

WEBINAR SERIES  
Achieving Excellence and Innovation in  
Family, School, and Community Engagement

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**Harvard Family Research Project (HFRP)**



**Harvard Family  
Research Project**

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## Today's Moderator



**Tom Schultz**

*Project Director for Early Childhood Initiatives*

*Council of Chief State School Officers*

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## Webinar 6: Ensuring School Readiness Through Successful Transitions

### Presenters:

- **Moderator: Tom Schultz**, *Project Director for Early Childhood Initiatives, Council of Chief State School Officers*
- **Jacqueline Jones**, *Senior Advisor on Early Learning to the Secretary of Education, U.S. Department of Education*
- **Judith Jerald**, *Early Childhood Advisor, Save the Children*
- **Sharon Ritchie**, *Senior Scientist, FPG Child Development Institute, University of North Carolina-Chapel Hill*
- **Whitcomb Hayslip**, *Early Childhood Education Consultant and Former Assistant Superintendent, Los Angeles Unified School District*

April 14, 2011

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## Opening Remarks



**Jacqueline Jones**

*Senior Advisor on Early Learning to  
the Secretary of Education  
U.S. Department of Education*

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# Children and Family Transitions to School

*Lessons Learned and Critical Strategies*



**Judith Jerald**  
*Early Childhood Advisor*  
*Save the Children*

## Why Are Smooth Transitions Important?

- For children
- For parents
- For the “sending” teacher or caregiver
- For the “receiving” educational setting

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## Elements of a Successful Transition to School

- Parent-School Relationship
- Teacher-Child Relationship
- Child-School Transition
- Child-Peer Relationships



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## Strategies to Support Preschool Transitions

- Plan ahead
- Provide supportive guidance, activities, and materials for parents and children
- Make home/school connections before the start of school



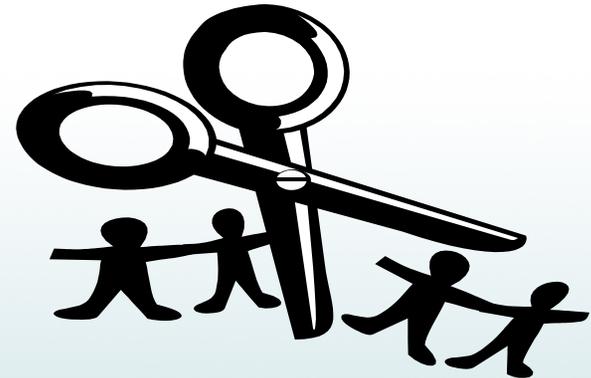
## Strategies to Support Preschool Transitions, continued

- Connect parents and children with each other before school starts
- Connect 6–8 weeks into the school year
- Offer parent volunteer opportunities from the start

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## Supporting Transition into Kindergarten: School Outreach Efforts

- Connecting preschool and kindergarten faculty
- Parent meetings; field trip to the school
- Home visits
- Scamp (school camp)
- Volunteer opportunities



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## Getting to Know the Child

- Portfolios
- Parent-Teacher meetings
- Individualization



## What Is the Transition Like for Parents and Children?

- Addressing their feelings
- Preparing their children
- Getting to know the teacher...who is getting to know their child

## Parent-Teacher Tools

- Things a parent and teacher can do at the beginning of the year
- Tools for parents and teachers to use together on behalf of the child

## Learning and Growing in Kindergarten: Parent-Teacher Discussion Prompts

- If I had to describe my child in 10 words, they would include...
- What I like most about my child is...
- What I find most challenging about caring for my child is... because...[for parents]
- What I find most challenging about teaching the child is... because...[for teachers]
- The activity I most enjoy with my child is...because...
- Three hopes I have for my child during this school year are...

## Discussion Prompts, continued

- My child is happiest when...
- The kinds of play and learning activities my child enjoys most are...I think this is because...
- What upsets my child most is...I think this is because...
- To comfort my child, I...
- I think my child's greatest strengths are...
- I think my child needs help with...

