

# **Transitional Kindergarten: An introduction and Frequently Asked Questions**

Recently a new bill passed the legislature which changed the kindergarten start date (beginning in the 2012-2013 school year) and created Transitional Kindergarten. The following “Frequently Asked Questions” as well as several web sites have been created to help the early childhood field learn more about this new program. These are just some of the questions and answers available. Please see the links to relevant web sites at the end of the document for more detailed information.

## **Introduction:**

California is one of just four states (along with Connecticut, Michigan and Vermont) with a kindergarten cut-off date later than December 1st. In most states, children must turn five by September 1st in order to start kindergarten. California allows children as young as four years and nine months to start kindergarten as long as the child turns five by December 2nd.

Research indicates that beginning kindergarten at an older age improves children’s social and academic development. A 2005 study by the Rand Corporation found a “significant boost” to test scores, especially for children from low-income families. Based on these benefits, California’s non-partisan Legislative Analyst’s Office, the California Performance Review, and the Governor’s Committee on Education Excellence have each called for an earlier kindergarten cut-off date.

Senate Bill 1381 (Simitian) Kindergarten Entry Age: This bill, signed into law in 2010, changes the kindergarten entry-age in California from five years old by December 2nd to five years old by September 1st. For those “young fives” (i.e., children turning five from September 2 – December 2) whose kindergarten is delayed, the bill creates a transitional kindergarten. The new age requirement would be phased-in over three years beginning in the 2012-13 school year.

Transitional kindergarten means the first year of a two year kindergarten program that uses a modified kindergarten curriculum that is age and developmentally appropriate.

Transitional kindergarten will improve the pre-first-grade preparation for those fall-birthday children who would otherwise be the youngest in their class. This is especially important for low-income and English language learner children, who often receive less academic preparation. Transitional kindergarten will provide a two-year preparation for first grade while reducing the likelihood of retention after a year of traditional kindergarten.

## **Frequently Asked Questions:**

### **1. What is the Kindergarten Readiness Act of 2010?**

Senate Bill (SB) 1381 amended California Education Code to change the required birthday for admission to kindergarten and first grade and established a transitional kindergarten program beginning in the 2012–2013 school year.

### **2. What is the minimum age for admittance to kindergarten in California?**

A child shall be admitted to a kindergarten maintained by the school district at the beginning of a school year, or at a later time in the same year if the child will have his or her fifth birthday on or before one of the following dates:

For the 2010–11 school year the date is December 2  
For the 2011–12 school year the date is December 2  
For the 2012–13 school year the date is November 1  
For the 2013–14 school year the date is October 1  
For the 2014–15 school year and each school year thereafter the date is September 1.

**3. What is transitional kindergarten?**

A transitional kindergarten is the first year of a two-year kindergarten program that uses a modified kindergarten curriculum that is age and developmentally appropriate. Pursuant to law, a child is eligible for transitional kindergarten if a child will have his or her fifth birthday between:

For the 2012–13 school year November 2 and December 2  
For the 2013–14 school year October 2 and December 2  
For the 2014–15 school year and each school year thereafter September 2 and December 2.

**4. Will transitional kindergarten continue after 2014?**

Yes.

**5. Must children attend transitional kindergarten or kindergarten?**

Parents and guardians are currently not required to enroll children in transitional kindergarten or kindergarten.

**6. Is a district required to offer transitional kindergarten and kindergarten programs?**

Each elementary or unified school district must offer transitional kindergarten and kindergarten classes for all children eligible to attend.

**7. Can transitional kindergarten and kindergarten students be enrolled in the same classrooms?**

Although the intent of the law is to provide separate and unique experiences for transitional kindergarten and kindergarten students, districts have flexibility to determine how best to meet the curricular needs of each child.

**8. How long is the transitional kindergarten day?**

Pursuant to law, a transitional kindergarten shall not be construed as a new program or higher level of service. By statute, the maximum school day in kindergarten is four hours. An exception to this statute allows schools that have adopted an early primary program (extended-day kindergarten) to exceed four hours.

