Washington Office of Superintendent of
PUBLIC INSTRUCTION

Transition to Kindergarten: Minimum Standards and Requirements

2024

TRANSITION TO KINDERGARTEN

Minimum Standards and Requirements

2024

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INTRODUCTION

Purpose and Authority

The purpose of this guidance is to provide minimum standards and requirements for Transition to Kindergarten (TK) programs, ensuring that TK programs serve eligible students of all abilities who need additional preparation to be successful in kindergarten and who lack access to other early learning group settings. These rules establish expectations and requirements for local education agencies (LEAs) in implementing and administering TK programs.

The authority for this chapter is under RCW 28A.300.072, which requires the Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction to establish rules concerning TK programs. LEAs should use this guidance in coordination with the research-based Washington State Full-Day Kindergarten Guide to ensure alignment with the evolving needs and aspirations of educators, administrators, and policymakers.

> ** Please note:* **OSPI and partners are in the process of updating the Full-Day Kindergarten Guide to become the TK/Kindergarten Best Practices Guide. This new volume will serve as a comprehensive resource that addresses the fundamental principles of full-day kindergarten and will integrate invaluable insights into the subtle nuances of TK classrooms, offering guidance that is both research-informed and grounded in practical experience with a tentative posting of Fall of 2024. Once posted all links in this guidance will be updated.**

Background and Context

House Bill 1550 (HB 1550) as passed by the Legislature in 2023, codified the existing Transitional Kindergarten as Transition to Kindergarten (TK). Chapter 392-425 WAC provides expectations for authorized local education agencies implementing transition to kindergarten programs. Also see: RCW 28A.300.072: Transition to kindergarten program.

The authority for this chapter is under Second Substitute House Bill No. 1550 (chapter 420, Laws of 2023), which requires the Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI) to establish rules and guidelines concerning TK programs.

PROGRAM OVERVIEW

Transition to Kindergarten

Transition to Kindergarten (TK) is a legislatively established and authorized program for children who are at least 4-years-old by August 31 and have been identified through a screening process to be in need of additional preparation to be successful kindergarten students in the following school year.

A TK program may be implemented and administered by the following LEAs, in accordance with RCW 28A.300.072**:**

> (1) Common school districts;
> (2) State tribal compact schools authorized under chapter 28A.715 RCW;
> (3) Only charter schools authorized under RCW 28A.710.080(2) may implement and administer a transition to kindergarten program.

Program Goals and Objectives

In partnership with community-based early learning programs, LEAs offer TK to provide early intervention for children with complex intersectional needs. LEAs can tailor their TK programs responsive to community needs indicated in a local needs assessment (see more under Local Needs Assessment). Examples include:

- Beginning a dual language program to give multi-language learners a head start before entering kindergarten.

- Responding to community needs and preferences

- Increasing the social, emotional, and academic skills that LEA data indicates children need an additional year to develop before entering kindergarten.

- Providing access to a continuum of inclusive placement opportunities for children with disabilities.

- Serving children whose families do not meet income eligibility for Working Connections Child Care (WCCC), ECEAP, or Head Start but cannot afford private fees for other early learning programs.

- Attracting and retaining families within the LEA, contributing to stable or increased student enrollment. This can be particularly important when facing declining student numbers.

- Providing an integrated early learning environment for their future students. LEAs using braided funding can create blended classrooms including slots for ECEAP and Head Start providing more socioeconomically diverse classrooms where children can develop positive relationships across lines of difference.

Compliance with Chapter 392-425 WAC

The following information is intended to position LEAs/buildings for success and to support in maintaining alignment with Chapter 392-425.

Eligible LEAs planning to implement and administer a TK program are required to adhere to guidelines, as developed by OSPI, related to:

(1) Best practices for site readiness of facilities that are used for the program;
(2) Developmentally appropriate curricula designed to assist in maintaining high quality programs; and
(3) Professional development opportunities.

Minimum Operating Requirements At-A-Glance

Approximate Time Frame	Requirement
Due **June 1** of prior school year	Notify OSPI of intent to open or expand TK program
Spring of prior school year at the latest	CRE Planning Worksheet and Comprehensive Needs Assessment before opening or expanding
Beginning of SY—Jan 31	Enroll students that meet the eligibility criteria
Ongoing	Classrooms staffed by certificated teacher(s) and qualified paraeducators; early childhood experience recommended for both
Ongoing	Curriculum that offers a rich, varied set of experiences in developmentally appropriate learning environments and addresses the whole child
Ongoing	Establish learning environments that are developmentally appropriate and promote creativity
Ongoing	Demonstrate strong connections and communication with early learning community providers (Local area coordination/Coordinated Recruitment and Enrollment)
Fall: Nov 15 Winter: March 15 and/or Spring: June15	Administration of all three components of Washington Kindergarten Inventory of Developing Skills (WaKIDS) at the beginning of the program and the Whole-child Assessment at least one more time during the year
By opening of TK school year	Readiness of Facilities – best practices developed by OSPI
Ongoing	Professional Development Opportunities – guidelines developed by OSPI

ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

LEA Administration

LEAs planning to start or expand a TK program must notify the Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI) by June 1. Please see OSPI's TK Website for the current survey.

LEAs administering a TK program must coordinate with local licensed child care and early learning providers to demonstrate program need before beginning or expanding a TK program through the Coordinated Recruitment and Enrollment and Comprehensive Needs Assessment process.

LEA and Building Administrators

LEA and building administrators must conduct a Coordinated Recruitment and Enrollment (CRE) assessment before beginning or expanding a TK program that considers the existing availability and affordability of local and local tribal early learning providers. Once the CRE has been performed and analyzed, a comprehensive needs assessment at the building or LEA level must be completed. The needs assessment must take into consideration what specific supports will best serve students and their families in a TK program. See more under the Coordinated Recruitment and Enrollment process.

It is imperative that leaders of high-quality early learning programs understand early childhood development and appropriate, evidence based instructional practices to effectively support teachers. Please see below for resources to build understandings to support continual improvement in high-quality early learning settings.

Evidence Based Practice Resources

A Principal's Guide to Early Learning and the Early Grades from the National Association of Elementary School Principals and P–3 Network. This guidebook includes important foundational information and explores six competencies for leadership in early learning communities. See the Executive Summary to begin building your strong PreK–3rd program.