## Setting Goals Together: Parents and Teachers

- What are our goals for the child now? Over the next 3 months?
- What kinds of experiences can we give the child to help him or her reach these goals?
- How can we work together to best support the child?

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## Challenges

- Time and parent availability
- Resources
- Special populations
- Knowledge
- School/community investment



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## Save the Children U.S. Programs Early Steps to School Success

*Serving children birth to 5 in rural school districts  
throughout the United States*



**Save the Children®**

**Judith Jerald**

Early Childhood Advisor

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**FirstSchool:**  
*Seamless Education for Young Children  
and Their Families*



**Sharon Ritchie**

*Senior Scientist*

*FPG Child Development Institute*

*University of North Carolina-Chapel Hill*

## Seamless Education

Altering the institution of school to become a place that ensures seamless education in its largest sense requires time and a commitment to an alignment between beliefs and actions, between data and professional development, and between research and practice.

Alignment across all educational programs and practices should result in a continuum of learning and increased consistency of children's experiences through integrated curricula, programs, and practices across home, preschool, and school.

## FirstSchool: Fostering Continuity PreK–Third Grade

- A preK–third grade public school initiative
- Grounded in research, evidence, and 4 years of collaborative planning and multisite piloting
- Committed to school success for all with special emphasis on African American, Latino, and low-income students

## Why PreK–3 Education?

- More than one-quarter of 4-year-olds in the nation are in school-based programs.
- Fewer than one-third of America's fourth graders are at or above grade level in literacy.
- Retention in the early grades costs states millions of dollars and is an ineffective and often detrimental intervention.
- Studies show investing solely in preK is not enough. While a well-designed preK does improve children's social and cognitive skills, these gains can fade out as children advance beyond kindergarten.

## Our Impetus: NCEDL

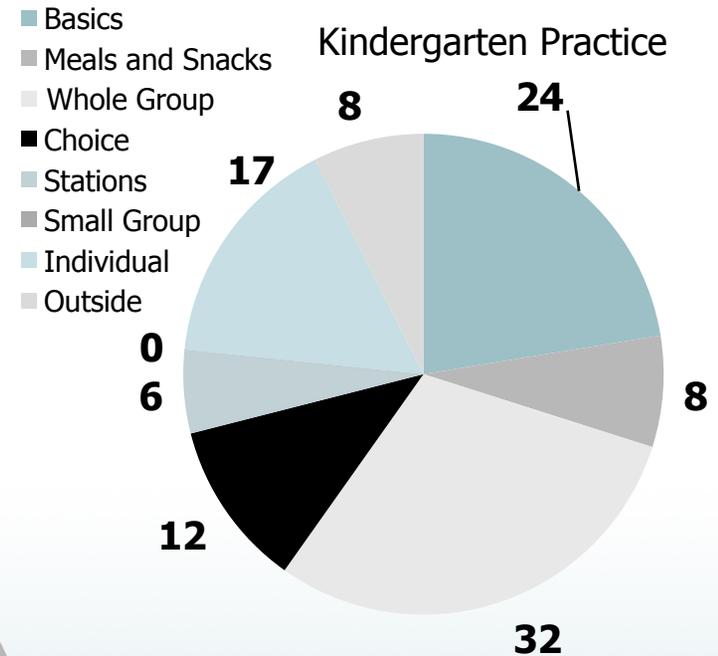
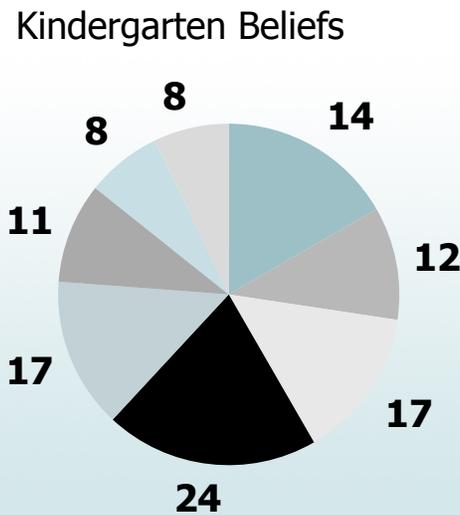
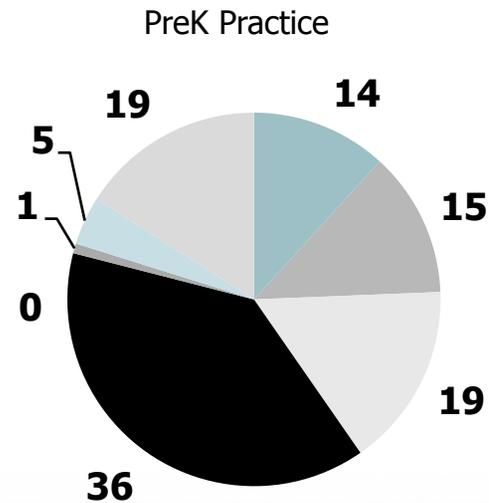
### 11-state study of state-funded preK

