

Transitional Kindergarten: Getting Kids Ready for Success in School



California's children begin kindergarten at a younger age than kids in almost any other state, often before they have the maturity and the social, early literacy and pre-math skills they need to meet the challenges of kindergarten. California is only one of four states that set a cutoff date as late as Dec. 1, yet we have some of the highest standards for what we expect our children to learn in our kindergarten classrooms. Furthermore, the children with the largest school readiness gaps, including low-income 4 year olds, are the least likely to have access to high-quality pre-k that prepares them to succeed in kindergarten. Just 13 percent of low-income children attend high-quality pre-k, according to research by the RAND Corporation.

Preparing Children for Success in Kindergarten

Giving our children a year of transitional kindergarten would allow them to mature socially, emotionally, cognitively and physically, and help them develop the skills they need to succeed in the year before kindergarten. Transitional kindergarten provides 4 year olds who have birthdays between September and December, and are currently eligible for kindergarten, with a year of early education.

Benefits for Our Children and Communities

Children, families and schools all benefit from transitional kindergarten. Research shows high-quality early childhood education can narrow the achievement gap and offers one of the highest returns of any public investment – more than \$7 for every dollar spent. Additionally, children who attend high-quality early learning programs are less likely to drop out of high school, be held back a grade or placed in special education, and more likely to score better on reading and math achievement tests.



Long Beach Unified School District

In Garfield Elementary School's Preppy K classroom, teacher Nancy Dixon works with 20 children in small groups to write stories about their favorite foods, encouraging them to spell out each word in their stories based on the sounds of each alphabet letter. Through activities like these, the children in Ms. Dixon's class are learning many new academic, social and emotional skills that will prepare them for future academic success.

The Preppy K class at Garfield Elementary School opened in 2008 as part of a pilot program through the Long Beach Unified School District. In just two years, Garfield's principal, Donna McKeehan has received very positive feedback from parents about their children's development, and the school's kindergarten teachers appreciate that many of the "preppies" come into their classrooms focused and ready to learn. One of last year's Preppy K students, Emily, graduated from kindergarten this year as one of the top students in her class, and her teachers are very proud of her for her extraordinary academic and social skills.

Transitional kindergarten prepares our children to succeed in kindergarten and beyond, setting them on a path to develop the skills they need to be college and career ready, building a brighter future for California.

Visit www.preschoolcalifornia.org/SB1381



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