Building a seamless learning continuum: Looking at the role of leadership to bridge the gap between Pre-K and K-12 care and education systems

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Over the past decades, educators and policymakers have worked on creating an aligned P-20 system; albeit much of this work has focused on aligning the K-12 and higher education systems and very little work has been conducted to integrate early care and education programs in this work to create a true P-20 learning continuum. This has resulted in inconsistent connections between early childhood programs (e.g., Head Start, Preschool for All sites in Illinois) and the K-12 system. This paper presents the findings of a study that has explored the connections (or lack thereof) between early childhood programs and K-12 schools and the roles that early childhood program and K-12 school leaders play in creating a seamless P-20 education system. Pre-K and K-12 aligned partnerships were analyzed through the lenses of inter-organizational and micro-political theories to identify and explain the disconnect between educational sectors.

Benefits of early childhood education, and thus benefits of a PreK-3 learning continuum

Multiple studies have shown that enrolling low-income children in early childhood programs improves outcomes in elementary school, with benefits that include higher achievement test scores, reduced need for special education services, and lower grade retention rates (Horton, 2007; Reynolds, Temple, Ou, Robertson, Mersky, Topitzes, & Niles, 2007; The Committee for Economic Development, 2006; Wat 2007). Studies following preschool attendees through adolescence found higher rates of high school completion and higher educational attainment compared to other low-income children not enrolled in preschool programs (Horton, 2007; Reynolds et al., 2007).

For example, the Chicago Longitudinal Study followed the life course of 1,539 low-income minority children born in 1979 or 1980 who attended early childhood programs in 25 sites in 1985-1986. The study found that the preschool group had significantly higher rates of high school completion and 4-year college attendance as well as more total years of education completed. By age 24, the preschool group was more likely to have a stable employment history and had significantly lower incarceration rates (Reynolds et al., 2007).

The Administration for Children and Families (2006) conducted a study of Early Head Start programs serving children from birth to age three. Results showed that Early Head Start children performed better on measures of cognition, language and social-emotional functioning and were less likely to be in an "at-risk" category, potentially reducing the need for special education services. Early Head Start parents were more likely to be in education or job training programs and to be more supportive of their children's development. The researchers also found significant positive effects on English vocabulary acquisition for Spanish-speaking children.

The economic benefits of early childhood programs have been well-documented through many longitudinal studies. One study followed preschool students through age 27, and compared economic outcomes with a similar group of students who did not attend preschool. The researchers found that the preschool group had four times as many individuals earning $2,000 or more each month; three times as many owning their own homes; and one fourth as many receiving welfare benefits as adults (Schweinhart, Barnes, & Weikart, 1993). A recent Minnesota report found that the estimated cost burden to the Minnesota K-12 system due to children entering kindergarten unprepared was $113 million annually (Chase, Coffee-Borden, Anton, Moore, & Valorose, 2008). Finally, a recent report described the economic gains of a voluntary universal prekindergarten program in Illinois (Lynch, 2007). This report projected that by 2050,

this cohort of students will contribute an additional $18 billion in earnings resulting in $9 billion in increased profits and benefits for Illinois businesses, and a $7 billion decrease in governmental spending and a $6 billion reduction in crime-related costs (Lynch, 2007).

While the wide spread short-term and long-term benefits of early childhood education are clear, an emerging area of research is showing that the investment in early childhood can be lost if high quality early childhood experiences are not coupled and aligned with consistent quality experiences in elementary school (Kauerz, 2006). A review of the research on 'fade out' effects of children who attended Head Start programs noted the independent contribution that the quality of elementary education experience for disadvantaged children has on retaining their cognitive development and learning success (Barnett, 2002).

Some of the loss in learning or 'fade out' can be attributed to low quality classrooms in elementary schools, of which a larger proportion of these low quality classrooms are in schools in more impoverished areas that have the least qualified teachers and fewer resources (National Institute of Child Health and Human Development Early Child Care Research Network [NICHD ECCRN], 2002, 2004; Stuhlman & Pianta, 2009). The fade out can also be attributed to the different philosophies among early childhood and elementary schools in which children often get lost in the transition (Takanishi & Kauerz, 2008).

In 1990, the U. S. Congress authorized a program designed to enhance the early public school transitions of former Head Start children and their families to test the value of extending comprehensive, Head Start-like supports through the first four years of elementary school. The program overall showed clear evidence that community partnerships were strengthened and that multiple transition supports were enacted to promote the early school adjustment of

disadvantaged children (S. Ramey, C. Ramey, Phillips, Lanzi, Brezausek, Katholi, & Snyder, 2000).

The Learning Continuum

An effective learning continuum that spans the lifespan learning experiences from birth to beyond ensures continuity in children's experiences as they move from one care and education setting to another. A strong continuum includes several important features:

- *Vertical alignment:* curriculum and instruction progress in an orderly and logical manner across developmental levels and grades;

- *Horizontal alignment*: instructors coordinated learning experiences within grades and subjects;

- *Shared goals* of student readiness and proficiency as learning progresses; and

- *Communication and coordination* among caregivers, educators, and families to support student learning (Kaurez, 2008).

Research shows that this type of aligned approach in early childhood and K-12 education can improve student achievement, reduce the need for costly special education services, and produce a more educated, skilled and competitive workforce (Graves, 2006). A seamless learning continuum multiplies the benefits of investments in preschool. To do this, though, requires continuity in services between the two education sectors.

Continuity requires sequential access to coordinated programs and predictable experiences that support learning and development. To create this sequential experience, Kaurez (2008) asserted that early childhood and K-12 systems need to integrate both *push-down* and *push-up* efforts. *Push-down* refers to policies and practices in the K-12 system that the early learning community may learn and adapt for use within its classrooms. Similarly, *push-up*

includes policies and practices from the early learning community that the K-12 system may adapt for its own student clientele.

According to Kaurez (2008), a learning continuum should be a "together effort" that includes everyone, without the burden falling on one particular sector. For example, in Sweden, integrating pre-schools with primary schools made the schools more learner-centered and brought about a paradigm shift in education in which child care and development go hand in hand with education (Soo-Hyang Choi, 2002). Sharing efforts and knowledge in these ways helps early childhood and K-12 to jointly provide coordinated child-centered education and whole-child development.

Leadership Matters

While less research is known on the contributions that early childhood program directors have on student learning and development, advancements have been made in the K-12 literature to show the direct impact of principals on student learning. Leithwood, Louis, Anderson, & Wahlstrom (2004) identified the significant contribution that school leaders make to increasing student achievement, second only to the contributions of teachers. The same research found that in difficult times and circumstances, leadership matters even more. This is not only the case in K-12 education. Research also has shown that the level of training and support for early childhood program directors impacts the quality of services provided (Bloom & Bella, 2005).

Other studies have identified the effects of specific leadership skills on improved student achievement. Waters, Marzano, & McNulty (2003) examined the effects of K-12 school leadership practices on student achievement and identified specific research-based school leadership responsibilities and practices significantly associated with improved student achievement. Leaders in both early childhood and K-12 education are well-positioned to create

the conditions for a smooth learning continuum that fully supports children as they progress. However, based on the lack of literature and research on this area, it is clear that many currently do not understand the critical role of leaders in both sectors with bridging the divide between early childhood programs and the K-12 system.

This divide is innate to the system and culture in which leaders emerge. The problem often begins with the training that principals and early childhood program leaders receive in their preparation programs and continues with a shortage of targeted professional development for practicing school leaders and childcare directors. For example, very few principal preparation and professional development programs provide learning experiences on early childhood learning standards, early childhood brain research and learning theories, or funding and school laws and policies related to early childhood care and education programs and services. Such knowledge would prepare K-12 principals both to partner with early care and education professionals and to provide instructional leadership for Pre-K and early elementary programs within their own schools.

The National Association of Elementary School Principals (NAESP) (2005) developed six standards for education and early learning that effective principals must demonstrate to connect elementary schools and early childhood programs to develop high quality early childhood and elementary programs in their communities. While these standards have been created, no research currently exists to show how these standards are being used, how widely distributed they are, or whether these standards have improved student learning.

