The Neag PK3 Leadership Program
Leaders matter to ensure successful pathways to high school graduation
Session Goals

✧ Explore 3 pillars of CT initiatives –PK-3, Standards, Leadership
✧ Share research regarding neuroscience and brain development with conceptual and practical framing
✧ Establish common ground and understanding of the importance of the PK-3 continuum
✧ PK3 Leadership
✧ Connecting and advocating
The CT Context

- Office of Early Childhood
- Birth to Grade 3 Leaders
- Standards –
  - Early Learning and Development Standards
  - K-3 Social, Emotional and Intellectual Habits
  - Connecticut Core Standards
- PK-3 Leadership
“...an effective principal is going to look at what’s not happening or what can happen differently in the teaching and learning process to support that child to grow.”

“I’ve seen elementary school principals who I can tell have never stepped into an elementary school, who come from middle school and high school, where their positions are highly regarded and come into and elementary school and, honestly, as bright and as smart as they are, and as much respect and regard I have for them, they have to work really hard to really understand the dynamics of young children, and the effectiveness that they can bring if they add more insight and knowledge to it.”

“I think that a lot of my colleagues have elementary school background and experience and probably a few more have secondary level experience, so I think early childhood background and experience is not a given.”
Starting at the End: What are we after?*

Better Outcomes for Children

1. Strong foundational cognitive skills (literacy/communication and mathematics)
2. Strong social and emotional competence
3. Consistent patterns of engagement in school and learning

* Kristie Kauerz Presentation 7.13.15
Form a triad and identify three to five topics that are essential for leadership development of early childhood programs (PK through grade 3)
Earlier is better!

Source: Center on the Developing Child-Harvard University
Human Brain Development

Neural Connections for Different Functions Develop Sequentially

- Sensory Pathways (Vision, Hearing)
- Language
- Higher Cognitive Function

FIRST YEAR

Birth (Months) | (Years)
---|---
-8 -7 -6 -5 -4 -3 -2 -1 | 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 | 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 13 14 15 16 17 18 19

Executive Function: Skills for Life and Learning
Executive Functions

Inhibitory control of actions and attention
- self-control or discipline
- selective or sustained attention

Working memory
- holding information in mind & working with it

Cognitive flexibility
- thinking “outside the box”
- adapt to different rules
Executive Function Skills Build Throughout Childhood and Adolescence

Source: Center on the Developing Child-Harvard University
Executive Function Over School Age Development

- Planning
- Long-term Goal Setting
- Motivation
- Grit
- Engagement
- Persistence
- Interest
- Self-control
- Cognitive Flexibility
- Working Memory
- Orienting
- Reactivity

Birth to 3
Early Childhood
Middle Childhood
Adolescence

C. Cameron, University of Buffalo
Supporting Executive Function, Language, Literacy and Mathematical Thinking

- Positive impact of specific strategies on:
  - Working memory
  - Reasoning
  - Math
  - Attention
  - Reading
  - Vocabulary
High levels of dramatic play improve self-regulation when children practice making the rules and then by regulating their own and their playmates’ behaviors.

Blair and Raver, 2015,
Barnett et al, 2011,
Bodrova & Leong, 2003,
Vygotsky, 1977
Reflection

Does the research regarding brain development, executive function and play influence best practices in your organization?

How?
“Now if we are to prevent the achievement gap and develop a cradle-to-career educational pipeline, early learning programs are going to be better integrated with the k-12 system.”

