



BRIEFING

Universal Prekindergarten in California: Progress and Opportunities

Welcome

Join the conversation

- ▶ Submit questions for Q&A by writing your questions on the index card provided.
- ▶ Raise your hand, and someone will come by to collect the card.



Agenda

- ▷ Opening remarks
- ▷ Research presentation
- ▷ Panel and Q&A
- ▷ Closing remarks



Opening Remarks

Al Muratsuchi | California Assemblymember, District 66

Parent Perspective

Lissete Frausto | Parent Organizer, Kidango



Research Presentation

Hanna Melnick | Senior Policy Advisor and Director of Early Learning Policy, Learning Policy Institute

Research Overview

LPI data sources:

- UPK Planning & Implementation Survey:
2022–23 and 2023–24 school years
1,506 LEAs (98% of districts and 69% of charters)
- Family Survey: Preliminary Analysis
Survey with RAPID EC of >2,400 families statewide



California's UPK Programs

	Age	Eligibility	Setting
Transitional Kindergarten	4	All	LEAs
California State Preschool Program	2–5	Income-eligible Special needs	LEAs Community-based organization
Head Start	3–5	Income-eligible	LEAs Community-based organization
Subsidized Child Care	0–12	Income- and work-eligible	Private centers Family child care Friend, family, neighbor



How Is TK Implementation Going?

TK will be universal by 2025–26...

TK ELIGIBILITY (MUST TURN 5 BETWEEN DATES)