Washington State Full-Day Kindergarten Guide

2023–24 Consolidated School Improvement Plan and Comprehensive Needs Assessment Toolkit 2023

Child Care Aware Washington Services for Principals

Coordinated Recruitment and Enrollment Planning Worksheet

PreK–3rd Grade Transition Resources

OSPI's Revised Student Growth Goals Rubrics

Washington State Early Learning and Development Guidelines Birth Through Third Grade

Certificated Staff Qualifications

A person serving as a teacher in a TK program must hold a valid teaching certificate in accordance with Title 181 WAC. Hiring certificated educators with experience in early childhood education is recommended. TK Teachers must maintain a valid certificate by meeting reissue or renewal requirements. Visit the OSPI Certification website for more information.

Classified Staff Qualifications

Paraeducators for transition to kindergarten programs must have met the minimum hiring requirements and must make progress on the paraeducator certificate program in accordance with Title 179 WAC.

Professional Development

Ongoing professional development is essential for all educators. The primary aim of Professional Development (PD) in TK programs is to equip educators with the knowledge, skills, and resources to create high-quality, play-based learning environments that:

- **Enhance knowledge and skills:** This includes understanding early childhood development (social-emotional, cognitive, physical, language).

- **Bridge the Pre-K to Kindergarten gap:** Educators will learn best practices for transitioning students to kindergarten.

- **Implement a developmentally appropriate curriculum:** This includes utilizing play as the primary learning tool and aligning with the Washington TK/Kindergarten Learning Standards.

- **Build positive relationships with children and families:** PD will address fostering strong connections.

- **Meet the diverse needs of all learners:** Educators will gain skills in differentiated instruction and creating inclusive classrooms.

LEAs are strongly encouraged to use existing professional development time to support TK teachers and paraeducators in opportunities for professional learning in these areas. This may include, but is not limited to, providing clock hours, supporting educators in completing professional growth plans focused on these learning activities, or dedicating time during the three funded professional learning days (RCW 28A.150.415). LEAs are also encouraged to consider using Teacher Principal Evaluation Program (TPEP); Title II, Part A; or other appropriate funding sources for PD opportunities for TK educators.

In addition, TK educators can also participate in developmentally appropriate professional development through approved early learning trainings. For example, many early learning training courses provide STARS hours (issued by the Department of Children Youth and Families (DCYF)) which are accepted as clock hours. See the DCYF website for more information about STARS hours and training, and the OSPI Educator Clock Hour Information FAQ to learn more about STARS hours as an acceptable form of clock hours.

By supporting ongoing and job-embedded professional learning activities, TK educators will be equipped to create high-quality learning environments that support all students as they transition to kindergarten.

LOCAL NEEDS ASSESSMENT

Collaboration with Community Early Learning Providers

It is a requirement that a **local child care and early learning needs assessment is conducted before beginning or expanding** a TK program that considers the existing availability and affordability of early learning providers, such as ECEAP, Head Start programs, other LEA Developmental preschools, and licensed child care centers and family home providers in the region. Data available through the regionalized data dashboard maintained by DCYF or any other appropriate sources may be used to inform the needs assessment required by this subsection.

Coordinated Recruitment and Enrollment

The purpose of coordinated recruitment and enrollment (CRE) is to deepen collaborative, inclusive community early learning enrollment efforts and to ensure the most children as possible are served with the funding available, all while maintaining informed family choice. Since TK seeks to fill a gap in available high-quality early learning opportunities, it is necessary to take steps to assure that families are aware of all the options available to them, as well as the potential benefits and outcomes of those options.

Early Learning Collaboration is also a requirement of WaKIDS. Learn more on the WaKIDS website.

It is critical that TK programs work in collaboration with and do not adversely impact enrollment in community-based early learning programs, including Head Start, ECEAP, and those operating in licensed child care centers and licensed family homes. LEAs should participate in coordinated outreach, referral, and placement in collaboration with community-based programs and LEA developmental preschools to assure best fit and appropriateness of services based on each child and family's need. **LEAs must complete the CRE Planning Worksheet as an assurance that this process has been fulfilled.**
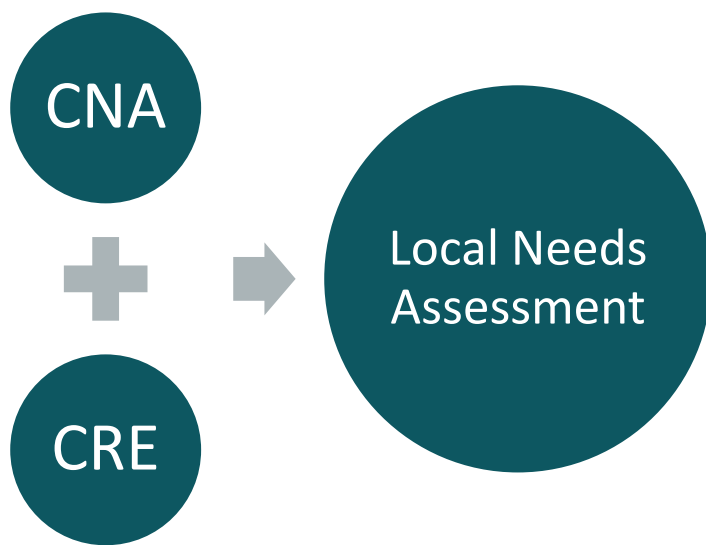
Resource
For a list of licensed child care providers located within your school boundary visit: **Child Care Aware Washington Services for Principals**

Comprehensive Needs Assessment

WAC 392-425-030 addresses the requirement that LEAs coordinate with local child care and early learning providers to demonstrate program need before beginning or expanding a TK program through OSPI's established process of engaging in both coordinated recruitment and enrollment (CRE) strategies as well as a LEA/Building Comprehensive Needs Assessment (CNA). A CRE strategy and the CNA serve different purposes and focus on the different aspects of successful planning and implementation of TK programs. **When used in unison, the two assessments comprise the local needs assessment.**

Needs Assessments
Needs assessments are required for all supplemental state and federal funding streams for TK (beginning in 2025–26 for LAP) and is also a component of WAC 180-16-220 Supplemental basic education program approval requirements. This systematic process should identify and prioritize the needs of the LEA and potential TK students, to guide resource allocation and strategic planning to address strengths and gaps and improve outcomes effectively. Please note that the TK CNA can be embedded in a building or LEAs CNA/SIP or stand alone.