The problem is also evident in a relative lack of formal and informal training for many early childhood leaders. When training occurs, it rarely addresses the connections between early childhood and K-12. While principals in Illinois must complete a master's level certification

program, early childhood program directors are required to have less formal education; many have a bachelor's degree while others have an associate's degree.

As noted in the most recent *Who's Caring for the Kids?* report (Fowler, Bloom, Talan, Beneke, & Kelton, 2008), the quality of care provided is affected by the level of formal education and specialized training of early childhood directors. Furthermore, directors who are more highly educated tend to provide more professional growth opportunities to their teachers (Fowler et al., 2008). More highly qualified directors have also been shown to increase staff retention as well as set higher expectations for program quality – both of which translate to better learning experiences for children (Bloom & Bella, 2005; Lower & Cassidy, 2007; Whitebook & Sakai, 2004). The research on early childhood directors confirms that early childhood directors are an important part in improving the quality of early learning teachers, facilities, and care for young children. The purpose of this paper is to present research on the current state of the alignment in the early childhood and K-12 education sectors, primarily uncovering gaps in alignment, the factors that lead to these gaps, and potential policy recommendations. The focus of this paper is on the role that early childhood program and K-12 school leaders play in bridging the gap between early childhood and K-12 programs.

<div align="center">Theoretical Framework</div>

This study utilized a multidisciplinary and interdisciplinary approach through a theoretical framework based on inter-organizational and micro-political theories. The theoretical assumptions that were used to guide this study were not produced in the education research, but borrowed from studies on inter-organizational and political models conducted in the areas of business and social sciences.

Operationally, a learning continuum functions within an inter-organizational domain: the inter-organizational domain suggests two of more organizations coming together to address collective problems or issues that cannot be resolved by a single organization (Gray, 1985; Gray & Hay, 1986; Gray & Wood, 1991; Hardy & Phillips, 1998; Logsdon, 1991; Trist, 1983). Trist (1983) refers to these collective problems as a meta-problem, a problem which one organization cannot deal with alone. Many states have created P-20 councils, based largely on the meta-problem philosophy, though most P-20 council neglect to incorporate the early learning community into their P-20 planning. This study looked at the role of the state in supporting leaders from the early childhood and K-12 sectors to create and sustain a Pre-K and beyond learning continuum.

In inter-organizational models, the common problem becomes the domain in which each of the stakeholder groups or organizations has an interest and in which collaboration takes place. Often, the collaboration is not initiated by the stakeholder groups, but rather state policymakers who face the considerable challenge with integrating several communities into a larger policy context without sacrificing each group's identity, foundational philosophies, and integrity. Here is where lies the challenge between the early learning and elementary education communities, which often operate on different pedagogical philosophies and techniques (e.g., play-based versus direct instruction). Micro-political theory was also integrated into the study's theoretical framework to capture the focus of inter-organizational conflict between the early learning and elementary education sector, particularly related to goal diversity (Ball, 1991) and ideological disputation (Ball, 1991).

Goal diversity and inconsistent philosophies and techniques are just an outgrowth of an American education system that developed in separate pieces at different times: the college

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system first (17th century), elementary and secondary schools next (19th century), and finally, early childhood (20th century). Only in the past few decades has work begun to integrate these pieces of the education system into a coherent whole: a learning continuum**,** or progression**,** that supports students from their earliest learning experiences, through their growing years and formal schooling, and into adulthood. Nonetheless, all three education sectors—birth to age 5 learning, Pre-K through Grade 12 (P-12) schooling, and higher education—have the same general goal: to nurture students through the learning process, giving them knowledge and skills for success in school and in life. The sectors each approach this goal in ways that are appropriate to their students' developmental characteristics. This theoretical framework (see Figure 1) helps to analyze the findings of our study on how different stakeholders and sectors interpret and work toward this common goal.

Figure 1. Concepts of the Inter-Organizational and Micro-Political Framework.

Key Concepts of Inter-Organizational/Micro-Political Framework

Inter-Organizational Theory
- Problem Domain (Gray, 1985; Hardy & Phillips, 1998
- Inter-Organizational Domain (Gray & Hay, 1986)
- Aspects/Strategies for Power (Hardy & Phillips, 1998)
- Circumstances (Oliver, 1990)
- Membership (Gray, 1989; Huxham & Vangen, 2000)
- Sector Interdependency (Gray & Hay, 1986)

Micro-Political Theory
- Interests of Actors (Ball, 1991)
- Maintenance of Organizational Control (Ball, 1991; Hoyle, 1999)
- Conflict over Policy (Ball, 1991; Hoyle, 1999)
- Sector Interdependency (Bacharach & Lawler, 1981)

Foci of Inter-Organizational Conflict
- Political Control (Ball, 1991)
- Alliances (Mangham, 1979)
- Power in Domains (Hardy & Phillips, 1998)
- Goal Diversity (Ball, 1991)
- Ideological Disputation (Ball, 1991)

Methods

Defining the Problem

We know that setting the foundation for student achievement begins early, even before the child sets foot into a public school setting. Recent research on early brain development has shown that from birth to five years, children's brains build the foundation for academic, emotional, and social functioning for the rest of their lives (National Research Council, Committee on Integrating the Science of Early Childhood Development, 2000; Shore, 1997). The research also highlights the importance of high-quality early learning experiences to ensure that children are ready for kindergarten and that cognitive gains may 'fade out' if not followed through aligned and integrated experiences in the early elementary years (Kauerz, 2006).

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At the core of this problem is the disconnect that occurs because of a lack of communication and partnering between educators in early learning and the K-12 school system. Little if any research exists that focuses on the extent in which elementary schools coordinate student's preschool experiences with pedagogical approaches in K-3 (Bogard and Takanishi, 2005), nor with the role of early childhood program and K-12 leadership in aligning the different sectors. This requires particular attention as quality leadership is an essential component of any school reform efforts directed at improving student achievement (Leithwood, Louis, Anderson, & Wahlstrom, 2004; Peterson & Finn, 1985). Thus, at the heart of the problem is that early childhood and K-12 school leaders' do not place a high priority in partnering across the two sectors that would bridge the divide between early learning programs and K-12 schools and create a continuous Pre-K-3 aligned system.

Research Questions

The purpose of this study was to collect data on the state of the aligned learning continuum in Illinois school districts and early childhood programs. The goal of the research was to make informed policy recommendations based on the data collected in this study and to inform the larger education community on those policies and practices that pose as barriers to a seamless learning continuum. In doing so, a study was conducted that considered four primary research questions:

1. What is the current nature of the linkages and partnerships between early childhood program providers and elementary schools in Illinois?

2. What are the most current issues and challenges that are barriers to creating a seamless learning continuum in Illinois?

3. How are early childhood program directors and elementary school principals facilitating the alignment of a seamless learning continuum?

4. What actions do practitioners recommend that would facilitate their efforts to develop and sustain an aligned learning continuum?

Research Methods and Data Sources

Aligned with the disciplined inquiry theme, the study used mixed method data collection and analysis through:

- Surveys to early childhood program directors and elementary school principals (see Appendices A and B), and

- Delphi surveys data gathering of expert advisory committee members.

Surveys were administered to a sample of early childhood program directors, and elementary school principals (with and without Pre-K programs in their schools. To obtain a representative sample of 327 directors, surveys were sent to a stratified sample of 1,753 childcare center directors (in for-profit, not-for-profit and school-based centers). The sample was stratified by the following areas within Illinois: "Chicago", the "Collar Counties of Chicago" (Cook, DuPage, Kane, Lake, McHenry, and Will counties), "Large Town" (population over 25,000), and "Small Town" (population less than 25,000). Surveys were sent to all 2,628 Illinois elementary school principals (e.g., P-8, K-4, K-8) to obtain a representative sample of 328 principals. The survey process garnered 205 responses from early childhood program directors (12% response rate) and 403 responses from principals (15% response rate). Appendix C and D contain the demographics of the survey respondents.

