



GUIDE TO TK SUCCESS

A parent-to-parent guide to
Transitional Kindergarten in Oakland

Congratulations, your child is heading to Transitional Kindergarten (TK)!

Transitional Kindergarten (TK) might sound unfamiliar at first. And that's completely okay! For many families, it turns out to be one of the most valuable early steps in their child's education. It's a full school year designed to lay the groundwork for everything that follows.

This guide is a parent-informed overview of what to expect during the TK year—things like common questions, daily structure, and important events. It's designed to help you feel more prepared as you take the first steps in your child's education journey.

About Oakland Enrolls

At Oakland Enrolls, we help families learn about and navigate public charter school options in Oakland. We work closely with families to understand your child's needs, explore different school options, and find schools that may be a strong fit. We support families through the application process, where families can use one common application to apply to multiple schools at once.



What Is TK, Really?

TK (Transitional Kindergarten) is a free, full-day public school program for 4-year-olds. Think of it as the first year of a two-year kindergarten experience. It's not daycare, and it's not preschool. TK is a **real school year** with a focus on **early reading, foundational math, and social-emotional growth**, while still giving kids time to learn through play.

Who is eligible for TK?

TK is available to all children who turn **4 years old by September 1 of the school year you are applying to** (i.e. if you are applying for the SY27-28, they must be 4 by 9/1/27)

- Child turns 4 on or before September 1 → they can enroll in TK
- Child turns 5 on or before September 1 → they can start Kinder
- Child turns 4 after September 1 → they're **not yet** eligible for TK

What does success look like in TK?

Success in TK is about building confidence and getting comfortable with school. When a child ends the year feeling **safe, confident, and happy at school, that's a win**. Everything else builds from there. When we talked to parents, a successful TK year looks like kids can:

- ✓ Follow simple 2–3 step directions
- ✓ Recognize letters in their own name
- ✓ Play and work alongside other children with growing independence
- ✓ Use words to express their needs and feelings (even if it's not perfect)
- ✓ Feel excited to come back to school



Parent-to-Parent Tips & Best Practices

Build Your Village

☆ Introduce yourself to other parents on Day 1.

Those parents become your village for the next 8+ years. Carpools, playdates, birthday parties, quick questions. The parent group chat will sometimes answer faster than the school office.

☆ Ask your child's teacher how they prefer to communicate.

Some prefer apps, others email, others specific times. Ask early and follow their lead. You'll get quicker and clearer responses.

☆ Stay connected, even if you can't volunteer.

Sign up for class updates, newsletters, or whatever the teacher sends home. If you can't be there in person, knowing what's happening means you can talk about it at home and reinforce learning.





Stay Organized & In the Loop

★ Know your school's schedule and options.

Understanding start and end times, early dismissal days, and whether a school offers early drop-off or after-school programs can make a real difference.

★ The school calendar is your go-to resource.

Get the school calendar on Day 1 and add every event, early dismissal, and minimum day to a phone or calendar right away. It's a small step that can save a lot of stress! Nothing derails a week quite like an unexpected minimum day that didn't make it onto the radar.

★ Know your conference dates and go.

TK teachers hold formal parent-teacher conferences, usually in fall and spring. These are **not** optional check-ins. They're your best window into how your child is actually doing socially, emotionally, and academically. Put the dates in your phone the first week of school.

★ The backpack comes home every day for a reason.

Check it every single night. Teachers send home notes, permission slips, and important papers at the bottom of that bag. The family that checks the backpack nightly is always the one who doesn't miss the field trip deadline.

Set Your Child Up for Success at Home

★ Sleep is not optional in TK.

A 4-5 year old in full-day school is exhausted in a way that catches parents off guard. Most TK kids need 10-12 hours of sleep. An overtired TK kid will have big feelings and a hard time learning. 7pm bedtime is not too early.

★ Pack a lunch they've actually eaten before.

School lunch is an adventure in itself. Don't send new food for the first time in a school lunchbox. They won't eat it, they'll be hungry and cranky by 1pm, and you'll hear about it.

★ Practice the morning routine before school starts.

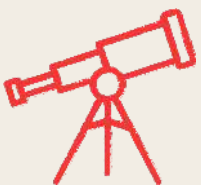
Start waking up at school time 1-2 weeks before school starts. A tired, rushed TKer is a hard TKer. Get breakfast, backpack, and drop-off down to build muscle memory.

★ Get familiar with letter names and sounds.

Exposure helps, but no pressure. Singing the alphabet, pointing out letters in their name, or reading together goes a long way. TK teachers will build on this.

★ Practice counting with your child.

You can practice counting objects from 1 to 10. When students begin to learn visual representations of numbers, rather than focusing solely on the digits themselves, it significantly enhances their understanding of math.





Support Your Child Emotionally

☆ Prepare your child for the transition.