**9. Is there a parental permission form to continue a child from transitional kindergarten into kindergarten?**

Children enrolled in transitional kindergarten do not need a signed parental permission form to continue in kindergarten.

**10. Are standards available for transitional kindergarten?**

While recommended standards at all grade levels are not mandatory but voluntary. Local Education Agencies will make the decision of what standards or learning foundations are to be part of the local course of study. For guidance in creating a transitional kindergarten course, local education agencies may look at California's Preschool Learning Foundations (<http://www.cde.ca.gov/sp/cd/re/psfoundations.asp>) California Academic Content Standards (<http://www.cde.ca.gov/be/st/ss/>), and the Common Core

State Standards for English Language Art and Mathematics  
(<http://www.cde.ca.gov/ci/cc/>).

**11. What is the curriculum for transitional kindergarten?**

California law defines transitional kindergarten as “the first year of a two-year kindergarten program that uses a modified kindergarten curriculum that is age and developmentally appropriate.” While no state curriculum is mandated, local education agencies must modify the local course of study in order to provide age and developmentally appropriate curriculum for transitional kindergarten.

**12. How will the needs of English learners be addressed in transitional kindergarten?**

Local educational agencies will provide a Home Language Survey to be completed by the parent or guardian which will aid the school in determining whether or not the student should be administered the California English Language Development Test (CELDT). Students who are English learners in a transitional kindergarten will have the same level of services as those in kindergarten.

**13. How will the needs of parents of English learners be addressed in transitional kindergarten?**

California law requires that “all notices, reports, statements, or records sent to the parent or guardian of any such pupil by the school or school district shall, in addition to being written in English, be written in the primary language, and maybe responded to either in English or the primary language.” This applies to parents of English learners in transitional kindergarten.

**14. Can students who are age eligible for kindergarten attend transitional kindergarten?**

The Kindergarten Readiness Act of 2010 does not change the established procedures of early admittance for students who do not meet the age eligibility requirement.

**15. What type of facility should be used for transitional kindergarten?**

Facility requirements will be the same as they presently are for kindergarten.

**16. Will transitional kindergarten have the same statutory class size limits as regular kindergarten (33 maximum/31 average)? What about Class Size Reduction for transitional kindergarten?**

The same requirements that apply to kindergarten also apply to transitional kindergarten.

**17. What is the teacher-student ratio for transitional kindergarten?**

This is a local district decision and will most likely be impacted by budget and contract agreements.

**18. Does the transitional kindergarten teacher need a teaching credential?**

The teacher must be properly credentialed as is currently required of kindergarten teachers.

**19. Does the Kindergarten Readiness Act of 2010 provide funding for any other staffing?**

No, although other available funding may be used.

**20. Does the Kindergarten Readiness Act of 2010 provide funding for professional development?**

No, although other available funding may be used.

**Anticipated Local Impact:**

For many providers, both center based and family child care, Transitional Kindergarten may have no impact at all. The children to be enrolled in Transitional Kindergarten are children who would have left their child care program and moved on to “regular” kindergarten. There may be some instances where a parent may decide to keep their child with their current child development center or family child care home rather than enroll them in Transitional Kindergarten. In this case, center based programs and family child care providers could have children longer and will need to anticipate the needs of older children. Additionally, children who enroll in a transitional kindergarten program may need after school care thus, remaining with their current provider, but in an “after school” arrangement.

The development phase of transitional kindergarten provides the opportunity for the early childhood field to link with the K-12 system and form lasting relationships which will positively impact preschool/child care to kindergarten transition.

For more information please feel free to contact:

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Additional resources can be found at:

<http://www.preschoolcalifornia.org/tk-library/tk-library.html>

<http://ci.kern.org/kctk/>

[www.tkcalifornia.org](http://www.tkcalifornia.org)

[www.fcoe.org/transitionalkindergarten](http://www.fcoe.org/transitionalkindergarten)

<http://ckanet.org>

<http://www.cde.ca.gov/ci/g/em/kinderfaq.asp>