



# Transitions to Kindergarten in Colorado:

## A ROADMAP



This work is funded by the Preschool Development Grant Birth through Five Initiative (PDG B-5), Grant Number 90TP0054, from the Office of Child Care, Administration for Children and Families, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. Its contents are solely the responsibility of the authors and do not necessarily represent the official views of the Office of Child Care, the Administration for Children and Families, or the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.

*Transitions to Kindergarten in Colorado: A Roadmap*, published in December 2021, is the final deliverable of a multi-faceted scope of work implemented between 2020 and 2021 by the National P-3 Center at University of Colorado Denver. Many staff helped to shepherd this work including Andrew Schaper, Sharon Triolo-Moloney, Margaret Soli, and Roberta Ballard.

Colorado's Office of Early Childhood (OEC) in the Department of Human Services, as well as the Preschool through 3rd Grade (P-3) and Migrant Education Offices at Colorado Department of Education, served as project advisors throughout.

**Suggested Citation:**

Kauerz, K., Schaper, A., & Triolo-Moloney, S. (2021). *Transitions to kindergarten in Colorado: A roadmap*. National P-3 Center, School of Education & Human Development, University of Colorado Denver.

February 24, 2022

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Dear Colorado Birth to 5 and PreK-12 policymakers, leaders, and educators:

Colorado is at an exciting moment in time, one marked by important transitions. By July 2022, the state will have launched a new Department of Early Childhood, one that many of you have helped to envision and advocate for. By July 2023, the state will transition to a new Universal Preschool Program, one that will substantively increase families' access to high-quality early learning through a mixed delivery system in the year prior to kindergarten.

These notable state policy shifts will influence a different kind of transition that children and families experience every year - the transition to kindergarten. These transitions are undergirded by essential, but often invisible, collaboration across state and local agencies, non-governmental organizations, early learning and care programs, and school districts working together.

Colorado has a strong legacy of supporting transitions to kindergarten. We want to recognize the extraordinary work in communities across the state to improve and enhance the experiences of families as their children progress from the early care and education system into kindergarten. Building on those efforts, the time is right to revisit and reimagine additional ways to systematically ensure more children in every community across the state benefit from effective and culturally and linguistically responsive supports as they move from formal and informal early care and education experiences into kindergarten. This Roadmap provides an important framework for this work.

The Early Childhood Leadership Commission (ECLC) is statutorily charged to advise and make recommendations for the coordination and alignment of state agencies that impact early childhood programs, policies, and funding. We are pleased that state and local agencies collaborated under Colorado Shines Brighter, our Preschool Development Grant Birth through Five initiative, to develop the Roadmap. This document recognizes that no single state or local agency can take full responsibility for transitions to kindergarten; it must be a collective, shared endeavor with the broader community.

For these reasons, we look forward to working together with ECLC commissioners, as well as Birth to 5 and PreK-12 leaders across the state, to build more systemic approaches to kindergarten transitions in Colorado. This work relies on the engagement of state and local partners to build systems and supports that, ultimately, will make young children's entry into kindergarten both smooth and joyful.

With enthusiasm for the work ahead,



Pamela Harris  
ECLC Co-Chair



Susan Steele  
ECLC Co-Chair



Tom Massey  
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# Introduction

This Roadmap provides a system-level vision for the state of Colorado to plan and provide support to families, early care and education (ECE) providers, PreK-12 educators, and other professionals to ensure all children experience successful transitions to kindergarten. This Roadmap addresses multiple priorities identified by Colorado leaders and highlighted in the *Early Childhood Colorado Framework* and the *Colorado Shines Brighter Birth through Five Strategic Plan 2020-2025*, while also looking to the future as Colorado establishes a new Department of Early Childhood and Universal Preschool.

In 2019, Colorado was awarded a three-year Preschool Development Grant (PDG) B-5 Renewal Grant, designed to implement strategies identified in the 2018 comprehensive needs assessment completed for the PDG Planning Grant. That needs assessment revealed that Colorado lacks a system-level approach to supporting children, families, ECE and K-12 educators, and communities to experience successful transitions. To address this, *Colorado Shines Brighter Birth through Five Strategic Plan 2020-25* included Strategy 1.3.2 focused on transitions:

The Office of Early Childhood and the Preschool through Third Grade Office will develop a birth through five transitions roadmap and identify the needed local training and tools for implementation. The roadmap will encompass support for children, including those with special health or developmental needs, their families, and early care and education and K-3 professionals, as well as home visitors, early intervention, child health, and early childhood mental health professionals.

The Early Childhood Leadership Commission and the Office of Early Childhood in the Colorado Department of Human Services annually review the *Colorado Shines Brighter* goals and strategies, resulting in recommendations for improvements and additions. The 2020 update recommended





New Strategy 1.2.7 focused exclusively on the kindergarten transition to “support school district implementation of systemic coordination with community based ECE programs to improve children’s transition to kindergarten (and early elementary grades).”

This Roadmap is intended to address both state and local opportunities to improve cross-sector (ECE and K-12) collaboration that supports children and families as they transition from preschool experiences, both formal and informal, and enter kindergarten.

As with any roadwork, some of the work to be done is structural, requiring changes to the infrastructure. In this report, we identify policy changes that could re-contour the infrastructure that supports transitions to kindergarten. Roadwork also includes aesthetic work, including signage and landscaping, that support people to find their way and to enjoy the journey. In this report, we identify relational or professional learning changes that could support families, teachers, administrators, and, most importantly, children, to feel supported and engaged throughout the transition.



## Transition to Kindergarten Defined

In this document, the *transition to kindergarten* is defined not as a single point in time, but as a continuum of time, experiences, and practices that support children’s introduction to, entrance into, and success in kindergarten. This transition requires meaningful engagement of both the early care and education system (ECE), or *sending* side, and the K-12 system, or *receiving* side. The sending side includes the formal or informal programs or settings where children are in the year prior to kindergarten. The receiving side includes kindergarten classrooms and elementary schools that are part of K-12 or PreK-12 school districts.<sup>1</sup> Strategies that support transitions to kindergarten may occur at the state, community, school district, elementary school, ECE program/setting, teacher/educator, classroom, or individual family/child level.

## Why Focus on Transitions to Kindergarten?

Effective transitions from preschool to kindergarten are important for children and their families, and, from a policy perspective, represent one of the most complex transition points because of the cross-agency and cross-system collaboration required. Transition practices that support positive relationships between children, families, and educators can substantively impact child outcomes (Ahtola et al., 2011; Cook & Coley, 2017). The transition to kindergarten represents an important shift in children’s and families’ education experiences as the goals, demands, and classroom structures in kindergarten are often different than those in preschool and child care settings (Rimm-Kaufman & Pianta, 2000; Vitiello, Pianta, et al., 2020). And, effective transitions to kindergarten call for state and local agencies and programs to align their efforts in ways that are sustainable and culturally-preserving for families and educators alike.

1 Of note, in Colorado 176 out of 179 school districts offer state-funded preschool (CPP; Colorado Preschool Program Legislative Report 2021), and all districts must provide federally mandated special education services to 3- and 4-year olds.



## RECENT RESEARCH ON TRANSITIONS TO KINDERGARTEN

A review of recent research on transitions to kindergarten (Kauerz & Schaper, 2021) highlights:

- Families and children have varying needs and access to transition supports.
  - Boys, children with IEPs, and children living in low-income homes are more likely to experience transition challenges (Jiang et al., 2021).
  - Children in African American, Hispanic, and immigrant families, as well as those living in urban areas, experience fewer transition practices than their peers (Iruka et al., 2020).
  - Rural families have less access to high quality ECE programs (Iruka et al., 2020) and communicate less with educators during the kindergarten transition (Sheridan et al., 2020).
- Transition strategies that engage families are the most influential (Cook & Coley, 2017; Sheridan et al., 2020). Family engagement is multi-faceted, including not only engaging in learning activities at home, but also engaging in activities at school. Families' own expectations for their child's transition are also important.
- Implementing a well-rounded combination of transition practices can have a positive influence on children and families. Effective implementation of transition strategies requires joint buy-in and collaboration between ECE and K-12 systems that often have widely variable approaches to support kindergarten transitions (Ehrlich et al., 2021).

## Why Focus on Systems that Support Transitions to Kindergarten?

Many reports and resources exist that provide extensive and creative ideas about the variety of transition *activities* that can support children and families. These activities, however, will only be universally, sustainably, and equitably delivered when there is a *system* of policies and strategies enacted across state and local agencies and organizations. Successful transitions from ECE settings to kindergarten require many parts working together. This report addresses efforts that support families, children, educators, ECE programs, elementary schools, school districts, and community partners – Ready Families, Ready Children, Ready ECE Programs and Elementary Schools, and Ready Systems. Systems that support transition to kindergarten strategies provide essential infrastructure (e.g., human and fiscal resources; policy guidance) that ensure *all* children and families, not just some in some communities, have successful, culturally- and linguistically-sustaining, and effective transition experiences. Although the focus of this report is on transitions to kindergarten,

these systemic issues are representative of other cross-agency transition efforts at other timepoints along the B-5 continuum.

## Colorado's Current Opportunity

Colorado is at a profound moment in time, providing unprecedented opportunities to strengthen transitions to kindergarten. In addition to the federal PDG grants that create capacity for the state to engage in comprehensive, long-term planning for an early childhood system, the state enjoys strong gubernatorial and legislative leadership for early childhood. The recent timeline of early childhood advances in Colorado highlights the importance and urgency of these issues:

- 2018: Governor Jared Polis elected, naming early childhood as one of his administration's priorities.
- 2019: Colorado's legislature funded full-day kindergarten for all students. Nearly 12,000 more children experienced full-day kindergarten in 2019-20, the first year of implementation, compared to the prior school year (see call-out box on next page).

- 2020: Colorado voters passed Prop EE, providing a dedicated funding source for a new Universal Preschool Program that will serve all children in a mixed-delivery system in the year prior to kindergarten.
- 2021: Governor Polis signed into law House Bill 21-1304, creating a new state agency, the Department of Early Childhood (DEC).

These recent accomplishments build on decades of effort to build programs, services, and systems that support young children and their families. Across Colorado, children transition into kindergarten from a variety of both formal and informal ECE experiences (see call-out box). Some of these ECE settings work closely with local schools, but many, for various reasons, do not. Looking to the future, DEC and CDE will be the primary state agency hubs that support kindergarten transitions, and other agencies and state-level non-governmental partners will continue to also have responsibilities. With this shifting policy landscape, the opportunity becomes clear for greater and more intentional alignment, guidance, support, and investment to improve the state's systems and strategies for transitions to kindergarten.