In addition to the surveys used to collect data from the field, the Delphi method was used with a statewide project advisory group (Leadership to Integrate the Learning Continuum [LINC]

Advisory Committee) -- consisting of educational stakeholders from both the early care and education and K-12 organizations -- as a method of gathering and synthesizing information to formulate the issues around Pre-K-3 alignment and recommend state policies to support inter-organizational collaboration. The advisory group met from August to December 2008, providing expertise and guidance to study the current status of early learning/K-12 integration in Illinois. During the months that the group met, the members were asked to respond to a succession of surveys to discuss the current state of the learning continuum in Illinois, challenges to the continuum, and policy recommendations to alleviate those challenges using the Delphi method.

The Delphi method was developed by the RAND Corporation with the purpose of bringing together an informed group (such as our expert advisory committee) to formulate and define an issue (in our case leadership and Pre-K-3 alignment) and present policy options. The Delphi method was used as a multi-phase process of surveying in which participants in the advisory committee were given the chance to present their positions, weigh the pros and cons for theirs and others positions, and then finally, come to a general consensus on appropriate policy recommendations over a series of surveys.

Surveys, including surveys in the Delphi method, were analyzed using SPSS descriptive statistical methods to identify frequencies and means of response distribution and analyses of variances in responses. Using qualitative analysis techniques, the information from the surveys was compared and contrasted to look for convergent and divergent themes within and across groups of respondents (Miles & Huberman, 1995).

<div align="center">Findings</div>

Results from the data collection reflected the existing linkages and gaps that facilitated or impeded the Pre-K through K-12 learning continuum in Illinois with particular attention to the

role of early childhood and elementary school leaders. The results from the survey questions were analyzed and reported using the conceptual framework of this study, which integrated inter-organizational and micro-political theories. Accordingly, the results showed that while each sector has the same general goal – to nurture students through the learning process, thus giving them knowledge and skills for success in school and life – their efforts begin and end during the years of schooling only under their jurisdiction. As a result, cross-sector collaboration between early childhood and elementary education was not common and when it occurred, it was often focused on one-time events to ease the pre-school to kindergarten transition, neglecting to consider collaboration to create a broader aligned learning continuum.

Working Within Domains – Evidence of an Inter-Institutional Divide

Based on the survey findings, it is apparent that collaboration with local K-12 schools is not an inherent occurrence within early childhood centers. The survey findings for program directors are displayed in Table 1. The findings show that program directors work most frequently with teachers within their own centers to improve teaching and learning. For example, program directors expect their teachers to regularly assess their children's developmental progress and use the results to inform curriculum, teaching, and program development. Furthermore, program directors alert their teachers of professional development opportunities to learn more about aligning early care and education programs with the P-12 education system.

However, when it comes to working with educators outside their own early childhood programs, directors rarely engage with local elementary teachers and administrators. For example, early childhood program directors and teachers do not regularly include elementary teachers and administrators in curriculum planning meetings. Nor do program directors and teachers frequently work with elementary teachers and administrators to align the two systems'

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programs and curricula, observe classrooms, or participate in joint professional development.

Finally, early childhood program directors indicated that they did developmental screening of

each child as well as monitor children's development. However, federal student data privacy

restrictions do not allow them access to their students' data once they matriculate to elementary

school, which prohibits them to use these data to evaluate and improve their programs.

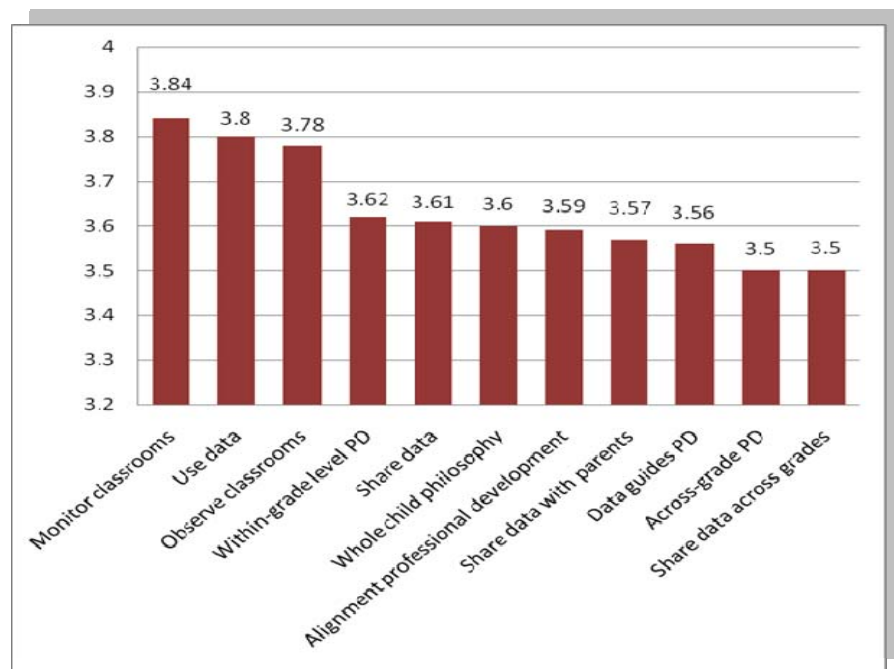Table 1: Policies and Practices of Early Childhood Program Directors
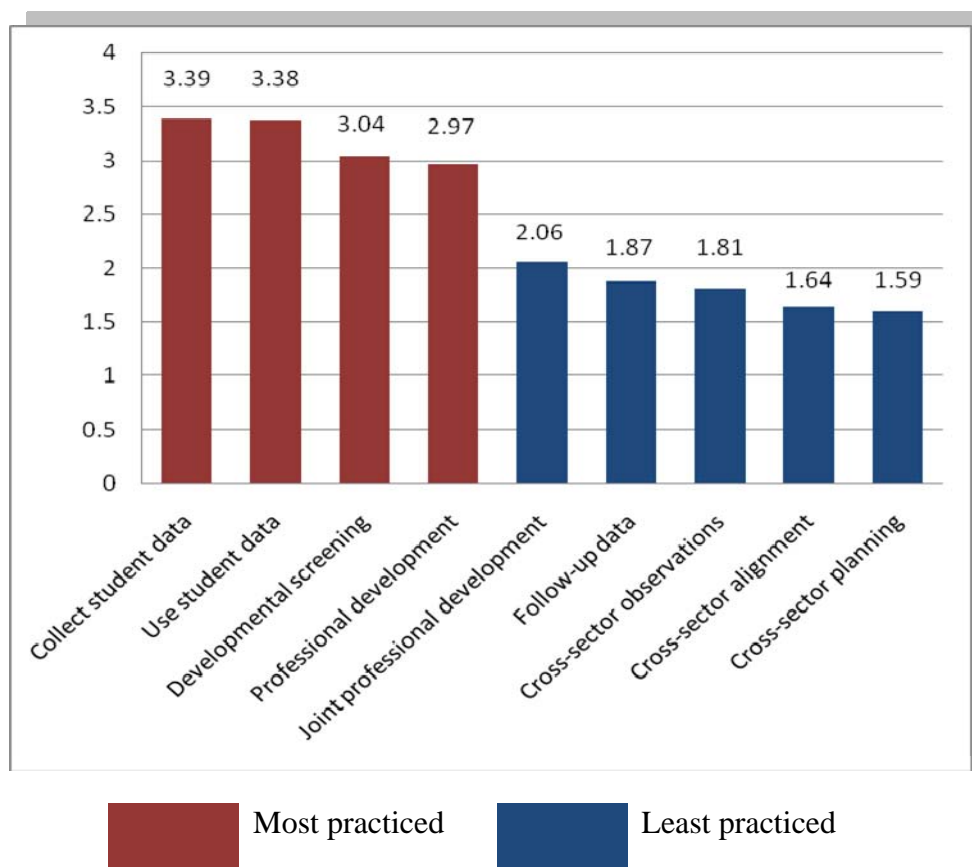
1=To no extent   2= To some extent   3= To a moderate extent 4= To a great extent

Based on the surveys of elementary school principals, K-12 teachers and administrators

work to align their curricula, assess the quality of schools and classrooms, assess students'

learning, and guide curricular development and professional development. However, similar to

the responses for center directors, these practices are most commonly employed only *within* each

principal's building. The survey findings for principals are displayed in Tables 2 and 3.