CNA + CRE → Local Needs Assessment

CRE is a shared process among community programs serving children ages 3–5 to support families in selecting a high-quality early learning program that best meets the needs of each child and family; and to assure that community early learning programs are working together in ways that maximize resources and serve the most children possible.

The CRE Planning Worksheet supports planning teams as they consider the need for and feasibility of new or expanded TK classrooms and how to work in partnership with other community programs to meet the need, aiming for efficiency and effectiveness in reaching students who do not have access to high quality early learning prior to kindergarten.

The **LEA/Building CNA** focuses on understanding the specific needs and resources of the LEA or school building to inform program planning and decision-making to best serve potential TK students. The components of the CNA are also present in a comprehensive multi-tiered system of supports (MTSS) framework that, when implemented effectively, enhances the

implementation of evidence-based practices to achieve important academic and non-academic outcomes for every student. See OSPI's MTSS webpage for more information. Conducting a CNA ensures that TK programs are tailored to the specific needs of the community and creates access for children who are currently underserved leading to the improvement of early learning outcomes for all children.

At the school-level or LEA-level the CNA process is implemented across five phases:
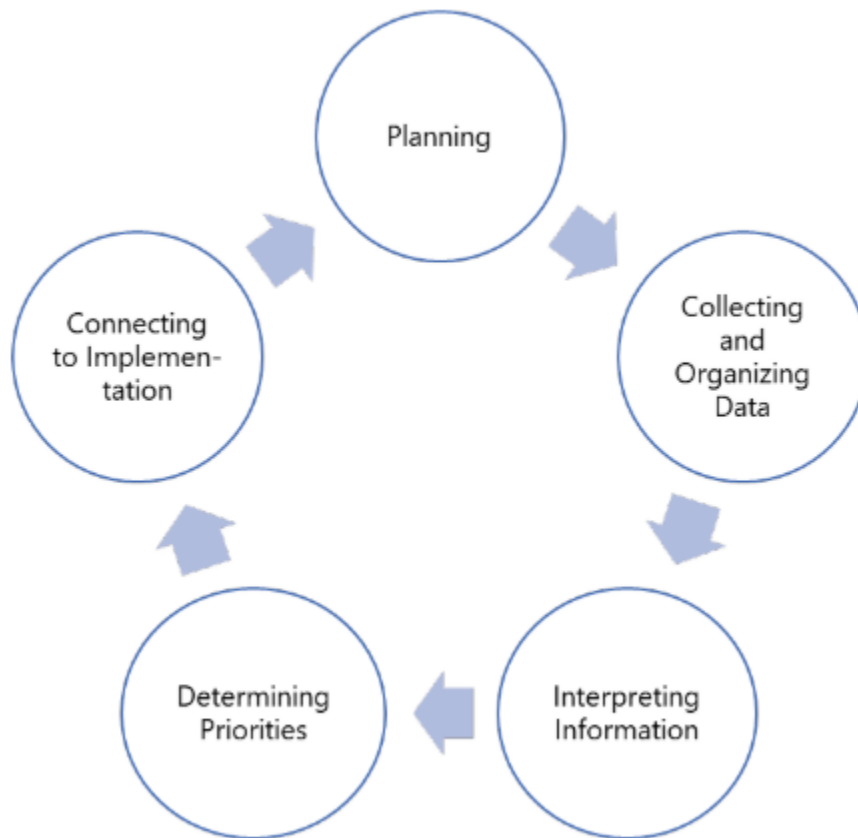
Recommendations from the Needs Assessment Guidebook (2018) for a successful needs assessment process requires four essential elements:

1) **Needs-Driven and Context Specific**—requires the problem, topics, and questions to be addressed are clearly defined, and the design and data inputs of the needs assessment must reflect the local context for the work.
2) **Rigorous Data Analysis**—requires diverse data sets that include multiple data types, reflecting multiple viewpoints, and high-quality data that is collected using valid and reliable methods in order to be deemed clean and trustworthy (error-free).
3) **Stakeholder Engagement**—expects the needs assessment process be conducted collaboratively with local stakeholders rather than completed by a small group of leaders or an outside agency. This means engaging school staff, parents, a diverse

assortment of leaders and external support providers during each phase of the CNA process.

4) **Collaborative Identification of Improvement Needs**—involves stakeholders working collaboratively to identify and prioritize areas of needed focus to inform improvement efforts.

The following steps should be considered to gain the most clarity in implementing a TK program Needs Assessment. Keep in mind, these steps are typically addressed and imbedded in LEA School Improvement Plans. Planning teams should be mindful of the unique needs of early learners, their families, and the teachers and staff who serve them and explicitly plan for and address strengths and gaps before beginning or expanding programs.

Planning

1. Define Objectives
- Clearly outline the goals of the needs assessment.
- Determine what specific information you need to gather to support children and families in the TK program.

2. Form a Planning Team
- Assemble a team of stakeholders, including preschool teachers, kindergarten teachers, school administrators, parents, and community members.
- Engage community early learning providers
  - Coordinated Recruitment and Enrollment Planning Worksheet
  - DCYF Coordinated Recruitment and Enrollment Website
- Assign roles and responsibilities within the team.

3. Identify Key Areas of Focus
- Academic readiness (e.g., literacy, numeracy).
- Social and emotional development.
- Physical health and development.
- Family engagement and support.
- School readiness (e.g., familiarity with the school environment).
  Please see the TK Readiness Considerations

Collecting and Organizing Data

1. Develop Assessment Tools—to measure program strengths and needs
- Surveys or questionnaires for parents and teachers.
- WaKIDS conducted at least two times a year
- Observational checklists appropriate for early learning settings.
- Interviews with parents, teachers, and administrators.
- Focus groups with parents and teachers.
- Review of existing data (e.g., TK and/or kindergarten progress reports/WaKIDS).

Interpreting Information

1. Analyze Data
- Compile and review the collected data.

- Identify common themes and areas of need.
- Compare findings against established benchmarks or standards.

2. Capture Findings
- Use OSPI templates to complete a narrative summarizing the findings.
- Consider including data visualizations (charts, graphs) to illustrate key points.
- Highlight strengths and areas for improvement.