## Conceptual Anchors to the Roadmap

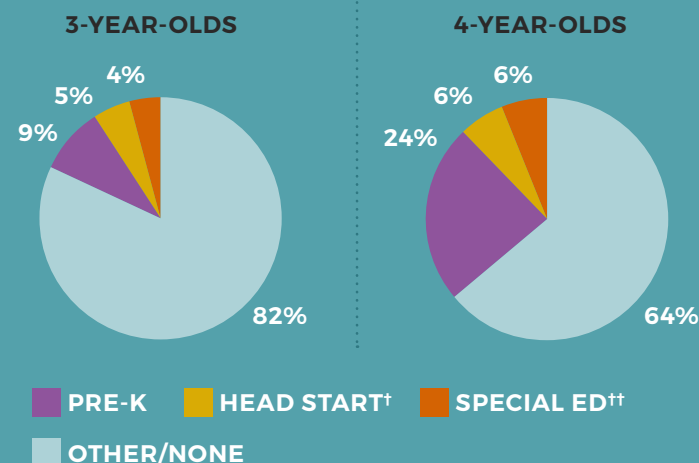
Throughout this Roadmap, four concepts anchor the statewide vision for supporting the transition to kindergarten:

1. **The transition to kindergarten is two-sided.** There are both sending (ECE) and receiving (kindergarten) sides that need to be engaged in supporting transitions to kindergarten. As demonstrated in the call-out box on ECE in Colorado, the sending side is comprised of a variety of both formal programs and informal settings. On the receiving side are kindergarten classrooms in elementary schools. While kindergarten attendance is not mandatory in Colorado, over 99% of children attend kindergarten (M. Rogers, personal communication, December 2, 2021).

## WHERE ARE COLORADO'S CHILDREN IN THE YEAR PRIOR TO KINDERGARTEN?

(National Institute for Early Education Research, 2021)

PERCENT OF POPULATION ENROLLED IN PUBLIC ECE IN 2019-2020

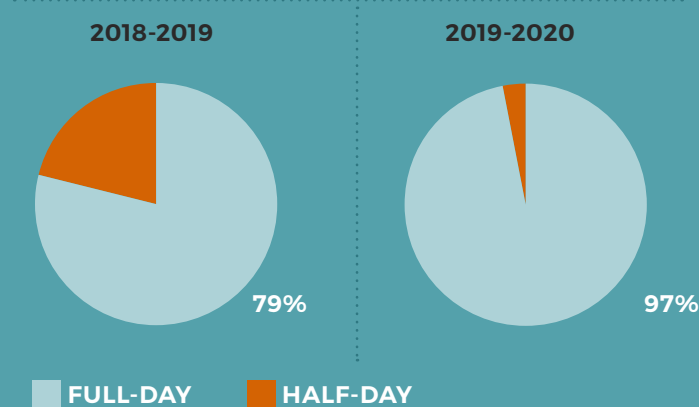


† Some Head Start children may also be counted in state pre-K

†† Estimates children in special education not also enrolled in state pre-K or Head Start

## WHAT PERCENT OF COLORADO'S CHILDREN ATTEND FULL-DAY KINDERGARTEN? (CDE, 2020A, 2020B)<sup>1</sup>

PERCENT OF CHILDREN ENROLLED IN KINDERGARTEN



<sup>1</sup> The percent of children attending full-day kindergarten in 2018-19 and 2019-20 was calculated by dividing full-day enrollment counts published in a CDE press release (2020a) by the total number of children enrolled in kindergarten (CDE, 2020b).





2. Because the kindergarten transition is by nature two-sided, strategies for supporting **kindergarten transitions require inter-agency coordination and collaboration**. The mix of formal programs on the sending side are governed by a variety of agencies – Head Start by the federal government; Preschool Special Education and Colorado Preschool Program (CPP) by CDE; and, by 2023, Universal Preschool, and child care by the new DEC. Kindergarten is governed by CDE and the state’s 179 local school districts. To establish smooth transitions to kindergarten, agencies and programs need to work together. Simple as this sounds on paper, the reality in communities is much more complex...
3. ...and this complexity requires attention to the **interplay of state policy and local implementation**. For example, at the implementation level, children from one ECE program may transition into multiple elementary schools in multiple school districts for kindergarten. Similarly, kindergarten classrooms receive children from many formal

ECE programs and informal family, friend, and neighbor (FFN) settings. While state policy can establish guidelines and processes that apply broadly, local-level efforts are needed to ensure that every child, no matter what their ECE experience and no matter which elementary school they enter, experiences a smooth and joyful transition to kindergarten.

4. Although we emphasize policy at state and local levels, children and families are the most important beneficiaries of effective transition strategies. And yet, sub-populations of children have **inequitable opportunities to experience smooth transitions**. To mitigate this, state and local entities need to center equity in all of their work. Transition practices should be respectful of and responsive to the diversity of families across the state. Policies and strategies must emphasize the importance of promoting inclusive practices for culturally and linguistically diverse children and families, and children with exceptional learning needs.

# Who and What Informed this Roadmap?

This Roadmap was informed by a combination of policy review and community input. Policy guidance and support was provided by staff from OEC in the Department of Human Services, and from the P-3 Office and Migrant Education Office in CDE. The community input process engaged voices from both sides of the transition (i.e., ECE and PreK-12), as well as from a diversity of communities across the state. The COVID-19 pandemic and ensuing impacts on ECE and elementary school settings prevented gathering information from a fully representative sample of Colorado educators. Despite this limitation, the mix of methods and engagement of a diverse array of practitioners and leaders provided a well-rounded set of perspectives and experiences. Specifically, the following activities informed this Roadmap:

- A policy scan and synthesis of current federal and state policies that contain relevant attention to the transition to kindergarten.
- Role-alike and community convenings that brought together leaders from both ECE and PreK-12 who provide services for specific groups including children and families: living in migrant and seasonal communities, receiving special education support and services, experiencing homelessness, and living in Tribal and Native American communities.
- Focus groups with school district personnel, representing both CPP/Preschool Special Education (sending side) and Kindergarten (receiving side).
- Key informant interviews with leaders in state agencies and non-governmental organizations that focus on ECE policies and supports, PreK-12 policies and supports, or both.

- Review of other states' and national organizations' transition-related efforts.

Additional details on each of these can be found in Appendices A-E. Across these methods, local and state leaders alike highlighted a need for more unified messages and mechanisms to support the kindergarten transition. All held a similar vision for more consistent, high-quality, and effective transition experiences for children and families across Colorado. The remainder of this report focuses on strategies to achieve that vision.



# Glossary of Key Terms and Acronyms

## FEDERAL AND STATE POLICY ACRONYMS

KEY TERM OR ACRONYM	DEFINITION
CAP4K	Colorado's Achievement Plan for Kids
CCDBG	Child Care Development Block Grant
CDE	Colorado Department of Education
CO ESSA Plan	Colorado's Every Student Succeeds Act Plan
CO Shines/QRIS	Colorado Shines Quality Rating and Improvement System
CPP	Colorado Preschool Program
DEC	Colorado Department of Early Childhood (to launch in 2022)
ECIDS	Early Childhood Integrated Data System
ELDG	Early Learning and Development Guidelines
ELOF	Head Start's Early Learning Outcomes Framework
ESSA	Every Student Succeeds Act of 2015 (also known as Elementary and Secondary Education Act, ESEA)
HSA	Head Start Act
HSPPS	Head Start Program Performance Standards
IDEA	Individuals with Disabilities Education Act
ISRP	Individual School Readiness Plans
OEC	Office of Early Childhood in Colorado Department of Human Services
READ Act	Colorado's Reading to Ensure Academic Development Act
SB 17-103	Colorado Senate Bill 17-103, Early Learning Strategies in Education Accountability
SBE	State Board of Education, the governing board for CDE
UPP	Universal Preschool Program (to launch in 2023)



KEY TERMS	
KEY TERM OR ACRONYM	DEFINITION
ECE	Early care and education programs and settings that children may experience before kindergarten. ECE includes formal and informal settings including state- and locally-funded Pre-K, Head Start, Preschool Special Education, child care, family child care, and family/friend/neighbor care. ECE settings may be school- or community-based.
FFN	Family, friend, and neighbor care is informal ECE provided in the child's or a caregiver's home by a parent, relative, friend, neighbor, babysitter, or nanny. These settings are typically exempt from licensing or regulations. They may not be required to meet health, safety, and training standards unless they care for children who receive government financial assistance.
Formal ECE	ECE provided in licensed settings that may be partially or fully subsidized by state and federal funding. These settings are governed by rules and regulations established by federal or state policy. Formal programs include Colorado Preschool Program (CPP), Preschool Special Education, Head Start, licensed child care centers and homes, and, beginning in 2023, Universal Preschool.
Informal ECE	Paid or unpaid child care in a child's home or elsewhere that is not regulated by licensing and policy, and typically not supported by public funds. Informal care is often referred to as Family, Friend, and Neighbor (FFN) care.
K-12	A generic term for school districts and the public education system, reflecting the provision of grades kindergarten through grade 12.
PreK-12	School districts that provide pre-kindergarten through grade 12. While most Colorado school districts offer Pre-K programs and services, not all embrace the PreK-12 terminology.
Receiving Side	Kindergarten classrooms, elementary schools, and school districts in which children enroll for kindergarten.
School/Kindergarten Readiness	In Colorado, the SBE defines school readiness as both the preparedness of a child to engage in and benefit from learning experiences, and the ability of a school to meet the needs of all students enrolled in publicly funded preschool or kindergarten. School readiness is enhanced when schools, families, and community service providers work collaboratively to ensure that every child is ready for higher levels of learning in academic content.
Sending Side	The full array of formal and informal, school- and community-based, ECE programs and settings that children experience in the year prior to kindergarten.