Like center directors, principals reported that they rarely work with early childhood directors and teachers *outside* of their buildings. A large percent of principals reported that their schools do not routinely invite early childhood teachers and family-based providers into their classrooms to observe, nor do the schools include Pre-K teachers in common planning sessions with elementary teachers. While it is common that principals encourage elementary teachers to observe each other's classrooms, very few principals encouraged Pre-K teachers to observe elementary classrooms or elementary teachers to observe Pre-K teachers' classrooms.

Table 2. Most Common Policies and Practices of Elementary Principals

1=To no extent 2= To some extent   3= To a moderate extent 4= To a great extent

Table 3. Least Common Policies and Practices of Elementary Principals
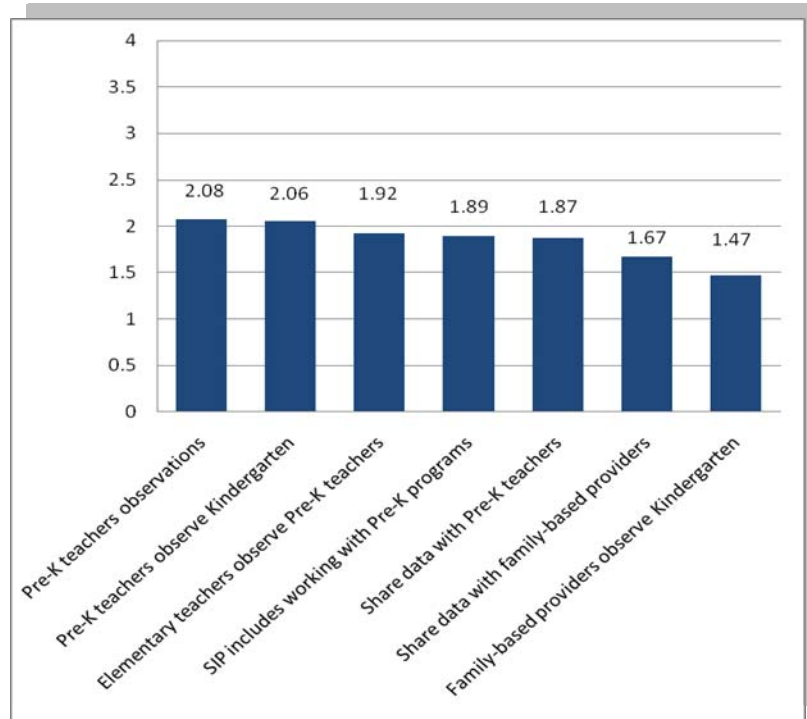
1=To no extent 2= To some extent   3= To a moderate extent 4= To a great extent

Bridging the Divide – Early Childhood Program Location

The analysis showed that principals with Pre-K programs in their buildings engaged more in certain practices than principals in which the district's Pre-K program was outside their school. A one way analysis of variance found that principals with Pre-K programs in their schools were more likely to practice learning continuum building activities than those principals without a Pre-K program. The practices practiced more often by principals with Pre-K programs in their schools are presented in Table 4.

Table 4. Learning continuum practices more often practiced by principals with Pre-K programs in their buildings.

Practice	df	F-Statistic	P-value
Adopt curricular practices from early learning	4	5.062	$p < .001$
Align curriculum with Illinois Early Learning	4	17.061	$p < .000$

Standards

Include Pre-K teachers in common planning time	4	14.170	*p < .000*
Pre-K teachers observe elementary classrooms	4	11.742	*p < .000*
Elementary teachers observe Pre-K classrooms	4	4.564	*p < .001*
Offer professional development on early learning theories	4	11.050	*p < .000*
Share aggregated student data with Pre-K teachers	4	9.965	*p < .000*

Barriers to Bridging Organizations Into A Common Domain

Data from both the center director and principal surveys identified the most common barriers to aligning learning experiences between early childhood and K-12 programs. Respondents were asked to provide a rating of the level of extent to which issues posed a barrier to their work building a learning continuum on a scale from 1 to 4 with 1 representing "to no extent," and 4 representing "to a great extent." The barriers that received the highest ratings by program directors cited are listed in Table 5.

Table 5. Barriers to the learning continuum reported by early childhood program directors.

Barrier	**Mean**	**SD**
Lack of access to follow-up data on program graduates	2.57	1.277
Not enough time to build partnerships	2.25	1.010
Lack of interest by K-12 district in receiving early childhood assessment data	2.23	1.217

Principals were also asked to rate the extent to which certain issues served as a barrier to their efforts to work with the early learning system to build a learning continuum using the same scale as the survey to directors (i.e., a scale of 1 to 4). Table 6 is a list of the barriers that received the highest ratings by principals.

Table 6. Barriers to the learning continuum reported by principals.

Barrier	Mean	SD
Not enough time to build partnerships	2.42	1.082
Incompatibility of schedules between the two systems	1.96	1.042
Privacy laws that strictly regulate the sharing of student information among people and systems (e.g., FERPA)	1.95	1.045

Suggestions for Overcoming Barriers and Bridging the Domain

Often the focus for bridging organizational domains lies in the present. However, state policymakers in Illinois – drivers for bridging this divide – have focused their attention on proactive measures, including a focus on how early childhood directors and principals are prepared in university-based preparation programs. An open-ended question was asked on the survey to both directors and principals to garner director and principal input on this strategy. The qualitative analysis revealed several types of recommendations about how to integrate more learning experiences about early care and education into administrator preparation programs. Their suggestions were organized into the themes described in Table 7.

Table 7: Principals and directors recommendations to leadership preparation programs.

Theme	Principals	Early Childhood Program

		Directors
Infuse early childhood and learning continuum content and experiences into the curriculum	Developmentally appropriate practices Integrating early learning standards into policies and practices Curriculum and instruction to meet young children's learning needs Administrator's role in developing Individual Education Plans (IEPs) and Response To Intervention (RTI) for preschool-age children Provide a course for each level of schooling (early childhood, elementary, and secondary education) Hire a faculty member/course instructor with early learning experience Provide opportunities for	Provide opportunities for observing K-12 classrooms Recognize philosophy differences between early childhood and elementary education Teach students about the whole span of a child's learning and development beginning in infancy

	observing early childhood providers	
Include content and experiences about collaboration and team-building	Include working with early childhood providers as experiences within internships in the general administration Type 75 preparation program Community relations courses and practical experiences	Place more emphasis on partnering and relationship-building Include working with K-12 providers (teachers and administrators) in early childhood leadership programs Offer post-graduate courses that include early childhood administrators in joint training sessions
Provide specialized programs (for principals)	Provide an option for a specialized program in which candidates can receive specialized designations for Pre-K-elementary, middle school, or high school within the general administrative certificate	

Open-ended questions were also asked regarding current professional development opportunities provided to both early childhood directors and principals. Early childhood directors gave recommendations as to the types of professional development that would help prepare them to better work with K-12 schools. The most common response related to the concept of "push-up/push-down," in which educators from the early childhood sector and K-12 sector can learn and adapt philosophies, policies, and practices from each other (e.g., learning theories, expectations, transitions, developmentally appropriate practices, curriculum alignment, relationship between the Illinois Early Learning and Illinois Learning Standards). Several directors suggested professional development courses about strategies to build partnerships and collaborating across sectors and seven respondents called for more cross-sector team opportunities to collaborate, in which representatives of the early childhood and K-12 communities come together for county, district, or regional seminars and workshops.

Elementary school principals responded with several suggestions for professional development providers that would help principals develop the knowledge and capacity to collaborate with early childhood providers. Several principals suggested that professional development providers should continue the workshop that currently exists for principals on understanding the Pre-K program. In addition, the principals suggested that workshops should provide learning opportunities on the following topics:

- Opportunities to partner with early childhood to align curricula, assure matches between curriculum and assessment, and assure rigor in early childhood and early elementary classrooms;

- Developmentally appropriate practices; assessing young children's learning and development;

- Early childhood learning theories and best practices; and,

- Training on how to integrate early childhood philosophy in the world of elementary schools that has to meet the accountability demands of NCLB and state tests.

Finally, principals said they need more information about mental health resources for students and families, and best practices to engage parents as partners in the early childhood to elementary education transition.

