Guidance on County Office of Education Support for Universal PreKindergarten Planning and Implementation

This section of guidance provides guiding principles, first steps, and other considerations and strategies for county office of education (COE) support for Universal PreKindergarten (UPK) planning and implementation.

Guiding Principles

Guiding Principle	Key Ideas
Lead with a **focus on equity** on behalf of children, families, and programs serving young children.	Promote UPK as a catalyst for equity and uphold a focus on meeting child and family needs, ensuring equity in access, and closing opportunity gaps.
Approach UPK planning and implementation with a **learning mindset**.	Be perpetual learners and take action to develop internal capacity to support local educational agencies (LEAs). The California Department of Education (CDE) recommends that COEs familiarize themselves with all CDE-released UPK planning and implementation materials, such as the LEA Template and waves of UPK Guidance, along with resources and training opportunities provided by partners. This should include a concentrated focus on learning from the assets and experiences of the early learning and care system.
Connect partners and implementers **to promote coherence** and integration of early childhood and Transitional Kindergarten (TK) through Twelfth grade systems.	Foster a collaborative mindset and act as a conduit to other local partners and interest groups with whom LEAs can partner to implement responsive UPK systems. COEs are encouraged to serve as conveners to bring together districts, charter schools, early learning programs and extended learning partners to support countywide planning and capacity building. This includes supporting relationship building, providing networking opportunities, and expanding opportunities for countywide partnerships.
Approach UPK planning and implementation as an **informer and capacity builder** at all levels.	Play a core role in building capacity through the development and dissemination of resources, tools, materials, training, and so on. COEs also play a role in facilitating shared learning

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	and ongoing continuous improvement. This is true across all levels of implementation, including a concentrated focus on leadership support and development within LEAs and at school sites. The CDE encourages COEs to both differentiate supports based on the needs of different LEAs and leverage local structures (for example, tables at which LEAs are already convened and supports through the Local Control Accountability Plan [LCAP] review processes).
Respect and leverage the knowledge and expertise of the early learning and care and expanded learning communities.	Acknowledge and respect the training and experience of the early learning and care and expanded learning workforce and its leadership within each community, and work to foster collaboration towards implementing safe, high-quality, inclusive learning environments and opportunities that are responsive to the needs of children, families, and communities. Individuals in the early learning and care and expanded learning communities can be assets towards the development of a developmentally-informed approach and can help uplift the value and impact of play on child development and early grades.

Recommended Steps, Strategies, and Considerations for County Office of Education Universal PreKindergarten Planning and Implementation Support

UPK implementation and preschool through Third grade (P-3) alignment will take time and necessitates coherences. COEs are urged to keep the goal of bridging the early learning and care and LEA systems to support all children and families through high-quality, early learning and care at the forefront.

The CDE believes the following strategies and considerations are foundational to launching effective COE support for LEA UPK planning and implementation support:

- Identify the COE team that will be involved in UPK planning and implementation support.

    - Identify which departments need to be involved and who will be responsible for overall UPK coordination at the COE.
    - Ensure that staffing supports alignment and opportunities to leverage existing structures (for example, include Expanded Learning Opportunity Program [ELO-P] leaders to ensure calibration of program technicalities and include LCAP review leaders to leverage that opportunity to integrate UPK).
- Assess internal COE capacity to provide technical assistance (TA), training, and guidance on key components of UPK.
    - Build an understanding about the state's UPK vision and requirements
    - Designate appropriate level staff time to provide effective and differentiated TA and support to LEAs.
    - Hire or shift resources to ensure that the COE has an expert (or someone who is gaining expertise) on UPK programs.
    - Define UPK for LEAs, answer some common frequently asked questions, explain the UPK Plan requirements, and provide support at the intersection between TK and ELO-P.
    - Assess the COE's ability to provide charter school assistance.
    - Ensure that individuals reviewing and approving LCAPs are knowledgeable about UPK and how it could be included in the LCAP.
    - Examine ways to integrate UPK trainings and TA in other COE early learning initiatives to ensure sustainable practices.
    - Assist in developing a "UPK planning team" with a diverse, knowledgeable, cross-disciplinary team within each LEA.
- Conduct outreach and analysis to understand the UPK needs and interests of LEAs and support the launch of UPK planning.
    - Conduct a survey or otherwise collect and analyze data to inform support for LEAs.
    - Conduct asset mapping of community resources and partners near LEAs.
    - Conduct focus groups or interviews with LEA leaders to determine strengths, needs, readiness, and so on.
    - Inventory professional learning and TA needs.
    - Consider the different needs of different types of LEAs (small, rural, charters, and so on).
    - Establish processes to confirm that every LEA has the information they need to complete their plan and implement UPK. This could include requiring a contact or designee from each LEA so that the COE can confirm that all LEAs are informed and actively planning.
- Establish a family-driven approach to UPK planning.
    - Work with LEAs to identify the needs of families in their community (for example, nine hours of care, food assistance, and so on), and help LEAs identify funding and partnerships to meet these needs.

