

## Getting Ready for Transitional Kindergarten and Kindergarten

### Transitional Kindergarten and Kindergarten is a Wonderful, New Adventure!

Starting transitional kindergarten (TK) and/or kindergarten is an exciting adventure for children and families. It is a new opportunity for learning, developing friendships, building confidence and independence.

You can help your child make a smooth transition to TK or kindergarten by becoming informed. When you are informed, you are better able to tell your child what to expect, express confidence in your child and provide calm reassurance. It is typical for both children and parents to feel anxious about starting TK or kindergarten.

We hope this booklet will provide you with key information that will help you and your child transition smoothly to TK or kindergarten.

Transitional Kindergarten (TK) is the first year in a two-year Kindergarten program. It will help prepare children to succeed in school, while also giving them an opportunity to meet new friends and provide care while parents work. TK teachers are required to take courses in early childhood development and TK classes are required to have lower ratios and class sizes. Children age 4 by September 1 are eligible to attend TK. Contact your school district to see if your child is eligible. TK is based on a developmentally appropriate, play-based curriculum that allows children to be active and have fun while learning important skills for reading, writing, mathematics, and social-emotional skills such as learning to listen to directions and take turns.

#### *Make the transition a smooth one.*

Going to a new school means changes in daily routines. You can take steps to reduce any stress you or your child may feel... and add to the fun!

#### Where will my child go to school?

There are a number of kindergarten or TK options for you to consider. Your child could attend your neighborhood school, a charter school, private school or you can choose to home school. You are encouraged to visit the schools you're interested in. Call in December to find out when they will be registering children for transitional kindergarten and kindergarten. To learn more about district boundaries, visit the following link [www.hcoe.org](http://www.hcoe.org)

#### *Your child can go to a school in your neighborhood*

Most of the time, your child will attend the school in the neighborhood where you live. Every district has boundaries set up for each school. Some districts have more than one school to choose from, including charter school options.

### *Your child could go to a charter school*

Charter schools provide an alternative public school option. They may have a theme or use other teaching methods. Some charters offer programs that will allow your child to learn at home.

### *Your child could attend a private school or you could teach your child at home*

Look online for locations and phone numbers of private schools in your community. In California, teaching your child at home is an option if you are a credentialed teacher or if you file a Private School Affidavit with the California Department of Education stating that you will meet all state requirements for private schools. For more information, contact the California department of education at 916-319-0800. The Private School Affidavit is online at [www.cde.ca.gov/sp/ps](http://www.cde.ca.gov/sp/ps).

## Admission requirements

### *School Registration*

Register your child at your local school district office. Call your local school for registration information, to find out when registration begins and orientation events and procedures. Don't put this off, register as early as possible!

### *Age*

If your child turns five before September 2nd of this year, your child is eligible for kindergarten. Younger children who turn 4 by September 1 can enroll in Transitional Kindergarten.

### *Immunizations*

State law requires either documented proof of immunizations or an exemption at the time of registration. No child will be placed in a class until required immunizations or exemptions are complete. The public health department can assist you.

### *Physical Examination*

All students are required to have a physical exam before entry into first grade. However, many school districts **strongly recommend** that this examination occur within 6 months of entry into TK or kindergarten. Please make arrangements for a physical exam as soon as possible and return the completed form to the school office promptly. The school can help you find a medical resource, if necessary.

### *Dental Examination*

Students in their first year in public school must submit proof of an oral health assessment. The assessments must be performed by a licensed or registered dental health professional, and proof of assessment is due by May 31.

### Successful learners attend school regularly.

Children are expected to attend school unless they have an excused absence.

### What can I do at home to prepare my child for transitional kindergarten and kindergarten?

Before the first day of school:

- Visit the teacher, classroom and playground with your child.
- Help your child find the restrooms at school.
- Make sure your child understands how they will get to and from school.
- Find out where your child will keep personal belongings such as coat and lunch box.
- Check with your child's school or teacher about snack and lunch procedures.
- A week or more before school starts, begin waking your child up at their new morning wake up time.
- Set aside a place at home for your child to keep a backpack, books, school work and writing materials. This can be as simple as a dresser drawer, a box or a desk.
- If you suspect your child will have a difficult time separating from you on the first day, talk with your child's teacher and make a plan.
- Label personal belongings by writing your child's name on the inside tags of sweaters, coats, backpack and on the inside of their lunch box.
- If you need to send money to school with your child, put it in an envelope and label it with your child's name and the purpose (i.e., lunch, milk, book order).

Remember to give your child lots of time to play. It's how children learn best.

### *Set a consistent school schedule for your child*

- Lay out clothes, make lunch, check backpack the night before.
- Go to bed early (plan on 10-12 hours of sleep for your child).
- Get an early start.
- Eat a good breakfast.
- Arrive at school on time.
- Take time to give your child a hug and wish your child a good day.

Avoid a stressful start to the day. Both you and your child need to adjust to early bedtimes and rising times. Help your child have a great start!

## Is my child “ready”?

This is an exciting time of year... preparing your child for school! As your child’s first and most important teacher, your support for your child and their upcoming school experience is critical. Being “ready” includes many areas of your child’s development: physical, emotional, social, language and general knowledge development. Research shows that children grow and learn at different rates and that they learn best when actively involved.

