

Building a Comprehensive P-3 Policy in Nevada

Recommendations Aligned with Governor Sandoval's Executive Order

Prepared by Dr. Kimberly Regan

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Office of Governor Brian Sandoval

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Background to the Subcommittee

On October 2, 2015, the Governor's P-20 Council, formerly known as the K-16 Council, convened to review and develop the scope and sequence of work surrounding the Governor's Executive Order. Several important items were presented and discussed as it relates to ECE. Given the short timeframe before the final P-20W Council report is due to the Governor on April 1, 2016, Council leadership decided to create various subcommittees to conduct research and compile recommendations for possible adoption by the full Council. The Council formed a subcommittee to focus on early childhood, preschool through grade three.

The P-3 Subcommittee was charged to focus on ways to improve transitions from early grades (preschool through third grade) to later grades and set a strong foundation for early learners. Specifically, this Subcommittee explored what P-3 data is currently available for inclusion in the SLDS and what additional data should be collected in order to guide future policy decisions.

P-3 Subcommittee Work:

Subcommittees are fact-finding bodies and take a deeper dive on issues than the full Council. Subcommittees meet in between full Council meetings, hear presentations from issue experts, deliberate on the issues, and then report to the full Council. The full Council will then decide what action to take based on the presentations. Below is a brief description of what the ECE subcommittee sought to accomplish.

The P-3 Subcommittee focused on *ways to improve transitions from early grades (preschool through third grade) to later grades* and set a strong foundation for early learners. Specifically, this Subcommittee explored what *P-3 data is currently available for inclusion in the SLDS* and what *additional data should be collected in order to guide future policy decisions*. The Subcommittee will hear presentations from early childhood experts and representatives from the Nevada Department of Education regarding national best practices, where Nevada currently stands, and recommendations the P-20W Council should consider.

The Council, and P-3 Subcommittee will focus on providing research and providing recommendations as outlined by the executive order and NRS 400.040 Powers and Duties.

Priority Topics for the P-3 Subcommittee

- Methods to ensure the successful transition of children from early childhood education programs to elementary school, including, without limitation, methods to increase parental involvement.
- What data exists at the state and/or district level that we can use to inform the subcommittee and P-20W Council on early education transitions? What data would be helpful at the state and/or district level that we could recommend the council include in the trajectory of successful P-20 pathways?

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P-3 Subcommittee Recommendations to include as part of the P-20W Council Report to Governor Sandoval

Establishing the Need: A Fragmented P-3 System

In Nevada, like many states, the programs that support children on their trajectory towards academic, social, and emotional success from birth to third grade are disconnected. The New America Foundation (2015) ranked Nevada as "crawling," the lowest of three possible ranks Crawling, Toddling, or Walking, when evaluating early childhood policies in the state based on progress towards achieving 65 policy indicators in seven areas. Evidence portrays increased barriers for children who experience poverty, are identified as Children in Transition, are English Language Learners, are identified as eligible for special education, are minority, immigrant, or who's families experience one risk factors such as parental incarceration or death. In addition, P-3 programs may be fragmented due to inconsistent funding streams and governance to oversee these programs across agencies (Daily, 2014).

"Improving the economy, strengthening the middle class and reducing the deficit are national priorities. Solving these challenges starts with investing in America's greatest resource: its people. Quality early learning and development programs for disadvantaged children can foster valuable skills, strengthen our workforce, grow our economy, and reduce social spending." There are at least four major benefits of investing in early childhood development: prevent the achievement gap; improve health outcomes; boost earnings; and makes dollars and sense (7-10% per annum) through outcomes in education, health, sociability, economic productivity, and reduced crime (Heckman, 2015).

Considering the economic perspective, a program constitutes a worthy social investment if the total benefits exceed the costs. One Harvard study (2007) yielded a range of cost-benefit analysis ranging from 2:1 to 17:1, depending on the program (Center on the Developing Child at Harvard University, 2007). ECE cost-benefit calculations result from returns to government savings (such as decreases in special education/remediation costs, welfare payments, and increases in income tax revenues); to society via decreased incarceration and crime-related costs; and returns to participants (such as increased earnings) (Center on the Developing Child at Harvard University, 2007).

A Framework for Recommendations

A comprehensive approach to effective P-3 education is critical to promoting positive outcomes for young children and their families. Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC) policies are increasingly prevalent internationally as an evolutionary component of P-20W systems to former traditional K-12 educational policy platforms (OECD, 2013). ECEC policy is aligned with anti-poverty or educational equity measures, as inequalities in child outcomes are often present when children enter formal schooling, which are likely to increase throughout the span of education. Many governments see ECEC as a public investment and integrate related services to ensure holistic and continuous child development (OECD, 2013). Effective P-3 education and support services are important to build a framework for student engagement and achievement, while simultaneously mitigating the compounding effects of disadvantaged backgrounds.

