



Transitional Kindergarten/ Junior Kindergarten

A Handbook for Soledad Unified School District

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1. Introduction

The Kindergarten Readiness Act of 2010 (Education Code 48000) enacted historic policy reform to help ensure that California children are better prepared to succeed in school and beyond. California schools now implement a two-year Kindergarten program to better meet the needs of young learners. Transitional Kindergarten (TK) is the first year while traditional Kindergarten is the second year. Soledad Unified School District also funds a Junior Kindergarten (JK) program for students that do not meet the birthday cut off date for TK.

2. Goals and Purpose of Transitional Kindergarten (TK) and Junior Kindergarten (JK)

The intent of TK and JK is to provide an extra year of schooling. This is the first year of a two year kindergarten program. TK and JK help address the challenges that many students entering school as a four-year-old may face. These challenges can create difficulties that persist as children advance throughout the grades.

TK and JK act as a bridge between a more flexible play-and-learn environment of preschool and a more structured academic setting of today's kindergarten classroom. TK and JK classes offer learning opportunities that use small group settings, hands-on learning, and a language-rich environment to prepare students for success. The "gift of time" helps students meet the social and academic expectations necessary for success in a traditional kindergarten class the following year.

3. Registration, Admission Criteria and Acceleration of a Student

Transitional Kindergarten (TK) and Junior Kindergarten (JK) registration timelines correspond to the kindergarten enrollment and registration calendar.

Parents need to know the following information as well as any other information the district provides related to enrolling students in school programs:

1. **TK** - A child must be turning 5 years old between **September 2nd and December 2nd to participate in TK.**
2. **JK** - A child must be turning 5 years old between **December 3rd and the first day of school in August to participate in JK.**
3. The TK or JK program is the first year of a two-year kindergarten program and parents need to understand that the second year in kindergarten will greatly benefit the child.
4. Students will complete one year of TK or JK followed by a complete year of kindergarten.
5. Admission criteria into TK or JK is based on the legality that these programs as well as kindergarten are voluntary options for parents.
6. Acceleration is the advancement of a student beyond their current grade vs. promotion is the single grade step most students make year to year.

In the event that a parent requests the acceleration of a student, the following Acceleration Criteria is initiated:

1. Parent requests student to skip the first year (TK) of a two-year Kindergarten program. Parent requests acceleration of their child.
2. District office informs TK teacher and TK Site Principal of the need for a School Wide SST.
3. A School Wide SST is held to discuss with parents the implementation of an Acceleration Plan:

Acceleration Plan

1. Student enters TK program.
2. Student is to be enrolled 6 weeks in the TK program. This allows time for the student to be fully assessed accurately with the DRDP - K (2015).
3. Second School Wide SST is held to discuss results of DRDP - K.
4. Parents, student, teachers and administrator follow the recommendation of the second School wide SST.
5. Admission criteria into TK or JK is based on the legality that these programs as well as kindergarten are voluntary options for parents.

4. Assessments

As with children in any grade, assessment of children in TK and JK plays a key role in supporting children's learning by informing and development of appropriate curriculum and learning activities. This takes place in the form of observational screening and current SUSD developed and adopted TK/JK assessments.

The *Desired Results Developmental Profile - Kindergarten 2015 (DRDP-K 2015) - A Developmental Continuum for Kindergarten* relies primarily on observation. The SUSD developed formal assessment covers developmentally appropriate and educationally significant milestones of a four-year-old or young five-year-old.

5. Foundations and Curricula

Curriculum and the Environment

Creating a quality early learning experience for TK and JK includes three critical components: developing and teaching the whole child; integrated and diverse activities; and social/emotional development.

1. Developing and Teaching the whole child

The TK/JK teacher prepares a wide range of developmentally appropriate activities and experiences within a richly prepared environment. The program recognizes that young children learn best in an environment that encourages and supports various learning styles and opportunities. The child has large time blocks of child directed explorations where experiential opportunities provide an understanding of concepts. The teacher supports development and optimizes learning by recognizing student developmental levels, readiness and teachable moments. The teacher offers instruction and support when appropriate.

2. Integrated and Diverse Activities

The day is balanced with large group, small group, and individual opportunities, indoor and outdoor activities, active and calm time, including free choice and teacher-directed lessons. Learning opportunities surface throughout the day, interwoven with carefully planned curriculum based on the developmental tasks of the age and the interest of the children. There is a natural flow to the day that allows children time to explore and experience their world. Emergent curriculum flows from the children's discoveries.

3. Social/Emotional Development

Social emotional development is a cornerstone in the TK/JK program. Children are encouraged and supported in learning to solve problems, negotiate, and work toward reciprocal relationships with their peers. The social emotional component is foundational and critical for optimizing development. Attachment, emotional awareness, self-regulation and resilience provide the child with a strong sense of self that allows them to fully develop their potential across all learning domains.

Physical Environment

The Physical Environment of the TK/JK program includes carefully planned spaces that encompass all aspects of development. TK/JK students have their own classroom with their own teacher.

Learning Centers include:

- Blocks and items to manipulate
- Dramatic play
- Creative expression
- Science experimentation and discovery
- Literacy (books, writing materials etc.)
- Large motor/small motor activities

6. Length of School Day

TK/JK students follow the SUSD school year calendar. The students school day is either a morning(AM) or afternoon (PM).

***TK Schedule**

8:00 - 9:55 AM - AM Instruction = 115 mins
9:55 - 10:15 AM - AM Recess = 20 mins
10:15 AM - Recess Ends/PM Students Arrive
10:15 - 11:40 AM - AM & PM Instruction = 85 mins
11:40 - 12:20 PM - Lunch = 40 mins
12:20 - 12:40 PM - PM Recess = 20 mins
12:40 - 2:35 PM - PM Instruction = 115 mins

AM = 225 minutes of instruction

PM = 225 minutes of instruction

***JK Schedule**

8:00 - 9:20 - AM Instruction = 80 mins
9:20 - 9:30 - AM recess = 10 mins
9:30 - 11:00 - AM Instruction = 90 mins
11:00 - AM Dismissal
11:35 - PM Arrival
11:35 - 1:30 - PM Instruction = 115 mins
1:30 -1:40 - PM Recess = 10 mins
1:40 - 2:35 - PM Instruction = 55 mins

AM = 180 minutes of instruction

PM = 180 minutes of instruction

*(*TK and JK follow unique schedules due to the fact that the students ages require slightly modified learning environments.)*