# Improving Transitions to Kindergarten in Colorado: Strategies

The remainder of this report details specific strategies that could strengthen and systematize Colorado's approach to transitions to kindergarten. To anchor the recommendations in Colorado's current context, we identified eight strategies from the review of federal and state policies and practices in Colorado and in other states:

1. Engage Families as Essential Partners
2. Child-level Standards
3. Child-level Learning Plans
4. Standards for Ready Schools and ECE Programs
5. Curriculum and Instruction
6. Readiness Assessments
7. Site- and Systems-level Plans
8. Data Systems

These eight strategies reflect a recognition that systemic attention to supporting transitions to kindergarten must include focus on Ready Families (Strategy 1), Ready Children (Strategies 2 and 3), Ready Schools and ECE Programs (Strategies 4, 5, and 6), and Ready Systems (Strategies 7 and 8). This organization emphasizes the importance of supporting the adults, programs, institutions, and systems that influence children's transitions to kindergarten – not placing the sole burden of “readiness” on children. The content of each strategy includes:

- **Strategy Definition:** Brief description of the purpose of each strategy and how it relates to the transition to kindergarten.
- **Why This Matters:** Rationale from both research and practice that reinforce why the strategy is important.
- **Relevant Federal and State Policies:** Federal and Colorado policies that explicitly influence the defined strategy. These indicate where there might be duplication or gaps in policies related to transitions to kindergarten.
- **Colorado Perspectives:** A high-level summary of what was learned about the implementation of transition strategies in Colorado during the community feedback opportunities conducted in 2020 and 2021.
- **Examples of the Transition Strategy in Action:** Practical, real-world examples of effective, systemic efforts that support transitions to kindergarten, related to the strategy, drawn from Colorado or other states.





Each strategy then provides recommendations – or, in keeping with the Roadmap theme, “roadwork” – that can be enacted at state and/or local levels:

- **Recommendations for State Roadwork:** Policy levers that can be enacted by state system and agency personnel, state-level non-governmental partners, and others with statewide responsibility for or influence on transitions to kindergarten.
- **Recommendations for Local Roadwork:** Policy levers or strategies that can be enacted by local leaders, ECE and PreK-12 administrators, elementary school principals, and other professionals in ECE programs, school districts, or community-based organizations.

Within each strategy, opportunities for collaborative, cross-sector work (ECE and PreK-12, together) are provided; these suggest ways to coordinate and align efforts *across* systems. In addition, each strategy includes opportunities specific to the sending/ ECE side and to the receiving/ kindergarten side. Of note, given the imminent creation of a new Department of Early Childhood that consolidates most programs and funding streams that provide preschool services, the ECE recommendations are not program-specific but, rather, intended to encompass all preschool programs and settings, formal and informal. Those involved in improving transitions to kindergarten in any context – state or local, urban or rural, ECE or school district, formal or informal programs – will be able to identify strategies and components that best match their roles and priorities.



# Engage Families as Essential Partners

## STRATEGY DEFINITION

Children's transitions to kindergarten cannot be separated from the experiences that their families have during the transition. Whether or not children attend a formal ECE program, ensuring that families are full partners in the transition is essential. Meaningful engagement of families requires attention to policies and practices that support parents and other primary caregivers as their children's first and most important teachers. It also requires that transition strategies are culturally sustaining and differentiated according to ethnicity, race, culture, home language, socio-economic status, and immigration status.

### *Why This Matters*

Families are the most important and effective supporters of their children's transition and educators' relationships with families shape those experiences. For many families, inclusive of those whose children had formal or informal ECE experiences, the transition to kindergarten requires navigating new schedules, relationships, and expectations. Family engagement during the transition to kindergarten is multifaceted, requiring strategies to involve families in activities at home, at school, and in community settings. Transition practices that support positive relationships between children, families, and educators can increase parent involvement in schools and positively impact child outcomes (Cook & Coley, 2017; Sheridan et al., 2020).

## COLORADO PERSPECTIVES

- ECE and school district leaders emphasize that building relationships is a key ingredient for successful transitions, particularly for families and children with unique needs such as those receiving special education services or experiencing homelessness.
- School districts report providing information to families through various mechanisms such as kindergarten roundups and orientations. Fewer districts encourage the use of transition practices that promote relationship-building between educators and families.
- According to state-level key informants, organizations that have built strong relationships with families and strengthened community ties are the best messengers to share information with families about transitions to kindergarten. Trust is the essential ingredient.
- At a local level, community organizations and public spaces, such as libraries, where families feel comfortable and familiar can provide trusted messages about the kindergarten transition.
- During the pandemic, many school districts used virtual technology to meet with families as part of transition supports. Use of virtual meeting tools addressed some of the challenges traditionally faced by schools (e.g., providing accessible, convenient space and time for educators and families to form productive partnerships).

EXAMPLES OF THE TRANSITION STRATEGY IN ACTION

- Colorado’s *Transition to Kindergarten: Timeline and Checklist* provides ECE and K-12 leaders with a month-to-month menu of transition activities to engage with families that can help ensure information and supports are provided in timely, useful, culturally-sustaining ways.
- Colorado’s *Early Learning and Development Guidelines* and Head Start’s *Early Childhood Learning and Knowledge Center* both provide an array of resources and videos to engage families throughout the transition to kindergarten.

RELEVANT FEDERAL AND STATE POLICIES

Policies on the “sending” side explicitly highlight family engagement strategies during the kindergarten transition. While many K-12 policies emphasize the importance of families, policies do not explicitly reference family engagement as it relates to the transition to kindergarten.

	ECE	K-12
FEDERAL	HSA, HSPPS	--
COLORADO	CO Shines/QRIS	--

STATE-LEVEL ROADWORK RECOMMENDATIONS

SHARED/CROSS-SECTOR

- Collaborate across state agencies to develop aligned strategies and resources for family engagement, emphasizing that all families bring strengths and are their child’s first and most important advocate.
- Develop and disseminate common resources to families, demonstrating that both ECE and PreK-12 agencies and organizations prioritize families.
- Ensure information for families is accessible, in multiple formats, in their preferred language.
- Support legislation, rules, and regulations that direct local communities to include families as essential partners in the development and implementation of transition plans and strategies.
- Identify funding sources that can be blended or braided to support locally offered summer programs that engage families and children transitioning from both formal and informal ECE settings into kindergarten.
- Provide guidance on ways to elevate family engagement in child-, site-, and system-level planning documents. This could include sample sections of plans for family engagement practices such as meetings with ECE and K-12 educators, sharing information and data with families, and other action statements that prioritize families’ engagement during their child’s transition.

SPECIFIC TO ECE/SENDING SIDE

- Ensure professional development offerings provided to both formal ECE programs and informal care providers include explicit attention to transitions to kindergarten and ways in which families can be centered and supported.
- Include families of preschool age children in the development of transition policies.
- Use feedback from families who have gone through the transition process to make improvements to policies, rules, regulations, and plans.

SPECIFIC TO K-12/RECEIVING SIDE

- Encourage school districts to include family engagement strategies *specific to* the transition to kindergarten in their Early Childhood Needs Assessments required by SB17-103.
- Bolster messaging and guidance that the PreK-12 systems’ efforts to build relationships and support families during the transition to kindergarten is critical not only for children who attend district-based Pre-K, but also for children attending community-based ECE and those in informal settings.
- Provide guidance for, and examples of, district websites that effectively link families with kindergarten registration timelines and processes, and transitions events and resources.

## SHARED/CROSS-SECTOR

- Identify innovative outreach strategies designed to reach children and their families who are not served by formal ECE programs, those with unique needs, and those living in rural and remote locations.
- Provide families with information on what learning and child development looks like in preschool and kindergarten. Include information on what can be done at home to support children's learning, and provide resources regarding kindergarten readiness.
- Include families as a key partner at all stages of the development and implementation of transition plans and strategies.
- Ensure communications with families are in their preferred language and provided through multiple modalities (e.g., in-person and virtual; oral and written).
- Connect with pediatric health service providers to share transition-related information and documents with families during wellness check appointments or in waiting rooms.
- Reduce the barriers that may prevent historically underserved families, such as those experiencing homelessness, from enrolling in ECE programs and kindergarten. For example, limit the amount of paperwork needed and/or provide a staff member to assist with completing the necessary paperwork.
- Coordinate a streamlined registration process for Migrant Education program staff and ECE staff to support families with completing registration forms, transferring relevant documents previously collected, and provide interpreters and translators for families as needed.

## SPECIFIC TO ECE/SENDING SIDE

- Ensure public and private, formal and informal, ECE programs understand and use common definitions for unique circumstances, such as homelessness, to determine families' eligibility for support.
- Engage families in conversations about the transition process early and often.
- Support families with tools to advocate for their child's specific needs.
- Regularly provide opportunities for families in migrant and seasonal communities enrolled in formal ECE programs, as well as those utilizing informal/FFN care, to receive support with tools and activities that reinforce their child's kindergarten readiness skills.

## SPECIFIC TO K-12/RECEIVING SIDE

- Provide relevant and timely information throughout the transition process, including:
  - A transparent kindergarten enrollment process to increase families' understanding of requirements, rights, responsibilities, and options to best fit their needs.
  - Inviting families to meet with teachers and observe classrooms to build relationships and empower families throughout the transition to kindergarten. Provide an interpreter as needed.
  - Providing clear communication to families in their preferred language about the services and supports the district offers (e.g., transportation, free/reduced lunch program, special education services, child care services).
- Develop partnerships between families with similar experiences (e.g., living in migrant and seasonal communities) focused on creating avenues for families to share their strengths, skills, and identities with each other, the communities in which they live, as well as with the schools and programs they attend.
- Identify local services or programs available for children and families experiencing homelessness through a school district liaison.
- Designate a family liaison to support coordination between families, formal ECE programs, informal care providers, and the school or district.
- Prioritize hiring staff who are bilingual and racially/culturally representative of elementary populations to serve as liaisons to children and families in migrant and seasonal communities.
- Identify strategies that support children with limited access to formal ECE programs.



# Child-level Standards

## STRATEGY DEFINITION

**Child-level standards refer to learning and development guidelines that define what children should know and be able to do. For transitions to kindergarten, these are often defined as “school readiness” standards.**

### *Why This Matters*

The ECE and PreK-12 systems have different sets of child-level standards or guidelines. Decades of research show that several interrelated domains of development are important for children’s success – physical well-being and motor development, social and emotional development, approaches to learning, language and literacy development, and cognition/general knowledge. As children transition from ECE to kindergarten, child-level standards often shift from being organized by domains of development into being organized by academic content areas. While the emphasis on academic standards has grown over the past few decades, teachers and families emphasize that developmental skills such as self-regulation and social interaction may be the most important skills for children transitioning to kindergarten (Bassok et al., 2016; Vitiello, 2020).

## COLORADO PERSPECTIVES

- Community ECE and PreK-12 personnel report that varying definitions of school readiness create misaligned understandings about which skills, knowledge, and dispositions are most important to nurture in young children.
- District leaders report that misalignment between ECE and kindergarten standards inhibit teachers’ ability to meaningfully share information about children and their families. For example, kindergarten teachers may receive information from ECE educators about children’s development and learning, but much of this information cannot be readily utilized because it does not align to kindergarten academic standards.

