

California's Universal PreKindergarten (UPK) Journey



CALIFORNIA DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Tony Thurmond, State Superintendent of Public Instruction

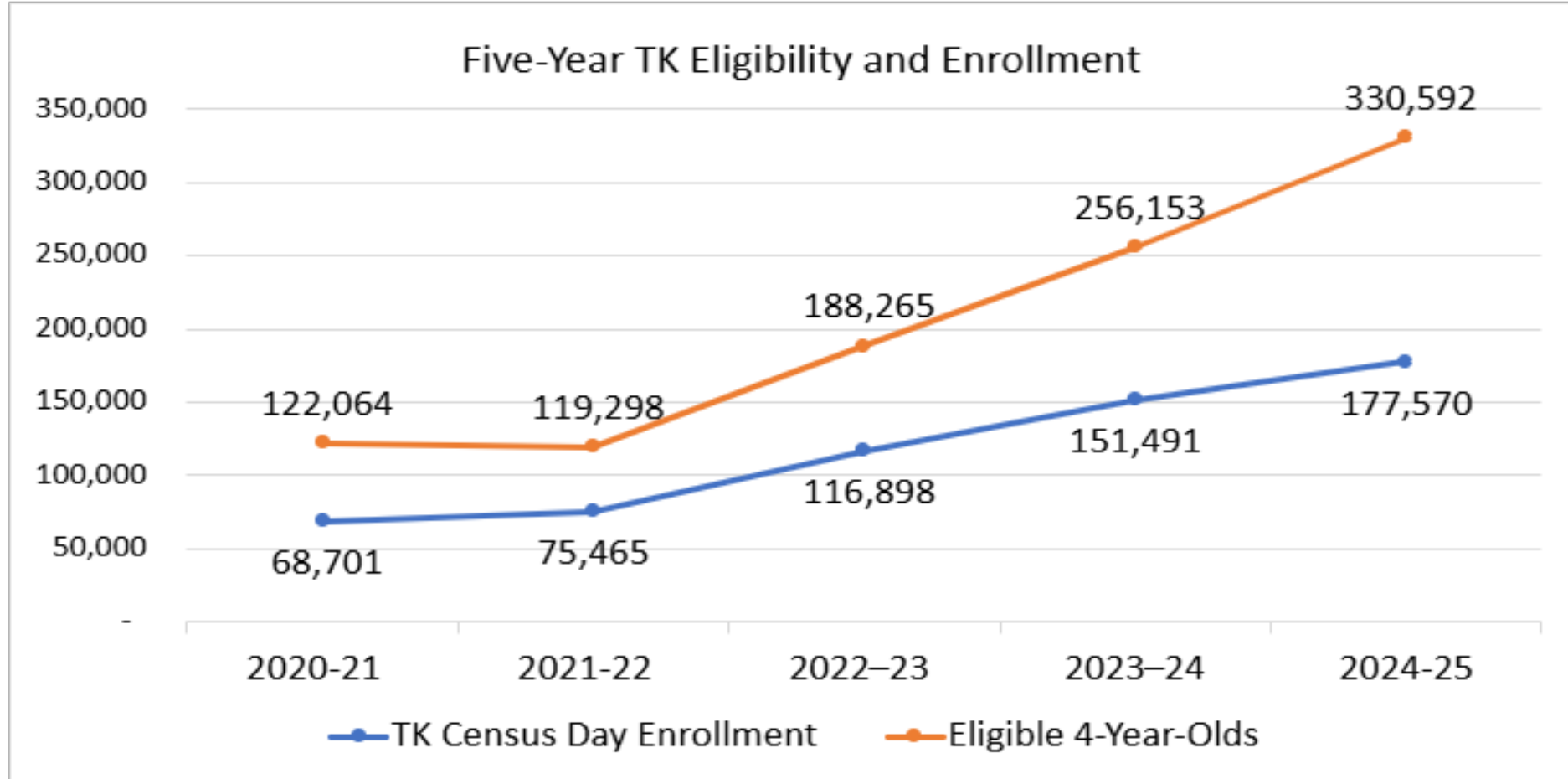
What Progress Has Your State Made in Expanding Access to High-Quality Preschool, and Where Do Gaps Still Exist? (1)

- The 2025-26 budget includes a total of \$6.2 billion for early education, including a historic investment of:
 - Approximately \$3.3 billion for fully implementing Universal Transitional Kindergarten (UTK) for all four-year-old children and
 - \$2.9 billion for California State Preschool Program (CSPP) for eligible two-, three-, four-, and five-year-old children.
- This represents an increase in total appropriation of about \$4.1 billion, compared to 2020-21, to support expansion of UPK.
- This year, California is increasing Transitional Kindergarten (TK) program quality from 3 National Institute for Early Education Research (NIEER) quality benchmarks to 4 NIEER quality benchmarks by implementing a 1:10 staff-child ratio in TK.

