

California's Great Start

Transition to Elementary School Toolkit

Supporting a Smooth and Effective Transition to
Transitional Kindergarten, Kindergarten, and First Grade

Acknowledgements

Many thanks to the California Superintendent of Public Instruction, Tony Thurmond, for setting a vision to leverage historic investments in public education to transform our California schools. His vision inspired the work to develop the toolkit that follows.

In 2022, California joined the national Transforming Kindergarten Collaborative funded by the U.S. Department of Education and facilitated by WestEd's Center for the Improvement of Social Emotional Learning and School Safety (CISELSS). The California Transforming Kindergarten Collaborative team, which included state leaders, consultants, and Early Childhood Education and Transitional Kindergarten through grade twelve (TK-12) professionals, partnered with the CISELSS team, with support from Erin Freschi, Senior Program Manager with WestEd's Early Childhood Learning and Development, and additional state partners to explore the needs and opportunities within the state for supporting children and families through the transition to elementary school.

Shanna Birkholz-Vasquez, Administrator, Universal PreKindergarten Implementation and Support Office (UPK), Early Education Division (EED), and external consultant, Dr. Beth Meloy, partnered in the development of this document.

Thanks are also extended to the following California Department of Education (CDE) staff members for their contributions: Tony Thurmond, State Superintendent of Public Instruction; Mary Nicely, Chief Deputy; Sarah Neville-Morgan, Deputy Superintendent, Opportunities for All Branch (OFAB); Stephen Propheter, Division Director, EED; Valentina Ware, Child Development Consultant, UPK, EED; John Oses, Education Programs Consultant, UPK, EED; Dr. Lillie Moffett, Society for Research in Child Development Fellow, OFAB; Stephanie Myers, Administrator, Early Education System Improvement (EESI) Office, EED; Erin Dubey, Administrator, Inclusion Support Office, EED; and staff from the Special Education Division and the Multilingual Support Division.

Thanks are further extended to the many state agencies and other partners who contributed their generous review and helpful feedback, including the California Department of Social Services (CDSS), and First 5 California. Thanks are also extended for input from our UPK-3 Kitchen Cabinet, Local Implementation and Promising Practices, and Support Systems Constellations, as well as specific interest

holders, including the California County Superintendents, Tribal Child Care Association of California, BlackECE, Oakland Unified School District's Kindergarten Readiness Unit and the California Association of African American School Administrators. The toolkit includes templates that were inspired by existing tools from both the Oakland Unified School District's Kindergarten Readiness Unit and the Los Angeles County Office of Education.

Table of Contents

Introduction	4
Toolkit Purpose	4
PreKindergarten through Third Grade (P-3) Alignment Matters	6
Effective Transitions Matter for Children and Their Families	7
Pathways into California’s Public School System	10
Key Considerations for Developing Transition to Elementary School Policies	11
What is “School Readiness”?	11
The Importance of Play in Learning	13
How to Develop Transition to Elementary School Policies	15
Step 1: Assess current policies and procedures	16
Step 2: Determine interest-holders for policy development	16
Step 3: Develop a logic model/theory of change	17
Step 4: Create data collection and evaluation plan	18
Step 5: Identify feasible strategies	19
Step 6: Identity implementation partners and timeline	24
Step 7: Implement policies and procedures	24
Step 8: Evaluate and improve	25
Conclusion	25
Transition to Elementary School Tools and Templates	26
Logic Model Template and Steps for Development	27
Transition to Elementary School Self-Assessment Tool	31
Sample Continuous Improvement Family Survey	40
Sample Family Information Questionnaire	42
Sample PreK to Elementary Educator Transition Worksheet	45
Universal PreKindergarten Communications Materials	48
Additional Resources to Support Transition to Elementary School Planning	49
Appendices	54
Appendix A: Toolkit Development Process	54
Appendix B: Defining Kindergarten, TK, and UPK in California	56
Appendix C: State Policies and Practices	58
Appendix D: Long Descriptions	59

Transition to Elementary School Toolkit

This toolkit is intended to support the development of policies and strategies that bridge Early Care and Education (ECE) and Transitional Kindergarten (TK) through grade twelve (TK-12) systems and support alignment and coherence for children and families during the critical transition to elementary school. It is designed to provide county, district, and local leaders as well as educators in ECE, Universal PreKindergarten (UPK), and TK-12 settings with foundational knowledge about the importance of a coherent transition to elementary school and includes tools and templates to facilitate implementation of successful strategies to support California's children and families.

Introduction

Toolkit Purpose

This toolkit is intended to support the development of policies and strategies that bridge Early Childhood Education (ECE) and Transitional Kindergarten (TK) through grade twelve (TK-12) systems and support alignment and coherence for children and families during the critical transition to elementary school. It is designed to provide county, district, and local leaders as well as educators in ECE programs, Universal PreKindergarten (UPK), and TK-12 settings with foundational knowledge about the importance of a smooth transition to elementary school and includes tools and templates to facilitate implementation of successful strategies to support all of California's children and families.

Strong support for the transition to elementary school may be particularly important for children and families who are experiencing poverty, children with disabilities, children and families who experience racial bias and discrimination, migrant children and families, children and families who are newcomers or refugees, and children and families whose home language is not English. Communities who are or who have been historically and systematically marginalized, such as tribal communities and Black/African American communities, may distrust TK-12 schools. To effectively support families who experience systemic racism in government systems, including public school settings, intentional engagement and partnership with communities is extremely critical. In communities where tribal nations are present, schools and their community

partners must be intentional about enhancing the well-being of American Indian and Alaskan Native children and families by embracing core values of respect for tribal sovereignty, integrity, and transparency.

The ultimate goal of this toolkit is to facilitate reflection upon current transition policies and practices across both ECE and TK-12 systems as well as identification of opportunities to enhance strategies, including through partnerships across systems and with community leaders, that support and improve the transition to elementary school experience of children, families and their educators.

This toolkit is intentionally focused on supporting a single, but critical, transition process—the transition to elementary school, which requires intentional partnership across existing systems to support success. The transition into elementary school is more than a single point in time when children step foot on elementary school campuses on their first day. It involves a series of experiences and intentional support that ideally begin at home and in ECE programs, and then continue through the kindergarten year and beyond.

It is important to note this toolkit does not reflect the numerous other critical transitions many children face over the course of early childhood, such as the transition from the home to childcare which may happen as early as a few weeks after birth, the transitions of young multilingual learners to English Learner programs, or the mandated transition from Part C to Part B services under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) which happens when children with disabilities turn three.¹ Family transitions also may affect the course of a child and their development including moving and/or sharing of home living with parents who don't live together. These, and other smaller daily transitions, are all critical to children's development and success in school.

This toolkit also does not yet explore all the complexities of facilitating successful transitions to elementary school for children or families who may need additional support, including children with disabilities, multilingual children and their families, tribal children, and children experiencing homelessness. The CDE is committed to providing information on strategies to support all children as they navigate the transition to elementary school and will be providing addenda to this toolkit in the coming months to address such strategies.

¹ See: <https://sites.ed.gov/idea/statute-chapter-33>

PreKindergarten through Third Grade (P-3) Alignment Matters

Research over the last 20 years shows children from all racial and ethnic groups, and children of all abilities, can benefit from quality PreK programs.² Research also provides evidence that high-quality PreK experiences are only one part of providing equitable opportunities for all children.³ As child development is an ongoing process, once children enter school, their subsequent educational experiences can bolster their success and learning progression, if they build on what they have already learned, and support continuity for children. Children who experience continuity across PreKindergarten (PreK) and elementary schools sustain their gains in elementary school.⁴

Alignment in policies, structure, instructional content, and family involvement from PreK into the early grades (P-3) can support the desired continuity across children's experiences in high-quality settings. In California, P-3 alignment requires coherence of UPK programs, which span ECE or Early Learning and Care (ELC), PreK and TK programs, as well as the coherence of UPK and the TK-12 system (See Figure 1). This continuity, when used to intentionally scaffold progressive learning experiences, can further support progression in children's development and learning across content areas by increasing the breadth and depth of children's understanding and connections among topics from year to year.

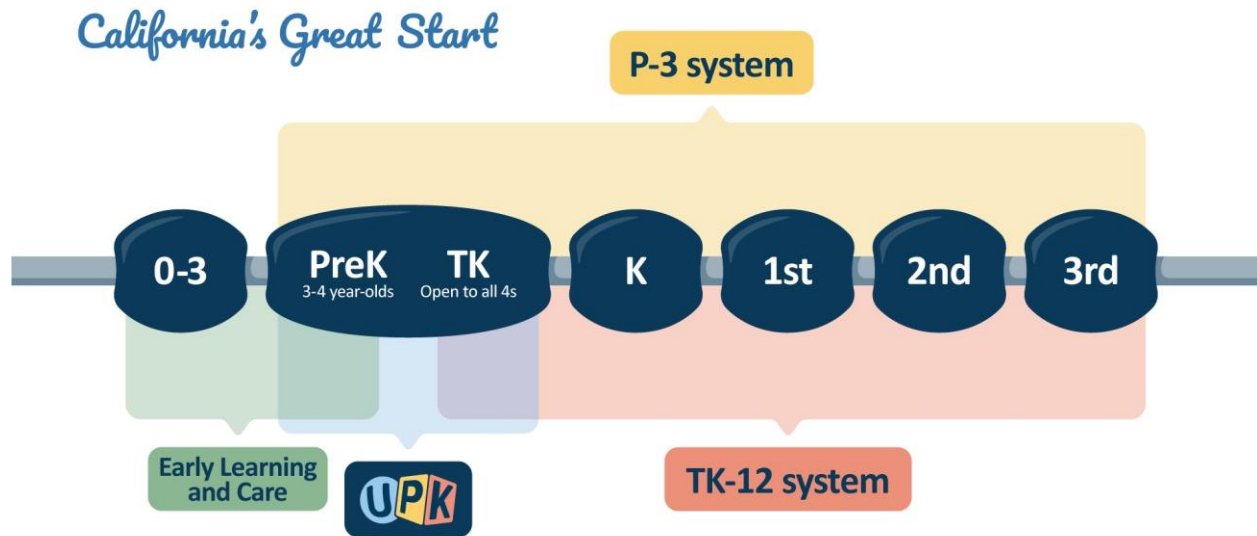
This toolkit is designed to support ECE, UPK, and TK-12 programs to align strategies, policies, and practices to engage families effectively and support successful transitions into UPK and kindergarten, a key step along the P-3 continuum.