- Little or no alignment between preK and elementary
- Low ratings on global classroom quality
- Poorest children are in the lowest-quality classrooms
- Superficial task demands and didactic instruction
- 44% of the day is spent in transitions and routines
- Minimal time is spent in meaningful interactions with teachers

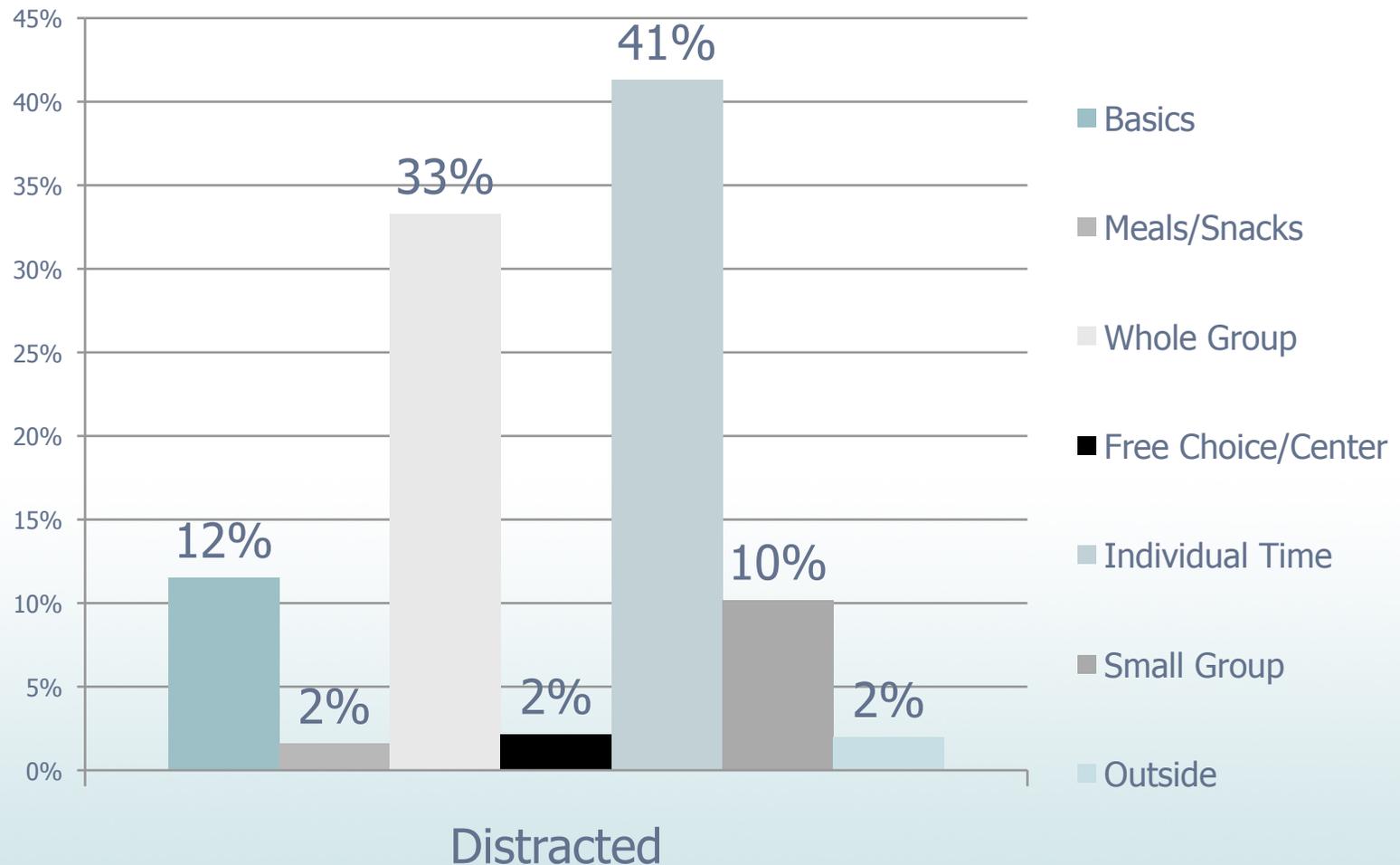
## FirstSchool Partnering With Schools to

