



Children's Defense Fund

Full-Day Kindergarten in Wisconsin

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

In 2011-2012, 386 districts offered Full-Day K only, 40 districts offered both half-day kindergarten and Full-Day K, and 3 districts offered half-day kindergarten only.ⁱⁱ

Statutory Provisions

- Students are required to complete kindergarten as a prerequisite to being admitted to first grade.ⁱⁱⁱ
- To be eligible for kindergarten, a child must be 5 years old by September 1st of the school year.^{iv}
- "Full-day" kindergarten means a school day with the same hours as 1st grade.^v
- State statute requires an annual schedule of at least 437 hours of direct pupil instruction in kindergarten.^{vi}
- Class size is determined at the district level unless a school is receiving a reading achievement grant. Schools receiving these grants must maintain a class size of 15 in grades K-3.^{vii}

Funding

- Annually, \$5 million is appropriated to expand the states half-day 5-year-old kindergarten program to a full-day program. Students eligible to enroll in the expanded program are those pupils who meet the income eligibility standards for free lunch. The board selects pupils for the expanded program based on the order in which the pupils register for the program.^{viii}
- These funds are used to pay the costs of teachers, aides and other support staff, transportation of staff to pupils' homes, in-service programs, parental involvement programs and instructional materials. Funds may not be used to provide facilities to house the program or to pay pupil transportation or to pay indirect administrative costs associated with the program.^{ix}
- Funding is based on the number of students enrolled.^x

Standards

- The Common Core State Standards were adopted in June 2010.^{xi}
- Districts are advised to also consider the WI Model Early Learning Standards to assure a comprehensive approach.^{xii} These early learning standards are aligned with elementary and secondary standards.^{xiii}

Assessment

- Some school districts screen incoming students to determine needed support services. Districts develop their own process for assessing educational programs that meet the needs of the children.^{xiv}

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- ⁱ National Center for Education Statistics, 2010. "Kindergarten requirements, by State: 2010." http://nces.ed.gov/programs/statereform/tab5_3.asp
- ⁱⁱ Wisconsin Department of Public Education. "Public School Program Data." <http://dpi.wi.gov/lbstat/progdata.html>
- ⁱⁱⁱ Compulsory School Attendance. *Wisconsin Statute* § 118.15 (1)(am).
- ^{iv} Age of Pupils; Phase In Of 4-Year-Old Kindergarten. *Wisconsin Statute* § 118.14(1)(c).
- ^v Definitions. *Wisconsin Statute* § 121.004(7)(c)2.
- ^{vi} School District Standards. *Wisconsin Statute* § (121.02 (1)(f)2).
- ^{vii} Achievement Guarantee Contracts; State Aid. *Wisconsin Statute* § 118-43.
- ^{viii} Five-Year-Old Kindergarten Programs. *Wisconsin Statute* § 119.71 (3)(a)(b)
- ^{ix} Ibid
- ^x Definitions. *Wisconsin Statute* § 121.004 (7)(c)1.b
- ^{xi} Common Core State Standards Initiative. "In the States." <http://www.corestandards.org/in-the-states>
- ^{xii} Rebecca Vail. Email. November 14, 2011
- ^{xiii} Transitions and Alignments. (2011, January). Education Week, Quality Counts. 30 (16) pg 50.
- ^{xiv} Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction. "Admissions and Early Entrance to Four- and Five-Year-Old Kindergarten." <http://dpi.wi.gov/ec/ec-entr-admiss.html>