Starting TK means new routines, new adults, and sometimes new friends. Talk about what school will be like, name the feelings that might come up, and remind them it's okay to feel nervous at first.

☆ Visit the school before Day 1 with your child.

Walk the hallways. Find the bathroom. Sit at a desk. Familiarity helps soothe first-day anxiety. Many schools offer summer orientations. Ask if yours does!

☆ Don't ignore separation anxiety.

Some kids cry every morning for two months. That's normal. It is not recommended to sneak out. Instead, establish a goodbye ritual. like a special handshake, three hugs, or phrase, and stick to it. Consistency is the cure.

☆ If something feels off, say something early.

Don't wait until the spring conference to mention your child hasn't made a single friend or seems to dread school. The earlier you raise a concern, the more time there is to fix it.

☆ Don't stress if your child isn't reading by May.

TK is about readiness, not performance. Some kids leave TK reading simple books. Some leave knowing letter sounds and how to write their name. Both are right on track. Trust the process and stay off the comparison carousel.



What to Expect, Month by Month

● **August/September:** The Adjustment Phase

**START
HERE**

Big emotions, early exhaustion, and clingy mornings are completely normal. Especially in those first few weeks. Staying positive at drop-off, even when it's hard, makes a real difference. Most children settle in within 3–6 weeks.

● **October:** Finding their Footing

Your child is starting to know their routine, recognize classmates, and understand classroom expectations. Teacher check-ins/early conferences happen around now. Make it a priority to go.

● **November–December:** The Sweet Spot Begins

Most kids hit their stride. You'll start seeing real friendships form. Academic skills are developing. Holiday events are a great chance to connect with other families.

● **January–February:** Mid-Year Growth

This is when the literacy and math foundations really click for many kids. Spring conferences are coming! So start noting any questions you want to ask.

● **March–April:** Spring Conferences

Your second formal sit-down with the teacher. Come prepared with questions. Ask specifically: 'Is my child on track for Kindergarten? Is there anything we should be working on at home?'

● **May–June:** Wrapping Up & Looking Ahead

Celebrate the year! Confirm Kindergarten enrollment. At most schools, TK students automatically continue to Kindergarten at the same school, but verify with your school that nothing extra is needed.



Oakland Public Charter Schools with TK Programs

Apply through OaklandEnrolls.org

All of the schools listed are free, public charter schools open to Oakland families. You can apply to all of them through a single application at OaklandEnrolls.org. If you are curious if other schools have a TK program, we recommend you go to their website directly!

SCHOOL	GRADES	NEIGHBORHOOD	WHAT MAKES IT UNIQUE
Achieve Academy	TK–5	East Oakland	Rigorous curriculum focused on academic achievement and holistic student growth.
ASCEND Charter School	TK–8	East Oakland	Dual language (English/Spanish) immersion program, K-8. Culturally responsive curriculum.
Aspire Berkley Maynard Academy	TK–8	North Oakland	College-prep focus with strong community partnerships and family engagement.
Aspire College Triumph Academy	TK–5	East Oakland	Part of the Aspire network; rigorous academics with a college-going culture from day one.
Aspire Monarch Academy	TK–5	Deep East Oakland	Aspire network school serving the Elmhurst neighborhood.
Cox Academy	TK–5	East Oakland	Authorized by ACOE; focuses on critical thinking and academic excellence.
Francophone Charter School of Oakland	TK–8	Various	French immersion program. One of the few Francophone charter schools in the Bay Area.
Lazear Charter Academy	TK–8	East Oakland	Deep roots in the Fruitvale community; bilingual and culturally responsive programming.
Yu Ming Charter School	TK–8	Various	Mandarin Chinese and English dual immersion. Note: Starts at Kindergarten, not TK.

PRO TIP: Use the School Finder

Visit **OaklandSchoolFinder.org** to search schools by location, grade level, language program, and more. You can compare schools side by side and find which ones are closest to your home or work.

Your TK Checklist

Print this. Put it on your fridge.

Before School Starts

- Read through the Oakland Enrolls TK Guide
- Confirm TK eligibility
- Apply through OaklandEnrolls.org
- Accept your school offer by March 20
- Attend any school orientation or family welcome event
- Meet the teacher before or on Day 1
- Tour the campus with your child
- Label all belongings
- Practice the morning routine 2 weeks before school starts
- Put the school calendar in your phone
- Download or sign up for school communication app

During the Year

- Check the backpack every night
- Read together for 15 minutes every day
- Attend fall parent-teacher conference
- Introduce yourself to 3 other TK parents
- Ask specific questions after school (not 'how was your day?')
- Establish a consistent drop-off goodbye ritual
- Attend spring parent-teacher conference
- Ask teacher: Is my child on track for Kindergarten?
- Confirm automatic Kindergarten enrollment for next year
- Celebrate the year — TK is a big deal!

Questions? Oakland Enrolls is here to help.