2021–22

Sept 2 to Dec 2

2022–23

Sept 2 to Feb 2

2023–24

Sept 2 to April 2

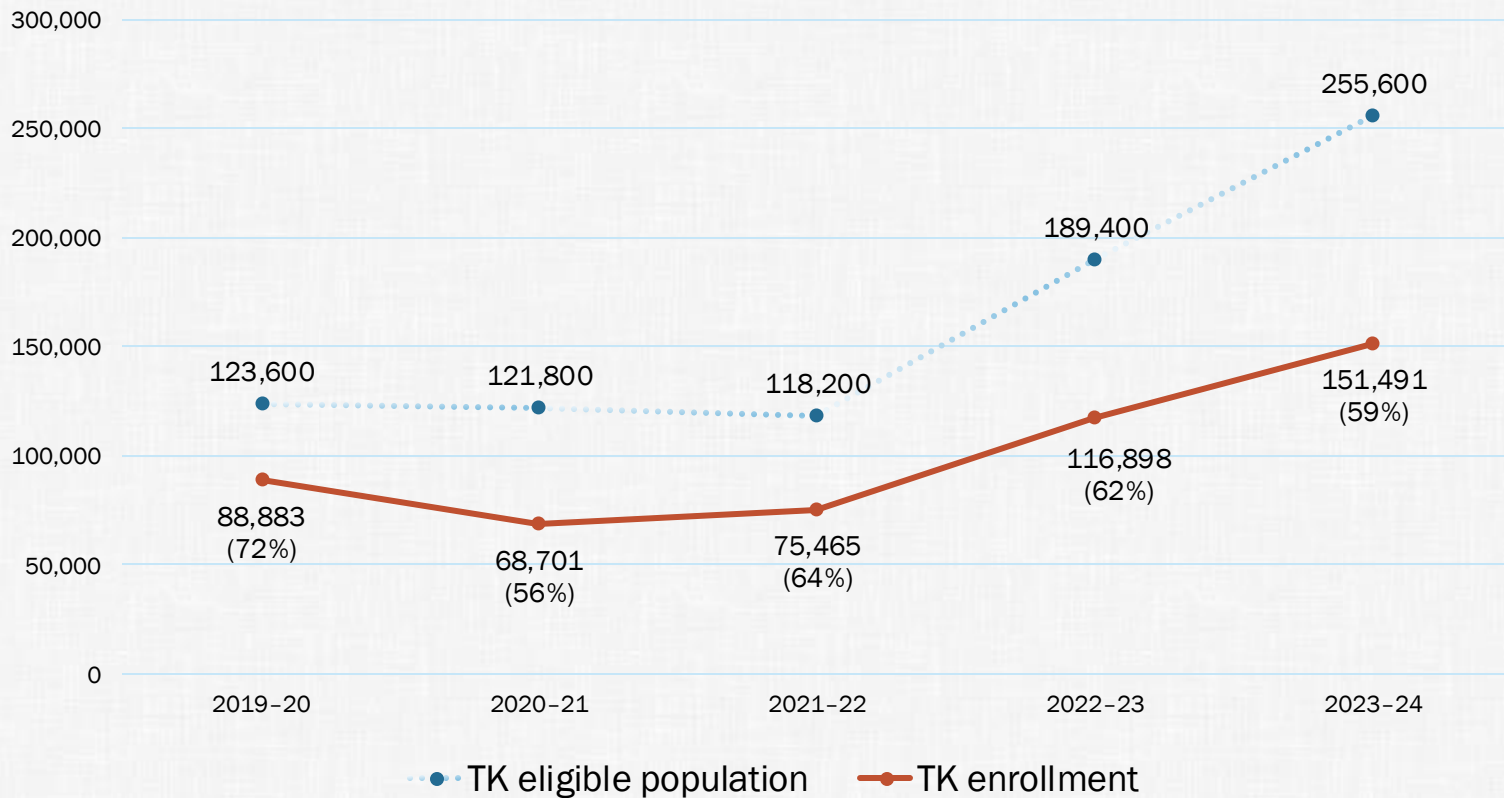
→ 2024–25

Sept 2 to June 2

2025–26

All 4-year-olds

...and enrollment is increasing rapidly.



Almost all LEAs offered TK in 2023–24

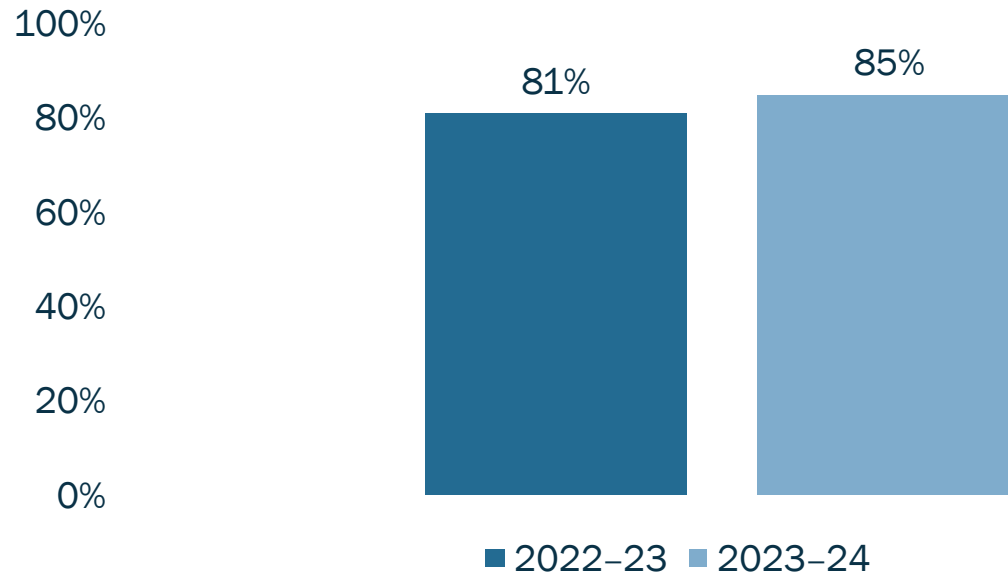
Most LEAs (94%) offered TK in 2023–24:

- 96% of school districts
- 91% of charters

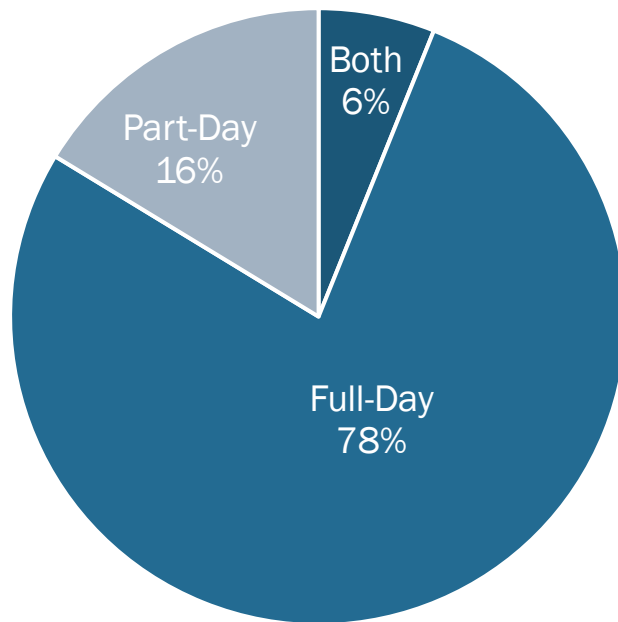
Top reasons for not offering TK:

