

Policymakers

A call to action and questions to consider to support an early learning transformation in your community

Policymakers at both the local and state level play a key role in providing the necessary resources, staffing structure, support, and accountability to start, sustain, and scale an early learning transformation.

School board members can help direct resources toward best practices, state legislators can help provide accountability to ensure districts are focused on providing high-quality early learning experiences, and more.

Consider reviewing the **Conditions for Early Learning Success self-assessment tool** to identify ways you may be able to drive improvement in early literacy outcomes in your community, with a particular emphasis on the following sections:

- Vision
- Foundations – Financial resources
- Foundations – State policy
- Foundations – Local policy
- Foundations – Community champions
- Foundations – Effective talent & organization

Consider the guiding questions below to understand important areas of focus as you think through how to best catalyze an early learning transformation from a policy perspective.

Does my community have a clear vision for early literacy, complete with quantifiable impact goals?

If not, policies may be able to create or clarify those goals.

Are school systems in my community focused on key drivers of improved early literacy outcomes, including the following? Is progress against these measured?

- Pre-K enrollment
- Childcare access and quality
- Classroom quality across PreK-3rd grade

Policy may be able to provide direction toward these and other important drivers of early literacy success.

Do school systems have the financial resources necessary to sustain an early learning transformation, focusing on key initiatives like the three above? Are these financial resources protected for the long-term?

Policy can help to ensure funding for an early learning transformation remains in place, cementing early literacy improvement as a priority and enabling school systems to drive for long-term transformation change.

Do school systems, community stakeholders, and early learning experts have the opportunity to inform the policymaking process?

These perspectives, along with rigorous student outcomes data, are critical to ensure policy best accelerates growth in early literacy outcomes. Consider a regular convening of key stakeholders including parents, teachers, students and district administrators to identify common themes for policy priorities.

Are there policies standing in the way of establishing the conditions for success, or policies that could help to unlock the potential of an early learning transformation?

For example, Dallas ISD's school board established policies that codified early learning objectives, banned suspensions for early learners in line with research, and more to support the district's efforts to improve early literacy.

Are there bright spots in my community that others could learn from, or that public funding could scale?

Dallas ISD became a proof point that influenced state policy, validating a number of best practices that informed select early learning policies contained in Texas' House Bill 3. There may be bright spots in your community that could provide a similar proof point to inform effective policy.

Are the staffing structures and leadership roles in my district aligned with early learning priorities?

Enabled by local policymakers, Dallas ISD reorganized to create a separate Early Learning department that enabled specific focus on PreK-2nd grade, with an empowered early learning leader to drive the overall strategy. There may be a need in your community to align talent and organization to early learning efforts.