



Los Angeles County  
Office of Education



LOS ANGELES COUNTY  
**BIRTH TO KINDERGARTEN  
TRANSITION SYSTEMS  
ALIGNMENT FRAMEWORK**

June 2021





**School Readiness means**  
**that children are ready for school,**  
**families are ready to support**  
**their children's learning,**  
**and schools are ready for children.**





**Message from Debra Duardo, M.S.W., Ed.D., Superintendent**  
***Los Angeles County Office of Education***

The Los Angeles County Birth to Kindergarten Transition Systems Alignment Framework was developed by a workgroup consisting of superintendents, principals, directors, early educators, kindergarten teachers, parents, and staff from the Los Angeles County Office of Education, California Department of Education, Office of Head Start, First 5 Los Angeles, Office for the Advancement of Early Care and Education, Parent Teacher Association (PTA), Baldwin Park USD, Garvey SD, Pomona USD, Child Care Resource Center, and the Campaign for Grade-Level Reading, in association with the Broad Academy fellowship.

In developing this framework, the workgroup's goal was twofold: (1) to provide a roadmap for school districts and early childhood programs in Los Angeles County to align their operating systems to better support a sustained and effective early learning to kindergarten transition system, and (2) to provide policies and practices that start at birth and continue through the transition into kindergarten.

The importance of quality early learning experiences is well documented. Children who attend high-quality early learning programs experience positive social-emotional, behavioral, and cognitive outcomes and are better prepared for success in elementary school. For those benefits to continue, we need to ensure there's a very personalized, warm handoff from one system to the next. We can't wait until high school or middle school to get them on the right path and ensure that their families have the supports and the resources they need. Linking the educational services provided by local educational agencies (LEAs) with those provided by early childhood education agencies is crucial to the success of our educational systems. We have to start now.

Continued success requires a sustainable system where all parties—early learning programs, kindergartens, administrators, teachers, staff, parents, children, community partners—buy in, engage, and feel supported. We need leaders to ensure expectations are clear, lines of communication remain open, and successful transition of children always remains and is recognized as a priority for all. We must work to ensure that our LEAs are ready to receive our children with universal design and supports for children and their families. We must act now.

Thanks to each of you who participated in making this framework happen. Your commitment will continue to resonate in the lives of our children, our families, and our communities for many years to come.

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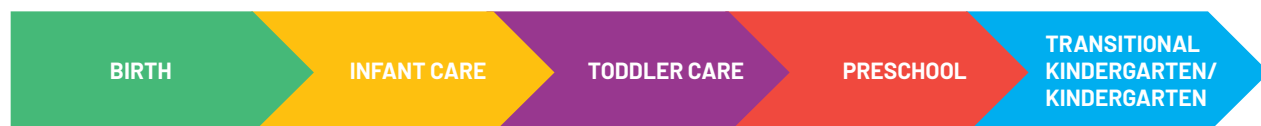
I.

## INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

### Purpose of Developing a Framework

Children experience numerous transitions across programs/settings and systems from birth through kindergarten (see Figure 1). Children differ in terms of when they enter these systems—one child may not experience care from anyone other than their family prior to kindergarten, whereas another child may enter infant care at just a few months old and continue to experience out-of-home care settings prior to kindergarten. The term “early learning” is used here to refer to any program or setting that provides infant care, toddler care, and/or preschool for children from birth to kindergarten entry. These programs include those operated by child care centers, family child care homes, Early Head Start and Head Start, state-funded preschool programs, etc. Transitional Kindergarten (TK) is a part of the K-12 public school system and provides children age four, who turn five between September 2nd and December 2nd, an opportunity to develop their school readiness skills prior to kindergarten.

**Figure 1: Early Learning to Kindergarten Transitions**



The developmental period of birth to age five is marked by significant shifts in children’s brain development and learning across all domains of development. Children in this developmental stage learn best in relational, social settings with the support of a responsive and caring adult who supports their learning and encourages exploration through experience and play. Transitions during this period are critical opportunities to support children and families as they adjust to new expectations, settings, and people. The transitions that a child experiences over this continuum differ for each child but often include the transition from exclusively being cared for by family to out-of-home care, as well as transitions between infant care, toddler care, preschool, transitional kindergarten, and kindergarten. Alignment between the systems that support children and families during this period can have a significant impact on how children and families experience these transitions and their eventual adjustment to elementary school overall.

The purpose of this framework is to provide a roadmap for school districts and early learning programs in Los Angeles (L.A.) County to align their operating systems so they better support a



sustained and effective birth to kindergarten transition system, and policies and practices that start from the time the child is born through the period in which they move into kindergarten. While the goal is to include content that supports this entire continuum from birth to kindergarten, this framework is being developed in stages, beginning with the transition from preschool into kindergarten, then toddlers into preschool, and finally birth through infancy into toddler settings/ programs. The first edition of this framework focused on the transition into kindergarten and was released in September 2020. This second edition includes additional content focusing on the transition from toddler care into preschool. The final edition will address the important transitions that children and families experience once a child is born.

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“I want my child to transition well and thrive in his new environment.”

– SPA 3: San Gabriel Valley parent

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## About This Framework

The Los Angeles County Office of Education (LACOE) hosted the county’s first-ever Bridging Head Start to Kindergarten Transitions Symposium on June 1, 2019, which brought together parents, teachers, and administrators from Head Start and state preschool programs and elementary and charter schools across L.A. County. The purpose of the symposium was to begin a countywide dialogue between local elementary schools, early learning providers, and L.A. County Head Start grantees, focused on strengthening transitions from early learning<sup>1</sup> to the K–12 system for children, families, and schools.

### L.A. County Transitions Workgroup Vision

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All children and families in Los Angeles County experience seamless and supportive transitions from their early learning experiences through kindergarten.

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With support from the Office of Head Start and California Department of Education (Early Learning and Care Division and California Head Start State Collaboration Office), LACOE subsequently established the L.A. County Transitions Workgroup. The workgroup’s goal was to develop a transitions framework to be used by Los Angeles County’s school districts, charter schools, and all early learning providers. The foundation of transitions is readiness, whereby children are ready for school, families are ready to support their children’s learning, and schools are ready to receive children.

<sup>1</sup>Early learning is used here to refer to child development between the ages of birth to five.



The workgroup consisted of superintendents, principals, directors, PreK teachers, kindergarten teachers, parents, and staff from LACOE, California Department of Education (CDE), Office of Head Start, First 5 Los Angeles, County Office for the Advancement of Early Care and Education, Parent Teacher Association, Baldwin Park Unified School District, Pomona Unified School District, Garvey School District, the Child Care Resource Center, and the Campaign for Grade-Level Reading, in association with the Broad Academy fellowship. (See the Acknowledgments section for a list of workgroup members.)

To develop the first edition of this framework, the workgroup consulted with parents, teachers, staff, administrators, directors, principals, and superintendents from various early learning and preschool programs, kindergarten and elementary schools, and relevant community stakeholders through surveys, focus groups, and one-on-one interviews. The workgroup also closely reviewed transition recommendations from experts, including the Office of Head Start's Public Schools Collaboration Demonstration Project, *Transitions and Alignment from Preschool to Kindergarten* published by the Education Commission of the States in September 2018, and the *California Assembly Blue Ribbon Commission on Early Childhood Education Final Report* published in April 2019. This second edition is revised to be inclusive of the transition from toddler care into preschool and from preschool into kindergarten. This second edition is funded by Head Start, Early Head Start, and CDE Preschool Development Grant (PDG).





## State and National Context

Recognizing the pivotal nature of early transitions, Congress has outlined precise expectations for both early learning and elementary school providers—close coordination, systematic procedures, ongoing communications, joint staff training, and family involvement—first in the Improving Head Start for School Readiness Act of 2007 (§ 642A) and again in the Every Student Succeeds Act of 2015 (§ 1120B).

More specifically, these two acts call for both local educational agencies (LEAs) and Head Start programs—and where possible other early learning providers—to jointly carry out activities that include developing and implementing a systematic procedure for receiving records; establishing channels of communication; conducting meetings involving parents, kindergarten or elementary school teachers, and Head Start teachers or, if appropriate, teachers from other early childhood development or early learning and care programs; organizing and participating in joint transition-related training of staff; and linking the educational services provided by LEAs with the services provided by local Head Start agencies and other early childhood development or early learning and care programs.

The State of California also incorporated transition activities into the Education Code (§ 8974): “School districts with early primary programs shall provide educational continuity from preschool through kindergarten and grades 1 to 3.” This includes mandates to “establish connections with public preschool programs” and “promote joint activities for teachers and administrators of public preschool programs... in areas such as program planning and staff development training related to developmentally appropriate curriculum and assessment practices for young children.” In addition, pursuant to Education Code § 8235(a), part-day and full-day state preschool programs shall include “age and developmentally appropriate programs designed to facilitate the transition to kindergarten for three- and four-year-old children in educational development, health services, social services, nutritional services, parent education and parent participation, evaluation, and staff development.” In school systems, the Local Control Funding Formula (LCFF) has specific resources to serve the needs of the whole child and support LEAs, schools, and families.<sup>2</sup> The funding plans and reports can provide early learning programs with the information they may want or need to work with their local planning efforts on how best to support transition.



<sup>2</sup> For more information:  
<https://www.cde.ca.gov/eo/in/lcfff/sys-resources.asp>



I.

## Alignment and Transitions from Early Learning Programs to Kindergarten

### *Sustaining Early Learning Gains*

The importance of quality early learning experiences is well documented. Children who attend high-quality early learning programs experience positive social-emotional, behavioral, and cognitive outcomes and are better prepared for success in elementary school (Barnett, 2011; Burchinal, 2010). This is especially true for children from low-income families who are at greater risk of poor academic outcomes. Because of deep-rooted equity issues in communities and schools, low-income children of color fare significantly worse than their peers on measures of academic achievement and school adjustment throughout the school years (Brooks-Gunn, 2007). For these children, high-quality early learning experiences can be particularly important to support better attendance rates and test scores, reduced placement in special education, and grade retention through later years (Reynolds, 2007; Karoly, 2005).

Research has shown that gains from early learning programs can fade over time for some children (Lee & Loeb, 1995; U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Administration for Children and Families, 2010). One reason for the “fade-out effect” is likely to be the lack of continuity and support as children transition from early learning programs through elementary school. Sustaining and building upon the progress children make in early learning programs

is critical to ensuring they succeed in school.

Therefore, school readiness is grounded in providing children with the skills necessary for continuous success, including an environment that is supportive and ready to receive them and their families. Creating a seamless system of education by aligning early learning experiences through third grade and developing effective transitions policies and practices is critical to ensuring children’s early gains are sustained and economic and racial disparities are reduced.

**Creating a seamless system of education by aligning early childhood through third grade and developing effective transitions policies and practices is critical to ensuring children’s early gains are sustained and economic and racial disparities are reduced.**

## Early Learning through Third Grade Systems Alignment

A “system” is defined by Merriam-Webster as a “regularly interacting or interdependent group of items forming a unified whole.” While this edition is focused on the transitions from toddler care to preschool and from preschool to kindergarten, supporting transitions throughout a child’s early years (birth through third grade) is critical to their long-term academic success. Early learning through third grade systems alignment—or efforts to create seamless learning and teaching experiences across settings and systems—involves coordination of standards, curricula, instructional practices, assessment of students’ progress, and teachers’ professional development across time and grade levels, as well as across levels within a system (e.g., classroom, school, district, state) (Valentino & Stipek, 2016). This alignment must be in place for transition practices and policies to be effective and sustainable.

