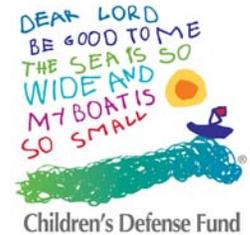


Children's Defense Fund

Full-Day Kindergarten in Tennessee



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 Tennessee school districts required by statute to fund Full-Day K for all eligible students? ___Yes XNo

In 2010 approximately 75,000 students attended kindergarten.

Statutory Provisions

- **Kindergarten attendance is mandatory.** No child is eligible to enter 1st grade without having attended an approved kindergarten program. While a child does not have to enroll in school at 5 years of age, enrollment must occur no later than the child's 6th birthday.ⁱⁱ
- **Children entering kindergarten shall be 5 years of age on or before September 30th of the school year.**ⁱⁱⁱ
- **A minimum number of hours for Full-Day K is not defined in statute.** Informal kindergarten policy defines it as a minimum of 4 hours per day while PreK is defined as 5.5 hours.^{iv}

Funding

- State funds for kindergarten are apportioned between the school systems in accordance with the Basic Education Program (BEP). Each school system shall notify the commissioner of education by August 1st of each year of the projected number of classes it will provide for the next school term. When funds requested are not utilized they are apportioned for one year only to districts in need of additional classes beyond the initial allocation.^v

Standards

- The Common Core State Standards were adopted in July 2010.^{vi}
- Kindergarten learning expectations are aligned with elementary and secondary standards.^{vii}

Assessment

- Assessment of PreK and kindergarten children shall emphasize the use of observational data and other assessments that support the delivery of an individualized, developmentally appropriate program.^{viii}
- Standardized or formalized testing may be administered to PreK and kindergarten children only for the purposes of diagnosing special education needs, developing services to support mainstreaming of children with disabilities, and/or for meeting any required federal program eligibility standards.^{ix}
- Each local school system shall adopt and implement a comprehensive developmental assessment program for kindergarten children, to be used in developing instructional programs.^x

ⁱ National Center for Education Statistics, 2010. "Kindergarten requirements, by State: 2010."
http://nces.ed.gov/programs/statereform/tab5_3.asp

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- ii Minimum Kindergarten Program Law. *Tennessee Code Annotated* § 49-6-201
- iii Ibid
- iv Bobbi Lussier, Personal Communication (Email), December 22, 2011
- v Minimum Kindergarten Program Law. *Tennessee Code Annotated* § 49-6-201
- vi Common Core State Standards Initiative. "In the States." <http://www.corestandards.org/in-the-states>
- vii Transitions and Alignments. (2011, January). Education Week, Quality Counts. 30 (16) pg 50.
- viii State Curriculum, Requirement D. *Rules of the State Board Of Education* § 0520-1-3-.05
- ix Ibid
- x ibid