

FACT SHEET

AB 22: Universal Transitional Kindergarten

Introduced by Assemblymembers McCarty, Bonta, Burke, Carrillo, Chiu, Friedman, E. Garcia, Gonzalez, Reyes, Luz Rivas, Robert Rivas, Rubio, Santiago, Ting, and Wicks
Senators Dodd, Gonzalez, Limón, Rubio

Co-Sponsors:

California School Employees Association
Early Edge California
Kidango
San Diego Unified School District

Staff Contact: Sierra Cook, (916) 319-2007

As Introduced: 12/7/2020

SUMMARY

Research shows that access to high quality early learning opportunities improves children's social-emotional development, school readiness, and long-term academic achievement. However, many families lack access to high quality pre-K programs, and too many California children enter kindergarten unprepared for school and never catch up.

AB 22 will extend universal access to full-day transitional kindergarten (TK) programs to all four-year-olds statewide at no cost to families, while also implementing TK quality improvements to address the social-emotional and early academic development of California's youngest learners. By ensuring that each child in California has access to a year of high-quality pre-K, this bill sets students up for success in kindergarten and beyond.

Universal Transitional Kindergarten is a crucial piece of a larger package of 2021 Early Childhood Education (ECE) legislation that will strengthen California's ECE system to better meet the needs of working families, support childcare providers, and most importantly ensure that every child in California is given a strong start to a successful future.

BACKGROUND

Ten years ago, the Legislature approved the "Kindergarten Readiness Act," which established TK to serve and educate four-year-olds within the public K-12 system. However, only 25% of four-year-olds (those with birthdays falling between September and December) are eligible to enroll in TK. The remaining 75% of four-year-olds are missing out on this opportunity for an additional year of high quality public education.

A study by the American Institute of Research found that TK significantly improves kindergarten readiness, putting children ahead of their non-TK peers by up to six months in some academic skills. TK gives students an advantage in literacy, language, math, and problem solving skills compared to non-TK students – even those with other preschool experiences.

The benefits of TK are most significant for disadvantaged students: low-income children and English learners show the greatest learning improvements at the end of TK. These findings demonstrate that high-quality TK can be a powerful tool for narrowing opportunity and achievement gaps, and setting California's neediest students on a path to success.

With historic rates of declining enrollment in most school districts, California has an opportunity to leverage existing school infrastructure for preventing the achievement gap and addressing the needs of working families. AB 22 builds upon and strengthens California's existing TK law by phasing in full-day, universal TK for *all* four-year-olds while also implementing quality improvements including lower adult-to-student ratios and developmentally appropriate learning expectations.

This bill gives families an additional option to ensure their children enter kindergarten with the maturity, confidence and skills they need to excel.

ECE PACKAGE

- Universal Transitional Kindergarten (AB 22, Asm. McCarty)
- California Early Learning and Care Program (Senator Limón, SB 50)
- Tiered Funding Rate Reform (legislation and budget action to follow)
- Preschool Expulsion Ban (legislation to follow)
- Preschool and Childcare Family Fees (AB 92, Asm. Reyes)
- Mandatory Kindergarten (Senator Rubio, SB 70)