This framework provides programs and schools with helpful ideas, examples, and resources to plan and implement transition strategies across the four subsystems essential for successful transitions: leadership/administrators, families, schools, and communities. With Los Angeles County Office of Education as leader and initiator of a safe space for innovation, this framework was designed as a “continuum of support” model for children as well as a planning tool for practitioners.

**The diversity of California’s PreK system is both a strength, in terms of giving parents more options to best meet their needs, and a challenge, in terms of ensuring equal access to quality experiences that prepare young children for success in school.**

Early learning through third grade systems alignment holds promise as an approach to sustaining the gains that young children acquire through their early learning experience. However, there are challenges to successful systems alignment, not the least of which is the complexity of the early learning system. The early learning “system” in California is a mixed-delivery system that includes

child care centers (for-profit, not-for-profit, and school-based), care provided in private homes (including both licensed family child care and license-exempt family, friend, and neighbor care), and federally funded programs like Head Start and Early Head Start. The public education system is also an important part of the early learning system, providing school district-based preschool programs funded by federal Title I, Proposition 98 state preschool, and local school district funds. The diversity of California’s early learning system is both a strength, in terms of giving parents more options to best meet their needs, and a challenge, in terms of ensuring equal access to quality experiences that prepare young children for success in school. These differences in quality across the various types of early learning programs/ settings may translate to differences in how children are prepared for the transition to kindergarten.

Although both the early learning and elementary education systems provide quality care and education to young children, early learning is not typically seen as a part of our nation’s public education system. However, with increased accountability placed on schools and teachers to show progress in third grade reading scores and ongoing concerns about persistent achievement gaps, schools are embracing the importance of early learning programs in preparing children for later school achievement. While there is



a growing interest in better-connected systems for children, the differences between the early learning and K–12 school systems continue to pose a challenge to full systems alignment. The two systems differ in important ways, including teaching philosophy, expectations of children and parents, and policies and regulations.

The early learning system focuses on child-centered approaches to support multiple domains of development (e.g., social, emotional, cognitive, motor, behavioral). This teaching philosophy, referred to as Developmentally Appropriate Practice (DAP), is grounded in the science of child development and recognizes that there are individual differences in the timing of developmental milestones in young children, but that there is a predictable sequence to development (National Association for the Education of Young Children, 2009). DAP also recognizes that children reach developmental milestones at different points in time within each developmental domain. Children are viewed as naturally interested in learning and motivated to explore and interact with the world around them. It is recognized that play is central to that exploration and learning. The early educator’s role is to engage children in authentic and meaningful learning experiences that are individualized to each child’s interests, abilities, and learning styles.

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“I know it’s going to be different because [the teacher] is going to have a bigger class and more students. But I hope that I can still have some type of communication with her. I know they’re really busy and so I won’t be the mom everybody hates.”

– SPA 3: San Gabriel Valley parent

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In contrast, the K–12 school system has increasingly focused on standards, assessments, and accountability. This approach is grounded in the idea that children should learn a common set of skills and knowledge by specific ages and that teachers should provide learning experiences to facilitate that achievement. Between 1999 and 2011, there was a major shift in kindergarten teachers’ expectations of children, characterized by a greater emphasis on academic learning, higher expectations for literacy and math, and the use of teacher-directed, rather than child-directed, instruction (Bassok, Latham & Rorem, 2016). For example, in 1999, 31 percent of teachers expected children to learn how to read by the end of kindergarten, whereas 12 years later that expectation increased to 80 percent. During this period, there were also significant reductions in the time spent on art, music, and science and a greater reliance on textbooks, worksheets, and workbooks in kindergarten. The cause for this shift is most commonly attributed to the heightened accountability pressures associated with the federal No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB). But other factors, such as the increase in the number of children enrolled in preschool and the corresponding increase in the incoming skills of kindergarten students, are also likely to have had an influence on kindergarten “becoming the new first grade” (Bassok, Latham & Rorem, 2016). Not only do these trends indicate a widening of the gap between preschool and elementary school expectations, teaching philosophy, and approach, but these changes also translate into children having increased difficulty transitioning into kindergarten. Efforts to bridge the gap between systems and ease this transition for children are more important now than ever before. LEAs must make themselves ready for the children they are receiving by implementing an aligned system of supports for preschool children and their families.

## Importance of Successful Transitions from Birth to Kindergarten

Birth to age five is a distinct developmental period and is the time when foundations of school readiness begin. Children in this age range develop and learn through interactions with others (both adults and other children), as well as through exploring the world around them. Stable, nurturing, and sensitive relationships with significant adults are critical during this period. Transitions during this period often mean a shift in these relationships, like when a parent returns to work and the child must adjust to a new caregiver or when a child transitions from one age group to another within an out-of-home care setting. Because infants and toddlers depend on consistent and predictable routines to make them feel safe and secure, it is especially important to support children and families through these early transitions.

**Nearly half of children have some challenge transitioning.**

### Toddler Care to Preschool

Young children develop in the context of their relationships with adults, so for toddlers who are in out-of-home care, a caring and trusting relationship with their caregiver is essential. Children form stronger and more secure attachments to adults who are consistently available to them and who are able to read their pre-verbal cues and respond sensitively to their needs (Raikes, 1996). This consistency in caregivers is important for young children, since repeated “detaching” and “re-attaching” to adults is emotionally stressful and can lead to challenges later in childhood (Howes & Hamilton, 1992). Although the importance of sustained, reliable relationships within the family is well understood, the need for stable and predictable relationships in child care settings is acknowledged less frequently (Howes & Ritchie, 2002).

Relationship-based care practices in early learning programs help support relationships between staff and the children in their care. At the core of relationship-based care practices are approaches that support families, teachers, and children as they build relationships with one another. Through these interactions, families, teachers, and children begin to understand one another’s specific needs, communication styles, and strengths. This individualized approach to working with each child and his or her family builds trust and creates a strong partnership between the caregiver and family and ensures that the child’s needs are met. Primary caregiving and continuity of care are two key approaches to relationship-based care in early learning programs. In a center-based toddler program, for example, primary caregiving is the practice of assigning one teacher to a small group of toddlers and giving that teacher the primary responsibility for those same children throughout the year. In a smaller home-based setting, primary caregiving is already a part of the model, since there is typically only one or two caregivers who have responsibility for a group of mixed-age children. Continuity of care is the practice of keeping children and their caregivers together for an extended period, even across classrooms and age groupings.

Alignment between toddler programs, preschool programs, and kindergarten requires many parts working together to ensure a seamless system. This includes ensuring continuity in children’s learning when they move from one age group to another within an early learning setting (e.g., toddler to preschool) as well as across settings (e.g., family child care to center-based care). Transitions



can be eased when changes in arrangements are as infrequent as possible, when adults view transitions from the perspective of the child and based on the child's level of development, temperament, family, and cultural experiences. Consistency and continuity between the home and other settings can help young children adjust to developmental changes and to changes in care. Successful experiences during early transitions can increase a child's ability to adapt to change in the future and can provide a more secure base for the child's current development.

## Preschool to Kindergarten

The transition to kindergarten often means that children are leaving behind caring and trusting relationships with early educators and peers, as well as a familiar environment that allows for independent choice and is more play-based than the one they are entering. The transition to kindergarten means that children must adapt to a new environment full of new people, greater academic expectations, and a more complex social environment that includes older children from multiple grades. For children who are not in a formal early learning setting prior to kindergarten, the adjustment to kindergarten is even more profound. According to a study by the National Center for Early Development and Learning in which 3,600 kindergarten teachers were asked to assess children's adjustment to kindergarten, nearly half of children (48%) were perceived to have some challenges (Rimm-Kaufman, Pianta & Cox, 2000). The most common challenges that teachers observed in children were difficulty following directions, insufficient academic skills and knowledge, and difficulty working independently.

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*"So I talked to him about going to kindergarten. He says he's scared. So, I try to do the same thing, to try to say it's going to be okay. And I have kids and friends just like him. It's just going to be a bigger class, bigger school. So, I just hope that he sees it like that. I just tell him it's going to be fun, just how it is here. So, you don't have to be scared about anything."*

*- SPA 4: Metropolitan Los Angeles parent*

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The transition to kindergarten requires adjustment for families as well. For those whose children participated in high-quality preschool, kindergarten can often mean less communication with teachers, less family support and connectedness with other parents, and new logistical challenges associated with a more defined daily schedule that often requires finding after-school care and transportation (Patton & Wang, 2012). Many parents have mixed feelings about their child's transition to kindergarten. Pianta and Kraft-Sayre (1999) conducted a study of parents' observations of their children's adjustment to kindergarten and found that just over half (53%) felt positive about the transition and over one-third (37%) had some anxiety about it. When asked about what they need to feel more comfortable with their child's transition to kindergarten, Wildenger and McIntyre (2010) found that over half the parents surveyed wanted more information about what was expected of their children in kindergarten and how their children's current skills align with those expectations.

“I’m actually scared for him to go to kindergarten because he doesn’t seem to get his emotions out in a positive way.”

– SPA 3: San Gabriel Valley parent

“I hope they don’t just see us as regular people. That they see us as family.”

– SPA 3: San Gabriel Valley parent

Successful transition, including the transition from early learning settings to preschool and later transition to kindergarten, requires many parts working together to create a solid systems approach.

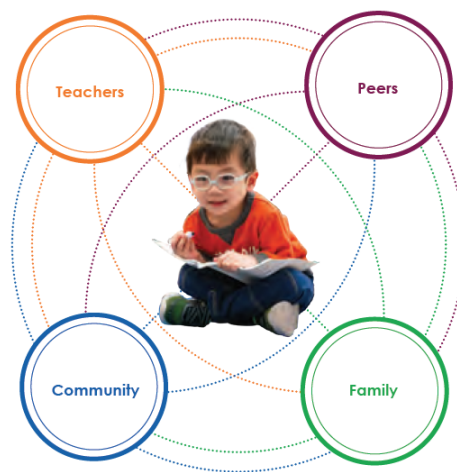
The Ecological and Dynamic Model of Transition (Rimm-Kaufman & Pianta, 2000) is a commonly used framework to describe the transition process and the importance of looking at transition from various perspectives in order to support children and families through transitions from birth to kindergarten. As depicted in Figure 2, this model acknowledges the importance of the interconnected and interdependent social contexts in which children develop, with the developing child at the center, surrounded by the family, teachers, peers, and community. These relationships are critical in facilitating a smooth transition to kindergarten. The model includes five principles that outline critical features of effective transition practices: (1) foster relationships as resources; (2) promote continuity from preschool to kindergarten; (3) focus on family strengths; (4) tailor practices to individual needs; and (5) form collaborative relationships.

The principles emphasize the critical role of involving the family early and in a way that addresses individual families’ needs and strengths, rather than relying solely on one-size-fits-all approaches like group orientations and informational flyers (Rimm-Kaufman & Pianta, 2000).

These principles matter in terms of both children’s and parents’ adjustment and outcomes. When schools implement effective transition practices such as having preschoolers visit kindergarten classrooms, sharing information with parents prior to program entry, and having teachers visit

**Figure 2:**  
**Ecological and Dynamic Model of Transition<sup>3</sup>**

Early Experiences —————> Kindergarten



(Rimm-Kaufman & Pianta, 2000)

<sup>3</sup> Graphic source: National Center on Early Childhood Development, Teaching, and Learning (2020): *Planning for the Transition to Kindergarten: Why It Matters and How to Promote Success*.



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“[I hope]... that the teacher has some kind of information about my child. Simple things. Personality, what they know, strengths, weaknesses.”

