



POLITICAL LEADERSHIP LITERATURE SUPPORT SUMMARY

I. Definition, Description, and Example of Element

Political leadership (PL) is a key element in helping to facilitate the development of coherent policies, as well as promoting the equity and sustainability of pre-K improvement (Reid et al., 2019). According to Barnett et al. (2016), political leadership is essential in cultivating the necessary political will to create and sustain high-quality education. Political figures at state and local levels accomplish this directly through their positions and indirectly in concert with the efforts of advocacy groups, philanthropic organizations, business leaders, and other community opinion leaders (Gallagher et al., 2001). Importantly, political leadership has a significant impact on key drivers of the scope and quality of early learning, such as funding resources, quality standards, enrollment goals, legislation passed, ballot initiatives, and court orders (Barnett et al., 2016). “Political leadership and, more rarely, judicial mandates can provide the necessary political will to create, scale up, sustain, and adequately fund high-quality early education.” (Barnett et al., 2016, p. 4).

Political leadership consists of several types of players. There is broad consensus in the literature on state-run early childhood education (ECE) systems that gubernatorial leaders are particularly important in forwarding an ECE agenda and setting the stage for prioritizing public funding for ECE (Barnett et al., 2016; Hibbard, 2015; Minervino, 2014). Legislators championing high-quality state-run pre-K are also a potent force in mandating adoption of some form of ECE (Ackerman et al., 2009; Minervino, 2014). Advocacy groups often do as much to identify and cultivate political leaders as they do to support them in their efforts to move the state preschool agenda forward. Advocacy groups of less traditional ECE supporters, like business leaders, can broaden political leadership by influencing politicians who have historically been less interested in early childhood issues (Strategies for Children, 2008). Divisions within the broader ECE community can damage the effectiveness of advocacy groups—alignment of these groups toward a common goal is important in generating political will to pass significant legislation and funding measures. Advocates usually lead or support diverse coalitions, including grassroots constituents who are most impacted by ECE policies (e.g., parents, educators), to ensure policymakers are presented with a more unified voice and agenda.

The political will to implement effective pre-K must be accompanied not only by adequate funding but also by an administrative infrastructure capable of delivering on its promise. In addition, political leaders must be prepared to champion and support their own pre-K programs (Ackerman, 2009). While top-level leadership is central to momentous, rapid progress, most of the time system-building efforts are slow and change is gradual (Hibbard, 2015). Leaders at lower levels must both help implement big pushes and keep pushing the agenda, especially when the political climate is less supportive.

Just as the advocacy coalition is most effective when it’s unified, advocates and governmental actors (elected officials, agency leaders) are more effective in advancing pre-K quality when they coordinate their goals and strategies with each other.

The Political Leadership Element details the formal political drivers, informal advocacy groups, and state government actors that launch or maintain the state agenda around quality pre-K and determine the key policy





decisions defining the scope, nature, and funding of pre-K. The PL Element focuses on infrastructure indicators. Equitable infrastructure indicators focus on state systems, policies, and practices that support high-quality pre-K. The infrastructure indicators are labeled as policy (e.g., established in policy and statewide standards), supports (e.g., dedicated resources), and data (e.g., data collection standards and protocols and data use). Below we break down the critical dimensions of political leadership into a set of measurable indicators, grouped by general constituency and function. Combined, indicators provide a useful calibration of the efficacy of the political leadership landscape and its capacity for forwarding high quality pre-K education.

PL1. Pre-K Office Leadership

State leaders directly in charge of the state pre-K program (e.g., the Early Learning Department or Office of Early Learning), develop and advance a strategic vision and plan focused on continuous quality improvement, compliance, and ensuring equitable outcomes for all children including the following six components:

- Vision and plan explicitly and meaningfully address equitable outcomes (e.g., might address equitable access, diversity of the workforce, anti-bias efforts, culturally sensitive and responsive practice).
- Plan includes providing robust supports for implementation including attention to leadership and JEPL.
- Plan was informed by data, includes measurable goals as well as measures to track progress.
- Strategic vision, goals, and activities are coherent and connect with other policies or efforts to improve early learning quality and outcomes in the state.
- There is a reasonable, evidence-based theory of change that connects the activities to the strategic plan goals and outcomes.
- Plans ensure sustainability of policies and practices.

PL2. State Agency Level

State agency (e.g., Department of Education or Health and Family Services) leadership recognizes early learning and pre-K education as a priority in agency planning and budgeting documents, and as a critical component in attaining key state educational goals. The goals of the pre-K early learning strategic plan as a key part of the agency's strategic plan are integrated into the larger mission and educational, human service, and community goals with adequate and sustainable funding and resources (e.g., staffing, funding, accountability systems) provided to discharge the responsibilities assigned. The early learning unit is part of the agency's leadership that makes decisions about major aspects of the agency's operations, including budget, staffing, priorities, and strategic planning.

PL3. Inside-Outside Agency Coordination and Support

Inside-outside strategy: The process of engagement for ECE advocates and state and community leaders includes the following components and goals:

- Engage each other through formal, ongoing collaboration and communication.
- Align goals, plans, and strategies for pre-K advancement and improvement.
- Openly resolve and agree upon any unintentional differences in approach.
- Be able to clearly articulate respective roles, interests, and expectations
- Coordinate efforts to foster added value, rather than engaging in competing efforts.





PL4. ECE Advocacy Coalition

ECE Advocacy Coalition organizations are unified around a pre-K improvement agenda and include the following components:

- Coordinated efforts to support the same or similar goals for pre-K quality and/or improvement
- Formal channels for communication, collaboration and coordination involve consistent participation from a core group of organizations
- Actively engage with and represent the interests of local stakeholder groups from diverse communities (e.g., children, families, and educators)
- Understand how pre-K policies and implementation may play out for children, families, and educators
- Clearly define the coalition (e.g., membership, leadership, roles, processes) and include diverse and strategic voices and perspectives that are critical to achieving advocacy goals

PL5. Grassroots Engagement

Grassroots engagement: ECE advocacy coalition has authentic engagement with grassroots organizations and voices to develop their goals, strategies, and capacity (budget, staffing), and incorporates the following components:

- Shared leadership and power between coalition and grassroots organizing groups
- Ongoing collaborations with grassroots organizing groups including families, educators, and service providers
- Using information from grassroots groups to inform an advocacy agenda, goals, strategies, and implementation
- Leveraging grassroots voices in advocacy work
Reflecting with grassroots organizations on the results of advocacy and discussing next steps
- Establishing a two-way feedback loop that is part of standard operations of the advocacy organizations/coalition and is reflected in their budget, staffing, strategic plans, etc.
- Advocates and grassroots leaders may have some differences in objectives and strategies, but they are transparent and strategic. They will not get in the way of their common goals.

PL6. Grasstops Stakeholders

Grasstops stakeholders: key, non-governmental influencers of the political process (e.g., business, philanthropy, higher education community, unions) are focused on early learning improvement as a priority. These key influencers align behind ECE advocates' pre-K agenda and demonstrate a willingness to use their access to key policy leaders and their political capital and other resources to encourage action on pre-K. Leading state ECE advocates play a leadership role in facilitating and coordinating their activities on behalf of pre-K. (While identifying specific organizations is not necessary, respondents should have several organizations in mind as exemplars when rating this item.)