² Campbell, F., Conti, G., Heckman, J.J., Moon, S.H.m Pinto, R. Pungello, E. & Pan, Y. (2014). Early childhood investments substantially boost adult health. *Science*, 242(6178), 1478-1485. DOI: 10.1126/science.1248429; Reynolds AJ, Ou S, Temple JA. (2018). A Multicomponent, Preschool to Third Grade Preventive Intervention and Educational Attainment at 35 Years of Age. *JAMA Pediatrics*, 172(3), 247–256. doi:10.1001/jamapediatrics.2017.4673; Phillips, D. A., & Meloy, M. E. (2012). High-quality school-based pre-k can boost early learning for children with special needs. *Exceptional Children*, 78(4), 471-490.

³ Meloy, B., Gardner, M., & Darling-Hammond, L. (2019). *Untangling the evidence on preschool effectiveness: Insights for policymakers*. Palo Alto, CA: Learning Policy Institute.

⁴ McCormick, M., Mattera, S., & Hsueh, J. (2019). *Preschool to Third Grade Alignment: What Do We Know and What Are We Learning?* Policy Brief. MDRC.

Figure 1: P-3 Alignment in California



Note: The TK-12 system, and as a result, the P-3 system, includes schools and their expanded learning programs, which provide critical academic assistance and enrichment opportunities for students from TK through 6th grade.

[Long Description: Figure 1: P-3 Alignment in California](#)

Effective Transitions Matter for Children and Their Families

Effective transitions into elementary school are important for children and families. Transition practices that support positive relationships between children, families, and educators can substantially impact child outcomes.⁵

The transition to kindergarten represents an important shift in children's and families' education experiences due to changing demands, expectations, and support for children and their families. When children experience discontinuities between early learning settings and kindergarten, they may be at greater risk for academic failure and social adjustment problems. Thus, building and implementing a seamless kindergarten transition can make a significant difference for children's on-going school success.

⁵ Ahtola, A., Silinskas, G., Poikonen, P.-L., Kontoniemi, M., Niemi, P., & Nurmi, J.-E. (2011). Transition to formal schooling: Do transition practices matter for academic performance? *Early Childhood Research Quarterly*, 26(3), 295- 302; Cook, K. D., & Coley, R. L. (2017). School transition practices and children's social and academic adjustment in kindergarten. *Journal of Educational Psychology*, 109(2), 166-177.

The research demonstrates transitions may be particularly difficult for some children and families.⁶ A recent study found that when children experience a decrease in high-quality teacher-child interactions and teacher-child closeness between PreK and kindergarten, they tend to have lower social-emotional skills and self-regulation at the beginning of kindergarten. The negative effects were strongest among boys during the initial transition to kindergarten.⁷

Transition practices that support positive relationships between children, families, and educators can substantially impact child outcomes.

In addition to boys, children with disabilities, and children living in low-income homes are more likely to experience transition challenges.⁸ Furthermore, it seems many of these children may be the least likely to experience the transition support and engagement all children and families need. Research shows children in Black/African American, Latinx, and immigrant families, as well as those living in urban areas, experience fewer transition support practices than their peers.⁹ Likewise, rural families appear to communicate less with educators during the kindergarten transition.¹⁰

Transition strategies that engage families are the most influential.¹¹ Family engagement is multi-faceted, including not only engaging in learning activities at home, but also engaging in activities at school. Research shows that family engagement is good for

⁶ Kauerz, K., Schaper, A., & Triolo-Moloney, S. (2021). Transitions to kindergarten in Colorado: A roadmap. National P-3 Center, School of Education & Human Development, University of Colorado Denver.

Office of Planning, Research and Evaluation: U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. (2022, October 22). Studying Combinations of Kindergarten Transition Activities Provided to Children and Families. Head Start to Kindergarten Transitions. Project.

https://www.acf.hhs.gov/sites/default/files/documents/opre/HS2K%20Brief_ECLSKprofiles_nov2022.pdf

⁷ Vitiello, V. E., Nguyen, T., Ruzek, E., Pianta, R. C., & Whittaker, J. V. (2022). Differences between Pre-K and Kindergarten classroom experiences: do they predict children's social-emotional skills and self-regulation across the transition to kindergarten?. *Early Childhood Research Quarterly*, 59, 287-299.

⁸ Jiang, H., Justice, L., Purtell, K. M., Lin, T.-J., & Logan, J. (2021). Prevalence and prediction of kindergarten-transition difficulties. *Early Childhood Research Quarterly*, 55, 15-23.

⁹ Iruka, I. U., DeKraai, M., Walther, J., Sheridan, S. M., & Abdel-Monem, T. (2020). Examining how rural ecological contexts influence children's early learning opportunities. *Early Childhood Research Quarterly*, 52, 15-29.

¹⁰ Sheridan, S. M., Koziol, N., Witte, A. L., Iruka, I., & Knoche, L. L. (2020). Longitudinal and geographic trends in family engagement during the pre-kindergarten to kindergarten transition. *Early Childhood Education Journal*, 48(3), 365- 377.

¹¹ Cook, K. D., & Coley, R. L. (2017). School transition practices and children's social and academic adjustment in kindergarten. *Journal of Educational Psychology*, 109(2), 166–177. <https://doi.org/10.1037/edu0000139>; Sheridan, S. M., Koziol, N., Witte, A. L., Iruka, I., & Knoche, L. L. (2020). Longitudinal and geographic trends in family engagement during the pre-kindergarten to kindergarten transition. *Early Childhood Education Journal*, 48(3), 365- 377.

children. Family engagement practices that reflect families' racial, ethnic, and cultural identities and promote a sense of belonging, and communications in a language that families understand, are especially critical to supporting the diverse populations of children and families in California.¹²

Families' own expectations for their child's transition to elementary school are also important. Robust family engagement requires schools to engage intentionally with and actively support the transition to elementary school for all children and families, especially children and families who are experiencing poverty, children with disabilities, and children and families whose home language is not English. Engaging families from communities who are or who have been historically and systematically marginalized, such as Black/African American and tribal communities, requires schools to both acknowledge and take active steps to eliminate racism in their policies and promote anti-racist and anti-bias practices among their educators. Intentionally designed transition policies and practices, which are equity centered and supported by strong community partnerships that reflect the diversity of children and families served, can pave the way for smoother transitions.

Transition policies and practices are growing in popularity among school districts nationwide. Using data from the Early Childhood Longitudinal Study – Kindergarten, researchers have demonstrated increases in the use of transition activities by elementary schools over the past few decades, but there is still room for improvement. The three most common transition practices are sending information home about kindergarten, hosting child/parent visits prior to the start of the school year, and welcoming parents to an orientation before school starts.¹³ These are common strategies that represent important first steps towards supporting effective transitions, however, they may not be sufficient to yield meaningful support for children and families.

Implementing a well-rounded combination of transition practices can have a positive influence on children and families, and ensure all children and families are reflected and feel supported throughout the Transition to Elementary School. Effective implementation of transition strategies requires joint buy-in and collaboration between ECE and TK-12

¹² Smith, J. (2020). Teachers' perspectives on communication and parent engagement in early childhood education programs for migrant farmworker children. *Journal of Early Childhood Research*, 18(2), 115-129.; Iruka, I. U., Cabrera, N., & Páez, M. (2022). Supporting and engaging with diverse families during the early years: emerging approaches that matter for children and families. *Early Childhood Research Quarterly*, 60, 390-393.

¹³ Little, M. H., Cohen-Vogel, L., & Curran, F. C. (2016). Facilitating the transition to kindergarten: What ECLS-K data tell us about school practices then and now. *AERA Open*, 2(3), 2332858416655766.

systems that often have widely variable approaches to support kindergarten transitions.¹⁴

Pathways into California’s Public School System

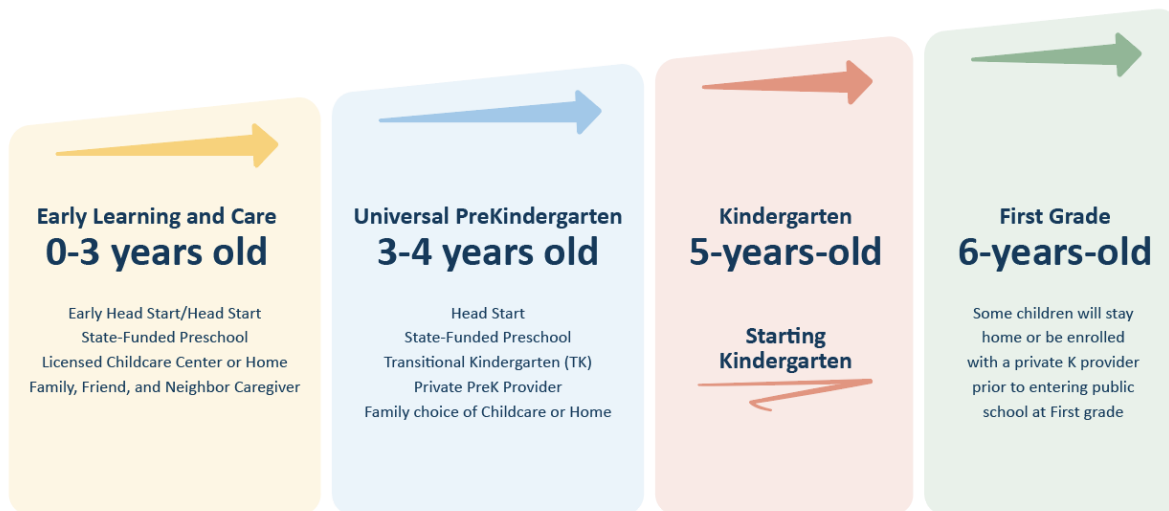
California is building a mixed delivery approach to UPK. This means that parents may choose to enroll their children in a Transitional Kindergarten (TK) program or any other prekindergarten program for which the family is eligible including, but not limited to, the California State Preschool Program (CSPP), Head Start, subsidized programs administered by the California Department of Social Services (CDSS), and private pay preschools, or to keep their children at home.

As TK will be fully funded by 2025–26 to provide access to early education for all children whose fourth birthday occurs by the first of September of the school year they are enrolled, CSPPs will have increased room in their contracts to expand the enrollment of three-year-old children so more children have access to two years of high-quality early education before kindergarten. Per 2021–22 CDE enrollment data, only 8.5 percent of three-year-old children eligible for CSPP were enrolled. As CSPP increases enrollment of younger children, programs may need to adjust their curricular and instructional approaches to ensure children’s developmental needs are met. CSPPs may also have opportunities to provide extended day programs (before-school, after school, and summer session) to children enrolled in TK and Kindergarten to address the needs of families while also providing extended learning opportunities.

