

Preschool Through Third Grade (P–3) Learning Progressions

Introduction



California Department
of Education

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A Message from the State Superintendent of Public Instruction



In California, we recognize the importance of a strong start for students in preschool and early elementary school. We know that building a high-quality continuum of learning is essential for students to seamlessly build on key skills from one grade to the next. At the California Department of Education (CDE), a high quality continuum of learning is at the heart of the Preschool through Third Grade (P-3) Alignment Initiative, as it promotes the alignment of policies, structures, instructional content, and family involvement from preschool into the transition to early elementary school.

That is why I am proud to present the *P-3 Learning Progressions*, a publication that further supports the CDE's P-3 alignment initiative, as well as alignment with California's new P-3 Early Childhood Education

Specialist Instruction Credential, and my plan to ensure all students learn to read by third grade.

In addition to the robust examples of instructional strategies in Mathematics, Science, and Language and Literacy, the *P-3 Learning Progressions* includes new content on Social and Emotional Development and content on Approaches to Learning progressions in the elementary grades. These skills—such as developing positive self-identity, emotion regulation, and executive functioning skills—are critical to supporting the whole child and should be valued alongside academic skills. The *P-3 Learning Progressions* also further highlight California's commitment to equity by ensuring our state's diverse population of students are represented in authentic examples of each skill and by ensuring our educators have the instructional tools and resources that they need to be responsive to each student.

My hope is that this resource will be a valuable tool used by our leaders, educators, and instructional coaches to demonstrate the instructional connections that exist across the *California Preschool/Transitional Kindergarten Learning Foundations* and the *California Common Core State Standards*, as well as to show how the progressions of skills can be supported in joyful, inclusive, and culturally responsive ways.

Thank you for everything you do to provide a great start for California's earliest learners.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Tony Thurmond". The script is elegant and cursive.

Tony Thurmond
State Superintendent of Public Instruction

Acknowledgments

The development of the *Preschool Through Third Grade (P–3) Learning Progressions* involved many people. The following groups contributed: (1) project leaders; (2) lead writers; (3) domain subject matter experts; (4) diversity, equity, and inclusion reviewers and contributors; (5) the California Department of Education (CDE); (6) the State Board of Education; (7) early childhood interested parties and constituencies; (8) educator focus groups; and (9) WestEd project staff.

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The following individuals provided review and content contributions to the development of the *P–3 Learning Progressions* to elevate equity and inclusion of the diversity of children and families in California with a focus on specific populations, including multilingual learners, children with disabilities, racially and culturally diverse children, and children from Native nations and tribal communities. Among the individuals listed below, some brought subject matter expertise as it relates to research focused on equity and inclusion of diverse populations; others brought knowledge of the home languages spoken by multilingual learners or the cultural practices of diverse children, families, and communities; and others brought a rich background of professional experience in early education.

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We also thank additional CDE review staff from
the **Curriculum Frameworks and Instructional
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Special Thanks

The California State Board of Education

Thanks to **Linda Darling-Hammond** and State Board of Education staff.

Learning Policy Institute

Thanks also extend to **Abby Schachner**, Senior Researcher at the Learning Policy Institute.

Early Childhood Interested Parties and Constituencies

Many statewide organizations provided perspectives in focus groups that informed the development of the *P–3 Learning Progressions*:

Advisory Commission on Special Education
**Association for Supervision and Curriculum
Development**
Association of California School Administrators

California Association of Family Child Care
**California Autism Professional Training and
Information Network**
California Child Care Coordinators Association

California Community College Early Childhood Educators

California Dyslexia Initiative

California Education Partners

California Kindergarten Association

California Mathematics Project

California Preschool Instructional Network

California Reading and Literature Project

Californians Together

Catalyst California

CATESOL

Child Care Resource Center

Council for Exceptional Children/The California Division for Early Childhood Curriculum and Instruction Steering Committee

Early Edge

EveryChild California

First 5 California

Kidango

Migrant Head Start

Parent Institute for Quality Education

PEACH – An Early Childhood Higher Education Collaborative

Region IX Head Start Association

Sobrato Early Academic Language

Special Education Local Plan Area Organization

Supporting Inclusive Practices

Tribal Childcare Association of California

Educator Focus Groups

Special thanks also extend to the 114 P–3 educators and practitioners who provided invaluable feedback that informed the development of the *P–3 Learning Progressions*.

