Rising to the Challenge: Building Effective Systems for Young Children and Families, a BUILD E-Book
Race to the Top—Early Learning Challenge (ELC) is the major federal funding initiative seeking to support states in developing high quality early childhood systems, especially targeted to children with high needs. Launched in 2011 as a joint initiative of the U.S. Departments of Education and Health and Human Services, there have been three rounds of major grants under the ELC, with 20 states now participating and funding that totals just over $1 billion.

This federal initiative had particular meaning to the BUILD Initiative and its founders, members of the Early Childhood Funders Collaborative. For more than a decade, BUILD has served as a catalyst for change and a national support system for state policy leaders and early childhood systems development. Not only did BUILD’s work help shape the federal initiative, but it was also the fulfillment of the founders’ most fervent hopes—that states could create detailed blueprints for an early childhood system, with budgets to support significant infrastructure development. BUILD staff, consultants, and many colleagues in the field rose to the challenge and provided extensive support to states as they applied for, and now implement, the federal opportunity.

The Early Learning Challenge supports states in their efforts to align, coordinate, and improve the quality of existing early learning and development programs across the multiple funding streams that support children from their birth through age five. Through the ELC, states focus on foundational elements of a state system: creating high quality, accountable early learning programs through Quality Rating and Improvement Systems; supporting improved child development outcomes through health, family engagement and vigorous use of early learning state standards and assessments; strengthening the early childhood workforce; and measuring progress.

Thirty-five states plus the District of Columbia and Puerto Rico applied for the 2011 round of the Early Learning Challenge grants with nine states initially and then five more selected from this pool for funding. Sixteen states plus the District of Columbia responded to a new 2013 third round of grants; six were selected.

Round 1: California, Delaware, Maryland, Massachusetts, Minnesota, North Carolina, Ohio, Rhode Island, and Washington

Round 2: Colorado, Illinois, New Mexico, Oregon, and Wisconsin

Round 3: Georgia, Kentucky, Michigan, New Jersey, Pennsylvania, and Vermont

Since the launch of the ELC, grantee states have rapidly moved from concept to implementation. Through this E-Book, we share learnings from the initial implementation of the efforts, highlighting experience, trends, and reflections stemming from the significant federal investment in this strategic work. The chapters are authored by experts who have worked in tandem with state leaders to gather information. By documenting the experience of the states, captured through interviews with state leaders, Rising to the Challenge provides a source of learning for all fifty states and territories and puts into practice our leadership commitment to continuous learning in the best interests of the children and families to whom we are all dedicated.

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Chapter 5: P-3 Reform in Vision and in Practice

Kate Tarrant, Ed.D.
2015
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Introduction
The nation’s Race to the Top—Early Learning Challenge (ELC) competition has been an historic investment of federal funding to help states build systems and services that support children in their earliest years. Recognizing that early childhood is the first phase of a child’s educational experience, the ELC encouraged state policymakers to take action to sustain early childhood program effects in the early elementary grades. Over the course of three rounds of ELC competitions, the encouragement states received to address connections between early childhood and early elementary education became increasingly significant. In the first and the second rounds of ELC, initiated in 2011 and 2012, states were allowed to invest ELC funds to address the continuum of early learning through the early elementary school years but did not receive any credit for developing a plan; it was an “invitational” priority. By the third round of the competition released in 2013, this area was elevated to a “competitive preference priority,” giving states the option to earn points for “creating preschool through third grade approaches to sustain improved early learning outcomes through the early elementary grades.”

This chapter chronicles some of the innovations and promising practices that state leaders from states awarded ELC funding ("ELC states") have pursued in an effort to link early childhood and early elementary school learning. We share why ELC states have engaged in this work, what common strategies they are pursuing, and how they are going about reaching their goals. We note that ELC plans and resources are being deployed to support a vision of early childhood that includes embracing early elementary school, building local capacity, and forging new partnerships.

The chapter is organized into three main sections. It begins with a brief discussion of the methodology used to collect insights from ELC states Delaware, Georgia, Maryland, Massachusetts, New Jersey, Pennsylvania, and Washington. It then shares the results. The chapter concludes with a discussion of key considerations for policymakers as they strive to provide developmentally-informed, high-quality early education from the early childhood years through elementary school.