## EXAMPLES OF THE TRANSITION STRATEGY IN ACTION

- The 2019 crosswalk of Colorado’s ELDGs with the Head Start ELOF and Colorado’s Academic Standards for Preschool and Kindergarten provides a visual example of aligned child-level standards within the ECE/sending side, as well as across ECE and Kindergarten.
- Minnesota Department of Education’s definition of school readiness includes a clear and explicit description of child readiness, linking the developmental domains and academic content areas that matter most for kindergarten entry.



## RELEVANT FEDERAL AND STATE POLICIES

There are two definitions for children's school readiness defined in policy:

- One in state policy, approved by the Colorado SBE as authorized by CAP4K, refers to readiness as it relates to a child's preparedness to engage and benefit from educational experiences. This definition does not reference specific skills and/or abilities.
- One in federal policy, documented within the HSPPS, that focuses on child-level academic and non-academic skills and abilities.

Multiple child-level standards exist in Colorado:

- As required by CCDBG, Colorado developed *Early Learning and Development Guidelines* (ELDGs) that describe the trajectory of children's learning and development, across multiple developmental domains, from birth to age 8.

	ECE	K-12
FEDERAL	CCDBG, HSPPS	--
COLORADO	CAP4K	CAP4K

- The *Head Start Early Learning Outcomes Framework (ELOF): Ages Birth to Five* presents five broad areas of early learning and shows the continuum of learning for infants, toddlers, and preschoolers.
- Colorado's 2020 Academic Standards, approved by the SBE, define grade-level expectations for both Preschool and Kindergarten across multiple content areas. These define end-of-year expectations. School districts are required to adopt these standards.

## STATE-LEVEL ROADWORK RECOMMENDATIONS

### SHARED/CROSS-SECTOR

- Collaboratively revise a statewide definition of school readiness that embraces multiple domains of development and academic content, and that recognizes and sustains cultural and linguistic diversity.
- Provide explicit guidance that there is no singular benchmark for school readiness, but that children enter Kindergarten with varying experiences and skills, and at varying stages of development.
- Widely disseminate resources and tools – through DEC, CDE, and other statewide organizations – that support understanding of the school readiness definition across ECE and PreK-12 educators.
- Develop and disseminate examples of individual school readiness plans that explicitly align with both the ELDGs and Colorado's Academic Standards for Preschool and Kindergarten. To increase alignment with the ELDGs, the Colorado Academic Standards for Preschool and Kindergarten could explicitly pull out social and emotional development as a priority content area.
- Align ECE and PreK-12 professional development systems and supports to ensure the multiple sets of child-level standards are recognized and to provide opportunity for ECE and kindergarten teachers to discuss key standards related to the transition and their similarities and differences.

### SPECIFIC TO ECE/SENDING SIDE

- Highlight key standards from the ELDGs and Head Start ELOF that are critical for kindergarten teachers and administrators to know and use to inform the transition from preschool settings into kindergarten classrooms.

### SPECIFIC TO K-12/RECEIVING SIDE

- Highlight key kindergarten Colorado Academic Standards that are critical for ECE teachers and administrators to know, particularly as they relate to school readiness.
- Provide links to the ELDGs on CDE's Colorado Academic Standards webpage.

### SHARED/CROSS-SECTOR

- Actively disseminate resources and guidance about how to use the comprehensive crosswalk of Colorado's ELDGs, Head Start's ELOF, and Colorado's Academic Standards for Preschool and Kindergarten. Ensure these dissemination strategies originate from both ECE and PreK-12 agencies and organizations.
- Provide guidance on setting goals in individual school readiness plans that align with ELDGs and Colorado's Academic Standards for Kindergarten and create a trajectory for children's readiness at the end of preschool to ensure success in kindergarten.
- Collaborate across ECE and PreK-12 organizations to design and deliver professional learning to educators and families that addresses the multiple sets of child-level standards. Facilitate discussions about similarities and differences among the standards, and ways to ensure meaningful attention to all domains of children's learning and development.

### SPECIFIC TO ECE/SENDING SIDE

- Provide professional learning and supports to ECE programs and teachers, in both formal and informal settings, that includes examples of learning activities that are developmentally appropriate and standards based.

### SPECIFIC TO K-12/RECEIVING SIDE

- Provide professional learning and supports to school-based PreK and kindergarten teachers, as well as elementary administrators, on standards-based instructional practices that address multiple domains of children's development.





# Child-level Learning Plans

## STRATEGY DEFINITION

**Both ECE and kindergarten teachers invest time to understand each child's developmental progress and, often, document ways in which families and educators, together, can boost learning and development. These documents, or child-level learning plans, especially when shared across ECE and kindergarten contexts can support the continuity of learning experiences and services for individual children and families.**

### *Why This Matters*

Developing learning plans is a particularly important process for subgroups of children who may experience more challenges during the transition to kindergarten, such as those with IEPs (Jiang et al., 2021). The process of developing child-level learning plans provides an opportunity to equitably differentiate supports by building relationships between ECE and kindergarten educators and families. Aligning families' and educators' expectations and goals increases the probability that children experience a smooth transition. It is especially important to intentionally improve a shared approach, as evidence suggests that kindergarten teachers often do not use child-level learning plans developed by ECE providers (Cook et al, 2019; Purtell et al., 2020).

## COLORADO PERSPECTIVES

- ECE programs and school districts reported that child-level transition plans are often created for specific groups of children including those with IEPs and those with behavior support plans.
- Some communities in Colorado have developed standardized transition forms and portfolios across ECE settings and have supported kindergarten educators' understanding and use of the common forms.
- Several attendees of the Building Bridges Transition Summit, a state-sponsored event focused on building community-level cross-sector coordination to support kindergarten transitions, intend to implement strategies to support transition plans for all children, but these efforts have been placed on hold because of the pandemic.
- Special education providers reported that, for children with IEPs, communication and coordination with elementary school staff can be streamlined because the same provider sometimes is able to serve the same child in both preschool and kindergarten.

## EXAMPLES OF THE TRANSITION STRATEGY IN ACTION

- Head Start guidance makes clear that transition plans for children eligible for IDEA services are developed in collaboration with the receiving school system and families.
- Washington State created a voluntary Transition Summary Form that provides opportunity for families, ECE providers, and children themselves to share observations on children's developmental progress and their hopes for kindergarten.

RELEVANT FEDERAL AND STATE POLICIES

Policy requirements for child-level learning plans vary in relation to which children are required to have plans. For example, CAP4K and CPP require that programs and schools develop learning plans for all children served. Alternatively, IDEA and the HSPPS include requirements specific to children eligible for special education services. Beginning in kindergarten, the READ Act requires schools and districts to identify children at-risk for a significant reading deficiency.

	ECE	K-12
FEDERAL	HSPPS, IDEA	IDEA
COLORADO	CAP4K, CO Shines/QRIS, CPP	CAP4K, READ Act

STATE-LEVEL ROADWORK RECOMMENDATIONS

SHARED/CROSS-SECTOR

- Ensure that all policy, rules, regulations, and guidance related to transitions to kindergarten explicitly name the importance of both ECE and kindergarten educators’, as well as families’, engagement in developing child-level plans.
- Collaborate to catalogue and examine all existing child-level planning requirements with the goal of streamlining, simplifying, and reducing duplication of plans required by different policies.
- Collaborate to develop and provide guidance and support for the use of a common kindergarten transition form.
- Develop the state-level infrastructure and supports that would ensure that child-level learning plans developed by ECE providers are consistently transmitted to schools, districts, and kindergarten teachers.
- Provide guidance for setting goals in child-level learning plans that align with Colorado’s ELDGs and Academic Standards, in addition to requirements in IDEA and the HSPPS. Specifically, ensure that goals recognize and support multiple domains of learning and are culturally and linguistically appropriate.
- Provide guidance to educators on how to examine data from state assessments to identify and rectify disparities between groups of children based on home language, race/ethnicity, ability status, gender, and educational setting.

SPECIFIC TO ECE/SENDING SIDE

- Provide examples of, or templates for, child-level learning plans that ECE programs and families can easily share with kindergarten teachers and elementary schools.

SPECIFIC TO K-12/RECEIVING SIDE

- Expand current guidance provided on CDE website about individual school readiness plans (ISRP) to include specific strategies to engage a child’s ECE provider, whether community- or school-based, in contributing to the plans.
- Provide explicit guidance on ways to focus on children’s strengths, not deficiencies, in plans, especially those that address language and literacy development.



## LOCAL-LEVEL ROADWORK RECOMMENDATIONS

### SHARED/CROSS-SECTOR

- Develop templates for transition plans in collaboration with families, ECE providers, kindergarten teachers, and elementary principals.
- Within transition plan templates, center families' priorities for their children's learning, so that plans are congruent with children's history, culture, values, and home language.
- Review information from child-level learning plans to help guide policy decisions and inform improvement plans.
- Develop a process for sending and receiving staff to share/review child-level learning plans and other data.
- Provide suggestions for ways to incorporate goals in child-level learning plans that align with Colorado's ELDGs and Academic Standards.

### SPECIFIC TO ECE/SENDING SIDE

- Develop transition portfolios that include health or immunization records and child assessment information for families to take to their next location if they move to a new school or community.
- Provide guidance to ECE programs and teachers on ways to meaningfully include families' voice, vision, and priorities in the development of learning plans.

### SPECIFIC TO K-12/RECEIVING SIDE

- Provide opportunities for kindergarten special service providers to observe incoming students in their ECE environments, both formal and informal, to gain insight into their strengths, skills, and needs.
- Establish a process to review and adjust learning plans often to reflect a child's growth and development.
- Support families and kindergarten teachers with establishing a plan for ongoing communication about their child's adjustment to a new school.



# Standards for Ready Schools and ECE Programs

## STRATEGY DEFINITION

**ECE program and elementary school standards outline expectations for the quality of the formal settings in which children engage in learning. Within the construct of school readiness, these are often called “Ready School” expectations. Primary characteristics of Ready Schools include high standards that are implemented consistently across classrooms; qualified teachers, ongoing professional learning, and adequate compensation; and strong leadership from administrators.**

## Why This Matters

Wide variation in children’s learning experiences create wide variation in the range of skills that children gain and develop. On the ECE side, variable programmatic quality influences the range of skills with which children enter kindergarten. On the kindergarten side, variable school quality influences the extent to which children’s skills are built upon once they enter kindergarten. Ready Schools and ECE programs ensure that the responsibility of “readiness” is not carried by children. The variability of transition strategies implemented from school to school often comes down to differences in school leadership (Vitiello, Basuel, et al., 2020). School districts with committed leadership tend to implement more consistent and intentional transition practices across multiple elementary schools (Purtell et al., 2020).

