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Transitional Kindergarten is Back On

By Andrea A. Firth

Transitional kindergarten—first on, then off, is now on again. "We should be accustomed to the uncertainty of education funding from the State at this point," says Dr. Fred Brill, Superintendent of the Lafayette School District. Lafayette, like other school districts in the area, placed transitional kindergarten on hold this past spring when funding for the program was eliminated. With the recent passage of the state budget, funding for the transitional kindergarten program was reinstated, and public schools across the state are now required to provide students with fall birthdays access to an extra year of kindergarten.

Transitional kindergarten is part of the Kindergarten Readiness Act of 2010, which will move the entry age for kindergarten from age five by December 2 to age five by September 1. The entry age change will be phased in over the next three years and provide students who move from age four to five in the fall the option to attend two years of kindergarten. (See table)

For the upcoming school year, students who turn five years old between November 2 and December 2 are eligible to participate in transitional kindergarten. In Lafayette School District there are at least 16 students who qualify to participate in transitional kindergarten this year, and Moraga School District reports a similar number of potential transitional kindergarten candidates. Both districts have already had students enroll in the program and expect others to follow; information on how to enroll in transitional kindergarten is available at the district websites. Orinda Union School District also plans to offer the new kindergarten option and will have transitional kindergarten information posted on the district website soon.

"Transitional kindergarten represents a great opportunity for these young students," says Brill, noting that kindergarten has evolved to be a much more academic program over the past several years. Although the state has mandated that transitional kindergarten have a separate curriculum, the specific educational standards to be applied have not yet been determined. Currently Lafayette School District plans to incorporate transitional kindergarten students into its regular kindergarten classrooms. Moraga will determine how to structure the transitional kindergarten program (as a single or combination class and at which schools), depending on the number of students that enroll.

"Our teachers are well versed in differentiation, and I am confident that the kindergarten teachers can integrate these younger students well," says Brill adding, "We are excited to have this new cohort of students joining our schools."

Kindergarten Entry Age and TK Eligibility

School Year Kindergarten Entry Age Transitional Kindergarten Eligible

2012-13 Five by November 1 Five between 11/2 and 12/2

2013-14 Five by October 1 Five between 10/2 and 12/2

2014-15 Five by September 1 Five between 9/2 and 12/2

TK: Transitional Kindergarten

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