– SPA 7: East parent

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families at home, parents are more engaged and children show better outcomes. Using a nationally representative sample of children from the Early Childhood Longitudinal Study–Kindergarten sample (ECLS-K), researchers found that the number of transition practices implemented prior to kindergarten and during the fall of kindergarten was associated with more parent involvement in school and better academic outcomes for their children at the end of kindergarten (Little, Cohen-Vogel & Curran, 2016). These researchers also found that transition practices implemented in the preschool setting are associated with better social-emotional outcomes. Other research shows that children who attended preschool classrooms that implemented more transition practices were rated by kindergarten teachers as more socially competent and as having fewer behavioral issues (LoCasale-Crouch, Mashburn, Downer & Pianta, 2008). In both studies, the association between transition practices and positive outcomes was stronger for low-income children. Unfortunately, low-income children were also found to be less likely to attend preschools and schools that implemented transition practices (Shulting, Malone & Dodge, 2005; LoCasale-Crouch, Mashburn, Downer & Pianta, 2008).

## Specialized Transition Supports

### Children with Special Needs

Some families, like those whose children have special needs, are dual language learners (DLL),<sup>4</sup> or have experienced trauma, may need specialized transition supports. Infants and toddlers with special needs who are receiving intervention services through Early Start<sup>5</sup> face a significant transition when they reach age three and are no longer eligible for the program. It is important that program staff work with the family early in the process of creating their Individualized Family Service Plan (IFSP) to prepare them for this transition and make sure they are supported in identifying and connecting with the service options available for the child at age three (e.g., special education services through their local school district, community-based preschool programs, and other services in their community)(CA Dept. of Developmental Services & CA Dept. of Education, 2013).

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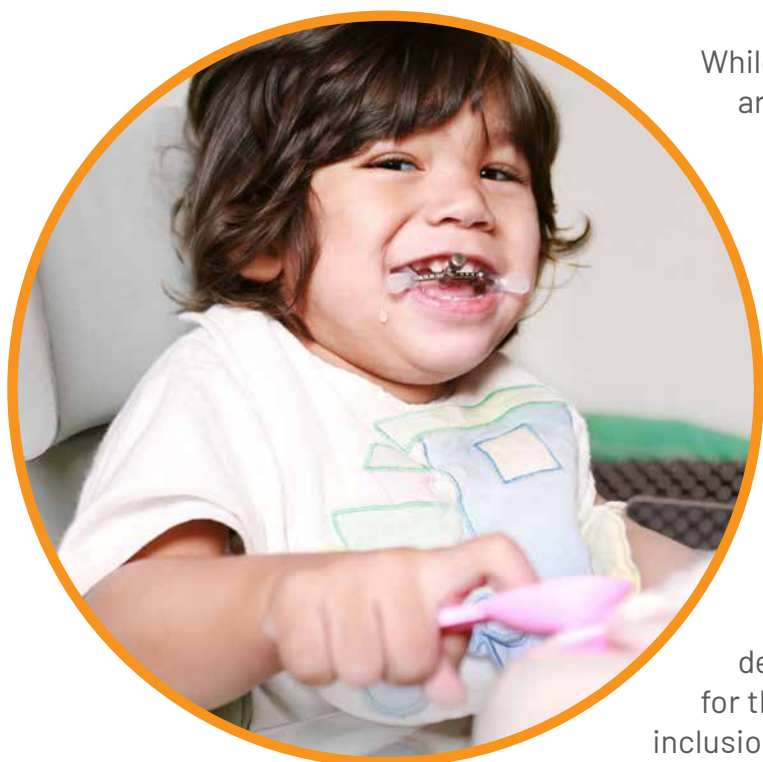
“I would sum that up in one word, which is dialogue. Yes. You know, my daughter is facing some challenges in kindergarten. And we are in constant, daily [communication], but definitely multiple times a week... with the principal.”

– SPA 3: San Gabriel Valley parent

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<sup>4</sup> Dual language learners (DLL) are young children aged birth to five learning two or more languages at the same time. English Language Learners (ELLs) are children five and older in the K-12 education system.

<sup>5</sup> Early Start is California's early intervention program for infants and toddlers with disabilities and their families.



While preschool-age children with special needs are often already receiving services from their local school district under Part B of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) prior to kindergarten, the transition to kindergarten is also a major transition for these children and families. The transition may involve moving from part-day to full-day care or from one school to another and may also mean changes in that child’s educational plan. Preschool-age children with special needs are supported by an Individualized Education Program (IEP) team that will conduct a thorough evaluation of the child and work with the family to determine the appropriate kindergarten setting for the child. This may include a mainstream or inclusion classroom, self-contained classroom, or placement in a specialized school that can best meet the needs of the child.

### Dual Language Learners

Children whose home language is explicitly and systematically supported experience significant social, linguistic, cognitive, and cultural long-term benefits (National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine, 2017). Therefore, it is critical that early learning providers and kindergarten teachers work with families to support the home language, as well as the acquisition of English. Partnering with families is critical to a smooth transition to kindergarten, and even more so for the families of DLL children, as these families may have been born in a different country and may not be familiar with the U.S. school system. It is important for schools to establish a strong partnership with these families so that the child’s unique talents, interests, and perspectives are fully understood and supported, even if the teacher does not speak the child’s home language. Districts must also have a sound communication plan in place to address any language barriers that may exist.

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“His facial expressions are awesome. Also, he’s really good learning the dual language... we speak both English and Spanish here.”

- SPA 3: San Gabriel Valley parent

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To effectively support families through early transitions, school staff must understand and be able to articulate the benefits of supporting the child’s home language and help families understand that the child’s transition to proficient academic English may take up to five years (National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine, 2017). Families of DLL children also need support in understanding how the child’s new school will partner with them to make decisions about placement in a bilingual or English language learners (ELL) kindergarten. This information should be communicated in the family’s home language. As the proportion of DLL children continues to increase and schools continue to recognize the long-term benefits of bilingualism, specialized supports for transitioning these children successfully into kindergarten need to become more prevalent.

### Children Who Have Experienced Trauma

Children who have experienced trauma, homelessness, and/or involvement with the child welfare system may also need augmented and specialized transition supports. Because of the potential negative impact of adverse childhood experiences (ACEs) on children’s development, these children are at particularly high risk for a range of negative outcomes across the lifespan. They often have difficulties with executive functioning skills, such as paying attention, starting tasks and staying focused, regulating emotions, and self-regulation, which are all critical skills for kindergarten and later school success (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2020). Specialized outreach and transition supports are particularly important for families whose children have experienced trauma. Partnerships between early learning settings, elementary schools, child welfare, and mental health services are needed to ensure that these children and families have the support they need.

**Because of the potential negative impact of adverse childhood experiences (ACEs) on children’s development, these children are at particularly high risk for a range of negative outcomes across the lifespan.**

Despite the research demonstrating that students of color, DLL/ELLs, and students who are more economically disadvantaged benefit the most from transition supports, schools that serve a greater proportion of these students are shown to provide fewer transition supports (Little, Cohen-Vogel & Curran, 2016).

Children who have special needs, who are dual language learners, or who have experienced trauma will need individualized supports to make birth to kindergarten transitions go smoothly. In the next section, data on the prevalence of transition practices in L.A. County school districts and early learning programs is presented, as well as data on parents’ views on the transition from preschool to kindergarten and what supports they feel are most needed.

## Transition Supports in Los Angeles County

The L.A. County Transitions Workgroup collected and reviewed data from key stakeholders, including parents, school administrators, and school staff, to gain a deeper understanding of current transition practices and the needs and desires of parents relative to supporting their children’s transition from PreK to kindergarten. The data collection initially included (1) a survey of school administrators and teachers and (2) empathy interviews with parents and parent focus groups. To support the development of the second edition of this framework, interviews with program administrators and supervisors who care for infants and toddlers were added. Below is a summary of the data as it relates to the survey, parent interviews and focus groups, and interviews with program administrators and supervisors.

### School Administrator and Teacher Survey

The survey of L.A. County school administrators (superintendents, principals, managers) and teachers (n=239) asked respondents to indicate their level of agreement with various statements about their school district or program’s transition practices and policies. Responses of both administrators and teachers were aggregated for analysis. As shown in Table 1, more respondents agreed with the positive statements about their school or program’s family-focused transition policies and practices than the systems alignment transition strategies. Specifically, 85 percent of respondents agreed that family engagement was a priority in their district or program and 66 percent agreed that their district or program effectively reaches out to families during transition. With the exception of preschools sharing child information with elementary schools (69%) and preschool teachers visiting kindergarten classes (52%), fewer than half of respondents agreed with statements regarding their school district or program’s efforts to align the two systems. This included involving preschool teachers in districts’ professional learning communities (45%), collaboration between preschool and kindergarten teachers on transition supports (35%), having kindergarten teachers visit preschool classes (20%), and providing cross-training for preschool and kindergarten teachers (20%).<sup>6</sup>

**The survey found that 69% of respondents agreed they have a system in place for preschools to share child information with elementary schools and 52% of preschool teachers are visiting kindergarten classes, but more than half agreed that the systems do not align.**

Survey respondents were also asked how well their school district or program was doing in implementing various preschool to kindergarten transition supports; fewer than 25 percent indicated they were doing well on these practices. As with the items in Table 1, more respondents felt that their district or program was doing well when it came to family-focused transition practices like providing parents with school readiness resources (22%), sharing information about what to expect in kindergarten (22%), and inviting parents to transition workshops (22%). However, fewer respondents felt that their school or program was doing well implementing systems alignment practices like holding joint meetings between elementary school and preschool staff (5%), providing opportunities for preschool and kindergarten teachers to meet and collaborate (4%), and offering joint training of preschool and kindergarten teachers

<sup>6</sup>An empathy interview uses a human-centered approach to understand the feelings and experiences of others. For more information regarding the quantitative and qualitative data collection, please contact the Los Angeles County Office of Education at (562) 940-1770.

and staff (5%). For example, fewer than 5 percent of respondents felt that their district or program was doing well when it comes to having preschool and kindergarten teachers meet to collaborate on transition or having principals visit preschool classrooms.

**Table 1: Percent of Survey Respondents – Program Transition Policies and Practices**

| N=239                             | SURVEY ITEM   | AGREE OR STRONGLY AGREE |
|-----------------------------------|---|-------------------------|
| <b>Family Supports</b>            | Family engagement is a priority for our district/program.   | 85%                     |
|                                   | The district/program is effective in reaching out to families regarding transition.                                 | 66%                     |
| <b>Systems Alignment Supports</b> | Our district has a system in place for preschool programs to share child information with the receiving school.     | 69%                     |
|                                   | Preschool teachers visit kindergarten classes as part of the transition process.                                    | 52%                     |
|                                   | Preschool teachers are provided the opportunity to participate in the district's Professional Learning Communities. | 45%                     |
|                                   | Kindergarten and preschool teachers collaborate to facilitate preschool to kindergarten transitions.                | 35%                     |
|                                   | Kindergarten teachers visit preschool classes as part of the transition process.                                    | 20%                     |
|                                   | The district/program provides cross-training opportunities for preschool and kindergarten teachers.                 | 20%                     |

Overall, it was clear that most respondents felt there was room for improvement, particularly with respect to systems alignment transition practices. While schools and early learning programs value the importance of successful transition and have made it a priority, not all schools and programs have implemented a comprehensive set of policies and practices to support alignment.

