



Ready and Successful Schools Action Plan: Recommendations to the Washington Early Learning Partnership

Ready and Successful Schools Work Group
May 2013

Coordinated by the
Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction in collaboration with the
Department of Early Learning and Thrive by Five Washington

Dad, Wife And Daughter Photo courtesy of FreeDigitalPhotos.net

Ready and Successful Schools Action Plan

Executive Summary

In 2012, State Superintendent Randy Dorn charged the Ready and Successful Schools Work Group with recommending a four-year *Ready and Successful Schools Action Plan*. The Work Group was charged with identifying a handful of key next steps that the K-12 system can use to align with early learning system-building reforms, build connections with early learning providers, and enhance the education of children served in PreK through Grade 3 programs and classes in Washington’s public schools.

This *Action Plan* constitutes the recommendations of the 37-member Ready and Successful Schools Work Group that met from October 2012 through May 2013 to identify the highest impact statewide actions that can be taken over the next four years. Their recommendations, presented in this *Action Plan*, are an important step in improving the education of our earliest learners, which is one of Superintendent Dorn’s five education priorities for Washington. This *Action Plan* will be presented to the Washington Early Learning Partnership for its consideration and approval.

The Work Group included school district superintendents, school board members, teachers, ESD leaders, early learning providers, other educators, and individuals representing the Washington Early Learning Partnership (Department of Early Learning, OSPI and Thrive by Five Washington). Financial support was provided by the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation. Bea Kelleigh, of Dovetailing^{LLC} served as the consultant facilitator and primary author of this report. Robert Butts, OSPI Assistant Superintendent for Early Learning, and Greg Baker, Superintendent of the Bellingham School District, co-chaired the Work Group.

Strengthening PreK-3rd Education is Important and Urgent

The PreK-3rd grade years are instrumental in setting children on a path to success or conversely, in allowing “opportunity gaps” to continue, forcing students, teachers and administrators to play a continuous game of catch up.

Recent data (2011-12) show that 31% of Washington’s 3rd grade students demonstrate “below basic” levels of proficiency in reading on Washington’s Measurements of Student Progress (MSP), with 8.4% percent of our students “well below” basic. The picture is bleaker for low-income children and many children of color.

“...One in six children who are not reading proficiently in 3rd grade fail to graduate from high school on time - four times the rate for children with proficient 3rd grade reading skills.”

- Double Jeopardy: How Third-Grade Reading Skills and Poverty influence High School Graduation Rates 2012

This is troubling for academic, social and economic reasons. By 2018, 67% of jobs in Washington will require a postsecondary training. Unfortunately, recent data show that only 77.2%¹ of Washington high school students in the Class of 2012 graduated from high school. Of those, only 62% of graduates are enrolled in post-secondary education² leaving a serious gap between what the workforce will require and what the education system is delivering.

¹ Washington Profile. Projections of Jobs and Educational Requirements through 2018. <http://www9.georgetown.edu/grad/gppi/hpi/cew/pdfs/washington.pdf>
² Graduation and Dropout Statistics Annual Report 2011-2012. OSPI. March 2013. <http://www.k12.wa.us/DataAdmin/pubdocs/GradDropout/11-12/GradandDropOutStats2011-12.pdf>

Building on Strong Foundations

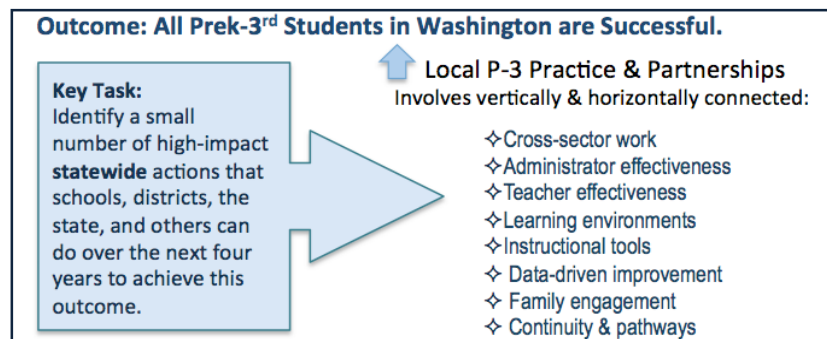
This *Action Plan* builds on the growing momentum and research about PreK-3rd, which includes:

