Investigation of the Implementation of PreK-3 Alignment in South Carolina: Implications for Primary School Education

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Abstract

PreK-3 alignment is a continuum of experiences that begins in preschool when a child is three-years-old and extends through third grade. Many early childhood educators, researchers, and policy makers believe the implementation of PreK-3 alignment has the potential to make a significant difference in schools across America. It is considered by some experts to be the most promising solution to the problems facing education today. This study was designed to determine the levels of implementation of PreK-3 alignment in South Carolina’s primary schools, which practices impact student achievement, and the levels of student achievement in these schools. Primary schools were selected for this study because of their unique structure, emphasis on early childhood education, and concentration of grades related to PreK-3 alignment. This study was structured as a qualitative descriptive study. A questionnaire was utilized to collect data from the principals of primary schools in South Carolina. Through the principals’ responses, I documented that three of the six components of PreK-3 alignment are implemented more consistently than others. Those components include the following: 1) Transitions, 2) Alignment of Standards, Curriculum, Instruction, and Assessments, and 3) Instructional Approaches and Classroom Learning Environments. Primary school principals indicated full-day preschool and kindergarten programs, communication with parents, and reading interventions have the greatest impact on student achievement. I discovered the levels of student achievement varied in these primary schools as accountability ratings ranged from A to F.