- Use data to drive and monitor change efforts and inquire into practice
- Develop collaborative structures to support communication and continuity across the age span
- Re-Think foundational processes

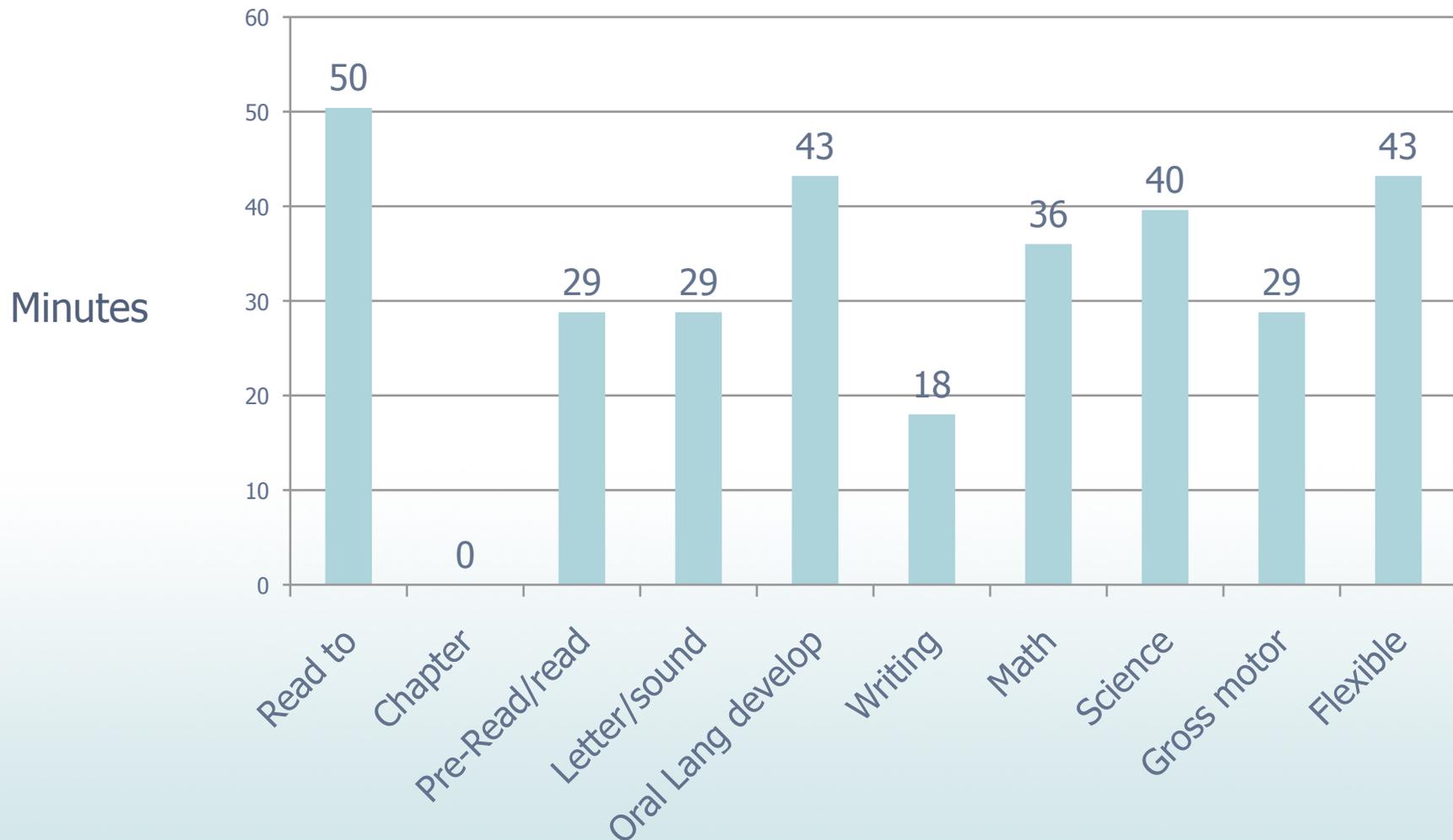
# Improve Transitions: Explore Beliefs and Practice