The following list is a general guideline of school readiness skills based on the Preschool Learning Foundations that will help your child succeed in TK or kindergarten. At [lccpc.hcoe.org](http://lccpc.hcoe.org) you will find a three month summer calendar of activities you can use with your child to reinforce their readiness skills. Most children grow a great deal the summer before going to TK and kindergarten. If you have concerns about whether your child is really ready, you should contact the school.

### *Physical Development Skills*

Your child is making an attempt to:

- Jump with two feet, hop or balance on one foot.
- Kick a ball.
- Catch a ball with two hands.
- Draw and color beyond scribbling.
- Cut on a line with scissors.
- Zip, button and snap.
- Manage own clothing and toileting.

Make time to have your child actively play and exercise. Visit the park and encourage your child to run, jump and climb. Play with balls of different sizes. Support your child’s fine motor development by providing lots of opportunities to strengthen their hands and fingers. Mold with playdough, draw with paint, crayons and pens and cut up magazines with child safe scissors.

### *Social and Emotional Skills*

Your child is working on:

- Feeling comfortable in new situations and has a positive approach to new experiences and learning; is curious and excited about school.
- Sharing and taking turns; using good manners.
- Participating in group activities, learning to resolve conflicts.
- Cooperating with family, friends and teachers.
- Separating from parents/guardians.
- Talking about their feelings.
- Concentrating on activities and paying attention for at least 10 minutes.

Encourage your child to share their ideas, talk about their feelings and solve their problems. Being ready for school means knowing how to be a part of a group and follow the routine. Provide opportunities for your child to work cooperatively with other children and adults. Preschool, playgroups and play dates are wonderful environments for children to practice these skills.

### *Early Math Skills*

Here are some early math skills your child may be working on:

- Knows their age.
- Counts to at least 10.
- Counts at least 5 items, pointing to each one.
- Begins to recognize and name up to 5 numerals.
- Understands that numbers mean quantity (I want 2 toys).
- Sorts and classifies items (sorts cars, foods); compares groups, understanding which group has more, fewer, or the same as.
- Solves simple addition and subtraction problems with small numbers of objects (if you have 2 crackers and you eat 1, how many are left?).
- Identifies shapes (circle, square, rectangle, triangle).

Math is everywhere around us. Help your child learn to count by counting things in their environment and talking about numbers and quantity. Have your child sort their toys when they clean up or help sort laundry or silverware. Point out the names of shapes in the environment as you a walk or drive through town.

### *Early Reading Skills*

Here are some ways to encourage early reading skills:

Help your child learn to enjoy books. Visit the library and surround your child with books every day. Refer to books when your child asks a question and model reading for them by reading yourself. Play games with letters and have your child's name written where it can be seen and recognized daily.

### *Early Writing Skills*

Provide the materials for your child to explore the magic of writing. Writing can take place with a paint brush and water on the sidewalk or with a stick in the sand at the beach. Your child may need help learning to write their name. Make this a fun experience so your child will enjoy writing when they go to school.

### *Language Skills*

Language skills are thinking skills. The more children hear words and practice them, the better they will be at learning in school. Family conversations during dinner, telling stories about your

day, playing imagination games with friends and reading books are all great ways to build language skills.

If you are concerned about your child's language skills check with the school district to see if your child is eligible for speech services.

According to local teachers, the following are the most important skills:

- Your child can use the toilet, wash hands, dress, eat and blow nose by themselves.
- Your child stays focused and pays attention for 7-10 minutes at a time.
- Your child asks for help when they need it.
- Your child can hold a pencil, use a crayon and cut with scissors.

When a child can take care of personal needs and pay attention in the classroom, they are ready to learn other skills.

### Questions to ask

Some questions to ask the TK/kindergarten teacher...

- How many children are in the class? Who are the adults working in the classroom?
- What are the class rules, school rules, bus rules? Is there an established school policy, or booklet, concerning such things as vacations, emergency closing procedures, medical emergencies and transportation?
- How will the children be welcomed to school during the first few weeks? Am I expected or encouraged to stay? Or should I drop my child off?
- If my child has some problems adjusting or needs some extra help, how will you let me know so I can be a part of the solution?
- How will you handle conflicts between children?
- How will you handle discipline in the classroom?
- What is the usual daily routine (recess, circle, lunch time, etc.)?
- When will children work in small groups and independently?
- Will my child be given homework? If so, how can I help?
- What special events or field trips do you have planned? How can I participate?
- If my child is not feeling well in the morning, or was sick the night before, should I keep my child at home? What happens if my child gets sick at school?
- What is the best way for us to keep in touch? Can I reach you by phone or email?
- When can I visit the classroom? How can I help in the classroom?
- Is transportation available?
- Do you have early release days?
- What are the snack and lunch procedures?
- What time does school begin and end?
- Is afterschool child care available?

If your child attends a child care program.

Consider asking the provider to share information about your child's development with the TK/kindergarten teacher.

### How can I help at school?

Studies show that when parents are involved, children feel better about themselves and learn more.

- Get to know your child's teacher.
- Volunteer in the classroom and on field trips.
- Attend parent-teacher conferences.
- Attend school events such as Back-to-School Night, Open House, Science Fair and Book Fair.
- Join your school's parent-teacher group (PTA, PTO).
- Attend parent groups such as School Site Council.
- Show an interest in school activities and your child's work.

*No one knows your child better than you.*

You know how your child responds to stress and how to effectively help your child through challenging situations. Communicating this information to your child's teacher will support your child through the transition.