

Successful Transitions from PreK to the Early Grades

AFT TEACH Conference
Washington, DC

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The Punchline:

*We need to think differently and
more comprehensively about
“transitions.”*

Why do we need a new approach?

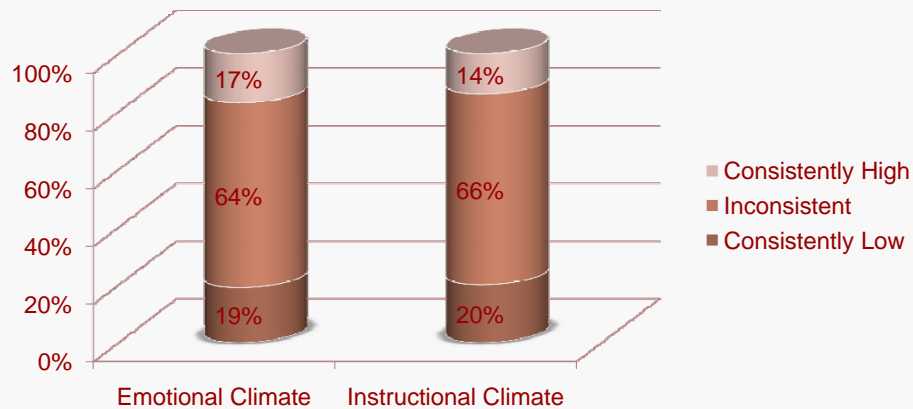
What we know about the early learning years:

- Brain development is at its most robust and particularly sensitive
- Achievement gaps exist early...and persist

More of what we know about early learning:

- Conditions not optimal for young children's learning:
 - Low Quality (pre-school programs and elementary classrooms)
 - Fragmented Alignment (within ECE, across ECE/K-3, and within K-3)

Elementary School Classrooms (across 1st, 3rd, and 5th grades)



Pianta, R. C., Belsky, J., Houts, R., Morrison, F., & National Institute of Child Health and Human Development Early Child Care Research Network (2007). Opportunities to learn in America's elementary classrooms. *Science*, 315, 1795-1796.

Even more that we know about early learning:

- Evidence points to what works:
 - **High quality** Preschool is imperative
 - **High quality** Full-day Kindergarten has tremendous pay-offs
 - **High quality** early grades fight fade-out
 - There is no silver bullet; every year matters.

Take-aways

1. We need more **high-quality PreK and full-day K** opportunities for young children.
2. We need to ensure **high-quality early elementary grades (K-3)**.
3. We need to increase the **continuity** and improve the **alignment** across programs and across classrooms.

What is PreK-3rd?

Definition of PreK-3rd

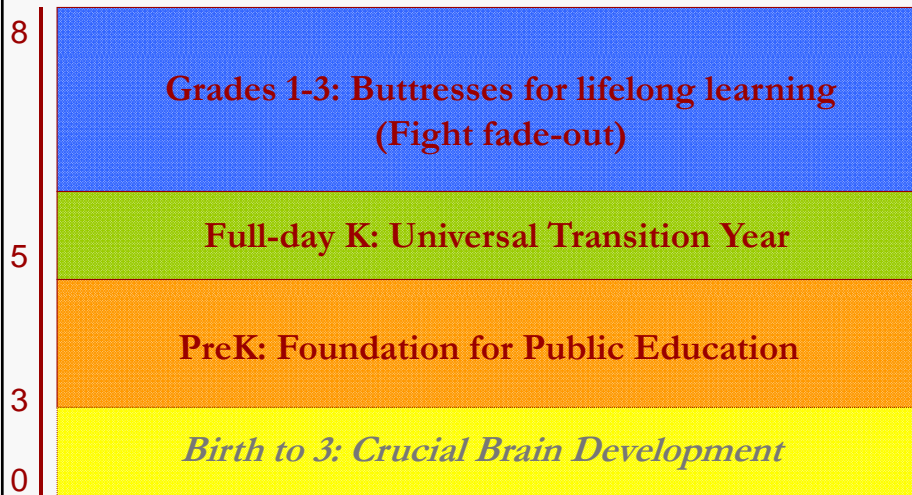
The continuum of learning that spans the traditional boundaries of **PreK**indergarten (learning-based programs children experience before they enter school) and the early grades (**K-3**).