UPK presents the opportunity to provide many more children with early education opportunities. The flexibility of the UPK mixed delivery approach allows parents and communities to select the early education programs that best meet their needs. As Figure 2 demonstrates, children will enter elementary school with a range of early learning experiences. Some children may be cared for solely in their homes prior to Kindergarten or even first grade entry, while others will have experiences in Head Start, State Preschool, TK, or other early learning settings such as private programs and family childcare homes. These experiences may impact the cultural, linguistic, and other assets as well as areas for growth they bring to their first elementary school classroom.

¹⁴ Ehrlich, S. B., Cook, K. D., Thompson, D., Kauerz, K., Barrows, M. R., Halle, T., Gordon, M. F., Soli, M., Schaper, A., Her, S., & Guerra, G. (2021). Understanding cross-systems transitions from Head Start to kindergarten: A review of the knowledge base and a theory of change (OPRE Report # 2021-128). Office of Planning, Research, and Evaluation, Administration for Children and Families, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. Retrieved from: Understanding Cross-Systems Transitions from Head Start to Kindergarten: A Review of the Knowledge Base and a Theory of Change (hhs.gov).

Figure 2: Pathways into Elementary School



[Long Description: Figure 2: Pathways into Elementary School](#)

Key Considerations for Developing Transition to Elementary School Policies

What is “School Readiness”?

For many, the transition to elementary school conjures ideas about getting children ready for school. For families, that may mean buying supplies, reading books, and picking out an outfit for the first day of school. For education leaders, it should mean something very different.

The concept of school readiness has been a focus of the early childhood field for years, but its meaning has shifted over time. The research is clear that efforts to prepare children for school are critical. However, the research has also clearly demonstrated that maintaining the boost in learning that high-quality PreK programs provide requires attention to the transition to elementary school—particularly schools that are ready for children—and alignment of instruction and support services across PreK, kindergarten, and the early grades so that children’s skills and knowledge are built upon, rather than having curricular content repeated. As the field has grown and our understanding of child development and what children need in kindergarten to thrive has shifted, so too has our use of the term “school readiness” and what supporting school readiness for both children and schools means for policy and practice.

School readiness includes ready children, ready schools, and ready communities.

For the purposes of this toolkit, school readiness includes three coordinated elements. According to the National Education Goals Panel, school readiness includes ready children, ready schools, and ready communities.¹⁵ Ready children refers to their overall development including physical well-being and motor development, social and emotional development, approaches to learning, language development and cognition and general knowledge. These areas of development support a child's preparedness to engage in and benefit from learning experiences.

Just as critically, ready schools are just that— schools that are able to meet the needs of all students.¹⁶ Ready schools, among other key characteristics, are schools that work to facilitate the transition between home and school and strive for continuity between ELC settings and elementary schools. Ready schools are culturally affirming and actively work to create a welcoming and positive school climate that promotes a sense of belonging and inspires joy and the love of learning for all children. Ready schools understand, acknowledge, and take action to support children who come to them with a variety of cultural, linguistic, and other assets as well as areas for growth¹⁷. Ready schools recognize that children with disabilities and multilingual learners will need additional support to successfully engage in the learning environment. Ready schools are committed to the success of every child as well as every teacher and every adult who interacts with children during the school day.

Ready schools meet every child where they are and support all adults to engage every child in meaningful learning.

Ready communities ensure families and the community at large have the supports and services they need to support all children's readiness for school. Ready communities are communities that have been engaged in developing policies to support school readiness and feel a sense of partnership with schools. Schools have a responsibility to intentionally reach out and welcome input and collaboration from community members, including community-based service providers, who must likewise be committed to working together to ensure the partnerships flourish. In communities where tribal nations are present, schools and districts must be intentional about enhancing the well-being of American Indian and Alaskan Native children and families by embracing core

¹⁵ Emig, C. (2000). School Readiness: Helping Communities Get Children Ready for School and Schools Ready for Children. Child Trends Research Brief.

¹⁶ <https://govinfo.library.unt.edu/negp/reports/readysch.pdf>.

¹⁷ California Department of Education. (2022). *Equitable Learning Environments for Young Boys of Color: Disrupting Disproportionate Outcomes*, Sacramento, CA: Author.

values of respect for tribal sovereignty, integrity, and transparency. School readiness is enhanced when schools, families, and community members work collaboratively to ensure that every child is ready for and actively engaged in learning.¹⁸

The Importance of Play in Learning

The transition to elementary school is a particularly meaningful one, which has the potential to shape how children view school and learning. Utilizing play and playful learning strategies, during this transition helps children associate school with joy and fulfilling their natural curiosity. Embedding opportunities for playful learning in the classroom routine is important to help create a more equitable learning environment for all children. Play actively supports children's learning and development across cognitive, social, emotional, and physical domains. Children who enjoy school are more engaged in learning and will have greater success throughout their academic journey.

Integrating playful hands-on exploration and learning activities provides young children with opportunities to learn more about the world and themselves. The risks children take while playing teach them by challenging them to grow, testing their limits, and providing opportunities for them to learn how to overcome obstacles and cope with frustrations. As the *Powerful Role of Play in Early Education* outlines, play provides essential self-esteem-building experiences of success. These skills are all foundational to future learning and fundamental to success in life.¹⁹ As demonstrated in the graphic below, playful learning occurs on a continuum from more unstructured learning opportunities to teacher-guided activities (See Figure 3). ECE and early elementary educators should utilize play-based learning strategies that include activities from each step along the continuum of play, ranging from child-directed to educator-guided, to educator-directed play-based activities.

Universal Design for Learning (UDL) can support integration of play-based learning activities into the classroom to meet the needs of all students. The UDL framework is designed to improve and optimize teaching and learning based on how children learn. Research shows that all children benefit from play-based learning. Children with disabilities who are encouraged to engage in self-directed play or participate in educator-guided or educator-directed play, also experience the positive impact that play has on overall well-being.

¹⁸ Kauerz, K., & Schaper, A. (2021). Transition to kindergarten: Findings from recent research. National P-3 Center at University of Colorado Denver and Education Commission of the States. Retrieved from: [Transition-to-K_Recent-Research_2021.pdf](#) (nationalp-3center.org).

¹⁹ California Department of Education. (2021). The Powerful Role of Play in Early Education. Best Practices for Planning Curriculum for Young Children. <https://tkcalifornia.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/02/powerfulroleofplay.pdf>.

Figure 3: A P-3 Continuum of Play-based Learning Strategies



[Long description: Figure 3 A P-3 Continuum of Play-based Learning Strategies](#)

Play is a critical strategy for supporting children's language and literacy development. When specifically considering multilingual students, educators can integrate formulaic phrases in the child's home language into playful learning activities to create more inclusive environments. Inclusive play is important because it ensures all children in the environment are exposed to diverse perspectives and have opportunities to form relationships with their peers. Play will naturally allow children to interact, highlighting both differences and similarities, serving as a tool to expand children's awareness, understanding, and respect for others, which supports and creates an overall sense of belonging for all children.

Our youngest learners thrive when more – but not all – of their time is spent engaged in the child-directed and educator guided activities that can occur in centers, supported by intentional instructional strategies, rather than learning experiences that are solely educator-directed.

Incorporating play into the TK/Kindergarten classroom can be achieved in part by utilizing “centers” or “stations” that provide children with opportunities to choose a learning activity according to their interests. For example, children can engage in learning through play embedded in different themes and content areas across distinct

areas of the classroom space. Such centers may include dramatic play, block or Science, technology, engineering and math (STEM) building, art, math, literacy, nature/science exploration, music and movement, puzzles, and water/sand tables.

Figure 4: Learning Stems from Play

Learning Stems from Play: Considerations for Implementing UPK Instructional Time

Learning thrives in an environment that celebrates and affirms cultural and linguistic diversity, actively combats racism and pursues equity, embraces inclusion and promotes belonging for each and every child.



Our youngest learners thrive when at least 50% of instructional time relies on child-directed playful learning activities, such as those that occur in learning centers, with the remaining time spread across educator-guided or -directed playful learning activities, such as those available through whole group or small group contexts.

[Long Description: Figure 4: Learning Stems from Play](#)

Our youngest learners thrive when more – but not all – of their time is spent engaged in the child-directed and educator guided activities that can occur in centers, rather than learning experiences that are solely educator-directed. As such, at least 50 percent of instructional time in prekindergarten classrooms should rely on learning centers, with the remaining time spread across more educator-guided and educator-directed instructional activities, such as those available through whole-group or small-group contexts (See Figure 4). As children age, their interest in and ability to learn from more frequent educator-guided and educator-directed opportunities grows.

How to Develop Transition to Elementary School Policies

As a district, school, or ECE program, it is important to follow a series of steps to identify areas of focus and develop transition to elementary school policies that support

implementation of related strategies.²⁰ Doing so ensures acknowledgement of the work you have already done, leverages the deep knowledge of teachers and staff with your learning community, and supports alignment of new and existing strategies with the needs of the children and families you serve.

Step 1: Assess current policies and procedures

In this step, you will assess your transition to elementary school policies and procedures and identify any bright spots or gaps. As you implement this step, it is critical to talk to and collect information from families, your staff, including your student services and special education staff, leaders and teachers, partners (or potential partners) within your community, including County Office of Education Staff, Special Education Local Plan Areas (SELPA) staff, or Special Education Directors. This information gathering may take place during one-on-one conversations, focus groups, or through surveys that include staff as well as parents. As part of this process, you should determine what activities are already taking place and where gaps exist.

Transition self-assessment or reflection tools, such as the example included in the resource section, can be helpful in determining your current efforts for supporting successful transitions to elementary school and may allow you to elevate bright spots and gaps that exist across your learning community. It is critical to consider how to collect information outside of your own organization to inform your work. Consider outreach to community members, ECE providers, local Tribes, district partners, families, and educators in this information gathering process.

Step 2: Determine interest-holders for policy development

This critical step will ensure all relevant parties are involved in the development of policies that could affect them. Having all interest-holders collaborate provides critical opportunities to align expectations, classroom management strategies, curricula, assessments, instructional strategies, family engagement approaches, and learning environments. This includes traditional partners as well as non-traditional partners that may include philanthropy, the public library systems, city agencies and collective impact tables. It also opens avenues for sharing data, jointly planning, and participating in professional development together.

