



DEVELOPMENTALLY APPROPRIATE TRANSITIONAL KINDERGARTEN: A POSITION PAPER 2011

Introduction

The Alameda County Child Care Planning Council, funded by the Department of Education, advises and makes recommendations to policymakers to ensure that all children and families have access to quality child care and early education. The vision of the Alameda County Child Care Planning Council is to be a guiding force for *excellence in the care and education of all children* and to be regularly sought out for our expertise by local, state and national decision makers.

Background

The Kindergarten Readiness Act of 2010 (Senate Bill 1381) amended California Education Code (Section 46300, 48000, and 48010) to change the required birthday for admission to kindergarten from December 2 to September 1 by the 2014-2015 school year. This date change will be phased in over three years, beginning in 2012-2013:

- 2012-2013 school year – November 1
- 2013-2014 school year – October 1
- 2014-2015 school year* - September 1

**and each school year thereafter*

The Kindergarten Readiness Act establishes a Transitional Kindergarten (TK) program beginning in the 2012–2013 school year. A Transitional Kindergarten is defined as “the first year of a two-year kindergarten program that uses a modified kindergarten curriculum that is age and developmentally appropriate.” According to the law (EC 48000[c]), 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



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Pursuant to California Education Code, districts must adhere to the following:

- Each elementary or unified school district must offer transitional kindergarten and kindergarten classes for all children eligible to attend.
- Enrollment in transitional kindergarten or kindergarten is voluntary.
- In order to claim apportionment for transitional kindergarten, districts must use a modified kindergarten curriculum that is age and developmentally appropriate.
- The number of required instructional minutes for transitional kindergarten is 36,000 minutes per year. The minimum length of instructional time that must be offered to constitute a school day is 180 minutes.

According to the California Department of Education:

- Facility requirements for transitional kindergarten classes will be the same as they presently are for kindergarten.
- Class size limits for transitional kindergarten will be the same as regular kindergarten
- Districts have flexibility to allow transitional kindergarten and kindergarten students to be enrolled in the same classrooms.
- Teacher-student ratio for transitional kindergarten is a local district decision most likely be impacted by budget and contract agreements.
- The transitional kindergarten teacher must be a properly credentialed teacher.
- Local Education Agencies will make the decision of what standards or learning foundations are to be part of the local course of study.
- The Kindergarten Readiness Act of 2010 does not provide funding for any other staffing.
- The Kindergarten Readiness Act of 2010 does not provide funding for professional development.



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The Child Care Planning Council of Alameda County applauds the California Department of Education emphasizing that local education agencies must “provide age and developmentally appropriate curriculum.” We view this as an exciting opportunity to partner with school districts, administrators and teachers in ensuring that the new Transitional Kindergarten programs are child-centered, developmentally appropriately and aligned with the California Preschool Learning Foundations.

POSITION

The research is sound and compelling. Success in school is contingent upon five key areas of their early development and learning: Cognition and General Knowledge Skills, Emotional Well-Being and Social Competence, Health & Physical Development, Approaches to Learning and Communicative Skills (National Education Goals Panel, 1997). Local studies have demonstrated that participation in preschool and transitional programs supportive in the five areas results in a higher level of school readiness at Kindergarten entry than those without a preschool experience. (Applied Survey Research, *Kindergarten Readiness in Alameda County*, 2008, 2009, 2010)

Transitional Kindergarten provides an opportunity to build a bridge from preschool to K-12 education for more than 120,000 of California’s youngest kindergarteners each year (www.preschoolcalifornia.org, 2011). To have a rich early educational experience in the Transitional Kindergarten classroom with strong measurable academic outcomes for students, it is our position that practitioners in the early care and education field and educators in the K-12 system work together during planning and implementation phases. Programs must integrate developmentally appropriate practices and social/emotional support with strong instructional pedagogy so that our children can receive a quality Transitional Kindergarten experience and ultimately enter Kindergarten ready to succeed.



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In planning for Transitional Kindergarten in our county, the Alameda County Child Care Planning Council respectfully makes the following recommendations:

- Alameda County Office of Education hire a Transitional Kindergarten specialist/coordinator
- Alameda County Office of Education host a Transitional Kindergarten Forum by early spring 2012. Forum will address Transitional Kindergarten best practices, planning strategies and updates from local school districts.
- Identify opportunities for joint professional development for Early Care and Education, Transitional Kindergarten and Kindergarten teachers
- Assure TK teachers have education and experience in teaching four and five year olds in a developmentally appropriate setting
- Commit to utilizing the California Preschool Learning Foundations as a framework for a developmentally appropriate Transitional Kindergarten curriculum and communicate such to educators, parents and partners
- Develop accessible parent friendly materials and conduct outreach to TK and K eligible families.
- Identify and explore potential barriers of TK for families (i.e. transportation if TK is not located in neighborhood, after school care options if TK is part-day program)
- Identify and explore potential issues for Early Care and Education community, school districts and families related to enrollment options, funding, eligibility
- Child Development Division, CDE and Head Start address impact of TK and K eligibility on State preschool and Head Start funding and eligibility.
- The Alameda County Child Care Planning Council make available to local school districts and to the Alameda County Office of Education its knowledge and expertise on developmentally appropriate practices.

CONCLUSION



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Most children whose birthdays occur in the late summer and fall months are at a disadvantage when entering kindergarten compared to their five-year-old peers. The Alameda County Child Care Planning Council supports The Kindergarten Readiness Act, which phases in the change of the birth date requirement for children entering kindergarten over a three year period from the current December 1 date to September 1 by the 2014-2015 school year.

Transitional kindergarten provides an opportunity to build a bridge from preschool to kindergarten for early kindergarteners, **especially if the transitional kindergarten program “provides age and developmentally appropriate curriculum,” as stipulated by California Education Code.** We also recognize that for some children this may be their first formal early learning environment. As planning and development continue on this important endeavor of developing quality transitional kindergarten programs in the County, the Alameda County Child Care Planning Council looks forward to working closely with local school districts, Early Care and Education providers and community partners.