PreK-3rd Education

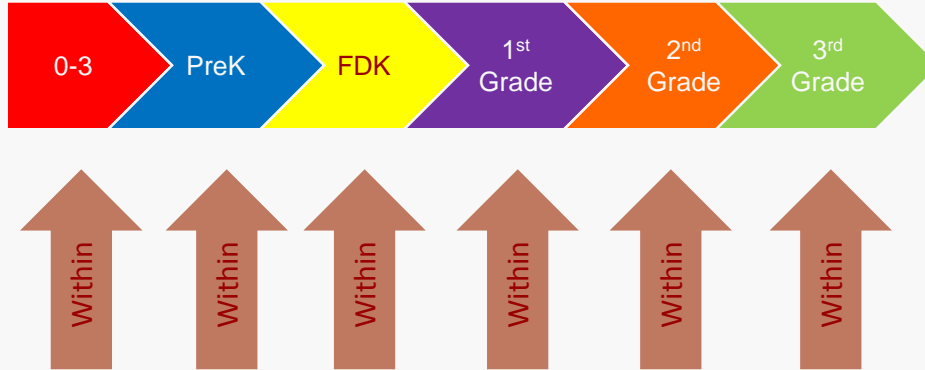
Primary Goals:

1. Develop strong foundational cognitive skills (literacy/communication and math)
2. Develop social and emotional competence
3. Establish patterns of engagement in school and learning

