

Transition to Kindergarten: District Landscape Survey Report

Background and Purpose

In 2023, the Washington State Legislature established and authorized Transition to Kindergarten (TK) as a new program for four-year-olds, with the goal of expanding access to high-quality early learning opportunities that support kindergarten readiness. Fewer than one-quarter of Washington's preschool-age children currently have access to state-funded preschool, making TK an important option for eligible children and families.

In spring 2025, the passage of [SB 5769](#) capped TK growth for the 2025–2027 biennium. According to the 2025 TK Interest Survey, 13 districts planned to open new TK programs during the 2025–26 school year but were unable to do so due to the funding cap. OSPI, in collaboration with DCYF, will submit a report to the Legislature and Governor by December 1, 2026, outlining a proposed plan and recommendations for phasing in future TK programs, prioritizing communities with the highest need and limiting growth to no more than five percent.

To inform this work and better understand the strengths and needs of TK programs across the state, OSPI administered a Landscape Survey in spring 2025 to all districts operating TK programs. The findings are based on **135 district responses** and provide an overview of current TK implementation statewide. *At the time of the survey, approximately 7,700 students were enrolled in TK programs across 160 districts.*

Landscape of Transition to Kindergarten Classrooms

TK classrooms commonly emphasize rich, well-organized environments, respectful and caring relationships, scaffolded instruction, with ample time for play and investigation. Most classrooms serve only TK students, though some integrate with ECEAP or district preschools. Students with IEPs typically receive push-in support. Nearly **70% of TK teachers have a master's degree or higher**, and about half of TK teachers have **ECE endorsements**. Most classrooms utilize full-time paraeducator support, with an **average class size of sixteen**. TK programs report an average **50/50 split of low-income to non-low-income students**.

Technical Assistance

Districts cite ongoing funding gaps that threaten program sustainability and highlight the need for targeted professional development for TK staff. They request **stable funding, enrollment flexibility, and better support for training and materials**. Key policy recommendations focus on consistent funding, support for small districts, and expanded access for all eligible students.



Coordinated Recruitment and Enrollment

Most districts use **Coordinated Recruitment and Enrollment (CRE)** and a **Comprehensive Needs Assessment** to identify program needs and prioritize student enrollment. CRE processes vary by district size and service availability. While most districts report inclusive and streamlined CRE efforts, some note gaps. Only about one-third have consolidated waitlists with community early learning programs, which may affect access to full-day options and program information.

Professional Development

Professional development for TK teachers primarily centers on **social emotional learning, early literacy, and numeracy**, along with **child development** and the **Pyramid Model**.

Paraeducators and specialists are encouraged to participate across the state, and over half of districts use a systematic, child development-based approach for staff training. Most districts also provide training and support for administrators, teachers, and staff in implementing a **developmentally appropriate, play-based approach to early learning**. There is strong interest in ongoing early childhood education training among administrators and staff.

