



WSA Issue Brief: Benefits of Pre-K to 3

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What is Pre-K to 3?

Pre-K to 3 is an approach to education that focuses on the foundational learning of children ages three to eight years of age. In this model, early learning providers, such as Head Start and state pre-schools, partner with local school districts to provide a continuum of educational services.

Why Pre-K to 3? ⁱ

- Prevention of social, emotional, cognitive, and health concerns
- Develop strong language and literacy skills
- Develop social and emotional resilience
- Establish patterns of engagement (child, family, and community) in school and learning
- Close early achievement gaps

Key Elements of Pre-K to 3 ⁱⁱ

- *School Organization & Leadership:* From Superintendents to early learning leaders, everyone is involved and informed.
- *Qualified Teachers:* Degree requirements and continuous professional development for teachers are critical to high quality instruction.
- *Classrooms as Learning Environments:* Classroom environments must be appropriate to developmental levels of children, safe, secure, and conducive to learning.
- *Alignment & Coordination:* Curriculum alignment from grade to grade and result sharing to inform instruction as children move up from year to year allows adjustment of teaching practice to meet the needs of each child.
- *Assessment & Accountability:* Evaluation of child progress each year keeps teachers knowledgeable and accountable for adjusting curriculum for continuous improvement.
- *Family & Community Engagement:* Involved families and community members ensure future child success.

Lessons Learnedⁱⁱⁱ

- Pre-K + Full Day Kindergarten + Grades 1, 2, & 3 adjusting curriculum for skill retention = SUCCESS.
- Children who possess solid reading skills by the end of 1st grade and build upon them through 3rd grade have higher graduation rates and are more likely to continue education.
- Solid readers at the end of 3rd grade are ready to transition to higher level teaching practices ensuring continued success. 3rd grade is the benchmark for information retention.
- For every child receiving quality Pre-K services, savings of up to \$3000 in annual remediation costs per child are achievable.

A Pre-K to 3rd Grade Success Story in Bremerton, Washington^{iv}

“Six years ago, the Bremerton School District forged a community-wide plan to increase kindergarten readiness and literacy. Leaders are intentionally aligning up, down and across systems so that all children enter 3rd grade at reading level. Today, the district is nationally recognized for its leadership in early childhood education, connecting preschool to full-day kindergarten and beyond. What began as a collaboration between Head Start programs, preschools and child care providers has matured into a cohesive early learning system. Bremerton boasts free full-day kindergarten, aligned curriculum through 3rd grade and dedicated professional development that supports teacher implementation. The district also works hard to cultivate new partnerships, engage community members, and utilize current research and data to drive the process. The result is significant gains in student achievement and increased quality of instruction. For example, in 2009, 66 percent of Bremerton kindergarten students entered school knowing their letters—up from just 4 percent in 2001.”

ⁱ Information from: Kauerz, Kristie (2009). PreK—3rd: Macro-Level Perspectives. Harvard Graduate School of Education presentation.

ⁱⁱ Bogard, K. and Takanishi, R. (2005). PK-3: An Aligned and Coordinated Approach to Education for Children 3 to 8 Years Old. *Social Policy Report: Giving Child and Youth Development Knowledge Away*, Volume XIX, Number III. Foundation for Child Development.

ⁱⁱⁱ Bremerton School District

^{iv} Foundation for Child Development (2010). *Starting Strong in Washington State Policy Brief: Early Learning Lessons and Success Stories*. <http://www.fcd-us.org>.