

## **PK-3: An Aligned and Coordinated Approach to Education for Children 3 to 8 Years Old. Kimber Bogard and Ruby Takanishi, 2005**

### **Overview**

Many states are taking steps to improve the likelihood that children will succeed in grades K-12 by investing in early childhood education and PreK. However, research indicates that the positive outcomes and advantages of attending PreK fade out in the elementary years. This article suggests a PreK-3 alignment approach that may enable children to maintain gains made in early education programs. A PreK-3 approach includes: (1) universal access to PreK for 3 and 4 year olds followed by mandatory full day kindergarten, (2) alignment of social and pedagogical experiences from PreK through third grade that are based on child development capabilities, and (3) teachers who are prepared to provide high-quality education from PreK and beyond.

### **Discussion**

- a. Research suggests that creating an intentionally aligned educational system for children 3 to 8 years old based on their developmental characteristics and abilities could be a major factor in sustaining public investments in education. Evaluating the effectiveness of an aligned approach to educating children 3 to 8 years old requires an examination of school district and school level organization and policy, principal leadership, and classroom processes not only within each grade, but also across grade levels.
- b. PreK-3 focuses on these grades because children face their first major academic reckoning in the third grade and the outcome/results of their performance in this grade is likely to have serious consequences on their future education.
- c. Alignment and coordination can be achieved through legislation on school organization, curricula, assessment tools and practices, and through teacher education. PreK-3 alignment and coordination is operationalized as follows:
  1. A sequenced curriculum based on research about the developmental characteristics and learning of children.
  2. A set of principles that assess children's learning over this age span.
  3. Teachers who are prepared to educate children from 3 to 8. They must be knowledgeable about the developmental characteristics of children at this age.
  4. A set of principles that views PreK through 3<sup>rd</sup> grade as a coherent, first level of publicly supported education in the same way we think about a coherent middle or high school education.
- d. The PreK-3 approach is organized according to both structural and process components in schools and classrooms. The structural component includes variables such as class size, teacher-child ratios, and teacher preparation which are associated with children's social and academic outcomes. The process component includes teacher sensitivity, the quality of teacher-child interactions, and teachers' satisfaction with their jobs.

### **Conclusion**

The alignment of district, school, and classroom policies with the PreK-3 approach is crucial to ensure students make gains in education within PreK-3 and beyond by learning experiences that are systematically organized across grade levels and their impact on child outcomes.

Bogard, K & Takanishi, R. (2005). PK-3: An aligned and coordinated approach to education for children 3 to 8 years old. *Social Policy Report*, 19(3), 3-22.