

LEADING THE WAY: P-3 EDUCATION IN COLORADO

OVERVIEW OF COLORADO'S P-3 LEADERSHIP CADRE

The building of a strong foundation that promotes success in school and life begins early in a child's life. In fact, the fields of neuroscience, child development and other related disciplines suggest that positive early learning experiences can significantly influence the development of children's cognitive, linguistic, physical, and social-emotional skills. And, yet, there is increasing recognition that while high-quality early learning experiences are important, they do not do enough to ensure success for all children. (1)

It turns out that those early years of formal schooling matter, too. In fact, it is ongoing access to high quality classrooms and schools from preschool to third grade that provides opportunities for all children to build continuously upon the foundational skills developed during the first four years of life. (2) With a growing awareness of the significance of providing children and their families with high quality educational experiences through Grade 3, there is a heightened sense of urgency, and therefore investment, among states and school districts to leverage and align resources that promote consistent high quality experiences across grade levels.

Recognizing the capacity of leaders in schools and districts to positively impact the delivery of educational experiences in schools and their potential to promote alignment across existing services within surrounding communities, a P-3, or preschool through grade three, approach is emerging in school districts across the nation. Having a P-3 orientation is essential to successfully supporting children and families, and those partnering with them, as they move within and across grade levels, ensuring smooth transitions every step of the way. At the forefront of this national movement, Colorado Department of Education's (CDE) Teaching and Learning Unit initiated the Colorado P-3 Leadership Cadre to support knowledge-building and resource-sharing among those school and district leaders dedicated to Colorado's youngest learners and their families.

Colorado's P-3 Leadership Cadre, which includes elementary school leadership teams representing various regions and school sizes from across the state, convenes as a professional learning community and is co-created between participating teams and CDE. Over a two-year period, cadre participants commit to meet in face-to-face or virtually, so that participants have the opportunity to:

- 1: Learn from one another about efforts to create a P – 3 system in schools,
- 2: Learn from state and national experts about effective P – 3 models,
- 3: Work to co-develop a P – 3 leadership model for the state, and
- 4: Establish demonstration sites for the state. Participants also agree to share learning experiences through the Colorado Association of School Executives (CASE).

A primary learning guide, used by the cadre is Leading Pre-K-3 Learning Communities: Competencies for Effective Principal Practice, <http://www.naesp.org/llc>, a 2014 publication of the National Association of Elementary School Principals (NAESP). Learning about the core competencies outlined by NAESP, as well as having the opportunity to share experiences and additional P-3 resources with one another helped to better equip leadership teams with the knowledge and determination needed to take on the important challenge of improving the quality and coherence of early learning programs along the P-3 continuum in their local schools and communities.

There is growing recognition among early childhood experts that high-quality early learning opportunities are necessary but not sufficient to ensure long-term success for all children. (1)

Consistent access to high-quality classrooms and schools from preschool to third grade provides opportunities for all children to build continuously upon the foundation skills developed during the first four years of life. (2)



PRIORITIES & ACCOMPLISHMENTS

With the launch of the P-3 Leadership Cadre, school leadership teams that include principals, preschool and K-3 teacher leaders, instructional coaches among others, had the opportunity to convene with other teams from across the state as a professional learning community over a period of two years.

Whether through in-person or virtual exchanges, intentional engagement with others on the endeavor of aligning programming, resources and experiences for staff, students and families fostered increased awareness of current research on school reform practices, thought partnership on effective planning and implementation strategies, an increased sense of connection to others doing similar work and the motivation to take measured steps resulting in school improvement for Colorado's youngest students.