**Parent Interview and Focus Group Data About the Transition to Kindergarten**

Empathy interviews were conducted with a total of thirteen parents of preschool-age children (i.e., four or five years old); six of the parents had children in school district-based preschools and seven parents had children in a nonprofit preschool setting. The interviews were conducted between November and December 2019, using a protocol of sixteen open-ended questions developed by the Transitions Workgroup and informed by existing research. In addition to the

“I would say that definitely the teachers, the staff, we do have parent meetings. And in those meetings, they do... they do give out information, especially on enrollment. And then, I think, at the end of a school year. What your child is expected to know in kindergarten. So there are a lot of meetings and all that and school readiness.”

- SPA 7: East parent

“There are parents that kind of always have a face-to-face with the teacher as they pick up their child and drop off their child. But once they go to kindergarten, there’s no longer face-to-face. It’s only that if they schedule meetings.”

- SPA 3: San Gabriel Valley parent

interviews, four focus groups were conducted with a total of twenty-four parents who had at least one child under age five. One focus group was conducted at a school district and the other three were held at nonprofit early care and education organizations.

In analyzing the qualitative data, three key themes emerged that are critical in supporting successful transition: information sharing, relationship building, and individualized supports.

**Information Sharing** – Many parents noted that both preschools and elementary schools put effort into sharing information with parents prior to kindergarten entry. The information is typically focused on how to enroll their child, what to expect, and how to complete the necessary paperwork. Parents care about their child’s future and want information that will help them thrive in their new learning environment and set them up for success. Parents with older children who already transitioned to kindergarten were the most at ease with the process. Some parents felt they received an adequate amount of transition information regarding the school and services, while others felt they received no information, and most were somewhere in between. Parents are particularly eager for information on how to enroll their child in kindergarten and the skills their child is expected to have at entry. Parents also found it helpful when preschool teachers gave them ideas for how to support their child’s readiness including activities to do at home and over the summer before kindergarten.

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“And what I’m also hoping is that the teachers will recognize how verbally gifted she is and will kind of, you know, push her to cultivate that and really develop that.”

– SPA 3: San Gabriel Valley parent

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**Relationship Building** – Relationships are critical for successful transitions. As highlighted in the Ecological and Dynamic Model of Transition (Rimm-Kaufman & Pianta, 2000), the stronger the communication and relationships between a child’s social contexts (e.g., family, school, peers, community) the more likely there will be a smooth transition to kindergarten. Parents talked about the importance of open communication and dialogue with teachers and staff as critical components to relationship building.

While parents in the interviews and focus groups felt that they received a lot of information to support transition, many did not feel supported in establishing relationships with kindergarten teachers and other parents as they were in preschool. In addition, they hoped teachers would understand their child’s needs without the same level of parent input. There are many tools, such as apps and texts, that kindergarten teachers are utilizing to fill the communication gap, and many parents find them to be useful. However, they noted that the relationship between teachers and families is different between preschool and kindergarten. They understood the reason for the differences, such as larger class sizes and safety on the school campus, but many preferred the family-like relationship of the early learning setting.

**Individualized Support** – Many parents expressed concerns that their child’s unique strengths might not be recognized by their new school. They want their children to thrive and many felt that the transition to elementary school would mean that teachers have much larger groups of children and will not have the time to get to know each child and family individually. Parents with children who




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*“I want my child to speak Spanish and English—we are doing our part at home with expectations to speak Spanish, but this is not reinforced at school, so he thinks that only English is important.”*

*– SPA 3: San Gabriel Valley parent*

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have IEPs are concerned with how the kindergarten teacher will support their child’s individual needs. Parents value the emphasis that preschools place on social-emotional development and are concerned that kindergarten is too focused on academic learning and following rules. They want the emphasis on social-emotional learning to continue in kindergarten and be recognized as a strength, like cognitive abilities, throughout their child’s education.

Families with children who are DLLs have unique concerns about how their child’s language development is supported. Most parents recognize the value of bilingualism and want their child’s home language to be valued and supported through the transition to kindergarten.

It is clear from the data collected that K–12 schools and early learning programs are doing a lot to support children’s transition from PreK to kindergarten. However, it is also apparent that there are areas that need to be strengthened. While results indicated an emphasis on transition supports for children and families, they also highlighted a need for stronger systems alignment and establishment of meaningful, ongoing connections between staff and teachers in both systems. Data also suggests that family-focused transition practices could be strengthened by carrying over aspects of the preschool setting parents valued most: deep connections between parents and teachers, ongoing and meaningful

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*“One thing is she’s somewhat introverted. So, you know, sometimes she withholds social situations for that reason. So I’m hoping that, you know, her introversion doesn’t become an obstacle to her connecting with other children.”*

*– SPA 3: San Gabriel Valley parent*

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communication, and individualized supports for children, particularly for those with unique needs. The following sections provide practical guidance and resources for schools and early learning programs to align their transition systems with sound policies and practices that support and strengthen the children, families, schools, and communities they serve.

## **Interviews with Infant/Toddler Care Administrators and Supervisors**

To support the development of the second edition of this framework, in the late winter/early spring of 2021, an additional set of interviews were conducted with seven early learning administrators and supervisors who provide home-based and center-based early learning services for infants and toddlers to get an understanding of how these programs support children's transitions from toddler care into preschool. The interviews also asked administrators and supervisors to reflect on parents' experience with this transition. The feedback from these interviews was analyzed and organized according to the same three themes that were identified in parent interviews and focus groups: information sharing, relationship building, and individualized support.

**Information Sharing** – Administrators noted that multiple family transition meetings were scheduled prior to preschool entry. In some instances, programs supported family transitions during parent conferences and home visits were organized to discuss the individual needs and strengths of the children. Nearly all administrators and supervisors agreed that these opportunities to share information with families about children's strengths, interests, preferred ways of learning, and ways to support children's transition to preschool are a critical part of supporting smooth transitions.

**Relationship Building** – Early learning and preschool programs have adopted a collaborative practice with families to visit the preschool setting during the transition process. Parents are given the opportunity to meet with the preschool staff, start to get acquainted, and help orient children and families to the preschool's routines and expectations. In addition, both early learning and preschool teachers share information with parents about enrollment information and procedures.

Administrators expressed that by working together in partnership with the preschool teachers, parents gain a stronger sense of open two-way communication between schools, opportunities for visits to the new school, and an understanding of what and how children learn in the new school setting.

**Individualized Support** – Parent-teacher relationships may well be the most essential to supporting transitions, with research suggesting that children and families who experience a positive connection are more likely to have high levels of engagement with and at school. Early learning teachers and families experience a loss as families anticipate a transition to preschool. Administrators shared that families are concerned about adjusting to a new teacher, new settings, routines, environments, and establishing new relationships. While parents received preschool information during transition meetings, administrators and early learning teachers felt that families need additional time to understand what children will learn in the new setting prior to stating what the expectations are and what support they will receive from the new school. The most common recommendation highlighted from respondents was the need for ongoing meetings/information sessions to develop strong partnerships, to get to know children and families on an individual basis, and to support children and families as they transition from early learning into preschool. Strong leadership builds strong partnerships as a basis for shared understandings and collaboration.



## I.

## Commonalities Across Toddler Care, Preschool, and Kindergarten

An important aspect of effective transitions is the alignment of early learning standards, curriculum, instruction, and assessment. The alignment of these elements ensures coherence or interconnectedness between:

- Standards—what children are expected to know and do
- Curricula—what children are taught
- Instruction—how children are taught
- Assessments—what and how children’s progress is measured  
(Atchison & Pompelia, 2018, p. 7)

Alignment across these elements also “increases consistency of children’s experiences across and within grades in order to create a continuum of learning” (Howard, 2010, p. 5). It is essential for school districts to partner with early learning programs in their community to establish a process for articulation and alignment. Through regular articulation meetings or professional learning communities, silos that exist in education may be broken down. Tables 2 and 3 summarize key content and resources to facilitate conversations and collaborative work around aligning early learning standards, instruction, assessment, and learning environments across toddler care, preschool, and kindergarten. The tighter the alignment of these elements, the smoother the transition and the greater the likelihood of positive child outcomes as children move between early learning settings and into the K-12 system.



Table 2: Commonalities Between Toddler Care and Preschool

ELEMENT

TODDLER CARE

COMMONALITIES BETWEEN TODDLER CARE AND PRESCHOOL

**Early Learning Standards**

The intent of aligning learning standards (learning expectations) from early learning (infants and toddlers) to preschool and kindergarten is to provide seamless transition from grade to grade. Being aware of the alignment between standards and how alignment correlates to core curriculum will prevent gaps in learning.

**[Infant/Toddler Learning & Development Foundations](#)**

ITF describes developmental continuums (8–36 months) across four domains.

**[Preschool Learning Foundations \(PLF\) & Frameworks, Vol 1-3](#)**

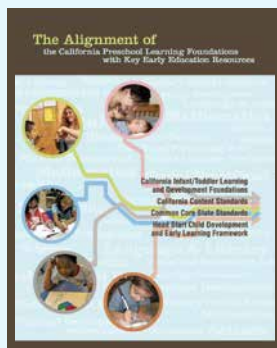
PLF describes developmental continuums (48–60 months) across nine domains.

**[Head Start Early Learning Outcomes Framework \(ELOF\)](#)**

ELOF describes the continuum of learning for infants to preschoolers across five central domains.

**[California Common Core \(CCC\) State Standards](#) and [California State Standards](#)**

**[Alignment of PLF and CCC Document](#)**



*\*To the maximum extent appropriate, children with disabilities are educated with typically developing peers in regular classes with the use of supplementary aids as necessary.*

**Social and Emotional Development Domain**

- Interactions with Adults and with Peers
- Relationships with Adults and with Peers
- Identity of Self in Relation to Others
- Recognition of Ability to Influence Social and Physical Environment
- Expression of Emotion and Empathy
- Emotion Regulation and Impulse Control
- Social Understanding

**Social and Emotional Development Domain**

- Self-Awareness
- Social Awareness (Empathy)
- Responsible Decision-Making (Initiative)
- Self-Management (Self-Regulation)
- Relationship Skills (Social and Emotional Understanding)

**Language and Literacy Domain**

- Receptive and Expressive Language
- Responsiveness to Language
- Communication and Use of Language
- Reciprocal Communication—Back and Forth Communication
- Communication Skills and Knowledge
- Interest in Print

**Language and Literacy Domain**

- Listening and Speaking
- Interest in Print

**Cognitive Domain**

- Number Sense
- Classification
- Inquiry through Observation and Investigation
- Spatial Relationships
- Cause and Effect
- Exploration and Discovery
- Memory
- Reasoning and Problem Solving
- Imitation
- Symbolic Play
- Attention Maintenance
- Understanding Personal Care Routines
- Knowledge of the Natural World

**Mathematics Domain**

- Number Sense (Counting) & Number Operations
- Classification—Sort and Classify
- Mathematical Reasoning to Solve Problems

**Science Domain**

- Observation and Experimentation
- Cause and Effect

**Physical Development Domain**

- Gross Locomotor Movement Skills & Gross Motor Manipulative Skills
- Fine Motor Manipulative Skills
- Ability to move small and large muscles, control body movements, and demonstrate precision, strength, coordination, and efficiency using the muscles of the hand
- Interact with the environment with increased body, spatial, and directional awareness

**Physical Development**

- Spatial Awareness
- Locomotor Movement—Balance while Walking
- Manipulative Skills
- Muscular Strength
- Flexibility
- Active Physical Play or Aerobic Activity

Table 2: Commonalities Between Toddler Care and Preschool

ELEMENT

TODDLER CARE

COMMONALITIES BETWEEN TODDLER CARE AND PRESCHOOL

**Assessments**

The intent of aligning instructional assessments is to make sure there is consistency with monitoring and measuring children's progress in development and learning to inform instructional practices and sustain children's developmental growth.

