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## **Universal Preschool for Every Child in LA by 2024**

*Los Angeles Unified launches effort to expand early education starting in this fall*

LOS ANGELES, April 14, 2021 – Today, the Board of Education unanimously approved an effort to provide universal preschool for every three- and four-year-old child in Los Angeles by 2024. A mother of two, Board President Kelly Gonez authored the resolution, with Board Members Jackie Goldberg, Nick Melvoin, Scott M. Schmerelson, and Dr. George J. McKenna III cosponsoring. In the immediate term, the school district will use a portion of its COVID-19 relief money to reopen early education centers that closed in the last recession and expand its pre-Kindergarten programs, known as Transitional Kindergarten (TK) and Early Transitional Kindergarten (ETK), for the coming 2021-22 school year. In the next several months, the District will develop a comprehensive plan to expand early learning offerings even further until every three- and four-year-old has access to a high-quality preschool program.

“Nothing has proved the need for universal access to high-quality early childhood programs like the COVID-19 pandemic,” Board President Kelly Gonez said. “Early education puts our youngest learners on a path for success academically, socially, and emotionally, while enabling parents to engage in the workforce. Making these investments now will promote equity and have long-lasting transformative benefits for our students, families, and communities.”

Los Angeles Unified currently provides early learning to more than 20,000 students, but demand for quality programs still far exceeds supply. Amidst efforts by Governor Gavin Newsom and President Joseph R. Biden to expand investment in early learning, the Board’s resolution sets the stage for Los Angeles to capitalize on state and federal investment. The resolution lays out essential strategies for achieving universal preschool, including centering equity, expanding bilingual preschool options, investing in professional development for educators, partnering with nonprofit and home-based providers, and meaningfully engaging parents and families.

“Early childhood education can determine how well a student will do in school when the work becomes more demanding.” Board Member McKenna said. “We need to prepare children to learn as early as possible. Students deserve every opportunity to succeed in school.”

“I thank Board President Gonez for bringing this resolution forward and for prioritizing early childhood education and advocating for universal preschool,” Board Member Schmerelson said. “As career educator, I know that a high-quality instructional program and wraparound services for our youngest and most vulnerable students will guarantee early parent involvement, better attendance and student success and engagement.”

“Every child in Los Angeles should have access to high-quality early learning opportunities,” Board Member Melvoyn said. “Access to early learning not only helps break the cycle of poverty, but helps combat educational inequality, promotes social justice, and offers students a strong foundation to achieve greater academic outcomes and success. I am excited to build on the existing work this Board has undertaken to expand early education with a comprehensive plan to offer universal preschool across our district.”

“We know that the early childhood years are most critical for learning and cognitive development,” Board Member Goldberg said. “High quality preschool programs have long term beneficial outcomes for students academically, as well as their social emotional growth. Therefore, it is critically important at this time that Los Angeles Unified do all that it can to increase opportunities for every family to have early education opportunities.”

“Today's vote marks the District's commitment to ensure our highest-need communities have access to affordable, culturally responsive early learning and care programs that are enriched by expanding partnerships, family and community engagement, and professional development for educators,” Board Member Tanya Ortiz Franklin said. “This moment requires a collaborative response to address the impact of COVID-19 on our youngest learners and to collectively strengthen our early learning system.”

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