Determining Priorities

1. Develop Action Plan
- Based on the findings, create an action plan to address identified needs.
- Set specific, measurable, achievable, relevant, and time-bound (SMART) goals.
- Assign responsibilities for implementing the action plan.

2. Implement Interventions
- Provide professional development for preschool, TK, and kindergarten teachers.
- Deliver specific supports to address each TK student's needs.
- Create resources for parents (e.g., informational packets, workshops).

Connecting to Implementation

1. Evaluate and Revise
- Monitor the implementation of the action plan.
- Gather feedback from stakeholders.
- Evaluate the effectiveness of interventions.
- Make necessary adjustments to improve outcomes.

2. Communicate Results
- Share the results of the needs assessment and the action plan with all stakeholders.
- Celebrate successes and acknowledge contributions from all involved.

Please note:
- The TK CNA can be embedded in a building or LEAs CNA/SIP or stand alone.
- TK funding streams require a CNA.
  - Beginning 2025–26, LEAs utilizing Learning Assistance Program (LAP) funds will need to complete the Washington Integrated Student Support Protocol, which has a CNA embedded in the process.
  - LEAs utilizing federal funds also must conduct a CNA.
- OSPI offers CNA Templates addressing the needed components across funding programs or LEAs may use their own.

2024–25 Consolidated School Improvement Plan Template
Find more information in the Comprehensive Needs Assessment Toolkit 2023

STUDENT ELIGIBILITY

Student Eligibility

Children meeting the following criteria are eligible to participate in a TK program:

- A child who has been determined to benefit from additional preparation for kindergarten through a screening process and tool; and
- who is at least 4-years-old by August 31 of the school year in which they enroll in a TK program.

In determining student eligibility and admitting students to a TK program, LEAs must:

- Give priority to children most in need of additional preparation to be successful in kindergarten, as demonstrated through a screening process and tool; and to children with the lowest family income not otherwise participating in another local early learning program.
- Not exclude, nor establish a policy to prohibit from participation, an eligible child due only to the presence of a disability.
- Not charge tuition or other fees from state-funded eligible students for enrollment in a TK program.

Enrollment into TK programs is based upon the determination of ability or need(s) that has historically hindered children from successfully participating in and/or benefiting from kindergarten. **It is the responsibility of the LEA to determine the appropriate screening process or tool for evaluating prospective students and establishing need.** To determine eligibility for TK, screening procedures should include multiple sources of information.

Establishing developmental indicators for eligibility—Screening procedures should be culturally and linguistically relevant. Results should be reviewed with families for their input and feedback. Screening practices should also consider that young children require flexibility and understanding when gathering assessment information. Stress in new situations, hunger or fatigue can cause children to become distracted from assessments or unwilling to participate.

> The WaKIDS Whole-child Assessment **is not a screening tool**.
> WaKIDS is administered over a 6–10-week observation period, after the student is enrolled in a TK program. See Assessment section for more information about WaKIDS requirements.

Professionals should be prepared to make modifications or reassess later.

Listed below are examples of widely used, norm-referenced screening instruments that demonstrate reliability and validity and take 30 minutes or less to administer.

Sample Screening Instruments:

- Ages and Stages Questionnaires® (ASQ®-3, ASQ®:SE-2), Brookes Publishing Company
- Battelle Developmental Inventory Screening Test, Riverside Publishing
- DIAL-4, Pearson Assessments

There is flexibility for an LEA to enroll a student in the program that best meets their needs (including enrolling 5-year-olds in TK, if it is determined they would benefit from additional preparation for kindergarten). Access to TK does not constitute an individual entitlement for any particular child.

Choice Transfers

TK should follow the LEAs existing choice transfer requirements. TK students generate state funding and a choice transfer or interdistrict agreement would give a non-resident district the authority to claim a student that does not reside in their district. Students residing in a district that does not offer TK may request to enroll in a TK program directly and would be eligible in the same manner as resident students per RCW 28A.225.210.

Enrollment Timelines

LEAs may use their own discretion when to enroll students for a TK program. However:

- LEAs offering a TK program must offer the program during the school year,
- The program may begin after the first day of the school year (for example: October start), but *must* begin no later than January 31,
- The program must conclude by the end of the school year and;
- TK must be *offered* as a full-day program.

Please note that based on individual student need, a district may allow a child to participate in TK as a part-time student (partial day). A part-time student will be counted as a partial full-time equivalent student in accordance with WAC 392-121-122. Please see more under Required Instructional Hours.

CURRICULUM AND INSTRUCTION

Developmentally Appropriate Curriculum Overview

A high-quality TK program that includes a whole-child approach and addresses physical, social and emotional development as well as foundational academics is likely to have a positive impact on a student's start to school. When LEAs are in the process of curriculum adoption, goals and principles should be relative to selected instructional materials (RCW 28A.320.230 Instructional materials). The statutory requirements for state-funded full-day kindergarten require teachers to provide a curriculum that offers a rich, varied set of experiences that assist students in learning through hands-on experiences. A play-based classroom is the logical strategy for teachers to engage children in hands-on learning. This instructional practice can be woven into any academic instruction and is not curriculum specific. Teachers must interpret and implement

selected curriculum to serve their students and constantly assess children's' progress to inform their teaching. TK teachers need a solid understanding of content and pedagogy to positively influence children's learning in every developmental area.

LEAs should strive to include the following components to develop and continuously improve their high-quality early learning program:

- **Qualified and Caring Teachers**: Teachers who are well-trained in early childhood education and are responsive to children's needs.

- **Safe, Supportive, and Inclusive Environment**: A physical environment that is safe, clean, and stimulating, with age-appropriate materials and activities that embraces inclusivity and belonging for all students.

- **Rich Learning Experiences**: Activities that promote social, emotional, physical, and cognitive development, such as play-based learning, storytelling, and creative arts.

- **Individualized Attention**: Small class sizes or a low child-to-teacher ratio to ensure that each child receives adequate attention and support.

- **Parent Engagement**: Opportunities for parents to be actively involved in their child's education and to collaborate with teachers (this is a requirement when using Title I, Part A funds).

- **Assessment and Accountability**: Regular formative assessments to monitor each child's progress and adjust teaching strategies accordingly. Administer WaKIDS twice a year (whole-child assessment component only), at minimum.