*\*Children with disabilities may benefit from more frequent progress monitoring.*

**Desired Results Developmental Profile–Infant/Toddler (DRDP)**

- Approaches to Learning–Self-Regulation
- Social and Emotional Development
- Language and Literacy Development
- Cognition, Including Math and Science
- Physical Development–Health

**Desired Results Developmental Profile–Preschool (DRDP)**

- Approaches to Learning
- Social and Emotional Development
- Language and Literacy Development
- Cognition, Including Math and Science
- Physical Development–Health

**Instruction**

The intent of aligning instruction is to provide developmentally appropriate teaching practices that provide an optimal balance of adult-guided and child-guided experiences.

*\*The goal of Universal Design for Learning (UDL) is to use a variety of teaching methods to remove any barriers to learning and give all students equal opportunities to succeed. It supports children with disabilities, children with a variety of learning preferences, and DLLs.*

[Universal Design for Learning](#)

- Opportunities for Exploration
- Self-Initiation
- Build Interest
- Encouragement for Problem Solving and Mastery (encouraging new skills, understanding, and problem solving)
- Read and Respond to Children's Cues
- English Language Development Strategies for DLLs

- Cognitive-Constructivist Approach: Active knowledge building, re-construction of meaning, critical thinking, deep understanding, and stimulation of questioning
- Interactive Learning (questioning, feedback, modeling, scaffolding)
- English Language Development Strategies for DLLs

**Learning Environments**

The intent of aligning learning environments is to ensure that the physical spaces allow students to encounter places where they are safe to take risks, explore, investigate, experiment, communicate, create, and learn.

*\*UDL guidelines outline the importance for teachers to create an environment that is safe and minimizes distractions.*

Environment and spaces organized to support the toddler's free movement, interest, and exploration.



Classroom for preschool is set up for learning experiences aligned with the curriculum.



Table 3: Commonalities Between Preschool and Kindergarten

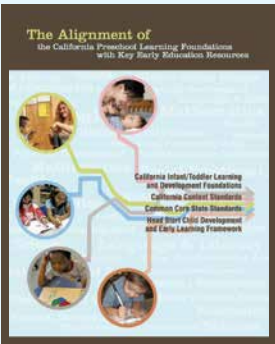
| ELEMENT   | PRESCHOOL  | COMMONALITIES BETWEEN PRESCHOOL AND KINDERGARTEN   | KINDERGARTEN   |
|---|--|--|--|
| <p><b>Early Learning Standards</b><br/>The intent of aligning preschool to kindergarten learning standards (learning expectations) is to provide seamless transition from grade to grade. Being aware of the alignment within standards and how alignment correlates to core curriculum will prevent gaps in learning.</p> <p><a href="#">Preschool Learning Foundations (PLF) &amp; Frameworks, Vol 1-3</a></p> <p>PLF describes developmental continuums (48-60 months) across nine domains.</p> <p><a href="#">Head Start Early Learning Outcomes Framework (ELOF)</a></p> <p>ELOF describes the continuum of learning for preschoolers across five central domains.</p> <p><a href="#">California Common Core (CCC) State Standards and California State Standards</a></p> <p><a href="#">Alignment of PLF and CCC Document</a></p> | <p><b>Social and Emotional Development Domain</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Social and Emotional Understanding</li> <li>• Empathy and Caring</li> <li>• Initiative in Learning</li> </ul> <hr/> <p><b>Language and Literacy Domain</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Phonological Awareness – Recognition of sounds and syllables. The foundations for phonological awareness are written only for older four-year-olds.</li> <li>• Letter Knowledge – Recognize half the uppercase and half the lowercase letters</li> <li>• Writing – Write letters and letter-like shapes</li> </ul> <hr/> <p><b>Mathematics Domain</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Number Sense – Counting numbers up to 20</li> <li>• Patterning – Recognize and expand patterns</li> <li>• Measurement – Non-standard units of measurement</li> <li>• Geometry – Simple shapes</li> </ul> <hr/> <p><b>Science Domain</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Curiosity and ability to raise questions about objects and events in their environment</li> </ul> | <p><b>Social and Emotional Development Domain</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Self-Awareness</li> <li>• Social Awareness (Empathy)</li> <li>• Responsible Decision-Making (Initiative)</li> <li>• Self-Management (Self-Regulation)</li> <li>• Relationship Skills (Social and Emotional Understanding)</li> </ul> <hr/> <p><b>Language and Literacy Domain</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Listening and Speaking</li> <li>• Comprehension of Age-Appropriate Text</li> <li>• Phonological Awareness (syllables, onset-rime, delete onsets) – At around 60 months</li> <li>• Writing – Use drawing and dictation to compose opinion pieces, narrative, and informative texts</li> </ul> <hr/> <p><b>English Language Development</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Listening, Speaking, Reading &amp; Writing</li> </ul> <hr/> <p><b>Mathematics Domain</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Number Sense (Counting) &amp; Number Operations</li> <li>• Classification – Sort and classify</li> <li>• Measurement – Compare, order, and measure</li> <li>• Geometry – Create and compose shapes, identify 3-D shapes and positions in space</li> <li>• Mathematical Reasoning to solve problems</li> </ul> <hr/> <p><b>Science Domain</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Observation and Investigation/Experimentation</li> <li>• Documentation and Communication</li> <li>• Compare and Contrast</li> <li>• Physical Sciences – Properties of materials</li> <li>• Earth Sciences – Properties of earth (land, air, water)</li> <li>• Life Sciences – Properties of plants and animals</li> </ul> | <p><b>Social and Emotional Development Domain</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• No kindergarten standards specific to social and emotional. CDE supports elementary in social-emotional learning in the Core Social Emotional Competencies developed by the Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning.</li> </ul> <hr/> <p><b>Language and Literacy Domain</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Phonological Awareness (rhyming words; isolating and pronouncing initial, medial, and final sounds; and phoneme manipulation)</li> <li>• Phonics – Decode</li> <li>• Letter-Knowledge – Know all uppercase and lowercase letters</li> <li>• Writing – Compose opinion pieces, narrative, and informative texts</li> </ul> <hr/> <p><b>Mathematics Domain</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Number Sense – Numbers up to 100 and operations in base ten (with numbers 11-19)</li> <li>• Measurement – Concepts of time and calendar</li> <li>• Geometry – Identify, analyze, compare, create, and compose a variety of shapes</li> <li>• Mathematical Practices (e.g., reason abstractly)</li> </ul> <hr/> <p><b>Science Domain</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Statistics, Data Analysis, and Probability</li> </ul> |
|  <p><i>*To the maximum extent appropriate, children with disabilities are educated with typically developing peers in regular classes with the use of supplementary aids as necessary.</i></p>  | <p><b>Physical Development Domain</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Balance – Holding still</li> <li>• Manipulative Skills – Increase fine motor skills</li> <li>• Spatial Awareness – Use own body as reference</li> </ul>   | <p><b>Physical Development Domain</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Body Awareness – Identify body parts</li> <li>• Spatial Awareness</li> <li>• Balance – When moving in different directions</li> <li>• Locomotor Movement – Balance while walking and variety of other skills, such as jog, run, hop, jump</li> <li>• Manipulative Skills – Increase coordination with throwing, kicking, striking, bouncing, etc.</li> <li>• Muscular Strength – Climb ladders</li> <li>• Flexibility – Stretch without bouncing</li> <li>• Active Physical Play or Aerobic Activity</li> </ul>   | <p><b>Physical Development Domain</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Balance – Using up to five body parts</li> <li>• Spatial Awareness – Travel within large group without bumping into others or falling</li> <li>• Movement Concepts – Create shapes using body parts in a variety of combinations</li> <li>• Fitness Concepts – Participate in physical activities that are enjoyable and challenging</li> </ul>   |

Table 3 : Commonalities Between Preschool and Kindergarten

**ELEMENT**

**PRESCHOOL**

**COMMONALITIES BETWEEN PRESCHOOL AND KINDERGARTEN**

**KINDERGARTEN**

**Assessments**  
 The intent of aligning preschool through kindergarten instructional assessments is to make sure there is consistency with monitoring and measuring children’s progress in development and learning to inform instructional practices and sustain children’s developmental growth.  
*\*Children with disabilities may benefit from more frequent progress monitoring.*

[Desired Results Developmental Profile](#) (State Mandated)



[Early Childhood Assessments - NAEYC](#)

[Desired Results Developmental Profile-K \(DRDP-K\)](#)

- Approaches to Learning
- Social Emotional Development
- Language and Literacy Development
- English Language Development
- Cognition (Math & Science)
- Physical Development-Health
- History-Social Science
- Visual and Performing Arts

**Kindergarten Assessments**

- Kindergarten Readiness Checklist (district created)
- Benchmark assessments (district approved)
- Dynamic Indicators of Basic Early Literacy Skills ([DIBELS](#))

**Dual Language Learners**

- [English Language Proficiency Assessments](#)

**Instruction**  
 The intent of aligning instruction is to provide developmentally appropriate teaching practices that provide an optimal balance of adult-guided and child-guided experiences.  
*\*The goal of Universal Design for Learning (UDL) is to use a variety of teaching methods to remove any barriers to learning and give all students equal opportunities to succeed. It supports children with disabilities, children with a variety of learning preferences, and DLLs.*  
[Universal Design for Learning](#)

Social-Constructivist approach: Building knowledge through skills previously learned through experiments, discovering, role-play, and collaboration.

- Child-Initiated/ Child-Centered

- [Developmentally Appropriate Practice](#)
- [Preschool Curriculum Frameworks, Vol. 1-3](#)
- [Preschool English Learner Guide](#)
- [Video: Play in Early Childhood](#)

- Cognitive-Constructivist approach: Active knowledge building, re-construction of meaning, critical thinking, deep understanding, and stimulation of questioning
- Teacher-guided experiences
- Interactive Learning (questioning, feedback, modeling, scaffolding)
- Use of technology
- English Language Development Strategies for DLLs

- [Video: Transitional Kindergarten Implementation Guide: Effective Instruction](#)
- [Video: Effective Early Learning Strategies](#)

- Cognitive Learning Process: Acquisition of general and specific skills, e.g., learning how to decode
- Teacher-directed instruction methods (didactic)
- Concept/subject-driven instruction (based on curriculum programs)
- Learning centers (assigned or on rotation)
- Independent seat work (e.g., paper-pencil assignments and/or manipulatives)

[Curriculum Frameworks](#)

**Learning Environments**  
 The intent of aligning preschool to kindergarten learning environments is to ensure that the physical spaces allow students to encounter places where they are safe to take risks, explore, investigate, experiment, communicate, create, and learn.  
*\*UDL guidelines outline the importance for teachers to create an environment that is safe and minimizes distractions.*

Classroom is set up for free choice and interest areas.



[Early Childhood Environment Rating Scale](#)

Classroom is set up with tables for individual seating and some activity areas.



[Video: Transitional Kindergarten Implementation Guide: Learning Environment](#)

Classroom is set up with desks for individual seating.



[Video: Reimagining Classrooms: TED Talk](#)



## I.

## Policy Implications

Smooth transitions from birth through kindergarten promote an optimal path for children’s growth and development over time. Alignment not only ensures that children are prepared for what they will learn and what is expected of them in kindergarten, but also helps families feel connected to their school and creates a foundation for a strong home-school partnership. The ideas, best practices, and tools shared in this framework are intended to be a resource for local communities, early learning providers, K-12 schools, and families so that they can work together to create a seamless and supportive birth to kindergarten transition system. To truly sustain these transition policies and practices and ensure systems are aligned, it is recommended that policymakers develop solutions that address system barriers that make alignment challenging. The following policy implications were developed through conversations with the L.A. County Transitions Workgroup and present ways to address many of these barriers:

**Collaborative Planning:** Support school district administrators to implement birth to kindergarten alignment strategies and involve early educators from diverse programs and settings as part of the planning and implementation of those efforts.

