

A Policy Briefing on Early Childhood Education

CTA believes that early childhood education is crucial to students' success in school and life. Kindergarten should be mandatory for all five-year-olds and fully funded early childhood education programs should be available through the public schools. Funding for new pre-school programs should not come at the expense of Proposition 98 unless its funding base is expanded to account for the new students. Preschool educators should be credentialed.

Kindergarten Attendance

Today's kindergarten classroom provides youngsters with skills vital to their success in their academic and professional careers. Attendance should be mandatory for all children aged five years old. A full year of kindergarten should be a prerequisite for advancement to first grade.

Full Day Kindergarten

While CTA recognizes that the 200-minute kindergarten session is the norm, if an extended-day kindergarten were to be negotiated, both an extended-day and the 200-minute day kindergarten should provide time to meet the developmentally based instructional needs of the whole child. Both should include all curricular areas inclusive of Fine Arts and Physical Education as outlined in the state adopted frameworks. An extended-day kindergarten should be no more than the maximum minutes allowed by the Education Code for kindergarten.

Free, Universal Preschool

Access to free universal pre-school should be available to all California children, one year prior to kindergarten eligibility. It should:

1. Be developmentally appropriate;
2. Have a minimum of three hours (180 minutes) per day, 180 days per year; and
3. Be staffed at a ratio not to exceed 1:8; supported by one credentialed teacher and two qualified instructional aides.

California should adopt legislation to fully fund early childhood education programs through the public schools. Any expansion of early childhood education programs should ensure full funding without encumbering current Proposition 98 K-14 programs unless the Average Daily Attendance (ADA) for the expanded program is included in the ADA for determining the amount in the Proposition 98 Trust Fund.