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Internationally, countries with strong ECEC policies have students who score statistically higher than countries where ECEC policies are fragmented or lacking (OECD, 2013). For example, one study yielded that after accounting for students with lower socio-economic backgrounds, fifteen year olds who attended ECE tend to performed better on the Program for International Student Assessment (PISA) than those who did not (OECD, 2013). However, enrollment and attendance in high-quality ECE programming is one factor in predicting better outcomes at the later stages in life. Other factors include access to and quality of ECEC related services. PISA results suggest the relationship between ECE participation and later learning outcomes is the strongest in countries with certain "quality" features are part of the ECEC policies. This includes: staff-child ratios; program type and duration; public education spending per child; enriched and stimulating environments; rich and robust pedagogy; valuable teacher-child interactions; teacher and leader quality; entrance age and duration of compulsory education; high levels of student engagement; supporting and sustaining transition work; family engagement; and access to support services such as health care (Center on the Developing Child at Harvard University, 2007; Daily, 2014; and OECD, 2013).

Several states have adopted a statewide approach to effective P-3 models (Daily, 2014; Loewenberg, et. al., 2015). The models include a comprehensive plan for effective transitions between preschool and kindergarten, which are continued through third grade horizontally and vertically. Children who experience successful transitions across grade levels are more likely to enjoy school, experience academic and social growth, and focus on new content and skill development (Daily, 2014). Governor Sandoval's landmark education initiatives platform and corresponding budget included support for early learners including the Preschool Development Grant Match, Full Day Kindergarten Expansion, *Read by Three* initiatives, and the Early Childhood Advisory Council and the Silver State Strong comprehensive strategic plan. These initiatives establish a framework to increase state-level capacity to support effective P-3 across districts and within programs. However, policies exist in context and powerful impacts result when they are comprehensive across agencies and key stakeholders. Investing in or addressing a policy-based comprehensive approach to P-3 is necessary to achieve better outcomes (Loewenberg, et. al, 2015).

A data system policy, which includes P-3 as part of the P-20W State Longitudinal Data System (SLDS), ensures the quality, privacy, and integrity contained in the infrastructure. Such data and associated research will inform future policy initiatives and decisions in regards to early childhood education and across the P-20W pathway. This is important work in ensuring our state provides an innovative P-20W education preparing our youngest children for career and college readiness and global society.

The following recommendations align with Governor Sandoval's P-20 Council Executive Order and NRS 400.040 1.(b)(e)(g)(h(2)(3))(i). Some of the recommendations may be in implementation at varied degrees within state and across districts. A comprehensive P-3 approach to Early Childhood Education is essential to building a framework toward a strong state and P-20W pathway and is focused on increasing capacity and building infrastructure.

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Recommendations for Transitions

1. Include Early Childhood Education (ECE) - related definitions & language to the Nevada Revised Statute:
 - a. **Early Childhood Education (ECE):** Encompasses all early learning and development programs, or provider, regardless of setting or funding source, which provides early care and education for children from birth through age eight.
 - b. **P-3:** Encompasses all children's experiences between birth and age 8 (third grade), including cognitive, social, and emotional skills, which promote learning and development.
 - c. Establish **P-3 as the foundation** to a critical period to lay the foundation of cognitive, social, and emotional skills, which establishes a successful trajectory to an effective P-20W pathway in a statewide comprehensive infrastructure.
2. Call for statewide P-3 comprehensive policy that includes:
 - a. Systems approach via Cross-sector work; administrator effectiveness; teacher effectiveness; instructional tools; learning environment; data-driven improvement; family engagement; continuity and pathways (Kauerz & Coffman, 2013).
 - b. To align and implement standards-based instructional practices in a developmentally appropriate manner.
 - c. To build an infrastructure designed to increase the capacity of stakeholders within the ECE community and across agency collaborations.
 - d. To support other Councils charged with Early Childhood-related work, including, but not limited to the Early Childhood Advisory Council (ECAC).
 - e. To align with and promote Nevada in the forefront of the reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) and the Every Student Succeeds Act (which replaces the No Child Left Behind law).
3. Governance recommendation to add an Early Childhood position to the Governor's Office to promote effective P-3 governance:
 - a. Coordinate policy work and collaboration among key stakeholders to ensure Nevada policy ranked top percentile: Smart approach to policy Implementation (Loewenberg, et al, 2015).
 - b. Coordinating the range of P-3 programs, services, agencies and entities at the state level to ensure the delivery of seamless programs and services for children and families (Daily, 2014).
 - c. Assist with Governor's Early Childhood Advisory Committee (ECAC) and other committees charged with ECE-related tasks.
 - d. Support the Nevada Department of Education in carrying out daily tasks as deemed necessary by the State Superintendent of Public Instruction.
 - e. Support ECE efforts in Nevada – Effective P-3, transitions, MOUs, cross-agency collaboration as charged within the executive order.
 - f. Conduct Research associated with the Guiding Research Questions and make recommendations therein.

