

U.S. Department of Education

**National Association of State Leaders in
Early Education
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Ensure Early School Success

- **Build Kindergarten into a More Sturdy Bridge Between the Early Years and Early Grades**
- **Expand Access to High Quality Preschool (Encourage use of Title I)**

Preschool reduces achievement gaps and supports early school success.

- More low-income children could benefit from high quality early learning experiences that begin before kindergarten. Districts can play a leadership role in expanding access to preschool in both school and community-based settings, by using Title I, partnerships with Head Start, and other resources.

Kindergarten is the first at-scale early learning opportunity in a school setting for providing the supports and interventions needed to assure on track development.

Children arrive:

- From diverse settings and experiences. Settings are voluntary, parent choice, of varying quality, and not resourced at scale.
- With a wide range of developmental and linguistics strengths, learning differences, developmental delays, and disabilities.
- With undetected and undiagnosed physical and behavioral health challenges.

Kindergarten is a key inflection point for early learning, early school success, and equity.

- Gap at the end of kindergarten is substantial and persists into and through elementary school.
- This means that kindergarten is predictive of which children will experience early school success and which will not.

Kindergarten is an important first step on the learning journey that should afford every student multiple pathways for high school graduation and career success.

- Focusing on critical touchpoints in a student's educational journey, including the transitions into kindergarten and first grade, and ensuring that the kindergarten year provides a strong foundation, lays the path for early school success.

Kindergarten presents an important opportunity to partner with parents and families to build the relationships, routines, and habits that are essential to early school success and every day school attendance.

- Research confirms the strong connection between daily attendance and 3rd grade outcomes, especially for students from low-income communities.
- Students chronically absent in preschool and kindergarten are more likely to be chronically absent in later grades.
- Chronic absence disrupts learning and the habits and routines that are the foundation for acquiring early literacy and math skills.

Enabling Conditions for Success:

- An **equity lens** that focuses attention and resources on the most vulnerable populations of children
- Intentional and systematic **alignment for continuity** of services, supports, instruction, relationships, and data-sharing across the Pre-K-3 continuum
- Evidence-based, promising, and innovative **models of instructional and assessment practices**
- **Professional development and supports** for early educators, teachers, school leaders, and staff
- **Authentic partnerships** with parents, caregivers, and families
- **Interagency, cross-sector, and community-wide collaboration** that engages other public agencies, higher education, civic, community, private-sector, and social-sector stakeholders
- **Strategic blending and braiding of funding streams** to facilitate equity, alignment, and collaboration.

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