

POLICY 14:

Kindergarten

NO DATA UPDATE IS AVAILABLE FOR POLICY 14
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Why Kindergarten Policy Matters. States can enhance opportunity for children by improving access to and the quality of kindergarten. Kindergarten is an important and often overlooked link between early childhood and elementary education. Research indicates that children who attend full-day kindergarten show significantly greater academic gains before first grade than those who attend half-day programs.⁶⁹ Studies also suggest that compared to children in half-day kindergarten, children who attend full-day kindergarten have higher academic achievement in later grades, show faster gains in literacy and language, display better behavior, and remain on grade going forward, thereby lowering the cost of retention and remediation.⁷⁰ Some states have invested in broad access to full-day kindergarten, yet in 2000, only 63 percent of kindergarteners attended a full-day program.⁷¹

Key State Policy Measures. State leaders can support the development of children into productive adults by ensuring that kindergarten serves as an effective transition from early childhood to elementary school. The following policies can play a key role in enhancing early education in this way:

- 14.1 Financial incentives for full-day kindergarten.** State funding formulas can create incentives for local districts to provide full-day kindergarten by providing a funding amount to cover the full-day cost. Alternately, state formulas can create a disincentive for local districts to offer full-day programs by forcing local districts to supplement state money with local funds to cover the cost difference between full-day and half-day programs.⁷²
- 14.2 Statutory definition of “full-day.”** Many states have not defined the meaning of “full-day,” and thereby do not set a standard that may maximize the benefit of a child’s exposure to kindergarten programs.⁷³ Research indicates that a kindergarten day that is not consistent with pre-k and first grade days can disrupt the routine of young children.⁷⁴ States can therefore enhance the value of kindergarten programs by defining the length of the kindergarten day by statute in a manner consistent with pre-k and first grade activities.

Kindergarten Policy Measures

Measure 14.1: Financial Incentives for Full-day Kindergarten

Does the state funding formula provide an incentive or disincentive for local districts to offer full-day kindergarten? *Table reflects policy as of 2001-02.*

| | |
|--|---|
| Incentive | Alaska, Ga., Ill., Neb., N.M., N.Y., Wis. |
| Neutral | Ala., Ark., Calif., Conn., D.C., Fla., Iowa, La., Maine, Mass., Mich., Miss., Mo., N.C., S.C., S.D., Tenn., Texas, Vt., Va., Wash., W.Va. |
| Disincentive | Ariz., Colo., Del., Idaho, Ind., Kan., Ky., Md., Minn., Mont., Nev., N.H., N.J., N.D., Ohio, Okla., Ore., Utah, Wyo. |
| States do not use traditional formulas to determine kindergarten funding | Hawaii, Pa., R.I. |

Measure 14.2: Statutory Definition of “Full-day”

Does the state define in statute the length of a “full-day” kindergarten class in a manner consistent with a first grade class? *Table reflects policy as of 2001-02.*

| | |
|---|---|
| Yes | Conn., Fla., Ill., La., Minn., Miss., Neb., N.M., Ohio, Wis. |
| Statutorily defined but not aligned with first grade activities | Ala., Alaska, Calif., Colo., D.C., Ga., N.J., Okla., S.D., Va. |
| Not specified in statute | Ariz., Ark., Del., Hawaii, Idaho, Ind., Iowa, Kan., Ky., Maine, Md., Mass., Mich., Mo., Mont., Nev., N.H., N.Y., N.C., N.D., Ore., Pa., R.I., S.C., Tenn., Texas, Utah, Vt., Wash., W.Va., Wyo. |