Cross-Sector Collaborations

Early childhood program directors and principals were asked in an open-ended question to describe the cross-sector partnerships in which they engaged to foster seamless learning experiences for their students. The directors and principals were asked to provide descriptive data on their partners, the purpose of the partnership, and the activities in which the partnership engaged. The qualitative data were thematically coded to organize the characteristics of these cross-sector collaborations.

The cross-sector collaborations described by principal respondents most often involved administrators and staff in elementary grades *working with staff in their own district's early childhood programs* (e.g., Head Start and Preschool for All programs). Of the principals who responded to this open-ended question, about half of the principals said that they participated in some type of collaboration with early childhood providers. Of these who responded, the overwhelming majority (approximately 80%) said that these collaborations involved administrators, faculty, and staff in their own districts. Only a few principals reported working with early care and education providers outside the district in the greater community. These data appear consistent with the data presented earlier, in that elementary school principals reported

engaging in alignment and collaboration activities, but the activities most often involved staff members in their own buildings.

A small group of principals reported being involved in *community coalitions* that involved multiple community groups such as representatives from business, mental health and social service agencies, health providers, and educators. The most common goals or activities in these collaborations involved working together to improve children's transitions from early childhood programs to kindergarten through screening, visits to the kindergarten classrooms and open houses, aligning curriculum, and informing early childhood providers of school readiness requirements.

Among early childhood program director respondents, the majority indicated that they were not involved in any collaborative activities with their local school districts. Those that did engage in such activities described them as falling into three categories:

- *Formal community/county-wide coalitions* with community stakeholders from the education and business communities, social service agencies, and others to increase resources for early care and education providers and improve transitions for children from Pre-K settings to kindergarten.

- *Serving on school district school improvement teams* and decision-making committees to align the curriculum, share test results, and inform the early childhood community about the district's kindergarten readiness expectations and logistics.

- *Working with individual schools and/or teachers* (either formally or informally) to appropriately place students, particularly special needs students; aligning standards and curriculum; and learning about best practices and teaching strategies. The most common

goal for these collaborations was to improve the transitions for specific children from preschool to kindergarten.

Results of the Delphi study

Over the course of meetings, members of the advisory committee identified several challenges to creating the learning continuum through dialogue during the meetings as well as through the Delphi surveys. The nature of the challenges are characterized as such:

- ***Misperceptions of the nature and value of the work*** performed within organizations and schools providing care and education along the learning continuum. In particular, early care and education providers do not feel that their work is not valued by educators in the K-12 system;

- ***Complex systems of care and education***, in which communication processes are rudimentary (and sometimes non-existent) among the organizations and sectors. As a result, the education system is fragmented resulting in service and education silos, service duplication, and/or services not rendered to children and families in need;

- ***Inconsistent cross-sector collaboration****,* leading to misalignment of various essential elements of a strong learning continuum: standards, curricula, assessments, instruction, and preparation and professional development of leaders and teachers in early childhood education and K-12 systems;

- ***Incompatible policies, practices and funding streams*** that do not promote or sustain collaboration and integrated learning environments and experiences for children; and,

- ***Insufficient family and community involvement*** that engages parents and families to become essential partners in their children's development and education.

As a result of discussions and the surveys, the advisory group was able to come to consensus on a set of policy recommendations for Illinois that would begin to alleviate the challenges in response to those identified through the surveys to early childhood program directors and elementary school principals. The recommendations fell into three goal areas: 1) strengthening the learning continuum through cross-sector communication and collaboration among service agencies, early childhood representatives, and K-12 education; 2) expanding leadership preparation and professional development programs that support the learning continuum; and, 3) supporting a statewide data infrastructure that collects and analyzes data of student development across the continuum from preschool through higher education. The recommendations of the LINC advisory committee can be found in Appendix E. A copy of the LINC advisory group's final report can be downloaded at: www.leadershiplinc.ilstu.edu.

Discussion

Overall, when one compares the practices of both center directors and principals, both appear to be engaging in practices related to improving the curriculum and teaching within their buildings and/or districts and using student data to assess children's progress. However, the practices that center directors and principals report using the least are the alignment and collaboration practices that require these leaders to reach outside of their buildings. While these conclusions are based on the responses of principals and center directors who responded to this survey, we anticipate that the results would be about the same in schools and early childhood programs across Illinois, as well as nationally.

Additionally, the results of the survey show that principals with Pre-K programs in their buildings were more likely to engage in practices that bridge the inter-organizational divide. These results are discouraging considering that due to space constraints, many early childhood

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centers in districts are not located in elementary schools but in other facilities, including middle, high school, and sometimes alternative schools. While the survey results identified more structural or organizational barriers to collaboration, the Delphi surveys revealed more political and cultural differences between early childhood and K-12 education. Follow up interviews or focus groups would likely reveal similar responses to the Delphi survey.

Responses for bridging the gaps between early childhood and K-12 reveal the influence and role that those outside of the school and center have on bridging the divide. The surveys and Delphi process revealed that much of the misalignment between early childhood and K-12 is due as much to cultural differences and lack of understanding about each other's philosophies and techniques as to structural and organizational constraints. Integrating better training in early childhood and principal preparation programs, as well as professional development offerings would help to avoid many of these barriers. Although a small number of principals and early childhood directors indicated examples of ways that they collaborate with the other sector, time constraints of this study prevented researchers from learning more about what these collaborations entail. Further research to enhance this study should include some in-depth investigation into early childhood/K-12 collaborations, identifying strengths and weaknesses as well as strategies to inform others interested in developing an inter-organizational collaboration.

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Appendix A
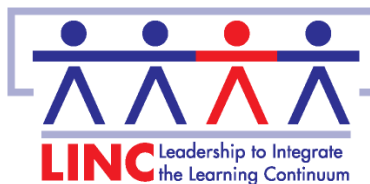
Child Care Director –

Thank you for agreeing to take part in this survey. The purpose of the **Leadership to Integrate the Learning Continuum (LINC)** project is to discuss the issues related to aligning and coordinating the learning experiences for children from birth to K-12 schools. The project is exploring current practices that early childhood centers and programs (both public and private-based) and elementary schools in Illinois do to develop and sustain coordinated learning practices and experiences. By completing the survey, you are providing data that will better inform the work of this committee.

Several terms are used in the survey. Please review these terms so that you are able to answer the questions accurately.

- **Learning Continuum:** The aligned learning and developmental experiences of children from birth through K-12 schools.
- **Alignment:** Building a coordinated structure of standards, curricula, teaching practices, and assessments in which the knowledge and skills gained serve as a foundation for future learning.
- **Transition:** Activities and processes to ease children's transitions from their environments prior to school into elementary school.
- **Educational Leaders:** Leaders in early care and education (e.g., center-based directors, family child care providers, public Pre-K program coordinator, lead teacher) and school leaders in K-12 schools (e.g., teacher leaders, principals, and district office administrators).
- **Learning Environments**: Include family child care providers and private and public early learning centers, school-based or non-school based (e.g., Head Start, Preschool for All, KinderCare). At the primary grade level, learning environments include public and private elementary schools.
- **Early Care and Education Providers:** Include family child care providers, as well as teachers and directors of school and non-school based early learning centers.

Thank you in advance for your willingness to complete the survey. By January 2009, survey results and policy/practice recommendations will be posted on the project website: http://www.leadershiplinc.ilstu.edu. If you have any questions about this project or the survey, please contact Lisa Hood at 309/438-3034 or lhood@ilstu.edu.