- **Curriculum**: LEAs choose a well-defined curriculum that is developmentally appropriate and aligns with early learning standards and LEA priorities.

TK programs should utilize the TK/K Best Practices Guide for information about child development, developmentally appropriate learning environments, and guiding principles for high-quality TK.

Resources

Washington State Full-day Kindergarten Guide

WA State Early Learning and Development Guidelines

Title I, Part A Evidence- Based Practices in Intervention Resource Guide

Required Instructional Hours and Access to Specialists

LEAs offering a TK program must offer the program during the LEA's regular school year. The program may begin after the first day of the school year, however it must begin by January 31. The program must conclude by the end of the school year.

Just as with regular kindergarten, LEAs must offer a full-day TK program. ***Based on individual student need, the LEA may allow a child to participate for less than full-time***.

TK is funded through the prototypical funding model, similar to kindergarten, so programming

should mirror what is offered to kindergarten students ([RCW 28A.150.315](#) All-day kindergarten programs—Funding—Identification of skills, knowledge, and characteristics—Assessments*).* TK administrators should also utilize the [Washington State Full-day Kindergarten Guide](#) to find best practice program components.

(a) Provide at least a one-thousand-hour instructional program (prorated for partial year TK programs);

(b) Provide a curriculum that offers a rich, varied set of experiences that assist students in:

> (i) Developing initial skills in the academic areas of reading, mathematics, and writing;

> (ii) Developing a variety of communication skills;

> (iii) Providing experiences in science, social studies, arts, health and physical education, and a world language other than English;

> (iv) Acquiring large and small motor skills;

> (v) Acquiring social and emotional skills including successful participation in learning activities as an individual and as part of a group; and

> (vi) Learning through hands-on experiences;

(c) Establish learning environments that are developmentally appropriate and promote creativity;

(d) Demonstrate strong connections and communication with early learning community providers; and

(e) Participate in kindergarten program readiness activities with early learning providers and parents.

Inclusive TK Classrooms

Every child is entitled to a warm and stimulating learning environment where they feel valued and empowered to thrive. OSPI holds an unwavering commitment to fostering inclusive TK classrooms in Washington, where all children, regardless of their abilities, backgrounds, or needs, can learn, play, and grow together. The following guiding principles outline how LEAs can support this vision:

- **Early Identification and Intervention:** Provide early screening and assessments to identify children who may benefit from additional support and services.

- **Individualized Learning Plans:** Develop and implement individualized learning plans that address the specific needs and goals of each child.

- **Qualified and Culturally Responsive Educators:** Invest in training and professional development to effectively implement inclusionary practices and address the diverse needs of all learners.

- **Family Engagement:** Actively involve families in their child's education and ensure their voices are heard in decision-making processes.

- **Community Partnerships:** Collaborate with community partners to provide

comprehensive support services and resources for children and families.

- **Data-Driven Decision Making:** Collect and analyze data to monitor progress, identify areas for improvement, and ensure the effectiveness of our inclusionary practices.

Students with Individualized Education Plans (IEPs) may be enrolled in TK if they meet the entrance requirements, please see Eligibility section above. ***Considering TK programs as the Least Restrictive Environment (LRE) for students with disabilities is crucial for promoting inclusive education*** (WAC 392-172A-02050). LRE ensures that these students have access to the general education curriculum and can interact with their peers without disabilities, fostering social integration and academic development. Early exposure to inclusive settings helps build a foundation for lifelong learning and acceptance, supporting the overall goal of providing equitable education opportunities for all students. A student should not be placed in a Developmental PreK simply because of an IEP, but should explore all options for the least restrictive environment as an IEP team: therefore, TK should be an option for placement as determined by the IEP team. For information about IDEA Part B visit the OSPI Special Education website.

For ideas on ways to create an inclusive setting consider these resources:

- Summary of Key Updates to WAC 392-172A this document clarifies the obligations of districts to support children ages 3–5 years eligible for IDEA, Part B. OSPI and community partners have worked together to clarify current WACs and the definition of a regular early childhood program.

- Inclusionary Practices Technical Assistance Network

- Understood.org-offers support for both families and educators. For educators, Understood.org provides information around understanding differences, partnering with families, connecting with children, and teaching strategies for learners with disabilities.

- ECTA Center: Inclusion and Preschool Inclusion Finance Toolkit (ectacenter.org)

- National Center for Pyramid Model Innovations NCPMI (usf.edu) Early Childhood Inclusion (parastorage.com)

- OSPI and DCYF's Advancing Integrated and Inclusive Programs for Preschool-Aged Children Guide

- Braided Funding to Promote Preschool Inclusions

ASSESSMENT AND PROGRESS MONITORING

Many school districts require other diagnostic, formative, and summative assessments to be administered in the early grades, primarily in reading and mathematics. While no single assessment is valid for all purposes, RCW 28A.150.315(2)(a) states that it is the intent of the Legislature that administration of the Washington Kindergarten Inventory of Developing Skills (WaKIDS) replace the administration of other assessments being required by school districts or that other assessments only be administered if they seek to obtain information not covered by WaKIDS.

Washington Kindergarten Inventory of Developing Skills

WaKIDS is a transition process that strives to connect the key adults in a child's life and provide a smooth transition between early learning or home, into the TK or kindergarten classroom. WaKIDS also provides important information about where Washington's TK/kindergartners are in their development early in the school year.

Inequities begin prior to the start of kindergarten and persist far into the child's K–12 experience and beyond. The data collected through WaKIDS helps to inform classroom decisions about individualized learning and district-and state-level decisions about education policy and investments.

WaKIDS has three components:

> **Family Connection:** TK teachers are expected to meet individually with each student's parents or guardians. These individual meetings, which generally take 20–45 minutes, occur at the school or at a mutually agreed upon location, before or near the beginning of the program.

> **Whole-child Assessment:** Students are assessed within the context of daily routines and classroom activities using Teaching Strategies *GOLD®*. TK teachers are required to complete one checkpoint at the beginning of the program and, additionally, it is required that the WaKIDS Whole-child Assessment be administered at least one more time during the school year. The checkpoint dates for TK align with kindergarten and ECEAP classrooms using *GOLD®*. A student's parent or guardian has the option to decline or excuse their student from the assessment. Districts must keep records of any test refusals, following their test refusal policy.

