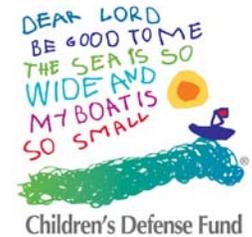


# Children's Defense Fund

## Full-Day Kindergarten in Montana



January 2012

Full-day kindergarten (Full-Day K) is a necessary component of a comprehensive early learning continuum and boosts children's cognitive learning, creative problem-solving and social competence. However, Full-Day K is not part of the K-12 publicly funded school system in most states. Nationally, only 10 states and the District of Columbia require school districts to provide publicly funded Full-Day K through statute. Thirty-four states require school districts to provide at least half-day kindergarten and six have no requirement.

Are Montana school districts required by statute to fund Full-Day K for all eligible students? \_\_\_ Yes X No

### Statutory Provisions

- Kindergarten attendance is not mandatory.<sup>ii</sup>
- Students who will be 5 years old on or before September 10<sup>th</sup> of the school year may attend kindergarten. Children can also be enrolled by special permission from the board of trustees.<sup>iii</sup>
- The school fiscal year begins on July 1<sup>st</sup> and ends on June 30<sup>th</sup>. Three hundred sixty hours are required for a half-day kindergarten program and 720 hours for a Full-Day K program.<sup>iv</sup>
- There are no guidelines for teacher to student ratio or class size in statute in Montana. Montana's Full-Time Kindergarten Model Curriculum suggests a teacher to student ratio of 1-to-20.<sup>v</sup>

### Funding

- Funding for Full-Day K and half-day kindergarten is the same. Funding for kindergarten is less than funding for first grade.<sup>vi</sup>

### Standards

- The Common Core State Standards were adopted in November 2011.<sup>vii</sup>
- Kindergarten learning expectations are aligned with elementary and secondary standards.<sup>viii</sup>

### Assessment

- Montana statute does not specify assessment requirements.<sup>ix</sup>

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<sup>i</sup> National Center for Education Statistics, 2010. "Kindergarten requirements, by State: 2010."

[http://nces.ed.gov/programs/statereform/tab5\\_3.asp](http://nces.ed.gov/programs/statereform/tab5_3.asp)

<sup>ii</sup> Kindergarten and Preschool Programs. *Montana Code Annotated* § 20-7-117

<sup>iii</sup> Ibid

<sup>iv</sup> School Fiscal Year. *Montana Code Annotated* § 20-1-301

<sup>v</sup> Montana's Office of Public Instruction 2009. "Montana Full-Time Kindergarten Model Curriculum Guide 2009."

<http://opi.mt.gov/pdf/FTK/09FTKCurriculum.pdf>

<sup>vi</sup> National Education Association. "Great Public Schools Criteria for Montana."

[http://www.nea.org/home/achievement\\_Montana.html](http://www.nea.org/home/achievement_Montana.html)

<sup>vii</sup> Common Core State Standards Initiative. "In the States." <http://www.corestandards.org/in-the-states>

<sup>viii</sup> Transitions and Alignments. (2011, January). Education Week, Quality Counts. 30 (16) pg 50.

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<sup>ix</sup> Education Commission of the States. "Kindergarten Database." <http://mb2.ecs.org/reports/Report.aspx?id=8>