

Expanded transitional K left out of Brown's budget

By Sharon Noguchi, San Jose Mercury News

SACRAMENTO — Gov. Jerry Brown's revised budget omits funding for Democrats' top priority this year: expanding transitional kindergarten, the public school program to ready 4-year-olds for the rigors of elementary school.

With rosy revenue projections, Brown would focus education dollars on repaying money the state borrowed from school districts during the Great Recession and on shoring up the teachers' pension system.

California's spending on pre-kindergarten to 12th grade would jump 8.4 percent, from \$70 billion this school year to \$75.9 billion in 2014-15 — even as enrollment is expected to decline slightly, by 0.1 percent. Of that total, more than \$45 billion would come from the state's general fund, with federal revenues, local property taxes and Lottery proceeds contributing most of the rest.

Brown's revised budget released Tuesday proposes accelerating the repayment schedule of \$6.2 billion owed to schools, so that it all would be repaid by the end of the 2014-15 school year. The state had borrowed the money by deferring payments it owed school districts.

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