As schools and districts across Colorado use evidence-based frameworks and resources to guide the work of examining and strengthening the services provided to improve outcomes for students, preschool through Grade 3, and their families, leadership teams set priorities and goals based on their unique context. School leadership teams successfully identified a meaningful entry point for this work pursued noteworthy goals. Highlights of Colorado's P-3 Leadership Cadre priorities and accomplishments are described below:

- **Creating a mission and vision statement specific to P-3 grade levels** proved to be a significant accomplishment at Global Primary Academy, in the Mapleton School District, Taking this foundational step supports a more appropriate and cohesive approach to addressing the unique educational needs of the youngest students. According to Global Primary Academy's Director, A.J. Staniszewski, "The P-3 alignment work fits well within the umbrella mission and informs the school's approach to how students move towards 4th grade and beyond."
- **Systematically analyzing student data** is a commitment integral to promoting alignment across grade levels at both Global Primary Academy in Mapleton and Queen Palmer Elementary School in Colorado Springs, District 11. Using a continuous improvement framework to problem-solve and make decisions grounded in data ensures that all students receive appropriate levels of support. Director Staniszewski highlighted that the Multi-Tiered Systems of Supports (MTSS) is used three times a year to help accomplish this goal.

And, at Queen Palmer Elementary, Principal Julie Fahey points to the necessity and value of prioritizing time for teachers to review data in order to inform instructional decisions, grouping decisions and interventions and reports this has proved helpful in more effectively supporting children growth. And, that by using a shared assessment system across Kindergarten and First grade, there is an increased understanding and communication around student's strengths and progress and that they have been better able to track student growth as a result.

"Principals alone can account for 25 percent of a school's impact on student learning and have the second largest in-school impact on student achievement after teachers." ⁽³⁾



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- **Making connections that align programming along the early learning continuum.** Increasing program efficiency and effectiveness is fundamental to creating coherence across grade levels. Principal, Michelle Malvey, reports that teachers at Lincoln Elementary School in the Thompson School District have been conducting classroom visits in PreK and Kindergarten to support teachers in vertical planning and to promote smooth transitions between grades. Building this bridge between Pre-K and elementary classrooms supports alignment along the early learning continuum through shared practices. And, at the Colorado School for the Deaf and Blind, preschool through second grade levels now operate under one administrator, instead of two. As a result, the teaching teams collaborate in meetings and even share professional development.

Tera Wilkins, the Family-Centered Early Education Program Administrator makes the connection between this change and the now deeper conversations about essential P-3 topics like transitions and meeting the developmental and education needs of students. Jackie Crabtree, Principal of Cotopaxi Consolidated Schools I Freemont School District RE-3, and her leadership team are highlight the strategy of aligning the curricula by a one or two content areas at a time and, then, expanding that alignment each year. Aligning curricula is part of the comprehensive efforts need to effectively support programming along the continuum.

- **Ensuring developmentally appropriate practices across grade levels** is an essential component of any comprehensive alignment strategies and is an identified goal for both Lamb Caro, an Early Childhood Administrator in the Thompson School District and Shelley Smith, the Director of Early Childhood Programs for the Eagle County School District. Both leaders emphasized the value of using available resources and the importance of having regular conversations with teachers about strengthening classroom practices while providing the necessary ongoing supports. Looking closely at what developmentally appropriate practices look like at each grade level has been eye-opening for educators at all levels. When working to meet the rigorous Colorado Academic Standards, effective P-3 leaders rise to the challenge of using high quality teaching strategies that provide meaningful and inclusive learning opportunities for all students.
- **Strengthening family engagement** is a widely held goal across Colorado's P-3 Leadership Cadre participants. Lamb Caro of Thompson School district shared that elementary schools are working to more thoughtfully engage families in school-related events and planning opportunities when possible. Tera Wilkins of the Family Centered Early Education Program at the Colorado School for the Deaf and the Blind named the value of connecting with families from the start and even shared how including families in the strategic planning process helps to better equip all stakeholders as they work to address the additional layer of complexities associated with serving students who are deaf and blind. And, Julie Fahey, of Queen Palmer Elementary school said that one strategy they are implementing is to have families visit classrooms to observe teachers supporting children's literacy skills in ways that can also be implemented at home. Queen Palmer Elementary is leveraging community partnership to provide incentives for participation with the goal of increasing family participation and reinforcing the importance of strong home-school partnerships.