> **Early Learning Collaboration:** Local education agencies administering a TK program must make a best effort to coordinate with local child care and early learning providers to assure best placement and appropriate services based-on each child and family's need.

It is a requirement that TK programs administer all three components of WaKIDS at the start of the program and the WaKIDS Whole-child Assessment one more time during the school year (RCW 28A.300.072).

WaKIDS Whole-child Assessment data for TK students must be submitted and finalized by the

appropriate checkpoint dates, based on the program start date to allow 6–10 weeks of observation:

- Fall: November 15
- Winter: March 15
- Spring: June 15

WaKIDS must be conducted by the certificated, WaKIDS-trained teacher to whom the student is assigned. WaKIDS 101 and Refresher courses are offered virtually, throughout the year. Training dates can be found on the [WaKIDS Events and Training](#) webpage.

WIDA

The WIDA assessments measure English proficiency in the four domains of listening, reading, writing, and speaking. Students who may be eligible for English language development (ELD) services are required to be screened and provided with those services, including students in TK programs. However, our state-approved English language proficiency assessment, the WIDA Kindergarten Screener and WIDA Kindergarten ACCESS for ELLs assessment have not been validated for children under 5 and therefore, **are not appropriate for screening** TK students until they are closer to the typical age of kindergarten students.

The following procedure must be used for screening TK students:

1. *Home Language Survey*—Required the Home Language Survey for all TK students and use the information from questions 2 and 3 to determine possible eligibility.

2. *Provisional Qualification*—Record all TK students who are possibly eligible based on the Home Language Survey as provisionally qualified English learners without a screener score, using their date of enrollment as their Initial Placement Test Date.

3. *Spring WIDA Screening*—Beginning May 1, all TK students must be given the WIDA Kindergarten Screener prior to the end of their time in TK, following the guidance for early kindergarten screening (listening and speaking only). This screening will fulfill the requirement for an annual English language proficiency assessment and will determine their eligibility for ELD services the following school year upon entering kindergarten.

For more information on early learning strategies for multilingual learners, please see:

[Teaching in PreK–3](#)
[WIDA Early Years Can Do Descriptors](#)
[WIDA Focus Bulletin: Promoting Equity for Young Multilingual Children and Their Families](#)
[Exploring the WIDA PreK–3 Essential Actions Workshop](#)

Dyslexia Screening

Students in grades K–2 will be screened for indications of or areas of weakness associated with dyslexia. Districts may forgo early screening for the weaknesses associated with dyslexia in TK, as OSPI takes steps to develop guidance for screening 4-year-olds. Districts are required to conduct the WaKIDS whole-child assessment, which includes indicators of typical development in literacy, within the first 6–10 weeks of TK. Districts will also collaborate with families for each

student's literacy development and potential interventions, but this can be accomplished through administration of WaKIDS or other district assessments.

FACILITIES SITE READINESS

Health and Safety Guidelines

LEAs are required to meet the Chapter 246-366 WAC minimum environmental standards for educational facilities.

Facility site readiness should be considered when LEAs perform their TK CNA. Questions to consider include:

- Can TK programs be located at and fully integrated into district schools? How will TK fit into the school's master schedule?

- Is the learning environment, which encompasses physical space, materials, and schedule and routines, designed with young children who may have developmental delays and other risk factors in mind? See the Washington State Full-day Kindergarten Guide Chapter 3 Learning Environment: Physical Space.

- Consider ease of access, safety, and transitions to bathrooms, cafeteria, outdoor learning environments, specialists, etc.

- Materials and equipment should be child-sized and developmentally appropriate.

- Access to age-appropriate playground equipment:

  > Department of Health School Health and Safety
  > The Association 4 Learning Environments (A4LE)

- It is highly recommended that TK planning includes the school nurse to address and prepare for applicable health requirements.

  > Health Services Resources
  > Infectious Disease Control Guide for School Staff
  > Immunization Manual

LEAs and schools braiding funds to administer their TK programs (*i.e.* ECEAP, Title IA) must adhere to the highest performance standards of funding streams used.
ECEAP Performance Standards
Head Start Performance Standards

SITE VISITS

To ensure the continued success of TK programs, OSPI site visits are crucial for gathering firsthand insights. These visits are not evaluations, but opportunities to observe TK classrooms in action, answer questions from educators, and gain a deeper understanding of the program's strengths and areas for growth. This collaborative approach allows OSPI to offer targeted support, celebrate program successes, and work alongside educators to ensure TK continues to provide a strong foundation for all students. OSPI will collaborate with LEAs and regional ESDs to schedule visits.

FUNDING

Basic Education Funding

TK is not basic education, meaning it is not an entitlement for all students, As such, all students must be screened for TK eligibility. Funding allocated for this program must only be used for students enrolled in TK. TK is funded through the prototypical school funding model and TK students are funded through apportionment, generating funds the same as kindergarten students, including transportation and other district level services. TK programs are funded based on enrollment reported on the P-223.

Resources:

OSPI School Apportionment

Budget Preparations

Title I, Part A

TK is reserved for students who have been identified as needing additional supports prior to entering kindergarten, therefore; Title I, Part A can be used to fund TK as it would any intervention program to include supplies, curriculum, professional development, teacher and paraeducator salaries etc. Title I, Part A funds must be spent according to a program's School Improvement Plan as informed by its Comprehensive Needs Assessment. Like all Title I, Part A funded programs, LEAs/buildings have the option of running these programs as either a Schoolwide or Targeted Assistance Program. Please see the Title I, Part A Program Model webpage for more information on the two program models and the *Funding Early Learning in Title I, Part A Programs* to find more information specifically related to early learning programs. Please note that Title I allocations are based on an estimate of the population, ages 5–17, so **there is no additional allocation for TK students.**

When filling out the Title I, Part A Consolidated Grant Application, TK students should not be included in the enrollment numbers on the ranking and allocating page if the TK program is attached to an elementary school building. TKs *can* be funded out of a building allocation (if attached to an elementary school) or via a district set-aside when conducted offsite.

Below are some examples of how Title I, Part A funds can be used to support some best

practices for administering a TK program:

- For required Early Learning Collaboration – identify an early learning/extended learning contact in the LEA to serve as a point person between the community and LEA-based early learning programs. Visit **Child Care Aware of Washington** to request a list of child care providers in your area.