Selected State Kindergarten Policies

| STATE | 14.1 | | 14.2 | |
|----------------------------|---|--|---------------------|---|
| | Incentive Provided for Full-Day Kindergarten in State Funding Formula | Minimum Number of Hours in Full-Day Kindergarten | Statutorily Defined | Consistent with 1st Grade |
| Alabama | Neutral | Yes | – | 6 hours/day |
| Alaska | Incentive | Yes | – | Minimum of 4 hours/day |
| Arizona | Disincentive | – | – | N/A |
| Arkansas | Neutral | – | – | N/A |
| California | Neutral | Yes | – | More than 4 hours, but not to exceed the length of the primary school day |
| Colorado | Disincentive | Yes | – | 900 hours/year (Shorter than 1st grade) |
| Connecticut | Neutral | Yes | Yes | 900 hours/year (5 hours/day) (Same as 1st grade) |
| Delaware | Disincentive | – | – | N/A |
| District of Columbia | Neutral | Yes | – | No Data |
| Florida | Neutral | Yes | Yes | 720 hours/year (Same as 1st grade) |
| Georgia | Incentive | Yes | – | 4.5 hours/day for 180 days/year |
| Hawaii | N/A [a] | – | – | N/A |
| Idaho | Disincentive | – | – | N/A |
| Illinois | Incentive | Yes | Yes | 4 hours/day (Same as 1st grade) |
| Indiana | Disincentive | – | – | N/A |
| Iowa | Neutral | – | – | N/A |
| Kansas | Disincentive | – | – | N/A |
| Kentucky | Disincentive | – | – | N/A |
| Louisiana | Neutral | Yes | Yes | 6 hours/day (Same as 1st grade) |
| Maine | Neutral | – | – | N/A |
| Maryland | Disincentive | – | – | N/A |
| Massachusetts | Neutral | – | – | N/A |
| Michigan | Neutral | – | – | N/A |
| Minnesota | Disincentive | Yes | Yes | 935 hours/year (Same as 1st grade) |
| Mississippi | Neutral | Yes | Yes | Same length of school day as that of other elementary grades |
| Missouri | Neutral | – | – | N/A |
| Montana | Disincentive | – | – | N/A |
| Nebraska | Incentive | Yes | Yes | 1,032 hours/year (Same as 1st grade) |
| Nevada | Disincentive | – | – | N/A |
| New Hampshire | Disincentive | – | – | N/A |
| New Jersey | Disincentive | Yes | – | Minimum of 4 hours/day |
| New Mexico | Incentive | Yes | Yes | 5.5 hours/day or 990 hours/year (Same as 1st grade) |
| New York | Incentive | – | – | N/A |
| North Carolina | Neutral | – | – | N/A |
| North Dakota | Disincentive | – | – | N/A |
| Ohio | Disincentive | Yes | Yes | Same number of hours per day as grades 1–6 |
| Oklahoma | Disincentive | Yes | – | 6 hours/day |
| Oregon | Disincentive | – | – | N/A |
| Pennsylvania | N/A [b] | – | – | N/A |
| Rhode Island | N/A [c] | – | – | N/A |
| South Carolina | Neutral | – | – | N/A |
| South Dakota | Neutral | Yes | – | Determined by district |
| Tennessee | Neutral | – | – | N/A |
| Texas | Neutral | – | – | N/A |
| Utah | Disincentive | – | – | N/A |
| Vermont | Neutral | – | – | N/A |
| Virginia | Neutral | Yes | – | 540 hours/year |
| Washington | Neutral | – | – | N/A |
| West Virginia | Neutral | – | – | N/A |
| Wisconsin | Incentive | Yes | Yes | Same length of school day as 1st grade |
| Wyoming | Disincentive | – | – | N/A |
| Year Data Collected | 2001-02 | 2001-02 | | |

Data Source:

- 14.1** Education Commission of the States. “How States Fund Full-day Kindergarten.” *State Notes*. Updated April 2005. Retrieved July 15, 2005. <http://www.ecs.org/clearinghouse/63/10/6310.htm>.
- 14.2** Kristie Kauerz, *Full-Day Kindergarten: A Study of State Policies in the United States*. Denver: Education Commission of the States, June 2005.

Data Table Notes:

- a. Hawaii operates as a single school district and, hence, there is no state formula for distribution of funds in the traditional sense.
- b. Pennsylvania state statute contains a formulaic incentive for providing full-day kindergarten, but this formula is not used for funding allocations in practice.
- c. Rhode Island school districts receive state funding based on the amount received in FY 1997-1998 with state mandated increases and adjustments for categorical funds. Because there is no “foundation formula,” there are no weights for various grades.