1. Low/no TK enrollment
2. Lack of space
3. TK not included in charter
4. No funding (basic aid districts)

More LEAs are offering TK at all school sites

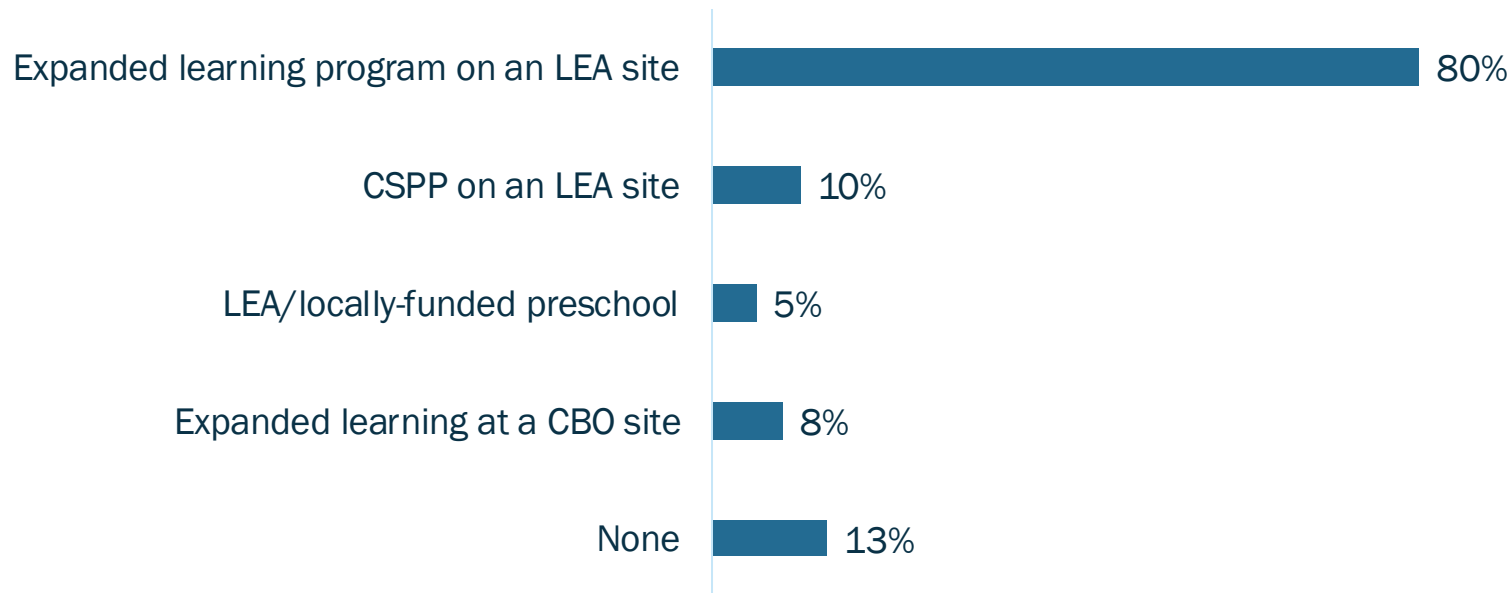


Most LEAs are offering TK for a “full” day...



Note: “Part day” is defined as 3 to 4 hours. “Full day” is defined as more than 4 hours. Data are for 2023–24.

...and most offer expanded learning options to extend the TK day.



Note: LEAs could select more than one option. Data are for 2023–24.

Reasons families did not select TK

1. Not offered at our elementary school
2. Don't want my child in school yet
3. No before/after care
4. Not potty-trained
5. Did not know my child was eligible