**Birth to Kindergarten Leadership Development:** Develop and support elementary school leaders to become birth through third grade leaders who are knowledgeable about early development and learning and are focused on building connections between the early learning and K-12 systems.

**Assessment Data Continuity:** Establish a valid and reliable measure of student skills that can be used to assess growth over time and across grades and that captures skills and growth of all children (including those who are DLLs and who have IFSPs/IEPs).

**Data Systems:** Establish a data system that links individual child-level assessment data from early childhood to elementary data to enable teachers to better meet children’s individual needs and build upon their strengths.

**Joint Learning and Planning:** Provide paid release time and substitutes for early learning and K-12 teachers to participate in joint professional development and to collaborate with other teachers both within and across systems.

**Align PreK-3 Teacher Preparation:** Support efforts to increase associate and bachelor’s degrees for early educators, strengthen K-3 teacher preparation to include greater emphasis on early childhood development, and incorporate transition best practices into teacher preparation and credential programs.

**Reduce Class Sizes and Provide More Classroom Support:** Support efforts to reduce group and class sizes and increase the number of classroom aides so that teachers can have the time and resources to focus on individual children’s needs and strengths and engage in more frequent dialogue with parents.

**Streamline Volunteer Process:** Support more parent and community engagement by simplifying the process to increase understanding so that more people will want to volunteer their time.

**Support CDE’s Preschool through Third Grade (P-3) Alignment Efforts:** Partner with the CDE as they advance P-3 Alignment statewide.



## L.A. COUNTY TRANSITION FRAMEWORK

### Framework Using a Systems Approach – Three C’s of Transition Impacting Child Outcomes

The L.A. County Transitions Workgroup leveraged a wide variety of data for the development of a comprehensive, countywide birth to preschool and preschool to transitional kindergarten and/or kindergarten transition framework, including input from workgroup members, lessons learned through active participation in the Office of Head Start and Public Schools Collaboration Demonstration Project, and insight data from parents, teachers, administrators, and other stakeholders from across L.A. County.

Successful transition, including the transition from early learning to kindergarten, requires many parts working together to create a solid systems approach. Over time, successful systems alignment helps to ensure that the valuable gains achieved in early learning programs are not lost, but rather sustained into kindergarten and beyond, thus reducing the school readiness achievement gap. In part one, a system was defined by Merriam-Webster as “a regularly interacting or interdependent group of items forming a unified whole.” This definition aligns with the Office of Head Start’s whole child approach to school readiness: children are ready to learn, families are ready to support them, and schools are ready for the children and families they are receiving ([OHS ECLKC website](#)).

Data analysis from the workgroup’s surveys, interviews, cited research, and feedback data from the parents, teachers, and leadership/administrators demonstrated that transition across early learning to kindergarten activities for children and families are typically provided; however, less emphasis is placed on systems alignment and ongoing connections among leadership/administrators, teachers, families, and community organizations. This resulted in three key themes identified as critical in supporting successful transitions: information sharing, relationship building, and individualized supports. The themes were used to identify the Three C’s of Transition approach of interconnecting components:

1. Coordination—defined as alignment and articulation across subsystems, including intentional information and data sharing (theme one: information sharing)
2. Cooperation—defined as commitment between subsystems to work together to achieve identified actions and procedures (theme two: relationship building)
3. Collaboration—defined as supporting mutual relationships between subsystems that result in a collective and shared purpose and addressing the unique needs of children (theme three: individualized supports)



The workgroup intentionally considered the third theme, individualized supports, when identifying strategies and resources within the framework, addressing the individual child’s and family’s unique strengths and needs, including DLLs, children with special needs or disabilities, children experiencing adverse childhood experiences, and children experiencing homelessness.

*“How the foundation for positive transitions is laid across all levels of the system to support children, families, and staff through transitions can have far-reaching effects on children’s well-being and academic success.”*

- Office of Head Start, 2020,  
<https://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/transitions>

Figure 3: Three C’s of Transition Impacting Child Outcomes





Based on this whole child systems approach, the workgroup identified four essential subsystems needed for a comprehensive and successful transition from early learning to kindergarten. The interconnectedness of the subsystems and components ensures that the transition focus is not reliant on any one individual or group, but rather a group of individuals that represent a cross sector. The four subsystems are as follows:

- Leadership/Administrators—including school boards, superintendents, principals, early learning program directors, and supervisors who must set the tone and expectations of the entire organization using a systems approach. It is key that all leaders that impact decision-making are part of the transition system.
- Families—including parents, guardians, and other significant caregivers and caretakers, such as grandparents, extended family, and older siblings. Families have the best understanding of their child and should be encouraged and supported to be their first educator.
- Schools—including early childhood education programs and local educational agencies (LEAs), both educators and other school staff, such as school librarians, special education providers, physical education instructors, etc.
- Community—applying Rimm-Kaufman and Pianta’s (2000) Ecological and Dynamic Model of Transition to school readiness, the workgroup added Community, which includes community organizations and programs such as local libraries, WIC, Parent Teacher Associations (PTA), parks and recreation programs, and external service providers.



The approach in this framework is aligned with the recently updated recommendations from the National Center on Early Childhood Development, Teaching, and Learning (2020): *Planning for the Transition to Kindergarten: Why It Matters and How to Promote Success*. The recommendation includes the following:

- Approach transition collaboratively, and include the diverse perspectives of learners and their families
- Involve all key stakeholders in the process, including families, educators, leaders, members of children’s cultural and linguistic communities, and individuals representing children with disabilities
- Align children’s experiences across systems in early learning settings and kindergarten classrooms

To support successful transition system alignment, Tables 4 through 7 focus on the Three C’s of Transition (Coordination – Cooperation – Collaboration) and how they are supported in each of the four subsystems (leadership/administrators, families, schools, and communities). The tables detail strategies and resource links to consider when planning for successful transitions from early learning to kindergarten. The information, grounded in research, is gathered from practitioners and parents to support educators in filling the gaps that historically have existed between early learning and elementary education. Where applicable, links to resources are included in the tables or in Appendix C. Please note that Tables 4 through 7 are not all-inclusive, but provide examples and guidance to help programs develop their plan of action for embedding a systems approach to transition throughout the organization.



Table 4: Three C's of Transition Impacting Child Outcomes – LEADERSHIP/ADMINISTRATORS

## Three C's of Transition Impacting Child Outcomes LEADERSHIP and ADMINISTRATORS

### LEADERSHIP/ ADMINISTRATORS

Superintendents  
Boards  
Principals  
Directors  
Managers  
Supervisors

#### COORDINATION

Alignment and articulation across subsystems  
(Information Sharing)

- Identify leadership team membership representing early learning and kindergarten.
- Develop a process for collaboration and establish a PreK–K shared vision and plan
- Identify a communication strategy to build understanding and obtain buy-in from administrators, teachers, families, and community members
- Establish a data management system and data-sharing processes (e.g., child-level data)
- Identify an evaluation process to determine effectiveness of early learning and kindergarten collaboration, articulation, and planning process
- Ensure that transition is included in the distance learning process and during breaks<sup>7</sup>

#### COOPERATION

Commitment between subsystems to work together  
(Relationship Building)

- Set clear expectation of implementing systems approach
- Build a culture of collaboration and cohesiveness between early learning and kindergarten systems supported by all stakeholders (e.g., district boards, nonprofit boards, superintendents, directors, administrators, teachers, parents)
- Build shared understanding around developmentally, linguistically, and culturally appropriate practices and leadership
- Establish early learning and kindergarten goals that are in alignment with existing initiatives and community efforts
- Identify key strategies and activities to support alignment and articulation (e.g., design a variety of professional learning experiences)

#### COLLABORATION

Supporting mutual relationships between subsystems  
(Individualized Supports)

- Develop relationships and work closely across early learning and school systems and providers to ensure positive child outcomes for all students, including student subgroups, such as children with disabilities and dual language learners
- Schedule, coordinate, and implement joint professional development activities to accommodate both early learning and kindergarten teachers, as well as administrators
- Emphasize importance and benefits of attendance from early learning programs through elementary grades

### RESOURCES

- [Education Commission of the States: Transitions and Alignment from Preschool to Kindergarten](#)
- [National Association of Elementary School Principals: Leading Pre-K-3 Learning Communities](#)
- [Los Angeles Unified School District Birth to Eight Roadmap](#)
- [National P3 Center](#)
- [Transition and Alignment: Two Keys to Assuring Student Success](#)
- [Trying Together: Kindergarten Transition](#)
- [Zero to Three: The State of Child Care for Babies](#)
- [Zero to Three: Putting the Pieces Together for Infants and Toddlers](#)

<sup>7</sup>See Appendix B for additional information.

## Three C's of Transition Impacting Child Outcomes

# FAMILIES

## FAMILIES

Parents  
Guardians  
Caregivers/  
Caretakers

### COORDINATION

Alignment and articulation across subsystems (Information Sharing)

- Learn about the different expectations and strategies early educators use to support children as they transition within early learning programs and to kindergarten
- Identify the school and program(s) you would like your child to attend
- Become familiar with the School of Choice (if available) and enrollment process, including timeframes, school rules, and expectations
- Learn about before-school and after-school programs and other magnet academic and extracurricular programs
- Learn about how well prepared children are at the schools you are interested in by becoming familiar with CDE's School Accountability Report Card (SARC) applicable to kindergarten
- Request a site tour to familiarize yourself with the elementary campus to determine if it fits your child's needs
- Schedule an appointment to meet the elementary staff and introduce yourself and your child
- Develop an understanding of the importance and benefits of regular attendance
- Create a transition folder or portfolio for your preschool child with key information such as medical and dental records, allergies, Individualized Education Programs (IFSP, IEP), etc.
- Become familiar with how the elementary school system differs from the early learning system
- Ask teachers for transitions activities to support your child during school breaks and at the end of the year<sup>8</sup>

### COOPERATION

Commitment between subsystems to work together (Relationship Building)

- Attend early learning or kindergarten orientation sessions and transition events prior to the program or school start date
- Become familiar with your rights and the local educational agency's (LEA's) role under federal and state laws, such as your rights under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA)
- Participate in parent groups, committees, and organizations, such as a parent advisory group, Parent Teacher Association (PTA), School Site Council (SSC), etc.
- Regularly attend program/school events and parent-teacher meetings
- Join a parent/family peer-to-peer network or support group

### COLLABORATION

Supporting mutual relationships between subsystems (Individualized Supports)

- Work with teachers and administrators to identify your child's strengths and gaps to support your child's unique educational needs
- Make attendance a priority— for every day the child does not attend, that is time lost in the instructional process
- Always communicate with your child's program or school about any circumstances that may interfere with consistent attendance in order to access support from the school and/or community programs
- Attend orientation or other transition event, symposium, or conference to become familiar with the processes involved in early learning to kindergarten transitions

## RESOURCES

- List of public schools by school district and by charter: [Public Schools Directory](#)
- CDE School Accountability Report Card: [CDE SARC website](#)
- [A Parent's Guide to the SARC](#)
- [The Transition to Kindergarten and Out-Of-School-Time Programs: Tips for Parents and Caregivers](#)
- [Your Child Is Going to Kindergarten: Making the Move Together](#)
- [Transition to Kindergarten: Activity Calendar for Families](#)
- [Family Engagement in Transitions: Transition to Kindergarten](#)
- [Transitions to Kindergarten: Supporting Children Who Are Dual Language Learners \(DLLs\)](#)
- [Continuing the Journey: Best Practices in Early Childhood Transition: A Guide for Families \(book\)](#)

