



Birth-to-College

COLLABORATIVE TOOLKIT

How do program and school leaders support the early work of PLCs within a BTC approach?

Action Plan for Implementation for School and Program Leaders: Exploration and Adoption

HOW TO USE THE ACTION PLAN

An action plan accompanies each Birth-to-College (BTC) Implementation Guide for teachers and staff. This tool is intended to provide a place to document your school's process of exploring, installing, and implementing birth through 3rd grade alignment. Ideally, this tool is to be used in a group setting such as a teacher planning meeting or a staff meeting. To use the action plan, first identify up to five (5) priorities out of the key decisions and strategies for implementation listed below for which you and your colleagues would like to focus. Once you have identified priorities, follow the instructions on page 5 for completing the action plan.

KEY DECISIONS AND STRATEGIES FOR IMPLEMENTATION

- **Build and Strengthen Relational Trust:** Open, honest communication is the cornerstone of any trusting partnership. In the previous implementation guide for school and program leaders, the authors recommended that potential partner organizations spend at least a year building relational trust by sharing information with one another at regularly scheduled meetings and for teachers and staff to consider being involved in these meetings. At that stage, teachers and staff from the respective partners should intentionally build and continue to work toward strengthening trust within and across organizations. Potential roadblocks to alignment provide an opportunity for partners to work together in service of a common goal. Logistical challenges imposed by school- or program-specific requirements, obligations and responsibilities have the potential to adversely impact efforts to align. Therefore, teachers and staff should take an active role throughout the problem-solving process and should expect leadership to remain engaged and responsive.

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- **Understand Funding Regulations and Requirements:** Because early childhood and elementary school programming are financed through different funding streams with different philosophical priorities, policies and regulations, staff should discuss each program’s individual eligibility requirements and admissions process and address the funding, legal and/or regulatory requirements that each entity is obliged to follow. Identifying any points of alignment or contradiction in funding regulations and requirements as they pertain to recruitment, eligibility and admissions will help anticipate pitfalls prior to engaging families in the process.
- **Develop Family Buy-in and Get Input:** Establishing family buy-in prior to and during the recruitment and admissions process is critical. Understanding the family’s role in both choosing to engage in the pathway for aligned recruitment and admissions and continuing with the program long enough to benefit from the alignment across both early childhood and K–12 is critical to ensuring that the efforts put into establishing the aligned process do benefit the children and families they are intended to impact. For example, determining whether families enrolled in the early childhood program are interested in attending the elementary school/s and looking at trends in prior year’s enrollment will help determine the actual viability of an aligned recruitment and admissions process early on. In addition, patience will be paramount for teachers and staff, as many parents and families struggle with unfamiliar terms, rules and policies, especially in light of their efforts to navigate the processes of enrolling and transitioning their children to kindergarten, as well as maintaining eligibility. Staff members are charged with the responsibility for making sure parents and families have the most up-to-date documentation to facilitate this process at each level (i.e., application, enrollment, transition, and maintenance). Likewise, it is important to solicit feedback from families about how well the recruitment and admissions processes work for them and any barriers or challenges to participation in those processes they have experienced.

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- **Consider Recruitment and Eligibility:** Staff should come to a shared understanding of each program’s and individual’s responsibilities in recruiting, determining eligibility of, enrolling and communicating with families throughout each step of the process across the early childhood and elementary school programs involved in the partnership. Factors that often determine eligibility that should be discussed and considered early on in establishing a pathway include income or need criteria, prioritization of risk factors (e.g., special needs, teen parent, single parent, homeless), sibling priority, attendance boundary or catchment area, selective enrollment through testing and random enrollment through lottery. Staff from the respective partners should also share a timeline for the recruitment and admissions process, which includes when and where they do recruitment and how they track enrollment.

- **Optimize Timing:** Aligning the timing of recruitment, admissions and enrollment procedures can be an important hurdle to overcome. As elementary school enrollment often follows a different school-year calendar than early childhood enrollment, ensuring that staff and parents are fully aware of timetables and deadlines and that parents can be supported in filling out the correct forms at the appropriate times is a critical element in guaranteeing a streamlined pathway for admission. Laying out all necessary timetables and working to align and coordinate deadlines that meet the needs of all organizations involved will significantly facilitate effective admissions and transitions processes for staff and students and families.
- **Delegate Responsibility:** Various staff members across the organization have a critical role to play throughout the establishment and implementation of an aligned recruitment and admissions process. In order to effectively create a process that is family friendly and maintains fidelity to the needs of each organization, it is important that all staff members and their responsibilities in the process be carefully considered to create a successful foundation for alignment.