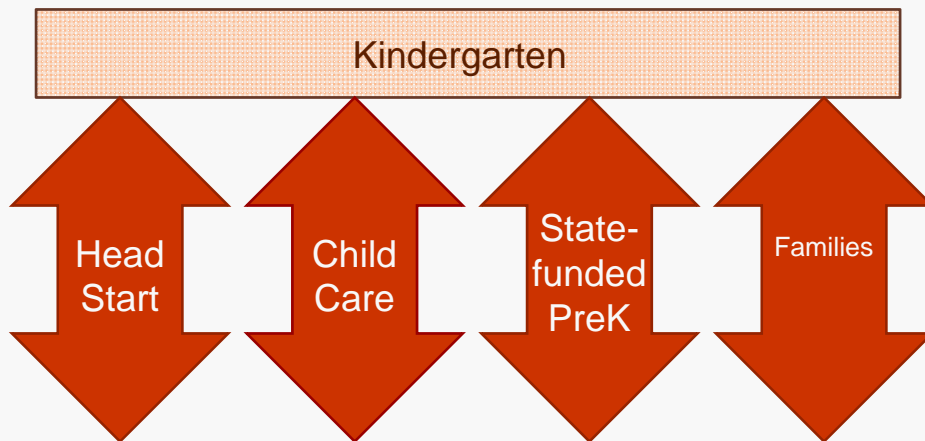
Essential PreK-3rd Priorities

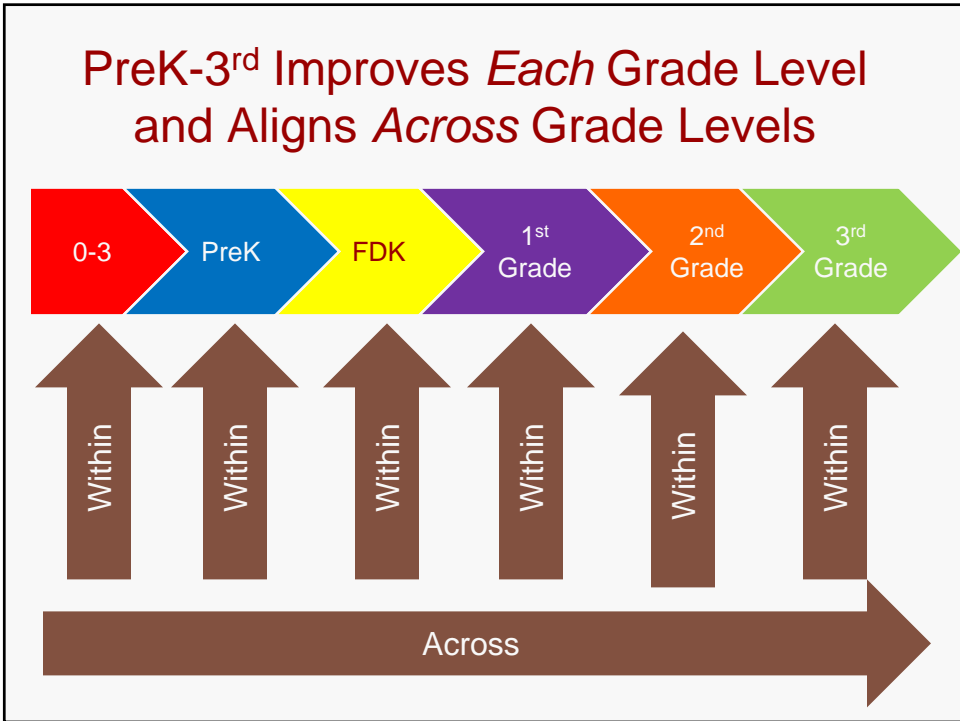
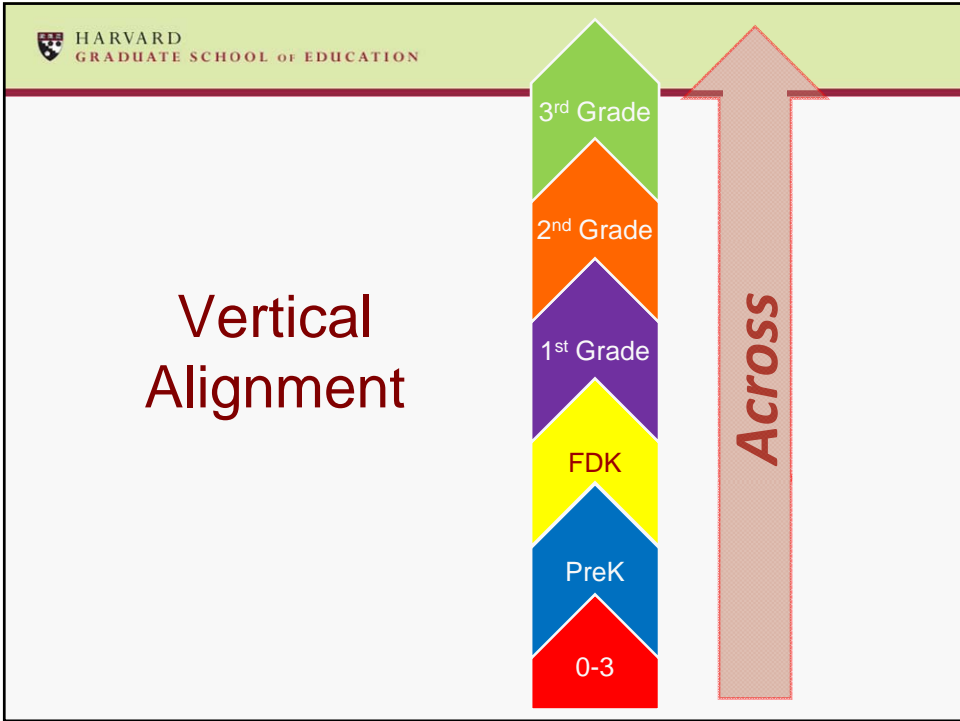