PL7. Legislative Branch

Legislative leadership: The extent to which key elected legislators have a track record of supporting pre-K quality through policy and funding



PL8. Executive Branch

Gubernatorial leadership: The extent to which the current state governor has a track record of supporting pre-K quality

PL9. Political Leadership Data Collection for Equity Goals

Equity is front and center in all discussions around pre-K policies and practices. The ways in which state teams conduct their work, and the activities they engage in, including data collection efforts, are designed to ensure early learning programs, early childhood educators, children, teachers, and families will succeed including targeted populations. State teams engage in all four of the following activities to promote equity:

- Supporting the vision of a successful pre-K system in school readiness for all children regardless of race, income, and language differences and including children with developmental delays or disabilities
- Bringing together a diverse stakeholder group that represents the diverse voices within the pre-K field, including teachers, parents, community leaders, advocates, program leaders, and state officials
- Ensuring data are collected on all populations of children and are disaggregated to understand barriers and gaps in opportunity and achievement. Data are shared with stakeholders and decisions are made with input from all voices
- Drafting policies to ensure strategies are deliberate to meet the needs of targeted groups to reach the vision of success

II. PL Literature Process Overview and Summary

To understand the existing literature support and identify the literature gaps and limitations for each of the IDM indicators, we conducted a systematic literature search and checked with experts for relevant sources to support the various indicators of PL. More details of the general review process conducted across all elements can be found in the [IDM Evidence Review Document](#). For the PL element, 19 key phrases were identified and explored. Out of these initial phrases, five key phrases retrieved relevant results. The list of all sources that yielded relevant results based on the five key phrases and expert recommendations along with 14 key phrases that did not yield relevant results can be found in Appendix A.

Once the literature search for the PL Element was completed, we reviewed the quantity and rigor of the literature supporting each indicator and computed what we termed the Literature Support Index (LSI). The LSI is calculated for each indicator based on seven components:

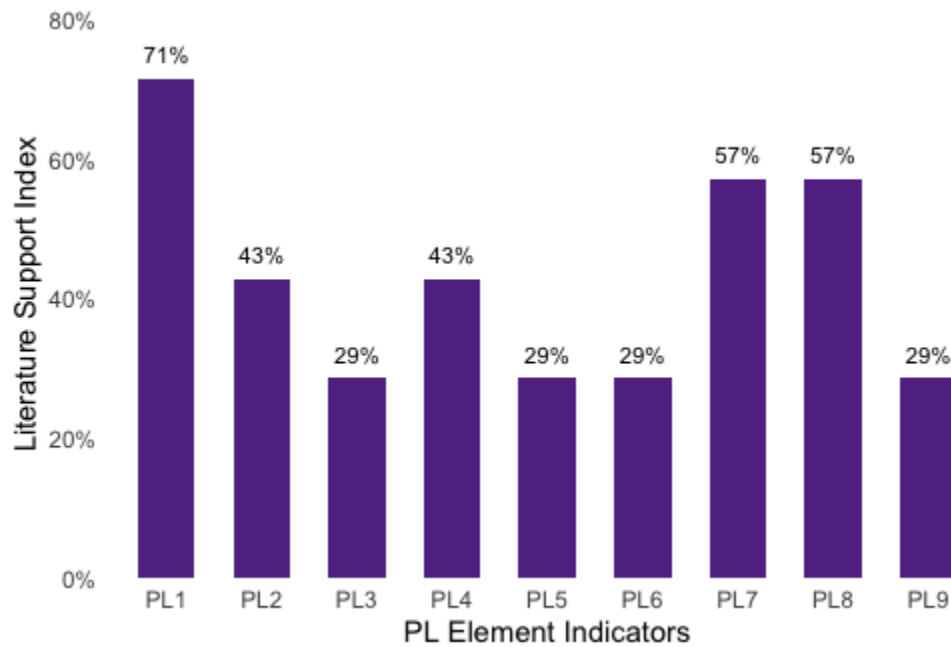
1. at least three peer-reviewed articles;
2. at least one study with no more than two limitations;
3. at least one study at national or state level;
4. at least one study that uses experimental or quasi-experimental design;
5. at least two studies that use representative sampling;
6. support from at least one national research organization; and
7. support from at least one national policy organization.



The LSI is expressed as a percentage of the above seven criteria that are satisfied for a particular indicator. More information about the rationale for the LSI and how it is calculated can be found in the IDM Evidence Review Document. Figure 1 summarizes the LSI for the PL Element indicators.

Figure 1

Overall Summary of PL Literature Support Index

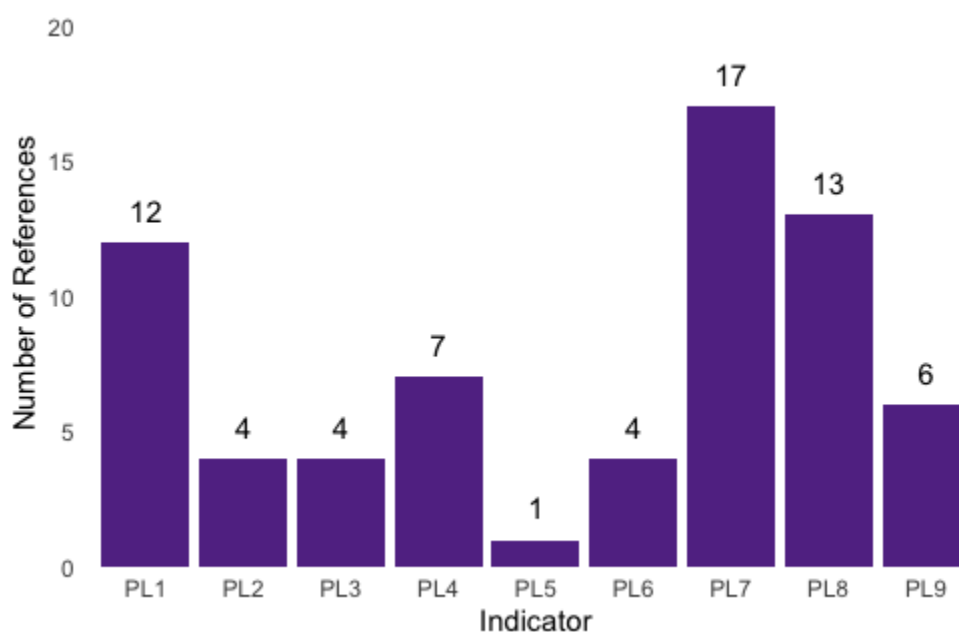




While Figure 1 combines aspects of both rigor of the literature as well as quantity supporting each indicator, Figure 2 represents solely the quantity of evidence for each indicator. Figure 2 shows that PL indicators 1, 7, and 8 are supported by a larger number of sources than the rest of the indicators. We hope that this type of analysis can help state teams understand where there are gaps in research and potential directions for future studies (PL5 is an under-researched topic for example).