<u>Background Information</u>

1. In what type of early childhood center do you work? (check only one):
   ___ For-profit—private proprietary or partnership
   ___ For-profit—corporation or chain (e.g., KinderCare, La Petite Academy)
   ___ For-profit—corporate-sponsored (e.g., Bright Horizons Family Solutions)
   ___ Private nonprofit—independent
   ___ Private nonprofit—affiliated with a social service agency or hospital
   ___ Public nonprofit—sponsored by federal, state, or local government
   ___ College or university affiliated
   ___ Military-sponsored
   ___ Public school

2. If you said that your center is based in a public school, where is it located?
   ___ In an elementary school
   ___ In another school building, not an elementary school
   ___ In a district owned stand-alone building
   ___ Other (please specify): _____

3. Check all current sources of funding received by the center:
   ___ Preschool for All, state-funded pre-kindergarten, or other ISBE early childhood block grants
   ___ Head Start or Early Head Start
   ___ IDHS or Chicago CYS child care subsidies (CCAP program)

4. Please choose the best descriptor of where your early learning center is located.
   ___ Chicago
   ___ Collar County (Cook, DuPage, Kane, Lake, McHenry, and Will)
   ___ Large Town (population over 25,000)
   ___ Small Town/Rural (population less than 25,000

5. What age levels does your early learning center serve? (check all that apply)
   ___ Infants   ___ Toddlers   ___ Preschoolers   ___School-agers

6. Is your center NAEYC accredited?   ___ Yes   ___ No

7. What is your licensed status?   ___ Licensed   ___ License-exempt

8. In total, how many children is your center licensed to serve? _____

9. Estimate the percentage of children in each category: (The total should equal 100%)
   ___ African American   ___ Asian/Pacific Islander   ___ Caucasian
   ___ Hispanic   ___ Native American   ___ Multi-racial   ___ Other

10. In total, how many teachers does your center employ? _____

<u>Policies and Practices</u>

The purpose of the following questions is to identify policies and practices in your center aimed at coordinating and aligning your program to your local K-12 schools.

1. My center has a written policy or statement that recognizes the care and education children receive in our center affects how well our children are ready for Kindergarten.
   ___ Yes   ___ No

2. My center uses specific criteria for measuring a child's readiness for Kindergarten.
   ___ Yes   ___ No

3. The curriculum in our preschool classes is aligned with the Illinois Learning Standards for <u>Kindergarten</u>.
   ___ Yes   ___ No

Please rate the extent to which the following statements apply to your center (place a check in the appropriate box).

	To No Extent	To Some Extent	To a Moderate Extent	To a Great Extent
Our center uses the same criteria as our K-12 school system for measuring a child's readiness for Kindergarten.				
I provide my teachers with information about professional development opportunities that address the alignment of early childhood with K-12 education.				
I work with the local school district to connect my teacher with their elementary school teachers for joint professional development.				
I work with the local school district and my own staff to promote child and family transitions (for example, inviting local Kindergarten teachers to our open houses, or joint staff planning).				

Curriculum and Teaching Practices

The purpose of the following questions is to explore the current practices of your center in coordinating and aligning the curriculum and teaching practices in your center with K-12 schools.

Please rate the extent to which you do the following (place a check in the appropriate box):

	To No Extent	To Some Extent	To a Moderate Extent	To a Great Extent
I include elementary teachers and/or school administrators in planning with early childhood teachers in my center				
I meet with district administrators (for example, principals or superintendents) to talk about aligning our center curriculum with Kindergarten curriculum in the district(s).				
I invite elementary teachers and/or administrators to observe our classrooms to learn about the curriculum and classroom expectations of our early childhood program.				
I encourage my teachers to observe Kindergarten classrooms in the local school district to learn about the Kindergarten curriculum and learning expectations.				

Student Assessments

The purpose of the following questions is to explore your center's current practices in using screening and assessments to document and follow each child's development.

Please rate the extent to which your center does the following: (place a check in the following box).

	To No Extent	To Some Extent	To a Moderate Extent	To a Great Extent
We provide developmental screening of every child upon three months of program entry.				
We expect teachers to use individual child's assessment data to inform curriculum, individualized teaching, and program development.				
We expect teachers to document each child's developmental strengths and needs through a portfolio that is shared with the parent/guardian.				
We expect teachers to prepare documentation of each child's strengths and weaknesses that can be shared with elementary school teacher(s) to facilitate an aligned transition.				
We follow the progress and development of each child after they leave our center and matriculate through the K-12 schools.				

After assessing your students, do you have access to resources to support families if you identify a particular learning or development issue?

___ Yes   ___ No

Barriers to Aligning and Coordinating Learning Experiences

The purpose of the following questions is to identify those issues that serve as a barrier to your center's work with K-12 schools to align and coordinate teaching and learning experiences for children as they move from birth to K-12 schools.

Please rate the extent to which the following issues are barriers in your work with the K-12 schools.

	To No Extent	To Some Extent	To a Moderate Extent	To a Great Extent
Differing philosophies between your early childhood program and the K-12 schools (for example, curriculum, pedagogy, purpose)				
K-12 community is so vast that I do not know where or how to start building partnerships				
Not enough time to build partnerships				
K-12 school districts do not provide follow-up data on progress of our center graduates when they enter and matriculate through the K-12 system				
Lack of awareness of the Illinois Learning Standards for Kindergarten and elementary grades				
Incompatibility of schedules between my center and elementary schools				
Language and/or cultural barriers between my center and the school district(s)				
Our local K-12 school district(s) have not been interested in receiving our child assessments or data				

Please list any other barriers not listed above:
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What polices (state and/or local) would reduce the barriers that inhibit your center's ability to work with the local K-12 school system(s)?
_____
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Your Preparation and Professional Development

The questions on this page ask for information about the context and content of the education and professional development in which you have participated.

1.   How many year have you been an early childhood center director? _____

2.   What is the highest degree you have earned?
      ___ Associates degree
      ___ Bachelors degree
            ___ in Early Childhood Education
            ___ in an Education-related field (for example, elementary education, curriculum & instruction)
            ___ in a Non-education related field
      ___ Masters degree
            ___ in Early Childhood Education
            ___ in an Education-related field (for example, a principal endorsement)
            ___ in a Non-education related field
      ___ Doctorate (please specify): _____

3.   Have you earned the Illinois Directors Credential (IDC)? ___ Yes ___ No

      a.   If so, at what level? ___ Level I   ___ Level II   ___ Level III   ___I'm currently pursuing the IDC

4.   Have you earned the Type 04 certificate for teaching in early childhood? ___ Yes ___ No

5.   Have you earned the Type 75 (Illinois General Administrative endorsement)? ___Yes ___No

6.   What could colleges do to prepare early childhood administrators like you so that you could better understand and partner with K-12 schools to coordinate and align curriculum, pedagogy, and transitions?_____
_____
_____
_____

7.   Within the past five years, have you received professional development on these issues (check all that apply):
___ Standards and curriculum alignment between early childhood and K-12
___ Building coalitions of partners across educational sectors
___ Using data to track students as they enter and matriculate through the K-12 schools
___ Other (please specify):

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8.   What professional development would you like to see offered to support your needs to work with K-12 schools?

_____
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Cross-Sector Collaboration

1.   Is your center involved with any programs, services, or formal or informal partnership whose goals is to improve children's transitions from Pre-K to elementary school? For example, these partnerships might focus on aligning curriculum and the learning experiences for children before and after they enter the K-12 schools, improve the curriculum and teaching practices across the education sectors to be more developmentally appropriate, and/or even have the broader goal of improving student learning outcomes.

___ Yes   ___ No

If you answered yes, please describe the partnership including information about:
•   The partnership's goals
•   The partners involved
•   Partnership activities (what you do)
•   The partnership's accomplishments
Please use the space below to write your description.

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Thank you for completing the survey! For more information about the LINC project, please visit us at:
http://www.leadershiplinc.ilstu.edu

Appendix B

http://www.leadershiplinc.ilstu.edu

Principal –

Thank you for agreeing to take part in this survey. The purpose of the **Leadership to Integrate the Learning Continuum (LINC)** project is to discuss the issues related to aligning and coordinating the learning experiences for children from birth to K-12 schools. The project is exploring current practices that educational leaders in early learning and elementary schools in Illinois do to develop and sustain coordinated learning practices and experiences. By completing the survey, you are providing data that will better inform the work of this committee.

Several terms are used in the survey. Please review these terms so that you are able to answer the questions accurately.

- **Learning Continuum:** The aligned learning and developmental experiences of children from birth through K-12 schools.
- **Alignment:** Building a coordinated structure of standards, curricula, teaching practices, and assessments in which the knowledge and skills gained serve as a foundation for future learning.
- **Transition:** Activities and processes to ease children's transitions from their environments prior to school into elementary school.
- **Educational Leaders:** Leaders in early care and education (e.g., center-based directors, family child care providers, public Pre-K program coordinator, lead teacher) and school leaders in K-12 schools (e.g., teacher leaders, principals, and district office administrators).
- **Learning Environments**: Include family child care providers and private and public early learning centers, school-based or non-school based (e.g., Head Start, Preschool for All, KinderCare). At the primary grade level, learning environments include public and private elementary schools.
- **Early Care and Education Providers:** Include family child care providers, as well as teachers and directors of school and non-school based early learning centers.

