



OFFICE OF THE SUPERINTENDENT

5735 47th Avenue • Sacramento, CA 95824

(916) 643-9000 • FAX (916) 643-9480

Jonathan P. Raymond, Superintendent

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January 11, 2012

Members of the California State Legislature
State Capitol
Sacramento, CA 95814

Re: Governor Brown's proposed elimination of transitional kindergarten

Dear Legislators:

In his compelling State of Union address last year, President Obama warned legislators against balancing the budget through cuts to education, saying: "Cutting the deficit by gutting our investments in innovation and education is like lightening an overloaded airplane by removing its engine. It may make you feel like you're flying high at first, but it won't take long before you'll feel the impact."

Governor Brown's proposed elimination of transitional kindergarten – a move that will effectively kick out 125,000 children from California schools – is exactly the kind of wrong-headed approach to fiscal management that the President cautioned against. On behalf of the students, teachers, parents and staff of the Sacramento City Unified School District, I strongly oppose this proposition.

As an early implementer of transitional kindergarten, our district has witnessed the potential in this program to end the devastating cycle of "start behind, stay behind" that traps so many students, especially disadvantaged children. By closing the school readiness gap, we believe we can close achievement gaps. Transitional kindergarten's bridge between preschool's "world of play" and kindergarten's "world of school" gives children a gift of time to develop the confidence and skills necessary to be successful in later years. Already, teachers at our five Early Kinder sites report that students in the two-year program are better prepared for the academic rigors of kindergarten and are performing well in classes.

But without funding, this innovative program is in jeopardy. Our district, as all others in California, has been left reeling from years of state budget cuts. To sustain Early Kinder, we must have help from the state. We cannot do it alone.

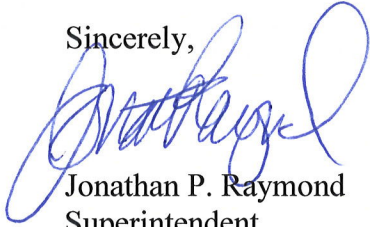
Transitional kindergarten is an investment in the future of California. Research shows that children who do not experience a school readiness program are more likely to be placed in special education, to be retained in later grades and to drop out of school. We

cannot build a strong future workforce without well-educated high school graduates who are ready for college and careers.

I urge the Legislature to reject this proposal. Let Governor Brown know that these cuts are unacceptable and damaging to efforts to rebuild California's flagging economy. Let the Governor know that you are committed to investing in our state's "engine" by investing in California's kids.

Please contact me if you need further information on this important issue and if you would like to visit one of our Early Kinder sites.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Jonathan P. Raymond". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large loop at the end.

Jonathan P. Raymond
Superintendent

cc: Governor Brown
Julie Henderson, Senior Advisor for Policy, Office of the Governor
Sue Burr, Executive Director, State Board of Education
Dr. Michael Kirst, President, State Board of Education