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- g. Strategic alignment of programs vital to effective P-3 plans
 - h. Collaborate with the Office of Economic Development to develop opportunities potentially funding ECE programs (including social impact bonds and/or other funding sources)
4. Require districts and charter schools to develop P-3 plans which address:
- a. horizontal and vertical alignment for grades P-3
 - b. transition of students incoming from external programs – MOUs – expectation for community
 - c. making these investments count – return on investment
 - d. family engagement
 - i. transitions
 - ii. provides access to stabilizers
 - iii. access to resources for health and wellness
 - e. support for special populations across P-3
5. Require P-3 Leadership pedagogy in professional development and higher education classes (ECS, 2013; Clarke-Brown, et. al, 2014) including:
- a. Comprehensive P-3 pedagogy and policy analysis and implications
 - i. P-3 QRIS and NSPF alignment
 - ii. Cross-sector work; administrator effectiveness; teacher effectiveness; instructional tools; learning environment; data-driven improvement; family engagement; continuity and pathways
 - b. Understanding and supporting child development
 - c. Horizontal and vertical alignment across schools, districts, and the state
 - d. Designing standards-based instruction in a Developmentally Appropriate Practice (DAP) manner, including early literacy and language development
 - e. Designing standards-based, DAP environment
 - f. Promoting Social Emotional Learning (SEL) to support executive functioning and metacognition (CASEL, 2014; ECS, 2014)
 - g. Supporting student engagement and achievement
 - h. Supporting special populations, decreasing and sustaining achievement gaps
 - i. Supporting family engagement in P-3, including transitions
 - j. Facilitating change in a movement to implement comprehensive P-3 systems
 - k. Evaluating P-3 programs, classrooms, educators (NCTE, 2013)
6. Require P-3 Teaching and Learning pedagogy in professional development and higher education classes, including child development, horizontal and vertical alignment, DAP, designing the environment, promoting SEL to support executive functioning and metacognition, supporting student and engagement and achievement, reading pedagogy, P-3 QRIS and NSPF alignment
7. Require Districts and Charter Schools to develop Family Engagement plans which include:
- a. approaches to teaching,
 - b. transitions,
 - c. standards,
 - d. comprehensive assessments,

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- e. early care and education, and
- f. child development and behavior
- 8. Continued improvement and expansion of the Quality Rating Improvement System (QRIS) to include use of curriculum and child assessments (Loewenberg, et.al, 2015)
- 9. Expand access to high quality child care, prek, and full-day kindergarten (Loewenberg, et. al., 2015)
- 10. Statewide "best practice" P-3 models identified and expanded across the state
 - a. Site-based models or lab-sites as a resource for observation and trainings
- 11. Children In Transition (CIT) – Personal Learning Plans (PLPs) for every CIT student
 - a. identifying needs and a plan to address those needs and stabilizers "staffing students" at least every quarter
 - b. family engagement (as permitted)
 - c. agency engagement (as applicable)
- 12. Equitable funding analysis and support in relation to the state's economic productivity (Baker, et. al, 2015) including but not limited to:
 - a. Ensuring Nevada ECE policy establishes this state to be in the forefront when accessing federal grants and other funding opportunities.
 - b. Ensuring the SLDS is comprehensive in data collection surrounding P-3 to support efforts to compete nationally for funding opportunities.
 - c. Continued pursuit of USDE Grant programs such as Prek development block expansion; Investing in Innovation (i3); incentives to prepare, develop, and advance effective teachers and principals; leveraging resources through Promise Neighborhoods, and expanding high-performing public charter schools; Read by Three expansion; and others which can support the expansion of Nevada efforts in early childhood education.

Recommendations related to Data

- 1. Link existing prek data to the SLDS including:**
 - a. Meta data across agencies: this may include related elements, linkages to multiple data domains, XML coding, and applications of the data element. This is the technical side of the element's definition and works to ensure programmers have a consistent "grammar basis" within the data vocabulary along with maximizing interoperability between systems using the same vocabulary.
 - b. Student demographics
 - c. Link Kindergarten Entry Assessment (KEA) data in the SLDS, expand across FDK
 - d. Link multiple domain assessment data from Head Start, state and prek-development grant funded Prek (ECDC, 2014; Loewenberg, et. al, 2015)
 - e. 3rd party data
 - a. MOUs for cross-agency data sharing
 - b. Identify and address barriers which facilitate "silos"
- 2. Expansion of Data collection based on Research Questions**

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Designing research questions establishes a framework for building data collection surrounding P-3 initiatives.