## COLORADO PERSPECTIVES

- A 2017 validation study of Colorado Shines/QRIS shows that about half (48%) of all licensed programs were participating in Colorado Shines at a Level 2 or higher. According to the 2021 CPP Legislative Report, approximately 50% of programs serving CPP-funded children are rated at the bottom two levels of Colorado Shines.
- School district leaders reported a lack of clear guidance or messaging about what ‘ready schools’ means in practice or how it aligns with QRIS expectations.

## EXAMPLES OF THE TRANSITION STRATEGY IN ACTION

- The Minnesota Department of Education provides a clear definition of “Ready School” as one that can meet the needs of children and families from culturally and linguistically diverse communities who have a variety of formal and informal ECE experiences prior to kindergarten.
- Ohio’s Department of Education, in collaboration with the state Association of Elementary School Administrators produced *Strong Beginnings, Smooth Transitions, Continuous Learning: A Ready School Resource Guide for Elementary School Leadership*. This guide provides a framework for elementary principals to build and support systems that support young students.

RELEVANT FEDERAL AND STATE POLICIES

CAP4K’s school readiness definition, approved by the Colorado SBE, includes a definition of “ready school” as “the ability of a school to meet the needs of all students enrolled in publicly funded preschool or kindergarten.” Both CO Shines/QRIS legislation and the HSPPS include requirements for monitoring implementation and quality of programs for preparing children for kindergarten. CCDBG authorizes use of quality improvement funds for professional development and training activities aimed at improving outcomes related to children’s entry into kindergarten.

	ECE	K-12
FEDERAL	CCDBG, HSPPS	--
COLORADO	CAP4K, CO Shines/QRIS	CAP4K

STATE-LEVEL ROADWORK RECOMMENDATIONS

SHARED/CROSS-SECTOR

- Continue to elevate in all state-level policy documents, including updates to *Colorado Shines Brighter* strategic plan, the important roles and responsibilities of both ECE service providers and PreK-12 school districts supporting transitions to kindergarten.
- Convene a workgroup to consider a “Ready Schools and ECE Programs” definition that articulates specific strategies focused on transitions to kindergarten (e.g., offer menu of transition activities; engage ECE and kindergarten teachers in shared professional learning).
- Provide examples of what programs and schools look like when they are designed to meet the needs of all children during the transition.
- Develop and support both ECE and elementary school leaders to become more knowledgeable about early development and learning and to intentionally build connections between the ECE and PreK-12 systems. One example of this would be to enact the provision in Colorado’s ESSA plan to create and support a P-3 leadership cadre.
- Partner with the Early Childhood Councils, Family Resource Centers, and other community organizations to expand access to resources that improve the quality of informal and FFN settings.

SPECIFIC TO ECE/SENDING SIDE

- Continue to prioritize resources that can be used to improve ECE programs’ ratings through Colorado Shines.
- Embed transition to kindergarten strategies as key aspects of high-quality ECE programs.
- Include information on successful transition practices in materials and training available to all licensed child care sites.

SPECIFIC TO K-12/RECEIVING SIDE

- Within a “Ready Schools” definition, examine how the early grades (K-2) can be elevated within school and district accountability. If the quality of K-2 classrooms is included in the accountability system, transitions may become more important for elementary leaders and teachers.
- Provide guidance for districts and schools on how to best support principals and teachers in relation to the transition to kindergarten.

### SHARED/CROSS-SECTOR

- Engage local organizations like the Early Childhood Council, Family Resource Center, institutions of higher education, and others to design and deliver shared professional learning opportunities for ECE and PreK-12 administrators and leaders.
- Support personnel from both ECE programs and PreK-12 systems to visit one another's sites. Engage in shared discussion about the similarities and differences in settings and ways to align what children and families experience as they transition to kindergarten.

### SPECIFIC TO ECE/SENDING SIDE

- Provide professional learning to ECE program administrators that is focused on transitions to kindergarten and guiding them to better understand ways to collaborate with public schools.
- Invite kindergarten teachers and school administrators to visit ECE programs with high Colorado Shines ratings.

### SPECIFIC TO K-12/RECEIVING SIDE

- Provide professional learning to ensure elementary school administrators have an understanding of foundational best practices in early childhood.
- Provide time and resources for administrators and teachers to visit ECE programs with high Colorado Shines ratings to better understand children's experiences in these settings.
- Invite ECE administrators and educators, from both formal and informal settings, to visit elementary schools and kindergarten classrooms.





# Curriculum and Instruction

## STRATEGY DEFINITION

**Curriculum and instruction influence children's day-to-day classroom experiences. Creating and supporting ways for early childhood educators in both formal and informal settings, kindergarten teachers, and families to align their instructional strategies creates continuity for children and families.**

### *Why This Matters*

The transition to kindergarten often means that children leave familiar, caring environments – in both formal and informal ECE settings – that are play-based and allow for more independent choice than the school environments they are entering. The transition to kindergarten means that children must adapt to new classroom that often have greater academic expectations and different daily routines. Research consistently demonstrates a lack of alignment between what children experience in classrooms in the year prior to kindergarten and in kindergarten (Vitiello, Pianta, et al., 2020). Creating smooth transitions to kindergarten requires attention to the classroom experiences – including both what is taught and how it is taught – and ensuring alignment across ECE and kindergarten.

## COLORADO PERSPECTIVES

- District and ECE leaders identified curriculum alignment across ECE and elementary schools as a useful transition strategy.
- Some communities have developed transition toolkits that include instructional recommendations for supporting children with transitions, and ways teachers can share curricula and learning expectations with families of new kindergartners.
- ECE and PreK-12 educators report the value of lessons and instructional time for familiarizing children with elementary school environments, especially those that may be new for children such as school buses and cafeterias.
- With Colorado's expansion of full-day kindergarten, some communities expressed concern that more children may be moving from part-day, play-based settings into kindergarten classrooms that, due to accountability pressures, incorporate curriculum and instruction used in 1st grade classrooms 20 years ago. National research affirms this (Bassok et al., 2016).
- Colorado's READ Act has a significant impact on reading curriculum and instruction children experience upon entering kindergarten. In kindergarten, the READ Act requires schools to use scientifically and evidence-based literacy skill instruction.

## EXAMPLES OF THE TRANSITION STRATEGY IN ACTION

- The Minnesota Department of Education developed a video focused on how to support the kindergarten transition in classrooms including recommendations for how to be responsive to individual children's needs.
- While not required for other types of ECE programs or elementary schools, the curriculum and instruction approaches referenced in the HSPPS can help promote school readiness, children's initial adjustment to elementary school, and family's comfort and engagement with the transition process.

## RELEVANT FEDERAL AND STATE POLICIES

The HSPPS include requirements for Head Start programs to use curriculum and instructional approaches that can promote a positive kindergarten transition experience for children and families. Using curriculum and instruction to support transitions is not referenced in K-12 policies or Colorado-specific policies.

	ECE	K-12
FEDERAL	HSPPS	--
COLORADO	--	--

## STATE-LEVEL ROADWORK RECOMMENDATIONS

### SHARED/CROSS-SECTOR

- Provide resources and tools to help ECE and kindergarten educators align curricula.
- Ensure recommended curricular programs, such as those on state advisory lists, complement children's development.
- Provide guidance on best practices for planning meetings between ECE and kindergarten teachers that focus on curriculum and instructional practices.
- Provide recommendations for implementing culturally relevant curricula and instruction.
- Provide guidance on best practices for using transition-specific child-level records, transition plans, and assessment data to inform instruction.
- Provide guidance on using multiple sources of data — assessment data, informal and formal observations, and other evidence — to support differentiating transition supports for individual children.

### SPECIFIC TO ECE/SENDING SIDE

- Provide guidance on curricula available for ECE settings.
- Provide guidance on instructional practices appropriate for 3- and 4-year olds.
- Compile information that can be shared as examples of what quality curriculum and instruction look like in a variety of settings.
- Provide a guide that ECE settings can use to assess how their curriculum and instruction practices support successful transitions.

### SPECIFIC TO K-12/RECEIVING SIDE

- Provide professional learning and supports to kindergarten teachers and administrators that encourage play-based learning in kindergarten.
- To supplement existing recommendations for literacy, provide guidance and lists of evidence-based instructional and professional development programs for other elementary subjects and instructional approaches for kindergarten teachers.
- Provide resources for elementary principals on evidence-based curriculum and instructional approaches that align with children's developmental needs in kindergarten.
- Develop resources to inform and educate ECE teachers and administrators about what literacy curriculum and instruction are like in kindergarten, and provide recommendations on developmentally and age-appropriate practices ECE educators can use to support children's literacy skills prior to entering kindergarten.
- Develop a resource for school district administrators that outlines how Title II funds can be used to support joint professional learning between ECE and kindergarten teachers to collaborate on aligning instruction.



## LOCAL-LEVEL ROADWORK RECOMMENDATIONS

### SHARED/CROSS-SECTOR

- Align ECE and kindergarten curricula with state ELDGs and Academic Standards. Include opportunities for ECE and kindergarten teachers to observe each other's classrooms as part of alignment processes.
- Ensure ECE programs and elementary schools provide protected time for shared or aligned professional learning for educators in formal and informal ECE settings and kindergarten teachers to discuss implementing play-based instructional practices that scaffold depth of learning in content areas.
- Support the development and use of culturally and linguistically appropriate curricula and instructional practices that build on children's prior knowledge, individual learning styles, and incorporate oral traditions.
- Identify and curate resources for families on activities and materials they can use at home to support the transition process.
- Support principals and other school leaders, in collaboration with ECE programs, to develop multilingual and multicultural learning environments that embrace the assets families possess.

### SPECIFIC TO ECE/SENDING SIDE

- Provide resources and training on the use of formal and informal observational assessments to inform curriculum and instruction to support children's success in elementary school.
- Invite kindergarten teachers and elementary administrators to observe ECE settings that utilize the learning environment for developmentally informed instruction.

### SPECIFIC TO K-12/RECEIVING SIDE

- Ensure kindergarten educators are supported to implement aligned, developmentally appropriate, play-based, child-directed practices in kindergarten and early elementary.
- Provide teachers and staff with professional development around trauma-informed practices, and how to recognize and reduce bias.
- Ensure curricula includes a focus on children's social-emotional development.
- Ensure that curriculum and instructional plans support children who do not experience formal schooling prior to kindergarten. For example, ensure plans incorporate opportunities to learn foundational skills that children may not have been exposed to prior to kindergarten.



