

# Live Oak may raise age for starting kindergarten

Kids turning 5 after Sept. 1 would attend program for 4-year-olds



Bill Lovejoy/Sentinel photos

Jessica Toban tries her hand at a little art work during the afternoon session at Green Acres Elementary School's preschool in Live Oak Tuesday. School officials are considering raising the age requirement of kindergarten admission by three months.

by **DONNA JONES**  
SENTINEL STAFF WRITER

**LIVE OAK** — If little Johnny's birthday falls on Dec. 2, he can start school in California at age 4 even though many educators don't think he's likely to be ready for the academic rigors of kindergarten.

That may change in Live Oak School District, where officials are considering participation in a state pilot program raising the age for kindergarten admission by three months.

If approved, children would have to turn 5 by Sept. 1 to sign up for kindergarten in Live Oak.

But district officials don't want the late-birthday children to stay home an extra year. Instead, they are proposing two years of kindergarten designed to match child development more closely.

"Let's make school fun and appropriate and not about stressing little children by forcing them into a program not made for them," said David Paine, the district's curriculum director.

About 40 children would be affected if the district makes the change, Paine said.

The district can make the change if the state accepts its application to participate in the pilot program, and district trustees approve the plan. Only a small number of districts statewide will be approved, and the district won't be notified until July 1.

Meanwhile, if administrators get the go-ahead from trustees at a March 22 meeting, they will implement a kindergarten-readiness class, mandated for the pilot program, in this year's summer school.

They also will proceed with plans to build and implement a program for 4-year-old stu-



Christopher Tiran works on a building-block project at Green Acres Elementary School's preschool Tuesday afternoon.

dents into the existing preschools the district operates at its three elementary schools: Live Oak, Green Acres and Del Mar.

The preschool classes, which serve 125 children ages 3½ to 5, are designed to prepare students for later study in the district's kindergarten through eighth-grade program. The classes would probably be split so teachers could develop separate programs for 3- and 4-year-olds, Paine said.

The district expects the program to be free or inexpensive because of state funding tied to the pilot project.

In many ways, the existing preschool and

kindergarten programs look alike, Paine said. Teachers at both levels work together to build reading, writing and math skills, he said. Counting, working with the alphabet, storytelling and music can be found at both levels, for example. It's a matter of where students fall on a continuum, Paine said.

Both programs would run daily in 3½-hour sessions. The program for 4-year-olds would probably include more time for play than the traditional kindergarten, Paine said.

## A meeting for parents

**WHAT:** Parents are invited to a meeting with school officials to discuss the possible change in age for admittance to kindergarten in Live Oak schools.

**WHEN:** 6:30-7:30 p.m. Thursday.

**WHERE:** Live Oak School District board room, 984-1 Bostwick Lane, Santa Cruz.

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