    - Help LEAs clearly define and articulate options that are available for extended learning and care beyond TK.
    - Identify and tailor materials to communicate about options for UPK.
    - Focus on supporting LEAs to implement developmentally appropriate teaching and learning that is culturally and linguistically responsive and inclusive.
    - Provide communications materials to help families understand options.
    - Support collaboration with county social services, health, and welfare departments to serve the whole family.
- Facilitate connections between LEAs and other partners in support of UPK planning and implementation.
    - Connect LEAs with educational partners that can inform planning and support implementation including, but not limited to, Local Childcare Planning Councils, Resource and Referral Agencies, Special Education Local Planning Areas, institutes of higher education, First 5 county commissions, and so on.
    - Connect LEAs with early and expanded learning program partners such as Head Start providers, California State Preschool Programs (CSPPs), other extended learning and care providers in proximity to the LEA to identify options for early and expanded learning opportunities that meet family needs.
    - Support collaboration between UPK and ELO-P partners to work together to define a cohesive and comprehensive plan at both the COE and the LEA.
    - Develop messaging for different audiences on the benefits and considerations of how UPK may impact existing delivery of early childhood education (ECE).
- Support P-3 workforce and leadership development.
    - Provide ongoing leadership support to build school site capacity for effective UPK implementation beyond the first year.
    - Assess the needs of leaders (principals and central office staff), and provide professional learning opportunities such as Principal Early Learning Academies. If the COE operates an Administrative Credentialing program, consider adding or modifying modules to address administration and support of early and expanded learning programs.
    - Work with LEAs to determine workforce needs and determine what systems are already in place to build upon.
    - Consider the existing workforce programs and partnerships operated by the COE and whether the COE has the capacity and interest in leading a consortium that ensures LEA staff obtain the required unit-based coursework and credentials.
- Establish structures to provide differentiated and individualized TA to LEAs.

    - Provide quick reference materials (including visuals and short videos) that clearly define and articulate options that are available for families beyond instructional time for four-year-old children (CSPP, private, or ELO-P) and share promising practices for how to braid or blend funding.
    - Assist LEAs in understanding CDE-released guidance.
    - Offer local information sessions and individualized assistance to LEA leads.
    - Offer one-on-one TA sessions or office hours with LEAs on UPK, TK, CSPP, and ELO-P.
        - Ask LEAs to bring a team to the meeting, as well as representatives from extended learning and care providers.
        - Review requirements and plans.
        - Leverage LCAP support teams.
- Maintain a long-term focus on a P-3 vision, and facilitate deeper understanding and assessment of P-3 alignment.
    - Support LEAs to implement a whole child approach and assess the P-3 continuum to think about developmental appropriateness across that span.
    - Facilitate professional development across ECE and LEA programs to encourage greater collaboration, planning, and alignment.
    - Create spaces or forums that bring together LEA and non-LEA early learning and child care teachers for the purpose of curriculum alignment, lesson planning, and easing transitions for students.