<sup>8</sup> See Appendix B for additional information. Los Angeles County Birth to Kindergarten Transition Systems Alignment Framework (Second Edition) – June 2021

Table 6: Three C's of Transition Impacting Child Outcomes – SCHOOLS

# Three C's of Transition Impacting Child Outcomes SCHOOLS

## SCHOOLS

- LEAs
- Charters
- Early Learning Programs
- Preschools
- Family Child Care Homes
- Educators
- School Staff

| COORDINATION   | COOPERATION   | COLLABORATION  |
|--|---|--|
| Alignment and articulation across subsystems<br>(Information Sharing)  | Commitment between subsystems to work together<br>(Relationship Building)   | Supporting mutual relationships between subsystems<br>(Individualized Supports)  |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Create a sense of community across systems by coordinating joint events for staff, students, and families</li> <li>Invite early learning providers to attend kindergarten events and vice versa (e.g., culminating theme gallery walks or family math classroom events)</li> <li>Provide articulation or planning time for early educators and kindergarten teachers to discuss shifts in pedagogical approaches and instructional content</li> <li>Recruit and prepare families to participate in collaboration meetings, including early learning teachers, transitional kindergarten and/or kindergarten teachers, administrators, and parents</li> <li>Exchange school/program data and share child-level data between early learning and school systems</li> <li>Provide parents transition activities and supports during school breaks and at the end of the year<sup>9</sup></li> <li>Provide receiving teacher with child's portfolio that may include observation and assessment data, which offers a baseline for social, emotional, and early academic skills</li> <li>Exchange and share resources that increase understanding of early learning standards (e.g., for children in foster care, dual language learners, students with special needs, children experiencing homelessness, and gifted and economically disadvantaged students)</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Become familiar with staff, routines, and environments by participating in joint events or activities</li> <li>Establish relationships between teachers and be responsive to each other's inquiries</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Attend and engage in joint professional development opportunities (preschool-kindergarten)</li> <li>Participate in classroom visits and debrief to reflect on developmentally appropriate practices, early learning standards, learning environments, assessments, and social interactions</li> <li>Participate in joint planning and articulation (preschool-kindergarten) to discuss shifts in pedagogical approaches, instructional content, and formative assessments and plan for differentiated instruction</li> <li>Coordinate supports for children with disabilities and special needs</li> <li>Ensure regular attendance by clarifying attendance policies and supports available to families</li> <li>Complete a comprehensive IFSP/IEP re-evaluation meeting for children with special needs</li> </ul> |

## RESOURCES

- [NAEYC: Developmentally Appropriate Practice Position Statement: 2020](#)
- [PACE \(Policy Analysis for California Education\) – PreK-3 Alignment Challenges and Opportunities in California](#)
- [PACE: Practice Brief Report – Fostering Pre-K to Elementary Alignment and Continuity](#)
- [Data-Sharing Between Head Start Programs and Receiving Elementary Schools](#)
- [Council for Exceptional Children](#)
- [National Education Association IDEA Resources](#)
- [ECLKC: Children with Disabilities](#)
- [Early Childhood Transitions: Supporting Children and Families](#)
- [Kirklees Guidance for Transitions in Early Years](#)
- [Developmental Foundations of School Readiness for Infants and Toddlers](#)

<sup>9</sup> See Appendix B for additional information.

## Three C's of Transition Impacting Child Outcomes **COMMUNITIES**

# COMMUNITIES

Libraries  
 Dept. of Children and Family Services  
 Parks & Recreation  
 Regional Centers  
 Medical and WIC Providers  
 Local Volunteers  
 Related Service Providers (e.g., Occupational and Speech Therapy)

### COORDINATION

Alignment and articulation across subsystems  
 (Information Sharing)

- Identify community organizations and programs that can or could support the early learning programs and elementary school(s) and the children and families they serve.
- Identify community organizations and programs that can or could serve the unique characteristics, diversity, and needs of the families and children in the community
- Assess current transition activities and processes in the community to identify what is effective and where program improvement is needed
- Share data and common data points across programs and organizations
- Share resources across programs, such as Community Transition Resource Handbook or Calendar
- Use common or standardized transition documents and forms
- Ensure early learning programs, schools, and families are aware of community resources, including those for special populations, such as those experiencing homelessness<sup>10</sup>

### COOPERATION

Commitment between subsystems to work together  
 (Relationship Building)

- Develop MOUs and partnerships between community organizations that support early learning and elementary school goals (e.g., library programs, city or county parks and recreation dept.)
- Host a collaborative transition event, inclusive of all stakeholders in the community
- Incorporate leadership practices for successful transitions from early learning to kindergarten
- Engage in community events around early learning and kindergarten enrollment
- Coordinate with the local library to host a story time focused on early childhood transitions in early learning and kindergarten
- Provide information about the early learning and kindergarten registration or transition process to distribute to families attending community events

### COLLABORATION

Supporting mutual relationships between subsystems  
 (Individualized Supports)

- Establish an intentional transition network
- Establish or utilize existing transition teams, liaisons, or coordinators to support linkages between community organizations, programs, early learning programs, and LEAs
- All stakeholders embrace and understand the importance of continuity of transition activities across their programs
- All programs become more knowledgeable of the differences inherent in each of the systems (funding, regulations, organizational structure, staff qualifications, etc.)
- Establish a transition task force inclusive of parents, educators, administrators, and community representatives to establish connections and coordinate the transition process
- Establish relationships and partnerships to leverage community resources that support children, families, and schools (e.g., homeless liaisons)

## RESOURCES

- [Education Commission of the States: Transitions and Alignment from Preschool to Kindergarten](#)
- [NCECDTL: Transition to Kindergarten: Collaborations, Connections, and Six Steps to Success](#)
- [NCECDTL: Leadership Practices for Successful Transitions to Kindergarten](#)
- [NCPFCE: Family Engagement In Transitions: Transition To Kindergarten](#)
- [WestEd: Effective Early Childhood Transitions: A Guide for Transition at Age Three—Early Start to Preschool](#)
- [ACF Office of Child Care and Office of Head Start: Promoting Continuity of Care in Infant/Toddler Settings: What Can State/Territory Leaders Do?](#)
- [Zero to Three: The State of Child Care for Babies](#)

<sup>10</sup> See Appendix B for additional information.





II.

## Developing a Systems-Based Transition Action Plan

Kindergarten transition work is most effective when strong leaders build a collaborative workgroup and a focused plan. The Transition Action Planning Template can be used to guide the development of a transition plan that strengthens the partnership between preschool programs and their local receiving elementary schools. The Template will allow workgroup members an opportunity to identify current practices that foster connections to receiving schools; brainstorm and identify activities; establish roles, responsibilities, and timeframes; and plan for improvement. Figure 4 provides a brief overview of the seven steps that should be included when developing an action plan. (See Appendix A for Transition Action Planning Template)

Figure 4: Transition Action Plan



III.

## CONCLUSION

This second edition of the Los Angeles County Birth to Kindergarten Transition Systems Alignment Framework is intended to support school districts and early learning programs in Los Angeles County to align their systems to better support a sustained and effective early learning to kindergarten transition. It highlights the importance of strengthening the subsystems that surround the developing child (leadership/administrators, families, schools, and communities) by focusing on the Three C’s of Transition—Coordination, Cooperation, and Collaboration—and the critical role of ongoing and open communication to support all three aspects of transition. The policy and program examples and tools provided within the framework are meant to support districts and programs to develop a comprehensive systems-based transition action plan.

With support from the CDE, we plan to continue to expand the Framework to include an early learning system of transition for birth/infant to toddler and incorporate the transitions into and out of transitional kindergarten as well. The Framework will also be expanded to include strategies for the intentional and successful transition of children who are dual language learners, foster children, and those with special needs. We are hoping that together we take a strategic systems approach to how we bridge the gap for all children as they transition from one early learning setting to another and through their transition into kindergarten and beyond.



## IV.

## APPENDICES

### Appendix A: Transition Action Plan and Template

**Step 1:** Identify key stakeholders to be part of the transition workgroup that will be committed to the process. Team members should include preschool and kindergarten teachers, school liaisons, principals, directors, education managers, parents, and community representatives. Identify the transition workgroup lead.

**Step 2:** Assess evidence of current practices. What is the reality of what's happening now with transition activities (sharing information, building relational supports, etc.)? Identify the strengths, benefits, challenges, and opportunities for improving transition activities practiced in your school and community. For each activity currently happening, identify the type of connection it fosters and the intended outcome.

**Step 3:** Develop a survey to assess challenges and opportunities for current practices. Distribute survey to key stakeholders. Aggregate and analyze data results to determine what's working and what's not working with the current practices.

**Step 4:** Analyze feedback from Steps 2 and 3 and communicate to the workgroup. Brainstorm to envision the future and identify goals to accomplish. Consider the types of connections, types of activities, and when the activities will be achieved.

**Step 5:** Develop the action plan, including all key components. The action plan should include: (1) connections to be made; (2) identified activities; (3) person(s) responsible; (4) established benchmarks/measures; and (5) completion dates. Plan, prioritize, and finalize details through coordination. Look at calendar to assign realistic timelines, determine how often and when sub-teams will meet, and establish who is responsible for next steps and follow-up.

**Step 6:** Implement the action plan. Don't wait until it is perfect. Focus on the following: (1) communicating the plan; (2) articulating clear expectations; (3) securing resources; (4) tracking successes; (5) monitoring and frequently checking in; (6) staying adaptable and flexible; and (7) communicating results frequently.

**Step 7:** Reevaluate and refine your goals, create new ones if necessary, and plan steps to take. The workgroup needs to keep their motivation strong to complete the goal. Communicate regularly. Consider scheduling a weekly or monthly evaluation, which could include measuring progress and evaluating barriers/obstacles. Make necessary adjustments and keep the workgroup going. Celebrate.



### TRANSITION ACTION PLANNING TEMPLATE

|                       |  |
|-----------------------|--|
| Name of Organization: |  |
|-----------------------|--|

#### Step 1: Who are the crucial individuals that will be involved in developing and implementing a comprehensive plan?

| Workgroup Members                                     | Affiliation | Contact Information (Phone/Email) |
|---|-------------|-----------------------------------|
|   |             |                                   |
|   |             |                                   |
|   |             |                                   |
|   |             |                                   |
|   |             |                                   |
| <b>Designated Team Leader and Contact Information</b> |             |                                   |

#### Step 2: What are the organization's current practices?

| Type of connection | Sharing information | Building relational supports | Fostering alignment between settings | Evaluation |
|--------------------|---------------------|------------------------------|--------------------------------------|------------|
| Child–School       |                     |                              |                                      |            |
| Family–School      |                     |                              |                                      |            |
| School–School      |                     |                              |                                      |            |
| Community–School   |                     |                              |                                      |            |
| Strengths:         |                     |                              |                                      |            |



| Type of connection | Sharing information | Building relational supports | Fostering alignment between settings | Evaluation |
|--------------------|---------------------|------------------------------|--------------------------------------|------------|
| Benefits:          |                     |                              |                                      |            |
| Challenges:        |                     |                              |                                      |            |
| Opportunities:     |                     |                              |                                      |            |

**Step 3: What are the challenges and opportunities for current practices?**

| Type of connection | What's Working | What's Not Working |
|--------------------|----------------|--------------------|
| Child–School       |                |                    |
| Family–School      |                |                    |
| School–School      |                |                    |
| Community–School   |                |                    |

**Step 4: What brainstorming ideas does the team have after analyzing information from steps 2 and 3?**

| Type of connection | What are suggested connections we will make? | What are suggested activities we will implement to support the connection? | What are the benchmarks for achievement? |
|--------------------|--|--|--|
| Child–School       |  |  |  |
| Family–School      |  |  |  |



| Type of connection | What are suggested connections we will make? | What are suggested activities we will implement to support the connection? | What are the benchmarks for achievement? |
|--------------------|--|--|--|
| School–School      |  |  |  |
| Community–School   |  |  |  |

Step 5: Based on Step 4, what are the final decisions that will be presented to the entire group and approved by administration?

| Type of connection | What connection will we make? | What activities will we implement to support the connection? | Who will be responsible for the connection and who will support? | What are the benchmarks for achievement? | What is the completion date for all benchmarks? |
|--------------------|-------------------------------|--|--|--|---|
| Child–School       |                               |  |  |  |   |
| Family–School      |                               |  |  |  |   |
| School–School      |                               |  |  |  |   |
| Community–School   |                               |  |  |  |   |

Step 6: Implement Plan – Do not wait until it is perfect.

