

Guidance on Universal PreKindergarten Leadership Structure

School leaders play a huge role in supporting high-quality early childhood education for young children in their local educational agency (LEA) or school. Yet, many elementary school principals and LEA leaders enter their leadership roles without a strong understanding of how to support high-quality, early education programming or advance the professional learning of early learning educators. Furthermore, many LEAs do not have established leadership structures and positions that ensure early education is elevated and integrated within the highest levels of LEA administration. This section includes key considerations for ways to structure LEA positions to best support Universal PreKindergarten (UPK) implementation and a PreKindergarten through third grade (P-3) frame, and how to offer effective and engaging professional learning opportunities, as well as links to relevant research.

Positions to Support Universal PreKindergarten Implementation

LEA leadership should review the LEA's current management structure and consider adding new positions such as a:

- **School site UPK administrator position:** UPK coordinators who serve as the liaison between community partners (California State Preschool Program [CSPP], Head Start, and so on) and support the transition to Transitional Kindergarten (TK) and Kindergarten (K) services, as well as helping to coordinate any extended learning and care partnerships.
- **Curriculum and instruction division position:** A UPK-specific position to ensure UPK and TK or P-3 curriculum and instruction is well represented, coherent, developmentally-informed, and aligned with K through third grade curriculum and instruction within the district.
- **UPK or P-3 cabinet-level administrator position:** A UPK or P-3-specific position to ensure that UPK is consistently included in the vision and direction of the district and aligned and integrated with early elementary administration, including the facilitation of professional learning activities for leadership, described in more detail below.

Other Recommendations to Support Universal PreKindergarten and Preschool through Third Grade Leaderships

- **Leverage existing capacity:** Some LEAs have existing administrative early education positions that could be elevated to the cabinet level as part of UPK planning and implementation.
- **Review organizational structures:** There will be a number of positions that already exist within districts and schools that will need to coordinate with, and be involved in, UPK planning and implementation. It will be important for districts to review organizational structures to identify opportunities for cross-divisional

collaboration and alignment (for example, TK Coordinator, CSPP Director, Early Learning Coordinator, P-3 Coordinator, First 5 School Readiness Coordinator, Head Start Director, and so on).

Offering Professional Learning

LEA leadership should consider the activities below to ensure that effective professional learning opportunities are developed and offered to leadership. Furthermore, county offices of education (COEs) can play an important role in facilitating some of these professional learning opportunities.

- **Conduct a needs assessment:** Before conducting professional learning for leadership, the LEA should conduct surveys on leadership attitudes and knowledge of UPK, TK and P-3, knowledge of child development and early education, and overall capacity to support these efforts.
- **Provide early education-focused professional learning opportunities for elementary principals, site supervisors, and LEA administrators:** Elementary school principals with CSPP or TK classrooms should be provided with professional learning on child development, developmentally-informed practice, play-based learning, early education curriculum and instruction, observational assessments, and appropriate learning environments. Principals and leaders should also be provided with information on, and develop robust knowledge of, UPK community partners and programs.
- **Facilitate UPK observations for district leadership and elementary principals:** Both district leadership and elementary principals need the opportunity to observe high-quality UPK instruction and learning environments. Principals should be encouraged to incorporate observing high-quality UPK classrooms in their professional learning on early education.
- **Offer professional learning opportunities to the school board:** The LEA school board should have ample opportunity to engage in learning sessions on the value of UPK, measures of UPK quality and standards, and knowledge of UPK community partners and programs.
- **Share consistent updates with superintendents and assistant superintendents:** Superintendents and assistant superintendents will be the drivers of UPK in a district. It is important to provide them with regular updates and knowledge of UPK implementation in their district, and professional development on the topics listed above.
- **Leverage the expertise of early education partners:** Rely on the valuable insight of early childhood education educators and leaders in the district and community to support the professional learning needs of leadership. Significant early education infrastructure exists, such as the California Preschool Instructional Network and Quality Counts California, that can be leveraged to support leadership development. Community based organizations operating in the district might have resources to leverage as well. Furthermore, COEs can be a key resource for leadership supports and professional learning.

- **Support continuous improvement:** The needs for leadership development and support as it pertains to UPK will evolve over time as LEAs engage in planning and implementation. LEAs should periodically assess the need for professional learning and respond accordingly.

Resources to Guide LEA Leadership in Supporting High-Quality Early Education Programming and Professional Development for Early Educators

Roles	Resource	Description and Overview
Principals	For a Principal's Guide to Early Learning and the Early Grades (Pre-K–3rd Grade) see the link provided by the National P-3 Center at https://nationalp-3center.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/03/Executive-Summary_NAESP_Pre-K%E2%80%933rd-Grade.pdf .	The goal of this publication is to provide a structure and a set of competencies that can guide principals in creating and supporting connections between birth to age five and K through twelfth grade (K-12) systems in order to build successful P-3 continuums in their schools. This body of work provides a tool for principals to not only keep pace with their ever-shifting roles, but to help them support children reach their greatest potential. This guide will also help school leaders identify important areas of focus, fine-tune developmentally-informed leadership practices, and align PreKindergarten (Pre-K) experiences with early elementary grades, thereby providing a coherent and related set of learning experiences for children during the first critical years of schooling.
Administrators	For a Framework in Action: Administrator Effectiveness, see the direct link provided by the National P-3 Center at https://nationalp-3center.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/10/Administrator-Effectiveness-Framework-in-Action.pdf .	Administrators hold responsibility for creating an organizational culture, setting an inspiring and shared vision among diverse stakeholders, supervising teachers and staff, and supporting key priorities in which to invest both human and financial resources. In K-12, relevant administrators include elementary school principals, school district superintendents and central office staff, and school board members. For ages birth to five, relevant administrators include Head Start and

Roles	Resource	Description and Overview
		Pre-K directors or program managers, child care or preschool directors, family child care owners, and others who supervise the operation and management of early care and education (ECE) programs. This body of work provides a framework for Administrators (district superintendents, school principals, ECE directors) to actively create a culture and organizational structures that ensure the quality of P-3 learning.
Schools, school districts, ECE programs, and other community partners	For a Framework for Planning, Implementing, and Evaluating P-3 Approaches see the direct link provided by the National P-3 Center at https://nationalp-3center.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/10/P-3-Framework.pdf	This resource provides, at multiple levels, a framework for planning, implementing, and evaluating a P-3 approach. It also provides guidance for developing a leadership team and building administrator effectiveness for P-3 alignment.