A Note About P-3
“P-3,” as used in this chapter, represents educationally-oriented services for children from birth through 3rd grade. Within the early childhood field, the phrases and terms “Pre-K-3,” “0–8,” and “birth to third grade” are used to represent similar constructs but may include different age spans and, therefore, a narrower or broader set of services.

Method: Learning from state leaders
To identify trends in the P-3 practices of ELC states, we reviewed documents, including state applications and reports, as well as other analyses of state work, and conducted semi-structured interviews with leaders from seven ELC states using a standard interview protocol. State leaders were provided with an opportunity to review information for accuracy. This chapter synthesizes the insights from the document review, as well as from leaders in some ELC states that plan to use some of their funding to sustain program effects for children during the elementary school years. It does not represent the work of all ELC states. As previously mentioned, the first two rounds of the competition did not award points for addressing this invitational priority: six states that received the grant wrote to the area and none of the Round 2 grant recipients submitted plans in this area. When this area became a competitive priority in Round 3, every winning state wrote to this area. State leaders interviewed were in different stages of their work, with some well into implementation and others still in the planning stages. The appendix includes a table with more information on the states, the individuals interviewed, and data sources.
Results: Common approaches to P-3 practice and policy reform

Eight findings showcase the commonalities in ELC states’ approaches to improving P-3 practices. We begin with why state leaders wrote to this area and the benefits of this area of the ELC. The next three findings describe what ELC states are doing to sustain early childhood program effects into the elementary school years. These commonalities include localized approaches to P-3 reform and P-3 professional development and reflect states’ intentional strategies to promote greater alignment. This work was often included in the original ELC plans submitted to the federal government. The third approach – formative assessments – was addressed in other areas of states’ ELC plans but emerged as influential for building connections between the early childhood and elementary school sectors. The final set of findings include the commonalities in how ELC states are implementing P-3 reforms, including funding partnerships, using experts to advance reforms, documenting lessons learned, and addressing implementation challenges.

Finding 1: P-3 reforms are expanding ELC states’ early childhood systems.

The state leaders interviewed indicate that the ELC has provided key resources to help states build stronger connections between early childhood and early elementary school structures and services. According to Rolf Grafwallner, Maryland Assistant State Superintendent, who oversees the implementation of the ELC grant, “RTT has been a vehicle to make a shift from a stand-alone effort into something that is sustained.” As Deb Wise of Pennsylvania noted, “when you have funding behind you, things can get done.”

Several state leaders noted that sustaining program effects was not a “main priority of the grant” but as Susan Adams, Georgia Assistant Commissioner for PreK at Bright from the Start: Department of Early Care and Learning, said, “It is embedded into what we are doing.” Grafwallner shared, “The benefits of having the grant can be thought of in terms of intended and unintended consequences. We struggled to put something together in this sustaining area and so we wrote in the Leadership Academies [for early and elementary educators]. Now, we’re glad we did because it made it into the plan for the grant and it has really grown. It’s getting us to shift from birth-to-five to birth-to-eight and not only in vision but in practice.” As Grafwallner suggests, the ELC P-3 work seems to be altering the state’s very conceptualization of early childhood policy and practice. Across the board, the state leaders noted that this work is vital to early childhood systems building. Georgia’s Susan Adams summed it up this way: “We can do all the great things in the world but if it doesn’t connect to K-12 and we don’t see the change in third grade, then we should go home. We’ve worked really hard to create good relationships with school systems to understand that these are all our kids. We need to focus on the long-term goal. We need to make the connections and smooth transitions.”

Finding 2: States are adopting a localized approach to P-3 reform.