Arne Duncan
U.S. Secretary of Education
National Association for the Education of Young Children Conference,
November, 2009
Washington DC.
The continuum of learning that spans the traditional boundaries of prekindergarten (learning-based programs children experience before they enter school) and the early elementary grades (k-3).
Key Elements

- High-quality PK for all
- Full-day kindergarten
- Highly qualified teachers (with at least bachelor’s degrees)
- Sharing, planning, and professional learning across grade levels
- Strong leadership
- Quality, developmentally appropriate, aligned curriculum and standards PK to third grade
- Shared Accountability (preschools, public schools, parents, community)

*Leading Pre-K-3 Learning Communities: Competencies for Effective Principal Practice*
National Association of Elementary School Principals
Studies Informing PK-3

- Chicago Longitudinal Study
- Early Childhood Longitudinal Study, Kindergarten Class of 1998-1999
- Head Start Impact Study (Final Report-2010)
- National Head Start/Public School Early Childhood Transition Demonstration Study
- National Longitudinal Survey of Youth, 1979: Child Surveys
- National Institute of Child Health and Development (NICHD) Study of Early Childhood and Youth Development (SECCYD)
Why?

- Issues of consistent quality in PK and K-3
- Lack of alignment within PK/K-3 and across PK/K-3
- The opportunity and achievement gaps start early...and continue...
PK-3 Video, New America Foundation
Horizontal Alignment

Alignment within each grade level
State Funded PK

School Readiness | Child Day Care | Preschool Development Grant | Smart Start
Vertical Alignment

3
2
1
FDK
PK
0-3
Horizontal and Vertical Alignment

Improves EACH grade level and ACROSS grade levels
Effective PK-3 Systems

- Quality
- Rigor
- Reduce Opportunity and Achievement Gaps
- Equity
- Alignment and coherence
- There is a focus on children’s pathways through the system
Reflection

Does the importance of the PK-3 continuum resonate with you? Explain.
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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Partnership</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Core Development Team</td>
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<td>Expert Advisory Panel</td>
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<td>Executive Style Academy</td>
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<td>Researchers and Practioners</td>
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<td>Cohort</td>
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<tr>
<td>Non-credit – resume builder</td>
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Program Goals – as a result of participating in this program participants will:

- Know – standards, research, developmental approaches, best practices, systemic models, advocacy and communication strategies
- Understand – alignment, quality, rigor, intentional teaching, job-embedded learning, collaboration, change, partnerships
- Be able to do – approach challenges with a growth mindset, use effective adult learning, create an action plan, identify quality factors when observing teaching, lead for equity, communicate with credibility
Module Topics

- **Curriculum and Instruction** – PK-3rd Grade – standards, social & intellectual habits, intentional teaching, UBD, child development and exceptionalities, brain research, learning environment

- **Assessment Practices with Young Children and Evaluation of Teachers and Programs** – balanced approaches, TEVAL evidence guides, quality indicators for programs

- **Leading for Equity, Excellence and Early Success** – partnerships, family engagement, advocacy, politics, systems thinking, cultural responsiveness, cycles of inquiry and continuous improvement
Resources
LANGUAGE DIVERSITY AND LITERACY DEVELOPMENT RESEARCH GROUP
increasing opportunities-to-learn for all // dedicated to the science of learning // informing research, practice, and policy

First School
Transforming PreK–3rd Grade for African American, Latino, and Low-Income Children
EDITED BY
Sharon Ritchie
Laura Gutmann
FOREWORD BY AISHA RAY

Leading Anti-Bias Early Childhood Programs
A GUIDE FOR CHANGE
Louise Derman-Sparks
Debbie LeeKeenan
John Nimmo
Foreword by Mariana Souto-Manning

Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning (CASEL)
What can superintendents do?

- Keep it simple and focused
- Support joint professional development
- Focus on results (with appropriate time frames)
- Create a PK-12 culture where early childhood education is valued

The Foundation for Child Development
What can principals do?

- Embrace the PK-3 early learning continuum
- Ensure developmentally appropriate teaching
- Provide personalized, blended learning environments
- Use multiple measures to guide growth in student learning
- Build professional capacity across the learning community
- Make your school a hub of PK-3 learning for families and communities
What can boards of education do?

- Provide resources
- Establish and support high-quality PK-3 programs
- Establish policies to create strong PK-3 alignment
- Ensure that PK is part of the district identity, language and decision making (PK-12)
- Advocacy
Life-long Kindergarten

Mitchel Resnick – MIT Media Lab
What can I do to initiate or improve PK-3 approaches in my organization?