



Children's Defense Fund

Full-Day Kindergarten in Tennessee

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 Tennessee school districts required by statute to fund Full-Day K for all eligible students? ___ Yes X No
In 2010, approximately 75,000 students attended kindergartenⁱⁱ.

Statutory Provisions

- **Kindergarten attendance is mandatory**, no child shall be eligible to enter first grade without having attended an approved kindergarten program. A child does not have to enroll in school at 5 years of age, but enrollment must occur no later than the child's sixth birthday.ⁱⁱⁱ
- **Children entering kindergarten shall be 5 years of age on or before August 31st for the 2013-2014 school year and on or before August 15th for all school years after.**^{iv}
- **The length of the kindergarten day shall be no less than four hours.**^v Prekindergarten is defined as five and a half hours^{vi}; therefore most districts have extended their kindergarten program to least five and a half hours each day.^{vii}
- **The teacher to pupil ratio shall not exceed 1 to 20 and the maximum kindergarten class size is 25.**^{viii}

Funding

- State funds for kindergarten purposes shall be apportioned between the school systems in accordance with the Basic Education Program. Each school system shall notify the commissioner of education by August 1st of each year of the number of kindergarten classes that it will provide for the next school term. The amount of kindergarten funds that are allocated to a school system but not claimed by the system in any school term shall be apportioned for one year only among the school systems that have qualified for more kindergarten classes than the initial allocation provided.^{ix}

Standards

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

Assessment

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

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- ⁱ Minimum Kindergarten Program Law. *Tennessee Code Annotated* § 49-6-201
- ⁱⁱ 2010 Average Daily Membership. Tennessee Department of Education.
http://www.tn.gov/education/asr/09_10/stat_summs.shtml. Accessed January 2013.
- ⁱⁱⁱ Minimum Kindergarten Program Law. *Tennessee Code Annotated* § 49-6-201
- ^{iv} Ibid
- ^v Ibid.
- ^{vi} Enrollment in pre-kindergarten programs for at risk children --Requirements of programs. *Tennessee Code Annotated* §49-6-104.
- ^{vii} Bobbi Lussier, Personal Communication (Telephone), July 17, 2012.
- ^{viii} Maximum class size -- Waiver -- Split-grade classes. *Tennessee Code Annotated* §49-1-104.
- ^{ix} Minimum Kindergarten Program Law. *Tennessee Code Annotated* § 49-6-201
- ^x Common Core State Standards Initiative. "In the States." <http://www.corestandards.org/in-the-states>
- ^{xi} Transitions and Alignments. (2011, January). Education Week, Quality Counts. 30 (16) pg 50.
- ^{xii} State Curriculum, Requirement D. *Rules of the State Board Of Education* § 0520-1-3-.05
- ^{xiii} Ibid
- ^{xiv} ibid