- Design high quality TK instruction – to include behavioral support with Washington Pyramid Model, Positive Behavioral Intervention Services, and Multi-Tiered Systems of Support (MTSS).

- Hire teachers with backgrounds emphasizing child development and/or early childhood special education.

- Create an inclusive environment.

- Cultivate relationships with families.

Title I, Part C (Migrant Education Program)

Title I, Part C, Migrant Education Program funds can be used to provide preschool services to eligible migrant students ages 3–5 not yet in kindergarten. Funds can also be used for training parents and families on strategies to support their children's learning in the home and increase PD to enhance understanding of the migratory lifestyle.

TRANSFERABILITY

Both Title II and Title IV funds can be transferred directly into the Title I, Part A budget in the yearly Consolidated Grant Application. Transferring these funds into Title I, Part A can create a larger, more flexible pool of funds LEAs can spend according to their School Improvement Plan (or Schoolwide Plan) as informed by their Comprehensive Needs Assessment.

Title II

Title II, Part A funds can be used to support supplemental professional learning activities for **teachers and principals** involved in early learning. Activities may only include ongoing and sustained activities of **four or more days**. Activities that meet the purpose of Title IIA have outcomes focused on:

- Increasing student achievement consistent with state standards,

- Improving the quality and effectiveness of teachers and principals,

- Increasing the number of teachers and principals who are effective in improving student academic achievement in schools, and

- Providing low-income and minority students greater access to effective teachers, principals, and other school leaders (*ESSA section 2103(b))*.

Title III

In Washington, Title III and Transitional Bilingual Instruction Program (TBIP) funds can be used to support students beginning in Transition to Kindergarten (TK). Students who may be eligible for English language development (ELD) services are required to be screened and be provided with those services, including students in TK programs. See Chapter 1 in the Washington State Multilingual Learners: Policies and Practice Guide for more information on how to provisionally qualify TK students for English Language Development Services.

Provisionally qualified TK students are eligible for ELD services and can be claimed on the P-223 count for TBIP and Title III funding. Best practice for early multilingual learners is to provide inclusive services through co-teaching or through professional development for TK educators to integrate ELD supports and strategies into the early learning environment. Pull-out services are not best practice and are discouraged. Title III can fund PD for early learning educators who teach English learners. Funds may be expended on PD that is specifically related to English Language Development for English learners.

For more information on early learning strategies for multilingual learners, see the WIDA website Teaching in PreK–3, WIDA Early Years Can Do Descriptors and the WIDA Focus Bulletin: Promoting Equity for Young Multilingual Children and Their Families. The WIDA self-paced workshop Exploring the WIDA PreK–3 Essential Actions is also available to Washington educators.

Title IV

Title IV, Part A funds can be used to help fund TK programs and activities. The Student Support and Academic Enrichment (Title IV, Part A) program provides funding to improve students' academic achievement by increasing LEAs capacity to:

- Provide all students with access to a well-rounded education;

- Improve school conditions for student learning; and

- Increase the use of technology to enhance the academic achievement and digital literacy of all students.

General TK purchases may include obtaining supplemental curriculum, books to supply a program focused on providing families with reading material for home, SEL programming and additional materials, etc. Purchasing technology and training teachers and other staff on how to use the technology is also allowable i.e. to assist with coordination and outreach by establishing a data base to coordinate and connect with other providers to support the transition to kindergarten. The Title IV A program is a flexible source of funding that is aimed to meet LEA's unique needs and provides ample opportunities for maximizing the use of the LEA's pot of federal funds.

Title VI

There are a variety of effective early learning activities and strategies that can have a positive impact in the education of Native prekindergarten children. Title VI funds can support those activities, but each Native group has specific differences. The chart below illustrates the most recent federal guidance can help understand the differences.

American Indians and Alaska Natives	Under the Title VI, Part A Indian Education Grants to LEAs formula grant program, funds can be used for early childhood programs that emphasize school readiness *(ESEA Section 6121 (b)(3))*. Also in Title VI, Part A, the Indian Education Demonstration Grants program authorizes the use of grant funds to support preschool and kindergarten programs as long as those programs are effective in preparing children to make sufficient academic growth by third grade *(ESEA Section 6121 (c)(7))*.
Native Hawaiians	Under the Native Hawaiian Education program (Title VI, Part B) funds can be used to support a Statewide Native Hawaiian early education and care system, and to operate family-based education centers, including those that provide services for parents and children from ages birth–3, preschool programs, and research on such programs *(ESEA Section 6205 (3)-(A), 6205 (3)-(B), and 6205 (3)-(C))*.
Alaska Natives	The Alaska Native Education program (Title VI, Part B) allows funds to be used to support early childhood and parent education programs that improve the school readiness of Alaska Native children *(ESEA Section 6205 (3)(A), 6205 (3)(B), and 6205 (3)(C))*.

Non-Regulatory Guidance: Early Learning in ESSA, Expanding Opportunities to Support our Youngest Learners, January 2017, p. 16. (ESSA Section 1119).

LAP

Since students have already been identified as needing additional preparation for successful transition through a screening process, TK is well aligned with the intent and purpose of LAP and future required use of Washington's Integrated Student Supports (ISS) Protocol. Beginning in school year 2025–26, LEAs and schools must utilize the ISS Protocol for LAP planning and implementation, which includes the TK program when LAP funds are used. For ideas on effective implementation of TK, please refer to the Early Learning Guide on the TK webpage.

In accordance with SHB 1550 (2023), funds are generated and included in both LAP base and LAP high poverty allocations for TK based on a per pupil rate. If operating a TK program, LEAs and schools must use a portion of their LAP base and/or LAP high poverty funds to support the TK program. This portion must be at least equal to the amount that the LEA calculates using the per pupil rate multiplied by the number of students enrolled in TK. Depending on the identified needs in their comprehensive needs assessment, the LEA may use more LAP base and/or LAP high poverty funds to support TK. LEAs should track these funds separately using a budget subcode, such as 55-09. For more support in budgeting LAP funds for TK, please use the Fund Balance Reporting Tool (tab GL 823 Restricted) on School Apportionment's Tools and Forms webpage. Guidance can also be found in School Apportionment and Financial Services' presentation at WASBO (starting on p. 61).

