

Transitional Kindergarten Parent Engagement Toolkit

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Purpose: To provide local education agencies (LEA's) with tools and resources that communicate the benefits of transitional kindergarten (TK) and support parent outreach.



Presentation Outline

- Overview of parent focus groups
- Effective TK messaging
- TK messengers and tips
- Methods for parent engagement



Overview of Parent Focus Groups

- **Goal:** Identify best ways to reach out to parents, especially low-income parents, to communicate benefits of TK
- Conducted six parent focus groups, two each in:
 - Bay Area (Oakland)
 - One focus group with African-American parents
 - Los Angeles
 - One focus group with Spanish-speaking Latino parents
 - Orange Cove (Fresno County)
 - One focus group with Spanish-speaking Latino parents
- Majority of parents had children who had attended or are attending preschool



Identifying Effective TK Messages

- Targeted parents from low-income communities, Latino and African American parents
- Why? – Underserved communities with limited access to information may view TK as “holding back” their children



TK Messaging for Parents

- California is only one of four states that had four-olds in Kindergarten. It is a law that goes into effect in the fall of 2011.
- It applies to all children born between September-December.
- TK provides children with the **gift of time** to learn skills that will help them build a **strong foundation for success** in elementary school.
- California's kindergarten curriculum and standards have **changed over the years**, and many of the skills children were once taught in first grade are now taught in kindergarten. TK is the **right program at the right time**.
- TK serves as a **bridge between preschool and kindergarten**, giving children more time for **hands-on, interactive learning**.
- It is not just about being ready academically, it is also about **being socially and emotionally ready** when they are 5 and when they are 15.



TK Messaging for Parents (Continued)

- TK gives children the opportunity to spend time learning important **social, emotional and academic skills** that will help them succeed in kindergarten **and beyond**.
- TK provides young learners with a high-quality early education **at no cost to parents**, to ensure that they have an opportunity to **continue learning**.
- It helps children **adjust** to the school environment & develop **strong learning skills**.
- TK provides young 5 year olds with an opportunity to start their kindergarten experience with **children their own age**, and with teachers that can tailor lesson plans to their needs.



Developing and Using Consistent Messaging

Consistent messaging is critical to successful outreach

- Work with your communications office to develop messaging that articulate the benefits of TK
- Adapt messaging for use in outreach materials, staff trainings, talking points, brochures, etc.
- Provide talking points on benefits of TK to potential messengers, including front office staff at elementary school, school faculty, school administrators, school board members and district administrators



Messengers

Primary question: Who do parents look to when it comes to issues related to their children’s education?



TK Messengers: Teachers, Principals and School Staff

- **Teachers**
 - Serve as most direct link to education system for most parents
- **Principals**
 - Less direct contact with families, but still important messengers in TK outreach efforts. They are highly respected.
- **School staff**
 - Interact regularly with families (particularly front office staff)
- **TIPS**
 - Make information and resources available to all elementary school staff, teachers and principals
 - Offer communications training on new law and TK program to all elementary school staff
 - Make sure teachers are accessible to parents to answer questions about TK, particularly during height of school registration
 - Have a TK booth during school events such as Back-to-School Night and Open House



TK Messengers: Parent Ambassadors

- **Parent Ambassadors**
 - Parents trust other parents when it comes to information about their children's education
 - Peer-to-peer perspective validates school information
 - Parents have been on of the strongest assets in recruitment efforts across the state
- **TIPS**
 - Identify potential parent ambassadors, offer them personalized briefing with principal or teachers
 - Provide materials and resources on TK to distribute to other parents
 - Give them formal opportunities to be involved (e.g. participating in parent info meetings, providing quotes for parent bulletin endorsing TK)
 - Involve them in planning and outreach efforts



TK Messengers: Child Development Centers

- **Local Child Care & Child Development Centers**
 - Very effective messengers because of their direct access and frequent interaction with families
 - Trusted by many families when it comes to information about their children
- **TIPS**
 - Share information about TK and implementation plans with local providers
 - Designate a contact who can be available to answer questions as they come up during implementation
 - Schedule regular articulation discussions on connecting zero to five to early elementary, and invite local child care and development providers to participate



TK Messengers: Community Organizations

- **Local Community Organizations**
 - Includes community centers, community-based organizations (CBOs), churches, etc.
 - Seen as advocates for their community and trusted source for accessing new and critical information
- **TIPS**
 - Schedule meeting or TK classroom tour with local community organizations in your area to provide information about TK
 - Have a TK “point person” available as designated contact for organizations
 - Have some asks ready, such as including information about TK in their newsletter or on their website, or presenting at community meetings about the benefits of TK



TK Messengers: Media

- **Media**
 - Most families use some form of media to get information about changes in laws, issues in education
 - Some parents have already heard about TK from media coverage, interested to find out more
 - For diverse communities, ethnic media (i.e. print, TV, radio) highly trusted source of information
- **TIPS**
 - Make positive newspaper clips about TK and other positive media coverage available to parents during meetings, in packets
 - Incorporate video clips in presentations on the benefits of TK where possible
 - Work with communications office to engage local media on TK, email or call reporters to tell them about program, invite them to visit classroom
 - Send press release about launch to local media outlets during back to school time



Methods for Parent Engagement

- **One-on-one conversations**
 - Gives school staff opportunity to provide information, address misinformation and concerns, discuss parents questions in depth
- **Meetings**
 - Small group meetings (3 to 5 parents) best, creates welcoming environment for parents to ask questions, share their thoughts
- **Classroom Tours**
 - A tour of a nearby program with a small group of parents can help them understand what happens in the classroom
 - Provide time after tour for questions and discussion
- **Parent Help Line and TK Liaison**
 - Having designated person or team of people available to answer questions will help parents build relationships, feel more comfortable with the program
 - Establish bilingual help center with phone number parents can call



Methods for Parent Engagement (cont.)

- **Resource Table**
 - Establish TK table at “Kindergarten Roundup,” other district education events
 - Be sure person staffing tables has talking points on TK, outreach materials for families to take home
- **Flyers and Banners**
 - Post flyers and banners during registration at school and district offices, childcare centers, community centers and other local organizations
 - Make sure they have phone number parents can call for more information
- **Brochure**
 - Create parent brochure to highlight benefits of TK
- **Website**
 - Have parent friendly information on TK available on school and district website



For additional TK information visit the following websites:

www.fcoe.org/transitionalkindergarten

www.tkcalifornia.org

www.preschoolcalifornia.org


