



+



San Francisco Office
of Early Care & Education

Universal PreK

Universal Prekindergarten (UPK) will exist for all four-year old children in California by 2025-26. UPK is a mixed delivery system that brings together programs across early learning, and includes other PreK programs serving three- and four-year old children. These include Transitional Kindergarten (TK) and the California State Preschool Program (CSPP), both administered by the California Department of Education; the federal Head Start Program; non-profit community-based organizations (CBOs) that operate a preschool learning experience; family child care (FCC); and private preschools. The aim of UPK is to ensure that every four-year old child – regardless of background, race, zip code, immigration status, or income level – has equitable access to a quality learning experience the year before kindergarten. UPK also ensures that families have a meaningful choice for programs that can support the specific needs of their children.

As part of UPK, Transitional Kindergarten is being expanded in school districts throughout the state. Questions are being asked about what increased TK opportunities means for the current mixed delivery system serving four-year olds.

Universal PreK – Frequently Asked Questions

What is Universal PreK (UPK)?

UPK is a mixed delivery approach that brings together programs across early learning, relying heavily on Transitional Kindergarten (TK) and California State Preschool Program (CSPP), as well as Head Start, community-based organizations (CBOs), including family child care, and private preschool. UPK ensures that every four-year old child – regardless of background, race, zip code, immigration status, or income level – has equitable access to a quality learning experience the year before kindergarten. UPK also ensures that families have a meaningful choice for programs that can support the specific needs of their children.

What is Transitional Kindergarten (TK)?

TK is required by the state and part of the public school system. It was established to increase the options for children to attend an early learning program the year before Kindergarten. It is one approach in the mixed delivery system for achieving UPK, and the only program that must serve any four-year old child that wants to enroll by 2025-26. TK programs are not preschool classrooms or child development programs. They are part of the K-12 public school system and are the first year of a two-year kindergarten program, which uses a modified kindergarten curriculum. TK programs are intended to be aligned to the California Preschool Learning Foundations developed by the California Department of Education (CDE). TK programs are required to be taught by a teacher who meets credentialing requirements. Although TK is not compulsory, local education agencies (LEAs) are required to offer TK classes for all age-eligible children whose families apply to attend.

Are Universal PreK (UPK) and Transitional Kindergarten (TK) the same thing?

Transitional Kindergarten is part of Universal PreK, but not the only part. UPK stands for Universal Prekindergarten, which, by 2025–26 will exist for all four-year-old children in California. UPK is a mixed delivery system that brings together programs across early learning, and includes other PreK programs serving three- and four-year old children. These include the California State Preschool Program (CSPP), also administered by the California Department of Education; the federal Head Start Program; non-profit community-based organizations (CBOs) that operate a preschool learning experience; family child care (FCC); and private preschools.

What is the UPK Plan?

Each Local Education Authority (LEA) is required to develop a plan for consideration by the governing board at a public meeting on or before June 30, 2022, for how all 4 year old children in the attendance area of the LEA will have access to full-day learning programs the year before kindergarten that meet the needs of parents, including through partnerships with:

- The LEA's expanded learning offerings
- The After School Education and Safety Program (ASES)
- The California State Preschool Program
- Head Start programs
- Other community-based early learning and care programs

Can SFUSD subcontract to community-based centers and family child care homes to provide TK?

No. TK is part of the TK-12 public school system and reimbursed to school districts through Average Daily Attendance (ADA), therefore TK cannot be subcontracted to non-SFUSD programs. However, 4 year olds of TK age can be enrolled in other PreK programs, not just TK at SFUSD, such as CSPP, Head Start, non-profit community-based organizations that operate a preschool learning experience, family child care homes, and private preschools

Will families who are seeking to enroll their four-year-old child in a program have to choose TK in lieu of another preschool or early education program?

No. Eligibility for transitional kindergarten (TK) does not affect eligibility for another programs including the California State Preschool Program (CSPP), Head Start, as well as other subsidized programs administered by the California Department of Social Services (CDSS). Families whose children are eligible for TK and are also eligible for subsidized early learning and care programs will still be able to choose to send their child to those programs, e.g. TK age eligibility will not prevent a child from being able to enroll in CSPP as long as the family meets the CSPP eligibility requirements. Families may also continue to choose to stay at their community ECE program, or enroll their children in family child care, private for-profit or non-profit CBO preschool programs, or choose to keep their children at home.