Relevant parties might include district administrators, union representatives, principals, teachers, community-based PreK directors and staff, expanded learning directors and staff, parents and caregivers, regional centers, resource and referral agencies, tribal leaders, local religious institutions and faith-based leaders, organizations supporting

²⁰The steps in this toolkit are adapted from Bornfreund, L., Ewen, D., Lieberman, A., Loewenberg, A., McDonald, D., & Fretwell, J. (2021). A Toolkit for Effective and Supportive Transitions for Children, Families, and Educators in Fall 2021 and Beyond: Six Steps to Strengthen Transitions. New America. <https://www.newamerica.org/education-policy/reports/a-toolkit-for-effective-and-supportive-transitions-for-children-families-and-educators-in-fall-2021-and-beyond/six-steps-to-strengthen-transitions/>

refugee and new immigrant populations, or other important groups in your community, such as community and cultural leaders. Think carefully about how to involve members of communities that may not typically be represented in these conversations, especially representatives from tribal nations, communities with families who speak a language other than English at home, families experiencing homelessness and other historically marginalized communities.

Some questions to consider may include:

- Who are our current partners and interest-holders?
- Who might be affected by the development of a transition to elementary school policy or implementation of the associated strategies?
- Are there people who should be involved that we do not know? How might we reach them? Who might we ask for feedback or referrals to make sure we have engaged all relevant parties?
- Are there additional partners we should engage to address the needs of children with unique needs in our community?
- How can we work with all our interest-holders to partner effectively?

Step 3: Develop a logic model/theory of change

In this step, you should consider developing a logic model or theory of change to guide the development of your transition to elementary school policy and selection of strategies. A logic model details the relationship between your vision/goal, the resources you can put towards your goal, activities (what you do), outputs (what happens as a result) and ultimately the outcomes of the identified strategies (how children, families, or systems are improved) in the short-, mid-, and long-term (See Figure 5).

Using a co-created logic model will ensure that all partners identified in Step 2 feel represented in the plan and can be engaged in aligned contributions to supporting successful transitions. Specifically, all partners should feel invested in the objectives of the policy and strategies, understand why they are important (how it will impact outcomes for children, families, and systems), and commit to the collective and individual activities needed to be successful. Ensuring partners see their priorities reflected in your logic model may require special attention to outcomes for specific populations of children, such as tribal children, Black/African American children, children with disabilities, refugee children, and/or multilingual learners.

A logic model or theory of change is also critical for developing the data collection and evaluation plan in Step 4 as part of a continuous improvement effort. (See logic model template and general guidance in the resource section)

Figure 5: Example Logic Model



[Long Description: Figure 5 Example Logic Model](#)

Step 4: Create data collection and evaluation plan

A data collection plan helps to ensure you are collecting data that is both useful and appropriately utilized. There is no need to collect data you won't use. Conversely, it is important to identify the data that is most helpful to you. You will need data for reporting or continuous improvement efforts, and identifying these needs on the front end will support best practice. Based on the logic model developed in Step 3, partners should identify pre-existing data sources and determine gaps, ideally together.

An evaluation plan is a written document that describes how the collaborative team will monitor and evaluate implementation of the Transition to Elementary School policy and the associated strategies. The evaluation plan also details how any analysis of collected data will be used for program improvement and future decision making. This should be an ongoing effort, working on transition planning is an ongoing activity.

Step 5: Identify feasible strategies

Based on the logic model, you should identify the key strategies that are most feasible at any given time. By collectively focusing on the impact of specific activities, it is possible to have a great measurable impact. There are many possible Transition to Elementary School strategies, and it is important to choose those that fit within your budget and capacity, as well as those strategies that you believe will have the greatest impact in your community. Remember to ensure selection of strategies is supported by robust community engagement with attention to the needs of all children, including children with disabilities,²¹ multilingual learners, tribal children, refugee children, and children who experience racial bias and discrimination.

The following table includes a list of potential strategies organized by type of connection being made. Specifically, strategies are elevated to strengthen both the **child-school connection** and **family-school connection**. These strategies directly impact the experience of children and families during the transition process and range from information sharing about enrollment processes and deadlines to more intentional practices that welcome parents and encourage relationship building with teachers and administrators prior to the start of the kindergarten year.

The table also elevates strategies to improve the early childhood education **provider/program-school connection**. These strategies are implemented by educators, schools, or programs and create the conditions to implement better family/child support strategies. Strategies include activities like professional learning designed to enhance teacher, paraeducator, leader, and administrator capacity to support transitions, and policies like those that support data and information sharing between early childhood education programs and schools.

Finally, the table includes strategies that can strengthen the **community-school connection**. Any transition to elementary school policy or practice must be built on authentic engagement of and partnership with community members to ensure the transition to elementary school supports a sense of belonging for all children. This must include efforts to intentionally build educator and leader knowledge about cultural, racial, and linguistic considerations in their own community and supporting a welcoming environment for all families.

²¹ Transition activities and other supports needed for individual children receiving special education services should be agreed upon by the child's IEP team and documented within their IEP

Connection	Transition activity
Child - School	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Hosting TK/kindergarten preview days for children prior to TK/kindergarten that may include visiting the school and classroom, as well as activities like riding the bus, if applicable. ● Hosting a longer session of bridge to kindergarten activities in the summer prior to TK/kindergarten entry. ● Implement a staggered start, where half the children begin one day, and the other half the next day. ● Establishing connections between preschool children and kindergarten teachers and other staff (e.g., special education staff with whom children will interact). ● Creating connections between preschool children and the kindergarten program, using school functions. ● Having children practice kindergarten rituals towards the end of their preschool year. ● Incorporating preschool activities into the kindergarten year. ● Encouraging preschool teachers to stay in contact with their former students. ● Encouraging kindergarten teachers and support staff to visit preschool children, including program visits and home visits. ● Conducting spring kindergarten orientation for preschool children, including opportunities to visit the school's Expanded Learning Programs. ● Establishing peer connections within the preschool class. ● Establishing connections among preschool peers who will be in the same kindergarten. ● Establishing preschool peer connections with kindergarten peers. ● Considering a child's need to nap and/or rest during the TK and kindergarten day in partnership with the Expanded Learning Programs. ● Offering a variety of engagement opportunities for tribal children and families, including offering opportunities in partnership with staff at a local Tribal Head Start program or Tribal Early Learning Center. ● Creating visuals or social stories to familiarize children with images of the key locations on the school site, new routines/schedules, and adults with whom children may

Connection	Transition activity
	interact. For children with disabilities, ensure that augmentative and alternative communication devices are supported.
Connection	Transition activity
Family - School	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Conducting family information and learning events, including distribution of resources, prior to TK/kindergarten start date, ideally with options in multiple languages that reflect the languages spoken in the community. ● Conducting teacher-family conferences prior to the first day of school or within the first few weeks of school. ● Conducting TK/kindergarten teacher home visits with the child and the family. ● Contacting families during the first few days of school. ● Maintaining periodic contact with families. ● Connecting families to community resources. ● Encouraging family participation in home learning activities. ● Encouraging family participation in the classroom and at school events. ● Conducting regular family meetings to assess family strengths and needs. ● Conducting family meetings about transition strategies and to learn about family routines, religious holidays and traditions, and activities the families enjoy in the community. ● Providing opportunities for parents to engage in planning activities, offer input and feedback, and lead activities when appropriate. ● Sharing information about individual children with families, preschool teachers, and kindergarten teachers. ● Using newsletters and resource materials to share general information with families. ● Setting up two-way communication with families using online platforms. ● Creating Expanded Learning Program (before and after school) “touch points,” such as orientations, family nights, tours and open house events.

Connection	Transition activity
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Supporting parent pairings or a “buddy system” to support the transition. ● Sharing information about the Universal Meals program and considering whether additional partnerships to support family food security are needed. ● Engaging with tribal families early and often through local Tribal Head Start programs or a Tribal early learning and education center to share information and discuss questions, and connecting with Tribal Head Start Home Visiting programs, if invited, to engage with families in their homes. ● Providing families the opportunity to connect with school nurses if their child has allergic reactions, hearing or vision modifications, or other special or medical needs. ● Conducting Individualized Educational Programs (IEP) team meetings with families to ensure individualized needs for the transition are documented and necessary supports are in place for children with IEPs.
Connection	Transition activity
Program/ Provider - School	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Coordinating (or participating in) a kindergarten/UPK/ELC collaborative (e.g., meeting or series of meetings, or peer learning community space) that brings together educators to discuss challenges and opportunities and build better relationships. ● Ensuring elementary educators and leaders are well-versed in child development and developmentally appropriate practice— especially social-emotional development. This may include providing professional learning opportunities or participating in existing opportunities or hiring and placing staff based on these skills and competencies. ● Ensuring elementary educators and learners are equipped to support play-based learning activities (see Figures 5 and 6 above for more detail). ● Ensuring elementary educators and leaders understand IDEA requirements to participate on IEP teams and are

Connection	Transition activity
	<p>prepared to include activities to support transitions in IEPs for children with disabilities.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Aligning early learning standards and utilizing a standard kindergarten entry assessment tool across programs. ● Developing a consistent transition to kindergarten/ elementary school information sheet or form that all ELC educators or families can complete to share with elementary educators prior to the transition to elementary school. (This could include assessment data, notes from the ELC teacher, and/or information from the family about their child). ● Fostering inter-school collaboration to facilitate coherence of classroom practices. ● Conducting visits: Preschool teachers visit kindergarten classrooms and kindergarten teachers visit preschool classrooms of incoming students. ● Aligning curriculum and when possible, using similar toys, books, and other materials across TK/kindergarten classrooms and early learning programs in the community to ensure continuity. ● Engaging tribes to ensure the incorporation of tribal culture and community traditions and to foster tribal language and share tribal history in learning environments. ● Providing opportunities for joint collaboration and professional development for both special education teachers and other elementary educators/staff to ensure the appropriate curriculum and supports for children with disabilities and multilingual learners.
Connection	Transition activity
Community-School	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Building useful policies related to the kindergarten transition. ● Engaging in reciprocal conversations with community members to identify and communicate community expectations for children. ● Establishing policy coordination through inter-agency connections.

Connection	Transition activity
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Facilitating family networks and connecting families to each other to strengthen school or program community bonds. ● Coordinating and calibrating with community partners around the school’s Expanded Learning Programs to ensure the program is meeting family needs. ● Coordinating with local regional centers, Family Empowerment Centers (FECs) and Family Resource Centers (FRCs) and/or Parent Training and information centers (PTICs) to ensure additional supports for families of children with disabilities as they navigate the transition to elementary school.

Once key strategies are determined, you will need to identify your related funding needs, opportunities, and any gaps. In many cases, the activities may not require additional funding, but may require a shift in how existing funding is leveraged.

Step 6: Identity implementation partners and timeline

Implementation partners should include the many partners and interest-holders identified in Step 2 although the final list of implementation partners may evolve to include the staff who will be implementing the policy and strategies directly (e.g., principals, directors, teachers, staff). Consider whether county or regional organizations are positioned to support your implementation plan as facilitators or partners. For example, many County Offices of Education have resources to support these types of activities. A timeline of activities can be developed with a small group of partners representing the various interest-holder groups. The timeline should be clear, attainable, and complimentary of the work individuals are already conducting.