Figure 2

PL Quantity of Evidence by Indicator

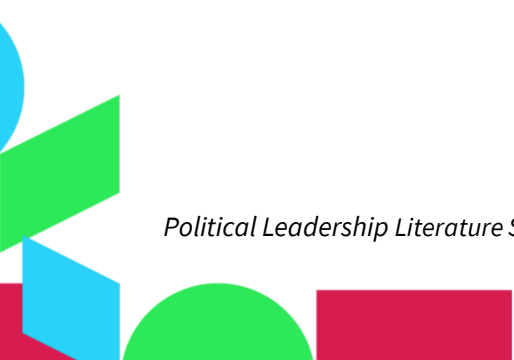
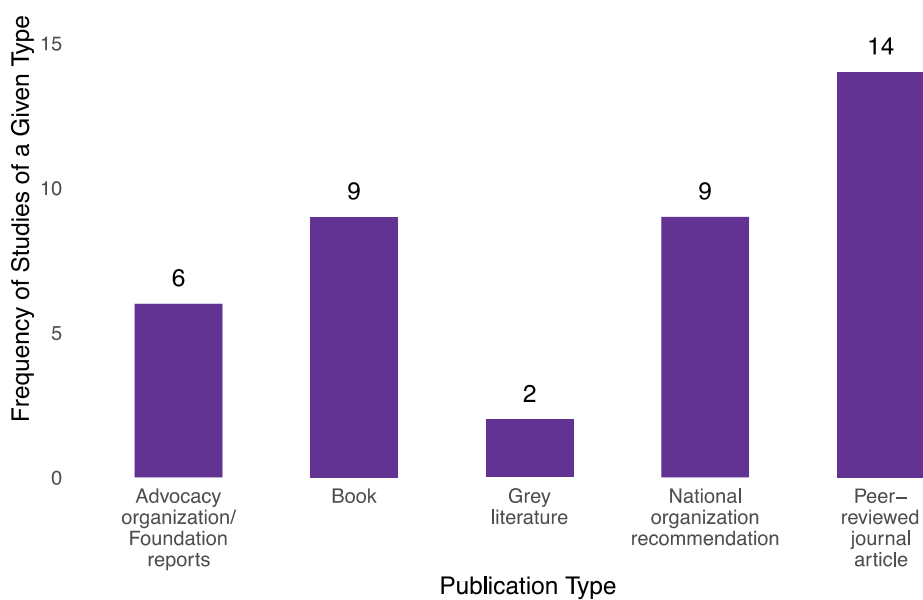




To understand more about the nature of the literature that supports the Element, Figure 3 lists the types of publications used as evidence for the indicators of the PL Element; the majority of the sources are articles from peer-reviewed journals (14). This is a smaller amount than in other IDM Elements due to Political Leadership being among the least researched areas of pre-K.

Figure 3

PL Evidence by Publication Type





In addition to types of publications, Figure 4 summarizes the research design used in the sources supporting the PL Element. The most common type of research designs represented in the PL literature scan (21) involved a literature review conducted by academic researchers or a research brief conducted to outline policy options. Qualitative studies were the second most common design (11). This makes sense because the workings of the political machinery is not a process that would lend itself to experimental design and the nature of the data is such that most of it has to be analyzed in a qualitative way.

Figure 4

PL Summary of Research Design

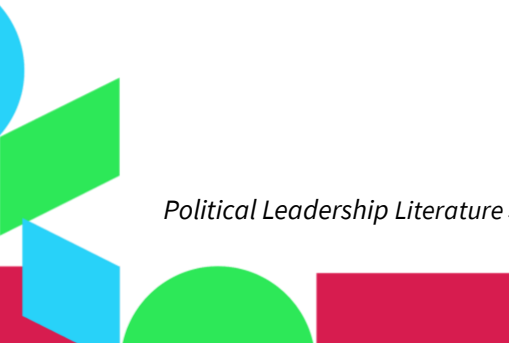
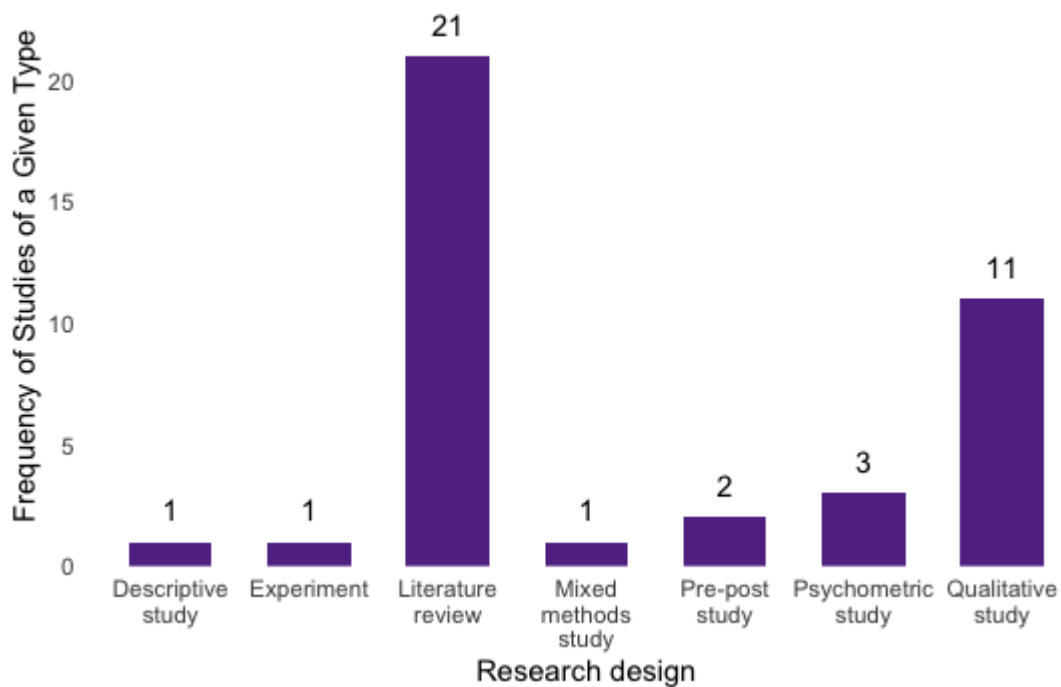




Figure 5

PL Child Outcomes Studies Examined

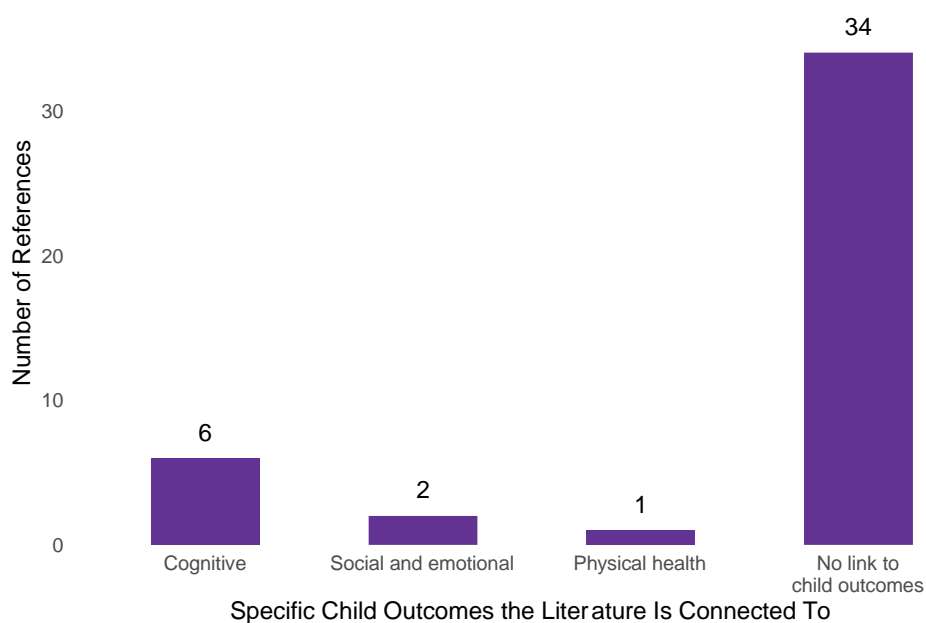


Figure 5 shows that very few studies in the PL Element were connected to child outcomes. As we mentioned above, this Element is the least researched Element in the IDM by the academic community; hence, there are few high-quality, academically rigorous peer-reviewed studies connecting political mechanisms to child outcomes. To the extent that such studies exist, most focus on cognitive outcomes (6) and fewer on other outcomes (one on health outcomes and two on social-emotional outcomes).

