

Transitional Kindergarten FAQs

Transitional Kindergarten (TK) is a kindergarten program for children, not yet age five, who do not have access to high-quality early learning experiences prior to kindergarten and have been deemed by a school district, through a screening process and/or other instrument(s), to be in need of additional preparation to be successful in kindergarten the following year. Districts may select to offer TK programs, but they are not required.

Outlined is a list of frequently asked questions (FAQ) regarding the TK program. (This document has bookmarks to help you navigate through the questions. To access the bookmarks, please download and open the document, and then click on the image shown here – on the left of your Adobe screen.)



Frequently Asked Questions

What are the reasons school districts implement Transitional Kindergarten (TK)? Why TK?

In partnership with community-based early learning programs, districts offer Transitional Kindergarten to provide early intervention for children with complex intersectional needs. Inclusive Transitional Kindergarten may provide a placement option for children with disabilities and children whose families do not qualify for Head Start, ECEAP or child care subsidy.

What is the TK policy?

Under [RCW 28A.225.160](#), it is the general policy of the state that the common schools shall be open to the admission of all persons who are five years of age and less than 21 years who reside in a school district. As established in [WAC 392-335-025](#), a child must be five years of age as of midnight August 31 of the year of entry to be entitled to enter kindergarten. School districts are authorized to adopt uniform entry qualifications for kindergarten, including birth date requirements. OSPI rules at [WAC 392-335-025](#) further provide that school districts may adopt policies that provide for individual exceptions to the district's uniform entry qualifications.

Under the rule, such policies must provide for a screening process or instrument that measures the ability or the need, or both, of an individual student to succeed in earlier entry.

[WAC 392-335-025](#) provides school districts with the opportunity to evaluate children who are 1) not age five by August 31 to be considered for kindergarten enrollment and 2) not age five by August 31 to determine need for Transitional Kindergarten.

How is TK different from regular kindergarten?

Students are eligible for kindergarten when and if they are five years of age by August 31. Younger children may be permitted to enter kindergarten if the district and family

determine they will be successful. TK programs are intended for children not yet five by August 31 who have been screened and demonstrate the need of additional preparation in order to be successful in kindergarten the following year.

What are the requirements of TK?

The requirements for Transitional Kindergarten are the same as those for regular kindergarten established by [RCW 28A.150.315](#).

These include:

- Classrooms staffed by certificated teacher(s) and Paraeducators who provide a curriculum that offers a rich, varied set of experiences in learning environments that are developmentally appropriate and address the whole child.
- Developing initial skills in the academic areas of reading, mathematics, and writing.
- Developing a variety of communication skills.
- Providing experiences in science, social studies, arts, health and physical education, and a world language other than English.
- Acquiring large and small motor skills.
- Acquiring social and emotional skills, including successful participation in learning activities as an individual and as part of a group.
- Learning through hands-on experiences.
- Established learning environments that are developmentally appropriate and promote creativity.
- Demonstrate strong connections and communication with early learning community providers.
- Participate in kindergarten program readiness activities with early learning providers and parents.
- Administration of the Washington Kindergarten Inventory of Developing Skills.

For information about child development, developmentally appropriate learning environments, and guiding principles for high-quality kindergarten download the [Washington State Full-day Kindergarten Guide](#).

How many instructional hours must be provided?

Districts must provide at least 1,000 annual instructional hours, prorated from the start date of the program, with 27 weekly hours and 45 minutes of instruction. Districts may start TK programs at any point between the beginning of the school year and January 31. TK programs must conclude by the end of the standard school year.

Districts should be aware that starting TK programs later in the year may lower the district's overall annual hours.

Could our district hire a teacher or paraeducator with emergency certification?

If no certified candidates apply, districts may hire a teacher or paraeducator with an emergency certification and timeline for certification. Ideally, teachers will have Early Childhood and/or Early Childhood Special Education endorsements and experience.

