



FAQ

Transitional Kindergarten

An informational fact sheet for Sonoma County

What is the Kindergarten Readiness Act?

The Kindergarten Readiness Act of 2010 (Senate Bill 1381) changes the requirements for kindergarten entry from five years old on December 2 to five years old on September 1, so that all children enter kindergarten at age 5. The new law amends the state Education Code relating to kindergarten to create “transitional kindergarten,” the first year of a two-year kindergarten experience for four-year-olds with fall birthdays.

Each school district will develop its own policies and procedures to implement Transitional Kindergarten over the next three years. Parents should contact their school or district office for specific information about Transitional Kindergarten classes for children with fall birthdays.



When does the new law go into effect?

The program may be phased in over three years and must be fully implemented by 2014.

- In 2012-13, children who have their fifth birthday between November 2 and December 2 will be admitted to a Transitional Kindergarten program maintained by their local school district.
- By 2013-14, children who have their fifth birthday between October 2 and December 2 will be admitted to the Transitional Kindergarten program.
- By 2014-15 and each school year thereafter, children who have their fifth birthday between September 2 and December 2 will be admitted to the Transitional Kindergarten program.

What is Transitional Kindergarten?

Transitional Kindergarten is the first year of a two-year kindergarten experience for those children born between September and December. Classes will offer children a developmentally appropriate curriculum aligned with the kindergarten standards and taught by credentialed teachers from the K-12 system. The program will give children born between September and December an additional year of preparation, so that they can enter kindergarten with the academic, social, and emotional skills they need for success. Transitional Kindergarten does not replicate preschool or kindergarten; it is a hybrid.



If a student has a fall birthday, is he or she obligated to be enrolled in Transitional Kindergarten? Is this a mandatory program?

No. Transitional Kindergarten will be voluntary for all children. To provide flexibility for children with late birthdays who are ready for kindergarten, the legislation protects the provision in existing law that allows children born after September 1 to be admitted to kindergarten on a case-by-case basis in accordance with district policies and assessment criteria.

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Will this mean increased costs for schools?

Funding for children with fall birthdays will be redirected to the Transitional Kindergarten program, which will employ existing teachers and use current classroom facilities. Schools may have minimal additional expenses at the outset of the program as they create a developmentally appropriate learning environment and make optional purchases of supplemental curriculum materials.



What about smaller school districts that have only a few children in a Transitional Kindergarten class?

Sonoma County has many small, single-school districts. Most of these small districts will likely choose to have combination Transitional Kindergarten/ Kindergarten classes that provide instruction and scheduling in ways that meet the needs of mixed-age groups.

What is the difference between Transitional Kindergarten and preschool?

Transitional Kindergarten must be aligned with California’s kindergarten standards and offer children a developmentally appropriate curriculum. It must be taught by credentialed teachers from the K-12 system. In contrast, the California State Preschool Program is aligned with California’s Preschool Learning Foundations and taught by individuals who have Child Development Teacher Permits from the Commission on Teacher Credentialing. Districts will receive per-pupil funding for children in Transitional Kindergarten, as is the case for all students in K-12 public education.



What is the difference between *Transitional Kindergarten* and *traditional kindergarten*?

Transitional Kindergarten provides the youngest kindergartners with a readiness year that is developmentally appropriate and will better prepare them for success once they enter traditional kindergarten. The Transitional Kindergarten environment includes more opportunities for social-emotional development, fine- and gross-motor activities, and ongoing language development. This is accomplished through dramatic play, small group instruction, and teaching using hands-on activities.



What does the research say?

Research shows that beginning kindergarten at an older age improves children’s social and academic development and provides a significant boost to their test scores, especially for children from poverty. Children are also more likely to attend college and earn higher wages, according to a Public Policy Institute of California review of 14 recent studies. By ensuring that more children are prepared for school, Transitional Kindergarten gives students the gift of time. It will also generate savings to our education system through reduced special education and grade retention costs.