



CPC P-3: A System for Improving and Sustaining Early Learning Gains in an Age of Information Overload

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We live in a golden age of information. At our fingertips are a near limitless number of reports, stories, facts, current events, and opinions of all stripes on whatever medium one is interested. Social media, the internet, and email make this information pervade our daily lives and we manage it through quick response, selective attention, or a “blind” eye.

We do not live in a golden age of organized information in which analysis and synthesis of knowledge is readily available or systematically applied to the solution of pressing social problems. What does the new information mean? How does it contribute to existing efforts to, for example, improve health and well-being? How valid are findings or data reported? Are the opinions or recommendations expressed evidence-based, informed by experience, or thoughtful?

For continued scientific and social progress, we need more integrative knowledge that seeks to pull together disparate viewpoints and findings, and translate them into actionable recommendations for improving policies, programs, and practices. These may be resources guides; registries of digestible but authoritative knowledge about health, education, and welfare; or analyses that seek to integrate and summarize for policymakers and practitioners. Putting this knowledge into practice is a big next step and the process of allocating and reallocating resources to fit social needs is a continual one.

Addressing Two Urgent Problems in Education

We developed the Child-Parent Center Preschool to 3rd Grade (CPC P-3) Program, website of resources, and “what works” evidence to promote a comprehensive approach for addressing two urgent problems:

1. High percentages of children entering kindergarten not fully prepared to succeed and
2. Discontinuity between preschool and school-age experiences that lowers achievement excellence by 3rd grade.

Roughly half of all children enter school with good mastery of literacy, numeracy, and social skills. By the time children enter 4th grade, only one third of them are proficient readers based on national assessments.

Although good preschool programs can substantially improve school readiness, they are not enough to raise 3rd and 4th grade reading and math proficiency to the levels that are needed or desired. Only a concerted effort across the entire preschool to 3rd grade continuum can do so. This is especially the case for vulnerable children, who experience far lower levels of proficiency and far higher levels of discontinuity in the quality of learning environments.

The need for more organized and synthetic knowledge for promoting children’s healthy development has never been greater. A systematic approach that starts early, continues through the transition to school, is comprehensive, and broad in content is needed.

CPC Supports Continuum of Early Learning

CPC P-3 provides a blueprint for effectively addressing these two problems. As an evidence-based school reform model, the program organizes and implements a system of school-based services to create, improve, and sustain learning gains. Each school's collaborative team is led by a Head Teacher and Parent Resource teacher who support the P-3 alignment and continuity. Small classes, teacher aides, and across-grade teacher collaborations promote professional learning and student-centered instruction.

Six core elements are operationalized in the first-ever CPC manual and they include collaborative leadership, effective learning experiences, aligned curriculum, parental involvement and engagement, professional development, and continuity and stability. The goals of the CPC program are to enhance achievement excellence, engage children in learning, strengthen and sustain parental involvement, and promote good attendance patterns.

Evidence of Sustained, Long-term Effects

Recent studies (available on cpcp3.org) show that CPC preschool participation raises school readiness skills by 35% over participation in programs of good quality. Compared to half-day CPC, full-day participation increases school readiness by 40% and reduced chronic absences by 45%. We also found that parent involvement in school increased significantly in CPCs.

Previous CPC studies show that participation in P-3 services raises the achievement levels of students, who were from the most disadvantaged neighborhoods, to close to national norms and reduces the achievement gap in 3rd grade by 75%. These improvements led to long-term gains in educational attainment, crime prevention, and economic well-being. Cost-benefit analyses show that for every dollar invested in CPC P-3, the economic return to society is 14.83 dollars.

National and State Contexts for Supporting and Integrating Services

Large federal and state investments in preschool programs from Preschool Development Grants to Head Start, and Race to the Top have led to a high priority on learning gains that are sustained into the elementary grades and beyond. Many programs do not have sustained effects or have longer-term effects that are smaller than expected. CPC P-3 provides a ready-made system of resources for supporting these gains. School districts, individual schools and communities, states, and other stakeholders can use these resources, guidelines, and evidence reports to strengthen children's continuity of learning.

Top 10 Program and Site Resources to Support P-3 Continuity

The key ways in which CPC P-3 and cpcp3.org resources can create and help sustain positive outcomes for children and families are described below and can be accessed on our site.

1. CPC program manual. This is the complete guide to implementing CPC-P3 and also includes a set of planning resources, monitoring tools, guidelines, and research evidence to support elements and requirements for collaborative leadership, effective learning, parent involvement, curriculum alignment, professional development, and continuity and stability.

Purchase the manual [here](#).

2. Assess readiness to implement and school-family needs. Our FAQ provides key information for deciding how the program and resources can be helpful. A family needs assessment and asset mapping tool help schools and centers strategize ways to strengthen services.

Read our [FAQ](#), download the family needs assessment [here](#), and read "[Are you ready to implement CPC?](#)"

3. Curriculum Alignment Plan. A template for documenting instructional philosophy and the alignment of curricula from preschool to 3rd grade. It is revised annually and guides the school strategy for maintaining continuity to ensure gains are sustained.

Download the curriculum alignment plan [here](#).

4. Parent Involvement Plan. A template for developing family involvement activities and mobilizing resources in the school and community. A family needs assessment and asset mapping exercise are included. This plan is revised annually and is a menu-based approach for sustaining high levels of family support from preschool to 3rd grade.

Download the parent involvement plan [here](#).

5. Classroom Activity Report (CAR). A simple 1-page checklist in which teachers report their actual time in instruction by subject and the ratio of teacher-directed to child-initiated activities. It is completed in fall, winter, and spring.

Download the classroom activity report for PreK and K [here](#) and for grades 1-3 [here](#).

6. Classroom Learning Activities Checklist (CLAC). An observational assessment of the degree of engaged learning and task orientation in the classroom. This tool, which requires no more than 25 minutes to complete, is a formative assessment that also supports PD.

Download the classroom learning activities checklist [here](#).

7. On-line professional development modules with a PD planning calendar. Nine modules of 1 to 2 hours each are designed to promote the use of core instructional strategies in the classroom, including balancing teacher and child-directed instruction, oral language, STEM, and socio-emotional learning. A planning guide and calendar help facilitate professional learning throughout the year.

View professional development modules [here](#). Download the [PD planning sheet](#) and [check-in sheet](#).

8. Program Fact Briefs. Several 2-page summaries of CPC elements with evidence of effectiveness are available. These include small classes, collaborative leadership, parent involvement, full-day preschool, and professional development.

Read fact briefs on [small class size](#), [full-day PreK](#), and [parent involvement](#).

9. Research studies documenting CPC benefits. Recent studies in the Midwest CPC expansion show the benefits of participation in promoting school readiness and parent involvement. We have found that the program can be implemented well in a variety of contexts and for diverse populations.

Read research studies [here](#).

10. Reports describing ways to finance CPC and P-3 elements. These include Social Impact Bond/Pay for Success approaches, Title I, and ESSA regulations around evidence-based programming.

Read about financing the program [here](#).

With these and other resources available on the [cpcp3.org](#) site, schools and communities can take steps to enhance P-3 continuity to support the effectiveness of current and planned investments. Integration of information and ultimately of services are worthy goals, and they can be achieved.