



Children's Defense Fund

Full-Day Kindergarten in Pennsylvania

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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 Pennsylvania school districts required by statute to fund Full-Day K for all eligible students? ___ Yes X No

Of 501 school districts, 450 offer Full-Day K. 350 of those districts use the Accountability Block Grant program to fund kindergarten.ⁱⁱ

Statutory Provisions

- **Kindergarten is not compulsory;** the compulsory age for school is 8.ⁱⁱⁱ
- **State statute provides that the local school board will establish the age at which a child can begin the kindergarten program.** Once the age requirement is established, districts cannot refuse admission to a child that meets the age requirement. A district can also establish its own early admission policy to kindergarten as long as the early admission age is not less than 4 years old.^{iv}
- **The kindergarten program must provide a minimum of 2.5 hours of instruction for a half-day session or a minimum of five instructional hours for a full-day session.**^v
- **There are no guidelines for teacher to student ratio or class size in statute.**

Funding

- The Accountability Block Grant (ABG) program is part of the PA-PACT consolidated application for funding in Pennsylvania. School districts may provide Full-Day K with these dollars.^{vi}
- In 2011-2012, cuts in ABG resulted in some school districts no longer being able to provide free Full-Day K.^{vii}

Standards

- The Common Core State Standards were adopted in July 2010.^{viii}
- Published jointly by the Pennsylvania Department of Education and Department of Public Welfare in 2005, the *Pennsylvania Kindergarten Standards* lay out the standards for creative, cognitive, mathematical and social studies.^{ix}
- Kindergarten learning expectations are aligned with elementary and secondary standards.^x

Assessment

- Pennsylvania statute does not define an assessment for kindergarten. The Pennsylvania Department of Education does note that assessments that are implemented in the classroom and aligned with Pennsylvania's Learning Standards for Early Childhood (birth to 3rd grade) help inform teachers about designing a curriculum that best suits how each child learns.^{xi}

ⁱ National Center for Education Statistics, 2010. "Kindergarten requirements, by State: 2010."

http://nces.ed.gov/programs/statereform/tab5_3.asp

ⁱⁱ Pennsylvania Department of Education. "Admission to Kindergarten and Beginners."

http://www.portal.state.pa.us/portal/server.pt/community/purdon's_statutes/7503/admission_to_kindergarten_and_beginners/507324

ⁱⁱⁱ Ibid

^{iv} ibid

^v ibid

^{vi} Pennsylvania Department of Education. "PA-PACT Information."

http://pa.gov/portal/server.pt/community/grants_and_subsidies/7207/pa-pact_information/507147

^{vii} Lewistown Sentinel (August 18,2011) mwise@lewistownsentinel.com.

^{viii} Common Core State Standards Initiative. "In the States." <http://www.corestandards.org/in-the-states>

^{ix} Office of Child Development and Early Learning 2009." *Kindergarten Pennsylvania Early Learning Standards for Early Childhood.*" <http://www.pakeys.org/uploadedContent/Docs/PD/Standards/Kindergarten%202010.pdf>

^x Transitions and Alignments. (2011, January). Education Week, Quality Counts. 30 (16) pg 50.

^{xi} Pennsylvania Department of Education. "Linking Standards to Curriculum and Assessment."

http://www.portal.state.pa.us/portal/server.pt/community/standards/8709/linking_standards_to_curriculum_and_assessment/522220