Eight states used community-based strategies that address P-3. Recognizing that communities have unique cultures, resources, schools, programs, children and families, and priorities, states devolved P-3 planning and implementation to communities and encouraged experimentation at the local level. To carry out this work, states set broad parameters for the community work. First, they invited community early childhood stakeholders to apply for ELC funds that they could use to advance early learning and included P-3 as one of several goals that communities could pursue. They also set parameters about the community-building process. Most states required communities to demonstrate buy-in from members of community-based organizations, early childhood programs, public schools, and other child and family agencies. They also expected communities to develop plans to reach their goals and periodically report on their progress. Table 1 provides descriptions of state strategy. Taken together, these states are allocating ELC funding and offering support to more than 100 communities.
### Table 1: Community Teams Addressing P-3 in ELC States

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>State</th>
<th>Description</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Delaware</td>
<td><strong>20 DEL Readiness TEAMS</strong> enhance early learning in their communities by addressing schools, communities, and families. P-3 reform is an explicit purpose of the DEL TEAMS, with many focusing on linkages between early learning and K-12 schools and transitions for families and children as they move from early learning into kindergarten. Communities develop and implement plans and receive funding and technical assistance.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Georgia</td>
<td><strong>4 Early Education Empowerment Zones (E'Zs)</strong> include birth-to-eight teams as part of their local collaborations. The E'Zs aim to (1) increase the availability of high-quality early learning options for children with high needs, (2) integrate new or expanded initiatives in the state’s high quality early learning programs that are specifically focused on children with high needs, and (3) focus on the feasibility of taking strategies to scale. Each community receives resources and technical assistance to develop and implement its work.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maryland</td>
<td><strong>24 Local Early Childhood Advisory Councils</strong> (LECAC) help create and implement a seamless birth-to-grade 12 reform agenda. Communities develop plans and receive funding and technical assistance to address school readiness gaps, which may include specific P-3 strategies.²</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Massachusetts</td>
<td><strong>13 ELC Birth-to-Grade-Three Communities</strong> conduct collaborative community-wide activities to bring greater alignment to their birth-to-grade-three population of young children. Each community demonstrated there was an infrastructure in place to support P-3. Communities develop plans and receive funding and technical assistance.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>North Carolina</td>
<td><strong>3 ELC Transformation Zone</strong> counties engage in community infrastructure-building to promote positive outcomes for young children in high-need, rural counties. In one transformation zone, FirstSchool has received ELC funding to support two school districts to strengthen the use of data to promote effective instruction in Pre-k – grade three.³</td>
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<tr>
<td>Ohio</td>
<td><strong>3 SPARK Ohio and Ready Schools Demonstration Project</strong> sites receive funding and technical assistance to implement P-3 reforms that combine the school-focused Ready School Model and the family-focused SPARK Initiative. Each community must have buy-in from early childhood and elementary school stakeholders.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pennsylvania</td>
<td><strong>50 Community Innovation Zones</strong> are focusing on implementing effective or innovative practices to enhance early learning. Communities address one or more categories of efforts: (1) community collaboration and networking, (2) P-3 alignment, and (3) family engagement. Each community receives funding to implement its plan.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Washington</td>
<td><strong>10 Regional Early Learning Regional Coalitions</strong> focus on several P-3 efforts, including the coordination of early learning systems in their regions and the implementation of WaKIDS and family support and engagement strategies. Coalitions receive ELC funds as well as philanthropic resources to carry out their work.</td>
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Localized P-3 strategies are allowing a variety of approaches to take hold and ensure that local communities are leading the way in P-3. In Delaware, for example, one community has focused on family engagement throughout the P-3 age band. The community created a bookmobile that brings educational resources to families. Susan Mitchell, Senior Advisor in Delaware’s Office of Early Learning, reports, “A family member on the team suggested that they create the bookmobile. The group
then developed multiple partnerships to make this work: the school district donated a van and reconfigured it into the bookmobile and community members donated books and other resources in collection boxes. Now the van is at many community events. The group has started to raise its own funds, approximately a few thousand at this point, to maintain the bookmobile. This is big because we are moving to think about sustainability. “This project grew organically; it has engaged children, families, and early learning professionals in new partnerships.

Massachusetts’ Birth to Grade Three Communities have also adopted promising P-3 approaches. Several communities focus on assuring coherence through aligned instruction. In Boston, the KIDS initiative combines ELC funds with city and philanthropic investments to expand pre-kindergarten to serve children in 14 community-based programs. With these resources, Boston public school teachers receive intensive professional development, including coaching and instructional assistance to support continuity between pre-kindergarten and early elementary school services. Lowell, Massachusetts is home to another noteworthy P-3 innovation. It has selected common classroom quality assessment tools for family child care, community-based preschools, and elementary schools and is using the assessment results to inform unified professional development. In particular, Lowell has established two communities of practice, one for family child care providers and one for center-based providers. Both use the Environment Rating Scales as a common tool and have come together for joint training. Lowell plans to continue these communities of practice and to add two more: one for administrators of public school and community-based preschools, and one for families led by a parenting coach.4

We can do all the great things in the world but if it doesn’t connect to K-12 and we don’t see the change in third grade, then we should go home. We’ve worked really hard to create good relationships with school systems to understand that these are all our kids.