## Determine Effective Groupings



## Balance Children's Experiences



## Collaborate for Continuity Across the Age Span

- Ready Schools: Getting schools ready for children instead of children ready for schools
- Professional Learning Communities
  - Vertical
  - Horizontal
- Family Engagement Teams

## Re-Think Foundational Processes

- Attachment
- Self-Regulation
- Representation

## Getting the Ideas Out

See our website: [www.firstschool.us](http://www.firstschool.us)

- Winter 2008 issue of *Early Developments*, FPG's periodical, is dedicated to FirstSchool
- *Issues in PreK–3<sup>rd</sup> Education*
- Beginning School: U.S. Policies in International Perspective
- FirstSchool Design Guide: Optimal Learning Environments for Children 3 to 8
- Interactive Tool: Financing PreK in Public Schools

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## FPG Child Development Institute

**FirstSchool** is a project of the UNC FPG Child Development Institute. FPG research and outreach have shaped how the nation cares for and educates young children.

[www.fpg.unc.edu](http://www.fpg.unc.edu)



UNC

FPG CHILD DEVELOPMENT INSTITUTE

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**For further information, please contact:**

**[www.firstschool.us](http://www.firstschool.us)**

FPG Child Development Institute, UNC



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# Transition Kindergarten in LAUSD: *A New Step on the P–3 Continuum*



## **Whitcomb Hayslip**

*Early Childhood Education Consultant and*

*Former Assistant Superintendent*

*Los Angeles Unified School District (LAUSD)*

## Issues We Faced

- California is one of only four states with a required kindergarten admission birthday as late as December. Most states have moved to an August or September cutoff.
- California's kindergarten standards are among the most rigorous in the country.
- The Grade 2 California Standards Test (CST) English-language arts scores raised concerns about the district's current preschool through Grade 2 continuum, particularly for English learners.

## How We Responded

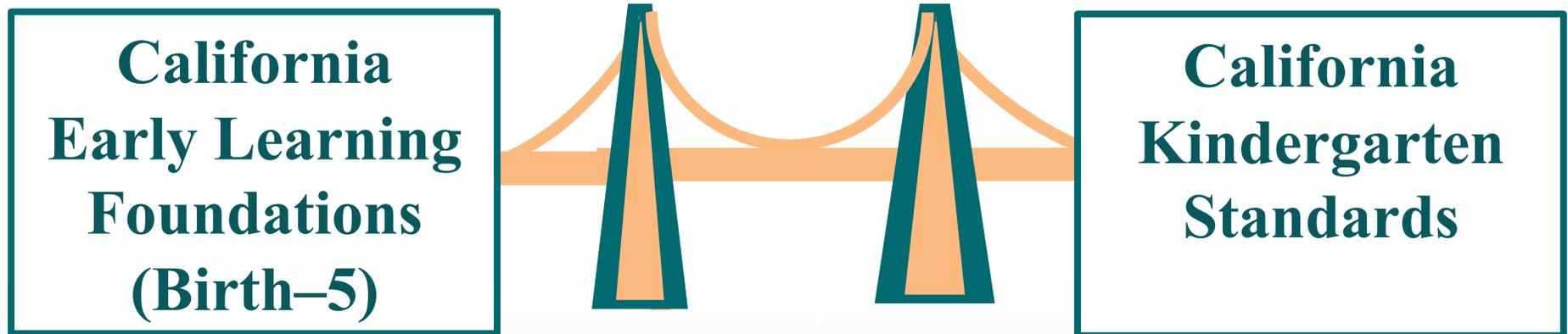
- Superintendent and chief academic officer proposed new Transition Kindergarten Program for the youngest kindergartners.
- Packard Foundation and Boeing Corporation provided funding for program development.
- Title I funds allocated to support initial program implementation and professional development.
- 36 schools selected for initial Fall 2010 implementation, with an additional 80 schools added for Fall 2011.

