



**Universal**  
PreKindergarten

*California's  
Great Start*

Universal PreKindergarten (UPK) is the expansion of the state's mixed delivery system to meet the early education needs of 3 and 4-year-old children and their families.

UPK brings more choices for preschool, including Transitional Kindergarten which will be available to all 4-year-olds by 2025-2026.

UPK is an essential part of transforming California's schools and giving every student in California a great start.

# A Holistic Approach for California's Schools

Together in California we are transforming our education system to meet the needs of all children and set them up for success in learning and life.



## A concentrated and statewide approach to early education is the right approach.

Students with access to quality PreK are better set up for success as they begin school. Success indicators include:

-  Improved cognitive development
-  Higher achievement in math and reading throughout elementary school
-  A lesser chance of needing specialized education services
-  A decreased likelihood of being held back in school

**Benefits continue over time, including positive effects for the key indicators measured by the California School Dashboard:**

-  Higher academic achievement
-  Increased likelihood of high school graduation
-  Increase in achievement for English learners
-  Increased likelihood of college degree

# We envision a UPK where:

- Each child enters school thriving and ready to succeed in their educational journey.
- All families, particularly in communities of color and in historically-marginalized communities, have high-quality early education opportunities and feel welcomed in early education spaces.
- Families have more choices to select the PreK program that best fits their needs, without compromising their children's access to learning opportunities.
- Teachers are supported to provide experiences that nurture each child to reach their full potential.
- Authentic partnerships among leaders of California's tribal nations and TK-12 and early education leaders are formed to share knowledge and insight.



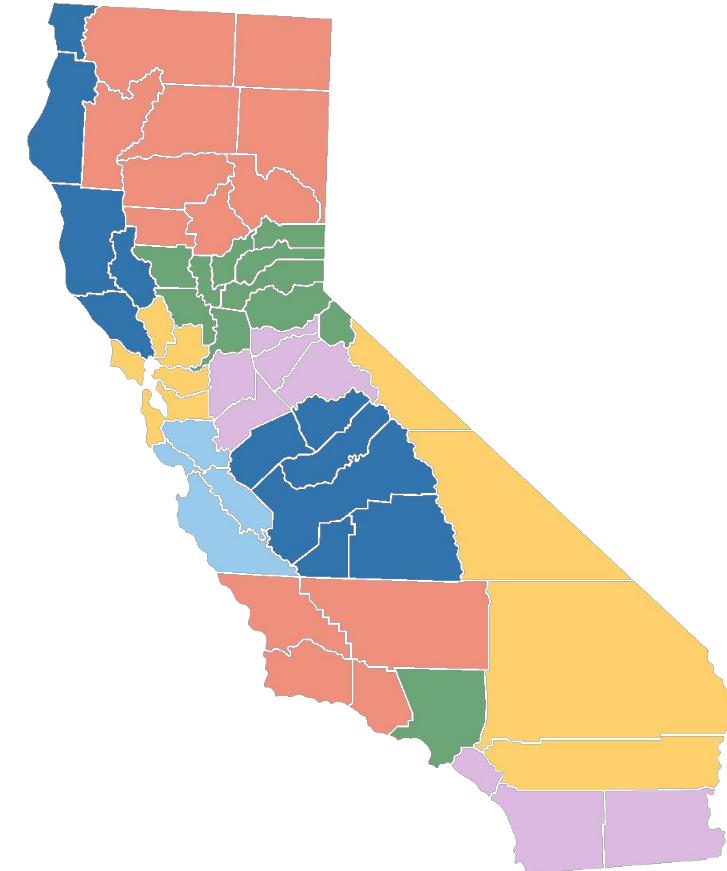
# Through UPK, children will be supported by:

- Experiencing joyful learning that fosters their curiosity and sense of belonging.
- Honoring and affirming their culture, race, languages, and identities.
- Supporting and including children of all abilities.
- Learning how to manage stress and regulate their emotions, essential skills they need for learning in a classroom.
- Completing grade three with the foundational skills they need (reading, math, social-emotional) to learn in later grades.



