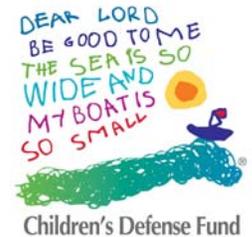


# Children's Defense Fund

## Full-Day Kindergarten in New Jersey



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

Approximately 27 percent of school districts in New Jersey do not provide Full-Day K.<sup>ii</sup>

### Statutory Provisions

- **Kindergarten attendance is not mandatory.** The Abbott preschool program was created following the landmark school-funding court case, *Abbott v. Burke*. Along with the full-day/full-year PreK program, districts are required to provide Full-Day K.<sup>iii, iv</sup>
- **Children between the ages 4 and 6 may enter kindergarten. Compulsory school attendance begins at age 6.** The cutoff date for kindergarten enrollment is October 1<sup>st</sup> or later; the local school district has the discretion to decide the date.<sup>v</sup>
- **Approved kindergarten classrooms of 2.5 hours may be considered full-day.**<sup>vi</sup> The length of the half or full day program is locally determined. The *NJ Kindergarten Implementation Guidelines* recommends that three hour and 2.5 hour kindergarten programs be considered "half day" whereas six to 6.5 hours be considered full-day.<sup>vii</sup>
- **Maximum enrollment is one teacher to 25 students. If classrooms go over 25 students, they are required to have an aide, with the exception of Abbott districts (see below), which are capped at one teacher to 21 students with an aide.**<sup>viii</sup>

### Funding

- Abbott districts receive state funding for Full-Day K.<sup>ix</sup> Funding for kindergarten is the same as grades 1-12.
- Each student in grades 1-12 shall be counted at 100% of the actual count of students. In the case of districts which operate a half-day kindergarten program each kindergarten student shall be counted at 50% of the actual count of kindergarten students. In the case of districts which operate a Full-Day K program or which currently operate a half-day kindergarten program but propose to build facilities to house a Full-Day K program, each kindergarten student shall be counted at 100% of the actual count of kindergarten students.<sup>x</sup>

### Standards

- The Common Core State Standards were adopted in June 2010.<sup>xi</sup>
- K-2 curriculum will be aligned with Common Core State Standards by 2012.<sup>xii</sup>
- Kindergarten learning and teaching standards are aligned with elementary and secondary standards.<sup>xiii, xiv</sup>

### Assessment

- There is no kindergarten readiness assessment tool; state student assessments are not administered until grade 3.<sup>xv</sup> This year, the state has been piloting the Work Sampling System (Meisels et al. 1995) as a measure of kindergarten skills in two school districts.<sup>xvi</sup>
- Assessment of Practices in Early Education Classrooms (APEEC) is an observation tool designed to assess physical environment, instructional and social contexts in K-3 classrooms.<sup>xvii</sup>
- A reading measure is used minimally at the beginning of grades K-3 to determine the reading skills and strategies students have mastered.<sup>xviii</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> Dr. Vincent Costanza, NJ Department of Education, Division of Early Childhood Education. Email. 11/21/2011

<sup>iii</sup> Center for Law and Social Policy. "New Jersey Abbot Program."

[http://www.clasp.org/admin/site/publications\\_states/files/0230.pdf](http://www.clasp.org/admin/site/publications_states/files/0230.pdf)

<sup>iv</sup> Ibid. N.J.S.A. 18A:7F-54

<sup>v</sup> Admission of Pupils Underage. *New Jersey Statutes Annotated* § 18A:38-5.

<sup>vi</sup> Access to Full-Day Preschool; Calculation of Preschool Education Aid. *New Jersey Statutes Annotate*. § 18A:7F-54

<sup>vii</sup> The *Kindergarten Implementation Guidelines* reflect the work of early childhood professionals across the state to bring current research and best practices. However, there is no requirement that districts implement the guidelines. Dr. Vincent Costanza, NJ Department of Education, Division of Early Childhood Education. Personal Communication Email. 11/21/2011

<sup>viii</sup> School enrollment. *New Jersey Annotated Code* § 6A:32 – 8.2

<sup>ix</sup> ACCESS. "New Jersey." [http://schoolfunding.info/states/nj/lit\\_nj.php3](http://schoolfunding.info/states/nj/lit_nj.php3).

<sup>x</sup> Access to Full-Day Preschool; Calculation of Preschool Education Aid. *New Jersey Statutes Annotate*. § 18A:7F-54

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

<sup>xii</sup> State of New Jersey Department of Education. "Core Curriculum Content Standards."

<http://www.state.nj.us/education/cccs/timeline.htm>.

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

<sup>xiv</sup> Teaching practices documents correlate to the Common Core Standard learner outcome for language arts and math which can be accessed at: <http://www.state.nj.us/education/ece/k/intro.pdf>, <http://www.state.nj.us/education/ece/k/lal.pdf>, <http://www.state.nj.us/education/ece/k/math.pdf>

<sup>xv</sup> State of New Jersey Department of Education. "Memo from Christopher D Cerf."

<http://www.state.nj.us/education/assessment/schedule1112.pdf>.

<sup>xvi</sup> Dr. Vincent Costanza, NJ Department of Education, Division of Early Childhood Education. Email. 11/21/2011

<sup>xvii</sup> "APEEC: Assessment of Practices in Early Education Classrooms Module."

<http://www.state.nj.us/education/ece/k/APEECModule.pdf>. Retrieved November 10, 2011.

<sup>xviii</sup> "Programs And Practices To Support Student Achievement."

<http://www.state.nj.us/education/code/current/title6a/chap13.pdf>