LESSONS LEARNED:

Colorado's P-3 Leadership Cadre Participants reflected on lessons learned through participation in the cadre, as well as throughout implementation of their specific action steps. Reflection highlights are captured below.

Lessons learned through participation in the P-3 Leadership Cadre

- Participation in the cadre provides the opportunity to share resources and experiences with other P-3 alignment leaders across the state.
- Networking with colleagues engaged in P-3 work across the state helps reduce the sense of isolation associated with trying something new.
- Participation in the P-3 Leadership Cadre encourages thinking and planning with a systems approach.



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Lessons learned through P-3 alignment work

- With a more thorough understanding of the essential pieces of P-3 alignment, sustaining the work will require putting structures and processes in place to support ongoing P-3 alignment work. Dedicating time to the P-3 efforts at grade level meetings and leadership meetings, for instance, will help keep the momentum going and build capacity across the team over time.
- At each step of implementation of P-3 alignment, a concerted effort to engage more stakeholders, including family and community partners, makes an important difference and helps schools and Districts most meaningfully apply strategies to the unique context of each learning community.
- Principals and District leaders benefit from building knowledge and expertise on a range of topics, including the fundamentals of child development, developmentally appropriate practice and understanding different grade level expectations. Leaders who deepen their own knowledge are equipped to provide critical support to teachers as they work to meet the needs of every student.
- Improving vertical alignment helps to clarify core priorities for educators working to meet the needs of individual students, and supports a more comprehensive and cohesive experience for students and their families.
- Engaging families in planning and programming is essential every step of the way. This includes engaging with families before they enter formal school and communicating about the importance of participating in quality early-learning programs as a way to promote success in school and life.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR SUSTAINING P-3 ALIGNMENT EFFORTS:

- **Start with a common vision:** Create a school-wide vision and shared definition of an aligned continuum of teaching and learning across P-3
- **Build capacity to serve as P-3 instructional leaders:** Provide ongoing support and professional learning opportunities for principals to increase understanding of learning and development for young children preschool through age 8
- **Build teacher capacity through training and Professional Learning Communities:** School leaders implement policies and practices that support teachers having access to joint training and opportunities to work and plan together across levels
- **Use data to inform practice:** As leaders work together and expand their P-3 alignment efforts across the state in a more intentional way, it will be important to collect data to track progress and identify strategies that are most impactful.
- **Support transitions:** Establish formal policies and practices that support the creation of cross-sector transition teams to address transitions from preschool to kindergarten including policies that effectively engage families and build teacher to teacher partnerships between school and community-based preschool teachers and kindergarten teachers.
- **Engage families:** Support continuity by ensuring families are partners in supporting children's learning at each level from preschool through grade 3 and across each transition point
- **Build a foundation to sustain P-3:** Identify opportunities to coordinate funding and other resources and build school-wide governance structures to support a P-3 system
- **Reach out to the community:** Establish partnerships that support continuity across community providers and the school.

(1): Shore, R. (2009). *The case for investing in pre-K-3rd education: Challenging myths and school reform*. Foundation for Child Development. <https://www.fcd-us.org/assets/2016/04/TheCaseForInvesting-ChallengingMyths.pdf>

(2) Ullrich, R. and Adamu, M. (2016). *A different way of doing business: Examples of pre-K to third grade alignment to practice*. Center for American Progress. <https://www.americanprogress.org/issues/early-childhood/reports/2016/01/13/128076/a-different-way-of-doing-business/>

(2) Loewenberg, A. (2016) *Why elementary school principals matter*. New America. <https://static.newamerica.org/attachments/13105-principals-corner/5.4Early-Ed-Principal-1.8d69b7bcac284a57b2dc1eae4dde54a8.pdf>



LEADING THE WAY: P-3 EDUCATION IN COLORADO

WHO:

LAMB CARO, *Early Childhood Administrator*

WHERE: Thompson School District.

