



The Need

Research shows that aligned, quality PreK-3rd grade learning opportunities help kids achieve third-grade literacy—an important benchmark and a foundation for continued academic success. To make sure all kids stay on track to reach this key milestone, we must start strong and start early with PreK-3rd grade alignment, coordinating resources and curriculum across this critical continuum. Such alignment sustains and strengthens students’ gains and helps ensure that they stay on track to read well by third grade.

The Solution

We all have a role to play in ensuring that young Minnesotans start strong. From parents to school principals, private early childhood education providers to district elementary teachers, everyone needs to be at the table to foster strong collaboration and planning.

A SEAT AT THE TABLE FOR KIDS: HOW YOU CAN ADVANCE PREK-3RD GRADE ALIGNMENT

Learn more in the report, ‘Starting Strong: Pre-K through 3rd Grade Success Stories from Across Minnesota’: minncan.org/research/starting-strong

Parents

ASK How do local pre-K graduates do in later grades? How does your child’s elementary school align curriculum and strategies across grades, or with pre-K programs in their community? In pre-K programs, how familiar are staff with local elementary schools? Do they partner with schools to align supports and ensure smooth transitions from pre-K to the elementary years?

DO Talk to staff at your child’s school or program about their perspective, and to find out if there is any coordination—in curriculum, resources, professional development, etc.—within and across programs, grades and buildings. Find ways to be a parent advocate by attending school board meetings, joining a parent committee or scheduling a meeting with school leaders.

School principals

ASK Could your school do more to partner with local pre-K providers, or to facilitate coordination across the early grades—both in your building and with others nearby?

DO Make time for classroom teachers to collaborate and develop ideas in partnership with school leadership. Reach out to other stakeholders in the community to build relationships and a larger action plan.

Policymakers

ASK Do schools have the tools and resources they need to implement PreK-3rd grade alignment? What policy barriers stand in the way of early childhood educators trying to work together? How do parents in your community feel about their early learning options, and what would they like to see change?

DO Visit schools and early learning programs in your district and find out what they’re doing to align PreK-3rd grade. Bring educators’ and parents’ ideas and perspectives back to the Capitol!

Elementary school teachers

ASK How much communication and collaboration happens in your school within and across grade levels? What conversations do you need to have with your principal, colleagues and parents in order to start—or ramp up—alignment efforts?

DO Advocate for shared planning time and professional learning communities, and consider creating a Google Drive to share standards, goals, assessments and more with your peers.

Pre-K providers

ASK How do nearby elementary schools coordinate with pre-K programs, and how can you join in? Are there ways for you to partner with—and learn from—other early childhood education providers in your community?

DO Network with other providers and seek out professional development opportunities. Join or start a local group of early educators to meet regularly, share strategies and develop resources and tools.

Superintendents + school boards

ASK Is your district focused on PreK-3rd grade alignment? How can you encourage schools and educators to see this as priority?

DO Make PreK-3rd grade alignment a strategic goal for you district, and secure buy-in from administrators, educators and the larger community. Explore partnerships with community-based providers to promote PreK-3rd alignment, share data and develop strong enrollment pathways and pipelines.