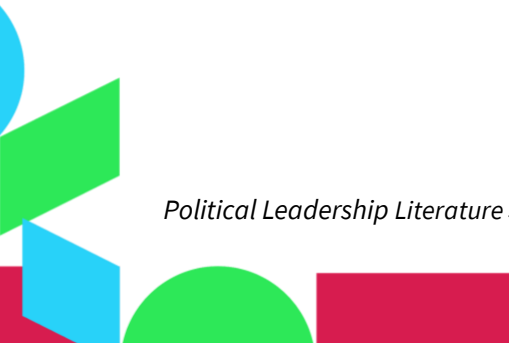




Figure 6

PL Inequities of Focus in the Literature

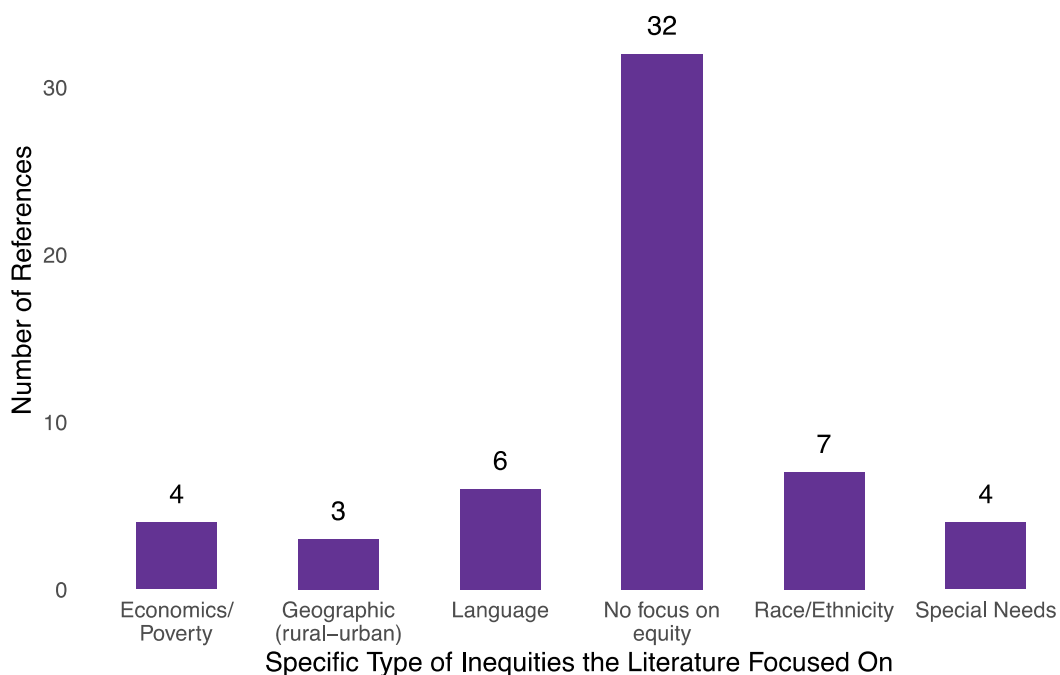
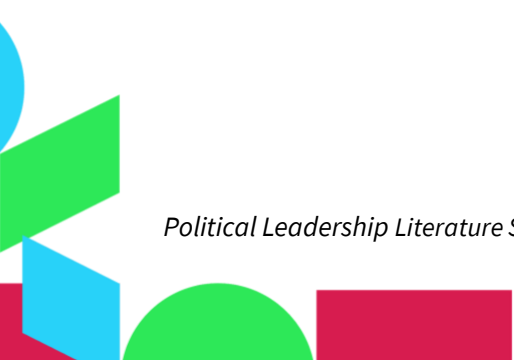


Figure 6 shows that very few studies underlying the PL Element focus on equity (7). Of those that do, seven studies focus on racial equity, six on language equity, and four focus on economic equity and special needs each. This is due to the challenging nature of studying Political Leadership issues and their impact on children in pre-K programs. As we have seen in Figure 5, few studies have focused on child outcomes; hence, focusing on child outcomes through an equity lens cannot number more studies than we have seen in Figure 5.





III. Summary of Political Leadership Literature Supporting Indicators: Current Practices and Challenges

State Agency Pre-K Leadership

Political Leadership: infrastructure indicators (state level) State Agency Pre-K Leadership

PL1. Pre-K Office Leadership

State leaders directly in charge of the state pre-K program (e.g., the Early Learning Department or Office of Early Learning), develop and advance a strategic vision and plan focused on continuous quality improvement, compliance, and ensuring equitable outcomes for all children including the following six components:

- Vision and plan explicitly and meaningfully address equitable outcomes (e.g., might address equitable access, diversity of the workforce, anti-bias efforts, culturally sensitive and responsive practice).
- Plan includes providing robust supports for implementation including attention to leadership and JEPL.
- Plan was informed by data, includes measurable goals as well as measures to track progress.
- Strategic vision, goals, and activities are coherent and connect with other policies or efforts to improve early learning quality and outcomes in the state.
- There is a reasonable, evidence-based theory of change that connects the activities to the strategic plan goals and outcomes.
- Plans ensure sustainability of policies and practices.

PL2. State Agency Level

State agency (e.g., Department of Education or Health and Family Services) leadership recognizes early learning and pre-K education as a priority in agency planning and budgeting documents, and as a critical component in attaining key state educational goals. The goals of the pre-K early learning strategic plan as a key part of the agency's strategic plan are integrated into the larger mission and educational, human service, and community goals with adequate and sustainable funding and resources (e.g., staffing, funding, accountability systems) provided to discharge the responsibilities assigned. The early learning unit is part of the agency's leadership that makes decisions about major aspects of the agency's operations, including budget, staffing, priorities, and strategic planning.

The structure of state agency pre-K leadership varies across states. In some states, Department of Education (DOE) leaders have made state-run pre-K and its inclusion in the education system a priority and have actively lobbied on its behalf, while in other states ECE is an afterthought. Because governmental authority for early childhood historically spans both the Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) and Department of Education (DOE), and because pre-K is a relative newcomer to the K-12 family, there are a host of administrative and organizational challenges. Kagan and Gomez (2015), Regenstein (2015), Regenstein and Lipper (2013), and

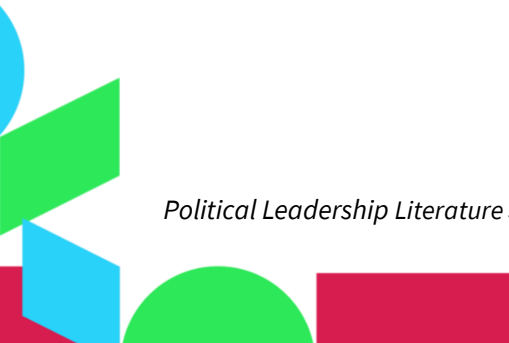




others have indicated that administrative complexities can be resolved through several different organizational structures (coordinated, consolidated, or created), but that regardless of structure, ECE must be granted the necessary authority and autonomy to pursue the educational agenda that is developmentally and academically appropriate for the young children in its care. Thus, the political will to implement universal pre-K must be accompanied not only by adequate funding but also by an administrative infrastructure capable of delivering on its promise. Leaders within pre-K governance must be willing and able to advocate politically on behalf of their programs and dedicate sufficient resources to their effective implementation (Ackerman, 2009). Hibbard (2015) notes that top-level leadership is central to major progress; but systems-building efforts are typically slow, gradual changes. This requires lower-level leaders to keep moving the agenda forward even when the political climate is less favorable.