This is the 17th largest school district in Colorado, encompassing 362 square miles, and is the largest employer in Loveland and Berthoud. It is a pre-K through 12th grade district with 13 early childhood centers, one K-8 school, 20 elementary schools, five middle schools, five high schools and two charter schools.



GOALS:

Implement Developmentally Appropriate Practices Across Grade Levels

Lamb and his team started with a pilot at Lincoln Elementary School that focused on what developmentally appropriate practices look like in the early years, particularly in kindergarten, and how these practices connect from grade to grade. Utilizing the expertise of a consultant on DAP in Kindergarten has built upon the benefits of implementing Teaching Strategies™ Gold.

Lamb worked with Michelle Malvey, the principal at Lincoln Elementary, to align the early childhood program with the rest of the elementary school. Michelle provides additional supports to the early childhood program, building capacity within the team.

Strengthen Family Engagement

Closely connected to the implementation of developmentally appropriate practices is the importance of family engagement. Efforts are being made to more thoughtfully include families in events and engage them in planning opportunities when possible.

LESSONS LEARNED:

Participation in the P-3 Leadership Cadre encourages thinking and planning with a systems approach. As a former principal, Lamb Caro brings a perspective from the ground to inform systems planning and changes. It is important to dedicate time to the P-3 work at level meetings and leadership meetings. This will build capacity all the way to the 3rd grade.

“A lot more vertical articulation with our Pre-K and Kindergarten teachers is happening... Lots of critical thinking. This kind of work has me pretty pumped.”

“Play is purposeful and intentional. There is a plan, and it all ties in to our early learning outcomes.”

NEXT STEPS:

To guide this work, we will use a clear plan to expand this work to other schools in the district and include community partners in this work. We will use data to track progress and identify what works when P-3 work is implemented with intention.



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WHO:

JACKIE CRABTREE, *Principal Cotopaxi Consolidated Schools*

WHERE: Fremont School District RE-3

Located at the western end of Fremont County, School District RE-3 includes five small communities, all within 12 miles of the school, located in Cotopaxi. Four of the five communities are located along the Arkansas River at the base of the Sangre de Cristo Mountain Range. The school ties these five separate communities together.

Fremont School District RE-3 is committed to helping students acquire the knowledge, attitudes, and skills necessary to become healthy, happy, safe, and productive adults; to help students become enthusiastic, life-long learners who are able to manage change; and to help students perpetuate and improve the democratic process and have a positive impact on their communities, their country and the world in a safe school environment.

GOALS:

To learn how to serve our children in ways that make a difference.

The P-3 Cadre experience helps to bring focus to specific aspects of alignment important to comprehensive efforts needed to effectively support programming along the early learning continuum. Using a framework helps to bring a sense of focus and structure to the work of serving young children and their families. And, staying at the forefront of educational research and best practices is critical. Part of serving children in ways that make a difference also includes aligning the curricula between the early childhood and elementary school programs. This is in progress at Cotopaxi Consolidated Schools, particularly around the new science and social studies programs. Next, we'll incorporate a new literacy program.



JACKIE CRABTREE

LESSONS LEARNED:

Being a part of the P-3 Leadership Cadre has helped to bring attention to the things that Cotopaxi is doing right and what could be improved. As an administrator, it's essential to focus on the most important things.

The internal group involved with the P-3 alignment efforts can be expanded to include others, such as Title 1 and Special Education specialists. Plus, making connections with the community and working with them as partners in this effort will make a positive difference.

Prioritizing time to collaborate on P-3 alignment is essential for teacher-buy in and being successful, overall. Shifting the focus has changed our perspective on young children and the questions we ask when serving young children and their families.

As a result of the P-3 Cadre experience, "our work is more focused. A lot of this has come from what we are learning about what is really important."

