



July 2011

# Policy Brief

## Transitional Kindergarten Issue Brief

Around the country, most states have established the month of September as their kindergarten entry birth date. Until recently, California was one of only a handful of states with a “late” kindergarten start date in December. Late last year California enacted a new law, SB 1381 (Simitian, D-Palo Alto) “The Kindergarten Readiness Act,” which moved up the state’s start date to September through a multi-year, phase-in requirement for local education agencies (LEAs). The law also created a new program called “Transitional Kindergarten.”

Transitional kindergarten (TK) is the first year of a two-year kindergarten program. Children eligible for TK are 4-year olds born between September 2 and December 2 in the year they would otherwise enroll in kindergarten. Providing state funding for a developmentally appropriate TK program for some of the state’s youngest learners is a significant policy shift in California. LEAs will now be able to claim average daily attendance (ADA) funding for students who enroll in a TK program and are five years old by September 1. Additionally, LEAs have flexibility to create TK programs with standards and curricula that meet the unique needs of

their student populations—currently no state mandated curricula or standards are set. Now more children, regardless of income level or proximity to a preschool facility, have the opportunity to attend a high quality early learning program at their local elementary school.

This issue brief will review the requirements and components of the new law, answer frequently asked questions about implementing the TK program and highlight board considerations.

### Kindergarten entrance dates

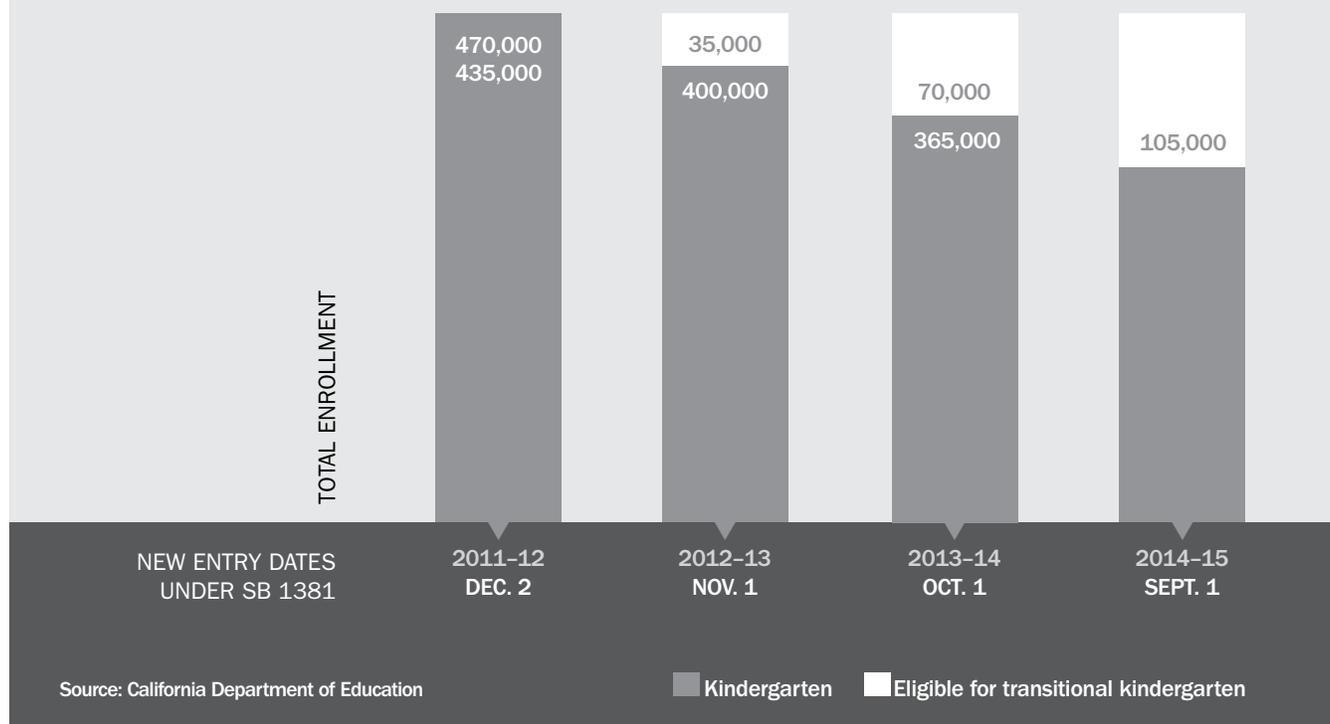
Beginning in 2012, SB 1381 moves up the kindergarten entry date by one month per year through 2014, although LEAs may immediately start offering transitional kindergarten to all children who turn five between September 2 and December 2. This flexibility should be especially helpful to small districts, which would benefit from having more children enroll in their TK classes during the implementation period and garner additional ADA.