Step 7: Implement policies and procedures

Based on the timeline outlined in Step 6, key partners will need to formalize policies and procedures to support the various agreed upon strategies. Depending on the desired outcomes, identified strategies and active participants necessary to bring a policy to fruition may differ. However, the end goal is to have a clear vision and consistent communication strategy about the agreed upon Transition to Elementary School strategies, policies, and procedures.

Step 8: Evaluate and improve

Using formal and informal feedback from families, educators, and other interest-holders as well as data collected on the Transition to Elementary School, is critical. It is important to regularly review this information to inform continuous improvement. This process may include:

- Conducting focus groups of parents, educators, and community partners
- Disseminating periodic surveys to families, community partners and educators and analyzing the results
- Mapping kindergarten assessment data over time and identifying inequities
- Reviewing logic model and relevant data at least annually
- Developing and implementing an improvement plan annually

Conclusion

Sound Transition to Elementary School policies and practices are investments in children's success in elementary school and beyond. The mission of both early childhood and TK-12 educators is to support children to grow and thrive. By intentionally connecting at this critical juncture to support children and families as they move from one system to another, we are partnering to lay the groundwork for the foundational learning of early elementary school and set children up for success in the many school and life transitions to follow.

This toolkit was designed to support educators, programs, and schools in implementing effective strategies that support all children and families to experience smooth Transitions into Elementary School.

Transition to Elementary School Tools and Templates

Within this section, you will find resources such as tools and templates to support your Transition to Elementary School planning and implementation of key strategies. The CDE has prepared templates for some activities that can be used by districts, schools, UPK programs, and their partners. We encourage you to utilize and customize any and all of these resources to meet the needs of your school, program, and community.

Tools in this section include:

- Logic Model Guidance and Template
 - Transition to Elementary School Self-Assessment Tool for use in planning and self-evaluation
 - Sample Continuous Improvement Parent Survey (self-evaluation of transition strategies)
 - Sample Continuous Improvement Educator Survey (self-evaluation of transition strategies)
 - Sample Family Information Questionnaire
 - Sample PreK to Elementary Educator Transition Worksheet
 - UPK Communications Materials
-

California's Great Start

Transition to Elementary Toolkit

Logic Model Template and Steps for Development

Step 1: Develop a vision statement. What is your goal related to your role in supporting an effective Transition to Elementary School for all children in your community? What are the challenges you need to address to meet your goal?

Step 2: Identify any resources you currently have in place that could be used to support the Transition to Elementary School. Note, you may also want to identify opportunities to pursue additional resources to support Transition to Elementary School activities. Think outside the box, are there community partners with resources that could be combined with your own to enhance or expand Transition to Elementary School activities.

Step 3: Based on the goal you identified in Step 1, what long-term outcomes for children, families, and educators do you expect to see? Once you have met your goal, what will be different for children, families, and educators in your community?

Step 4: Think about the activities your resources can support and how they may relate to your goal and the long-term outcomes you are seeking to achieve. Identify activities that you think will be most impactful (you may want to consider effort vs. impact in identifying priorities) and commit to taking action on these activities.

Step 5: How will you know that your activities are being implemented effectively? Outputs should reflect evidence that the activities you have put in place are being implemented at the levels needed to impact the outcomes you are hoping to achieve.

Step 6: Identify whether there are short- or mid-term- outcomes that can help you track your progress towards the long-term outcomes you ultimately hope to achieve. If so, add those to your logic model and think about timelines for collecting and analyzing information to track your progress.

Step 7: Regularly re-assess whether your inputs and identified activities are sufficient to achieve your goals. You can always make changes if you are not seeing the outputs or outcomes you expected.

Vision Statement:

Inputs <i>If you have these resources in place...</i>	Activities <i>And do these things...</i>	Outputs <i>You will see this evidence that you have done the activities...</i>	Short Term Outcomes <i>And achieve these changes in knowledge or initial behaviors...</i>	Mid-Term Outcomes <i>That lead to these more significant changes in behaviors...</i>	Long-Term Outcomes <i>And ultimately achieve these outcomes.</i>

Example Logic Model²²

Sample Vision Statement: *In order to support successful transitions to kindergarten in our district, our goal is to support students' social and emotional (SEL) skill development and ensure consistency across classrooms. To achieve this, we must address challenges related to consistent implementation of SEL curriculum and strategies, staff knowledge of SEL curriculum and strategies, and staff capacity to use student assessment data to support instruction.*

Inputs <i>If you have these resources in place...</i>	Activities <i>And do these things...</i>	Outputs <i>You will see this evidence that you have done the activities...</i>	Short Term Outcomes <i>And achieve these changes in knowledge or initial behaviors...</i>	Mid-Term Outcomes <i>That lead to these more significant changes in behaviors...</i>	Long-Term Outcomes <i>And ultimately achieve these outcomes.</i>
<i>Transition to kindergarten events</i>	<p><i>Advertise events earlier and through communications (e.g., social media) to increase family participation.</i></p> <p><i>Ensure advertisements are translated into Spanish (or most common non-English language)</i></p> <p><i>Invite a guest speaker(s) or content specialist(s) to discuss supporting student's SEL readiness for kindergarten.</i></p> <p><i>Share information about SEL curriculum and strategies used in</i></p>	<p><i>Event participation increases.</i></p> <p><i>Parents understand the importance of SEL skills for success in kindergarten and have tips on how to support their own children.</i></p> <p><i>Feedback from parents on SEL curriculum is collected and used to inform future decisions.</i></p>	<p><i>Families learn about the current SEL curriculum and strategies being taught in their child's classroom. They feel more prepared for their child's transition to kindergarten.</i></p> <p><i>Parents are empowered to continue asking questions and begin using some of the SEL strategies in the classroom at home to support their child's social and emotional skills for a successful transition to kindergarten.</i></p>	<p><i>Some students experience continuity in SEL strategies from home to school</i></p> <p><i>Parents feel empowered to influence curriculum and strategies used in the classroom.</i></p>	<p><i>More students arrive in the classroom with foundational SEL skills.</i></p>

²² Note: All blue text is example text that should be used to guide development of your own content.

Inputs <i>If you have these resources in place...</i>	Activities <i>And do these things...</i>	Outputs <i>You will see this evidence that you have done the activities...</i>	Short Term Outcomes <i>And achieve these changes in knowledge or initial behaviors...</i>	Mid-Term Outcomes <i>That lead to these more significant changes in behaviors...</i>	Long-Term Outcomes <i>And ultimately achieve these outcomes.</i>
<p><i>Funding opportunity to support a Summer Academy for children with little to no experience in preschool before entering kindergarten.</i></p> <p><i>Available online trainings to support preschool, transitional kindergarten, and kindergarten educators in implementing SEL strategies in their classroom.</i></p>	<p><i>Apply for funding.</i></p> <p><i>Design academy to incorporate foundational SEL skills in curriculum and activities.</i></p> <p><i>Develop communication materials and outreach to families in the school catchment area so they are aware of the opportunity and how to register/enroll their children.</i></p> <p><i>Support registration and attendance of preschool, transitional kindergarten, and kindergarten educators.</i></p> <p><i>Support a community of practice or meetings for teachers to discuss challenges and successes in implementing SEL strategies.</i></p>	<p><i>Students enroll in the academy.</i></p> <p><i>Summer Academy staff are supported through an expert coach or content specialist who visits the classroom (at least twice) to provide feedback on the implementation of SEL strategies.</i></p> <p><i>Survey summer academy staff and/or parents of participants to collect information on how well the program supported SEL skill development.</i></p> <p><i>More preschool, transitional kindergarten, and kindergarten educators have training on SEL strategies.</i></p> <p><i>More educators participate in opportunities to share challenges and successes with their peers.</i></p>	<p><i>More students are supported to develop foundational SEL skills that will help thrive in kindergarten.</i></p> <p><i>More Summer Academy staff feel confident in the teaching of the SEL curriculum and strategies used.</i></p> <p><i>Educator (peer) observations demonstrate implementation of SEL strategies.</i></p>	<p><i>Continued progress in student SEL skill development.</i></p> <p><i>More preschool, transitional kindergarten, and kindergarten educators express confidence in their ability to implement SEL strategies and support SEL skill development of all students.</i></p>	<p><i>All students can transition to kindergarten with foundational SEL skills.</i></p> <p><i>Kindergarten teachers report robust SEL skills for all incoming students.</i></p> <p><i>All Summer Academy staff feel confident in the teaching of the SEL curriculum and strategies used.</i></p> <p><i>All preschool, transitional kindergarten, and kindergarten educators express confidence in their ability to implement SEL strategies and support SEL skill development of all students.</i></p>

California's Great Start

Transition to Elementary School Self-Assessment Tool Strategies to Build Connections

This tool can help you identify key strategies you are currently implementing and prioritize strategies that are most feasible within the budget and capacity of your program, aligned with connection strategies provided in the toolkit.

