

A Parent Guide to Understanding the Difference Between Transitional Kindergarten (TK) & Preschool Programs

When making decisions for your family and child(ren), having clear and concise information is helpful. This guide contains objective information to help families understand the difference between what preschool programs and Transitional Kindergarten (TK) offer and help families decide on the best program for their rising four-year old child.



ASPECTS OF THE PROGRAM	PRESCHOOL PROGRAM (Family Child Care or Center Based)	TRANSITIONAL KINDERGARTEN (TK)
HOURS OF CARE	Typically full day care is available, M-F spanning the hours of 7am-6pm.	Part day program M-F for 3 hours/day is offered. Program typically starts between 8:00 and 8:30am with after school care available for a fee, depending on the school and district.
SCHEDULE OF CARE	Available year round and typically closed in observance of federal holidays.	Program available August - June when K-12 is in session and closed in observance of federal holidays and school breaks. (During breaks, schools may offer care for a fee.)
COST	Costs typically range from \$1300 - \$2100 per month depending on the type of program. Low and moderate income families may qualify for financial support to offset the costs of care.	Program is provided by the state in alignment with public education (Kindergarten - 12th grade) at no cost.
CURRICULUM	Philosophy varies with focus on children's social emotional and cognitive development, kindergarten readiness and life long learning.	Standardized Common Core curriculum issued by the state of California is used.
OVERSIGHT	Department of Social Services	California Department of Education
NAP PERIODS	Rest periods are required by the Department of Social Services.	Rest periods are not required.

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QUALITY ASSESSMENTS	Quality assessments like the Early Childhood Environment Rating Scale (ECERS), Quality Rating Improvement System (QRIS), or National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) Accreditation are commonly used.	The CA Office of Education states that quality assessment tools are not required in TK classrooms. Standardized Common Core curriculum standards are followed.
CHILD DEVELOPMENT ASSESSMENTS	The Ages and Stages Questionnaire is often used in partnership with families. The Desired Results Developmental Profile, or other tools are also used.	The CA Office of Education requires assessments when a child has a serious or moderate delay. Assessments may also be done when a mild delay is noticed by families or teachers.
OUTDOOR PLAY TIME	Children are encouraged to play outdoors throughout the day.	Outdoor time is limited due to required indoor instructional minutes.
TOILET LEARNING	The program will work with families on toilet learning.	Toilet learning is subject to the district's decision.

Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ)



WHAT IS TK (TRANSITIONAL KINDERGARTEN)?

TK is the first year of a two year kindergarten program. It is part of a larger California universal preschool approach. TK Standards can be found here:

<https://tkcalifornia.org>



WHEN CAN I REGISTER/ APPLY FOR TK?

TK is available on a rolling basis for the Palo Alto Unified School District (pausd.org/enrollment/registration). Please ask which schools will be providing TK for the year you need it.



HOW CAN I FIND A PRESCHOOL PROGRAM OR GET HELP PAYING FOR ONE?

Resources include mychildcareplan.org, the Santa Clara County Office of Education at childcarescc.org/families/paying-care, or for local information, go to cityofpaloalto.org/childcare.



This fact sheet was developed in direct response to families and child care programs requesting help to understand the differences between Transitional Kindergarten (TK) and preschool programs in order to make an informed choice. The fact sheet was developed by PAACECE (Palo Alto Advisory Committee on Early Care and Education) with the intent to be objective and to provide families with helpful information.