-Susan Adams, Georgia Assistant Commissioner for PreK at Bright from the Start: Department of Early Care and Learning

Finding 3: States are engaging instructional leaders with cross-sector professional development.

Another trend among ELC states’ P-3 efforts is the implementation of specialized cross-sector professional development for P-3 stakeholders, including elementary school principals, leaders from community-based early childhood programs, and other invested community members. These professional development offerings aim to deepen leaders’ understanding of early childhood practices and opportunities for sustaining early childhood program effects into the elementary grades. Table 2 describes four of these approaches.

<table>
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<tr>
<th>State</th>
<th>Description</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Maryland</td>
<td>The Maryland Leadership Academy for Early Childhood is designed for teams of six people (three people from school, including the principal and three people from the early childhood community) to learn about best practices in early childhood. Thirty schools were involved in the first year and 100 in the second year, reaching approximately 600 educators.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Massachusetts</td>
<td>Massachusetts’ Early Educators Fellowship Institute: Birth-to-Eight Leadership Series is a community-based professional learning approach for principals and program directors in both public and private programs. Since the ELC began funding the institutes in 2012, approximately 300 local leaders from birth-to-grade-three programs have benefitted from the approach.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Pennsylvania</td>
<td>Pennsylvania’s P-3 Governor’s Institutes are open to local teams of K-3 and EC leaders and focus on sharing P-3 resources and best practices. The P-3 Governor’s Institutes take place over a four-day session. Pennsylvania plans to reach 3,000 educators from 2014 to 2017.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Washington</td>
<td>Washington’s Starting Strong Institutes focus on improving leadership by engaging principals, early learning directors, and other early care and education professionals in professional development tied to understanding the birth-through-age-eight developmental continuum and strategies for supporting teachers in high-quality classroom practice. The Institute first took place in 2005 and has been funded, in part, by the ELC since 2012. In 2014, attendance exceeded 500 participants.</td>
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States’ P-3 professional development strategies share the common purpose of building capacity for leaders to implement policies and practices that will help to sustain early childhood program effects. They all require participants to come together in cross-sector community teams for the training. This approach ensures that a community has numerous individuals invested in plans to support learning from early childhood through elementary school and it aims to build relationships that can be sustained when the grant ends.

But there are distinctions in the professional development approaches as well. In terms of their content, some states, like Massachusetts, engage participants in understanding high quality early childhood practices. The content for these sessions varies from year to year, and has included: the leader’s role in building anti-bias education programs; the role of family engagement from birth through age eight; and how early educators can promote science, technology, engineering, and math. Other approaches, like that of Pennsylvania’s P-3 Governor’s Institutes, are more focused on sharing information specifically about building P-3 strategies and building connections among cross-sector teams. As a starting point for participation in the Institute, teams used Kristie Kauerz and Julia Coffman’s Framework for Planning, Implementing, and Evaluating PreK-3rd Grade Approaches to understand their community’s current P-3 landscape. The scope and intensity of the professional development approaches vary as well. For example, Maryland’s Leadership Academy and Washington State’s Starting Strong Institutes take a broad approach and have engaged a large number of stakeholders from across these states.

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5 See also Randi Wolfe, “Trends and Innovations in Early Childhood Workforce Development” in Rising to the Challenge: Building Effective Systems for Young Children and Families, a BUILD E-Book. 2015.
Massachusetts’ Early Educators Fellowship Institute is a more intensive approach. Its leadership series takes place over the course of several months and engages a smaller number of participants who are expected to build a learning community and develop a sense of shared purpose, identity, and responsibility to champion P-3 reforms.