Do TK programs need to conduct WaKIDS?

Yes, administration of all three components of WaKIDS is required for Transitional Kindergarten.

Family Connection: Transitional Kindergarten 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. A district can waive up to five (5) school days during the regular 180-day school year for the purpose of conducting parent-teacher conferences. Districts seeking to extend the Family Connections beyond three days need local school board of directors' approval and must notify the Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI). A district seeking a waiver of more than five days must request the waiver through the regular 180-day School Year Requirement waiver application process.

<https://www.k12.wa.us/sites/default/files/public/profpractices/adminresources/pubdocs/180dayRegularWaiverApp.docx>

Whole-child Assessment: In the first ten weeks of the program, students are assessed within the context of daily routines and classroom activities using Teaching Strategies GOLD®. TK teachers are required to complete one checkpoint-- Fall, Winter and/ or Spring-- up to 12 weeks after the start date. The checkpoints dates align with the full-day kindergarten classrooms using GOLD® for WaKIDS.

Early Learning Collaboration: Entrance into Transitional Kindergarten must be coordinated in collaboration with existing district-based and community early learning programs to assure best placement and appropriate services based-on each child and family's need.

How do I identify my early learning partners in my school district catchment area?

To find all the early learning programs in your elementary school catchment area, [fill out Child Care Aware Principal Form here](#).

To connect with pediatricians, health care clinics, social service organizations, reach out to the [Washington Communities for Children](#) and [Help Me Grow Washington Networks](#).

To find a [map of school districts in Washington](#), look [here](#).

How do I establish Coordinated Recruitment and Enrollment with other early learning programs, including our local ECEAP and Head Start?

The purpose of Coordinated Recruitment and Enrollment (CRE) is to assure that TK programs do not compete with existing programs that families may qualify for and benefit from. Start with CRE with conversations among local preschool partners. Take notes using [any tool](#) that helps your district document a description of each early learning program, demographics and eligibility requirements, number of children served, number of children on a waitlist, questions, issues to be aware of, and action steps. CRE can streamline the application process for families so they may be referred to the program that offers the best fit for their needs. CRE keeps in mind the differences in early learning settings and needs of each family (home language, work schedule, accommodations needed, distance from home, transportation, need for 2-generation approach, among other needs). OSPI created [TK Worksheet for Coordinated Recruitment & Enrollment and Budget Planning](#) with

the DCYF-OSPI-AESD Coordinated Recruitment & Enrollment Task Group.

I learned that there are no other preschools or early learning programs in my school district boundaries. How do I proceed?

Your elementary school or district could document the need using the [TK Worksheet for Coordinated Recruitment & Enrollment and Budget Planning](#) to demonstrate the need for inclusive classrooms for four-year-old children. Create a leadership/ advisory team including your neighboring school districts, [Educational Service District early learning or special education coordinator](#), local and/or regional [Washington Community for Children](#), family social services agency, WIC, food banks, public housing or service agencies for homeless, faith-based social service programs, DCYF or DSHS Community Service Offices, or other organizations serving children and families.

We are finding families who have lost their preschool/early learning experience for their child due to COVID issues and are wanting to enroll in our Transitional Kindergarten program.

Please refer families to [Child Care Aware of Washington](#) to consider all possibilities. Please keep in mind that child care continues to offer up to 10 hours of care per day for working families. Families who depend on child care to work and enroll in TK may struggle during school breaks and if the school reverts to remote learning – more so than if they found community-based options that will stay in-person: preschools, centers, or family child care homes.

How might TK grant opportunities impact community-based preschool programs also seeking to enroll and serve four-year old children?

[Pillar V](#) of Transitional Kindergarten establishes that programs work in collaboration with and do not adversely impact enrollment in community-based preschool programs, including Head Start, ECEAP (the Early Childhood Education Assistance Program), tribally-led early learning programs and those operating in licensed child care centers and licensed family homes. Districts participate in coordinated outreach, referral, and placement to assure the best fit and appropriateness of services based on each child and family's need.