Type of Connection	Sample Transition Activities	Currently Implementing	Priority for Implementation
Child - School	Hosting TK/kindergarten preview days for children prior to entry that may include visiting the school/classroom, as well as activities like riding the bus, if applicable.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Hosting a longer session of bridge to kindergarten activities in the summer prior to TK/kindergarten entry.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Implement a staggered start, where half the children begin one day, and the other half the next day.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Establishing connections between preschool children and kindergarten teachers and other staff (e.g., special education staff with whom children will interact).	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Creating connections between preschool children and the kindergarten program, using school functions.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Type of Connection	Sample Transition Activities	Currently Implementing	Priority for Implementation
	Having children practice kindergarten rituals at the end of their preschool year.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Incorporating preschool activities into the kindergarten year.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Encouraging preschool teachers to stay in contact with their former students.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Encouraging kindergarten support staff to visit preschool children.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Conducting spring kindergarten orientation for preschool children, including opportunities to visit the school's Expanded Learning Programs.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Establishing peer connections within the preschool class.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Establishing connections among preschool peers who will be in the same kindergarten.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Type of Connection	Sample Transition Activities	Currently Implementing	Priority for Implementation
	Establishing preschool peer connections with kindergarten peers.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Considering a child's need to nap and/or rest during the TK and kindergarten day in partnership with the Expanded Learning Programs.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Offering a variety of engagement opportunities for tribal children and families, including offering opportunities in partnership with staff at a local Tribal Head Start program or Tribal Early Learning Center.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Creating visuals or social stories to familiarize children with images of the key locations on the school site, new routines/schedules, and adults with whom children may interact. For children with disabilities, ensure that augmentative and alternative communication devices are supported.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Other activity: _____	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Family - School	Conducting family information and learning events, including distribution of resources, prior to TK/kindergarten start date, ideally with options in multiple languages that reflect the languages spoken in the community.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Type of Connection	Sample Transition Activities	Currently Implementing	Priority for Implementation
	Conducting teacher-family conferences prior to the first day of school or within the first few weeks of school.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Conducting TK/kindergarten teacher home visits with the child's family.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Contacting families during the first few days of school.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Maintaining periodic contact with families.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Connecting families to community resources.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Encouraging family participation in home learning activities.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Encouraging family participation in the classroom and at school events.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Conducting regular family meetings to assess family strengths and needs.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Conducting family meetings about transition strategies and to learn about family routines, religious holidays and traditions, and activities the families enjoy in the community.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Providing opportunities for parents to engage in planning activities, offer input and feedback, and lead activities when appropriate.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Type of Connection	Sample Transition Activities	Currently Implementing	Priority for Implementation
	Sharing information about individual children with families, preschool teachers, and kindergarten teachers.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Using newsletters and resource materials to share general information with families.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Setting up two-way communication with families using online platforms.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Creating Expanded Learning Program (before and afterschool) “touch points,” such as orientations, family nights, tours and open house events.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Supporting parent pairings or a “buddy system” to support the transition.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Sharing information about the Universal Meals program and considering whether additional partnerships to support family food security are needed.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Engaging with tribal families early and often through local Tribal Head Start programs or a Tribal early learning and education center to share information and discuss questions, and connecting with Tribal Head Start Home Visiting programs, if invited, to engage with families in their homes.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Type of Connection	Sample Transition Activities	Currently Implementing	Priority for Implementation
	Providing families the opportunity to connect with school nurses if their child has allergic reactions, hearing or vision modifications or other special needs.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Conducting IEP team meetings with families to ensure individualized needs for the transition are documented and necessary supports are in place for children with IEPs.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Other activity: _____	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Program/ Provider - School	Coordinating (or participating in) a K/UPK/ECE collaborative (e.g., a series of meetings, or peer learning space) that brings together educators to discuss challenges and opportunities, and build better relationships.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Ensuring elementary educators and leaders are well-versed in child development and developmentally appropriate practice— especially social-emotional development. This may include providing professional learning opportunities or participating in existing opportunities, or hiring and placing staff based on these skills and competencies.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Type of Connection	Sample Transition Activities	Currently Implementing	Priority for Implementation
	Ensuring elementary educators and leaders are equipped to support play-based learning activities (see Figures 5 and 6 above for more detail).	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Ensuring elementary educators and leaders understand IDEA requirements to participate on IEP teams and are prepared to include activities to support transitions in IEPs for children with disabilities.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Aligning early learning standards and utilizing a standard kindergarten entry assessment tool across programs.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Developing a consistent transition to kindergarten/ elementary school information sheet or form that all ELC educators or families can complete to share with elementary educators prior to the transition to elementary school. (This could include assessment data, notes from the ELC teacher, and/or information from the family about their child).	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Fostering inter-school collaboration to facilitate coherence of classroom practices.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Conducting visits: Preschool teachers visit kindergarten classrooms and kindergarten teachers visit preschool classrooms of incoming students.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Type of Connection	Sample Transition Activities	Currently Implementing	Priority for Implementation
	Aligning curriculum and when possible, using similar toys, books, and other materials across TK/kindergarten classrooms and early learning programs in the community to ensure continuity.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Engaging tribes to ensure the incorporation of tribal culture and community traditions and to foster tribal language and share tribal history in learning environments.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Providing opportunities for joint collaboration and professional development for both special education teachers and other elementary educators/staff to ensure the appropriate curriculum and supports for children with disabilities and multilingual learners.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Other activity: _____	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Community-School	Building useful policies related to the kindergarten transition.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Engaging in reciprocal conversations with community members to identify and communicate community expectations for children.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Establishing policy coordination through inter-agency connections.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Facilitating family networks and connecting families to each other to strengthen school or program community bonds.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Type of Connection	Sample Transition Activities	Currently Implementing	Priority for Implementation
	Coordinating and calibrating with community partners around the school's Expanded Learning Programs to ensure the program is meeting family needs.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Coordinating with local regional centers, family empowerment centers (FECs), family resource centers (FRCs), and/or parent training and information centers (PTICs) to ensure additional supports for families of children with disabilities as they navigate the transition to elementary school.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Other activity: _____	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

California's Great Start

Sample Continuous Improvement Family Survey

Instructions: Indicate your agreement with the following statements based on your experience with your child's transition into elementary school so far, with 1 being strongly disagreeing and 5 being strongly agreeing.

	1 Strongly Disagree	2 Disagree	3 Neutral	4 Agree	5 Strongly Agree	N/A
Sample: <i>My child attends school</i>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
The opportunity to tour my child's new classroom prior to the first day of school supported my child's preparation for school.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
The family engagement opportunities available to me work for my child and family.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
My child's expanded learning (or before and after school) options are clear and meet my needs.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Regular parent meetings are offered at times when I can attend and in a language I can understand. I feel connected to and heard by the adults who are working with my child.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Family information and learning events supported my family with the transition into elementary.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Comments: *Share any additional input you would like to share about the transition to elementary school for you or your child.*

California's Great Start

Sample Continuous Improvement Educator Survey

Instructions: Indicate your agreement with the following statements based on your experience supporting students' transitions into elementary school this year, with 1 being strongly disagreeing and 5 being strongly agreeing.

	1 Strongly Disagree	2 Disagree	3 Neutral	4 Agree	5 Strongly Agree	N/A
Sample: <i>I am an educator.</i>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Opportunities for classroom visits and/or collaboration with the prior teacher of transitioning students were available to facilitate my support of all children.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I feel comfortable supporting young children with a range of developmental needs during their transition to my classroom. If needed, I received professional learning opportunities on this topic.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
My school principal understands the importance of an effective transition to elementary school and supports my efforts to ensure smooth transitions.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I receive written records/ information about incoming students. The content of these records supports my preparation for the first weeks/months of instruction.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Comments: *Share any additional input about your experience supporting student's transitions into elementary school.*

California's Great Start

Transition to Elementary School

Sample Family Information Questionnaire

NOTE: This template is provided as a reference only. Please modify to meet the needs of your community. This may require coordination and collaboration between local preschool (e.g., CSPP, Head Start) programs and elementary schools or school district.

Child's Name:	
Child's Preferred Name/Nickname:	
Birthdate:	
Who lives at home with the child?	
Does the child primarily communicate in: English <input type="checkbox"/>	Other: _____
Language(s) spoken at home:	
Tell us about your child's personality:	
What are your child's top three strengths? 1. 2. 3.	
Are there any challenges or big changes your child is currently facing you want us to be aware of?	
Do you have any concerns about your child's development?	
What strategies help your child calm down when they are upset?	
What are your child's three favorite activities? 1. 2. 3.	

What are your child's three favorite books or stories?

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

How is your child feeling about starting TK/K?

Has your child participated in any of the following?

- | | | | | |
|--|--|--|------------------------------------|---|
| Childcare program <input type="checkbox"/> | Private Preschool <input type="checkbox"/> | Head Start <input type="checkbox"/> | Playgroup <input type="checkbox"/> | Organized Activities <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Other <input type="checkbox"/> | Transitional Kindergarten <input type="checkbox"/> | State Preschool Program <input type="checkbox"/> | | |

Please describe:

Where will your child be going after school each day?

- | | | | | |
|--|-------------------------------|--|--|--------------------------------|
| After school care <input type="checkbox"/> | Home <input type="checkbox"/> | To a family member's home <input type="checkbox"/> | To a neighbor/friend's home <input type="checkbox"/> | Other <input type="checkbox"/> |
|--|-------------------------------|--|--|--------------------------------|

Please share any additional relevant details:

Has your child ever been assessed or screened using a developmental checklist or screening tool? If so, please attach a copy of the results if you would like to share with your child's teacher.

- Yes
No

Does your child currently have an IEP or 504 plan or have they in the past (including IFSP)?

Yes

No

I don't know

How are you feeling about your child starting TK/K?

What information would help you support your child's transition to school?

Is there anything else we should know about you or your child?

California's Great Start

Sample PreK to Elementary Educator Transition Worksheet

NOTE: This template is provided as a reference only. Please modify to meet the needs of your community. This may require coordination and collaboration between local preschool (e.g., CSPP, Head Start) programs and elementary schools or school districts.

Information	
Student Name	
What name does the child go by:	
Name of Current Preschool Program/ Provider:	Name of Receiving School:
Will the child attend a summer program? (Name/location)	
Parents(s)/Guardian Name:	
Family Information	
What is the best language to communicate with the family?	
Who is the child's primary caregiver(s)?	
Please describe any recent changes in the child's life that might influence the child's transition:	

Student Strengths

What is special about the child and what are some of their favorite activities?

Describe how this child interacts with other children (plays mostly alone, plays mostly with others, sometimes needs adult support):

How does this child work through big emotions? Are there strategies teachers can use to support this child's emotion-regulation?

Describe strategies or accommodations that work well to support the child's full participation. What can teachers do to help this child engage effectively in the classroom?

Additional Student Information

Does the child have an Individualized Education Plan (IEP)?

- Yes
- No
- I don't know

Does the child communicate clearly?

- Most of the time
- Some of the time
- Never

Does the child have known allergies/health concerns?

- Yes
- No
- I don't know

If yes, what are they?

Are there any services the child is currently receiving that the elementary school should continue?

--	--

Additional Suggestions or notes

--

Transition Form Submitted By: (PreK info)

Name	School:
Phone:	Email:



Universal PreKindergarten Communications Materials

The California Department of Education is supporting Universal PreKindergarten (UPK) implementers in their work to design and communicate about their Universal PreK programs with partners, families, and communities. The following materials have been produced to help you in this work:

Family and community engagement

The materials listed below are designed for county offices of education, districts and community organizations who operate California State Preschool Programs, Head Starts and (TK) programs, as well as other interested community partners, to tailor and use with families to help them understand what UPK is, the choices that may be available to them, how to check their eligibility, and how to enroll their children.