#### Kindergarten entrance dates

School year	Minimum age for admittance to kindergarten in California	Notes
2010–11	December 2	
2011–12	December 2	
2012–13	November 1	
2013–14	October 1	
2014–15	September 1	September 1 becomes the new minimum age for each school year thereafter.

Source: Transitional kindergarten FAQs, California Department of Education

## Kindergarten programs



## Transitional kindergarten

The newly created TK uses a modified kindergarten curriculum that is age and developmentally appropriate (Education Code 48000(c)(3)). A TK class may be combined with a regular kindergarten class when there are not enough students to fill two separate classes in order to reduce costs and address staffing challenges.

## Funding

LEAs that receive state funding towards their revenue limits may claim ADA and eligible categorical funding for students enrolled in a transitional kindergarten classroom, just as they would if that student were enrolled in traditional kindergarten. LEAs may not claim apportionment for a child enrolled for more than two years in kindergarten or more than two years in a combination of

### Transitional kindergarten eligibility

School year	Eligibility for transitional kindergarten if a child will have their fifth birthday between:	Notes
2012-13	November 2 and December 2	
2013-14	October 2 and December 2	
2014-15	September 2 and December 2	September 2 and December 2 becomes the new eligibility window for the 2014-15 school year and each year thereafter.

Source: Transitional kindergarten FAQs, California Department of Education

transitional kindergarten and kindergarten classes. Basic aid school districts will not receive additional ADA funding to implement the transitional kindergarten program outside of any property tax dollars they currently receive.

The transitional kindergarten program does not provide any new funding for professional development or additional staffing. However, LEAs may use other available and allowable funding to invest in these new programs, such as Title I, Title III and Education Impact Aid.

### **Facilities**

Facility requirements will be the same as they are for kindergarten and classroom space may be shared concurrently between kindergarten and TK programs.

### **Standards and curriculum**

While standards for transitional kindergarten do not exist, LEAs are encouraged to consult the current California Kindergarten Content Standards, the California Preschool Learning Foundations, as well as the Common Core State Standards for English language arts and mathematics as they develop their local course of study.

LEAs have been granted flexibility under the Kindergarten Readiness Act to create and adopt curricula that meet the unique needs of their student populations. Education Code 48000(c)(3) requires that LEAs use a “modified kindergarten curriculum that is age and developmentally appropriate.” LEAs may draw from multiple resources to construct their adopted transitional kindergarten curriculum. Many LEAs from around the state already implementing early kindergarten programs are actively working on ways to share their best practices with the rest of the state. A list of resources is available at the end of this fact sheet.

### **English learners**

English learners in a transitional kindergarten program must have the same level of services that are provided to students in kindergarten. During enrollment, the LEA will provide parents with a Home Language Survey which will help school personnel determine whether the student should be given the California English Language Development Test. Under the TK program, LEAs have the option to select standards and curricula that best fit the needs of their unique student populations.

LEAs should also keep in mind that existing law, Education Code 48985 also applies to transitional kindergarten, which states “If 15 percent of the pupils enrolled in a public school that provides instruction in kindergarten or any of grades 1 to 12, inclusive, speak a single primary language

other than English...all notices, reports, statements, or records sent to the parent or guardian of any such pupil by the school or school district, in addition to being written in English, be written in the primary language, and may be responded to either in English or the primary language.”

### **Special education**

School districts must provide the same special education services for students in the transitional kindergarten as if they were in kindergarten based on the student’s Individualized Education Program (IEP). In addition, the requirement that school districts provide special education services for children three and older still stands. School districts currently don’t receive additional funding for the services provided to special education students between the ages of three and five. However, with the introduction of the TK program, school districts may now receive revenue limit funding, AB 602 funding, and any further categorical program funding for those eligible children and enrolled in the TK program.

### **Parents and guardians**

Parents and guardians may optionally enroll their age-eligible child in a transitional kindergarten program. However, once enrolled in TK, parents do not need to give permission for the student to continue to kindergarten.