Do TK teachers need to be trained to conduct WaKIDS?

Yes, WaKIDS is conducted by the certificated, WaKIDS-trained teacher to whom the student is assigned. Because TK is optional, districts will not be reimbursed for teachers' participation in WaKIDS training. Districts take on the responsibility of covering the cost of teacher training. However, the FP 181 Inclusive Transitional Kindergarten Exploration, Planning, and Installation grant provides funds for training reimbursement. Please check the allowable uses of funds to determine which other grants may be used in this way.

How are children identified for enrollment into TK?

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 district to determine the process for evaluating prospective students and establishing need.

It is critical that Transitional Kindergarten programs work in collaboration with and do not adversely impact enrollment in community-based preschool programs, including Head Start, ECEAP (the Early Childhood Education Assistance Program), and those operating in licensed child care centers and licensed family homes. Districts should participate in coordinated outreach, referral, and placement in collaboration with community-based programs to assure best fit and appropriateness of services based on each child and family's need.

Can Teaching Strategies GOLD® be used to qualify children for enrollment into TK?

Teaching Strategies GOLD® is not a screening tool and may not be used to determine placement into TK programs.

Can a child with an IEP be enrolled into TK?

Students with IEPs may be enrolled in TK if they otherwise meet the entrance requirements and are not already enrolled in a high-quality early learning program. Students with IEPs who are age five by August 31 should be enrolled into regular kindergarten, not TK.

Will TK students with IEPs impact the district's overall special education funding, including the state special education percentage cap?

Possibly. When a child who is age 3–5 years is eligible for special education funding, and enrolls in a TK program, they are reported in the K–21 categories of the P223-H. Accordingly, a district's special education percentage cap is affected and could exceed 13.5 percent. Once a district reaches its 13.5 percent cap, no additional state special education funding is generated.

Can children who are of kindergarten age be enrolled into TK instead of regular kindergarten?

No. The only requirement for eligibility into kindergarten is to be age five by August 31. Regular kindergarten classrooms are expected to meet the needs of all eligible children, including English Learners, children with Individual Education Plans (IEPs) and those who may enroll late due to their family's migratory lifestyle or other reasons.

Is it necessary to screen students for English language development (ELD) services and use English Language Proficiency (ELP) standards in TK?

OSPI is revising guidance around TK students who may potentially be English learners for the 2021–22 school year. Keeping in mind that the WIDA Kindergarten Screener was not validated for children under 5, we are offering two options for students in Transitional Kindergarten.

Option 1: Testing & Funding: Students in TK can be tested on the WIDA Kindergarten Screener following the guidance and eligibility criteria for kindergarten. If TK students are identified as eligible for English Language Development (ELD) services, the district can include these students in their P223 count for TBIP funding as they would for a kindergarten student who is eligible for ELD services. Eligible English learners will need to take the Kindergarten ACCESS assessment in spring 2022. These students do not need to screen again when they enter kindergarten.

Option 2: Wait until Kindergarten Students in TK can complete their TK year without being tested for ELD services. In this case, these students would not generate any TBIP funding. They would also not be required to take the Kindergarten ACCESS assessment in the spring. These students must screen when they enter kindergarten.

If a district has already screened TK students this fall and prefers option 2, please withhold from entering TK students into CEDARS as eligible for ELD services and correct your P223 count accordingly. For more information on serving multilingual learners in early learning, please see these [slides](#) and this [recording](#) from the Bilingual Education Information Session on October 7, 2021.

Is it required to conduct an early screening of indicators/weaknesses associated with dyslexia in Transitional Kindergarten?

Beginning in the 2021-22 school year, students in grades K-2 will be screened for indications of or areas of weakness associated with dyslexia. For the 2021-22 school year, districts may forgo early screening for the weaknesses associated with dyslexia in Transitional Kindergarten, 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 12 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.