The research questions align with Governor Sandoval's Executive Order and supports NRS 400.040 (b) Methods to ensure successful transitions from early childhood programs to elementary schools, including, without limitation, methods to increase parental involvement; (g) The development and oversight of the SLDS that links data relating to ECE programs and K-12 public education data relating to postsecondary education and the workforce in this State; (h)(2) The effectiveness of the preparation of teachers and administrators in this State; and, (h)(3) The return on Investment of educational and workforce development programs paid for by this State and, (i) Other matters within the scope of the Council as determined necessary or appropriate by the council.

These questions were identified:

Research Question 1: What is the Return on Investment for Nevada Early Childhood Education Programs?

Rationale and Purpose: The rationale is to conduct a longitudinal study to investigate the return on investment for Nevada Early Childhood Education (ECE) programs. Literature presents a potential return on investment of 17:1 provided we invest in early education (specifically for disadvantaged children; develop cognitive skills, social abilities, and healthy behaviors in ECE, and sustain early development with effective education through adulthood to gain a more capable and productive workforce (Heckman, 2015). Conducting this type of research will allow us to collect data points early in a child's life, intervene with specific stabilizers proven to mitigate barriers, and track the sustainability of effective education through adulthood, building a more capable and productive workforce, strengthening Nevada's economy.

Research Question 2: Can we predict student achievement on Nevada Criterion Referenced Tests (CRT) and the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) based on equitable access to quality P-3 programs?

Rationale and Purpose: The rationale and purpose is to develop a regression model to predict academic achievement based on various variables related to equitable access to quality P-3 programs? Data may include: program type and duration; quality ratings of P-3 programs/schools (QRIS & NSPF); highly qualified teachers and leaders; student demographics; staff-child ratios; public education spending per child; enriched and stimulating environments; rich and robust pedagogy; valuable teacher-child interactions; teacher and leader quality; entrance age and duration of compulsory education; high levels of student engagement; supporting and sustaining transition work; family engagement; and access to support services such as health care.

Research Questions 3: What components of P-3 are effective in eliminating achievement gaps and sustaining growth?

- *What instructional approaches, curriculum, assessment practices, family engagement, and transition practices are occurring in P-3 classrooms?*

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- Which classrooms are taught by highly qualified teachers with education and experience in P-3 and ECE?
- Which classrooms are led by highly qualified leaders with education and experience in P-3 and ECE?
- Which students have access to quality programs, educators, and leaders?

Rationale and Purpose: The rationale and purpose is to conduct a study to delineate effective P-3 instructional approaches, curriculum, assessment practices, family engagement, and transition practices are occurring in P-3 classrooms to increase student engagement and achievement across the span of the early learning years. Such practices are expected to eliminate achievement gaps and sustain growth as indicated on early learning assessments and culminate into positive student outcomes on a trajectory P-20 pathway toward success. Research suggests students with equitable access to highly qualified and experienced P-3 teachers and leaders are more likely to sustain gains made in the early learning years. Evidence of best practices in P-3 is expected to translate into increased student engagement, achievement, and growth on statewide assessments and the Nevada State Performance Framework. Data analysis would support the identification of sites, schools, and districts of "best communities of practices" for inclusion in the expansion of a quality P-3 statewide model that is exemplified at the national level.

Consideration of addressing the identified research questions, the Council is recommended to request appropriate stakeholders to determine existing and forthcoming data necessary to conduct the research. Several key area should be explored: What data exists or is needed to address the research questions? What needs to happen to address the research questions (think MOUs for cross-agency collaboration)? If data elements don't exist, recommendations to add elements for reporting/tracking and research practices

3. Cross-agency collaborations
 - a. Health care data exists within human health and services, need links to NDE and SLDS
 - b. Establish MOUs for cross-agency collaboration and shared data
4. Expand access to high quality child care, prek, and full-day kindergarten (Loewenberg, et. al., 2015)
5. Expand multiple domain assessment data from state and prek-development grant funded Prek (Loewenberg, et. al, 2015)
6. Expand Kindergarten Entry Assessment (KEA) data across FDK in the SLDS (ECS, 2014; CEELO, 2014)
7. Universal developmentally appropriate assessment data across 1, 2, 3
8. Registration – beginning at age 4 – families required to register children who are age 4 by September 30 to register their child with the Homeschool if they are not enrolled in public and/or private prek option. Public and private prek report enrollment data.
 - a. Need unique identifier (universal student ids assigned at onset of registration - age 4 by Sept. 30)

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- b. Explore whether health care professionals assist? As part of 4 yr. well-child check-ups and immunizations
- c. Data available to school leaders and teachers by a specific date in the year prior to entry in the kindergarten year

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