

Transitional Kindergarten (TK) Implementation Progress and Opportunities

Updated Fall 2026



MILESTONES

What we've achieved together

Full Implementation of Universal Transitional Kindergarten: The 2025-26 school year was the first full year of a free school-based preschool option for all children who are four years old by September 1.

10:1 Student-Adult Ratios: In the 2025-26 school year student-adult ratios were lowered from 12:1 to 10:1.

Bilingual Teacher Pipeline: Originating through [AB 2325](#), the 2026-27 budget included a \$10 million investment to establish the Pathways to Bilingual Teaching Program, which will strengthen California's bilingual educator workforce and expand access to high-quality multilingual education beginning in TK.

Developmentally Appropriate Multilingual Learner (ML) Screening Tools: With the passage of [AB 2268](#) and the 2025-26 budget, the legislature has committed to ensuring that children in TK are screened for ML status and needed supports in a way that is developmentally appropriate. Selected [screening tools](#) will be field tested in 2027-28, with full implementation in 2028-29.

Teacher Requirements Grounded in Child Development: Beginning in the 2025-26 school year, all lead TK teachers were required to hold a valid teaching credential and meet one of the following: at least 24 units of Early Childhood Education/Child Development, a Child Development Teacher Permit, or comparable LEA-approved professional experience.

Creation and Increased Funding to Before- and After-care Access Provided by the Expanded Learning Opportunities Program (ELOP). Created in 2021, the ELOP provides before- and after-care opportunities for families enrolled in TK-Grade 6 and offers up to 9 hours of care a day, which is critical to supporting working families. As of the 2026-27 state budget, local educational agencies with less than 55 percent of total unduplicated pupils will receive at least \$1,800 per pupil.

Developmentally Appropriate Curriculum and Instruction: The 2026-27 state budget clarified that TK curriculum and instruction must be developmentally appropriate and address the developmental domains in the Preschool/TK Learning Foundations.

ROADBLOCKS

Some current challenges

Dual Language Programs: Dual language programs are essential for supporting both home language and English development. They strengthen cognitive skills such as problem-solving and creativity, and research shows that students in these programs often outperform their monolingual peers. Despite these benefits, access to bilingual TK programs remains [limited](#).

Staffing Challenges: Districts continue to face challenges in attracting and retaining qualified TK educators, including instructional aids.

Professional Development: Many school districts have found success with delivering TK, but still struggle to provide training tailored to teaching and working with younger children, especially those who are learning English or have special needs.

Curriculum: TK does not have a required and recommended curriculum and therefore alignment across preschool and TK programs can vary greatly. Every child should have access to high-quality TK programs that do not vary based on where a child lives and goes to school.

Facilities: As school districts work to implement universal TK, they also need to ensure that they have the proper facilities needed to support serving younger students with different needs than older elementary school students. This means building new classrooms and/or retrofitting existing classrooms and including small and easily accessible toilets to support young learners who may still be acclimating to toilet training.

Family Awareness and Engagement: Even with the full implementation of TK, some families remain unaware of TK eligibility or are choosing not to enroll their child in TK for various reasons.

SOLUTIONS

Some priorities for action

Dual Language Programs: California can expand the availability of dual language programs by: 1. Providing stipends to educators to earn a Bilingual Authorization, funding ongoing professional development, and recruiting bilingual educators from local communities, 2. Offering financial incentives for LEAs to establish dual language programs and funding start-up costs, in addition to appropriate resources and materials in languages other than English so every child can receive the benefits of multilingualism.

Staffing: TK instructional aides are difficult to recruit and retain. The state should continue to invest in recruitment, compensation, and professional pathways for the TK workforce.

Professional Development: In addition to teachers and aides, school site leaders should be required to complete annual professional development grounded in Early Childhood Development. This ensures that school leaders are equipped with the tools to create developmentally appropriate environments for four-year-olds and support Dual Language Learners.

Curriculum: California released the Preschool TK Learning Foundations (PTKLF) in 2024, with the intent of having school districts align their TK programs with PTKLF. Since July 2025, state preschool programs have been required to use the PTKLF, but TK still does not have such a requirement. We need to ensure school districts adopt, receive and provide training to educators on the PTKLF to ensure more alignment across TK programs.

Facilities: In November 2024, California passed Proposition 2, the K-12 Facilities Bond Act, a \$10 billion school facilities bond that makes TK and district-run preschool facilities eligible for state construction and modernization funding. The state should build on this by continuing to invest in TK facilities designed for four-year-olds to ensure every school and classroom are meeting the needs of TK students.

Family Awareness and Engagement: The State and LEAs should consider effective communication campaigns to ensure that every family with a 4-year-old or soon-to-be 4-year-old understands their enrollment eligibility, the benefits of enrolling in TK, and what they need to do to enroll.