What Progress Has Your State Made in Expanding Access to High-Quality Preschool, and Where Do Gaps Still Exist? (2)

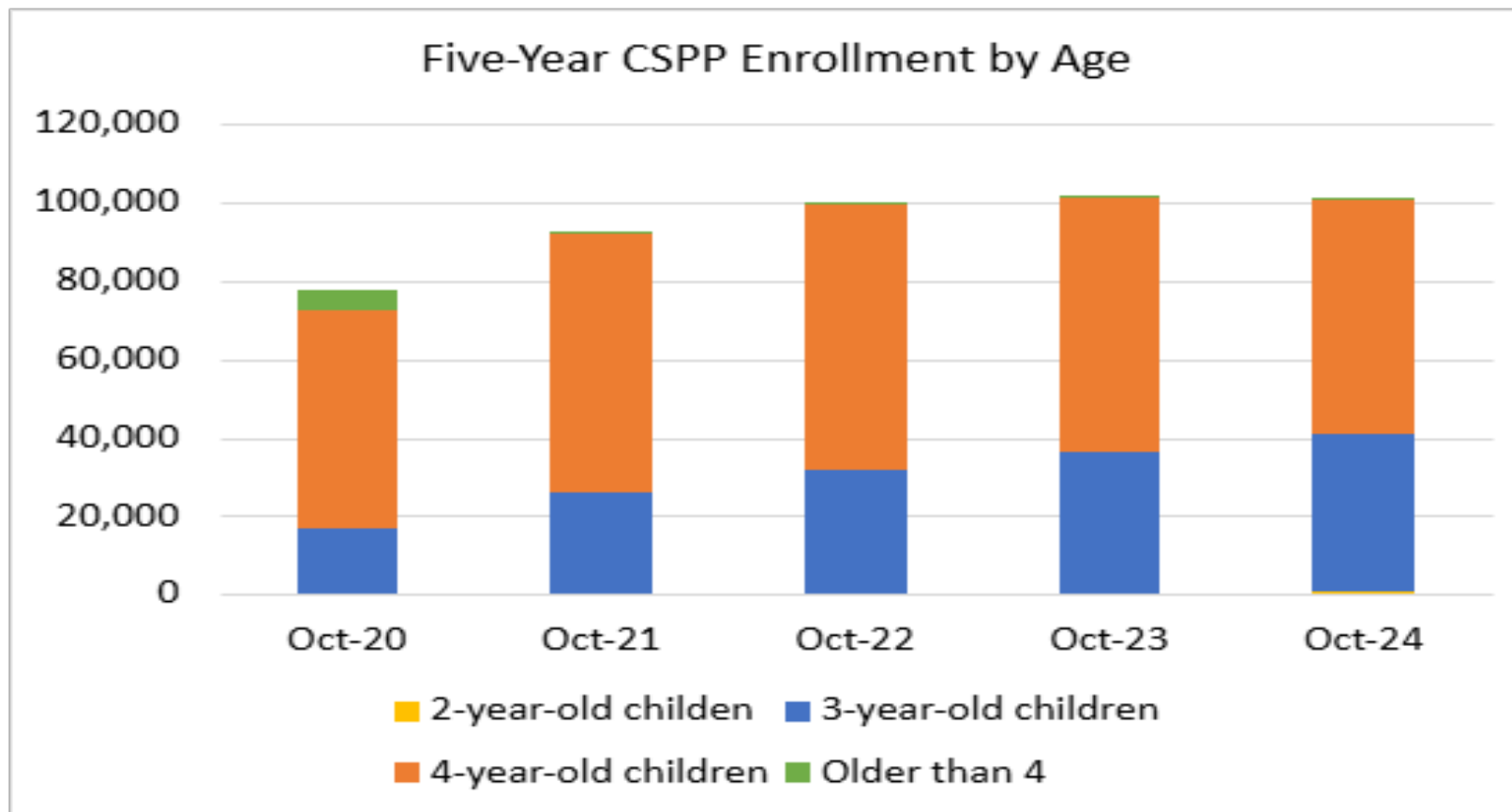
- How we got here:
 - *The Master Plan for Early Learning and Care* issued in December 2020 recommended universal pre-k for four-year-old children and targeted universalism for three-year-old children by increasing enrollment of children from families of low income and children with disabilities in CSPP.
 - Enactment of budget legislation in 2021 that gave one year for planning and \$500 million for local education agencies for planning and implementation, and the multi-year phase-in began in 2022-23.
 - UPK Mixed Delivery Planning Grant Program: \$50 million overall

