

## Kindergarten Policy Characteristics

*Updated by Emily Workman*

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Kindergarten is an essential part of the foundation upon which future learning and social/emotional development is built. Yet kindergarten policies vary significantly across states, thereby making access to high-quality, everyday kindergarten programs inconsistent and inequitable for students both within and across states. This marked diversity in access to high-quality programs is especially important at a time when 46 states plus D.C. are expecting more of their kindergarten students as they implement the new, rigorous Common Core State Standards.

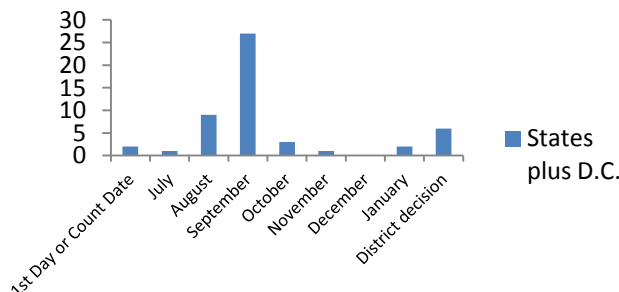
This report presents data on four policy areas that can indirectly influence student success and highlights the significant variations across states. Policy questions addressed:

- 1) Are districts required to offer a kindergarten program? If so, is it full-day or half- day?
- 2) Are students required to attend kindergarten?
- 3) At what age can a student enter kindergarten?
- 4) At what age is a student required to attend school?

### Summary:

- Compulsory school age:
  - Two states set the lower compulsory attendance age at 8; 15 states set the age at 7; 25 states set the age at 6; and eight states plus D.C. set the age at 5.
- Kindergarten entrance age

**Kindergarten Entrance Age Cutoff Dates**



- Districts required to offer kindergarten
  - 11 states plus D.C. require districts to offer full-day kindergarten.
  - 34 states require districts to offer half-day kindergarten.
- 15 states plus D.C. require students to attend kindergarten.

Key:

M= Mandatory

P= Permissive

LEA= Local Education Agency

STATE	COMPULSORY AGE	KINDERGARTEN ENTRANCE AGE	DISTRICT OFFERING	PUPIL ATTENDANCE
AL	6	5 on or before 9/01	M – Full Day	P
AK	7	5 on or before 9/01	P	P
AZ	6	5 before 9/01	M <sup>1</sup> - Half Day	P
AR	5	5 on or before 8/01	M – Full Day	M <sup>2</sup>
CA	6	5 on or before 10/01 <sup>3</sup>	M – Half Day	P
CO	6	5 on or before district count date	M – Half Day	P
CT	5	5 by 1/01	M – Half Day	M
DE	5	5 on or before 8/31	M – Full Day	M
DC	5	5 by 9/30	M – Full Day	M
FL	6	5 by 9/01	M – Half Day	P
GA	6	5 by 9/01	M – Half Day	P
HI	6	5 on or before first day of instruction <sup>4</sup>	M – Half Day	P
ID	7	5 by 9/01	P	P
IL	7	5 on or before 9/01	M <sup>5</sup> - Half Day	P
IN	7	5 on or before 8/01	M – Half Day	P
IA	6	5 on or before 9/15	M – Half Day	P
KS	7	5 on or before 8/31	M – Half Day	P
KY	6	5 on or before 10/01 <sup>6</sup>	M – Half Day	P
LA	7	5 on or before 9/30 <sup>7</sup>	M – Full Day	M <sup>8</sup>
ME	7	5 on or before 10/15	M - Half Day	P
MD	5	5 by 9/01	M – Full Day	M
MA	6	LEA option	M – Half Day	P
MI	6	5 on or before 11/01 <sup>9</sup>	M – Half Day	P
MN	7	5 by 9/01	M – Half Day	P
MS	6	5 on or before 9/01	M – Full Day	P
MO	7	5 before 8/01 <sup>10</sup>	M – Half Day	P
MT	7	5 on or before 9/10	M – Half Day	P
NE	6	5 on or before 7/31	M <sup>11</sup> - Half Day	P
NV	7	5 on or before 9/30	M – Half Day	M
NH	6	LEA option	M – Half Day	P
NJ	6	LEA option <sup>12</sup>	P <sup>13</sup>	P <sup>14</sup>
NM	5	5 before 9/01	M – Half Day	M
NY	6	LEA option	P	P
NC	7	5 on or before 8/31	M – Full Day	P
ND	7	5 before 8/01	M – Half Day	P
OH	6	LEA option <sup>15</sup>	M – Half Day	M
OK	5	5 on or before 9/01	M – Full Day	M
OR	7	5 on or before 9/01	M – Half Day	P
PA	8	LEA option	P	P
RI	6	5 on or before 9/01	M – Half Day	M
SC	5	5 on or before 9/01	M – Full Day	M
SD	6	5 on or before 9/01	M – Half Day	M
TN	6	5 on or before 8/31 <sup>16</sup>	M – Full Day	M
TX	6	5 on or before 9/01	M – Half Day	P
UT	6	5 on or before 9/02	M – Half Day	P
VT	6	5 on or before 1/01 <sup>17</sup>	M – Half Day	P