Regardless of their approach, state leaders reported that they are optimistic about the promise of these efforts. According to Maryland’s Rolf Grafwallner: “We’re getting more principals aware of good early childhood practices and a handle on what to look for in those classrooms, take interest, and show that good early childhood practices are an asset. It will go beyond the grant period and it will be a big piece in the future. It is not only about collaboration, but a different kind of view.” It will be important to take stock of the cost and effectiveness of these alternative approaches to inform future efforts to engage P-3 instructional leaders.

Finding 4: States are aligning formative assessments.

ELC states’ alignment of early learning formative assessment has propelled P-3 reform in two ways.

First, the concurrent development or expansion of early childhood comprehensive assessments and kindergarten entry assessments (KEA) has created an opportunity to link expectations between early childhood and the elementary school years. Specifically, ELC states are investing in complementary early childhood and kindergarten assessments that are based on aligned learning standards and designed to inform instruction. For example, Delaware’s KEA is a customized version of Teaching Strategies GOLD. To encourage continuity between early childhood and early elementary school, Delaware’s Quality Rating and Improvement System (QRIS) requires the highest-rated centers to use a formative child assessment and provides incentives and resources for early childhood programs to use Teaching Strategies GOLD. Resources from the ELC were made available to create this purposeful linkage. By offering training to early childhood and kindergarten teachers, the state aims to assure the valid and reliable application of the measures, that the tools inform instruction, and that children have continuity in their early education as they move from early childhood programs to elementary school.

Second, the implementation of KEAs has generated meaningful and mutually beneficial dialogue between early childhood and elementary school leaders. Washington’s KEA includes a specific emphasis on relationship building. According to Nicole Rose, Washington’s PreK-3/ECEAP Administrator, “The goal of the early learning collaboration component of Washington Kindergarten Inventory of Developing Skills (WaKIDS) is to increase communication and build connections between kindergarten teachers and early learning providers to promote smooth and successful transitions to kindergarten for kids.” It asks public school leaders and teachers to assess their engagement with early learning providers in

A Note About Assessments

Through the ELC, states are developing and implementing comprehensive assessment in birth-to-five programs as well as Kindergarten Entry Assessments (KEAs). States are addressing five domains of development – language and literacy, social and emotional development, approaches toward learning, physical health and motor development, and general cognition. As part of comprehensive assessments, states are implementing “formative assessments,” which aim to understand children’s development in order to inform individualized teaching practices as well as developmental screening. Some states have developed their own comprehensive assessment and KEA tools and others have adapted published tools, such as Teaching Strategies GOLD or the Work Sampling System. Please see Catherine Scott-Little and Kelly Maxwell’s, “Improving Systems of Learning Through the Use of Child Standards and Assessments” in Rising to the Challenge: Building Effective Systems for Young Children and Families, a BUILD E-Book, for a detailed review of ELC work on assessment.

ELC states are investing in complementary early childhood and kindergarten assessments that are based on aligned learning standards and designed to inform instruction.


their community. Early learning collaboration activities may include reviewing incoming kindergartener transition forms with pre-K program staff and working together on kindergarten readiness events. Rose added that, “WaKIDS has allowed a common language and understanding of where we are headed with early learning and kindergarten for now and we’re thinking about how we can push into grades one, two, and three.” Similarly, New Jersey’s ELC Executive Director, Vincent Costanza, emphasized the significance of the KEA in “creating coherence” for the state’s P-3 system by serving as the foundation for its “Kindergarten Seminars,” a professional development series available for kindergarten teachers and principals throughout the state.

Indeed, the successful roll-out of the KEA depends on buy-in from a range of K-12 stakeholders, such as district administrators, school building leaders, teachers, and unions. Engaging leaders from the K-12 sector can be challenging but the heft of the KEA creates a shared interest that seems to break down barriers and build new bridges in many ELC states.

Finding 5: Funding partnerships drive P-3 reform.

As ELC state leaders shared how they are sustaining early childhood program effects into the elementary school grades, several participants noted that public-private funding partnerships have strengthened P-3 efforts. The most common public-private partnerships combine public funding with private funding. Private philanthropies have been particularly active in this area. For instance, the Delaware Readiness Teams and Maryland local early childhood advisory councils have received substantial philanthropic support. Philanthropies are involved in P-3 specialized professional development in Washington and Maryland as well.

