



# Linking Early Learning and the Early Grades: Lessons from SPARK

 W.K. KELLOGG FOUNDATION



# Why SPARK?



**Did you know...**



**1 IN 3  
CHILDREN  
IN THE U.S.  
IS NOT  
READY FOR  
KINDERGARTEN**



## What will it take?

- ☀️ More “seamless” system of education
- ☀️ Stronger links across ECED and Primary
- ☀️ New policies and practices
  - Smooth transitions
  - Coordinated teaching and learning
- ☀️ New faces across the table



# How can we get there?

## SPARK Lessons Learned:

- Bring schools, communities and parents together
- Make solutions fit the community context
- Identify best practices that can be scaled



# Partnerships = Change

- ☀️ Partners who directly touch children's daily lives
- ☀️ Partnerships for system and policy change



## Common Strategies for Success

- ☀️ Parent engagement
- ☀️ Coordinated teaching and learning
- ☀️ Equitable access to quality
- ☀️ Partnerships and linkages
- ☀️ Leadership
- ☀️ Focus on transitions



# Today

- ☀️ Profile the work of each SPARK site
- ☀️ Focus on progression – family to school to community to state
- ☀️ Summarize promising practices and policy opportunities
- ☀️ Preview next steps – national and beyond



# Ohio SPARK



# Ohio SPARK

## Focus: parent engagement & training

- Single cohort of children
- Parent partners
- Developmental screening
- Individualized home based instruction

## Focus: school readiness

- Backpacks
- Let's Talk
- Get Ready for School



# Ohio Spark

## Focus: ready schools

- Transition teams
- Common transition form
- Ready school assessment
- Ready School Guide



# Mississippi SPARK



# Mississippi

## Focus: Community partnerships

- Created Local Children's Partnerships
- Multi-sector membership
- Share information on the status of early education in the community
- Bridge between children and parents and schools
- Focus on linking ECED and primary grades



# Mississippi

## Focus: Quality

- Use assessments for quality improvement: ECERS and ELLCO (ECED and primary)
- Quality improvement plans (school teams)
- Grants and TA for quality improvement
- Training on how to use assessment to improve program quality



# Mississippi

## Focus: Leadership Development

- Delta Early Learning Leadership Initiative (DELLI) in the Delta Council
- Business leaders educated about early education
- Focus on economic development



# New Mexico SPARK



# New Mexico

## Focus: Transition

- Joining Hands – transition framework: 8 guiding principles and benchmarks for measuring progress
- Preschool to kindergarten
- Continuity for P-3 unit
- Coordination of support services through partnerships
- Parent information and involvement



# New Mexico

## Process:

- ☀️ Multi-sector school-based teams
- ☀️ Principals provide leadership
- ☀️ Mentors for teams and teachers
- ☀️ Create transition action plans
- ☀️ Measure progress through JH



# Georgia SPARK



# Georgia

## Focus: Partnerships and Access

- Community Hubs
- Point of access for services
- Traditional and non-traditional settings
- Parent support and education – home visiting
- Transition model engages parents and children before and after school



# Georgia

## Focus: Partnerships – Scale-up from schools to school district

- Flexible use of funds
- Transition coordinator
- School-based parent resource specialists
- School transition teams
- Transition plans
- Strategies for linking school and community



# Florida SPARK



# Florida

## Focus: Partnerships and linkages ECED and Primary Schools

- Assemble multi-sector teams
- Begin with single cohort of 3 year olds
- Plan to follow to third grade
- Select ECED programs and feeder primary schools



# Florida

## Focus: ECED quality

- National accreditation
- Coaches in classrooms
- Health and nutrition training
- Parent skill building



# Florida

## Focus on Primary schools

- Inform about SPARK
- Engage district leaders
- District wide scale up = Ready Schools Miami



# Ready Schools Miami

## Comprehensive PK-3 model

- Transitions across systems
- Aligned curriculum, standards, assessments
- Parent engagement and support
- Learning communities for coordinated instruction
- Job embedded masters degree
- Health care clinics in schools
- Data sharing



# North Carolina SPARK



# North Carolina

## Focus on Ready Schools

- Capacity building: Ready Schools Community teams
- Addressed issue of transition
- Ready school assessment tool
- Principals developed improvement plans



# North Carolina

## Ready Schools in SPARK communities

- Ready Schools innovation grants
- Ready Schools planning teams
- School transition teams and liaisons

## Ready Schools at the state level

- Ready School definition
- Ready schools assessment
- Support for Ready Schools state wide



# District of Columbia SPARK



## DC

### Focus on Teacher and Program Quality

- NAEYC National Accreditation
- Pre-K, Head Start, kindergarten
- Coaches and learning teams
- Combines self study and ECERS-R
- Develop quality improvement plans



# DC

## Focus on School Leadership

- Principal Leadership Academy for Ready Schools
- Commitment to transforming schools into early learning units
- School funding for classroom quality improvement



# Hawai'i SPARK



# Hawai'i

## Focus: School Readiness for native Hawaiian Children

- Developmental assessments
- Parent training for school readiness
- Focus on literacy
- Program quality improvement: training and accreditation



# Hawai'i

## Focus Ready Schools

- Transitions -KeiKei Steps to Kindergarten
- Teacher exchanges
- Kindergarten readiness assessment



# Hawaii

## Focus: Partnerships

- Preschool content standards
- Family and Community Guidelines
- Guidelines for Cultural Competence
- P-3 Summits



## Keys to Success

- ☀️ Multi-sector community teams
- ☀️ Education as economic development
- ☀️ Include school leaders
- ☀️ Non-traditional settings/primary language
- ☀️ Begin with the end in mind
- ☀️ Focus on transition/transition teams
- ☀️ Continuity across ECED and primary



# Policy Opportunities

- 🌟 Create a national definition of Ready School
- 🌟 Establish public-private partnerships to support quality ECED programs
- 🌟 Provide quality improvement funds to schools and preschools
- 🌟 Support community and school teams
- 🌟 Create incentives for innovative transition models
- 🌟 Coordinate standards, assessments and curriculum across learning levels



# Policy Opportunities

- ☀️ Support home visiting programs
- ☀️ Support teacher training and mentoring to align pedagogies
- ☀️ Support learning advocates to connect families and schools
- ☀️ Sponsor cross-sector community forums
- ☀️ Create community-school planning teams
- ☀️ Train school leaders



## Next Steps

### Governor's Forums on Linking Early Years and Early Grades

- 5 States
- Governor's support
- Strategies transition and alignment
- Policy outcomes – state and national
- Learning community



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