

California's New Kindergarten System: Preparing Children to Succeed



What is TK?

Offered across the state, transitional kindergarten (TK) is an exciting educational opportunity for children born in the fall. Transitional kindergarten offers children with birthdays between September and December a developmentally appropriate curriculum aligned with kindergarten standards, taught by credentialed teachers from K-12. TK was created by the 2010 California law called the Kindergarten Readiness Act.

The entry date change and the creation of TK address a longstanding need in California, as our children have historically started kindergarten at a younger age than kids in almost any other state – often without the maturity, social skills and early academic skills they need to succeed in kindergarten and beyond. At the same time, kindergarten today is far more academic than it once was; similar to what first grade used to be.

The youngest kids in a kindergarten class risk struggling academically, emotionally and/or socially. At their young age, some may have limited experience interacting with peers and teachers, while others may not yet know how to listen or follow a structured class schedule. TK ensures that children have these pivotal skills, which are foundations to successful learning, when they begin kindergarten.

What are the benefits of TK?

Transitional kindergarten bridges the path between preschool and kindergarten and gives students a head start that will yield huge payoffs in future academic success. TK provides the gift of time that will help students build a strong foundation for success in elementary school. One out of every four kindergarten students in California will benefit from transitional kindergarten. As of 2014, TK serves 134,000 students each year.

TK is a win-win-win for children, families and schools.

- Children are better prepared to succeed.
- Families have an additional option to ensure their children enter kindergarten with the maturity, confidence and skills they need to excel.
- Schools benefit because children will be better prepared to succeed academically and less likely to be placed in special education or held back in later grades.

Research shows that the return on early investments in education is substantial. According to Deborah Stipek, professor at the Stanford University School of Education, “the cost is paid back many times over in reduced grade retentions, special education services and in lower expenditures for incarceration. Returns also come in the form of the increased productivity that results from higher levels of academic achievement and high school completion rates.”



Frequently Asked Questions: Transitional Kindergarten

What is Transitional Kindergarten?

Q. What is Transitional Kindergarten?

A. Transitional Kindergarten (TK) is an early year Kindergarten experience for “young five year olds,” (all students whose 5th birthday falls between September 2nd and December 2nd are eligible for TK in OUSD). TK provides our youngest students with a “Kindergarten Readiness” year, giving them a stronger foundation for success in their following year of traditional Kindergarten and beyond.

Q. How do I enroll my child in Transitional Kindergarten for the 2013-14 school year?

A. In order to enroll in a Transitional Kindergarten (TK) class in an OUSD school, you will need to participate in OUSD’s Options process. The Options enrollment window for 2013-14 school year will begin on Dec. 3, 2012 and

close on Jan. 18, 2013. Please visit <http://www.ousd.k12.ca.us/site/Default.aspx?PageID=1099> or call the Student Assignment Center at (510) 273-1600 with questions about the Options process.

What are the Kindergarten Age Requirements?

Q. What are California's Kindergarten cutoff dates?

A. California recently passed a new law (Senate Bill 1381) that changes the age when children can begin Kindergarten. Under this new law, California's Kindergarten age requirements will gradually change over the next two years, so that by the fall of 2014-15, all children must turn 5 years old on or before September 1 in order to enroll in Kindergarten.

2012-13 school year: entering Kindergarteners must turn five on or before **Nov. 1st**

2013-14 school year: entering Kindergarteners must turn five on or before **Oct. 1st**

2014-15 school year: entering Kindergarteners must turn five on or before **Sep. 1st**

Q. Why has California decided to change the Kindergarten cutoff date?

A. Prior to the passage of the *Kindergarten Readiness Act* (SB 1381), California's December 2nd cutoff date for Kindergarten entry was one of the latest in the nation. In most states, children must turn five by September 1st in order to start Kindergarten. California's late Kindergarten cutoff allowed children as young as 4 years and 9 months old to be in Kindergarten classes with children more than one year older. While rolling back the Kindergarten entry date a few months may seem small, it can make an enormous difference during the early years when children are rapidly growing and developing.

Q. My child's fifth birthday occurs in the fall months. Is my child now shut out of public school due to the changing Kindergarten age requirements?

A. No, the new law creates a *Transitional Kindergarten* class for four year olds who have their fifth birthdays between September and December.

Q. If my child attends Transitional Kindergarten, is he/she being held back?

A. No. TK provides a year of *developmentally appropriate* early education, so that students begin traditional Kindergarten with the academic, social, physical, and emotional skills that they need for success through the rest of their educational careers.

Q. What grade will children go into after Transitional Kindergarten?

A. TK is the first year of a two-year Kindergarten experience. Children are eligible to go onto traditional Kindergarten after completing TK.

Q. Does enrolling my child in Transitional Kindergarten mean that he/she will graduate high school late, at age 19?

A. No. Children who attended TK will be 18 years old when they graduate high school and will turn 19 years old several months after graduation.

Q. What is the difference between Transitional Kindergarten and Preschool?

A. TK builds on skills that children may have learned in Preschool or at home and uses a "modified Kindergarten curriculum" that is developmentally appropriate for young five year olds entering into a traditional school setting.

Q. How is Transitional Kindergarten different from traditional Kindergarten?

A. TK is not a replication of traditional Kindergarten. Transitional Kindergarten uses a combination of standards including the CA Dept. of Education's Preschool Learning Foundations and the Common Core Standards for Kindergarten. In addition, the TK classroom environment includes many more opportunities for social-emotional development, fine-and gross-motor activities, ongoing language development, and complex social play. This is accomplished through dramatic play time, small group instruction, and project-based learning.

Why is Transitional Kindergarten Good for Children?

Q. What are the benefits of Transitional Kindergarten?

A. TK provides an intentional learning space for children to develop social, emotional, physical, and academic skills with *developmentally appropriate* instruction. TK prepares students for the social and academic expectations of traditional Kindergarten, reducing the likelihood of future grade retention, and setting students up for academic success as they progress towards college and their future careers.

Q. Does Transitional Kindergarten provide support for English Language Learners?

A. English learners in Transitional Kindergarten will have the same level of services as those in Kindergarten.

Q. Is Transitional Kindergarten free or will I have to qualify based on income?

A. Transitional Kindergarten is part of California’s K-12 public school system and is free and open to all age-eligible children.