# Readiness Assessments – Children AND Schools/Programs

## STRATEGY DEFINITION

This strategy, in alignment with the earlier strategies related to standards, emphasizes the need for assessments of *both* children's learning and development *and* of elementary schools and ECE programs. Assessments are formal and informal measures that contribute to a deeper understanding of relative strengths and areas for growth. This strategy links the notion of Ready Children with Ready Schools and ECE Programs.

## Why This Matters

To understand the effectiveness of transition to kindergarten strategies, it is important to have data about *both* how children fare before, during, and after the transition *and* the quality of the learning opportunities and transition strategies provided by ECE programs and elementary schools. This combination of information will provide information that families, teachers, and administrators can use to provide individualized supports to children, as well as to continuously improve the organizational contexts that influence the transition to kindergarten.

## COLORADO PERSPECTIVES

- ECE and K-12 leaders asked if more could be done at the state level to develop shared language around assessment and school readiness to create a foundation for the alignment of what the expectations are for children to be ready for kindergarten.
- School district leaders and state-level personnel highlighted that Colorado Measures of Academic Success (CMAS) assessments included in Colorado's K-12 school accountability system begin in third grade, which may downplay the importance of quality of K-2 experiences and the kindergarten transition.
- School districts often use whole child assessments (e.g., TS GOLD) during ECE and at the beginning of kindergarten (Kindergarten School Readiness Assessment), then transition to academically focused assessments for the remainder of kindergarten.
- School district and ECE leaders expressed concerns about the validity of kindergarten readiness assessment results because children may not be comfortable in testing environments at the beginning of kindergarten and teachers may not have received proper training on test administration and data use.

## EXAMPLES OF THE TRANSITION STRATEGY IN ACTION

- Washington's Kindergarten Readiness System (WA-KIDS) does not isolate child assessment as the only metric. The system includes three components: an assessment of children's development; a requirement that preschool and kindergarten teachers meet together; and a family engagement strategy.

RELEVANT FEDERAL AND STATE POLICIES

At the state level, Colorado’s CAP4K policy requires the use of school readiness assessments aligned to elementary and secondary standards, and the READ Act requires schools to assess early literacy skills during the first 90 days of kindergarten. The HSPPS include technical assessment administration requirements for child-level assessments used in Head Start settings. CDE administers Results Matter, a statewide program that promotes the use of ongoing, observation-based assessment in ECE settings. OEC administers Colorado Shines, the state’s Quality Rating and Improvement System, which rates the quality of ECE programs.

	ECE	K-12
FEDERAL	HSPPS	--
COLORADO	CAP4K, CO Shines/QRIS	CAP4K, READ Act

STATE-LEVEL ROADWORK RECOMMENDATIONS

SHARED/CROSS-SECTOR

Ready Child Assessments:

- Provide guidance to better inform kindergarten educators on the assessment information they receive from ECE programs. This should include details that explain how kindergarten teachers can use assessment results to inform instruction and learning and how understanding developmental data can help guide learning in elementary settings.
- Identify appropriate assessment systems and methods, and provide resources for educators and families on how to understand and use assessment results. Review all assessments to ensure the tools and practices build upon children’s culture, language, learning styles, and individual strengths.
- Provide guidance on how to interpret assessment data for historically underserved populations, including

Colorado’s Native American population and multi-lingual learners, to eliminate potential bias and inaccurate identification of disabilities or special supports.

- Crosswalk commonly used ECE and kindergarten entry assessments such as TS GOLD with the Colorado Academic Standards for kindergarten and ELDGs.

Ready School Assessments:

- Design and implement Ready School and Ready ECE Program assessments to provide balance to the readiness equation. These assessments would examine the qualities of learning environments, teacher collaboration, engagement with families, across both ECE and PreK-12.

SPECIFIC TO ECE/SENDING SIDE

- Provide suggestions on how to align assessments for ECE programs working with numerous schools and school districts who use different assessment products.
- Provide examples of how to share the results of a variety of assessment measures with kindergarten teachers.
- Provide guidance on how families can gather assessment information to share with their child’s kindergarten teacher.

SPECIFIC TO K-12/RECEIVING SIDE

- Provide guidance on the connection between child-level records and information provided by ECE programs and kindergarten school readiness assessments.
- Provide supports and funds to engage PreK-12 administrators in learning about and reflecting on the readiness of their schools to support the learning and development of all young children.

### SHARED/CROSS-SECTOR

- Ensure families are aware of what assessment data are being collected and how they will be used as part of the transition process.
- Provide opportunities for ECE and kindergarten teachers to participate in coordinated professional learning around best practices for assessment administration and designate an agreed upon process for collaborative data discussions.
- Provide teachers with professional learning on how to use data from formative, observation-based, and authentic assessments to guide instruction, curricula, planning, and professional learning.
- Engage ECE staff and kindergarten teachers in the development of individual school readiness and READ plans.

### SPECIFIC TO ECE/SENDING SIDE

- Provide teachers with a process for documenting the results of the variety of formal and informal assessments routinely used that can be shared with kindergarten teachers.
- Incorporate families' observations of their children's development and learning in understanding assessment results. Communicate families' perspectives to kindergarten teachers.

### SPECIFIC TO K-12/RECEIVING SIDE

- Provide professional supports for teachers to use the assessment information provided by the ECE program to inform next steps for each student.
- Provide kindergarten teachers with time to review assessment data with ECE partners.
- Provide guidance on how to use end of year assessment data provided by the ECE program as part of a school readiness assessment process.





# Site- and Systems-level Plans

## STRATEGY DEFINITION

**Site- and systems-level plans are strategic, improvement, and coordination plans developed by ECE programs, elementary schools, school districts, local communities, and/or states that include explicit attention to transitions to kindergarten and provide practical, meaningful benchmarks for collaboration between sending and receiving sides. Related to transitions to kindergarten, a defining feature of these plans is their co-construction that includes both sending/ECE and receiving/K-12 sides.**

### *Why This Matters*

Written, co-constructed plans can provide the mechanism to develop shared understanding, language, and buy-in from both ECE and K-12. Policy levers such as requirements for formal agreements or Memoranda of Understanding (MOUs) between ECE and K-12 providers may not routinely result in meaningful collaboration (Cook et al., 2019). To address this, regulations that require evidence of collaboration (such as MOUs) should be coupled with explicit strategies and supports that engage ECE and kindergarten teachers and administrators in regular, face-to-face interactions to discuss, design, implement and continuously improve collaboration practices. When frequent coordination and communication exist between preschool personnel and elementary school personnel, it was because of conscious decision-making (Purtell et al., 2020).

## COLORADO PERSPECTIVES

- Colorado ECE and PreK-12 leaders report limited coordination and collaboration between ECE programs and elementary schools. Many district personnel are unaware of formal agreements or plans between ECE providers and school districts. Additionally, school district personnel report challenges coordinating with community-based providers.
- As a federal program, Head Start has a clear focus on transition, partnering with families, and sharing information with elementary schools. Local success often hinges on the extent to which school districts are receptive to these efforts.
- Legislation requires some ECE programs to collaborate with school districts (e.g., HSA, CPP), however state agencies do not emphasize that school districts engage with ECE programs. The overwhelming perception from state-level key informants was that the PreK-12 system is not required to engage with community providers.
- State-level interviewees highlighted policy barriers to supporting transitions included a lack of consistency across policies, existing inequities such as not reaching underserved communities, bureaucratic hurdles, lack of resources, and accountability systems.

## EXAMPLES OF THE TRANSITION STRATEGY IN ACTION

- The National Head Start Association and Council of Chief State School Officers created a toolkit that provides information and resources for state agencies, school districts, Head Start, and other ECE programs to establish shared system-level plans.
- The Illinois State Board of Education provides a list of suggested transition plan elements for programs to implement over the course of the entire year prior to kindergarten.
- The New York State Education Department provides a self-assessment tool for school districts to identify strengths, challenges, and next steps with transition plans and strategies.

RELEVANT FEDERAL AND STATE POLICIES

Inter-agency, collaborative plans are one of the most frequently required transition strategies in Colorado and federal policies. The HSA requires Head Start agencies to coordinate transition practices and other services with any school districts into which children transition. To strengthen this, ESSA requires school districts receiving Title I funds to develop agreements with Head Start and other ECE programs to increase coordination around transitions.

	ECE	K-12
FEDERAL	HSA, HSPPS	ESSA
COLORADO	CO Shines/QRIS, CPP	Colorado’s ESSA Plan, SB 17-103

STATE-LEVEL ROADWORK RECOMMENDATIONS

SHARED/CROSS-SECTOR

- Ensure that all state-level policy documents and strategic plans explicitly name the important roles and responsibilities of both ECE providers and PreK-12 school districts in supporting transitions to kindergarten.
- Provide guidance on how to engage families in the development of MOUs and other cross-sector plans.
- Ensure that sub-populations of children are explicitly addressed in plans. For example, ensure Migrant Education staff in both local ECE programs and PreK-12 school districts are engaged in developing plans.
- Provide resources, funds, technical assistance, and other incentives for community-based teams of ECE programs and PreK-12 systems to develop site- and systems-level plans. Ensure elementary principals and district leaders are part of these efforts.
- Highlight exemplar communities that have engaged in cross-program and cross-agency planning efforts.
- Using the policy inventory in this report, state agencies responsible for sending and receiving systems could collaborate to examine all existing planning requirements with the goal of streamlining, simplifying, and aligning.
- Support local EC Councils or other local entities with funds and supports to engage in cross-sector planning.

SPECIFIC TO ECE/SENDING SIDE

- As DEC works to align different ECE programs and funding streams, effort should be invested in establishing a unified approach to transitions to kindergarten, and be embedded in policies related to Universal Preschool, CCDBG, Head Start, Migrant and Seasonal Head Start. Collaborating with CDE to ensure alignment with Preschool Special Education will also be important.
- Provide guidance on how to use public funds (e.g., Universal Preschool, CCDBG, Head Start, IDEA, ESSA’s Title I and II) to support collaborative planning between ECE programs/teachers and elementary schools/kindergarten teachers to support transitions.

