



**For Immediate Release**  
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**Study Confirms Benefits for Students Attending California's  
Transitional Kindergarten Program**  
Provides Advantages to All Students Entering Kindergarten

**Sacramento** – A new study released today by the American Institutes for Research (AIR), an independent San Mateo-based research organization, confirms California's innovative transitional kindergarten (TK) program benefits all students entering kindergarten. Along with stronger mathematics and literacy skills, the study shows students are more engaged in their learning than students who do not attend TK. In particular, TK benefits English learners and low-income students regardless of instructional practices or classroom structure.

"Transitional kindergarten gives students an advantage of 3-6 months of learning in literacy and mathematics skills at kindergarten entry, which is quite notable, especially given that a large majority of the comparison students attended preschool themselves," said Heather Quick, AIR managing researcher and study principal investigator.

Notable findings include:

- **TK gives students an advantage at kindergarten entry on a range of literacy and mathematics skills**, including letter and word identification, phonological awareness, expressive vocabulary, problem solving, and knowledge of mathematical symbols and concepts. Students who attended TK were also rated as more engaged by their teachers, compared to their peers. These advantages are notable given the large percentage (over 80%) of students in the comparison group who attended preschool while eligible students were enrolled in TK.
- **TK is effective for all groups of students who participated.** It showed a particularly notable impact on language skills for English learners and mathematics skills for low-income students at kindergarten entry.
- **TK has no detectable impact on students' executive function or incidence of problem behaviors** at kindergarten entry.
- **Impacts of TK are smaller at the end of kindergarten, though TK students continue to have an advantage over non-TK students on letter and word identification skills.** Overall, non-TK students appeared to catch up with their TK peers on most measures, although both TK and comparison students demonstrated growth at or above what would be expected for their age on several assessments. The impact of TK on the literacy and mathematics skills of low-income and Hispanic students also persisted through kindergarten.

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- **There was little variation in the impact of TK by classroom or instructional characteristics.** Stand-alone classrooms were not significantly different from TK/kindergarten combination classrooms in their impact; half-day and full-day classrooms showed similar effects; and differences in assessed quality of teacher-child interactions did not change the program's impact. These findings suggest TK's positive impact for students may be driven by the characteristics that TK programs have in common (and that make TK a unique approach to prekindergarten): credentialed teachers with bachelor's degrees, close alignment with kindergarten, and inclusion of students from all income levels.

"This report captures how TK serves its intended children, and how it might have implications on how TK does, and should, influence pre-kindergarten and kindergarten policy in California," said Camille Maben, Executive Director of First 5 California, a co-funder of this study. Ms. Maben added, "The TK experiment seems to be working in California for our TK eligible children—what can we learn moving forward?"

This study concludes a multi-year effort by AIR on TK funded by the Heising-Simons Foundation, the David and Lucile Packard Foundation, and First 5 California. Click [here](#) to view this report and others.

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*First 5 California was established in 1998 when voters passed Proposition 10, which taxes tobacco products to fund services for children ages 0 to 5 and their families. First 5 California programs and resources are designed to educate and support teachers, parents, and caregivers in the critical role they play during a child's first five years – to help California kids receive the best possible start in life and thrive. For more information, please visit [www.cffc.ca.gov](http://www.cffc.ca.gov).*