Child Care and Preschool: Governor's Policy Proposals

L E G I S L A T I V E   A N A L Y S T ' S   O F F I C E

Presented to:
Senate Budget and Fiscal Review—
Subcommittee No. 1 on Education
Hon. Anthony Portantino, Chair

Subcommittee No. 3 on Health and Human Services
Hon. Richard Pan, Chair

Overview of Preschool Programs

☑ **State Has Two Main Preschool Programs**

- In 2016-17, State Preschool is serving an estimated 164,000 three- and four-year olds from families with incomes at or below 70 percent of state median income as calculated in 2007 ($42,216 for a family of three).

- In 2016-17, Transitional Kindergarten is serving an estimated 80,000 four-year olds with birthdays between September 2 and December 2.

☑ **Programs Offered by Two Main Types of Providers**

- All children in Transitional Kindergarten and roughly two-thirds of children in State Preschool are served by local education agencies (LEAs). About half of State Preschool providers are LEAs.

- About one-third of children in State Preschool are served by community-based organizations, such as non-profits.

☑ **Programs Vary in Length**

- State Preschool offers two options. The shorter program option operates at least three hours per day, 175 days per year. The longer program option operates at least 6.5 hours per day, 250 days per year. Parents must be working for their children to be eligible for the longer program option.

- Transitional Kindergarten programs operate at least three hours per day, 180 days per year. The state requires schools to operate Transitional Kindergarten and Kindergarten programs located on the same site for the same length of day.

Standards and Oversight for Preschool Programs

☑ Licensing and Monitoring

- State Preschool programs must be licensed by Community Care Licensing (CCL), a division of the Department of Social Services, and comply with CCL's health and safety standards.

- State Preschool programs also must follow additional rules set by the California Department of Education (CDE) regarding classroom environment, which include various health, safety, and programmatic requirements.

- Both CCL and CDE typically visit sites once every three years to monitor compliance with regulations.

- Transitional Kindergarten programs are not licensed or inspected by the state. Instead, they must operate in buildings with the same safety specifications as other K-12 buildings.

☑ Staffing Ratios and Requirements

- State Preschool teachers must have a Child Development Teacher Permit (24 units in early childhood education/child development plus 16 general education units). Programs must have a 1:8 adult-to-child ratio and a 1:24 teacher-to-child ratio.

- Transitional Kindergarten teachers must have a bachelor's degree, a Multiple Subject Teaching Credential, and a Child Development Teacher Permit or comparable training or experience. Programs are required to have at least a 1:33 teacher-to-child ratio.

☑ Quality Rating and Improvement System (QRIS)

- Many State Preschool programs participate in local QRIS. These systems rate quality based on a five-tier matrix and offer resources to improve quality. The minimum State Preschool requirements are roughly equivalent to a Tier 3 rating.

Governor's Policy Proposals

☑ **Allows Part-Day State Preschool Programs to Serve Children With Special Needs if All Eligible and Interested Children Have Been Served First**

☑ **Seeks to Better Align Certain Aspects of State Preschool and Transitional Kindergarten**

- Exempts State Preschool programs run by school districts from licensing requirements.

- Exempts State Preschool providers with QRIS Tier 4 or higher ratings from the State Preschool staffing ratio requirements.

- Allows State Preschool classrooms taught by a teacher with a Multiple Subject Teaching Credential to operate with an adult-to-child-ratio of 1:12.

☑ **Allows School Districts to Run Transitional Kindergarten and Kindergarten Programs on Same Site for Different Lengths of Time**

☑ **Aligns the State Definition of Homelessness With the Federal Definition**

☑ **Allows Providers to Accept Electronic Applications for State Preschool and Child Care**

Assessment

☑ **Not All Eligible Children Being Served**

- ■ We estimate at least one in five income-eligible four-year olds in California are not enrolled in a subsidized preschool program.

☑ **Alignment Proposals Make Complicated System More Complicated**

- ■ Proposal would create different health and safety requirements for State Preschool programs at LEAs and non-LEAs.

- ■ Proposal would make State Preschool rules regarding staffing requirements more complicated.

- ■ Proposal would not align the rules for State Preschool programs at LEAs with the rules for Transitional Kindergarten.

  - – State Preschool programs still would be required to follow CDE's classroom environment rules, which do not apply to Transitional Kindergarten.

  - – State Preschool classrooms with a credentialed teacher still would be required to have an adult-to-child ratio almost three times lower than that of Transitional Kindergarten.

☑ **State Preschool Teacher With a Multiple Subject Teaching Credential but No Early Education Training Might Not Warrant Lower Adult-to-Child Ratio**

☑ **Transitional Kindergarten and Kindergarten Funding Not Aligned With Program Length**

Recommendations

☑ **Serve Eligible Children Before Expanding Eligibility**

☑ **Reject Preschool Alignment Proposals, Pursue Alignment More Holistically**

- To provide for better coherence, make decisions on eligibility criteria, program standards, and funding levels in tandem.

☑ **Adopt Transitional Kindergarten and Kindergarten Program Length Proposal in Tandem With Creating Differential Rates for Part- and Full-Day Programs**

- Would better align school district funding to actual program costs and reduce funding disparities between part-day State Preschool and part-day Transitional Kindergarten.

☑ **No Concern With New Homelessness Definition**

☑ **No Concern With Electronic Applications**