- Washington State’s 10-year *Early Learning Plan*, our road map for building a prenatal – 3rd grade early learning system that ensures that all children in our state start life with a solid foundation for success in school and in life. The *Plan*’s Strategy 27 is to “ensure alignment and coordination of children’s PreK-3rd grade education and experiences,” the focus of the Ready and Successful Schools Work Group.
- The literature about the importance of “Ready Schools,” including the hallmark National Education Goals Panel “Ready Schools” Report of 1998 which embraced “Ready Schools” as a national goal;
- The burgeoning PreK-3rd work of districts and communities from Bremerton and Nooksack Valley to Yakima’s West Valley School District and King County’s Roadmap Project; and,
- The research-based [Framework for Planning, Implementing and Evaluating PreK-3rd Grade Approaches](#) (Kauerz & Coffman).

Ready and Successful Schools: Goals and Actions

Surveys. Surveys of elementary school principals and of Head Start/ECEAP directors were conducted to inform these *Action Plans*. The surveys explored: PreK-3rd practices and next steps; feeder patterns between PreK and Kindergarten; PreK and full-day K in school buildings; and policy and procedural barriers. Both principals and the Head Start/ECEAP directors rated “fostering family engagement in their child’s PreK-3rd learning and development” as the most important next step. (See Attachment B: *Summary of Ready and Success Schools Surveys*).

Key Task and Outcome. The Work Group began by adopting a desired outcome and key task to guide its work as shown in the graphic to the right. A fundamental premise - that achieving the desired outcome will require supporting and strengthening local PreK-3 practices and partnerships -



shaped the *Action Plan* at each step. The eight interconnected areas of effective local PreK-3rd practices and partnerships listed in the graphic are drawn from the recently published research-based *Framework for Planning, Implementing and Evaluating PreK-3rd Grade Approaches*.³

Recommendations. The Work Group next adopted five goals and then considered and prioritized seven key statewide actions to achieve the desired outcome – “All PreK-3rd students in Washington are successful.” As shown on the next page, three key actions (Phase I) are recommended as the highest priority for immediate collective state/regional focus and implementation. Four other vitally important actions (Phase II) are recommended for implementation (or expansion beyond current efforts) when Phase I actions are well on their way to success.

³ Kauerz, K., & Coffman, J. (2013). *Framework for Planning, Implementing and Evaluating PreK-3rd Grade Approaches*. Seattle, WA: College of Education, University of Washington. Web Address: http://depts.washington.edu/pthru3/PreK-3rd_Framework_Legal%20paper.pdf

Ready And Successful Schools Action Plan Recommendations	
Goals	Phase I Actions: Start Now: 2013-14
I. Grow and support <i>leaders</i> in cultivating robust PreK-3rd cultures and strategies.	Build a state/regional system of PreK-3rd leadership development and PreK-3rd contacts in school districts to help school and district leaders learn about high-quality, developmentally-appropriate, culturally and linguistically competent: early learning, learning environments, instruction and transitions. Create PreK-3rd teams to coordinate seamless transitions for children and families.
II. Strengthen and align <i>instruction</i> for students and the instructional capacity and skills of teachers.	Implement and fund PreK-3 rd professional development that includes cross-sector professional learning with early learning and K-3 educators. Ensure high-quality Kindergarten by providing opportunities for Kindergarten teachers, school staff and principals to receive on-going professional learning support. Identify policies and practices to promote joint resources for cross-sector PreK-3 rd work.
III. Engage <i>families</i> and communities in their child's education and transitions from PreK through 3rd grade.	Identify and implement best practices and models of strengths-based, culturally and linguistically appropriate parenting education and family engagement for replication that is easy to access through many venues. Identify policy barriers and recommend solutions.
Goals	Phase II Actions: Start (or expand, if on-going) Later
IV. Expand <i>access</i> to education, services, and instructional time that supports the "whole-child" development and learning of all young learners.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Increase opportunities for preschool-age children in schools and communities. Identify policy barriers and recommend solutions. 2. Advocate for the statewide implementation of state-funded full-day Kindergarten and reduced K-3 class sizes. Provide technical assistance to ensure high-quality full-day Kindergarten programs. Advocate for capital construction funding to pay for classrooms and portables in schools that do not have space to accommodate full-day kindergarten and/or smaller class sizes.
V. Align and support effective, developmentally and culturally appropriate PreK-3 <i>systems</i>.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Create a shared understanding of the expectations of Kindergarten preparedness and common pathways, processes and tools for Kindergarten transition. Communicate the continuum of expectations of entering Kindergartners to the PreK-3rd partners and families. 2. Streamline and strengthen data systems and use of data to inform practice, programs and policy.