“ The school has changed...we have more materials. We have listened to teachers to see what they want, what their needs are. That is based on what they are learning is most important. Teachers have spent time researching and then coming up with new ideas. Teachers lead, instead of administrators leading. ”

NEXT STEPS:

At Cotopaxi Consolidated Schools, the plan is to continue developing more structured and focused processes around collaboration across our small P-3 team. The aim is to further develop our weekly meetings and create more meaningful lessons. Observing teachers in action is an ongoing priority because it provides opportunities for school leaders to see what teachers are doing and how students are improving in their writing skills, for instance.

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COLORADO
Department of Education

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WHO:

JULIE FAHEY, Principal of Queen Palmer Elementary School

WHERE: Colorado Springs, District 11

This is one of the oldest school districts in Colorado Springs. It provides education to the greatest number of students in the region. Today, they have more than 60 schools and alternative education opportunities to provide each student with a unique and exceptional educational experience.



JULIE FAHEY
Principal

Queen Palmer Elementary School's vision is driven by high expectations for teachers and students. Education at Queen Palmer is personalized and aligned with the state standards in order to build critical thinkers.

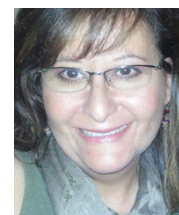
GOALS:

Increase Family Involvement.

The team at Queen Palmer is focused on increasing family involvement in Kindergarten and 1st grade classrooms. In Spring, 2017 families signed up for a ½ day visit to their child's classroom. This is an idea that came from participating in the P-3 Leadership Cadre. During these visits, teachers model early literacy skills, helping families to understand how to support their children at home. To increase participation, the school is partnering with the Rotary Club and offering gift cards as incentives.



NATALIE MILLER
Teaching /
Learning Coach



RENEE JOHNSTON
Kindergarten
Teacher



SYVENA FAIRBAIRN
First Grade
Teacher

Use Data.

Kindergarten and 1st grade teachers at Queen Palmer Elementary are implementing the use of a shared assessment system, Teaching Strategies GOLD™. A common assessment system creates shared language across two potentially disconnected early learning experiences, which promotes understanding and communication around students' strengths and progress. Queen Palmer makes data analysis a priority for teachers by giving them time to review data. Once a month, teachers have at least a ½ day to look at data and make instructional decisions, grouping decisions, and interventions. Teachers dig deep into the data presented in Teaching Strategies GOLD™ to guide their planning. They are seeing great gains in children, who are now being met exactly where they are. They are also able to track this growth in a way that they were never able to before. Because of this, fewer children are struggling in Kindergarten and 1st grade classrooms.

LESSONS LEARNED:

As someone who was never an early childhood person, Julie has learned a lot about the importance of early literacy. She has also learned a lot about the documentation of learning. It has humbled her to learn more about what goes on at the younger grade levels, and she realizes the importance of this foundation to be able to build upon in the older years.

Julie also has learned that to get buy-in, you need to have results. Once teachers see that what they are doing makes a difference, and they see changes within students, buy-in increases.

“Everybody at my school is on board. It's the work we've got to do. It's the expectation... We are looking at the whole child, not just a reading score.”

NEXT STEPS:

Julie's team is going slow, in order to go fast. They've pushed a lot of comfort zones this year. They are going to do the family school visits in Spring, 2017 and then evaluate them and decide how they want to continue them moving forward.

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WHO:

MICHELLE MALVEY, *Principal of Lincoln Elementary School*

WHERE: Thompson School District

This is the 17th largest school district in Colorado, encompassing 362 square miles, and is the largest employer in Loveland and Berthoud. It is a pre-K through 12th grade district with 13 early childhood centers, one K-8 school, 20 elementary schools, five middle schools, five high schools and two charter schools.



MICHELLE MALVEY

Lincoln Elementary School's vision is to engage children and enrich the world. Education at Lincoln focuses on Project Based Learning (PBL). This approach allows students to work together to gain knowledge and skills by investigating and responding to real-world problems and challenges.

GOALS:

Creating Alignment.

In the Thompson School District, there is a separate administrator for early childhood within the elementary school. One way Michelle and her team are working to align the early childhood classes with the rest of her elementary school is by having pre-K teachers and K teachers visit each other's classrooms. This gives teachers an opportunity to have a better understanding of where their students are headed and where their students have been. It also helps teachers to plan vertically across grade levels for smoother transitions.