# California will bring a community-first approach to UPK implementation:

- California is a diverse state, and implementation will look different across California's many regions
- TK-12 districts and early childhood leaders know their communities best and are well-suited to make decisions based on their communities' needs
- Partnerships with tribal communities and education centers are essential to creating a comprehensive UPK system
- Localized systems are better able to respond to the needs of their community members and students



# UPK must be built with the input from local communities

- Successful UPK programs will align their practices with needs of cultural and social groups in their community to achieve more equitable outcomes for students.
- Strong, reciprocal relationships between TK-12 & early learning programs, and local communities are necessary to co-create UPK programs that are culturally responsive.
- As sovereign nations, tribal communities must be included in the planning and implementation of local UPK programs.



# Clear communications with families is key

- Families need to have a clear understanding of what programs are available and that, if eligible, they have a choice in which program their child attends.
- Families should be welcomed at school to learn more about options and share the needs of their child.
- Providers should talk with families to understand what hours and programs are needed to support their children.
- Families' cultural expectations and values, including families from tribal communities, should be acknowledged and understood.
- CDE has [created materials](#) to support your work in communicating with families.



# Early childhood educators play an essential role

- Educating young children requires a unique skillset with a foundational understanding of how to support young children's developmental needs and pedagogical expertise in how to design joyful learning activities that captivate children's natural curiosity.
- CA Department of Education and CA Commission on Teacher Credentialing issued grants aimed at increasing educators' capacities and building the early childhood education workforce pipeline.
- In partnership, Local Education Agencies (LEAs) and early childhood education leaders must coordinate their plans for adequate staffing across the UPK system.
- Current and aspiring early childhood educators need to see what pathways exist locally for entering and advancing in the field.



# Meeting the needs of all children

UPK in CA is designed to be inclusive by:

- Saving 10% of all CA State Preschool spots for children with disabilities by 2025.
- Providing educators anti-bias training about developmentally appropriate behaviors and respect for cultural differences.
- Updating teaching practices and curriculum to incorporate ways for all children to show what they know.
- Ensuring all teachers understand how to support dual language learners and encourage the use of home languages in the classroom.
- Support tribal language revitalization programs in coordination with tribal leaders when possible.



# What is included in UPK?





UPK is an important part of a statewide effort to provide full-circle support for children and families and transform California's schools to be more community-focused and equitable.

# What's included in UPK:



Expansion of access to UPK programs for all 4-year-olds and more 3-year-olds



Access to two free meals each school day for all public education students in TK-12 regardless of income status



Increase to Early Childhood Mental Health Consultation reimbursement for California State Preschool Programs and other subsidized preschool providers, and expansion of supports for inclusion of more children with disabilities in UPK programs



New expanded learning opportunities available during the summer and before and after school, building on existing programs



Additional supports for more bilingual UPK programs, including tribal language revitalization programs, and expansion of anti-bias training confronting hate, bigotry, and racism



Funding to support more districts and schools to work closely with teachers, students, families, and community partners to reduce barriers and increase access to services



Additional supports for UPK educators and leaders to increase early childhood knowledge and expertise across systems



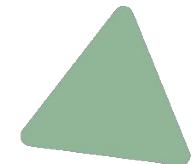
Guidance for partnering with Tribal Governments, integrating Indigenous expertise, and engaging Indigenous community members in UPK implementation



# California Universal Meals Program

## State Meal Requirement Updated:

- Starting in Transitional Kindergarten (TK), breakfast **and** lunch available to **all** students



## Federal Meal Requirement:

- To receive State funds, districts/schools must be on the National School Lunch Program (NSLP) and School Breakfast Program (SBP) and comply with all requirements including collection of meal applications
- Requires schools that meet the federal definition of high poverty to apply for the Community Eligibility Provision (CEP) or another Provision





# Access to Meals Improves Student Outcomes

The Universal Meals Program (UMP) is a critical part of supporting students to reach their full academic potential.