What is the ratio of teachers to children in TK?

Currently 1 teacher to 12 children. (1:12 is the minimum state licensing requirement.) From 2023-24 the requirement will be 1 teacher to 10 children.

Will there be 24 children in SFUSD TK classrooms?

Contractually with SFUSD labor partner (United Educators of San Francisco), the student ratio for TK is 22 students per classroom, which translates to 1 teacher to 11 children.

What is required to become a TK teacher? What are the different options in terms of credentials and permits?

TK is the first year of a two-year kindergarten experience. Therefore, the credential requirements for TK teachers are the same as those currently required by the state of kindergarten teachers—a Multiple Subject Credential. Additionally, TK teachers must meet one of the following by August 1, 2023:

- (1) At least 24 units in early childhood education or child development, or both;
- (2) Professional experience in a classroom setting with preschool-aged children that a local educational agency (LEA) deems comparable to 24 units; or
- (3) A Child Development Teacher Permit issued from the Commission on Teacher Credentialing (CTC).

Any current credentialed teacher who is or was assigned to teach TK *on or before* July 1, 2015, is able to teach TK without having to meet additional requirements. Any credentialed teacher assigned to teach TK *after* July 1, 2015, will have until August 1, 2023, to meet the above-mentioned education requirements.

Are non-SFUSD teachers also going to be required to have a Multiple Subject Credential if the preschool program enrolls only TK aged children?

No - not for community-based programs like CBOs, FCC, etc. The credential is only for SFUSD teachers.

How does SFUSD plan to recruit so many TK teachers?

SFUSD will need to plan for the future teacher pipeline and how to recruit teachers with a Multiple Subject Credential and an ECE background. For FY22-23, SFUSD will not need to recruit additional TK teachers.

Is TK full-day, full year?

TK schedule is school day, school year, just like K-12. Now, it is TK-12. SFUSD will offer 6 hours of instructional TK per day. TK classrooms already operate like PreK classrooms. There are many opportunities for children to engage with their environment. Extended hours can be provided in various settings, e.g. SFUSD afterschool program on site, or Excel program operated by CBO on SFUSD site, or CBO PreK center, or FCC, or Head Start.

Are TK children who are dual language learners going to have instruction in their home languages?

SFUSD currently serves children who speak many languages other than English and have many teaching staff who speak other languages. There are already TK DLL classrooms and one that specifically designated as a DLL English/Spanish immersion classroom. SFUSD hopes to have more in the future.

What is the application process for TK for families?

The enrollment system is not changing for now at SFUSD. The same process that enrolls K-12 will now expand to include TK-12. The Enrollment Placement Center at 555 Franklin will accept paper and online applications. Just like kindergarten, anyone who applies is given a placement but it might not be the family's first choice.

Will the SFUSD provide transportation for TK?

No. Only for Special Education Services (SPED).

Do TK classrooms have bathrooms in them?

TK follows the requirements for kindergarten – there will be a bathroom inside the classroom or just outside the classroom.

Will children in TK classrooms automatically be enrolled in Kindergarten at the same site?

Currently families must reapply for Kindergarten regardless of the school where they are attending PreK or TK.

How many TK children will be enrolled at SFUSD?

It is projected that up to 1,500 4 year olds will be enrolled in TK by 2025-26. There are approximately 6,000 4 year olds in San Francisco.

How will TK impact Preschool For All (PFA)?

PFA is not going away; it was legislated by Prop C passed by voters in 2014 for 25 years. The Department of Early Childhood (DEC: an emerging department of OECE + First 5 SF) is reviewing the part-day funding and programmatic structure of PFA. This will require a community engagement process, including a full review of how our program design aligns with TK curricula/standards. As DEC considers the possible impact of UPK on community ECE programs, we are also thinking about strategies to ensure the entire system remains strong, including expanding access to UPK to low-income families and access for infants and toddlers to low/moderate-income families.