SPECIFIC TO K-12/RECEIVING SIDE

- Provide guidance, resources, funds, and other incentives for school districts to embed collaborative transitions to kindergarten strategies that engage ECE programs in their district and school improvement plans.
- Encourage school districts to identify supports they need to improve transition practices as part of early learning needs assessments and improvement plans.
- Consider data on access gaps for ECE services, particularly for children with unique developmental and learning needs, when identifying school districts with the greatest need for improvement funds.

### SPECIFIC TO ECE/SENDING SIDE (CONT'D)

- Identify strategies that will encourage and support ECE programs to proactively engage in collaboration and coordination with elementary schools.

### SPECIFIC TO K-12/RECEIVING SIDE (CONT'D)

- Develop guidance and example MOUs to support school district compliance with ESSA and effectively plan and coordinate relationship-based collaborations with Head Start and other ECE programs to support the kindergarten transition.

## LOCAL-LEVEL ROADWORK RECOMMENDATIONS

### SHARED/CROSS-SECTOR

- Include community-based agencies and groups, such as EC Councils and Family Resource Centers, in the development and implementation of plans. This can be particularly helpful in supporting families that have been historically underserved by the education system.
- Build awareness of the importance of kindergarten transition for elementary school leaders, teachers, and staff by emphasizing the goals, purpose, and/or vision articulated in site- and systems-level plans.
- Develop an MOU between ECE programs and school districts to support collaboration across sectors.
- Establish primary points of contact within both ECE programs and elementary schools/districts to develop plans for supporting the transition to kindergarten.
- Create a process to routinely review and revise transition plans with collaborative teams of stakeholders.
- Recognize and develop a system for outreach to informal and FFN care providers to inform them of transition-related activities throughout the year.
- Include a communication timeline in planning documents that specifies what transition information will be shared, who is responsible for sharing it, when the information will be shared with families.
- Promote collaboration and coordination between ECE programs, particularly community-based programs, and elementary schools. Joint professional development is one way to do this.
- Make shared work time and space a priority for ECE, district, and school and leaders, and teachers. Protect release time and ensure substitute teachers are available.
- In planning documents, prioritize hiring teachers and leaders from the communities served. For example, include priorities for hiring early education teachers who speak children's home languages and share cultural backgrounds.
- Highlight the roles local EC Councils can play in supporting and implementing kindergarten transition practices, forming meaningful cross-sector relationships, and developing plans.



### SPECIFIC TO ECE/SENDING SIDE

- Prioritize outreach and enrollment practices for children from historically underserved populations, including children from families experiencing homelessness.
- Identify differentiated strategies for formal and informal, community- and school-based, and urban and rural ECE programs that will enhance each program's relationships with elementary schools.
- Identify and connect with the lead transition coordinator within the school district and elementary schools children will attend.

### SPECIFIC TO K-12/RECEIVING SIDE

- Designate school district personnel to coordinate on-going meetings with Migrant Education, Head Start, and Migrant and Seasonal Head Start personnel focused on how they can work together to support children and families in migrant and seasonal communities with the transition to kindergarten process.
- Include information about the federal guidelines for the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act and contact information for school district liaisons on all district and school kindergarten registration forms.



## STRATEGY DEFINITION

Systematic procedures for sharing data and information about children and families is a key mechanism for communicating children's progress and readiness as they transition into kindergarten. While individual ECE programs and elementary schools may engage in data-sharing practices, a statewide Ready System would establish integrated data systems that link assessment data from ECE to elementary data. An early childhood integrated data system (ECIDS) collects, integrates, maintains, stores, and reports information from early childhood programs across multiple agencies within a state that serve children and families from birth to age 8.

### *Why This Matters*

The broad purpose of an ECIDS is to provide integrated, cross-program data that inform decisions about early childhood policies, services, and education. An ECIDS may or may not be part of a state's broader statewide longitudinal data system. Alignment efforts that include sharing data and information between ECE programs and kindergarten can help to inform instruction, organizational improvement efforts, and an overall understanding of how the state supports young children as they transition across programs and services.

## COLORADO PERSPECTIVES

- ECE programs use many data systems, which often vary by program type (e.g., Head Start, CPP), and these data are infrequently shared with elementary schools. In addition, elementary educators often do not utilize the data that ECE programs share.
- Colorado's PDG B-5 Needs Assessment highlighted the need for greater data sharing and integration both within the ECE system (among different programs) and across ECE and PreK-12.
- Except for ECE programs administered by CDE, Colorado currently lacks a common student identifier that facilitates a longitudinal data system. As the state transitions to a new DEC and Universal Preschool, the state will need to examine how to link data across DEC and CDE.
- Assessments used by ECE (e.g., Results Matter) and elementary educators (e.g., Kindergarten School Readiness) are sometimes, but not always, the same. No matter which assessment tools are used, elementary educators often cannot access children's preschool records unless someone physically hands them over.
- ECE and school district leaders identified the important role EC Councils can play in facilitating information sharing between the B-5 and PreK-12 systems.

## EXAMPLES OF THE TRANSITION STRATEGY IN ACTION

- As part of planning for the new Department of Early Childhood, Colorado convened a Transition Advisory Group on Data, Innovation, Technology, and Accountability subgroup. This work builds on that of ECLC's Data subcommittee. Among the resources emerging from these efforts are recommendations focused on an ECIDS (LeBoeuf, 2021).

RELEVANT FEDERAL AND STATE POLICIES

Aligned requirements in HSA and ESSA mandate that Head Start agencies and LEAs accepting Title I funds create comprehensive transition plans, commonly called MOUs, that include data sharing and records transfer plans. HSPPS include provisions for using data to refine school readiness goals. Specific to the receiving side, Colorado’s CAP4K requires elementary schools to report readiness assessment data that is warehoused by the state. Although not part of the policy review for this project, HB08-1364 put in place legislative language related to cross-departmental data interoperability.

	ECE	K-12
FEDERAL	HSA, HSPPS	ESSA
COLORADO	CAP4K	CAP4K

STATE-LEVEL ROADWORK RECOMMENDATIONS

SHARED/CROSS-SECTOR

- Ensure that data-sharing that supports transitions to kindergarten is included as the state considers “what do we need to know, what knowledge are we missing, and who needs it?”
- As data systems are designed, ensure that the unique characteristics of children and families (e.g., home language, culture) can be captured in order to ensure equitable access to services.
- Develop an ECIDS that effectively links child-level data between ECE programs and PreK-12 school districts.
- Identify ways to collect information consistently and thoughtfully on the housing status of children and families.<sup>1</sup>
- Provide ECE and kindergarten educators with a system and professional supports for sharing child assessment and other data.

SPECIFIC TO ECE/SENDING SIDE

- Provide suggestions on how ECE programs that transition children into multiple elementary schools or districts can align and share data efficiently and effectively.
- Provide ECE programs and families information on how to identify and share data they have that will improve the transition process.
- Provide information to ECE providers on how to find data on the kindergarten(s) their children will attend.

SPECIFIC TO K-12/RECEIVING SIDE

- Provide guidance for elementary schools and districts on how to align assessment and data collection systems with ECE programs.
- Provide guidance on the connection between data provided by ECE programs and school readiness assessments and early literacy measures.

<sup>1</sup> CDE is unable to support recommendations not aligned to SBE positions on data collection and use.



## SHARED/CROSS-SECTOR

- Formalize data sharing agreements between ECE providers and school districts to help ensure data are shared for all children.
- Create simple and easily accessible methods for sending and receiving teams to document information, data, and meetings throughout the transition process.
- Use shared data to understand how families are utilizing community services and where more targeted outreach and advocacy is needed.
- Gather feedback from teachers, administrators, and families to determine how best to share information and data with an emphasis on whole child development.

## SPECIFIC TO ECE/SENDING SIDE

- Provide information to families on the different kinds of assessments children will experience in kindergarten and support families to actively engage with kindergarten teachers about these data.
- Work with kindergarten teachers and administrators to learn which data they most want to see and show them the types of data collected by ECE programs.

## SPECIFIC TO K-12/RECEIVING SIDE

- Collect data on the number of children experiencing homelessness in the district and potential barriers that are preventing families from accessing services and support.
- Use data transmitted from ECE providers to begin or continue intervention services as soon as possible.
- Use a common database for data transmitted from ECE providers and provide professional supports for kindergarten teachers and administrators on how to use this data.
- Include the Colorado Migrant Occupational survey in the general kindergarten registration process and share information with Migrant Education Program staff at CDE to identify children eligible for Migrant Education support and services.



# Overall Recommendations and Conclusion

With Colorado's recent historic investments in both Universal Preschool and Full-Day Kindergarten, as well as the creation of a new Department of Early Childhood, the opportunity to elevate the importance of, and create systemic supports for, transitions to kindergarten has never been greater. Informed by systematic engagement with Colorado's ECE, PreK-12, and community leaders at state and local levels, in addition to reviews of policies and practices, this Roadmap provides multiple paths to strengthen transitions to kindergarten in the state.

Notably, this Roadmap emphasizes that effective transitions require attention to Ready Families, Ready Children, Ready Schools and ECE Programs, and Ready Systems. This Roadmap provides recommendations both big and small, at state and local levels, and with implications for policy and practice. The rich array of perspectives and policy contexts presented in this Roadmap point to several high-level conclusions:

1. By improving policies and providing resources on best practices, state leaders can promote stronger engagement with families as essential partners in the transition to kindergarten.
2. Alignment of policies and practices across different types of ECE programs (e.g., Head Start, CPP, Preschool Special Education, the yet-to-be-launched Universal Preschool Program, and FFN care) can simplify transition to kindergarten plans, processes, and practices, especially for elementary schools and districts.
3. Aligned policies and practices between ECE ("sending") and PreK-12 ("receiving") systems can promote smoother experiences for children and families, as well as teachers and administrators responsible for implementing transition plans.
4. State agencies and non-governmental partners can play a pivotal role in supporting meaningful cross-sector systems building efforts focused on the kindergarten transition through collaboration, coordination, and engagement in alignment activities.
5. By highlighting the important roles of the ECE and PreK-12 systems in the kindergarten transition, leaders at state and local levels can better understand their role in influencing and enacting strategies to support the kindergarten transition.
6. Strong partnerships between state and local entities can make the transition to kindergarten effective in all communities across the state, while also ensuring they are culturally and linguistically responsive to local contexts.

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# Appendix A: Federal and State Transition-related Policy Synthesis

Based on a comprehensive document review, this synthesis organizes the strategies, personnel supports, and outcomes referenced in federal and state policies relating to the transition to kindergarten. Three main questions frame this summary:

What transition to kindergarten practices exist in state and federal policy? Are the transition practices intended to be implemented by sending or receiving systems, or both?