LESSONS LEARNED:

Networking and connections with other people have been really helpful in the ongoing work to align the early childhood program with the rest of the school. To support the connection between the early childhood program and the rest of the school, Michelle recognizes the importance of also evaluating the early childhood programs. In addition, engaging with families of our early childhood program is critical, even if they won't be continuing into our elementary school.

“ We all have a strong passion for connecting the work. The desire is there, and we are carrying momentum from last year (AY 2015-2016). ”

NEXT STEPS:

Michelle and her team plan to invite families from the early childhood program to events hosted by the elementary school to help them become a part of the larger school community.

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WHO:

SHELLEY SMITH

*Director of Early Childhood Programs
Eagle County School District*

ERIKA DONAHUE, Principal

June Creek Elementary School, Eagle County Schools



SHELLEY SMITH

WHERE: Eagle County School District

an innovative school district serving nearly 7000 students Pre-K through 12th grade from Vail to Dotsero, including Red Cliff, McCoy and Bond.

Eagle County School District's vision is to prepare all students to be global-ready graduates who will be successful in their careers or college experience and contribute to their communities in positive and effective ways.



ERIKA DONAHUE

GOALS:

Create Alignment.

Eagle County School District is working to improve alignment by implementing the use of a shared assessment system, Teaching Strategies GOLD™, in kindergarten classrooms. A common assessment system creates a shared language across two potentially disconnected early learning experiences, which promotes understanding and communication around students' strengths and progress.

Address the perception that Kindergarten is no longer DAP.

One challenge has been addressing concerns about the ability to meet the Colorado Academic Standards within a developmentally appropriate framework. Resources from the P-3 Leadership Cadre participation were used to facilitate conversations about, and strengthen developmentally appropriate practices in kindergarten classrooms.

As kindergarten teachers become more knowledgeable and intentional about implementing developmentally appropriate practices, students are more likely to experience aligned instructional practices across early learning settings. And, while working to ensure that classroom self-assessments were being completed for Colorado Preschool Program ECARE full-day kindergarten slots, it was noted that teachers become more aware of expectations to deliver developmentally appropriate practice during the process of completing the required self-assessment forms. Therefore, by introducing and/or reinforcing developmentally appropriate practices in kindergarten in a variety of ways, and supporting implementation and teacher buy-in with the purchase of appropriate classroom materials, Shelley Smith observed "teachers are definitely moving towards more of a center-based learning approach."

“When educators are better equipped to plan for and provide developmentally appropriate learning experiences, students continue to engage in active learning experiences that support development and build skills and competencies in meaningful ways.”



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WHO:

A.J. STANISZEWSKI, *Director of Global Primary Academy*

WHERE: Mapleton School District

Mapleton covers 25 square miles and serves suburban, rural, and light industrial communities in Denver and Thornton.



Mapleton is committed to raising expectations, providing choices for learning and removing obstacles for all students to guarantee that each student "achieves his or her dreams and enthusiastically contributes to his or her community, country and world."

GOALS:

Create a mission and vision statement. Using a protocol, the Global Campus created a mission statement for the whole school (P-12) and for the individual levels, including the preschool through 3rd grade. Each level created a vision statement under the umbrella of the larger school vision. The P-3 alignment work fits well within the mission and informs the school's approach to how students move towards 4th grade and beyond.

Analyze student data systematically. Using a continuous-improvement framework to problem-solve and make decisions grounded in data ensures all students receive appropriate levels of support. A Multi-Tiered System of Supports (MTSS) focuses on evidence-based instruction, intervention, and assessment practices to accomplish this goal. Global Primary Academy uses this process three times a year.



A.J. STANISZEWSKI

LESSONS LEARNED:

Through participation in the P-3 Leadership Cadre, A.J. Staniszewski understands the essential pieces of P-3 alignment, as well as the importance of creating structures to support ongoing P-3 work. Fundamental to creating alignment is building a strong internal team dedicated to this work and building a strong school community.