WestEd Project Staff

The following staff members are gratefully acknowledged for their contributions to the development of the *P–3 Learning Progressions*:

Jill DePiper

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P–3 Learning Progressions Introduction

The California Department of Education is committed to increasing alignment and coherence across preschool through third grade to help meet the learning needs of children and effectively build on the progress made as children transition from one grade to the next. The *Preschool Through Third Grade (P–3) Learning Progressions* in the domains of Approaches to Learning, Social and Emotional Development, Language and Literacy Development, Mathematics, and Science lay out how early knowledge and skills in each domain develop over time, showing the correspondence between the *Preschool/*



Transitional Kindergarten Learning Foundations (PTKLF) and existing kindergarten through third grade (K–3) state standards and resources in the field. In addition, the *P–3 Learning Progressions* offer in-practice examples that illustrate how educators engage learners through meaningful, culturally sustaining learning experiences that attend to the diversity in how children develop knowledge and skills and make connections to children’s home and community experiences. The *P–3 Learning Progressions* are designed to complement other resources available for educators in each domain, including, but not limited to, the PTKLF, state standards, curriculum frameworks, and other relevant resources and research. The *P–3 Learning Progressions* promote continuity in P–3 learning and should be used in combination with learning expectations and curricular materials available to educators to plan and promote developmentally appropriate, culturally sustaining, and joyful learning experiences across P–3.

Who is the audience and what is the goal for the P–3 Learning Progressions?

The *P–3 Learning Progressions* are designed for educators, administrators, instructional coaches, and others supporting educators in preschool through third grade. While resources such as the Common Core standards or curriculum frameworks exist for educators to understand the learning expectations for children across ages and grades and make curricular decisions, the learning progressions in each domain help educators

- ♦ promote continuity in learning by showing how learning expectations build on each other from preschool through third grade and
- ♦ support individual children as they progress through the developmental and learning continuum.

The *P–3 Learning Progressions* highlight the value of children’s diverse backgrounds and ways of knowing that educators can build on during learning experiences. The *P–3 Learning Progressions* hold that children vary in their learning and may demonstrate skills and knowledge across the developmental progressions at different times and in different ways regardless of grade level. Educators can use the learning progressions and the examples of teaching practices across grades in each domain to create a coherent and cohesive experience for children as they develop skills and knowledge from preschool through third grade.

How can educators build on children’s cultural and linguistic experiences and abilities to promote their learning in preschool through third grade?



