

**Alliance for Early Success – The Ounce of Prevention Fund
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“P-3” Alignment: Whose Job Is It Anyway?

The National Governors Association Early Learning Policy Academy

In July 2013, the NGA Center for Best Practices launched a 15-month policy academy to support a small group of states that are interested in and ready to work more intensely on P-3 reform issues. The NGA Center released a competitive RFP to states in April 2013 for participation in the policy academy, which provided states the opportunity to focus on one of two aspects of P-3 reform: (1) strengthening the effectiveness of early childhood and early elementary educators; or (2) developing and appropriately using assessment across the P-3 continuum. With input from an external review panel, the NGA Center selected the following six states: Connecticut, Hawaii, Illinois, Massachusetts, Nevada, and Pennsylvania. Two of the states (MA and HI) focused on P-3rd grade assessment and the other four states focused on educator effectiveness. Each state team includes at least five individuals who represent the governor’s office, K-12 and early education policy leaders from state agencies, and other stakeholder groups. States also received \$25,000 in grant funds, technical assistance and site visits from NGA Center staff and national experts, and attended two cross-state convenings that facilitated peer-to-peer learning and additional guidance from other experts.

Throughout the policy academy, NGA Center staff checked in with each state team regularly to monitor progress, adjust the action plans as necessary, and address challenges. In between the cross-state meetings and conference calls, NGA Center staff provided technical assistance by researching and analyzing promising state policies and practices and by connecting state teams to national experts and peers from leading states.

As part of the policy academy, all six states were required to host a governor’s symposium to raise awareness and momentum for a P-3rd grade state policy agenda in their respective states. Governors from Connecticut, Hawaii, Nevada, and Pennsylvania attended the events and made remarks about their state policy agendas. Attendees at all events included policymakers, local and district leaders, and other stakeholder groups. Through these events, state teams increased buy-in for P-3 reform efforts from leaders at both state and local levels while gaining participant input on how to better align early childhood and K-12 policies and practices.

The following are major outcomes that Illinois and Massachusetts accomplished in the course of the policy academy:

- **Illinois**
 - Conducted “crosswalks” of vocabulary and core initiatives from early childhood through 3rd grade to identify gaps and opportunities for collaboration.

- Developing case studies of successful local P-3 initiatives to highlight their accomplishments and how they achieved them.
- Validating Danielson Framework for pre-k through 3rd grade teachers.
- Provided recommendations to the state's Performance Evaluation Advisory Council, which implements the state's reforms in K-12 teacher evaluation, to develop guidance for evaluating P-3 teachers.
- **Massachusetts**
 - Drafted a "foundation statement" about how the B-3rd grade span plays a critical role in helping students attain the state's official definition of "College and Career Readiness." The statement has been shared with early childhood and public education stakeholders for input.
 - Presented the foundation statement and the work of the policy academy at the first-ever joint meeting of the Board of Early Education and Care and the Board of Elementary and Secondary Education.
 - Drafted a framework for social-emotional learning standards, which will be used to refine these standards at the preschool level and extend them into kindergarten.
 - Created a B-3rd page on the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education website.
 - Created a framework for a comprehensive B-3rd policy agenda.

In addition to the accomplishments above, the policy academy was also successful in helping each state bring together early learning and K-12 leaders who hadn't previously worked closely together around a set of common goals related to B-3rd alignment. It also raised the profile of this issue at the very highest level of state leadership, whether in the governor's office, the state education agency, or state boards. In all cases, the policy academy added more fuel to states' existing P-3 reform initiatives, and the accomplishments mentioned above strengthened the foundation for future efforts.