

REL#14-2  
FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE  
January 7, 2014

CONTACT: Giorgos Kazanis  
PHONE: [916-319-0818](tel:916-319-0818)  
E-MAIL: [communications@cde.ca.gov](mailto:communications@cde.ca.gov)

**State Schools Chief Tom Torlakson Co-Sponsoring Legislation to  
Expand Access to School Readiness for State's Youngest Learners**

SACRAMENTO—State Superintendent of Public Instruction Tom Torlakson is co-sponsoring legislation to provide voluntary, high-quality transitional kindergarten to every 4-year-old child in California, he announced at a Sacramento elementary school today.

Senate Bill 837 (Darrell Steinberg, D-Sacramento), the Kindergarten Readiness Act, builds upon the state's existing transitional kindergarten programs to ensure that every 4-year-old has the same opportunity to attend. Torlakson is co-sponsoring the bill with Early Edge California, which works to ensure that children have the early experiences they need to help them succeed in school.

"It's impossible to overstate how important these early years are to a child's future success in school," Torlakson said. "Transitional kindergarten—particularly a full-year, full-day program—can make all the difference, especially for families who may be struggling to give their young children these valuable learning opportunities."

Currently, transitional kindergarten is available only to those 4-year-olds whose birthdays fall too late in the calendar year to be eligible for kindergarten. The Kindergarten Readiness Act of 2014 expands that access to all 4-year-olds.

Recent Stanford University research shows that by age two, low-income children are six months behind in language development compared to the higher-income peers. By age five, low-income children are more than two years behind in language development. Other research shows that children who do not read proficiently by the end of third grade are four times more likely not to graduate from high school on time. Longitudinal studies have demonstrated for years that investing in high-quality early learning programs generates future returns in the form of lower grade retention, lower crime rates, and higher lifetime earnings.

As this legislation moves forward, Torlakson also is reorganizing the California Department of Education to put more attention on transitional kindergarten specifically early education in general. He is renaming the Child Development Division as the Early Education and Support Division, which will focus on the care and educational opportunities for children from birth through age eight. Some of these recommendations can be found in his [Blueprint for Great Schools](#), which his transition team put together leading up to his taking office in 2011.

“This change is about connecting early learning with the K-12 grades, which we know are built upon the foundation established by a child’s earliest schooling,” Torlakson said. “Every child in California should have the same opportunities to learn and thrive.”