TK Staffing

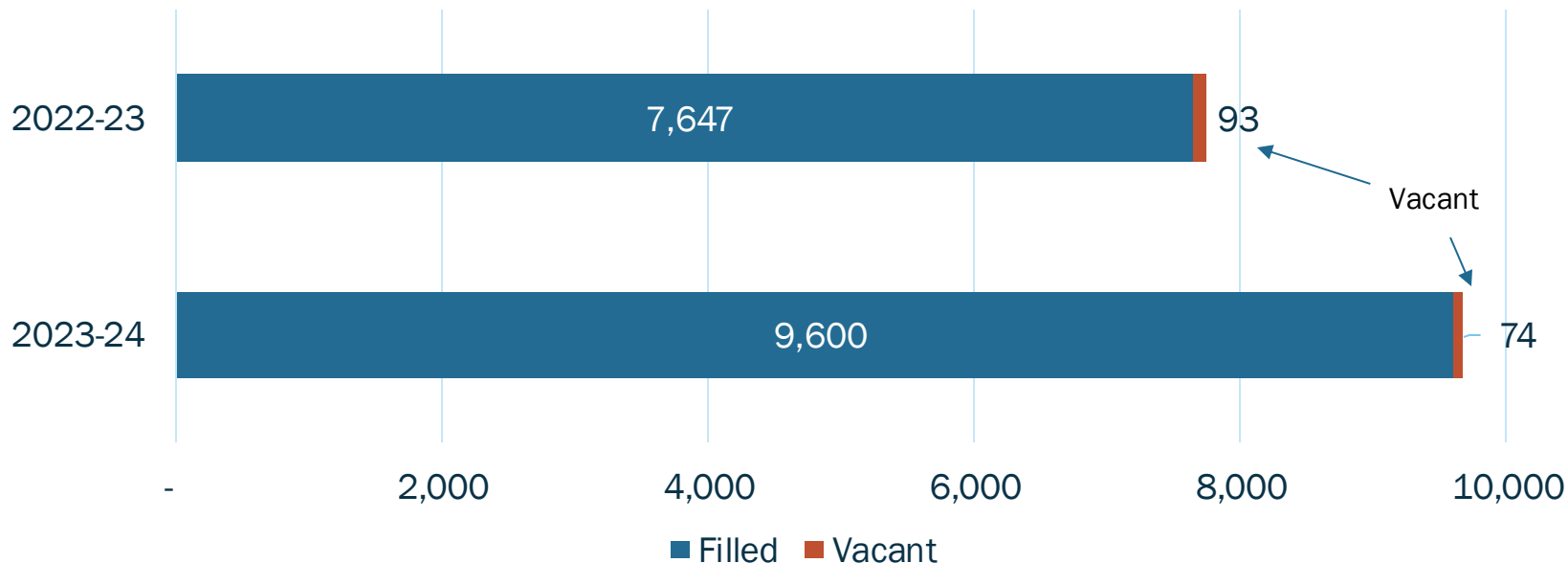
Current Requirements

- 12:1 adult-child ratio
- Lead teachers must hold a Multiple Subject or PK–3 ECE credential
- Assistant teachers do not need to meet ECE-specific requirements

New Requirements (2025–26)

- 10:1 adult-child ratio
- Lead teachers must *also* have 24 units of ECE, a Child Development Teacher Permit, or equivalent experience, as determined by the LEA

LEAs are hiring more TK lead teachers and have fewer vacancies



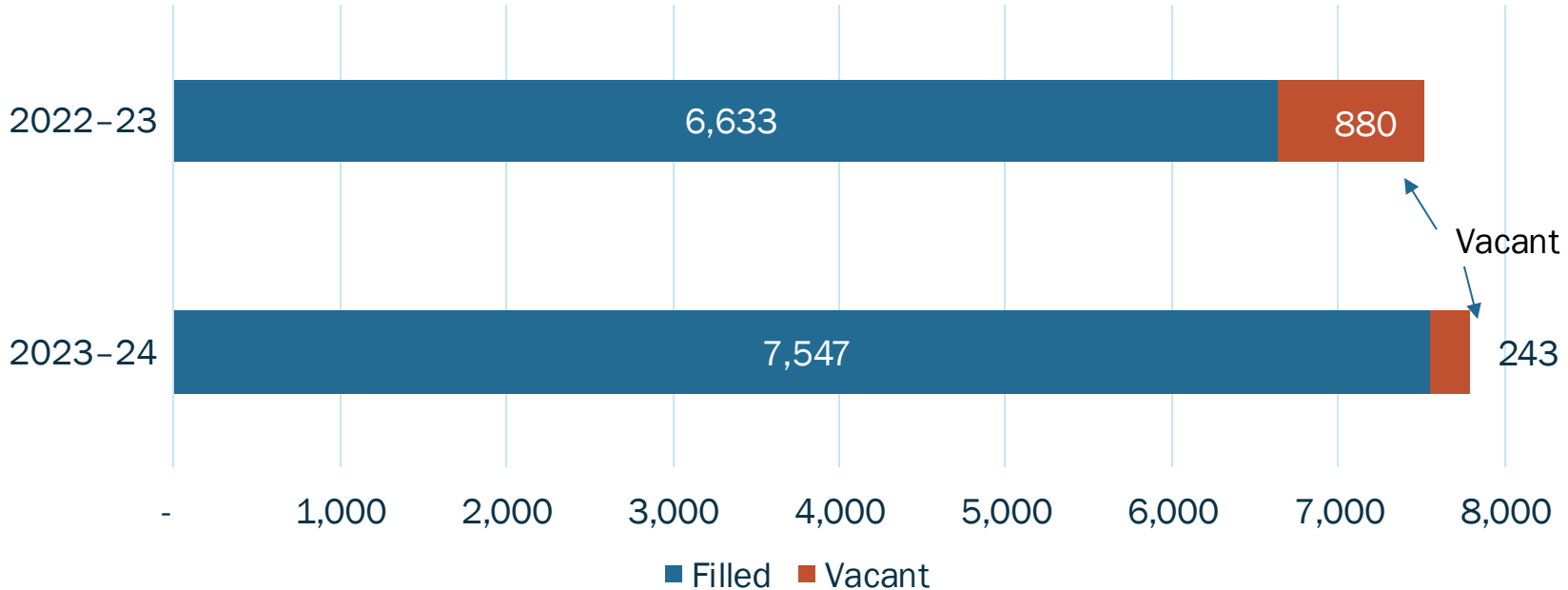
LEAs anticipate that most TK lead teachers will meet new requirements in 2025–26

