



Children's Defense Fund

Full-Day Kindergarten in Pennsylvania

January 2013

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 Pennsylvania school districts required by statute to fund Full-Day K for all eligible students? ___ Yes X No
Out of 499 school districts, 462 offer Full-Day K.^{ii iii}

Statutory Provisions

- **Kindergarten is not compulsory;** the compulsory age for school is 8.^{iv}
- **The local school board should 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.
 - The district's minimum entry age cannot be less than 4 (for K-4) or 5 (for K-5) before the first day of the school term.
 - A district can also establish its own early admission policy to kindergarten as long as the early admission age is not less than 4.^v
- **Kindergarten programs shall be kept open each school year for a minimum of 180 days of instruction for students. The Secretary may, upon request, approve a school term containing a minimum of 900 elementary and 450 kindergarten hours.**^{vi}
- **The maximum teacher to student ratio in Kindergarten is 1 to 22. Class size can go up to 27 if there is a teacher's aide; or 30 if there is an assistant teacher or two aides.**^{vii}

Funding

- Half-time kindergarten students are weighted as .5 full-time equivalent (FTE) students. Regular elementary and secondary students are weighted at 1.0 FTE.^{viii}
- The Accountability Block Grant (ABG) was launched in 2004-2005 to provide assistance for school districts focused on improving student achievement. School districts may provide Full-Day K with these dollars.^{ix}
- In 2011-2012 the ABG was eliminated resulting in some school districts no longer being able to provide free Full-Day K.^{x xi}

Standards

- The Common Core State Standards were adopted in July 2010.^{xii}
- Published jointly by the Pennsylvania Department of Education and Department of Public Welfare in 2005 and revised in 2009, the Pennsylvania Kindergarten Standards lays out the standards for areas such as creative, cognitive, mathematical and social studies.^{xiii}
- Kindergarten learning expectations are aligned with elementary and secondary standards.^{xiv}

Assessment

- Pennsylvania statute does not define an assessment for kindergarten.

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- ⁱ Admission to kindergarten when provided. *22 Pennsylvania Code § 11.14*
- ⁱⁱ Enrollment Public School 2010-2011.
http://www.portal.state.pa.us/portal/server.pt/community/enrollment/7407/public_school_enrollment_reports/620541
Accessed January 2013.
- ⁱⁱⁱ Wise, Deborah. 2012. E-mail correspondence. June 29.
- ^{iv} Compulsory school age. *22 Pennsylvania Code §11.13*
- ^v Admission to kindergarten when provided. *22 Pennsylvania Code § 11.14*
- ^{vi} School Term. *22 Pennsylvania Code § 11.1.*
- ^{vii} Teaching Load. *22 Pennsylvania Code § 53.26.*
- ^{viii} Substantiated Need. *22 Pennsylvania Code §349.2.*
- ^{ix} 2009-2010 Accountability Block Grant Midyear Report. *Pennsylvania Department of Education.*
- ^x Lewistown Sentinel (August 18,2011) mwise@lewistownsentinel.com.
- ^{xi} Detrow, Scott (March 2011). "Pa. education chief backs Corbett on cuts. *NewsWorks*.
- ^{xii} Common Core State Standards Initiative. "In the States." <http://www.corestandards.org/in-the-states>
- ^{xiii} 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>. Accessed January 2013.
- ^{xiv} Transitions and Alignments. (2011, January). Education Week, Quality Counts. 30 (16) pg 50.