DENVER — Policymakers across the country recognize how vital a child’s earliest learning opportunities are to their long-term educational success. That does not always mean, however, that policymakers know how to impact these early years, or even where to start.

Published today by the Education Commission of the States, *Initiatives from Preschool to the Third Grade: A Policymaker’s Guide* serves as a reference guide for policymakers and their staffs, members of the media and others on the most commonly requested topics to the ECS Information Clearinghouse from preschool to third grade.

This early learning primer is organized in response to the two types of questions policymakers most often ask ECS about P-3 approaches.

1). What are effective strategies to support children on their path to third-grade academic success?
   - **Preschool.** Access to high-quality preschool programs for 3- and 4-year-olds.
   - **Transitions.** Strategies to support children in their transition to kindergarten.
   - **Full-day kindergarten.** Full-day kindergarten programs for 5-year-olds.
   - **Kindergarten entrance assessments.** Using kindergarten entrance assessments to identify school readiness gaps.
   - **Bolstering third-grade reading proficiency.** Innovative policies designed to identify and support children who are not on track to meet third-grade reading goals.

2). What are the foundations of any effective P-3 approach?
   - **High-quality P-3 programs.** Characterized by exceptional educators and leaders who use ongoing data collection to inform instruction and practice.
   - **Aligned standards, curricula and assessments.** Ensuring state’s learning standards, curricula and assessments aligned to support children from preschool to third grade.
   - **Efficient P-3 finance.** Coordinating funding streams that support P-3 programs to maximize dollars and reduce inefficiencies.
   - **Effective P-3 governance.** Coordinating the range of P-3 programs, services, agencies and entities at the state level to ensure the delivery of seamless programs and services for children and families.

“There are many candidates across the country running for gubernatorial and legislative seats, and many are running with early childhood as a key component of their education platform,” said Bruce Atchison, director of ECS’ Early Learning Institute. “This document will be an excellent resource for the newly elected officials and for professionals currently working in the field of early childhood.”

Each section of this brief provides an overview of each topic, a brief summary of the research rationale, a status of related initiatives across the nation, specific state examples, questions for critical decision points and links to further reading.

*ECS was created by states, for states, in 1965. We track policy, translate research, provide unbiased advice and create opportunities for state policymakers to learn from one another.*