91% LEAs report that in 2023–24, their staff were already “fully qualified” because they have, in addition to a teaching credential:

- 24 units of ECE (52%)
- LEA-determined professional experience (51%)
- Child Development Teacher Permit or higher (38%)
- Taught TK prior to 2015 (29%)

Note: Respondents could select more than one option.

TK assistant teacher staffing is also growing and beginning to stabilize...



...but staffing is still a challenge.

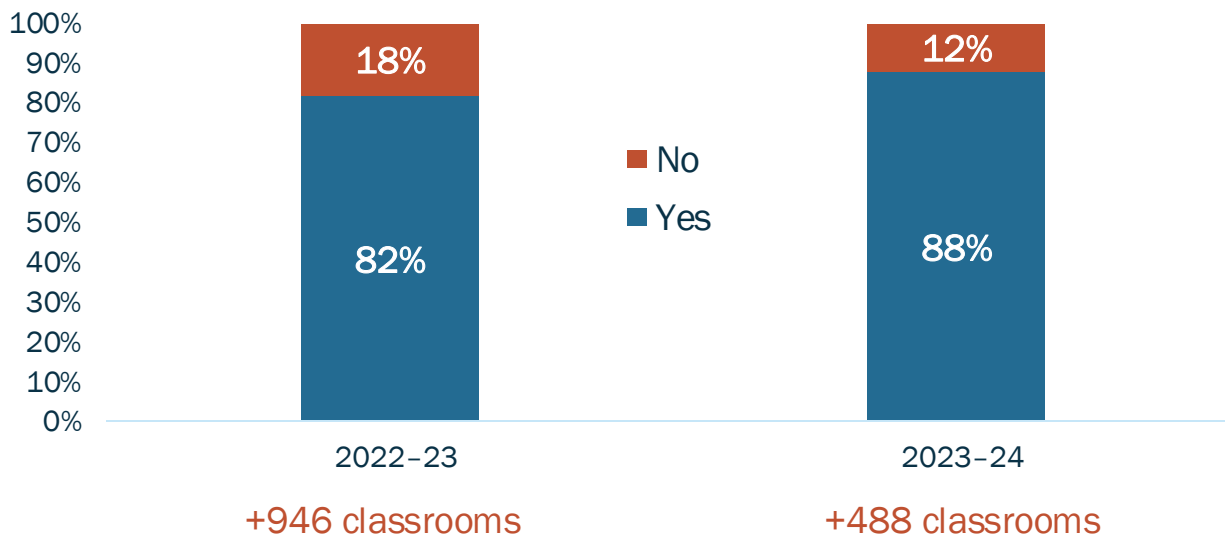


We continue to welcome new teachers each year who may have limited or no experience with early learning. Training and preparing these teachers to effectively manage and teach in a TK classroom is crucial but can be demanding given the unique developmental needs of TK students. Ensuring consistency in instructional quality despite this turnover remains an ongoing effort.

--Survey respondent from a small, rural school district

Many LEAs updated their UPK facilities...

Do you expect to have sufficient classroom space by 2025–26?



...but sufficient, appropriate space remains a top challenge.



There is no money (that we qualify for) to build new UPK classrooms or build bathrooms in existing classrooms. Therefore, we are having to displace Kindergarten classrooms with bathrooms to make room for TK.