Step 7: Reevaluate your goals, create new ones if necessary, update document, communicate to all stakeholders, and celebrate.



## **Appendix B: Distance and Virtual Learning: Continuity of Learning Experiences and Transitions**

While in-person instruction and services are disrupted due to summer break, a pandemic, or other unforeseen circumstances, the distance and virtual learning strategies outlined in this section should be fully activated. Program staff, families, and early learning, preschool, and kindergarten teachers all play an integral role in children’s successful transition. Distance and virtual learning is a valuable form of continuing education and transition services in which children, their families, and teachers can engage using varied technologies to facilitate communication and successful transitions.

Distance and virtual learning includes three key elements:

- 1) Strengthening the home-school connection
- 2) Embracing parents and families as lifelong educators
- 3) Respecting parents’ role as the child’s first teacher

Distance and virtual learning provides the unique opportunity to continue providing individualized education and services to children and families as they transition from early learning to preschool and preschool to kindergarten. Embracing a whole child approach to serving children and families, educators should collaborate, as much as possible, with other subsystems (refer to Tables 4 through 7) to allow the continuation of all necessary services to support successful transitions for children early learning, preschool and entering kindergarten, including coordinating transition services during the summer.

Continuity of learning experiences is essential to provide consistency in educational experiences to families and children. It is critically important that steps be taken throughout the school year for early learning, preschool, PreK, and kindergarten teachers and administrators to apply relationship-based practices and maintain supportive relationships. The family and child’s relationship with the schools can deepen during the distance-learning period and benefit them when they return to standard program operations. Family engagement is critical to the success of the early learning to kindergarten transition.

## FAMILIES

### Birth–Age Three

Provide hello and goodbye learning opportunities. Practice and model waving and saying bye-bye. Play disappearing and reappearing games such as peekaboo and pretend calls talking on a telephone.

Play games that focus on getting dressed, offering choices, and encouraging self-help skills.

Read books and talk about feelings. Pretend play about school and begin talking about the new school weeks before school starts.

Make books available. Read with your child every day. Point out and talk about the pictures. Sing songs and rhymes.

Plan a visit to the school and the classroom, and attend transition meetings.

Plan exploration outdoor opportunities, go on nature walks throughout the neighborhood, go on park trips, and take indoor activities outdoors.

Learn about free online resources available for your child.

Create family fun time activities such as art using paper, scissors, paint, and boxes.

Create opportunities for children to listen to music and movement activities to move their bodies such as enjoyable songs, dancing, and finger play.

Use indoor and outdoor spaces where your child can move freely and have a space to learn.

### Three-to-Five-Year-Olds

Create and practice routines for the morning and evening that you will follow during the school year. Help your child get up, get dressed, and be ready to learn at a reasonable time

Practice activities with your child that encourage independent skills, such as tooth brushing, putting away toys, self-feeding, hygiene, toileting, following instructions, etc.

Encourage your child to speak with other children to learn what kindergarten is like.

Read with your child, including books about going to kindergarten.

Find out if the new school has an open house at the end of summer to visit the classroom again.

Plan fun virtual and on-site activities with your child, spend time outside, visit the library and local museums, and take advantage of free events, like a farmers' market or summer festival.

Learn about free online resources available for your child.

Provide meaningful alternatives to screen time for your child (e.g., building items using cardboard boxes, gardening, cooking). Share photos or videos of your child's creation and activities with the teacher.

Music is magical, so explore singing and dancing to online applications, television shows, and movies that are age-appropriate and that you and your child would enjoy.

Choose a good place in your home for your child to learn. Set up a physical location that's dedicated to school-focused activities.

## SCHOOL

Plan school orientation and parent meetings.

Create resources for parents with information on preschool choices, how to ask questions, and transitions tips and ideas.

Provide parents with activities to make connections between prior experiences and new learning (e.g., activities to prepare their child for preschool).

Connect parents with site and parent meetings, as well as meeting minutes and agendas.

Create an "early learning to preschool transition" video for parents to watch on a virtual platform, with an introduction and overview of preschool and what to expect.

Utilize learning activities that familiarize families and children with the transition to preschool.

Communicate with families of children to identify separation anxieties and fears, and provide strategies on how to adjust to changes and read their child's cues.

Ensure that parents are knowledgeable on school emergency policies and procedures.

Schedule transition meetings with parents to discuss child needs, developmental progress, and school readiness. Invite the preschool teachers and share information and what's expected.

Prepare transition activities and preschool skills parents can do with their child to continue learning (e.g., unzipping her coat, hanging her coat on a hook, putting on her backpack, fastening her shoes).

Provide families with a transition kit (supplies and materials) that can be utilized at home.

Plan virtual joint professional development opportunities for early learning and preschool and invite participation in transition meetings.

Plan a "welcome back to school" activity (e.g., virtual assembly or virtual pep rally).

Create a weekly transition bulletin with built-in hyperlinks that provides parents and teachers with access to transition activities, strategies, tips, and resources (e.g., read-aloud/e-books, videos).

Create virtual lessons that all transitioning children may have access to during the summer.

Offer virtual parent support groups via online platforms on a regular basis.

Create a "transition to kindergarten" video for parents to watch on a virtual platform, with an introduction and overview of the receiving school and staff.

Utilize learning activities that familiarize families and children with the transition to kindergarten.

Communicate with families of children to identify any challenges and supports needed and/or celebrate successes through a virtual platform.

Provide an opportunity for parents to discuss the impact of school closure and emergency situations. Consider trauma that families are experiencing.

Schedule one-on-one virtual meetings with the parent to discuss child needs, developmental progress, school readiness, and what's expected for kindergarten.

Prepare transition activities that parents can do with their child during the summertime. Activities should be made available for all children regardless of whether the child is in a center or home-based program or receiving services virtually.

Provide families with a transition kit (supplies and materials) that can be utilized at home.

Plan virtual joint professional development opportunities for preschool and kindergarten teachers during and outside of normal working hours.





## Appendix C: Additional Transition Resources

The following table provides links to additional resources that may be helpful when planning for successful transition from preschool to kindergarten.

### ***Establishing an Early Childhood Education Leadership Team to Coordinate PreK–3 Efforts***

[Transition and Alignment: Two Keys to Assuring Student Success](#)

[Education Commission of the States: Transition and Alignment from Preschool to Kindergarten](#)

[National P3 Center](#)

[Bridging ECE and PreK–12 Systems](#)

[New Project: Head Start to Kindergarten Transitions](#)

[Foundation for Child Development: Framework for Planning, Implementing, and Evaluating PreK–3rd Grade Approaches](#)

[Education Development Center: First 10 Approach](#)

[Buffet Early Childhood Institute: Superintendents’ Early Childhood Plan](#)

[National Association of Elementary School Principals: Leading Pre-K–3 Learning Communities](#)

[All Things PLC: Advocates for Professional Learning Communities:](#)

[Finding Common Ground in Education Reform](#)

[California Department of Education: CA Early Childhood Educator Competencies](#)

[California Department of Education: Transition from Preschool to Kindergarten](#)

### ***Providing High-Quality PreK–3rd Grade Joint Professional Development***

[NAEYC: Developmentally Appropriate Practice Position Statement – 2020](#)

[New America – Education Policy](#)

### ***Supporting PreK–3 Vertical Articulation and Planning***

[Policy Analysis for California Education \(PACE\) - <https://edpolicyinca.org/>](#)

[Practice Brief Report – Fostering Pre-K to Elementary Alignment and Continuity](#)

[PreK–3 Alignment Challenges and Opportunities in California](#)

[Preschool to Third Grade Alignment: What Do We Know and What Are We Learning?](#)

[Preschool Through Third Grade Alignment and Differentiated Instruction: A Literature Review](#)

[National League of Cities: Educational Alignment for Young Children](#)

[Voices in Urban Education: Promoting Seamless Transitions from Preschool to Kindergarten and Beyond](#)

[Zero to Three: Putting the Pieces Together for Infants and Toddlers](#)

[Toddlers in Early Head Start: A Portrait of 3-Year-Olds, Their Families, and the Programs Serving Them Volume I: Age 3 Report 2015-28](#)

[Toddlers in Early Head Start: A Portrait of 3-Year-Olds, Their Families, and the Programs Serving Them Volume II: Technical Appendices](#)



## ***Establishing Data Management Systems & Data-Sharing Processes***

[Head Start Early Childhood Learning & Knowledge Center \(ECLKC\)](#)

[Office of Planning, Research and Evaluation \(OPRE\)](#)

[Understanding Children’s Transitions from Head Start to Kindergarten, 2019-2022](#)

[Quality Start LA: Quality Ratings](#)

[Build Initiative: Early Childhood Data Systems](#)

[California Department of Education - Local Control and Accountability Plan](#)

[NCES Early Childhood Data Governance in Action: An Introduction](#)

[LCAP Survey sample: ABC Unified School District Executive Summary Draft](#)

[Trying Together: Kindergarten Transition](#)

[Zero to Three: Data Systems in Early Childhood Systems](#)

## ***Connecting with Preschool Programs***

[FreePreschools.org Free Preschool Search by State](#)

[Child Care Alliance of Los Angeles Find Child Care Search](#)

[California Department of Education: Early Learning and Care](#)

## ***Coordinating PreK-3 Supports for Children with Disabilities and Special Needs***

[Council for Exceptional Children](#)

[U.S. Department of Education - Free Appropriate Public Education for Students with Disabilities](#)

[Early Childhood Technical Assistance Center \(ECTA Center\)](#)

[Transition from Preschool Special Education to Kindergarten](#)

[Practice Guides for Practitioners](#)

[CDE Special Education Overview](#)

[Head Start Early Childhood Learning & Knowledge Center \(ECLKC\): Children with Disabilities](#)

[National Education Association \(NEA\): A Successful Kindergarten Transition](#)

## ***Children’s Books about Kindergarten***

[Scholastic Books About Starting Kindergarten](#)

[Head Start Selected Children’s Books About Kindergarten](#)

[Head Start Transition to Kindergarten Selected Children’s Books About Kindergarten](#)

## ***Other Resources***

[Head Start ECLKC: Virtually Transitioning from Head Start to Kindergarten](#)

[Ready Freddy Pathways to Kindergarten Success:](#)

[2020 School Readiness Calendar](#)

## V.

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**For more information about this Framework, please visit:**

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