

# Transitional Kindergarten (TK) Implementation Progress and Opportunities

## MILESTONES

*What we've achieved together*

### Passage of Universal Transitional Kindergarten:

In the 2021-22 State Budget, California committed to providing universal access to TK, which means all California 4-year-olds will have access to a free preschool option by the 2025-26 school year.

**Lower student-adult ratios:** Starting in the 2022-23 school year, the student-teacher ratios in TK were lowered to 12:1. The Legislature has also committed to further lowering the ratio to 10:1 starting in the 2025-26 school year.

**Teacher requirements embedded in ECE:** By the 2025-26 school year, all lead TK teachers will be required to have a Multiple Subject Credential AND at least 24 units of Early Childhood Education and/or a Child Development Permit or PK-3 Specialist Credential.

**Before- and after-care access provided through the creation of the Expanded Learning Opportunities Program (ELOP):** ELOP provides before- and after-care opportunities for families enrolled in TK-Grade 6 and offers up to 9 hours of care a day. This is critical to supporting working families.



## ROADBLOCKS

*Some current challenges*

**Staffing challenges:** A teacher shortage due to both lingering impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic, coupled with low-compensation for educators, impacts school districts' ability to fully staff and expand classrooms.

**Professional development:** As the number of TK classrooms grows, it's important that teachers and aides have professional development to support them in teaching and working with younger children, as well as children who may speak a language other than English at home, or have special needs. Additionally, site administrators also need professional development on ECE and Child Development to ensure they have an understanding of developmentally appropriate practices and are fostering that environment on campus.

**Curriculum:** TK does not have a required and recommended curriculum and therefore alignment across preschool and TK programs can vary greatly.

**Developmentally appropriate assessments:** Since TK originally served older children with birthdays between September 2 and December 2, as TK is expanding to include younger children, there are some requirements and practices that have been implemented in TK that are not developmentally appropriate for 4-year-olds.

**Facilities:** As school districts work to expand TK, they also need to ensure that they have the proper facilities needed to support serving younger students with different needs than older elementary school students. This means building new classrooms and/or retrofitting existing classrooms and including small and easily accessible toilets to support young learners who may still be acclimating to toilet training.

**State Budget deficit:** California is currently experiencing a budget deficit that is leading to program cuts across sectors and may resume for several years. Additional funding needed to support TK implementation quality elements, such as 10:1 ratios, professional development, and compensation, may not be available for several years.

## SOLUTIONS

*Some priorities for action*

**Staffing solutions:** Secure funding in the state budget to support lowering the student-teacher ratios to 10:1.

**Professional development solutions:** Require school districts to provide annual professional development to teachers, aides, and site school leadership to ensure that all educators are grounded in Early Childhood Development and best practices that create a developmentally appropriate environment for 4-year-olds and support Dual Language Learners.

**Curriculum solutions:** California recently released the new Preschool TK Learning Foundations and it is the intent of the Legislature that school districts align their TK programs to these Learning Foundations. We need to ensure school districts adopt, receive and provide training and professional development to educators on the new Preschool TK Learning Foundations to ensure more alignment across TK programs.

**Developmentally appropriate assessment solutions:** With [AB 2268](#) (Muratsuchi) signed into law in June 2024 to exempt TK students from completing the English Language Proficiency Assessment for California (ELPAC), the next step is identifying and supporting 4-year-old Dual Language Learners into TK classrooms.

**Facilities solutions:** To support school districts with TK facilities, TK Facilities were included in the K-12 Facilities Bond which will be voted on in the general election this November 2024.

**Working towards full-day care:** Address stability of ELOP and strengthen implementation efforts to ensure that school districts are providing access to high-quality after-school programs that are developmentally appropriate for 4-year-olds. Develop partnerships between LEAs and other community-based programs to provide before- and after-care.