Beyond private funding, states are leveraging other public resources for their P-3 strategies. The ELC encouraged states to develop KEAs that were funded “in significant part, with federal or state resources” outside of the ELC. New Jersey’s State Department of Education funds the KEA as well as a staff position devoted to supervising P-3 work. Delaware is leveraging federal resources from the Department of Education’s Mid-Atlantic Region Education Consortium to fund its evaluation work for the DEL Readiness Teams.

Indeed, public-private partnerships may be part and parcel of implementing cross-sector P-3 work. Bringing public and private dollars to the work engages support from a broad group of stakeholders and enhances the potential that the work will be sustained beyond the duration of the grant.

Finding 6: Experts accelerate P-3 knowledge transfer.

Several ELC states have engaged national organizations to inform plans to sustain program effects into the elementary grades. Massachusetts and Pennsylvania state leaders mentioned that they have used national organizations’ materials, staff, or technical assistance to advance their work. The expertise available from national organizations has been valuable to ELC state leaders as they gain knowledge about developing and implementing P-3 reforms that works in their states.

Finding 7: ELC states are documenting lessons learned for P-3.

Four of the states are working with third-party research partners to document or evaluate their localized P-3 work in order to inform effective early childhood policymaking in the future. Massachusetts, for example, has contracted with a consultant to develop a website, the “Birth through Grade Three (Birth-Third) Learning Hub,” to track, profile, and analyze its birth–third-grade initiatives. Delaware is working with the Regional Education Lab on a formative...
evaluation of its DEL Readiness Teams to capture strategies that are working and discuss the sustainability plan. As Brandi Miller, Program Manager at the Delaware Office of Early Learning shared, the evaluation is critical because, “We are breaking down silos and people are still learning.” Pennsylvania’s Community Innovation Zones plan has built in research as well. The intent is to document each community’s approach and relevant successes. According to Deborah Wise, “We’re really interested in learning more about the process of systems building and what it takes to make change. We want to know more about the role of the state and what is left to the local levels to drive change.” Likewise, Georgia’s Susan Adams points out that Georgia is evaluating its effort and she notes, “We’ll have lessons learned from the Empowerment Zone strategy to learn about how the birth-to-eight teams work and then scale them up.” By allocating ELC funding to learn from localized P-3 strategies, state leaders are poised to extend the work beyond the life of the grant.

Finding 8: ELC states are building capacity to implement P-3 reforms.

ELC state leaders identified three ways that they are working to develop much needed capacity to implement P-3 reforms. First, state leaders reported they are developing organizational capacity. The different organizational structures of the public school sector and early childhood sector pose unique challenges for implementing P-3 strategies. Much of the early childhood program and policy development is set at the state level and sometimes involves multiple state agencies whereas public school decision making typically is devolved to local school districts. The mismatch in organizational structure requires state ELC leaders to actively engage and communicate with community partners, maintain flexibility with implementation, and support the capacity of the local education agencies (LEAs) to enact P-3 practices that fit the local context. Indeed, P-3 requires ongoing leadership and relationship building in communities that are working on sustaining program effects into the elementary school grades. In Maryland, Rolf Grafwallner shared, “It is important for the local early childhood advisory council to intervene and bring parties together. It is much more than an MOU.” A structure to facilitate communication is especially important in communities where there may be barriers between local schools and early childhood programs. This communication is also equally important at the state level. Grafwallner added Maryland’s unified early childhood division in the State Department of Education “is what has made this work possible. Everything we do is focused on the RTT shifts.”

The second way in which ELC state leaders are thinking about capacity has to do with the coherence among policy initiatives. The way in which ELC P-3 reforms fit with K-12 reforms, such as Common Core implementation and teacher evaluation systems, is critical to maintaining public school sector support. Washington’s Nicole Rose noted that there could be “initiative fatigue with the implementation of the teacher evaluation system, Common Core, and WaKIDS all happening at the same time. When our partners and teachers can’t see the connections, it feels like one more thing to do.” New Jersey’s Vincent Costanza put it this way: “With so much happening in the age three-eight space, we need to be intentional about how the pieces fit together. There is a missed opportunity if we don’t help educators see the connections between initiatives like teacher evaluation, Common Core, and KEA.” As such, New Jersey is seeking ways to align the KEA assessment with the student learning outcomes measurement that is part of the K-12 teacher evaluation system. When the systems are not aligned, multiple initiatives can create complex and burdensome demands for teachers and school administrators and undermine their support of the P-3 work. By carefully aligning and communicating the value-added of each of the major efforts in the P-3 continuum, ELC states are helping leaders at all levels in their state to feel supported rather than burdened by the new initiatives.