As Kagan and Gomez (2015) point out, government entities are each distinctive, which makes a standardized evaluation of governance, with no context for differences provided, difficult. When considering state leadership, it is important to be mindful of context. For instance, Barnett et al. (2016) emphasized the importance of local context, such as cultivating community partners, in the development of pre-K in each state. Nganga et al. (2020) discuss how ECE may be made relevant for young children through the use of contextually appropriate practices (CAP), such as policies and practices which support languages other than English in ECE programs, and not creating “global” classrooms at the expense of local cultures. These practices are developed in partnership with communities.

One study looking at pre-K programs across seven states found that without strong public support, political leadership was vital to initiate these programs and to build public support by promoting their benefits (National Center for Early Development & Learning, 2002). Kroll and Rivest (2000) identified the lack of a clear, unified message from state agencies as an obstacle to Smart Start in North Carolina. Funding requirements may differ between a county’s different departments, for example. The authors argue that state agencies must be in clear communication with one another about such requirements to prevent conflict from impeding services for children.





Political Leadership: infrastructure indicators (state level)

Pre-k leadership coordination, advocacy, grassroots and grassroots engagement

PL3. Inside-Outside Agency Coordination and Support

Inside-outside strategy: The process of engagement for ECE advocates and state and community leaders includes the following components and goals:

- Engage each other through formal, ongoing collaboration and communication.
- Align goals, plans, and strategies for pre-K advancement and improvement.
- Openly resolve and agree upon any unintentional differences in approach.
- Be able to clearly articulate respective roles, interests, and expectations
- Coordinate efforts to foster added value, rather than engaging in competing efforts.

PL4. ECE Advocacy Coalition

ECE Advocacy Coalition organizations are unified around a pre-K improvement agenda and include the following components:

- Coordinated efforts to support the same or similar goals for pre-K quality and/or improvement
- Formal channels for communication, collaboration and coordination involve consistent participation from a core group of organizations
- Actively engage with and represent the interests of local stakeholder groups from diverse communities (e.g., children, families, and educators)
- Understand how pre-K policies and implementation may play out for children, families, and educators
- Clearly define the coalition (e.g., membership, leadership, roles, processes) and include diverse and strategic voices and perspectives that are critical to achieving advocacy goals

PL5. Grassroots Engagement

Grassroots engagement: ECE advocacy coalition has authentic engagement with grassroots organizations and voices to develop their goals, strategies, and capacity (budget, staffing), and incorporates the following components:

- Shared leadership and power between coalition and grassroots organizing groups
- Ongoing collaborations with grassroots organizing groups including families, educators, and service providers
- Using information from grassroots groups to inform an advocacy agenda, goals, strategies, and implementation
- Leveraging grassroots voices in advocacy work
Reflecting with grassroots organizations on the results of advocacy and discussing next steps
- Establishing a two-way feedback loop that is part of standard operations of the advocacy organizations/coalition and is reflected in their budget, staffing, strategic plans, etc.

Political Leadership: infrastructure indicators (state level)

Pre-k leadership coordination, advocacy, grassroots and grasstops engagement

- Advocates and grassroots leaders may have some differences in objectives and strategies, but they are transparent and strategic. They will not get in the way of their common goals.

PL6. Grasstops Stakeholders

Grasstops stakeholders: key, non-governmental influencers of the political process (e.g., business, philanthropy, higher education community, unions) are focused on early learning improvement as a priority. These key influencers align behind ECE advocates' pre-K agenda and demonstrate a willingness to use their access to key policy leaders and their political capital and other resources to encourage action on pre-K. Leading state ECE advocates play a leadership role in facilitating and coordinating their activities on behalf of pre-K. (While identifying specific organizations is not necessary, respondents should have several organizations in mind as exemplars when rating this item.)

State leaders are informed and supported by advocates inside and outside the government, and are often adept at using research demonstrating the benefits and long-lasting effects of pre-K to increase public and political support. Effective change agents are not only committed to implementing state-run pre-K but understand the needs of their state and its unique context. With this in mind, it is easy to see why the path to statewide pre-K has been so varied, reflecting as it does the unique personality of each state (Zero to Three & Pre-K Now, 2007).

Karch (2013) highlights that there are many factions within the early learning community, many of whom have different interests and may have a stake in preserving the status quo. Karch suggests that private schools and Head Start may work against state-run preschool systems for fear of losing influence unless they are properly incorporated into the new state structure. Similarly, private preschool providers may be threatened by implementation of a large public system. However, both groups can also serve as a strong support system if they are involved in the planning process and given a stake in the program (Curran, 2015). Continuity of support across ECE groups is extremely important, as successful state-run pre-K systems tend to build gradually over a period of time (Kauerz & Kagan, 2012).

Identifying and cultivating leaders is often the work of an advocacy group (Zero to Three & Pre-K Now, 2007). In fact, it has been suggested that advocacy groups often do as much to identify and cultivate political leaders as they do to support them in their efforts to move the state preschool agenda forward (Strategies for Children, 2008). These groups exercise an indirect but vital influence, as they provide a sense of mission, message framing that motivates policy action, the vision of what a high-quality state-run pre-K should look like, and technical expertise on how to implement such a system (Karch, 2010, 2013). Voices for America's Children (2008) found that in some cases, political difficulties around support for pre-K may be surmounted by strategic advocacy.

Beyond advocacy organizations and the ECE community, other community members can be powerful voices for ECE support. Voices for America's Children (2008) recommends connecting constituents with their elected officials to voice their support for investing in ECE programs. This report advises frequent outreach to these constituents. Karch (2013) emphasizes the importance of engaging stakeholders from outside the ECE community, especially with the business community and law enforcement, to form strong support. Kroll and



Rivest (2000) give an overview to Smart Start, the statewide early childhood initiative introduced in 1994 in North Carolina. The authors found an increasing understanding from the state's business community of the importance of public education in keeping the existing and future workforce competitive. The governor featured local decision-making in the Smart Start initiative, and the membership of the local boards came from a broad group of stakeholders representing different interests in the communities. This value for local authority, backed by public funds, won broad support from community leaders. The path to statewide pre-K has been so varied partially because of the importance of these local partnerships, as statewide pre-K reflects the different context of each state (Zero to Three & Pre-K Now, 2007). In 2005, Massachusetts became the first state with a department devoted exclusively to ECE. Strategies for Children (2008) found that the Early Education for All (EEA) campaign was the driver behind the creation of Massachusetts' consolidated ECE department. Engaging the business community was identified as key to the success of the EEA campaign. To engage business leaders, the EEA campaign focused on ECE as an effective investment and a means to a quality future labor pool (Strategies for Children, 2008).

Political Leadership: infrastructure indicators (state level) **Legislative and gubernatorial pre-K leadership**

PL7. Legislative Branch

Legislative leadership: The extent to which key elected legislators have a track record of supporting pre-K quality through policy and funding

PL8. Executive Branch

Gubernatorial leadership: The extent to which the current state governor has a track record of supporting pre-K quality

Strong support from legislators is often important to the success of pre-K. Strategies for Children (2008) advocates for identifying powerful supporters in the legislative or executive branch of state government. Gallagher and colleagues (2001) examined how five states (Georgia, Illinois, New York, South Carolina, and Texas) handled the change to state-funded pre-K programs. They found that across states, certain influential figures, including legislators and other political leaders, were central to the success of the programs. When the support for pre-K is bipartisan, it can garner greater political support and increase the likelihood of successful action (Hibbard, 2015). As referenced prior, Karch (2013) discusses the many factions within the early learning community, many of whom have competing interests. In West Virginia, this manifested in the legislature as conflicting interests between a small group of legislators who wrote the universal preschool legislation in 2002, and the state's House Education Committee chairman, who was concerned that funding for this new state program would supplant federal Head Start funding for preschool services (Karch, 2013).