Greater access to nutritious school meals:

- Decreases overall food insecurity and for many students the school meals are the healthiest meals of their day
- Improves performance in school
- Reduces absenteeism
- Supports better concentration
- Lowers obesity rates and promotes lifelong healthier habits

Providing nutritious school meals starting in Transitional Kindergarten (TK) means building healthy habits and healthier bodies from the start.



# Inclusion and the Least Restrictive Environment

- Inclusion of children with and without disabilities is a priority for transforming California's schools.
- California State Preschool programs are now required to include children with disabilities and will be supported to do so with resources from the State.
- Access, participation, and supports are defining features of inclusive, high-quality early learning programs.
- The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) requires a free appropriate public education (FAPE) in the least restrictive environment (LRE) be made available to children with disabilities by:
  - To the maximum extent appropriate, children with disabilities, are educated with children who are not disabled.





# Benefits of Implementing Inclusive Settings

Inclusion means students with disabilities are valued members of the school community.

Including children with disabilities in early childhood programs with their peers without disabilities provides children with a sense of belonging, positive social relationships, and development to reach their full potential.

Inclusive early learning environments:

- Reduce the need for future special education services
- Decrease long-term special education costs
- Increase the academic achievement for all students in the classroom
- Provide children with disabilities significant developmental and learning progress
- Produce positive development, social, and attitudinal outcomes in same-age peers without disabilities



# Expanded Learning Opportunities

The Expanded Learning Opportunities Program provides \$4 Billion in apportionments to all classroom based local educational agencies in 2022-23 that have Transitional Kindergarten (TK) through sixth grade students.

In order to receive funding, recipients must operate:

- On school days, in-person, with qualified staff
- Before School and/or After School
- No less than nine hours\*
- Core Day + Expanded Learning = Nine Hours\*
- Operate on at least 30 non-school days, in-person, for no less than nine hours





# Preparing Students for College, Career and Life

California's Expanded Learning programs are an integral part of young people's education. Expanded Learning programs, starting in Transitional Kindergarten (TK), support families' need to work and ensure students experience:

- A safe and nurturing environment that supports the developmental, social-emotional and physical needs of all students.
- Opportunities to learn about and practice balanced nutrition, physical activity and other healthy choices in an environment that supports a healthy lifestyle.
- A culture of diversity and equity regardless of race, color, religion, sex, age, income level, national origin, physical ability, sexual orientation and/or gender identity and expression.
- Activities that reflect active, meaningful and engaging learning methods, which promote collaboration and expand student horizons.



# California's Vision of Success for English Learners

- UPK is committed to supporting multilingual opportunities for children, where possible, and ensuring English learners thrive.
- We are looking to create programs where multilingual learners “fully and meaningfully access and participate in a twenty-first century education from early childhood through grade twelve that results in their attaining high levels of English proficiency, mastery of grade level standards, and opportunities to develop proficiency in multiple languages.”
- The California Department of Education has developed an [English Learner Roadmap](#) to provide guidance to local educational agencies (LEAs) on welcoming, understanding, and educating the diverse population of students who are dual language learners and English learners attending California public schools.





# Supporting Multilingual Learners

Supporting multilingual learners is critically important as an estimated 60% of California's children speak a language other than English at home. Additionally, young dual language learners and all multilingual learners can benefit from multilingual programs.

Multilingual programs are critical because they:

- Increase students' ability to concentrate, solve problems, and focus, as well as improve students' academic outcomes.
- Encourage students' connection to their home language and culture.
- Enrich schools and communities with the cultural and linguistic assets that are shared by multilingual children and families.

UPK will create more opportunities for multilingual learners to get the supports they need, earlier, to support a strong foundation in both English and their home language.