November 4, 2019

To: Los Angeles County School District Superintendents

From: Debra Duardo, M.S.W., Ed.D., Superintendent

Subject: Preschool to Kindergarten Transitions

Every year, a hundred thousand new kindergarteners walk into a classroom at one of our county’s two thousand schools for the first time. That transition from preschool to kindergarten marks the beginning of our K–12 system’s opportunity to help them become successful young students. That transition is key to their success in our schools and beyond.

Studies show that quality transitions from preschool to kindergarten—with prepared children, prepared families, and prepared schools—result in reduced stress, improved social-emotional competence, greater academic growth, and increased family involvement. A warm, personalized handoff between the preschool and K–12 systems builds a child’s foundation for success in school and life. By bridging the transition gap, we help close the achievement gap.

The California Education Code (§ 8974) requires school districts with early primary programs to “provide education continuity from preschool through kindergarten and grades 1 to 3,” while the Every Student Succeeds Act (§ 1120B) and Head Start Act (§ 642A) outline precise expectations of both preschool and elementary providers: close coordination, systematic procedures, ongoing communications, joint staff training, and family involvement.

It is our duty as educators to help children continue to improve. Ever since the Bridging Head Start to Kindergarten Transitions Symposium last June, the Los Angeles County Transitions Workgroup has been designing a countywide transition framework that can be used as a guide to develop local partnerships that enhance the experience of families and build on children’s learning as they move from preschool to kindergarten.

This framework will incorporate recommendations from the California Blue Ribbon Commission on Early Childhood Education, the Education Commission of the State’s Special Report on Transitions and Alignment, and the early childhood education priorities of Governor Newsom and State Superintendent Thurmond. It will inform and facilitate each district’s commitment to collaboration between
preschool and kindergarten by sharing best practices for a comprehensive approach to successful transitions.

The Transitions Workgroup developing the framework consists of parents, teachers, principals, and administrators from a diverse group of stakeholders on both sides of the preschool to kindergarten transition. This includes the Los Angeles County Office of Education, California Department of Education, First 5 LA, LA County Department of Public Health, Baldwin Park USD, Garvey SD, Los Angeles USD, Pomona USD, Child Care Resource Center, Campaign for Grade-Level Reading and the County Office for the Advancement of Early Care and Education.

As the framework continues to be developed and refined, we will be approaching an even broader group of stakeholders to include you in this important endeavor. Please be open to joining this discussion. The framework is being designed as a tool for all providers and all funding streams, so we hope you will work with our team to ensure it meets the needs of your community.

Remember, we only have one shot with each of these children. We need to start them all on the right foot with successful transitions—and an ongoing commitment. As we roll out and refine our framework, I look forward to your input, your buy-in, and your consistent engagement. Your leadership matters!

DD/KW:cl

cc. Arturo Valdez, Chief Academic Officer, LACOE
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