Thank you in advance for your willingness to complete the survey. By January 2009, survey results and policy/practice recommendations will be posted on the project website: http://www.leadershiplinc.ilstu.edu. If you have any questions about this project or the survey, please contact Lisa Hood at 309/438-3034 or lhood@ilstu.edu.

Background Information

11. Please choose the best descriptor of where your school is located.
   ___ Chicago
   ___ Collar County (Cook, DuPage, Kane, Lake, McHenry, and Will)
   ___ Large Town (population over 25,000)
   ___ Small Town/Rural (population less than 25,000

12. What grade levels does your school enroll? _____

13. Does your district have a Pre-K program? ___ Yes ___ No

14. If yes, where is the Pre-K program in your district located?
   ___ In my school
   ___ In another elementary school
   ___ In another school (not elementary)
   ___ In a district owned stand-alone building
   ___ Other (please specify): _____

15. If your school has a Pre-K program in your building, are the early elementary classrooms (K-3) located near your Pre-K classrooms? ___ Yes ___ No ___ Not Applicable

16. In total, how many students does your school enroll? _____

17. Estimate the percentage of children in each category: (The total should equal 100%)
   ___ African American   ___ Asian/Pacific Islander   ___ Caucasian
   ___ Hispanic   ___ Native American   ___ Multi-racial   ___ Other

18. What percent of your students qualify for free- or reduced-lunch? _____

19. How many years have you been a principal? _____

20. What grade level(s) did you teach prior to becoming a principal (check all that apply)?
   ___ Pre-K   ___ K-3   ___ 4-9   ___ High School
   ___Other (please specify): _____

21. What are your teaching credentials? ___ Type 03 ___ Type 04 ___ Special Education
   ___ Other (please specify): _____

22. Approximately what percentage of teachers in your school hold the following credentials?
   _____Type 03   _____ Type 04

23. When you are hiring teachers in the early elementary positions (Pre-K -3), what criteria do you consider most important? _____

School Policies and Practices

The purpose of the following questions is to identify policies and practices in your school aimed at coordinating and aligning your school and local early care and education providers.

Please rate the extent to which the following statements apply to your school (place a check in the appropriate box).

	To No Extent	To Some Extent	To a Moderate Extent	To a Great Extent
My school has a written policy or policies that recognizes the learning and development of children ages birth to 5 as the foundation for students' lifelong learning.				
Our school improvement plan includes goals and activities for working with programs and services that children experience before they enter our school.				
My school has criteria for measuring a child's readiness for Kindergarten.				
I make sure that the culture in my school focuses on educating the whole child which includes using teaching strategies that develop children's motor, social, cognitive, language, and emotional development.				
I make sure that the staff in my school use the early care and education field to provide appropriate learning resources that inform our school's teaching and learning practices.				
I make sure that teachers in my school have adopted curricular practices and teaching strategies from early learning theories and early care and education providers.				
The curriculum in the elementary classrooms in my school is aligned with the Illinois EARLY Learning Standards for 3 and 4 year-old students.				

Curriculum and Teaching Practices

The purpose of the following questions is to explore the current practices of your school in coordinating and aligning the curriculum practices within grade levels, and with early learning community providers.

Please rate the extent to which you do the following (place a check in the appropriate box):

	To No Extent	To Some Extent	To a Moderate Extent	To a Great Extent
I monitor and evaluate classrooms, the school building, and other learning environments to ensure they are conducive to student development and learning.				
I observe classroom activities to ensure that they are age appropriate.				
I include Pre-K teachers in common planning time with elementary teachers.				
I encourage elementary teachers to observe each other's classrooms to learn about the teaching practices and curricular expectations in other grades.				
I encourage Pre-K teachers to observe elementary classrooms to learn about the expectations and learning experiences of students in elementary classrooms.				
I encourage elementary teachers to observe Pre-K teachers to learn about the learning experiences of students in Pre-K classrooms.				
I invite early childhood center teachers and directors to observe Kindergarten classes to learn about the curriculum and classroom expectations on students.				
I invite family child care providers to observe Kindergarten classes to learn about the curriculum and classroom expectations of students.				
I encourage my teachers to research and adopt teaching and learning practices from early care and education providers.				

Professional Development Practices

The purpose of the following questions is to explore current professional development practices of your school that supports efforts to coordinate and align teaching and learning experiences within grade levels, across grade levels, and with early care and education providers in your community.

Please rate the extent to which your school does the following (place a check in the appropriate box):

	To No Extent	To Some Extent	To a Moderate Extent	To a Great Extent
Within-grade level teams of teachers participate in professional development activities together.				
Across-grade level teams of teachers participate in professional development activities together.				
Professional development is offered to teachers focused on aligning curriculum, teaching practices, and assessments across grade levels.				
Professional development is offered to teachers on early childhood learning theories and how to adopt these theories in their classroom.				
Professional development is offered to teachers about theories and practices for educating the whole child.				
Professional development opportunities are offered to early childhood teachers and providers in your community on curriculum and teaching practices in your school.				

Student Assessments

The purpose of the following questions is to explore your school's current practices in using student data to improve and align your school's teaching and learning experiences and students' readiness to learn within grade levels, across grade levels, and with early care and education providers in your community.

Please rate the extent to which your school does the following: (place a check in the following box).

	To No Extent	To Some Extent	To a Moderate Extent	To a Great Extent
I expect teachers to share aggregated student data with fellow teachers in their grade level to guide discussions on strengthening classroom practice.				
I expect teachers to use student data to identify learning problems and modify teaching based on data results.				
My school uses aggregated student data results to guide professional development.				
I expect teachers to share aggregated student data with fellow teachers across grade levels.				
I expect teachers to share aggregated student data with Pre-K teachers to guide discussions on strengthening classroom practice at the elementary grade levels.				
I expect teachers to share aggregated student data with early childhood teachers in our community to guide discussions on strengthening classroom practice at the elementary grade levels.				
Our school allows student information to be shared with early childhood center or program providers to provide them with data on childrens' readiness for school.				
Our school allows student information to be shared with family child care providers to provide them with data on childrens' readiness for school.				
I expect teachers to use individual child's assessment data to guide discussions with parents and set learning and development goals.				

After assessing your students, do you have access to resources to support families if you identify a particular learning or development issue?

___ Yes   ___ No

Barriers to Aligning and Coordinating Learning Experiences
The purpose of the following questions is to identify those issues that serve as a barrier to your school's work with early care and education providers to align and coordinate teaching and learning experiences for children as they move from birth to K-12 schools.

Please rate the extent to which the following issues are barriers in your work with the early childhood community (place a check in the following box).

	To No Extent	To Some Extent	To a Moderate Extent	To a Great Extent
Differing philosophies between early childhood programs and your K-12 school (for example, curriculum, pedagogy, purpose)				
Early childhood community is so vast that I do not know where or how to start building partnerships				
Not enough time to build partnerships				
Not a priority for my school and/or district				
Teachers do not receive their student enrollment lists in time to be able to meet with children's early care and education providers				
Lack of awareness of the Illinois EARLY Learning Standards				
Lack of knowledge of developmentally appropriate teaching practices				
Incompatibility of schedules between my school and early care and education providers				
NCLB accountability demands inhibit using certain teaching and learning practices (e.g., play-based, hands-on learning)				
FERPA laws inhibit sharing student information				
Language and/or cultural barriers between my center and the school district(s)				

Please list any other barriers not listed above:
_____
_____

What polices (state and/or local) would reduce the barriers that inhibit your school's ability to work with the local early childhood community?
_____
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Your Preparation and Professional Development

The questions on this page ask for information about the context and content of the education and professional development in which you have participated.

