The preschool through third-grade years are foundational in a child’s journey toward lifelong learning. States recognize the immense impact high-quality early learning can have on a student’s educational trajectory, and they’re finding innovative ways to support this important time in a child’s life.

In honor of the Week of the Young Child, our newsletter highlights how states are investing in early learning and young children.

Visit StatesLeading.org and follow #StatesLeading on social media to learn more and join the conversation.

State Spotlights
The *Utah* State Board of Education, in partnership with district and charter leaders, kindergarten and preschool teachers, and early childhood experts, developed the Kindergarten Entry and Exit Profile (KEEP) to measure the key literacy, numeracy, and social-emotional skills essential for academic success in school.

KEEP informs parents, teachers, and school leadership about the academic and social-emotional development of kindergarten students and enables opportunities for data-informed decision-making and cost-benefit analysis of early learning initiatives.

Teachers can use this data to identify effective instructional practices or strategies for improving student achievement outcomes and understand the influence and impact of full-day kindergarten on at-risk students in both the short- and long-term.
The Connecticut State Department of Education, in partnership with the Connecticut Office of Early Childhood and Education Counsel, recently published a series of practical, user-friendly resources that promote strong connections between early childhood educators and elementary schools.

These resources include an early childhood landscape analysis tool for Connecticut schools and districts that highlights the importance of the transition to kindergarten and evidence-based practices for early learning.
Idaho offers all 4-year-olds free access to Smarty Ants, an animated, interactive reading-readiness program. This initiative is possible through an agreement between the Idaho State Department of Education and Achieve3000, an online literacy program.

According to Superintendent of Public Instruction Sherri Ybarra, “Smarty Ants will help Idaho children build a strong foundation for loving reading and succeeding in school.”
The **Illinois** State Department of Education launched the Kindergarten Individual Development Survey (KIDS), an observational tool designed to help teachers, administrators, families, and policymakers better understand the developmental readiness of children entering kindergarten.

KIDS focuses on the knowledge, skills, and behaviors that mostly impact long-term student success including: approaches to learning and self-regulation, social and emotional development, language and literacy development, and math cognition.

The state of **Louisiana** introduced the Early Childhood Ancillary Certificate, a professional credential for teachers working in early learning centers, serving a broader effort to unify the early childhood system and professionalize the early learning teacher workforce.

By 2019, all lead teachers in publicly-funded centers will be required to have a current certificate or be on the path to earning one.
Must Read

The National Institute for Early Education Research's *State of Preschool Yearbook* is an annual publication that tracks the funding, access, and policies of state-funded preschool programs. The 2017 annual report finds that states are heeding the demand for pre-K and expanding access to publicly funded programs in a variety of settings.

Among the highlights:

- Enrollment in state-funded preschool programs has more than doubled since 2002 – with more than 1.5 million children enrolled nationwide.
- Three states – *Alabama, Michigan and Rhode Island* – met all 10 of NIEER’s benchmarks for quality standards.
- Two states – *California and Texas* – are leaders on policies for supporting dual language learners in preschool.

This resource shows how states are broadening pathways for ECE opportunities within the larger continuum of learning.
This special Education Commission of the States report, *K-3 Policymakers Guide to Action: Making the Early Years Count*, summarizes the top policy components for a high-quality K-3 system and provides guidance to policymakers on how to begin moving the needle in their states.
State chiefs are committed to expanding and strengthening early childhood programs to provide equal educational opportunities for every young child from birth through third grade.

In *Equity Starts Early*, CCSSO outlines recommendations for building more coherent state early childhood education systems aligned with kindergarten through third grade schooling, increasing access to high-quality early childhood education programs, and crafting new state-federal partnerships to advance early learning opportunities, particularly for those children most at risk.
The January 2018 issue of NASBE’s award-winning journal, *The State Education Standard*, looked at how state policymakers can ensure access to high-quality early education.

The issue explores the transformation of the early education workforce, transitions to kindergarten and fully funding state pre-K. It also includes a case study on how Illinois serves young dual language learners.

Read more

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We want to hear from you!

Send your state's stories or organization's resources to communications@ccsso.org
The States Leading campaign celebrates the progress states are making toward providing equitable education for all students through the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) and innovative policies in other key areas of education, such as early childhood education, teacher preparation, and career readiness, among others.

Thank you to our proud partners:
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