– Survey respondent from a medium-sized school district

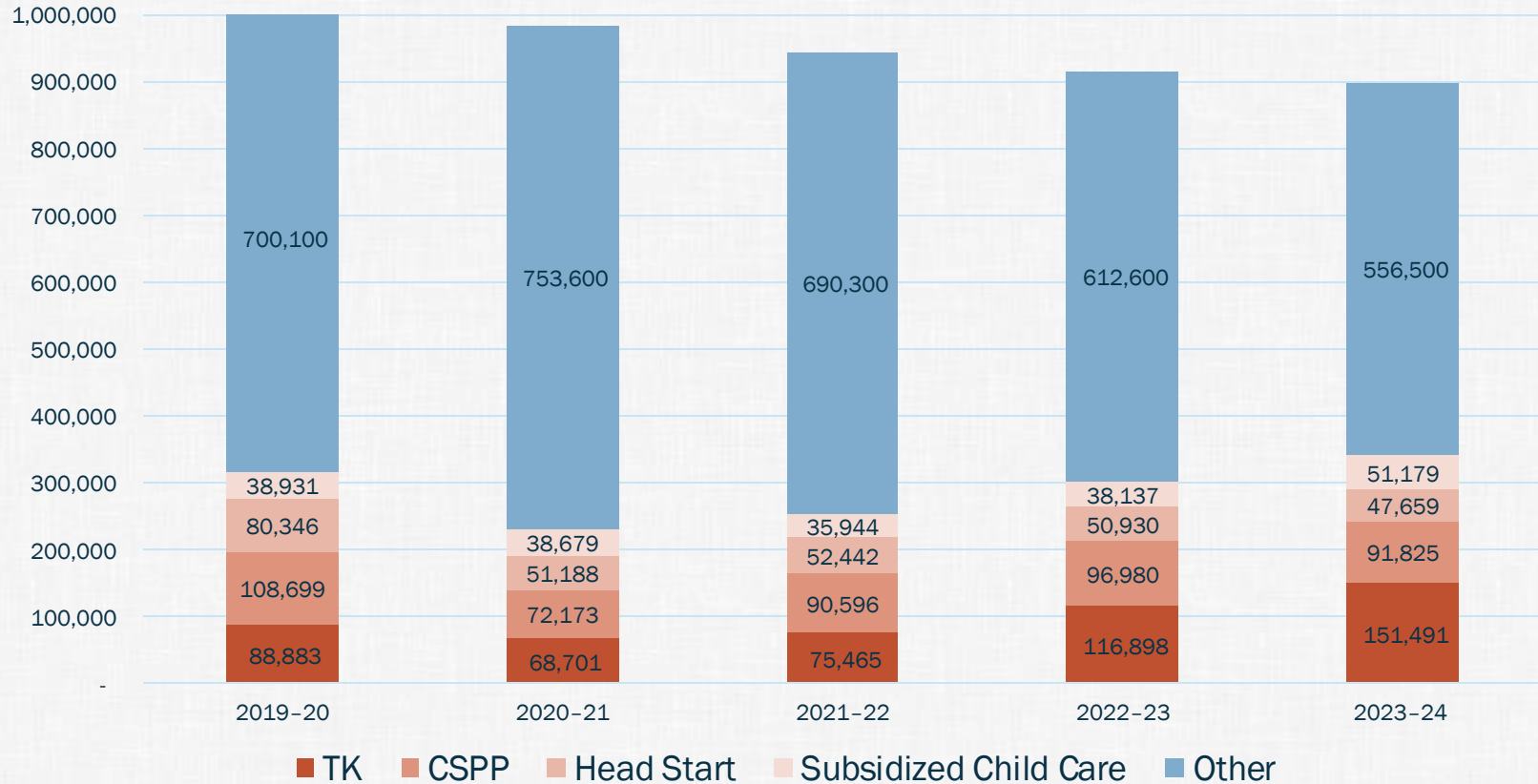
Districts want technical assistance to support:

- Modifying classrooms (56%)
- Coaching and mentoring (52%)
- Site leaders' ECE knowledge (50%)
- UPK enrollment and parents' awareness of programs (49%)
- Purposeful play and social interaction (48%)
- Literacy and language development (47%)
- Math and science development (47%)

