



# Children's Defense Fund

## Full-Day Kindergarten in Massachusetts

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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 Massachusetts school districts required by statute to fund Full-Day K for all eligible students?** \_\_\_ Yes X No  
During the 2011-2012 school year, there were 67,956 students enrolled in kindergarten and 83 percent (56,264) were enrolled in Full-Day K.<sup>ii</sup> In all, there were 80,281 5-year-olds in the state and roughly 84 percent of them were enrolled in kindergarten.<sup>iii</sup>

### Statutory Provisions

- Each school district may establish its own minimum permissible age for school attendance, provided that such age is not older than the mandatory minimum school age of 6 established in statute.<sup>iv</sup>
- All public school districts must provide 425 hours of kindergarten instruction per school year, or two and a half hours per day per academic year.<sup>v vi</sup>
- Class size for kindergarten in Massachusetts shall not exceed an average of 25.<sup>vii</sup>

### Funding

- In order for districts to receive funding from the state's Full-Day K grant program, the Quality Full-Day Kindergarten Grant program, kindergarten must be a minimum of five instructional hours, five days a week, at 180 days per school year.<sup>viii</sup>
- The Quality Full-Day Kindergarten Grant is an incentive aimed at improving existing Full-Day K programs. Close to \$23 million is divided among the districts that enter into the grant process and abide by the priorities and procedures written by the state. The purpose of this state-funded grant program is to support high quality educational programs for children in Full-Day K classrooms by: improving the quality of curriculum and classroom environment; providing continuity of curriculum across preschool, kindergarten, and grades 1-3; and developing other programmatic components of kindergarten listed below.<sup>ix</sup>
- Some Massachusetts districts charge parents tuition to pay for Full-Day K.<sup>x</sup>

### Standards

- The Common Core State Standards were adopted in July 2010. From these Common Core Standards, the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education has released the 2011 Massachusetts Curriculum Frameworks.<sup>xi</sup>
- Kindergarten learning expectations are aligned with elementary and secondary standards.<sup>xii</sup>

### Assessment

- Development of a statewide kindergarten readiness assessment is part of the mandate of the Massachusetts' Department of Early Education and Care. Any child entering kindergarten must have a comprehensive health and developmental examination.<sup>xiii</sup>

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- <sup>i</sup> School Year Requirements. *Code of Massachusetts Regulations* title 603 §27.03
- <sup>ii</sup> Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education. "School/District Profiles." <http://profiles.doe.mass.edu/>
- <sup>iii</sup> Strategies for Children. " Full-Day Kindergarten Fact Sheet (2012)."  
[http://www.strategiesforchildren.org/eea/6research\\_summaries/07\\_FDK\\_Factsheet.pdf](http://www.strategiesforchildren.org/eea/6research_summaries/07_FDK_Factsheet.pdf)
- <sup>iv</sup> Kindergartens: Minimum School Age. *Code of Massachusetts Regulations* title 603 § 8.02
- <sup>v</sup> Ibid
- <sup>vi</sup> School Year Requirements. *Code of Massachusetts Regulations* title 603 §27.03
- <sup>vii</sup> Kindergarten. *Code of Massachusetts Regulations* § 603. 8.01
- <sup>viii</sup> Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education. "Grants and Other Financial Assistance Programs: FY2011; Quality Full-Day Kindergarten." <http://finance1.doe.mass.edu/grants/grants11/rfp/701.html>
- <sup>ix</sup> Ibid
- <sup>x</sup> Strategies for Children. "Tuition Rates for Full-Day Kindergarten by City/Town, 2011-2012 School Year."  
[http://www.strategiesforchildren.org/eea/6research\\_maps/EEAMap\\_FDKTuition10.pdf](http://www.strategiesforchildren.org/eea/6research_maps/EEAMap_FDKTuition10.pdf)
- <sup>xi</sup> Common Core State Standards Initiative. "In the States." <http://www.corestandards.org/in-the-states>
- <sup>xii</sup> Transitions and Alignments. (2011, January). Education Week, Quality Counts. 30 (16) pg 50.
- <sup>xiii</sup> The Massachusetts Special Education Law, Requirement of Law. *Code of Massachusetts Regulations* title 130 §433.484