9.   When did you complete your Type 75 program? _____

10.   Did your Type 75 program (education administration program) provide content and learning experiences related to these issues (check all that apply):
        ___ Child development theories and practices
        ___ Developmentally appropriate practices (research-based practices for young children)
        ___ Standards and curriculum alignment between early childhood and K-12
        ___ Assessments for young children
        ___ Building coalitions of partners across educational sectors and the community
        ___ Advocating for high quality early care and education environments for children

11.   What could Type 75 programs do to prepare principals like you so that you could better understand and partner with early care and education providers to coordinate and align curriculum, pedagogy, and
transitions?_____
_____
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12.   Within the past five years, have you received professional development on these issues (check all that apply):
        ___ Child development theories and practices
        ___ Developmentally appropriate practices (research-based practices for young children)
        ___ Standards and curriculum alignment between early childhood and K-12
        ___ Assessments for young children
        ___ Building coalitions of partners across educational sectors and the community
        ___ Advocating for high quality early care and education environments for children

13.   What professional development would you like to see offered so that you could better understand and partner with early care and education providers to coordinate and align curriculum, pedagogy, and transitions?_____

_____
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Cross-Sector Collaboration
2.   Is your school involved with any programs, services, or formal or informal partnership whose goals is to improve children's transitions from Pre-K to elementary school? For example, these partnerships might focus on aligning curriculum and the learning experiences for children before and after they enter the K-12 schools, improve the curriculum and teaching practices across the education sectors to be more developmentally appropriate, and/or even have the broader goal of improving student learning outcomes.
___ Yes   ___ No
If you answered yes, please describe the partnership including information about:
- The partnership's goals

- The partners involved
- Partnership activities (what you do)
- The partnership's accomplishments

Please use the space below to write your description.

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Thank you for completing the survey! For more information about the LINC project, please visit us at:
http://www.leadershiplinc.ilstu.edu

Appendix C

Demographics of Center Director Survey Respondents

Number of Responses
- 205 completed surveys (targeted representative sample size of 327)
- Sent to 1,790 centers

Type of Center

- 24% (48) Private non-profit
- 20% (40) For-profit proprietary or partnership
- 20% (40) Public nonprofit-sponsored by federal, state, or local government
- 14% (28) Public school
- 13% (25) Private nonprofit-affiliated with a social service agency or hospital
- 9% (17) For profit-corporation/chain
- 3% (5) College/university affiliated

Location of Center (if affiliated with a public school)
- 81% (29) Located in a public school
- 14% (5) In another school building (not an elementary school)
- 8% (3) In a district stand-alone building

Sources of funding
- 70% (109) IDHS or Chicago CYS child care subsidies (CCAP) program
- 57% (88) Preschool for All, state-funded Pre-Kindergarten, or other ISBE early childhood block grants
- 34% (52) Head Start/Early Head Start
- Other listed include: Parent tuition or district funds

Geographic Location of Center
- 32% (64) Small town/Rural (pop. less than 25,000)
- 28% (56) Chicago

- 25% (51) Collar county (Cook, DuPage, Kane, Lake, McHenry, and Will)
- 17% (35) Large town (pop. over 25,000)

Age Levels of Children Served
- 98% (193) Preschoolers
- 56% (110) Toddlers
- 50% (99) School-agers
- 42% (83) Infants

NAEYC Accreditation
- 76% (148) No
- 24% (47) Yes

Licensure Status
- 83% (162)Licensed
- 17% (34) Licensed-exempt

Number of Children Licensed to Serve
- Average 120 children
- Median 82 children
- Range 8-935

Race/Ethnicity of Children Served (response average—totals do not equal 100%)
- 64% Caucasian
- 30% African-American
- 26% Hispanic
- 7% Asian/Pacific Islander
- 5% Multi-Racial
- 1% Native-American
- 9% Other

Number of Teachers Employed (includes teachers, assistant teachers and teacher aides)
- Average 13 teachers
- Median 9 teachers
- Range: 1-100

Appendix D

Demographics of Elementary Principal Survey Respondents

Number of Responses
- 403 completed surveys (targeted sample size of 328)
- Sent to approximately 2,600 elementary schools

Geographic Location of School
- 56% (218) Small Town/Rural (pop. less than 25,000)
- 29% (114) Collar County (Cook, DuPage, Kane, Lake, McHenry,Will)
- 13% (51) Large Town (pop. over 25,000)
- 3% (10) Chicago (note: Chicago Public School principals were not actively recruited for this survey to avoid conflicts with CPS's research/data collection efforts)

Age Levels of Children Served
- Predominately Pre-K through 8th
- A few principals led Pre-K-12

District Pre-K Programs
- 91% (367) of principals' districts have a Pre-K program

Location of Pre-K Programs
- 41% (163) In principal's school
- 28% (111) In another elementary school
- 16% (65) In a district-owned stand-alone building
- 8% (30) In another school (not elementary)
- 49% (198) of Pre-K programs in the principals' building are located near the early (K-3) elementary classrooms

Number of Children Enrolled
- Average 423 children

Race/Ethnicity and Income of Children Served
- 25% average percentage of minorities served in principals' schools
- 37% average percentage of students qualify for free- or reduced-lunch in principals' schools

Average Number of Years as Principal
- 8 years

Principals' Teaching Credentials[1]
- 83% (251) Type 03
- 23% (71) Special Education
- 15% (46) Type 04
- Others listed include: Type 75, Type 09, Type 73, Type 06, Type 10, NBCT, Reading Specialist, ELL, Superintendent Certificate

Grade Levels Taught Prior to Becoming a Principal
- 11% (38) Pre-K
- 51% (178) K-3
- 73% (257) 4th – 9th
- 27% (94) High School

Teaching Credentials of Teachers in Principals' Schools

- 81% average percentage of teachers who hold the Type 03 in principals' schools
- 17% average percentage of teachers who hold the Type 04 in principals' schools

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[1] Type 03 is a K-8 teaching certificate, and Type 04 is a Pre-K -3 teaching certificate

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Appendix E

LINC Advisory Group Recommendations

LINC Goal 1 **Policies and mechanisms that strengthen the learning continuum through** **cross-sector communication**	**LINC Goal 2** **Expanded leadership preparation and professional development programs that support the learning continuum.**	**LINC Goal 3** **A statewide data infrastructure that supports data collection and analysis of student development across the continuum from preschool (i.e., care and education programs prior to kindergarten) through higher education.**
Recommendation 1.1 The State should develop a standing joint sub-committee of the P-20 task force and Early Learning Council to serve as a statewide "bridge" mechanism for policy and curriculum alignment, leadership, preparation, professional development, and communication across early care/education and K-12 education. Recommendation 1.2 The Illinois State Board of Education and the Illinois Department of Human Services should encourage cross-	Recommendation 2.1 The Illinois State Board of Education should broaden its principal endorsement to PreK-12. Recommendation 2.2 The Illinois State Board of Education and Illinois Board of Higher Education should expand criteria for principal preparation programs to include early learning content and practice. Recommendation 2.3 State regulatory agencies should require preparation programs for early childhood directors and	Recommendation 3.1 Build on the current work at the state level to interconnect teacher, student, and school data to inform state policy, leader and teacher preparation programs, professional development programs, and local programs and policies. Recommendation 3.2 Data should be stored and accessible on a user-friendly on-line shared network, encouraging appropriate data use with a minimal expenditure of additional time.

divisional coordination and alignment between staff in early childhood and other education/service units, including high level policy meetings.	school administrators to include coursework regarding culturally and linguistically diverse children and families.	Recommendation 3.3 The data infrastructure should make data analysis accessible and understandable for educational leaders and teachers so they can assess and make improvements to their curricula, instruction and services. State education agencies should make public reports on the data and/or an intermediary organization should be allowed access to the data to be able to analyze and publish data reports that are accessible to schools and early care and education providers.
Recommendation 1.3 The revised Illinois School Leader Standards should include knowledge and competencies related to understanding and supporting lifespan learning starting at birth.	Recommendation 2.4 Oversight and funding agencies such (e.g., Illinois State Board of Education, Department of Human Services) should create incentives for providers to offer professional development for early childhood and K-12 leaders that includes learning theories and developmentally appropriate practices from birth through adulthood.	
Recommendation 1.4 The Illinois Early Learning Standards and Illinois Learning Standards (K-12) should be clearly connected so that educators can see and understand learning expectations for students across the education continuum.		