Early childhood education has also become a focal issue for governors in the past two decades (Karch, 2013; Wechsler et al., 2016). There is broad consensus in the literature on state-run early childhood education (ECE) systems that governors are particularly important in forwarding an ECE agenda and creating the focus and funding necessary for implementation (Barnett et al., 2016; Hibbard, 2015; Minervino, 2014; Wechsler et al., 2016). Political leadership from high-level elected officials is important so that adequate and sustainable

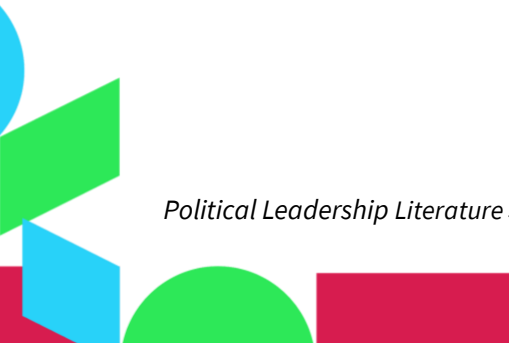




funding can be provided for the continuation and equity of high-quality preschools, especially for children from low-income families. Using nationally representative data collected for the National Household Education Survey (NHES) from 1991 to 2005, Greenberg (2010) found that increased public funding, particularly child-care subsidies and pre-K funding, may make low-income children more likely to attend center-based care. This is important because center-based care is typically associated with higher-quality compared to informal care. Because of this promise of higher quality, policymakers are interested in getting a better estimate of program costs so that they can realistically address pre-K resource issues and assess costs and benefits (Jones et al., 2019). As such, to persuade policymakers to advocate for investment in ECE, stakeholders should be able to present high-quality data surrounding the costs of improving and/or expanding early learning programs.

State-based pre-K has also been forwarded through two other government mechanisms: judicial mandate and referendum. Some states (NJ, NC, SC, AR, and MA) have benefitted from judicial rulings mandating high-quality pre-K as a component of the state's education system. As Boylan (2007) points out, however, the extent to which judiciaries have mandated pre-K, or the implementation of standards or funding, has varied across states. Unless the judiciary branch is willing to mandate specific funding for pre-K, legal rulings tend to have a limited effect. Even with specific remedies, executive and legislative support determine whether a judicial mandate is implemented effectively (Greif, 2004). For example, Greif highlights the huge differences in implementation of the *Abbott V* mandate in New Jersey under the administration of Gov. Whitman (who opposed increased education funding) and Gov. McGreevey (who was an advocate for education). Under Gov. Whitman, almost no progress or funding increases happened for three years after the ruling. In fact, Gov. Whitman's administration at times even circumvented the ruling by finding loopholes, or at other times just chose to completely ignore it. In contrast, after the change of administration, funding and development of high-quality pre-K expanded greatly in accordance with the court's ruling.

In addition to challenges with elected officials, the state pre-K system had hoped to incorporate DHS child care programs, but instead a turf war developed between Abbott Pre-K (DOE) and DHS child care programs. There were issues with established child care centers, as the state wanted to implement high-quality preschool but avoid offending these providers. Ryan (2006) gives an overview of the landscape of court cases for mandating pre-K. Ryan argues for more rulings in favor of expanding preschool, detailing that court rulings can have a large impact in states where there is already a high level of support for state pre-K. Ryan also argues that the executive and legislative branches may play a larger role in funding and implementing state pre-K, but believes that a judicial mandate can provide the political cover needed for governors and legislators to advance pre-K legislation and programs. In his work, Regenstein et al. (2007) concludes that working with the executive and legislative branches is a far more effective way to enact change than litigation. Referendums have served as another way of creating a political mandate for ECE in states and cities, but their use has been relatively infrequent and less is known about them.



Political Leadership: infrastructure indicators (state level) Equitable pre-K

PL9. Political Leadership Data Collection for Equity Goals

Equity is front and center in all discussions around pre-K policies and practices. The ways in which state teams conduct their work, and the activities they engage in, including data collection efforts, are designed to ensure early learning programs, early childhood educators, children, teachers, and families will succeed including targeted populations. State teams engage in all four of the following activities to promote equity:

- Supporting the vision of a successful pre-K system in school readiness for all children regardless of race, income, and language differences and including children with developmental delays or disabilities
- Bringing together a diverse stakeholder group that represents the diverse voices within the pre-K field, including teachers, parents, community leaders, advocates, program leaders, and state officials
- Ensuring data are collected on all populations of children and are disaggregated to understand barriers and gaps in opportunity and achievement. Data are shared with stakeholders and decisions are made with input from all voices
- Drafting policies to ensure strategies are deliberate to meet the needs of targeted groups to reach the vision of success

In order to understand issues of equity within the pre-K system and discrepancies in educational opportunities and outcomes among low-income children of color and their more affluent Caucasian counterparts, it is essential to understand the history of early learning. The history of early childhood education in the United States is that of a two-tiered system. In the late nineteenth century, wealthy philanthropists became interested in *day nurseries*, programs for children of low-income families, which were primarily custodial. These day nurseries were founded by wealthy white women to instill middle-class American values in children from immigrant and low-income families, as part of a larger social welfare system designed to benefit white people. Black women began to organize in Black women's clubs to serve the needs of young children in their own communities. A committee of Black women in New York City opened the first day nursery for Black children in 1903 (Cahan, 1989).

Head Start was founded in 1965 as part of President Lyndon B. Johnson's War on Poverty. Head Start was designed to meet the needs of preschool children from low-income demographics and their families in culturally responsive ways, by meaningfully partnering with the communities it serves (Cahan, 1989). Throughout the 1970s and 1980s, there continued to be efforts to support child care through federal initiatives. A coalition worked to pass a universal child care policy, the Comprehensive Child Development Act of 1971, but it was vetoed by President Nixon.

These long-standing inconsistencies and inequalities continue to play out in the field today. Early childhood education in the United States remains an uneven landscape that can be confusing to both policymakers and the general public. The early childhood field, both education and child care, includes public and private



programs. Private programs may be either for-profit or nonprofit, universal, or targeted to serve low-income families. There is a high level of variance, including but not limited to quality, accountability, population(s) served, cost, hours of operation, and setting, among each of these sectors. Unlike K-12 schools, early education in America is not universally considered to be part of the public school system, which means that there is no standard system of governance, public funding, or accountability. Instead of an education system, these many different programs mean that early childhood education currently functions as more of a market, with programs being viewed as commodities rather than a necessary public good. Like other market systems, this means a lack of consistent quality, and inequities throughout (Kagan, 2009).

This means that many early childhood programs remain racially and economically segregated. Early childhood programs with public funding typically serve children from low-income families, while private programs are more likely to serve children from a mix of economic backgrounds (Kamerman & Gatenio-Gabel, 2007).

In line with the framework of targeted universalism (Powell et al., 2019) used to guide the development of the IDM, equity indicators in each Element highlight the importance of ongoing data collection, the disaggregation of data, and the use of data for decision-making, action planning, and assessing implementation. This supports the five steps of targeted universalism (Powell et al., 2019), where once a universal goal is established (Step 1) and there is information about the performance of the general population relative to the universal goal (Step 2), the performance of different groups can be identified (Step 3), further analysis can be done to understand the structures that support or impede each group for achieving the universal goal (Step 4), and targeted strategies for each group can be developed and implemented to reach the universal goal (Step 5).