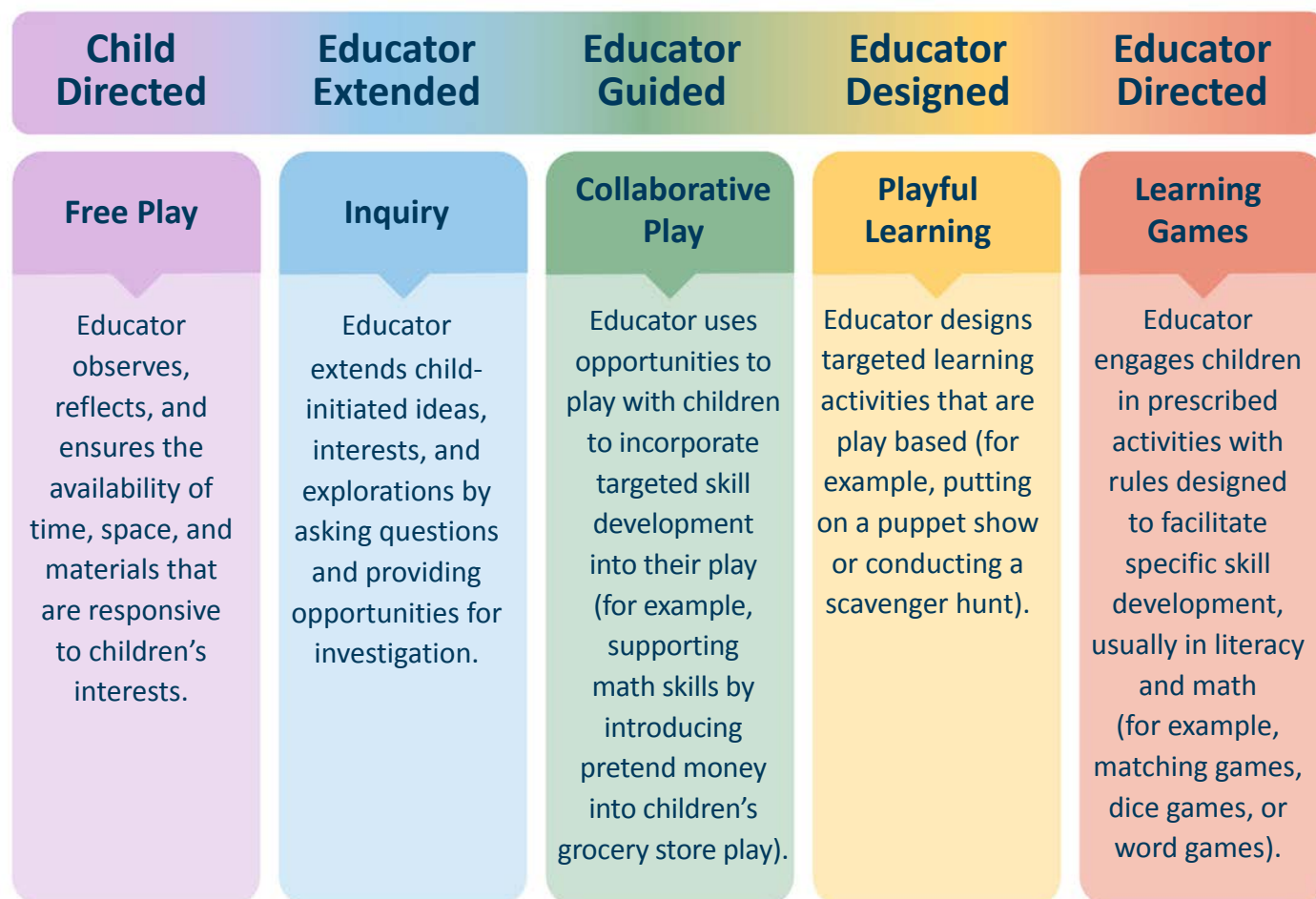
California’s children come from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds and have diverse abilities and unique lived experiences. Effective P–3 learning experiences provide many entry points and varied opportunities to engage all children—those from diverse cultural–ethnic backgrounds, multilingual learners, children with disabilities, and children with other diverse lived experiences and identities—in meaningful learning. Children’s many intersections of identity, including their cultural and linguistic backgrounds situated

in broader social and political contexts, shape how children make sense of the world. Children gain knowledge and skills from their families, communities, and other spaces in which they live and learn even prior to entering formal learning spaces. For instance, children’s home cultures and languages, including varieties of English, inform how children engage with new learning material and experiences. Children’s diverse cultural and linguistic experiences provide multiple perspectives, forms of expertise, and varying ways of thinking and knowing as children engage in learning. Educators can promote children’s use of their home languages during learning activities. Educators might also provide focused attention to English language development (ELD) each day to support full engagement in learning activities when instruction is in English (refer to the appendix in each domain for more on integrated and designated ELD approaches).

In addition, children vary in their abilities and unique strengths and needs, which can shape how they approach learning experiences and what supports they may need to fully participate as learners in the domain. Educators can use principles of Universal Design for Learning to create learning environments that offer all children an opportunity to access content and engage actively in learning. In addition, educators provide specific supports to meet the needs of children with disabilities in accordance with their Individual Family Service Plan, Individualized Education Program, or 504 plan. Throughout the in-practice examples in the *P–3 Learning Progressions* for each domain, references are made to how educators use teaching practices to support the individual needs of all learners and callout boxes provide more information on how educators can sustain and build on children’s cultural backgrounds, linguistic diversity, and varied abilities.

How can educators use play experiences to support children’s learning in preschool through third grade?

The *P–3 Learning Progressions* in all domains emphasize the use of learning through play in preschool through third grade. Learning through play occurs along a continuum from more unstructured experiences (in which children initiate and direct their play with space, time, and materials provided by educators) to learning activities guided by educators (in which educators set up play-based learning experiences with intentional learning goals and guide children to achieve them) and activities directed by educators (such as learning games designed to facilitate specific skill development) (refer to figure 1 for a graphic of the Playful Learning Continuum).¹ Learning through play can be implemented in a variety of ways to help meet the learning goals for children. Educators can create spaces and facilitate learning activities that promote active participation and curiosity, provide children with choices, and generate feelings of joy, self-confidence, and belonging. Learning through play complements rather than replaces direct or explicit instruction. In making P–3 curricular decisions and planning teaching approaches, educators should leverage learning through play experiences to engage every child in ways that build on their interests and abilities and help them make connections to their lived experiences at home and in their communities.

