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I bristle when I hear the adage "kindergarten is the new first grade" because it represents a mindset that goes against decades of research on brain development. Students need multiple opportunities within the course of the school day to practice self-regulation. Cognitive flexibility, social skills, and oral language. In my role of assistant principal, I have focused on building a PK through 3rd grade curriculum at Joel School. My leadership practices in this realm are based on my belief and research that early child educators must embrace purposeful play, peer collaboration, and inquiry-based lessons in order to support the development of executive function skills and increase engagement so students have a greater opportunity for long term success.

I was a member of the 2016-2017 UCONN PK–3 Leadership Program, an exciting and rigorous experience that increased my knowledge and confidence to support an effective PK through 3 program. In collaboration with our Director of Special Services and our Best Beginnings Coordinator/ School psychologist, we are transferring the information presented in modules on curriculum and instruction, assessment, program evaluation, and equity, respectively, as we prepare our PK program for National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) accreditation. Using the Early Learning Development Standards, Creative Classroom Curriculum, and NAEYC Standards, I have developed an evaluative program of formative and summative measures for teachers to ensure our program is on the right track for accreditation and for what is best for our children. I created a schedule that allows for a weekly block of time where PK teachers, school psychologists, and administration can meet as a Professional Learning Community to improve our programming. When we plan professional development with literacy and math coaches, we make sure that the content includes preschool considerations to support the PK-3 continuum.