- Slide Deck: Key information for families and community members can be found here: <https://docs.google.com/presentation/d/14yDCTghhqHSUIqCh-PzQXR14WvUrr3yd/edit#slide=id.p1>
- Talking points to accompany the slide deck can be found here: <https://docs.google.com/document/d/1hy83OQC0yZCSQYjerZTQIMpzMqpbO0Ba5SNcsRqyKFc/edit>
- Two-pager: Key information for families and community members can be found here: https://drive.google.com/file/d/1ggURxFRT2XQZAIcQApQCw0q52ci_anBV/view
- Translations of the slide deck, talking points, and two-pager into the top written languages used in California can be found here: <https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1WWotsq-K38MJko5urZhr4RFvmmWQPZD3>
- A Communications Toolkit, including guidance for promoting UPK programs on social media, in newsletters and e-blasts, and on websites can be found here: https://docs.google.com/document/d/13FJvt_L61csAB0GJKmHx-Z-Q4GO8UmU-y_mD-BT5Ic/edit

Implementer and partner engagement

These materials are designed for county offices of education, districts, community-based partners providing California State Preschool Programs (CSPP), Head Starts, early childcare providers, and advocates to digest and use with teams to understand the

various components and opportunities included with UPK as UPK programs are built locally.

- Slide Deck: Key information for implementers (PDF can be found here: [https://drive.google.com/file/d/1QqJOQJnwjba9711CXpb6hi0hbgAUp2WX/view](https://drive.google.com/file/d/1QqJOQJnwjba9711CXpb6hi0hbgAUp2WX/vi<u>ew</u>) or PowerPoint can be found here: [https://docs.google.com/presentation/d/1Y8qEVwyDGrVX82KEC7HBP8efsaskxl93/edit#slide=id.p1\)](https://docs.google.com/presentation/d/1Y8qEVwyDGrVX82KEC7HBP8efsa<u>skxl93/edit#slide=id.p1</u>)))
- Two-pager: Key information for implementers can be found here: <https://drive.google.com/file/d/1SVTHPjtSfCChILX3-K9V0bTP7unY4NJR/view>

Universal PreKindergarten brand and promotion materials

- Universal PreKindergarten Logo and brand guidelines can be found here: [https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1FUhhD65dsr9Ik9NTPBPA80Dzr92drwYC](https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1FUhhD65dsr9Ik9NTPBPA80Dzr92dr<u>wYC</u>)
- Zoom backgrounds can be found here: [https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1DoGCdDZbskOYrq0rcMvtUkB2T1-pGon-](https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1DoGCdDZbskOYrq0rcMvtUkB2T1-<u>pGon-</u>)
- Branded PowerPoint template can be found here: <https://docs.google.com/presentation/d/173GkhqYUcSWiWtfsmj1MGL3h9RScL4D/edit#slide=id.p1>
- Signature block images can be found here: [https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1NWyfQMW894YeI4AguXB6TD5p4dUVeqml](https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1NWyfQMW894YeI4AguXB6TD5p4d<u>UVeqml</u>)

Additional Resources to Support Transition to Elementary School Planning

This section provides resources, including tools and templates to support Transition to Elementary School planning and implementation of key transition strategies that can be used by districts, schools, UPK programs, and their partners. For each resource category, the CDE has shared links to examples from local school districts, research partners, local and federal early childhood programs, and other states that may inspire your work. We encourage you to utilize and customize any and all of these resources to meet the needs of your program and community.

Additional Logic Model Templates

[South Carolina Department of Education Logic Model Resources](#)

- This webpage houses several logic model resources including two templates that may be useful, specifically the “Logic Model Template-Format 2” provides an alternative visual representation (compared to the CDE template provided above) of logic model elements that may be useful.

[University of Arkansas System Division of Agriculture](#)

- This logic model template includes additional elements you may wish to consider as you build your own logic model, including priorities, assumptions, external factors and an evaluation plan.

[Harvard University](#)

- This logic model template provides another alternative set of elements you may wish to consider as you build your own logic model.

Additional Self-assessment tools

[TK/K Transition Planning Tool: Sample Worksheet](#)

- This tool is a sample worksheet provided by Oakland Unified School District (OUSD) to support building relationships and welcoming environments for children/families in co-located preschool and TK/K classrooms to facilitate smooth transitions.

[UC Berkeley](#)

- Implementation Assessment Tool. This tool is specifically designed to address effective Core Practice Model (CPM) implementation for child welfare agencies, but is an excellent model for how to measure implementation progress, and could be adjusted to meet your transition to elementary school policy implementation needs.

[Head Start | ECLKC](#)

- Ongoing Monitoring Summary Form. This tool is specifically designed to assess progress on meeting Head Start Program Performance Standards. However, it is another excellent model for how to track areas of strengths and concerns, and identify action steps to improve, which could be applied to your implementation process for transition to elementary school policies.

Professional Learning and Supports Assessment Tools

[Head Start | ECLKC](#)

- Reflective Practice Tool. This tool could be used to support self-reflection and evaluation of effectiveness of professional learning experiences you may offer as one of your transition to elementary school strategies.

[Pennsylvania Department of Education](#)

- Professional Development Survey for Educators and School Leaders. This tool could also be used to evaluate effectiveness of professional learning experiences you may offer as one of your transition to elementary school strategies

[NYC Department of Education](#)

- NYC School Survey: Teachers. This survey provides a model template for overall evaluation of teachers' perspective on how well the school is supporting their work.

Additional Sample Transition Worksheets (Information from Educators)

[Blue Mountain Early Learning Hub](#)

- Kindergarten Transition Survey for Child Care Providers (English). This tool offers an alternative model for gathering information from educators in child care and preschool settings to share with TK and Kindergarten educators.

[Blue Mountain Early Learning Hub](#)

- Kindergarten Transition Survey for Child Care Providers (Spanish). This tool is also available in Spanish.

Additional Transition Toolkits

[Indiana State Transition Toolkit](#)

- This transition to kindergarten toolkit was developed by the Indiana Department of Education.

[Mississippi State Transition Toolkit](#)

- This transition to kindergarten toolkit was developed by the Mississippi Department of Education.

[Alabama Transition Toolkit](#)

- This transition to kindergarten toolkit was developed by the Alabama Department of Education.

[New America Toolkit for Effective, Supportive Transitions for Children, Families and Educators](#)

- This toolkit was developed in collaboration between New America and Education Counsel, to assist educators and policy-makers on effective, supportive, transitions for children, families and educators.

[Maine Department of Education Transitioning into Kindergarten - Educators & Providers](#)

- The Maine Department of Education has a Transitioning into Kindergarten website which provides various transition team plans, kindergarten readiness videos and inclusionary practices.

[West Ed Sample Transition to Transitional Kindergarten/Kindergarten Planning Tool](#)

- This sample transition to kindergarten planning tool was developed by WestEd. In particular, the areas covered are ECE/TK/K connections, home/school connections, and child/school connections.

Additional Resources:

[Equitable Learning Environments for Young Boys of Color: Disrupting Disproportionate Outcomes](#)

- This report highlights the need to disrupt disproportionate discipline patterns and create strength-based and equity-oriented environments across all early education settings that help Black and Brown boys thrive.

[The Powerful Role of Play in Early Education](#)

- This book was written primarily for early childhood teachers and providers. However, the information in this guide is also relevant for supervisors and principals, infrastructure staff, and child advocates. The Powerful Role of Play in Early Education explains why play matters for young children of all cultural, linguistic, and ability groups and the central role of learning in young children's play.

[Resources for Educators](#)

- Oakland Unified School District (OUSD) has a webpage dedicated to Educator resources to support: Kindergarten transition plans, steps, forms, tools for school, resources to create welcoming environments, and resources on raising resilient children.

[Birth to Kindergarten Transition Systems Alignment Framework - Third Edition](#)

- This framework was developed to provide a roadmap for school districts and early learning programs in Los Angeles County to align their operating systems, so they better support a sustained and effective birth to kindergarten transition system, and policies and practices that support the entire continuum from birth to kindergarten in stages.

[Countdown to Kindergarten Resources](#)

- The city of Boston created a webpage that engages families, educators, and the community to enhance early learning opportunities and support the successful transition to kindergarten. Tools and resources are to create a continuum of services that support families birth through kindergarten entry.

[MULTILINGUAL Learning Toolkit](#)

- The Multilingual Learning toolkit is an online hub of research-based principles, instructional strategies, and associated, free, practical, and easy-to-use resources that are geared towards educators who teach PreK-3rd Multilingual Learners.

[Early Childhood Technical Assistance Center Resources \(ECTA\)](#)

- The ECTA Center supports state IDEA [Part C](#) and [Part B, Section, 619](#) programs in developing more equitable, effective, and sustainable state and local systems, that support access and full participation for each and every young child with a disability, and their family
 - [ECTA Part C to B](#)

- [ECTA Preschool to Kindergarten](#)
- [ECTA State examples](#)

[California English Learner Roadmap](#)

- A guide to strengthening comprehensive educational policies, programs, and practices for English learners (EL)

[Biliteracy Pathway Recognitions](#)

- The Biliteracy Pathway Recognitions are an optional program and participation is voluntary. Local educational agencies (LEAs) may customize the criteria to fit their local needs and to ensure the criteria reflects their program goals. The recognitions are established to recognize preschool, kindergarten, elementary, and middle school students who have demonstrated progress toward proficiency in speaking, listening, reading, and writing in one or more languages in addition to English

Appendices

Appendix A: Toolkit Development Process

This toolkit draws from a review of Transition to Kindergarten (Elementary School) Toolkits from other states as well as research on promising transition practices. The guidance and resources included are a combination of the input from statewide interest-holders, relevant evidence from research, and exemplars from states and local communities who have implemented successful Transition to Elementary School strategies in recent years.

To ensure this toolkit reflects California’s specific context, including its strengths and needs, the CDE leveraged its UPK Implementation and P-3 Alignment “Constellation Model” to solicit input from interest-holders including state and local practitioners, policymakers, researchers, and advocates. This constellation model supports a process for extensive collaboration with external partners. Created by the Center for Social Innovation, the constellation model is a framework for effectively bringing diverse partners from multiple fields together to work through complex and pressing issues, such as UPK implementation and P-3 alignment. Specifically, California’s UPK/P-3 constellation model includes:

- Thematic constellations that bring leaders and practitioners from across sectors and levels within the state to work together on planning and implementation, development of processes and guidance, and elevation of important considerations to the state leadership. UPK Constellations include Workforce, Research, Local Implementation and Promising Practices, Communications, and Support Systems.
- Two leadership teams that set strategic directions and help align the constellations towards overarching goals.
- Engagement of local implementers across sectors, including both local education agencies (LEAs) and community-based organizations (CBOs) as well as representatives from key statewide organizations, researchers, and advocates.