Policy impacts on children and families should be considered with an equity lens, and altered as needed to meet the needs of children and families, in accordance with NAEYC's recommendations (NAEYC Recommendations for Public Policymakers, n.d.) As previously mentioned under PL Indicator 1, the use of contextually appropriate practices (CAP) developed in partnership with communities can make programs more relevant to the needs of all children and families (Nganga et al., 2020). Additionally, the importance of adequate financial support to make high-quality ECE programs available to all children is reflected in NAEYC's recommendations. All program settings should be adequately resourced to meet the needs of the children and families they serve. As described previously under PL Indicator 7, increased public funding, particularly child care subsidies and pre-K funding, may make low-income children more likely to attend higher-quality, center-based care.

III. Future Directions and Limitations

Limited data are available to track funding support for pre-K and improvements to pre-K according to Greenberg (2010). Without sufficient data systems, state planners are unable to make precise decisions when it comes to needed resources and how to allocate these resources and funding to assure these resources directly benefit children (National Center for Early Development & Learning, 2000). In addition, little attention has been paid to issues such as estimating program cost and cost of delivering program service (Jones et al., 2019). For instance, studies conducted to understand how pre-K quality relates to child outcomes could help target limited resources and funding for quality improvement (Zaslow et al., 2016). More available data are needed so that a better determination can be made to support pre-K quality through policy level (Greenberg, 2010).

Research recommends that states identify different levels of resources needed for improving high-quality education so that states and localities can respond with policy strategies to improve ECE quality and ensure





equitable outcomes for children (Reid et al., 2019). For example, schools with high-quality teacher–child interactions may be weaker in family services and therefore may need additional resources to support their families. Researchers suggest it is important to consider a clear analysis of the range of costs and resources needed at different phases of implementation, as well as the program recipients and the different costs associated with different kinds of implementation (Jones et al., 2019).

It is recommended that instead of developing a vision and strategic plans focused on achieving short-term goals of providing high-quality pre-K programs, it is critical for policymakers at all levels of the state and government to consider the long-term impacts of policy on early childhood education and child development, namely, preparing children for success in the K-12 school system (Brown, 2013).

Successful development and implementation of quality pre-K programs are bolstered by leadership at all levels. Governors are particularly important for creating and maintaining strong ECE systems within their state. Legislators, advocacy groups, and other community partners, such as business organizations, can also play a powerful role as political allies. To accomplish the goal of high-quality pre-K education, state or political leaders not only need to be willing to advocate and support the implementation of high-quality programs, but also need to ensure administrative infrastructure capable of delivering the tasks. As it may cost considerable money and resources to ensure the implementation of high-quality pre-K education, it is critical that states, community leaders, and other advocates support and complement each other (National Center for Early Development & Learning, 2000). The political will to implement effective pre-K must be accompanied by adequate funding and an administrative infrastructure capable of delivering on its promise. That is, different levels of resources and inputs are needed to improve pre-K quality and equitable child outcomes (Reid et al., 2019).

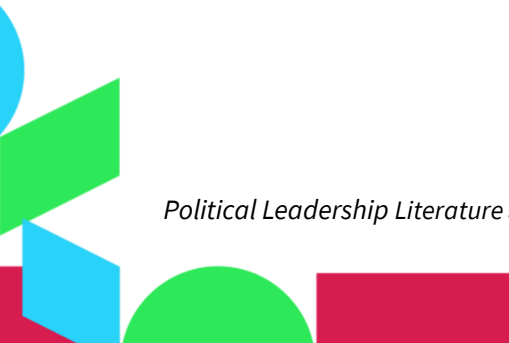


References

- Ackerman, D. J., Barnett, S. W., Hawkinson, L. E., Brown, K., & McGonigle, E. A. (2009). Providing preschool education for all 4-year-olds: Lessons from six state journeys. (NIEER Policy Brief, Issue 18, March 2009). Retrieved from: <http://nieer.org/policy-issue/policy-brief-providing-preschool-education-for-all-4-year-olds-lessons-from-six-state-journey>
- Apple, P. L. (2006). A developmental approach to early childhood program quality improvement: The relation between state regulation and NAEYC accreditation. *Early Education and Development*, 17(4), 535–552. https://doi.org/10.1207/s15566935eed1704_2
- Barhorn, I., Huttner, N., & Blau, J. (2013) Assessing Advocacy. *Stanford Social Innovation Review*. Retrieved from: https://ssir.org/articles/entry/assessing_advocacy#
- Barnett, W. S., Weisenfeld, G. G., Brown, K., Squires, J., Horowitz, M., & National Institute for Early Education Research. (2016). Implementing 15 essential elements for high quality: A state and local policy scan. *National Institute for Early Education Research*.
- Boylan, Ellen. (2007). High quality pre-kindergarten as the first step in education adequacy: Using the courts to expand access to state pre-k programs. *Children's Legal Rights Journal*, 27(1), 24–55.
- Brown, C. P. (2013). Reforming preschool to ready children for academic achievement: A case study of the impact of pre-k reform on the issue of school readiness. *Early Education and Development*, 24(4), 554–573. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10409289.2012.694352>
- Center for Educational Equity (2017). Establishing universal access to prekindergarten as a universal right. Retrieved from: http://www.centerforeducationalequity.org/publications/universal-prekindergarten-in-ny/Prekindergarten-as-a-Right_LongPaper_4B.pdf
- Curran, F. C. (2015). Expanding downward: Innovation, diffusion, and state policy adoptions of universal preschool. *Education Policy Analysis Archives*, 23(36). <http://dx.doi.org/10.14507/epaa.v23.1688>
- Farran, D., Meador, D., Christopher, C., Nesbitt, K., & E Bilbrey, L. (2017). Data-driven improvement in prekindergarten classrooms: Report from a partnership in an urban district. *Child Development* 88(5), 1466–1479. <https://doi.org/10.1111/cdev.12906>
- Gallagher, J. J., Clayton, J. R., Heinemeier, S. E., & National Center for Early Development & Learning, C. H., NC. (2001). *Education for Four-Year-Olds: State Initiatives. Technical Report #2*.
- Greenberg, J. P. (2010). Assessing policy effects on enrollment in early childhood education and care. *Social Service Review*, 84(3), 461–490. <https://doi.org/10.1086/655822>
- Greif, Alexandra. (2004). Politics, practicalities, and priorities: New Jersey's experience implementing the Abbott V mandate. *Yale Law & Policy Review*, 22(2), 615–657.
- Hibbard, S. (2015). Looking ahead: Governance and the role of leadership. In Kagan, S. L., & Kauerz, K. (Eds.) *Early childhood governance: Choices and consequences* (pp. 153–164). Teachers College Press.
- Jones, D. E., Bierman, K. L., Crowley, D. M., Welsh, J. A., & Gest, J. (2019). Important issues in estimating costs of early childhood educational interventions: An example from the REDI program. *Children and Youth Services Review*, 107. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.childyouth.2019.104498>
- Kagan, S. L. (2009). American early childhood education: Preventing or perpetuating inequity. *Research Review*, (3).
- Kagan, S. & Gomez, R. (2015). *Early childhood governance: Choices and consequences*. <https://www.researchconnections.org/childcare/resources/30629>
- Kagan, S. & Kauerz, K. (2012). *Early childhood systems: Transforming early learning*. <https://eric.ed.gov/?id=ED529873>
- Kagan, S. L., & Kauerz, K. (2009). Governing American early care and education: Shifting from government to governance and from form to function. In S. Feeney, A. Galper, & C. Seefeldt (Eds.), *Continuing issues in early childhood education* (3rd ed., pp. 12–32). Pearson.
- Kamerman, S. B., & Gatenio-Gabel, S. (2007). Early childhood education and care in the United States: An overview of the current policy picture. *International Journal of Child Care and Education Policy*, 1(1), 23–34.