## Goal of Transition Kindergarten:

Provide the youngest kindergartners with a readiness year that is developmentally appropriate and will better prepare them for success once they enter traditional kindergarten.

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## Building the Bridge for Parents and Teachers



## Understanding the Connection

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## Traditional Kindergarten

**Decoding**

**and**

**Language/Communication  
Social/Emotional**

## Transition Kindergarten

**Language/Communication  
Social/Emotional**

**and**

**Decoding**

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## Engaging Families: Strategies That Worked

- **Use of both traditional and ethnic media**
  - Effective tool in outreach to diverse families
- **Personalized contacts from both teachers and administrators at Transition Kindergarten sites**
  - Provides a positive first impression and lays the foundation for ongoing home/school collaboration
- **Use of parent “ambassadors”**
  - Builds a parent-to-parent communication system and provides opportunities for parent involvement in the program

## Engaging Families: Strategies That Worked, continued

- **Teaming with preschool staff members to bridge from their existing relationships with families**
  - Ongoing trusting relationships and articulation between preschool and kindergarten teachers helps to facilitate the transition process for families.
- **Use of family members as “expert informants” in program planning**
  - Taking the time to learn about children from their families improves the instructional program and reinforces the family’s role in their child’s education.

## Family Engagement Activities

### 1. Family Languages & Interests Interviews

- Teacher/family interviews focusing on language and culture

### 2. *Abriendo Puertas/Opening Doors*

- Comprehensive parent leadership and advocacy training program

### 3. *Me Gusta Leer/I Like to Read*

- Home-lending library program in English and Spanish

### 4. *Bring Me a Book*

- “Parents as First Teachers” training program

## Family Engagement Activities, continued

### 5. Family Activity Nights

- Workshops for entire families with hands-on activities focusing on literacy and mathematics

### 6. Road to College Family Field Trips

- Saturday field trips for families to colleges and museums, with specific activities for adults and children

### 7. Volunteer Opportunities

- Multiple options for families to provide support in the classroom, at the school, and from their homes

### 8. Newsletters & Connect Ed Communication System

- Use of print materials and technology to provide families with current information and updates

## Transition Kindergarten – Next Steps

- Give time and support to the development of 600 high-quality Transition Kindergarten programs over the next 3 years.
- Share the lessons learned from the development of Transition Kindergarten with staff along the P–3 continuum. Leverage the focus on the “new” program to enrich all of P–3.
- Inform instruction through increased access to meaningful data along the entire P–3 continuum for both parents and staff.

## Transition Kindergarten – Next Steps, continued

- Explore alternative administrative structures that both honor the training and expertise of early childhood educators and create stronger connections between preschool and K–3 programs.
- Increase opportunities for ongoing collaboration between schools and the families and caregivers working with children birth to 3 throughout our community.

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**For further information, please contact:**



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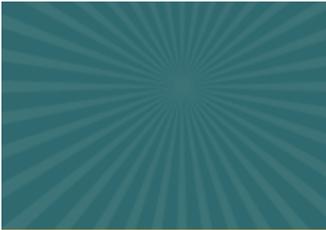
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# Questions and Answers