 - *Leadership:* Leaders—organizational as well as site level—must hold the broader vision for alignment and help service staff navigate the external relationships critical to obtaining the permissions necessary to create a plan for aligned recruitment and admissions. Leaders should take responsibility for the written documentation of the policies, procedures, regulations and guidelines that will define this aspect of alignment. Examples include (1) specifying the number of families targeted for engagement in the pathway, (2) targeting populations or exception populations to be considered, and (3) identifying policy or systems changes needed to effectively implement the aligned recruitment and admissions process. Moreover, leaders will need to produce strategic work plans for creating an aligned recruitment and admissions process. These work plans will include concrete goals that have specific action plans for achievement. Ultimately, ongoing engagement at the leadership level will ensure that the establishment of this seamless pathway is sustainable for all and aligned with the shared mission of building a continuum of education from early childhood through the elementary years and on through college.
 - *Teachers and Staff:* Many of the details for program implementation will require active understanding, engagement and communication between staff in the coordinating programs and schools. Guided by the vision laid out at the leadership level, staff will be responsible for crafting written documents that will walk parents and families, step-by-step, through an explanation of the process from recruitment to admissions. While staff must understand the technical details of navigating this pathway, the documents that explain this process to families should be written in clear, easily understandable language. It is highly recommended that staff ensure parents' comprehension and get signatures as written confirmation of understanding and agreement to the recruitment, eligibility, admissions and enrollment requirements and process.

- **Continue Communication Among Staff:** Once the key elements of the pathway from recruitment to admissions are established by leadership from the program perspective, clear, consistent communication to staff, parents and families will ensure that there is a common message across the organizations involved. Parents who are navigating the process of enrolling and transitioning their children to kindergarten will benefit from a strong communication plan being in place. Transparency and patience when explaining unfamiliar terms, rules and policies across organizations are helpful components along the road to alignment and should be practiced by all teachers and staff. Please refer to the BTC glossary for an example of the most common terms used in early childhood and K–12.

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- **Continue Communication With Families:** It is very difficult for families to plan a number of years ahead given the numerous factors that could alter their planning. Significant support is necessary for parents to understand the importance of the aligned processes from recruitment to admissions in leaving their options open and to ensure that all the appropriate paperwork is filled out and provided to both organizations at the time of enrollment. While the process should be put in place by staff, consideration on how to assist families in navigating the process is also important. A written agreement for families should be developed that provides a step-by-step guide through the policies and procedures of the aligned pathway. Providing clear parameters, instructions and guidelines for parents helps ensure that they make informed decisions about their participation in aligned recruitment and admissions processes and the selection of their child’s elementary school. How a family maintains its eligibility and admission to the elementary school—and what will disqualify it from the aligned educational continuum—will be essential to communicate to parents once those factors are determined by the partners. The early childhood school and elementary school teaching and staff should collaborate on providing families with this information.
- **Sustain Operations:** Staff will continue to be responsible for the overall implementation of the aligned recruitment, eligibility, enrollment and admissions processes, including maintaining documentation that tracks students and families, developing and distributing appropriate materials that explain the process, sharing information with relevant staff in a timely manner. As staff work to implement the aligned process from recruitment to admissions and meet the goals set forth by leadership, it is important to take advantage of a feedback loop between leadership and staff and opportunities to address any issues that arise across the coordinating organizations

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ACTION PLAN

From the list of Key Decisions and Strategies for Implementation, identify no more than 5 priorities, for which you and your colleagues would like to focus using the template below. For each priority, write in activities related to the priority, what types of tasks are related to the activity, who will be involved in the activity, when the activity will be completed, what supports and resources are needed to complete the activity, and next steps. Print action plans to organize and document priorities and activities as needed.

PRIORITY #__:				
ACTIVITIES RELATED TO PRIORITY #__				
ACTIVITY #__				
Tasks (list creation of "products" or "what to do" to meet activity/outcome)	Who (list all staff involved and lead)	By When	Supports/Resources Needed	Next Steps