<b>VA</b>	5	5 on or before 9/30	M – Half Day	M
<b>WA</b>	8	5 on or before 8/31	M – Half Day <sup>18</sup>	P
<b>WV</b>	6	5 on or before 9/01	M – Full Day	M
<b>WI</b>	6	5 on or before 9/01	M – Half Day	P
<b>WY</b>	7	5 on or before 9/15	M – Half Day	P

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<sup>1</sup> Each school district shall establish a kindergarten program in Arizona, unless the governing board of the school district files an exemption claim with the department of education.

<sup>2</sup> In Arkansas, pupil attendance is mandatory, but parents can request a waiver.

<sup>3</sup> California’s kindergarten entrance date changes to 5 by 9/01 in 2014.

<sup>4</sup> Hawaii’s kindergarten entrance date changes to 5 on or before 7/31 in 2014.

<sup>5</sup> Illinois permits districts to offer full-day kindergarten programs and receive full state aid.

<sup>6</sup> Kentucky’s kindergarten entrance date changes to 5 by 8/01 in 2017.

<sup>7</sup> The entrance age in Orleans Parish, Louisiana School District is 5 by 12/30.

<sup>8</sup> Louisiana specifies mandatory half-day attendance or test for 1st-grade readiness.

<sup>9</sup> Michigan’s kindergarten entrance date changes to 5 by October 1 in 2014 and 5 by September 1 in 2015.

However, permits a child that will be five years of age by December 1 of a school year to enter kindergarten if the parent or legal guardian notifies the school district in writing.

<sup>10</sup> The law is different for metropolitan school districts. Those districts “may establish and enforce a regulation which requires that a child shall have attained the age of five for purposes of kindergarten and summer school prior to a kindergarten school term ... on or before any date between August 1 and October 1 of that year.”

<sup>11</sup> Kindergarten is required for accreditation in Nebraska.

<sup>12</sup> A district may admit to kindergarten “any child over the age of 4 and under the age of 5 and shall admit...any child over the age of 5 and under the age of 6 years who is a resident of the district.”

<sup>13</sup> The Abbott district is required to offer full-day kindergarten.

<sup>14</sup> Children are required to attend full-day kindergarten in the Abbott district.

<sup>15</sup> Districts may choose to set the cut-off date for August 1 or September 30.

<sup>16</sup> Tennessee’s kindergarten entrance date changes to 5 by 8/15 in 2014.

<sup>17</sup> Local education agencies may choose to set the kindergarten entrance date between 8/31 and 1/01.

<sup>18</sup> Full-day kindergarten is being phased in beginning in the 2012-13 school year, beginning with the highest-poverty schools. Statewide implementation will be achieved by 2017-18.