LAP funds used to support TK are subject to LAP reporting requirements, including information on participating students, activities, and expenditures. For more information on the LAP reporting, including step-by-step instructions, please review the resources available on the LAP webpage.

Special Education

When considering TK as a placement option for students with Individual Education Plans, please refer to **WAC 392-172A-02055** *Continuum of alternative placements*.

(1) Each school district shall ensure that a continuum of alternative placements is available to meet the special education and related services needs of students eligible for special education services between the ages of 3 and 21 years old.

(2) The continuum required in this section for eligible students in kindergarten (including 5-year -olds in kindergarten) through age 21 must:

(a) Include the placements listed in the definition of special education services in WAC 392-172A-01175, such as instruction in general education classes, special education classes, special schools, home instruction, and instruction in hospitals and institutions; and

(b) Make provision for supplementary services such as resource room or itinerant instruction to be provided in conjunction with general education classroom placement.

(3) The continuum of alternative placements a public agency providing special education and related services to a preschool child with a disability may include, but is not limited to, the following:

(a) Providing opportunities for the participation of preschool children with disabilities in

preschool programs operated by public agencies other than school districts (such as head start or community-based child care);

(b) Enrolling preschool children with disabilities in private preschool programs for nondisabled preschool children;

TK students receiving special education services are funded at the K–12 rate.
TK students receiving special education services are reported in the K–12 category on the P-223-H, the district's special education cap is affected.

(c) Locating classes for preschool children with disabilities in regular public elementary schools; and

(d) Providing services and instruction in the home.

(4) If a public agency determines that placement in a private preschool program is necessary for a child with a disability to receive FAPE, the public agency must make that program available at no cost to the parent.

Other Federal and State Resources

As the LEA performs a needs assessment, the results can be used to help decide which of these funds should be used to support the TK program to benefit the local prekindergarten children. An LEA could strategically examine the needs and possible funding sources, considering which sources overlap and develop a funding plan based upon those available sources. The following Federal programs generally can be used to support preschool activities, though allowability determinations may vary depending on the program.

Rural and Low Income Schools (RLIS)

Rural and Low Income Schools grant funds may be used for any of the expanded opportunities allowed under ESSA in Title I, Part A; Title II, Part A; Title III; and Title IV, Part A. This includes early learning services.

School Improvement Funds

A school may use ESEA section 1003 funds awarded to the school's Local Education Agency (LEA) to operate an early learning program in that school if it is aligned to the identified school's School Improvement Plan (SIP). ESEA authorizes an LEA to use section 1003 funds for Evidence Based Practices (EBP) that support the implementation of the SIP for schools identified as eligible for supports in Tiers 3 and 3 Plus per the Washington School Improvement Framework (WSIF), and other entities as funds are available. An identified school may use section 1003 funds awarded to the LEA for that school to implement a high-quality early learning program that is designed to improve school readiness if it is aligned to the identified school's SIP. Please see OSPI's Continuous School Improvement Resources, for more information.

Early Childhood Education and Assistance Program

Washington state ECEAP can provide prekindergarten services for 3 and 4-year-old children. To be eligible, a child must fit in one or more of the following categories:

- Qualified by a school district for special education services;

- Currently experiencing homelessness as defined by the federal McKinney-Vento Education of Homeless Children and Youth Assistance Act;

- participated in Early Head Start (EHS) or a successor federal program providing comprehensive services for children from birth through 2 years of age, the early support for infants and toddlers program (ESIT) or received class C developmental services, the birth to three early childhood education and assistance program (Early ECEAP), or the early childhood intervention and prevention services program (ECLISPE);

- From a family with income at or below 36% of the state median income (SMI) or is a tribal child as defined in rule by the Washington state's federally recognized tribes and DCYF and at or below 100% SMI; or

- From a family with income that exceeds 36% of the SMI and impacted by specific prioritization factors such as receiving Child Protective Services or similar tribal services, Indian Child Welfare or Family Assessment Response (FAR) services.

Head Start

The Office of Head Start awards grants to public and private agencies on a competitive basis. Head Start grant recipients provide comprehensive early learning and development, health, and family support services to low-income families in a variety of settings including centers, family child care, school, and children's own homes as described in the Head Start Program Performance Standards and in accordance with the Head Start Act of 2007. Please see the Office of Head Start and Head Start Early Childhood Learning & Knowledge Center websites.

> ### Braided Funding
>
> Using multiple funding sources in a braided manner can help ensure consistency and eliminate duplication of services. If an LEA chooses to braid funding, the classroom could include in-kind staff from Head Start or ECEAP and several Head Start or ECEAP students in addition to certificated Early Childhood Special Education teachers for an inclusive placement option.
>
> The Learning Policy Institute released a report entitled Strategies to Foster Integration in Early Childhood Education that explains that most early learning programs are remarkably segregated. The report explores policy strategies that foster integration rather than segregation to include braiding funding or combining funding streams from various sources to enable children from different socioeconomic backgrounds to learn in the same classroom.

Funding Resources:

[Funding Early Learning Activities with Title I, Part A Guide](#)

[Braided Funding to Promote Preschool Inclusion](#)

[Preschool Inclusion Finance Toolkit](#)

[Unlocking Federal and State Program Funds to Support Students Success](#) pg. 112

[Office of Early Childhood Development's Dear Colleague Letter on a Mixed Delivery System](#)

Alternative Learning Environments (ALE)

Please note that [RCW 28A.232](#) authorizes ALE as a delivery method for the program of basic education and limits ALE to grade-level coursework in grades K–8 or high school courses. Because TK is considered a separate program from K–12 basic education with its own unique grade level, ***districts are not eligible to claim ALE state funding for students in grade TK*** ([WAC 392-121-182](#)(3)(b)).

APPENDICES

Definitions

"Eligible local education agency" means a local education agency authorized to administer a transition to kindergarten program under WAC 392-425-015.

"Screening process and tool" means using one or more instruments or methods of assessing and measuring the ability and need of an individual student.

Additional Resources

Local School Board Powers and Duties

Curriculum Adoption

DCYF Coordinated Recruitment and Enrollment website

LEGAL NOTICE

ESTD 1889

All students prepared for post-secondary pathways, careers, and civic engagement.