Phase I: High Priority, Immediate Actions. The Work Group recommends that the immediate, collective focus of the state, regional partners and school districts be dedicated to: growing and supporting leadership, strengthening professional learning, and creating a culture and practice of family engagement partnerships. This is recommended as leaders, teachers and family engagement are the cornerstones of effective education. These highest priority actions are:

1. Establishing a state/ regional system of PreK-3rd leadership development;
2. Implementing and funding professional learning to strengthen instruction; and
3. Identifying best practices and creating a *Family and Community Engagement Toolkit* that can be infused into leadership development and professional learning activities.

In addition to these priority actions, key ongoing work such as support for the expansion of ECEAP and state-funded, full-day K will continue in full force. This includes increasing facilities, since finding classroom space for these important expansions is an urgent challenge.

Phase II: Other Critical Actions. Four additional Ready And Successful Schools Actions are considered to be very important and are recommended to start (or expand beyond current efforts) after the first three are well on their way to success. These actions include:

1. Increasing access to preschool;
2. Accelerating the phase-in of state-funded full-day Kindergarten and reduced K-3 class sizes;
3. Establishing common Kindergarten preparedness expectations, messaging and transition processes; and
4. Streamlining data and assessments.

Carrying the Work Forward

The following next steps are recommended to advance the *Action Plan*.

Steps	Timeframe
1. Vetting. Vet the <i>Action Plan</i> broadly with the key partners to hone strategies, engage partners and build momentum.	June- July 2013
2. Adoption. Submit the recommendations to the Washington Early Learning Partnership for its consideration and approval.	August 2013
3. Branding. Consider and decide upon the connection and branding of this effort and the annual Starting Strong PreK-3 rd Institute.	June-September, 2013
4. Leadership. Create a <i>Ready and Successful Leadership Team</i> to manage and prioritize the work and determine where resources are needed first. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - <u>Members:</u> Ready Schools Work Group co-chairs, lead implementing agencies (OSPI, DEL, Thrive, ESD's), and Action Team leads. 	September, 2013
5. Work Group. Continue the <i>Ready Schools Work Group</i> to advise the Leadership Team. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - <u>Members:</u> Similar to the initial work group, with representative voices and intentional connections to the state's Early Learning Advisory Council (ELAC). It is recommended that the group meet three times annually, with additional meetings as needed. 	Ongoing
6. Common Framework. Request that the Washington Early Learning Partnership and the Ready and Successful Schools Work Group consider adopting the <i>Framework for Planning, Implementing and Evaluation PreK-3rd Grade Approaches</i> .	Fall 2013
7. Action Teams. Continue the practice of engaging <i>Action Teams</i> to develop/refine the recommendations and implement strategies. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - <u>Members:</u> Membership will vary depending on the strategy. 	On-going

Implementation Plans. The Action Plan includes recommended implementation plans for each action (see Appendix A of the Full Report). Each of the Implementation Action Plans contains:

- A description of the action, desired system changes and outcomes and key objectives;
- A chart with tasks, milestones, leads and key partners; and,
- Guidance about the resources needed and efforts to build upon.

Seminal Documents and Initiatives. As early learning and K-12 partners are often unaware of each other's guiding documents and key initiatives, a list of guiding documents and initiatives raised in the Work Group deliberations is included. (See *Appendix C* of the *Full Report*.)

Glossary of Acronyms. (See *Appendix D* of the *Full Report*.)

For additional information, contact Robert Butts, OSPI Assistant Superintendent of Public Instruction, at bob.butts@k12.wa.us or (360) 725-042.