



## Early Learning - Kindergarten

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### State Characteristics: Kindergarten

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#### Summary:

For the 50 states, District of Columbia and three U.S. territories (American Samoa, Puerto Rico, Virgin Islands):

- 16 states set the lower compulsory attendance age at 7; 23 states and one territory set the age at 6; and 8 states, the District of Columbia and two territories set the age at 5. Two states specify that students must attend after age 8.
- Cut-off dates on the entrance age range with 26 states, the District of Columbia and 1 territory setting a date in September; 10 states set a date in August; 3 states set a date in October; 2 states and 1 territory set a date in December; 2 states set a date in January; and 7 states leave the date to the option of the local education agency
- In 45 states or territories, districts are required to offer kindergarten
- In 19 states or territories, pupils are required to attend kindergarten

#### Relevant Policy Questions:

- Even though compulsory entrance age ranges from five to eight across the states, in practice — do most children start kindergarten at age five?
- If children in states with higher compulsory ages are starting later, how does that manifest in their performance and test scores?
- Are there benefits to setting a higher compulsory entrance age? What are they?
- Would parents, children and schools benefit from more clarity and alignment of the ages at which a child is eligible to attend school and the age at which the child is required to attend school?

#### Key:

M= Mandatory

P= Permissive

LEA= Local Education Agency

STATE	COMPULSORY AGE	KINDERGARTEN ENTRANCE AGE	DISTRICT OFFERING	PUPIL ATTENDANCE
		<b>States</b>		
AL	7	5 on or before 9/01	M	P
AK	7	5 on or before 8/15	P	P
AZ	6	5 before 9/01	M <sup>1</sup>	P
AR	5	5 on or before 8/01	M	M <sup>2</sup>
CA	6	Age changing gradually: 5 by 12/02 in 2011-12 year	M	P

STATE	COMPULSORY AGE	KINDERGARTEN ENTRANCE AGE	DISTRICT OFFERING	PUPIL ATTENDANCE
		<b>States</b>		
		5 by 11/01 in 2012-13 year 5 by 10/01 in 2013-14 year 5 by 9/01 in 2014-15 year and thereafter		
CO	6	LEA option	M	P
CT	5	5 by 1/01	M	M
DE	5	5 on or before 8/31	M	M
DC	5	5 by 9/30	M	M
FL	6	5 by 9/01	M	P
GA	6	5 by 9/01	M	P
HI	6	5 by 8/01 <sup>3</sup>	M	P
ID	7	5 by 9/01	P	P
IL	7	5 on or before 9/01	M <sup>4</sup>	P
IN	7	5 on or before 8/01	M	P
IA	6	5 on or before 9/15	M	P
KS	7	5 on or before 8/31	M	P
KY	6	5 on or before 10/01	M	P
LA	7	5 on or before 9/30 <sup>5</sup>	M	M <sup>6</sup>
ME	7	5 on or before 10/15	M <sup>7</sup>	P
MD	5	5 by 9/01	M	M
MA	6	LEA option	M	P
MI	6	5 on or before 12/01 <sup>8</sup>	P	P
MN	7	5 by 9/01	M	P
MS	6	5 on or before 9/01	M	P
MO	7	5 before 8/01 <sup>9</sup>	M	P
MT	7	5 on or before 9/10	M	P
NE	6	5 on or before 10/15 <sup>10</sup>	M <sup>11</sup>	P
NV	7	5 on or before 9/30	M	M
NH	6	LEA option	P	P
NJ	6	LEA option <sup>12</sup>	P	P
NM	5	5 before 9/01	M	M
NY	6	LEA option	P	P
NC	7	5 on or before 8/31	M	P
ND	7	5 before 8/01	P	P
OH	6	LEA option <sup>13</sup>	M	M
OK	5	5 on or before 9/01	M	M
OR	7	5 on or before 9/01	M	P
PA	8	LEA option	P	P
RI	6	5 on or before 9/01	M	M
SC	5	5 on or before 9/01	M	M
SD	6	5 on or before 9/01	M	M
TN	6	5 on or before 9/30	M	M
TX	6	5 on or before 9/01	M	P
UT	6	5 on or before 9/02	M	P
VT	6	5, LEA option between 8/31 and 1/01	M	P
VA	5	5 on or before 9/30	M	M
WA	8	5 on or before midnight 8/31	M	P
WV	6	5 on or before 9/01	M	M
WI	6	5 on or before 9/01	M	P
WY	7	5 on or before 9/15	M	P
		<b>U.S. Territories</b>		

STATE	COMPULSORY AGE	KINDERGARTEN ENTRANCE AGE	DISTRICT OFFERING	PUPIL ATTENDANCE
		<b>States</b>		
AS	6	5 by 9/01	M	M
PR	5	5 by start of school	M	M
VI	5	5 by 12/31	M	M

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## ***Equipping Education Leaders, Advancing Ideas***

<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> The entrance age for junior kindergarten is 5 after 8/01 and before 1/01.

<sup>4</sup> Illinois permits districts to offer full-day kindergarten programs and receive full state aid.

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

<sup>6</sup> Louisiana specifies mandatory half-day attendance or test for first-grade readiness.

<sup>7</sup> In Maine, schools shall either operate a kindergarten program or otherwise provide for students to participate in such a program.

<sup>8</sup> If the school district has semiannual promotions, a child may enroll in kindergarten for the 2<sup>nd</sup> semester if he is at least 5 on 3/01 of the school year.

<sup>9</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<sup>st</sup> and October 1<sup>st</sup> of that year.”

<sup>10</sup> With the 2012-13 school year, the entrance age changes to 5 on or before 7/31.

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