- Karch, A. (2010). Policy feedback and preschool funding in the American states. *Policy Studies Journal*, 38(2), 217–234. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1541-0072.2010.00359.x>
- Karch, A. (2013). *Early start: Preschool politics in the United States* (pp.175–210). The University of Michigan Press
- Kroll, C. K., & Rivest, M. (2000). *Sharing the stories: Lessons learned from 5 years of smart start*. CK Kroll & Associates.
- Minervino, J. (2014). The essential elements of high quality pre-k: An analysis of four exemplar programs. In J. Minervino, *Lessons from research and the classroom: Implementing high-quality pre-k that makes a difference for young children* (pp. 21–29). Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation.
- Minervino, J. (2014). *Lessons from research and the classroom*. Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation.
- Nganga, L., Madrid Akpovo, S., & Kambutu, J. (2020). Culturally inclusive and contextually appropriate instructional practices: Rethinking pedagogical perspectives, practices, policies, and experiences in early childhood education programs. *Journal of Research in Childhood Education*, 34(1), 2–5. <https://doi.org/10.1080/02568543.2019.1697153>
- National Center for Early Development & Learning, C. H., NC. (2000). *Pre-K Initiatives in Five States*. NCEDL Spotlights, No. 29.
- National Center for Early Development & Learning, C. H., NC. (2002). *Pre-K Initiatives in 2 More States*. NCEDL Spotlights. Frank Porter Graham Child Development Center, University of North Carolina-Chapel Hill. <http://www.ncedl.org>.
- Recommendations for Public Policymakers. (n.d.). NAEYC. <https://www.naeyc.org/resources/position-statements/equity/recommendations-policy>
- Regenstein, E., Stermer, J., & Wallen, M. (2007). Building the state early learning system. *Children's Legal Rights Journal*, 27(1), 56–68.
- Regenstein, E., & Lipper, K. (2013). A framework for choosing a state-level early childhood governance system. Retrieved from <http://www.buildinitiative.org/WhatsNew/ViewArticle/tabid/96/ArticleId/628/A-Framework-for-Choosing-a-State-Level-Early-Childhood-Governance-System.aspx>
- Regenstein, E. (2015). Glancing at governance: The contemporary landscape. In Kagan, S. L., & Gomez, R. E. (Eds.) *Early childhood governance: Choices and consequences* (pp.33–44). Teachers College Press.
- Reid, J. L., Melvin, S. A., Kagan, S. L., & Brooks-Gunn, J. (2019). Building a unified system for universal pre-k: The case of New York City. *Children and Youth Services Review*, 100, 191–205. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.childyouth.2019.02.030>
- Ryan, J. E., (2006). A constitutional right to preschool? *California Law Review*, 94, 49–1879.
- Stachowiak, S. (2013). Pathways for change: 10 theories to inform advocacy and policy change efforts. Retrieved from: https://orsimpact.com/DirectoryAttachments/132018_13248_359_Center_Pathways_FINAL.pdf
- Strategies for Children & Rennie Center for Education Research & Policy (2008). A case study of the Massachusetts Department of Early Education and Care. Retrieved from: http://www.strategiesforchildren.org/doc_research/08_Rennie_Case.pdf
- Voices for America's Children. (2008). Increasing state investments in early care and education: Lessons learned from advocates and best practices, Spring 2008. In Voices for America's Children.
- Wechsler, M., Kirp, D. L., Ali, T. T., Gardner, M., Maier, A., Melnick, H., & Shields, P.M. (2016, June). The road to high-quality early learning: Lessons from the states. [Learning Policy Institute Brief]. Retrieved from: <https://learningpolicyinstitute.org/product/road-high-quality-early-learning-lessons-states>
- Zaslow, M., Anderson, R., Redd, Z., Wessel, J., Daneri, P., Green, K., Cavadel, E. W., Tarullo, L., Burchinal, M., & Martinez-Beck, I. (2016). Quality thresholds, features, and dosage in early care and education: Secondary data analyses of child outcomes: I Quality thresholds, features, and dosage in early care and education: Introduction and literature review. *Monographs of the Society for Research in Child Development*, 81(2), 7–26. <https://doi.org/10.1111/mono.12236>
- Zero to Three & Pre-K Now (2007). Common visions, different paths: Five states' journeys towards comprehensive prenatal-five systems. Retrieved from <https://www.zerotothree.org/resources/478-common-vision-different-paths>





Appendix A

Table 1 Political Leadership Key Words and References Summary

Key word or phrase	# Articles for initial abstract review based on inclusion criteria	# Articles for 2nd abstract review with exclusion criteria	# Articles passed full article review	Article citation
Political leadership	7	6	5	Gallagher et al., 2001 (PL2, 7, & 8); Kroll & Rivest, 2000 (PL2, 3, & 6); National Center for Early Development & Learning, 2000 (PL2); National Center for Early Development & Learning, 2002 (PL2); Voices for America's Children, 2008 (PL4, 5)
Advocacy	70	1	1	Greenberg, 2010 (PL7)
Education improvement	36	8	4	Apple, 2006 (PL1); Brown, 2013 (PL8); Farran et al., 2017 (PL1); Zaslow et al., 2016 (PL1)
State funding	40	3	1	Reid et al., 2019 (PL7, 8)
Early learning mandate	40	2	2	Jones et al., 2019 (PL7); Nganga et al., 2020 (PL1)
Expert recommendations			21	Ackerman, 2009 (PL1, 7); Regenstein et al., 2007 (PL7, 8); Regenstein, 2015 (PL1); Hibbard, 2015 (PL1, 7, & 8); Barnett et al., 2016 (PL1, 8); Minervino, 2014 (PL7); Minervino, 2014 (PL8); Kagan & Gomez, 2015 (PL1); Karch, 2010 (PL4); Karch, 2013 (PL3, 4, 6, 7, & 8); Curran, 2015 (PL3, 4); Zero to Three & Pre-K Now, 2007 (PL4); Strategies for Children, 2008 (PL4, 6, & 7);



Key word or phrase	# Articles for initial abstract review based on inclusion criteria	# Articles for 2nd abstract review with exclusion criteria	# Articles passed full article review	Article citation
				Boylan, 2007 (PL7); Ryan, 2006 (PL7); Greif, 2004 (PL7); Kagan & Kauerz, 2009 (PL1, 7, & 8); Kagan & Kauerz, 2012 (PL1); Regenstein & Lipper, 2013 (PL2); Kauerz & Kagan, 2012 (PL3, 4, 6, 7, & 8); Wechsler et al., 2016 (PL8)
Total	193	20	34	



Appendix. Political Leadership Literature Review Summary (excluded articles)

Key word or phrase	# Articles for initial abstract review based on inclusion criteria	# Articles for 2nd abstract review with exclusion criteria	# Articles passed full article review
Early learning lobbying	0	0	0
Pre-K office leadership	0	0	0
Pre-K state agency	40	3	0
Governance	21	1	0
Grasstops stakeholders	0	0	0
Grassroots stakeholders	0	0	0
Early learning legislation	4	2	0
Judiciary	30	0	0
Governor	30	0	0
State accountability	43	1	0
Early learning strategic plan	2	0	0
State governance	29	2	0
Politics	30	0	0
Coordination	30	1	0
Total	259	10	0



Acknowledgement

This work was created as part of the Partnership for Pre-K Improvement, a collaboration between the [Alliance for Early Success](#), [Cultivate Learning](#), and [Start Early](#), with support from the [Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation](#).

This work is licensed under the Creative Commons Attribution-ShareAlike 4.0 International License. To view a copy of this license, visit <http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/4.0/> or send a letter to Creative Commons, PO Box 1866, Mountain View, CA 94042, USA.

© 2021 University of Washington. All rights reserved.

