

Transitional Kindergarten: Preparing California's Children to Succeed in Kindergarten

The **Kindergarten Readiness Act, a historic reform to kindergarten education**, gives California an unparalleled opportunity to ensure that 120,000 more children each year are better prepared to succeed in kindergarten and beyond.

- The legislation creates transitional kindergarten, the first year of a two-year kindergarten experience for those students who are born between September and December.
- SB 1381 changes the kindergarten entry date from Dec. 2 to Sept. 1, so children enter kindergarten at age 5.
- The legislation¹ will phase in the new age requirement by moving the cutoff date one month a year for three years, beginning in 2012.

What is Transitional Kindergarten?

- Transitional kindergarten programs will offer children developmentally appropriate curriculum that is aligned with kindergarten standards. Classes would be taught by credentialed teachers from the K-12 system.
- About 120,000 children – including 49,000 English language learners and 74,000 who attend Title I schools – will benefit from this reform.
- Existing funding for these children with fall birthdays will be redirected to transitional kindergarten and will employ existing teachers and classroom facilities.
- Parents now have an additional option to ensure their children enter kindergarten with the maturity and skills they need to excel.
- Transitional kindergarten is voluntary – a child born after Sept. 1 may still be admitted to kindergarten on a case-by-case basis if the parent or guardian applies for early admission and the school district agrees it would be in the best interest of the child.

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California's New Kindergarten System: Preparing Children to Succeed

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For more information, visit www.preschoolcalifornia.org/SB1381

What is transitional kindergarten?

Research Shows Early Learning Programs Like Transitional Kindergarten Deliver Excellent Return on Investment

High-quality early childhood programs like transitional kindergarten are a critical component of K-12 reform in the early elementary years.

- Without the strong, early start that high-quality early learning provides, children may not develop the skills they need to read proficiently in third grade. This critical milestone predicts whether a student will graduate from high school.²
- Research shows beginning kindergarten at an later age improves children's social and academic development and provides a significant boost to their test scores, especially for children from low-income families. Children are also more likely to attend college and earn higher wages, according to a Public Policy Institute of California review of 14 recent studies.³
- Transitional kindergarten will ultimately save the state money because children will be better prepared to succeed in school and less likely to be placed in special education or retained in later grades.⁴

These changes to the state's education code are critical because California's children start kindergarten at a younger age than kids in almost any other state, often without the maturity and the social, early literacy and pre-math skills they need to meet the challenges of kindergarten. At the same time, California has some of the highest standards for what we expect our children to learn in kindergarten.

Transitional Kindergarten Success Stories

School districts across California have already been implementing a similar reform. Los Angeles Unified School District this fall launched a pilot program at 36 elementary school sites; when adopted district-wide, it will serve more than 11,000 children. Sacramento, Fresno, Palo Alto, Torrance and Orange County are also offering similar programs to their youngest learners. As other districts begin their own transitional kindergartens, Preschool California is committed to working with them, the community and other partners to ensure they are developmentally appropriate and allow children to realize their highest potential.

[Transitional kindergarten builds on existing kindergarten readiness efforts, setting children on a path to develop the skills they need to build a brighter future for California.](#)

Endnotes

1. Kindergarten Readiness Act of 2010, SB 1381, 2010 State Legislature, (2010). http://www.leginfo.ca.gov/pub/09-10/bill/sen/sb_1351-1400/sb_1381_bill_20100930_chaptered.html 2. KIDS COUNT Special Report from the Annie E. Casey Foundation. (2010). Early Warning! Why Reading by the End of Third Grade Matters. Annie E. Casey Foundation. http://www.aecf.org/~media/Pubs/Initiatives/KIDS%20COUNT/123/2010KCSpecReport/AEC_report_color_highres.pdf 3. Cannon, J. & Lipscomb, S. (2008). Changing the Kindergarten Cutoff Date: Effects on California Students and Schools. Public Policy Institute of California. 4. Committee for Economic Development. (2006). The Economic Promise of Investing in High-Quality Preschool: Using Early Education to Improve Economic Growth and the Fiscal Sustainability of States and the Nation. Committee on Economic Development Statement. 414 13th Street, Suite 500 Oakland, CA 94612 (510) 271-0075 t (510) 271-0707 f

“Today’s kindergarten classroom is a much different place than most of us experienced. We’re placing real academic demands on our kids, and the youngest are struggling to keep up. The evidence shows that giving these younger kindergarteners an extra year can make a big difference in their long-term success.”

- Senator Joe Simitian (D-Palo Alto)

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