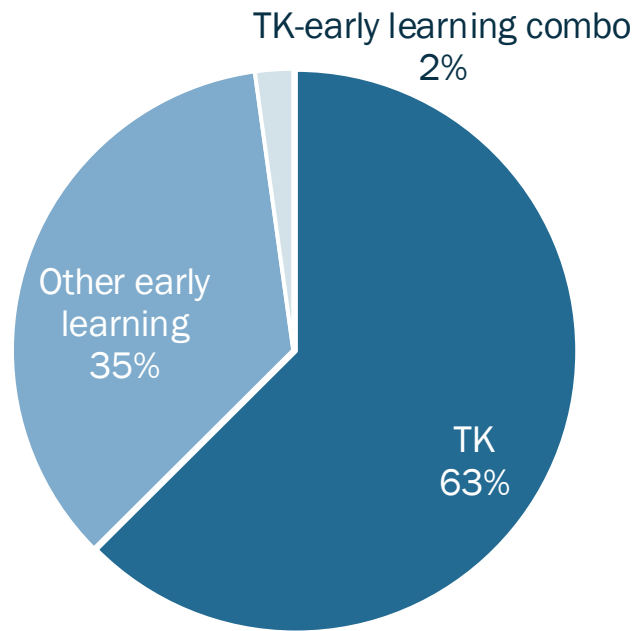


What Do We Know About UPK Programs Beyond TK?

3- and 4-year-old enrollment in public PreK is increasing



LEAs offer many preschool options beyond TK

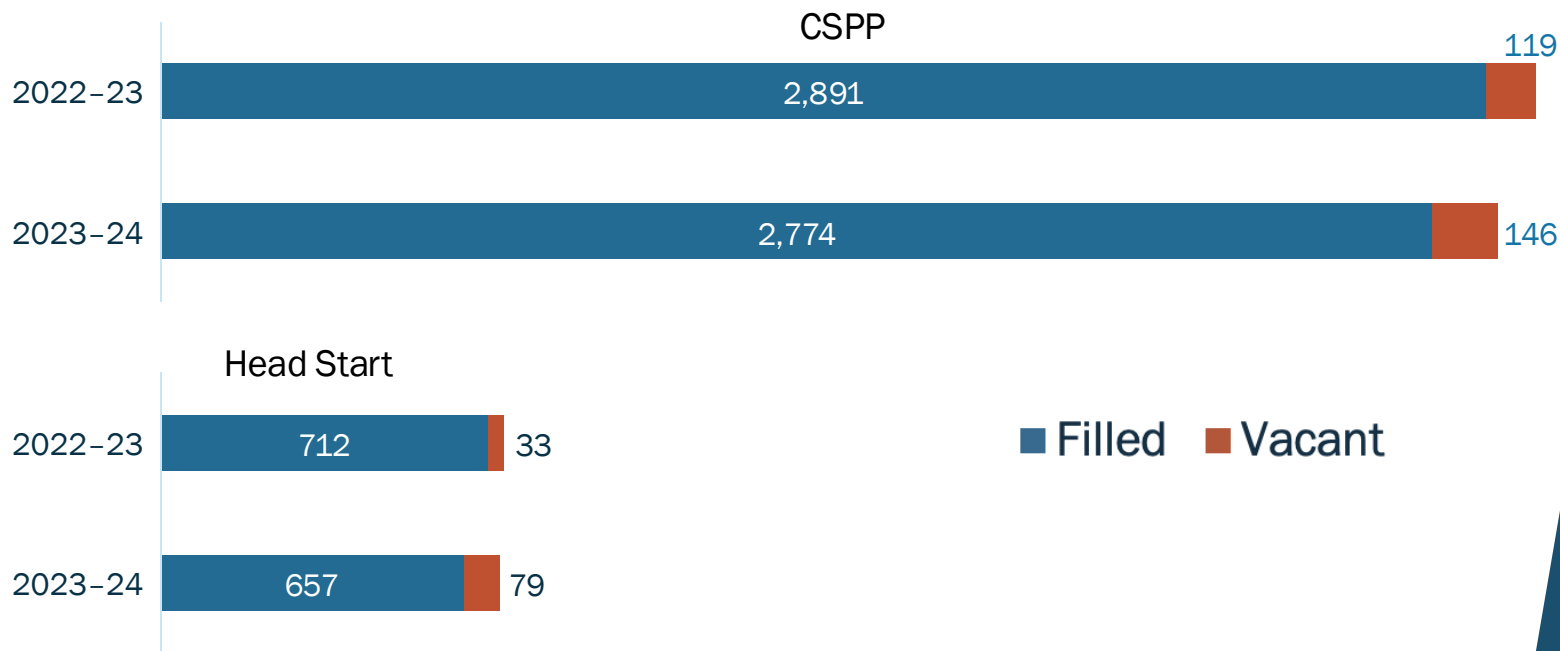


Note: “Other early learning” includes CSPP, Head Start, and locally funded preschool classrooms. Data are for 2023–24.

