



# Children's Defense Fund

## Full-Day Kindergarten in New Jersey

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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 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 other 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 22.2 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 fifth decision in the landmark *Abbott v. Burke* school funding case. Abbott districts, which are required to offer full-day prekindergarten, are also required to offer Full-Day K.<sup>iii iv</sup> An additional 111 school districts with high proportions of students eligible for the free or reduced lunch program are required to offer Full-Day K.<sup>v</sup>
- **Children between the age of 4 and 6 may enter a kindergarten, with 6 being the age of compulsory school attendance.** 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>vi</sup>
- **The maximum teacher to student ratio is 1 to 25. If classrooms go over 25 students, they are required to have an aide, with the exception of Abbott districts, which are capped at a teacher to student ratio of 1 to 21 with an aide.**<sup>vii</sup>

### Funding

- Abbott Districts receive state funding for Full-Day K.<sup>viii</sup> Funding for Full-Day K is the same as grades 1-12.<sup>ix</sup>
- A full-time equivalent student shall be calculated as follows: 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>
  - Approved kindergarten classrooms of two and a half hours may be considered full-day when calculating school funding, but are not considered full day for program purposes.<sup>xi</sup>
- The *NJ Kindergarten Implementation Guidelines* state that three hour and two and a half hour kindergarten programs are considered "half-day" whereas six to six and a half hour programs are considered "full-day". The length of the half- or full-day program is locally determined.<sup>xii</sup>

### Standards

- The Common Core State Standards were adopted in June 2010.<sup>xiii</sup>
  - K-2 curriculum will be aligned with Common Core Standards by 2012.<sup>xiv</sup>
  - Kindergarten program guidelines for were established in 2011.<sup>xv</sup>
  - Kindergarten learning and teaching standards are aligned with elementary and secondary standards.<sup>xvi xvii</sup>
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## Assessment

A kindergarten entry assessment tool is currently being chosen that will inform instruction during the kindergarten year.<sup>xviii</sup> Other state student assessments are not given until Grade 3.<sup>xix</sup> In 2011, the state piloted the use of Work Sampling System<sup>xx</sup> as a measure of kindergarten skills in two school districts.<sup>xxi</sup>

- Assessment of Practices in Early Education Classrooms (APEEC) is an observation tool designed to assess the physical environment, and instructional and social contexts in early elementary classrooms, grades K-3.<sup>xxii</sup>
- A reading measure used minimally at the beginning of grades K-3 to determine the reading skills and strategies students have mastered.<sup>xxiii</sup>

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<sup>i</sup> Dr. Vincent Costanza. 2012, NJ Department of Education. E-mail correspondence. June 26.

<sup>ii</sup> Ibid.

<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> Full day kindergarten requirements. *New Jersey Education Code* § 6A 13-3.2

<sup>v</sup> Dr. Vincent Costanza. 2012. NJ Department of Education, Division of Early Childhood Education. E-mail correspondence. June 26.

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

<sup>vii</sup> Full day kindergarten requirements. *New Jersey Education Code* § 6A 13-3.2

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

<sup>ix</sup> Definitions relative to construction, financing of public school facilities. *New Jersey Statutes Annotated* § 18A: 7G-3.

<sup>x</sup> Ibid.

<sup>xi</sup> Access to Full-Day Preschool; Calculation of Preschool Education Aid. School Attendance *New Jersey Education Code* § 6A:32-8.3 in Dr. Vincent Costanza, DNJ department of Education, Division of Early Childhood Education. 2012. E-mail correspondence. June 26.

<sup>xii</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. 2012. Personal Communication Email. June 26.

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

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

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

<sup>xv</sup> Dr. Vincent Costanza, 2012. NJ Department of Education, Division of Early Childhood Education. E-mail correspondence. June 26.

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

<sup>xvii</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>xviii</sup> Dr. Vincent Costanza, . 2012. NJ Department of Education, Division of Early Childhood Education. E-mail correspondence. June 26.

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

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

<sup>xx</sup> Meisels et al. 1995

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

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

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