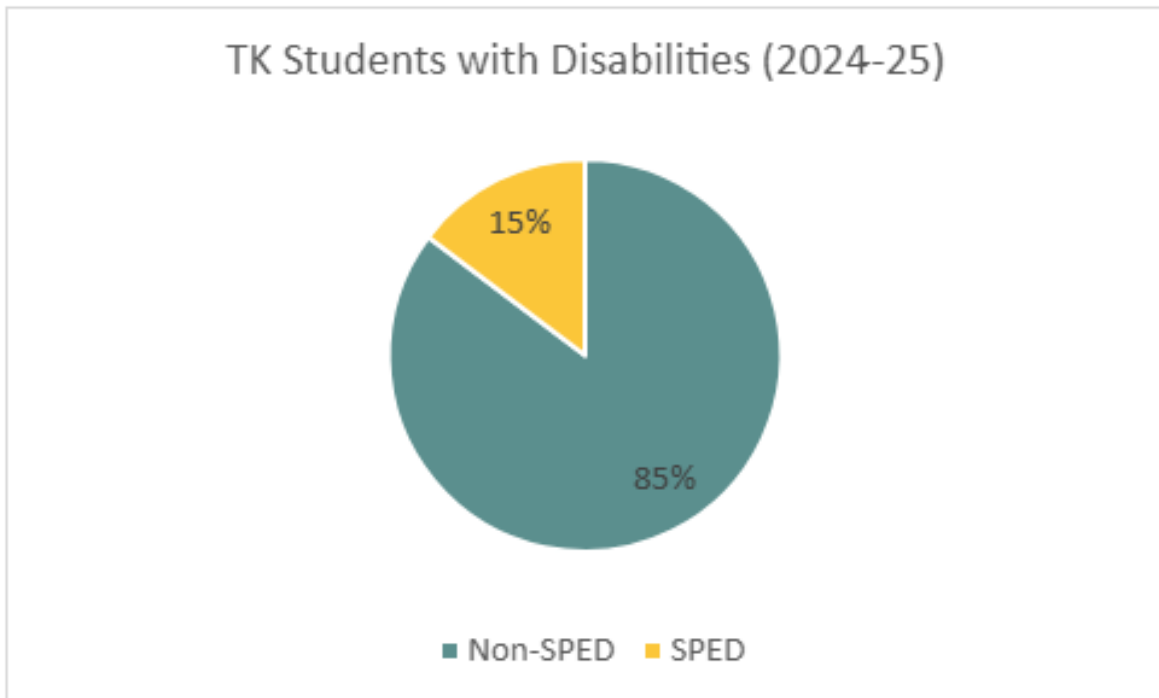
Curriculum

The Creative Curriculum®, which is comprehensive and play-based, is the primary curriculum used in TK classrooms. **Second Step** is the lead SEL curriculum, **Bridges Math** takes first place for early literacy, and **Heggerty** and **Foundations** are the most common literacy programs used. This suggests a significant focus on **play-based learning, social-emotional growth, and foundational math and literacy skills**. Teachers must interpret and implement selected curricula 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. It should be noted that many districts employ the expertise and professional judgment of their TK teachers who successfully adapt boxed or locally developed curriculum to fit their classroom community's needs.

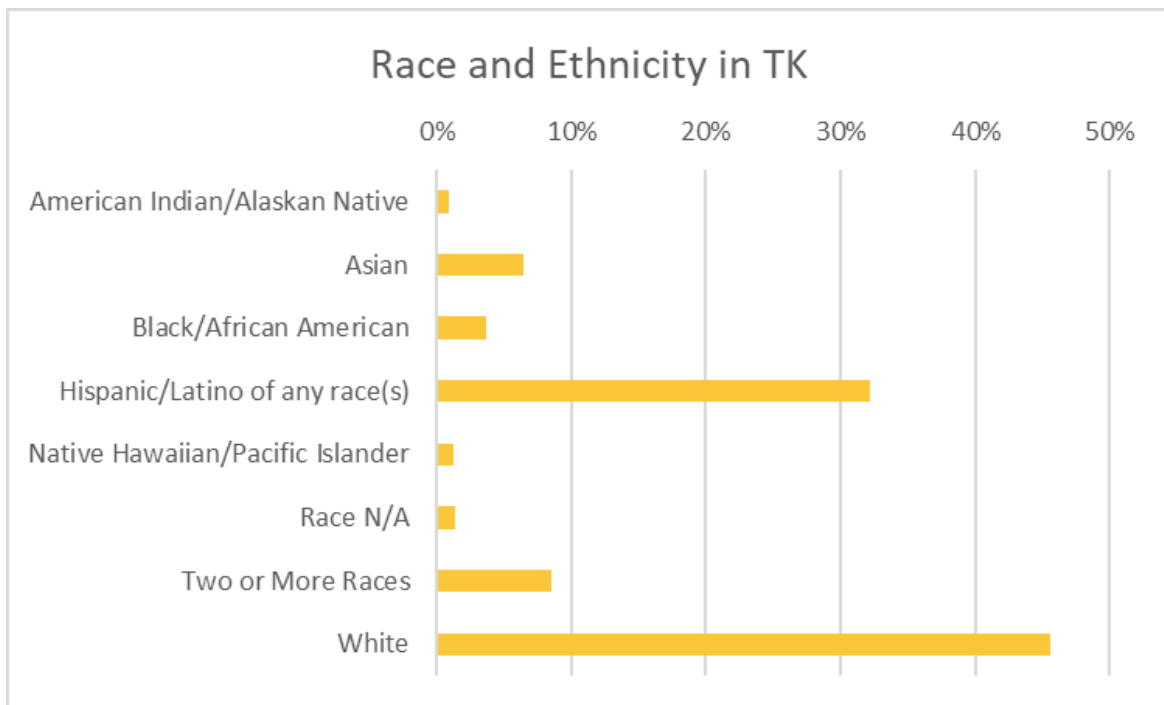
TK Testimonials

Many TK administrators, educators, and parents have provided accounts highlighting the **significant and beneficial effects of TK programs** on students and their communities. These testimonials have been compiled to offer individuals interested in TK programs greater insight into their value and impact. You can find the testimonials on the [OSPI TK webpage](#) or linked here: [Transition to Kindergarten Testimonials](#).