Director Staniszewski recognizes the importance of birth to three as a critical developmental period for young children. Thus, Global Primary Academy proactively communicates to all parents of young children the benefits of participating in quality early-learning programs.

“Participating in the P-3 Leadership Cadre has “allowed us to focus on our foundational needs, aligning expectations and skills at each grade level. (My learning) has allowed us to look at what is appropriate at each grade. Teachers are teaching differently. Now we can make sure our students are not getting the same thing twice, or missing something.”

“Before we were a part of this, what P-3 meant was quite foreign to everybody... At the beginning of the year it was just about the logistics. After realizing the value of that time, anything that is nuts and bolts comes from (the director) over email. Now we use the time to work on issues that need to be addressed together. It has been a huge success.”

NEXT STEPS:

Global Primary Academy recognizes the value of coming together and planning for implementation of identified areas of the action plan that the team helped to create. Global Primary Academy plans to continue to dedicate time and discussion to P-3 alignment because it builds common understanding of what the school wants to achieve and also informs ongoing work to restructure time and resources.

Currently, home visits are conducted for preschool students and Global Primary would like to extend that program to K-3.

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WHO:

TERA WILKINS, Family-Centered Early Education (FCEE) Program Administrator at the Colorado School for the Deaf and the Blind (CSDB)

WHERE: Colorado Springs, CO

The CSDB is a state-funded school within the Colorado Department of Education.

The Colorado School for the Deaf and the Blind (CSDB) is a state-funded school within the Colorado Department of Education. The school was established for the purpose of providing comprehensive educational services for children, birth to age 21, who are blind/visually impaired and/or deaf/hard of hearing. Services are provided directly to students enrolled at the school, and outreach programs serve students, staff, and families in communities throughout Colorado.

The Colorado School for the Deaf and the Blind (CSDB) Family-Centered Early Education (FCEE) program believes that all children can be successful, regardless of hearing level or communication modality. The FCEE program provides family-centered services, education, and support to children who are deaf/hard-of-hearing, from birth – 2nd grade. The FCEE program focuses on developing a strong foundation of communication and language where American Sign Language (ASL) and English are equally valued.

GOALS:

Increasing Programming Efficiency and Effectiveness for Early Education (Preschool through 2nd grade)

Prior to SY 2015-2016, the CSDB Preschool and Kindergarten through 5th grade programs operated under different administrators. In 2015-2016, the preschool through second grade programs merged to become the Family-Centered Early Education Program. The staff and students are now under one administrator, collaborate in meetings, and share professional learning opportunities. This internal re-structuring translates into deeper conversations about a range of essential topics, including transitions and meeting the developmental and educational needs of students.

For the first time, a section of the strategic plan focuses specifically on this age group, which has made a positive impact. Utilizing an evidence-based resource provided by the P-3 Leadership Cadre, CSDB included parents, staff and other stakeholders in establishing the vision, mission, goals and action steps. In turn, the team views the students differently, sees the shared work more clearly, and demonstrates significant investment in the work.

Increase Family Engagement

The strategic plan specific to preschool through 2nd grade classrooms at CSDB includes increasing family engagement by connecting with families from the start. As a result of participating in the strategic planning process, staff, parents and other stakeholders are better equipped to consider and address the additional layer of complexities associated with serving students who are deaf and blind and are working with more intention to connect with and engage families.

NEXT STEPS:

Tera's team at CSDB is working to expand this cohesive and streamlined continuum to include children birth to third grade and their families. This ongoing process will include broadening the use of the Teaching Strategies GOLD™ assessment system, accessing more professional development through Colorado Shines, and including even more staff in the strategic planning process.

To further build a bridge with the birth-three early intervention services, CSDB will continue the work of developing a Birth-to-Three Task Force that includes families and other stakeholders to help inform the work of building a more inclusive teaching and learning continuum.