Horizontal Alignment



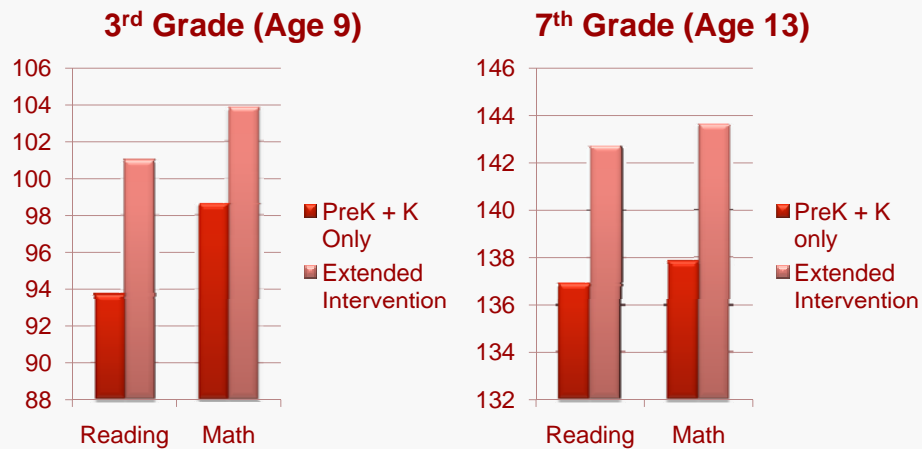
Horizontal Alignment of the “PreK Part”





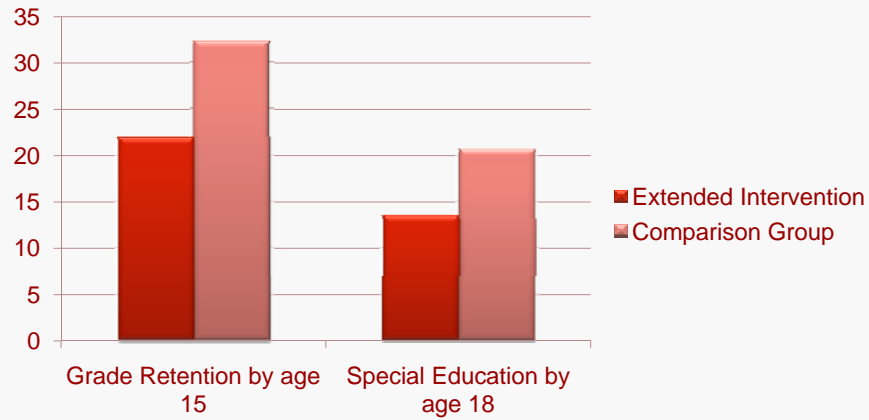
How do we know PreK-3rd works?

CPC Achievement Scores



Reynolds, A. J., & Temple, J. A. (1998). Extended early childhood intervention and school achievement: Age 13 findings from the Chicago Longitudinal Study. *Child Development, 69*, 231-246.

CPC's K-12 Outcomes



Reynolds, A. J., Temple, J. A., White, B. A. B., Ou, S.-R., & Robertson, D. L. (2011). Age 26 cost-benefit analysis of the Child-Parent Center Early Education program. *Child Development, 82(1)*, 379-404.

How do we “do PreK-3rd”?

PreK-3rd Strategies

- Create collaborative mechanisms
- Ensure administrators are instructional leaders
- Empower teachers to focus on instruction and teamwork
- Align standards, curricula, and assessments

PreK-3rd Strategies

- Establish a student-centered learning environment
- Rely on data to improve instruction and guide reform
- Engage families
- Move children along a high-quality pathway

Roles for Unions

- Support longer instructional days
 - PreK and Full-Day Kindergarten
 - Target Title I funds to the early learning years

Roles for Unions

- Support shared professional development
 - Administration-led and teacher-led days to foster horizontal and vertical alignment
 - Include community-based programs/teachers
 - Prioritize the content and processes that matter most

Roles for Unions

- Support high quality teachers *and* high quality teaching
 - Common certification/credentialing
 - Equitable compensation
 - Focus on effectiveness in the classroom

Roles for Unions

- Support high quality instructional environments
 - Inclusion in quality improvement initiatives for *all* preschool programs
 - Focus on classroom-level factors in K-3
 - Smaller class sizes and adult:child ratios, PreK-3rd

PreK-3rd Listserv

Send a message to:

prek-3rd@list.gse.harvard.edu

with “subscribe” in the subject line

PreK-3rd Resources

Foundation for Child Development Web site:

<http://fcd-us.org/sites/default/files/PreK-3rd%20Resources.pdf>

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