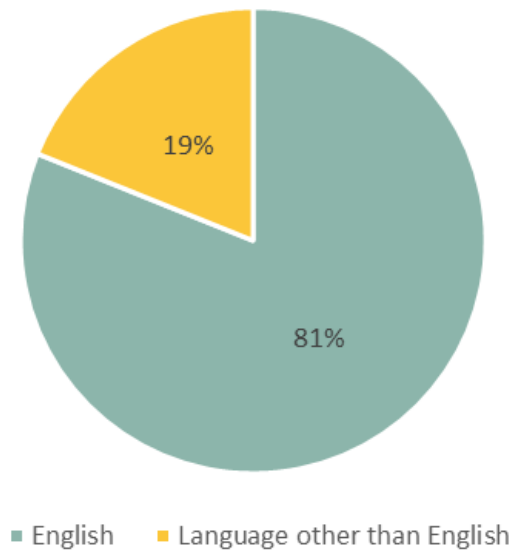
According to CEDARS data, during the 2024-25 school year, 15% of students enrolled in TK had a 504 plan or Individualized Education Plan (IEP).



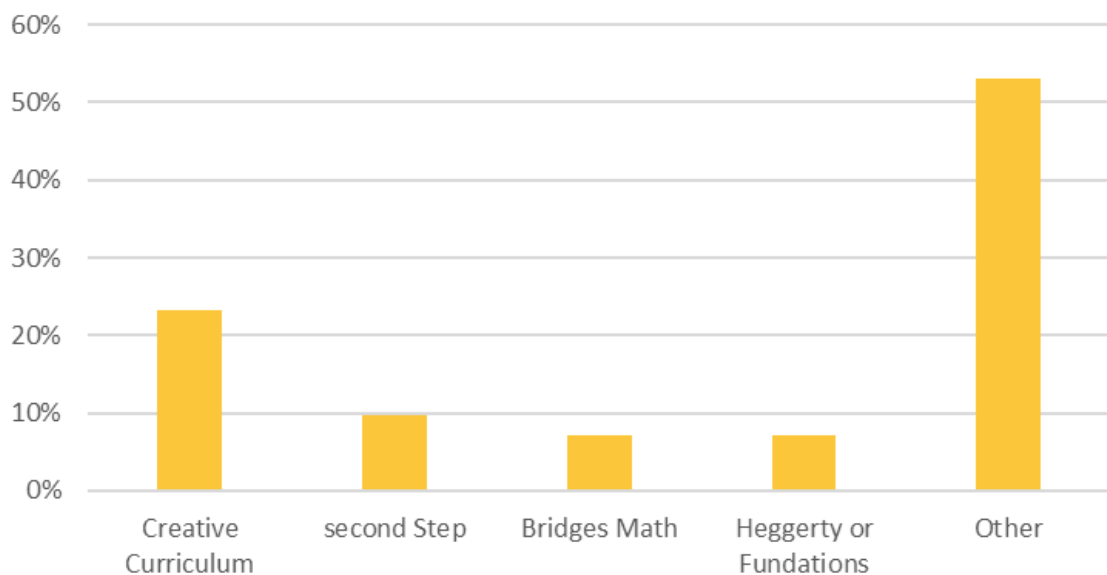
Demographics on Student Race and Ethnicity in TK closely resemble the Student Race and Ethnicity data for [Washington State](#) in 24-25.



Primary Home Language in TK



Curriculum in TK



According to the Landscape Survey, *The Creative Curriculum*® is the most widely adopted stand-alone curriculum, but many districts blend multiple curricula to address literacy, math, social-emotional learning, and other domains. Districts frequently supplement core curricula with locally developed resources and assessments. The "other" column reflects this common occurrence. This diversity reflects efforts to tailor TK programs to local needs, available resources, and student populations.