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## Transitional Kindergarten on Hold

*By Andrea A. Firth*

Public school districts across Lamorinda have placed their plans for transitional kindergarten on hold following the release of Governor Jerry Brown's preliminary budget, which proposes to cut funding for the program.

The 2010 Kindergarten Readiness Act pushes the entry age for kindergarten, currently age five by December 2nd, back requiring children to turn five by September 1st. The new age requirements will be phased in over three years. For the 2012-2013 school year, students must turn five by November 1st to be eligible for kindergarten. A change lauded by educators.

The Act also includes a provision for grade schools to provide kindergarteners whose birthdays fall in September, October, and November with the option to attend "transitional kindergarten." This new grade level would give these youngest students an extra kindergarten year. And, the grade school districts in Lafayette, Moraga, and Orinda had plans to offer transitional kindergarten starting in the fall.

Dr. Fred Brill, Superintendent of the Lafayette School District, says he is not 100% sure what the final status of transitional kindergarten is for the next school year. Communication about the program from different education resources has been vague and conflicting, says Brill. "It's extraordinarily frustrating, because I want to keep parents informed, especially the parents with incoming student who have November birthdays," he says. The Lafayette School District planned to collect the names of students who age-qualify and are interested in attending transitional kindergarten during their registration in late January, but for now the program is on hold.

According to the Orinda Union School District website, registration and planning for transitional kindergarten will not take place until state funding for the program is reinstated.

The Moraga School District, likewise, will not offer the un-mandated program. However, Courtney Guinn, the Director of Educational Services and Instructional Technology for the Moraga School District, says the district will "pre-register" children for transitional kindergarten at the district's upcoming February registration should the program's status change. Moraga School District will also hold a kindergarten informational meeting on February 2nd starting at 7:00 p.m. in the Joaquin Moraga Middle School Auditorium to further inform parents about these changes.

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