PreK providers are facing enrollment shifts

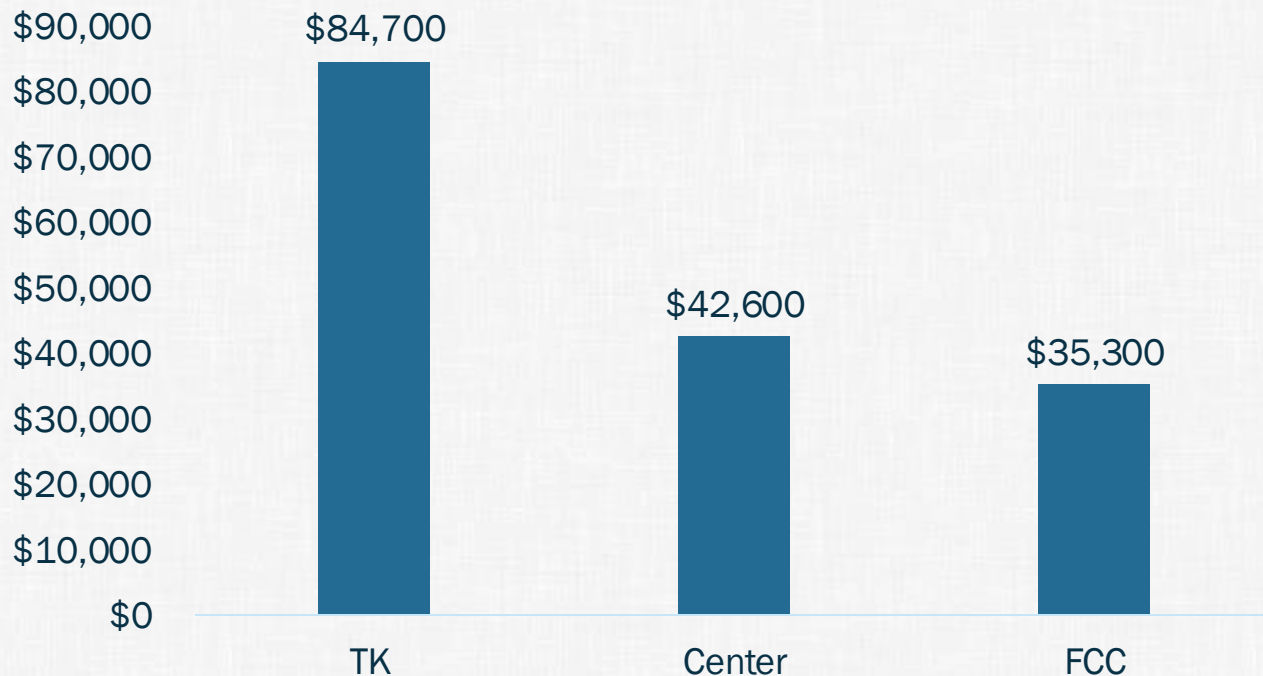
- ▶ Average enrollment in centers declined from 2020 to 2024, especially among 3- and 4-year-olds.
- ▶ Most center directors plan to enroll more 3-year-olds (67%).
- ▶ Teachers of 4-year-olds might be willing to teach 3-year-olds (57%) or TK (45%) but not infant/toddlers (20%).

LEAs face higher staff vacancies in CSPP and Head Start than in TK



CSPP and Head Start staffing challenges may be partly driven by low pay

Annual Median Wage for Teachers with a B.A. (2020)



Takeaways

- TK expansion is progressing quickly.
 - TK staffing and facilities appear to be less of a challenge this year than last, although LEAs still need support.
 - Site leaders and teachers need professional development.
- California is serving a larger portion of PreK students than ever.
 - PreK programs will have to adapt to maintain staffing and enrollment as TK expands.



Panel and Q&A

Panel and Q&A

- **Patricia Lozano** | Executive Director, Early Edge California (moderator)
- **Dianna J. Ballesteros** | Director of Early Learning, Alum Rock Union School District
- **Dora Jacildo** | Executive Director, Child Lane
- **Sonia P. Jaramillo** | Former Senior Director, Early Learning Program, Monterey County Office of Education
- **Paula Merrigan** | Transitional Kindergarten Teacher, Castro Valley Unified School District



Closing Remarks

Diana Vu | Legislative Advocate, Association of California
School Administrators



Closing Remarks

Corey Jackson | California Assemblymember, District 60



Universal Prekindergarten Expansion in California

Progress and Opportunities

Victoria Wang, Melanie Leung-Gagné, Hanna Melnick, and Marjorie E. Wechsler



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Thank You!



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