The final area in which ELC state leaders focused on building capacity relates to the sustainability of financing to continue their work. As the ELC winds down for several states, leaders are focusing on the durability of their efforts in this area. They reported promising signs for sustaining their P-3 work. First, relationships have been developed to enable local government and philanthropy to sustain the community-based strategies. Second, the ELC laid out an expectation that states fund the KEA with federal or
state resources beyond the ELC which might contribute to sustainability. As the KEAs phase in, leaders are learning about implementing them at scale and making adjustments so that they are viable in the future. This work lays the foundation for the public school sector’s ongoing engagement in early education. As an area of the ELC grant that did not draw on significant grant funding, the sustainability of the P-3 efforts may not be as significant a challenge as sustainability of the other grant areas. Nevertheless, building capacity to address the anticipated loss of funding is a key concern for state leaders.

Looking Forward
Maintaining the momentum for P-3 reform in ELC states will require additional work and a solid commitment among state and local leaders. As policymakers look to the future and strive to provide children with a solid foundation in the early years from birth through third grade, the following three issues should be considered:

First, research will be critical for scaling up and sustaining P-3 reforms. Fortunately, several states have devoted resources to documenting and evaluating their efforts, which will yield valuable lessons about effective P-3 practices. Systematic studies of the variations in states’ approaches, including cost-benefit analyses, can shed light on the potential of particular P-3 reforms to impact early learning. Because P-3 is a reform area that is growing in prominence – as evidenced by criteria outlined in the Pre-K Development Grants as well as through the federal School Improvement Grant’s new focus on early learning – culling these lessons will be important to assure the judicious use of resources invested in P-3 strategies.

Second, the way that ELC states have addressed equity with P-3 reforms needs to be considered. Within the localized approach, several states have targeted resources to communities with large populations of children from families with factors that place them at risk for school failure. For example, North Carolina’s Transformation Zones include rural counties. The first criterion for selecting Georgia’s Early Education Empowerment Zones was the density of children from disadvantaged families. Advancing equity, however, requires more explicit attention within all of the P-3 strategies described above. Critical reviews of validity and reliability of states’ formative assessment instruments for children whose families are linguistically, racially, and economically marginalized, for instance, is vital to ensuring early childhood reforms bolster opportunities for all young children.

By carefully aligning and communicating the value-added of each of the major efforts in the P-3 continuum, ELC states are helping leaders at all levels in their state to feel supported rather than burdened by the new initiatives.
The third issue for consideration is capacity. To ensure P-3 reforms consistently take hold and reflect best practice, states need to devote dedicated resources and staffing to support alignment between the early learning and early elementary school systems. States have used ELC funds in this regard to advance P-3 work in selected communities and to build the capacity of leaders who participate in professional development opportunities. ELC states will need to consider how they can finance P-3 reforms so that the reforms permeate policy and practice for all of the young children within their states.

Through the ELC, the federal government has drawn attention to the importance of sustaining early childhood program effects into the elementary school grades. In the ELC states that developed plans and allocated resources to this area, there is momentum to extend and sustain the work. The state leaders we engaged noted a robust appetite for P-3 work in states and communities and ELC funding has helped them put their plans into action. The ELC has helped to build the structures and forge the partnerships needed to connect the early childhood and early elementary school systems. Indeed, a broader vision of the early childhood system that includes early elementary school is taking hold at the federal level and in states and communities that have benefited from ELC support.

