

PK-3: WHAT IS IT AND HOW DO WE KNOW IT WORKS?

Bill Graves, 2006

Overview

Research shows that the PreK-3 approach can improve student achievement, reduce the need for costly special education services, and produce a more educated, skilled, and competitive workforce. It not only can lift student achievement dramatically, but also multiply the benefits of investments in PreK.

Main Components/Elements of PK-3 Alignment

- a. Alignment – Standards, curriculum, instruction and assessment are aligned within and across grades.
- b. School organization- Voluntary, full-school-day prekindergarten is provided for all three and four year old children and this experience builds on experiences in PreK. School districts provide principals and teachers with ongoing professional development and planning time to ensure alignment. In addition, principals need to foster teamwork among PreK-3 teachers and work to connect elementary schools with families and early childhood programs.
- c. Qualified teachers – All teachers have relevant specialized training. Qualifications enable teachers to teach at any grade level from PreK to third grade.
- d. Classrooms as learning environments – Instruction balances child-centered approaches with teacher-directed approaches. Assessment practices are used to improve instruction.
- e. Accountability to parents and community – Teachers and families work to set educational goals for children. Schools are responsible for reporting students' progress to families, communities, the school district, and the state.

Conclusion

Aligning pre-kindergarten with the standards, curriculum, and assessment children will experience in K-3 assures that the skills children learn at one level form a solid foundation for the skills they will learn at the next. To realize the potential of PreK-3 requires an organization that makes quality full-school-day prekindergarten available to all children, followed by required full-school-day kindergarten.

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