Figure 1. Playful Learning Continuum

Adapted from Pyle and Danniels (2017).²

How are the *P–3 Learning Progressions* in each domain organized?

Domain Introduction

P–3 Learning Progressions in each domain include a general introduction that describes how children's early development in the domain informs P–3 teaching and learning, teaching practices to support learning in the domain across P–3, and the organization by key areas of learning and development in the domain.

Key Areas

Each domain is organized by key areas that represent major areas of learning and development in the domain. These key areas have been identified to align with existing resources in the field, including the PTKLF, K–3 state standards, curriculum frameworks, and the development and science of learning research.

Learning Progressions Tables

Each key area contains learning progressions tables that present children’s growing knowledge and skills from preschool through third grade. The learning progressions, drawn from the PTKLF and existing K–3 state standards, have been written, organized, and labeled in ways that highlight the continuity between the PTKLF and K–3 learning expectations. It is important to keep in mind that children may not move linearly across a learning progression. Children’s development and learning are a result of their experiences and their unique developmental journey. Each child’s development and learning progresses over the early elementary years with growth spurts and periods of knowledge and skill consolidation at different points in time. It is important to note that while variation in development is expected based on children’s individual developmental journey, if concerns arise about a child’s development, educators can partner with families to look at appropriate evidence-based interventions to monitor a child’s progress and help them decide whether to refer the child for additional supports and specialized services.

In-Practice Examples

After the progression tables in each key area, there is a pair of in-practice examples showing how educators support children’s learning of a particular skill or concept across two different grade levels. Although the in-practice examples in each key area feature only two grades, educators can take inspiration to plan learning experiences to meet different learning goals in other grades. In-practice examples illustrate a range of instructional approaches, including direct, explicit instruction; playful, inquiry-based learning experiences; and culturally sustaining practices that educators can use to support children of diverse abilities and backgrounds across different grades. In-practice examples do the following:

- ◆ Illustrate how children develop the knowledge and skills within a learning progression in a key area by showing examples across two different grade levels.
- ◆ Illustrate teaching practices or strategies that educators use to support children’s learning of a particular skill or concept in the key area. Educators can build on these in-practice examples to plan and facilitate learning activities to support learning of other concepts within and across key areas.
- ◆ Show some of the ways in which educators build on the strengths and lived experiences of multilingual learners and children with diverse cultural and ethnic–racial backgrounds.
- ◆ Show how educators build on children’s strengths and are responsive to children’s individual needs.
- ◆ Spotlight just a few children in the classroom to illustrate how educators might encourage and support children’s participation in learning activities. However, in practice, educators strive to encourage and support all children as they engage and interact in learning activities.

A section, “Highlights from the In-Practice Examples,” at the end of the in-practice examples in each key area offers a description of how educators in the examples used teaching practices to support learning and embrace the diversity of learners in their classrooms. Additional ideas for how educators can support all learners in their classrooms are provided throughout the in-practice examples. However, educators should use additional resources and guidance to engage all children in meaningful learning. Educators should use the key area learning progressions along with the in-practice examples to guide their practice as they support children to build on what they already know and are able to do and gain new knowledge and skills.

Endnotes

- 1 California Department of Education, *California's Great Start Transition to Elementary School Toolkit: Supporting a Smooth and Effective Transition to Transitional Kindergarten, Kindergarten, and First Grade* (Sacramento: California Department of Education, 2023); California Department of Education, *The Powerful Role of Play in Early Education* (Sacramento: California Department of Education, 2021).
- 2 Angela Pyle and Erica Danniels, "A Continuum of Play-Based Learning: The Role of the Teacher in Play-Based Pedagogy and the Fear of Hijacking Play," *Early Education and Development* 28, no. 3 (April 2017): 274–289, <https://doi.org/10.1080/10409289.2016.1220771>.

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Pyle, Angela, and Erica Danniels. 2017. "A Continuum of Play-Based Learning: The Role of the Teacher in Play-Based Pedagogy and the Fear of Hijacking Play." *Early Education and Development* 28, no. 3 (April 2017): 274–289. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10409289.2016.1220771>.