Parents of students eligible for TK may ask the school board to allow their child to start directly in kindergarten. Conversely, if the board determines that it is in the best interest of the student to move into kindergarten before the normal grade promotion period, the LEA must provide the parent with information regarding the advantages and disadvantages of an early admittance. For additional questions about early admittance to either TK or kindergarten, please visit the California Department of Education website, “Kindergarten in California” <http://www.cde.ca.gov/ci/gs/em/kinderinfo.asp>

### **Other program requirements**

In most cases, state and federal requirements that apply to kindergarten will also apply to transitional kindergarten. Local bargaining agreements will likely apply in the same way, although LEAs should always consult with district legal counsel. For example, class size limits (33 maximum/31 average), teacher-student ratios, credentialing requirements, and *William’s* requirements are applicable.

As with kindergarten, transitional kindergarten programs require 36,000 instructional minutes per school year and the minimum length of instructional time that must be offered to constitute a school day is 180 minutes (Education Code 46117 and 46201).

Although not specifically addressed in statute, the CDE believes that the transitional kindergarten maximum school day shall be four hours (Education Code 46111) to match existing kindergarten requirements. However, an exception to this statute allows schools that have adopted an early primary program (extended-day kindergarten) to exceed four hours (Education Code 8973).

## Implications for governance teams

Transitional kindergarten creates an opening for LEAs to provide publically-funded early learning opportunities for their youngest students. Additionally, LEAs have flexibility to select and develop standards and curricula uniquely tailored to their student populations. Although the first year of implementation is a year away, there are many things LEAs can do now to prepare for the 2012–13 school year.

As soon as possible, governance teams should become familiar with the law and begin to discuss implementation strategies. It is very likely that district office staff have been following this issue for some time and are already thinking through the programmatic, facility and staffing details. Board members may request that district staff provide an overview of the Kindergarten Readiness Act to the governance team at an upcoming board meeting, and CSBA recommends that the presentation also allow for a discussion between the board and staff about opportunities, concerns, logistics, policies and procedures. The board may wish to direct staff to provide such information as content standards and curriculum suggestions; enrollment projections; facilities use; personnel implications; as well as any information they have gathered from incoming parents.

This fall, CSBA will develop a sample policy and administrative regulations related to the Kindergarten Readiness Act and Transitional Kindergarten Program. In order to prepare for the release of the sample, CSBA recommends that governance teams have discussions at the board level about policies related to student promotion from transitional kindergarten to kindergarten or first grade. The board may wish to seek parent input as they develop their policies in order to incorporate practices into district policy that are fair and appropriate for young children. It is recommended that LEAs adopt this policy as soon as it is released so it is in place by the LEAs' deadline for kindergarten enrollment.

## Resources

**California Department of Education,**  
*California Preschool Curriculum Framework, Volume I*  
<http://www.cde.ca.gov/sp/cd/re/documents/psframeworkkvoll.pdf>

**California Department of Education,**  
*California Preschool Learning Foundations, Volume I*  
<http://www.cde.ca.gov/sp/cd/re/psfoundations.asp>

**California Department of Education,**  
*Common Core State Standards Resources*  
<http://www.cde.ca.gov/ci/cc/>

**California Department of Education,**  
*Content Standards*  
<http://www.cde.ca.gov/be/st/ss/>

**California Department of Education,**  
*Curriculum Frameworks*  
<http://www.cde.ca.gov/be/st/fr/>

**California Department of Education,**  
*Kindergarten in California*  
<http://www.cde.ca.gov/ci/gs/em/kinderinfo.asp>

**California Department of Education,**  
*Preschool English Learners: Principles and Practices to Promote Language, Literacy, and Learning: A Resource Guide (2nd Edition)*  
<http://www.cde.ca.gov/sp/cd/re/documents/psenglearnersed2.pdf>

**California Department of Education,**  
*Transitional Kindergarten FAQs*  
<http://www.cde.ca.gov/ci/gs/em/kinderfaq.asp>

**Preschool California**  
*Transitional Kindergarten Library*  
A digital library developed by Preschool California in partnership with other stakeholders in an effort to bring local districts together and provides local school districts, administrators and other stakeholders a shared learning space to find documents, information and other resources regarding Transitional Kindergarten implementation.  
<http://www.preschoolcalifornia.org/tk-library/tk-library.html>