TK Enrollment



[Long Description of TK Enrollment](#)

CSPP Enrollment



[Long Description of CSPP Enrollment](#)

What Challenges Is Your State Facing in Sustaining or Improving Our Preschool Programs, and How Are You Addressing Them?

- Local control in the TK-Grade 12 is challenging the state's ability to increase the quality of TK.
- TK is defined as the “first year of a two-year kindergarten program,” which poses challenges.
- Serving younger children in UPK programs.

What Innovative Strategies or Partnerships Have Helped Your State Improve Outcomes for Children and Families?

- UPK Constellation Model for implementing UPK.
- UPK Mixed Delivery Quality and Access Workgroup.
- Developmentally Appropriate Toileting Practices Toolkit.
- Partnership with Teachstone and county partners to implement the Classroom Assessment Scoring System (CLASS) and the CLASS Environment statewide in CSPP.

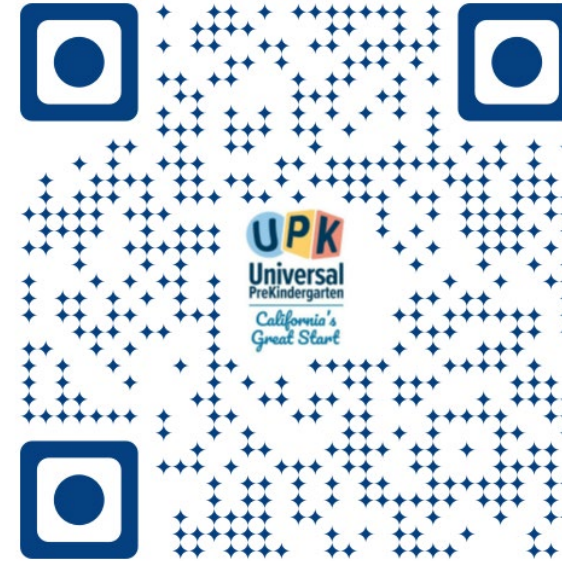
What Are Our Priorities and Goals for the Next Year to Strengthen Early Education in Your State?

- Maintaining access to and quality of CSPP and TK amid a tight state budget.
- Advocating to improve the reimbursement rate methodology for CSPP and ensure adequate funding for programs.
- Calibrating the Desired Results Developmental Profile (DRDP) 2025.
- Implementing the recently released Preschool through 3rd Grade (P-3) Learning Progressions.
- Conducting user testing of a recently developed UPK Curriculum Toolkit with programs to receive feedback.

What Is the Biggest Takeaway for Other States to Consider When Looking at Your State-run Preschool Program?

- Have a plan and work with internal and external partners to implement it.
- Time for planning and implementation takes longer than expected.
- UTK is only for districts and charter schools. We need to continue to work on bolstering the rest of the system.

Universal PreKindergarten Logo and Materials



Find resources and materials here:
<https://cauniversalprek.org/>

Thank you!



Photo Credit: Kidango Decoto Center;
Union City, CA

Long Description of TK Enrollment

- The line chart represents TK eligibility and census day enrollment from the 2020–21 school year through the 2024–25 school year. The line for eligibility remains relatively flat until the 2022–23 school year, when TK expansion started and it goes sharply up. The line representing enrollment is lowest in 2020–21, but begins to return to previous levels in 2021–22. Then the enrollment line has a significant increase in 2022–23 and remained flat in 2023–24 and 2024–25.

Long Description of CSPP Enrollment

- This stacked bar represents the number of children enrolled in CSPP in October of the last five years: October 2020, 2021, 2022, 2023 and 2024. The bars are broken down to show 3-year-olds, 3-year-olds, 4-year-olds, and older than 4-year-old children. It shows that most of the children are 3- and 4-year-old children, and that in all years there are more 4-year-old children than 3-year-old children. The lowest enrollment was in October 2020, with an increase in 2021 and 2022 and relatively flat enrollment in 2023 and 2024.