Further, to incorporate as many perspectives as possible and elevate the good work already happening in many local school districts and early learning communities across California, the CDE conducted a statewide survey of early learning, PreK, TK, and Kindergarten educators and leaders to collect information about their current transition to kindergarten practices and policies and solicit input on resources that would enhance their current approach. Of the 991 survey respondents, 35 percent reported

implementing some form of transition to kindergarten activities. Of those who do not currently implement any transition activities, 70 percent were interested in doing so.

The information gathered in the survey alongside conversations with key interest-holders affirmed that a toolkit would be useful for the field and helped inform the resources developed for inclusion in the toolkit.

Appendix B: Defining Kindergarten, TK, and UPK in California

California has a long history of being on the forefront of providing educational opportunities to its youngest learners. The first private kindergarten in California was opened in San Francisco on September 10, 1863, during a time when very few kindergarten programs existed in the United States. Kindergarten in California continued to expand and in 1987, legislation was passed to allow all children to enter kindergarten as long as they turned five on or before December 2 of the current school year.²³ This enrollment cutoff date allowed younger children to enroll in kindergarten than the date set by most other states.

However, in 2014, California acknowledged that these younger children needed additional support and learning opportunities in order to be successful in kindergarten. The state set a new date, requiring children to turn 5 by September 1 in order to enroll in kindergarten, bringing California's age requirements in alignment with 42 other states which have a kindergarten cut-off date by September 30.

As part of the transition to this new entry age, the California Kindergarten Readiness Act of 2010 established the Transitional Kindergarten (TK) program as a way to provide a bridge year of educational opportunities for these younger children who had previously been able to enroll in kindergarten. TK was defined in statute as the first year of a two-year kindergarten program (Education Code Section 48000) and represented the first step for California towards recognizing the power of a year of high-quality PreK learning experiences.

In 2021, Assembly Bill (AB) 130 became law, laying out a vision to provide a year of high-quality, inclusive PreK learning experiences to all children and setting California on a path towards establishing a universal TK program (UTK) by requiring any school district operating a kindergarten to also offer a TK program for all children who turn four years old by September 1 by the year 2025–26. In 2022, the Early Childhood and TK-12 education budget package included state funding for California to achieve this vision. Specifically, the budget provided initial planning and implementation funding to phase-in UTK. Alongside other investments, the state is building a Universal PreK program (UPK) which brings together TK, existing state, federal, and private preschool programs (including California State Preschools [CSPP] and Head Start), and expanded learning opportunities, including before and after school programs to provide high-quality,

²³ De Cos, P (2001)., History and Development of Kindergarten in California. California Research Bureau, California State Library.

inclusive learning opportunities to all four-year-old children, and at-promise three-year-old children.

Prior to this legislation, most eligible PreKindergarten-age children lacked access to a publicly funded PreK program in California. Although the overall population of children in California has declined, in 2019, there were approximately one million three- and four-year-old children in California with only a fraction of eligible children served by federally or state funded PreK programs and there is variability in enrollment by children's race and or ethnicity. Access to PreK is increasing in California as the expansion of TK takes hold. When expansion is complete in 2025, California will have the largest UPK program in the country, serving nearly 400,000 children in TK, in addition to serving at-promise 3- and 4-year-old children in CSPP, Head Start and other subsidized programs. The program will also serve a large number of multilingual learners, given that nearly two-thirds of children under the age of five in California speak a language other than English at home.

The 2021–22 Budget Act also authorized the ongoing Expanded Learning Opportunities Program (ELO-P) and provided \$1.74 billion for school districts and charter schools to provide in-person expanded learning opportunities to students from transitional kindergarten through grade six. At full implementation, the program is intended to provide all students with no-cost or low-cost access to nine hours of developmentally appropriate academics and enrichment activities per instructional day and 30 non-school days. This program is a critical part of ensuring all children have access to a year of high-quality, inclusive PreKindergarten learning experiences.

Appendix C: State Policies and Practices

California is engaging in several activities to identify and implement support policies and tools for PreK and TK-12 educators and leaders to help them support families and children as they transition into elementary school. The toolkit that follows is one example of these strategies in action.

The CDE is also working to support a revision to the California Preschool Learning Foundations to become the California PreKindergarten Learning Foundations (PLF). As part of this revision, the PLF will encompass learning standards in Transitional Kindergarten and be extended to third grade to demonstrate developmentally supportive instruction in the early elementary years. For the domains of math, language & literacy, and science, developmentally supportive examples of the existing K-3 California Curriculum Frameworks will be provided, and for the domains of social-emotional development and approaches to learning - where no K-3 standards exist- detailed developmental trajectories of these skills from ages 3 - 9 will be provided to support teachers understanding and valuing of these critical skills. Additionally, the CDE is revising the Desired Results Developmental Profile (DRDP) assessment to reflect updates to the PLF, and to combine the preschool and kindergarten tools to be more inclusive of Transitional Kindergarten.

The CDE is also working to support the implementation of Expanded Learning Programs for students from transitional kindergarten through grade six to ensure expanded learning opportunities provide developmentally appropriate academics and enrichment activities.

The CDE recently released the Equitable Learning Environments for Young Boys of Color: Disrupting Disproportionate Outcomes publication.²⁴ This report highlights the need to disrupt disproportionate discipline patterns and create strength-based and equity-oriented environments across all early education settings that help Black and Brown boys thrive.

Lastly, the CDE has launched Preschool to 3rd grade (P-3) webinars to demonstrate alignment practices across different elements such as inclusive practices, curriculum, assessment, support for multilingual learners, Black/African American, and tribal communities, and general principles from the science of learning and development “pushing up” from preschool into the early grades.

²⁴ See <https://www.cde.ca.gov/sp/cd/Re/documents/boysofcolor.pdf>.

Appendix D: Long Descriptions

Figure 1: P-3 Alignment in California

The upper left corner depicts the California's Great Start logo. Beneath is a timeline with labeled markers for 0-3, PreK (3–4-year-olds), TK (open to all 4s), K, grade 1, grade 2 and grade 3. This timeline depicts the continuity and progression of children's learning experiences through Early Learning and Care, UPK, the P-3 System and TK-12 system. The markers for 0-3 and PreK 3–4-year-olds are bracketed with the heading Early Learning and Care below. The Markers for PreK and TK are bracketed with UPK below. The label P-3 system encompasses PreK through grade 3 above the timeline. The markers for TK open to all 4s, K, grades 1, 2, and 3 are labeled with TK-12 system.

[Return to Text](#)

Figure 2: Pathways into Elementary School

From left to right are four progressive steps to elementary school with arrows pointing to the next step to the right. The first step is titled "Early Learning and Care 0-3 years old" and lists different options for Early Learning and Care: Early Head Start/Head Start, State-funded Preschool, Licensed Childcare Center or Home, Family, Friend and Neighbor Caregiver. The second step is titled "Universal PreKindergarten 3-4 years old" and lists different PK options: Head Start, State-Funded Preschool, Transitional Kindergarten (TK), Private PreK Provider, and Family choice of Childcare or Home. The third step is titled "Kindergarten 5-years-old" and beneath is the text: "Starting Kindergarten. The Fourth step is titled "First Grade 6-years-old" and beneath is the text "Some children will stay home or be enrolled with a private K provider prior to entering public school at First grade."

[Return to Text](#)

Figure 3: A P-3 Continuum of Play-based Learning Strategies

This graphic depicts the continuum of play-based learning strategies ranging from child directed, educator guided to educator directed. At the top from left to right are the headings "Child Directed", "Educator Guided" and "Educator Directed". Directly beneath the title "Child Directed" is a box titled "Free Play" with the text: "Educator observes, reflects and ensures the availability of time, space, and materials that are responsive to children's interests." Underneath and between the headings "Child Directed" and "Educator Guided" is a box titled "Inquiry" with the text: "Educator extends child-initiated ideas, interests, and exploration by asking questions and providing opportunities for investigation." Directly beneath the heading "Educator Guided" is a box labeled "Collaborative Play" with the text: "Educator uses opportunities to play with children to incorporate targeted skill development into their play (e.g., supporting math skills by introducing pretend money into children's grocery store play)." Underneath and between the headings "Educator Guided" and "Educator Directed" is a box titled "Playful

Learning” with the text: “Educator designs targeted learning activities that are play-based (e.g., putting on a puppet show or conducting a scavenger hunt).” Directly underneath the heading “Educator Directed” is a box titled “Learning Games” with the text: “Educator engages children in prescribed activities with rules designed to facilitate specific skill development, usually in Literacy and math (e.g., matching games, dice games, or word games).”

[Return to Text](#)

Figure 4: Learning Stems from Play

In the top left is the title “Learning Stems from Play: Considerations for Implementing UPK Instructional Time.” Beneath the title is text: “Learning thrives in an environment that affirms cultural and linguistic diversity, actively combats racism and pursues equity, embraces inclusion and promotes belonging for each and every child.” To the right of this text is a drawing of a tree. The roots of the tree are labeled, “Strengthening home language skills” and “building social-emotional skills.” The trunk of the tree is labeled “Playful Learning.” Each leaf of the tree contains text. The leftmost leaf is titled “Learning Centers.” This leaf contains the text: “Children choose and explore a range of open-ended, child-led and teacher-guided playful learning centers in different content areas covered in the Preschool Learning Foundations...” This text is continued on the right most leaf reading, “...Available centers may focus on art, dramatic play, blocks/engineering, nature/science, math, literacy, sand/water or sensory tables, puzzles/games, and can be connected to the curriculum unit of study or read-aloud book.” The leaf above the leaf titled “Learning Centers” is titled, “Small-Group Math and Literacy Instruction” and contains the text, “Including scaffolding and individualized support and assessment.” The Leaf above it is titled, “Music, Movement, Mindfulness” and includes the text, “Including integration with routines to foster independence and self-regulation.” To the right another leaf is titled, “Read-Aloud” and includes text reading, “Opportunity for book discussion or storytelling/acting and thematic connections to centers and content areas.” Further right and below is another leaf titled, “Community Building & Teacher Modeling” with the text, “Opportunity for teacher to introduce or model a new content area or unit of study (e.g., science), and children to engage in social conversation and sharing of their ideas and experiences.”

[Return to Text](#)

Figure 5: Example Logic Model

A graphical representation of the Logic model depicting the relationship between vision/goals, available resources, activities and outputs and outcomes (short term, medium term and long term). The top of this graphic depicts a box with the title “Vision/Goals” as the starting point. Beneath “Vision/Goals” are the headings “Resources”, “Activities” and “Outputs” with directional arrows pointing from “Resources” to “Activities” and from “Activities” to “Outputs.” An Arrow points down from “Outputs” to a Box titled “Outcomes” with headings for “Short-term Outcomes”, “Mid-term Outcomes, and “Long-term Outcomes.”

[Return to Text](#)