What personnel supports, and organizational and system building strategies do transition-related policies reference? What referenced personnel supports and strategies are intended to be implemented by sending and receiving systems?

What family and caregiver, and child-level, outcomes are referenced in transition policies? What outcomes are referenced in ECE policies (sending)? What outcomes are referenced in K-12 policies (receiving)?

**Step 1 Federal and State Policy Scans:** Federal and state policies were scanned for references to the transition to kindergarten. We searched policies listed below for the terms ‘transition,’ ‘school readiness,’ ‘kindergarten

readiness,’ and other related terms. Policy references were retained if they aligned with the definition of transition to kindergarten highlighted in this document.

**Step 2 Policy Coding:** Policy references captured in Step 1 were categorized based on references to transition-related strategies, personnel supports, organizational and systems strategies, and outcomes. Each reference was also coded as *sending*, *receiving*, or *both* depending on which system was intended to implement the policy.

**Step 3 Policy Synthesis:** The final step synthesized transition to kindergarten policy references in Table A2 to address the three framing questions. Transition to kindergarten practices are highlighted in the top row. The checkmarks cross-reference the policy language with strategies and related outcomes. Further, each checkmark is color-coded to allow the reader to match checkmarks to specific policies which are listed in the bottom row. For example, transition-related assessment practices are referenced in the fifth column and the color-coded checkmarks relate to CAP4K and the HSPPS. The last column permits the reader to cross-reference policies with transition to kindergarten strategies and outcomes.

TABLE A1. POLICIES INCLUDED IN FEDERAL AND STATE SYNTHESIS

FEDERAL POLICIES SCANNED	COLORADO POLICIES SCANNED
Child Care Development Block Grant (CCDBG) Every Student Succeeds Act of 2015 (ESSA) Head Start Act (HSA) Head Start Program Performance Standards (HSPPS) Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA)	Colorado’s Achievement Plan for Kids (CAP4K) Colorado’s ESSA Plan Colorado Preschool Program Policy Documents (CPP; Handbook, Rules, CO Revised Statutes 22-28-109) Colorado Senate Bill 17-103 (SB 17-103) Colorado Shines Quality Rating and Improvement System (CO Shines/QRIS; Rating Criteria, CO Revised Statutes 26-6.5-106)
<p>* We also searched the General Rules and Regulations for Non-Home Child Care Providers and found no specific references to the transition to kindergarten in this licensure policy.</p> <p>* The Results Matter Handbook was also scanned. It was not included in this policy synthesis because it is an initiative authorized by policy (IDEA and CPP), not a state policy in the traditional sense.</p>	

**TABLE A2. DOCUMENT SYNTHESIS OF COLORADO AND FEDERAL POLICIES RELATED TO TRANSITION TO KINDERGARTEN**

Transition to Kindergarten Practices	Site- and Systems-level Plans	Standards	Curriculum & Instruction	Assessments	Child-level Learning Plans	Additional Child & Family Services	
Personnel Supports, Organizational Strategies, Systems Building Strategies							Policies w/ Support References
Personnel Supports (e.g., professional learning, coaching)	PP	PP	P	P	P	P	CAP4K <sup>B</sup> , CO ESSA Plan <sup>B</sup> , CCDBG <sup>S</sup> , HSPPS <sup>S</sup>
Within Organizational Strategies (e.g., QRIS, governance, operations)	P	PP				P	CO Shines/QRIS <sup>S</sup> , HSPPS <sup>S</sup>
Cross-Sector Systems Building Strategies (e.g., MOUs, joint PD, data sharing agreements)	PPPPP				PPP		CO ESSA Plan <sup>B</sup> , CO Shines/QRIS <sup>S</sup> , CPP <sup>SB</sup> , ESSA <sup>RB</sup> , HSA <sup>S</sup> , HSPPS <sup>S</sup> , IDEA <sup>B</sup>
Outcomes							Policies w/ Outcome References
Family Comfort w/ Transition Processes and Logistics	PPP		P			PP	CO Shines/QRIS <sup>S</sup> , ESSA <sup>R</sup> , HSA <sup>S</sup> , HSPPS <sup>S</sup>
Family Collaboration w/ Educators	PPP				PP		CO Shines/QRIS <sup>S</sup> , ESSA <sup>R</sup> , HSA <sup>S</sup> , HSPPS <sup>S</sup>
Family Involvement with Programs and Schools						PP	HSA <sup>S</sup> , HSPPS <sup>S</sup>
Child Initial School Adjustment	PPP	P	P			PP	CO Shines/QRIS <sup>S</sup> , ESSA <sup>R</sup> , CCDBG <sup>S</sup> , HSA <sup>S</sup> , HSPPS <sup>S</sup>
Child Outcomes (not school readiness)	PP	P			PPP		CO Shines/QRIS <sup>S</sup> , CPP <sup>S</sup> , SB 17-103 <sup>R</sup> , CCDBG <sup>S</sup> , HSPPS <sup>S</sup> , IDEA <sup>B</sup>
School Readiness (Child, Program, and School Outcomes)	PP	PP	P	PP	P	P	CAP4K <sup>B</sup> , CO Shines/QRIS <sup>S</sup> , HSPPS <sup>S</sup>
Policies w/ Transition Practice References	CO ESSA Plan <sup>B</sup> , CO Shines/QRIS <sup>S</sup> , CPP <sup>SB</sup> , SB 17-103 <sup>R</sup> , ESSA <sup>RB</sup> , HSA <sup>S</sup> , HSPPS <sup>S</sup>	CAP4K <sup>B</sup> , CO Shines/QRIS <sup>S</sup> , CCDBG <sup>S</sup> , HSPPS <sup>S</sup>	HSPPS <sup>S</sup>	CAP4K <sup>B</sup> , HSPPS <sup>S</sup>	CAP4K <sup>B</sup> , CO Shines/QRIS <sup>S</sup> , CPP <sup>S</sup> , HSPPS <sup>S</sup> , IDEA <sup>B</sup>	CO Shines/QRIS <sup>S</sup> , HSA <sup>S</sup> , HSPPS <sup>S</sup>	

**Notes.** Ps indicate # of policies that reference strategy and outcome. <sup>S</sup> = Sending agency responsible for policy implementation. <sup>R</sup> = Receiving agency responsible for policy implementation. <sup>B</sup> = Both sending and receiving agencies responsible for policy implementation. See Step 3 for an explanation of this table.



## Appendix B: Role-alike and Community Convenings

**Role-Alike Convenings:** The purpose of the role-alike convenings was to provide an opportunity for individuals with similar roles or responsibilities from various agencies or programs serving similar populations of children and families to engage in open dialogue about issues, solutions, and resources needed to support effective and equitable transitions to kindergarten. The convenings gathered specific perspectives of professionals who primarily support “special populations” or sub-groups of children in Colorado who have been historically marginalized. Organizations that serve these specific populations were invited to participate in a series of four role-alike convenings that were hosted virtually between the end of September through the end of October 2020.

**Community Convenings:** In February 2020, the OEC hosted the *Building Bridges Transition Summit* in partnership with the CDE’s P-3 Office. Following a competitive application process, eight community-based teams from across the state were invited to participate in this two-day event. The purpose of the Summit was “to bring together inclusive community teams who are representative of sending and receiving programs, services and learning environments to better equip them to support children and families through transition.” Because of COVID-19, there had been no explicit follow-up with teams who participated in the Summit. However, as the National P-3 Center began outreach to the field in September 2020, these communities were a logical starting point to engage in deeper discussion about their successes and challenges related to community-wide transition plans. Subsequently, six community convenings were held between November 2020 and January 2021.

## Appendix C: District Focus Groups

The National P-3 Center hosted focus groups with school districts across the state to learn more about the opportunities, needs, and challenges related to the transition to kindergarten. School district representatives were targeted because of their under-representation in Community Convenings hosted from November 2020 – January 2021. Three focus groups were held on March 30 and April 1, 2021 using a facilitation protocol co-developed with the Colorado Department of Education (CDE) and approved by the Educational Data Advisory Committee (EDAC). CDE supported recruitment and the final set of participants were from seven school

districts located in five regions in Colorado (there are a total of eight regions in the state). District contexts varied with participants from urban-suburban areas, outlying cities and towns, and remote communities. Districts also varied in size with participants from small districts (< 1,000 students), a participant from a district with roughly 2,000 children, and participants from medium to large sized districts ranging from 16,000 to over 60,000 students. Participants had a variety of job titles including early childhood administrators or directors, elementary principals, readiness coordinator, and literacy director.

# Appendix D: Interviews with State Agency and Non-Governmental Partner Key Informants

The National P-3 Center contracted The Evaluation Center at the University of Colorado Denver to conduct interviews with key informants from state agencies and nongovernmental organizations engaged in supporting transitions to kindergarten for children and families across the state of Colorado. In collaboration with OEC and CDE representatives, a list of 40 potential interviewees were sent an initial invite, and 36 completed interviews between August and September 2021. The agencies and

organizations represented by the interviewees are highlighted in Table D1. Interview notes were coded for key themes including interviewees roles in relation to the transition to kindergarten, who they believed were the effective messengers for kindergarten transitions, perception of current policies and policy barriers, and their ideas on an optimal system for supporting kindergarten transition strategies.

TABLE D1. STATE AGENCY AND NONGOVERNMENTAL ORGANIZATIONS REPRESENTED BY INTERVIEWEES

STATE AGENCIES	NONGOVERNMENTAL ORGANIZATIONS
Colorado Department of Education (CDE) Office of Early Childhood (OEC) within the Colorado Department of Human Services (CDHS) Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment (CDPHE) Governor’s Office	Early Childhood Councils Leadership Alliance Early Childhood Leadership Commission Early Connections Learning Centers Early Milestones Colorado Family Resource Center Association Invest in Kids Mile High Early Learning Parent Possible

# Appendix E: Review of Other States’ and National Organizations’ Transition-Related Efforts

Over the course of 2020 and 2021, the National P-3 Center reviewed the guidance on transition to kindergarten from over 30 states, the District of Columbia and national organizations (e.g., Head Start Early Childhood Learning and Knowledge Center, Council of Chief State School Officers). Staff reviewed websites, documents, videos, and tools. Content, as well as examples of presentation and distribution of information on successful policies and strategies, were analyzed and summarized based on the questions:

- What is in transition plans?
- How was the plan developed?
- What does success look like for children, families, schools, and community partners? What supports are necessary at the state and local level?
- What policies did they identify as supports or barriers to successful transitions?

Information from this review is embedded in examples and recommendations throughout this document.