Appendix: Data Sources

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sources of Information by State</th>
<th>State Contacts</th>
<th>Document Review</th>
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| Delaware                       | Brandi Miller, Program Manager, Delaware Office of Early Learning  
                                  Susan Mitchell, Senior Advisor, Delaware Office of Early Learning | X |
| Georgia                        | Susan Adams, Assistant Commissioner for PreK, Bright from the Start: Georgia Department of Early Care and Learning | X |
| Maryland                       | Rolf Grafwallner, Assistant State Superintendent, Maryland State Department of Education | X |
| Massachusetts                  | Liz Belsito, Project Director, Department of Early Education and Care (DEEC)  
                                  Betsy Edes, Early Education Coordinator, DEEC | X |
| New Jersey                     | Vincent Costanza: ELC Executive Director, Department of Education | X |
| North Carolina                 | N/A | X |
| Ohio                           | N/A | X |
| Pennsylvania                   | Maryanne Olley, Early Education Advisor, Office of Child Development and Early Learning (OCDEL)  
                                  Jolie Phillips, Early Education Advisor, OCDEL  
                                  Deborah Wise, Chief of the Division of Standards and Professional Development, OCDEL | |
| Rhode Island                   | N/A | X |
| Washington                     | Nicole Rose, PreK-3/ECEAP Administrator, Department of Early Learning | X |

For each state included in this analysis, the state’s application and Annual Performance Report were reviewed. In addition, state-specific publicly available documents, as well as commentaries and reports from national perspectives regarding this area of the ELC grant, provided background information about states’ ELC P-3 reforms. Following is a list of these resources.


About the Author
Kate Tarrant is an independent early childhood research and policy consultant whose recent clients include the BUILD Initiative, New York State’s Early Childhood Advisory Council, American Institutes for Research, and other national, state, and local organizations. Her work focuses on comprehensive early childhood systems, workforce development, and quality improvement policy. She has authored numerous policy briefs, book chapters, and articles on these topics. Tarrant earned a doctorate in education from Teachers College, Columbia University and a Master’s Degree in Public Administration from Columbia University’s School of International and Public Affairs.

Author Acknowledgements
I am grateful for the insights from the state leaders who generously shared their time and expertise with me. The comments and suggestions from our advisory committee members informed and strengthened the chapter as well.
BUILD Initiative Credits

We thank the dedicated authors, along with the many state leaders, for their passion, insights, and time.

Many others have made important contributions to this work. *Rising to the Challenge* was first conceptualized by Joan Lombardi, Senior Advisor, Buffett Early Childhood Fund and Early Opportunities with BUILD’s Executive Director, Susan Hibbard, in collaboration with Sherri Killins, Director of Systems Alignment and Integration at BUILD. Harriet Dichter ably served as general manager and editor. Without her the book might still be just a great idea. Anne Rein prepared executive summaries; Ruth Trombka provided editorial assistance; and Nada Giunta provided design services.

This early documentation of the impact of the Early Learning Challenge, as well as the considerable support to state leaders as they quickly applied for ELC grants and then even more quickly began to implement the ambitious plans, would not have been possible without the extensive support of the philanthropic community. We wish to particularly thank Phyllis Glink and the Irving Harris Foundation, the Early Childhood Funders Collaborative, the Alliance for Early Success, the Buffett Early Childhood Fund, Annie E. Casey Foundation, Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, George Gund Foundation, The Heinz Endowments, the Kresge Foundation, the McCormick Foundation, the David and Lucile Packard Foundation, the William Penn Foundation, the JB and MK Pritzker Foundation, the Rauch Foundation, and the Winthrop Rockefeller Foundation all of whom provided financing and encouragement.

Joan Lombardi and Sherri Killins co-chaired an exceptional advisory committee, bringing together Miriam Calderon; Jeff Capizzano, The Policy Equity Group; Debbie Chang, Nemours Health Policy & Prevention; Ellen Frede, Acelero Learning (now with the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation); Phyllis Glink, Irving Harris Foundation; Bette Hyde, Washington Department of Early Learning; Stacey Kennedy, Colorado Department of Human Services; Tammy Mann, Campagna Center; Hannah Matthews, CLASP; Carmel Martin, Center for American Progress; Kris Perry, First Five Years Fund; Elliot Regenstein, Ounce of Prevention Fund; Yvette Sanchez Fuentes, National Alliance for Hispanic Families; Carla Thompson, W.K. Kellogg Foundation; Albert Wat, National Governor’s Association; Sarah Weber, Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation; Marcy Whitebook, Center for the Study of Child Care Employment; Ceil Zalkind, Advocates for the Children of New Jersey.

*Forward Ever for All Young Children!*