How should TK be reported?

- P223 reporting and Basic Education Allocation funding: A TK student should be reported in the "kindergarten" grade. A student who first enrolls in TK could be reported for two years as a kindergartener.
- TK students that attend 1,665 weekly minutes or more should be reported as 1.0 FTE. Students attending less are reported as a partial FTE. To calculate the student's FTE, divide the number of enrolled weekly minutes by 1,665.
- P223-H reporting and special education funding: TK students who are eligible for special education funding are reported on the P223-H in the Age K-21 field beginning with the first monthly count day that they are enrolled in a TK program. To be eligible, the student must have a current IEP and evaluation in place on the monthly count day and have received special education services on or before the monthly count day but within the prior month.
- When a child that is eligible for special education services and is reported in the K-12 category of the P223-H, the district's special education cap (13.5%) is affected.
- CEDARS: Students participating in TK must be reported to CEDARS with an appropriate program code in Element I06 – Program Code at the school in which they are receiving services. Students in this program should be reported with a kindergarten grade level (K1 for full-day kindergarten and K2 for part-day kindergarten) in Element B13 – GradeLevel.
- Districts are required to retain documentation in case of audit. They must retain documentation that the student was on the monthly count day:
 - Enrolled in the district,
 - Had participated on or before that day,

- Hadn't missed 20 consecutive school days prior to that day, and
- That their FTE is based on 1,665 weekly enrolled minutes.
- They should retain documentation that these requirements are met on the count day for each student claimed.
- Also, to support their TK program, they should retain documentation of their Coordinated Recruitment and Enrollment activities.

Can Federal Title I funds be used to provide supplemental supports to TK students?

TK is considered kindergarten; therefore, funds would need to be allocated to the building in which the program resides. TK students can be served in the same manner as regular kindergarten students are served. Things to note when using Title I funds in TK:

- The Title I allocation is based on an estimate of the population, ages 5–17, so there is no additional allocation for TK students.
- TK is considered kindergarten; therefore, funds would need to be allocated to the building—which could then require a revision to the building allocations, potentially affecting the ranking of schools within a district.
- Schools will need to collect low-income information for the TK students just as in the other grade-levels in the school. The TK student low-income information will be included in the "Free/Reduced Meals Low Income Student Count" and the "Building Percent Low Income" numbers in the Title I, Part A Application. Adding the TK numbers may impact the poverty rankings of the schools in the district and may change the order in which Title I funds are allocated to the schools within the district.

Can other Federal Title funds be used for TK?

Because TK is kindergarten, all Title funds allowable for use in kindergarten are permitted in TK, as long as all related requirements are met. For instance, Title I Part C Migrant Education Program funds would be able to provide support services for migrant students enrolled in either regular kindergarten or Transitional Kindergarten, as long as the eligibility criteria are met.

Districts should be aware that enrollment in TK may impact the rank order of school buildings.

What are the strategies to braid IDEA Part B funds for a child with disabilities? If IDEA Part B covers a developmental preschool part day (2.5 hours per day), what other funding source could pay for the cost of the remaining 2.5 hours for a 4-year-old?

For a four-year-old, the district could braid funds to enroll the child in inclusive TK with push in Special Education services to meet the IEP goal. Legally, developmental PreK is only required to be offered 10-12 hours a week, but depending on the needs of the child, districts have latitude to enroll children with an IEP in a full 6-hour TK schedule.

See the [Special Education Funding Manual for Part B, Section 611](#) and the [Fiscal Monitoring Procedures Manual for Part B, Section 619 and 611 for Early Childhood Special Education](#).

What considerations are there regarding Small School Funding formula?

Small schools are eligible with REAP to braid funds for all the same purposes as Title I Part A. Please

refer to [Unlocking State and Federal Funds](#) (pages 119-121) for more details.

Can Learning Assistance Program funds provide supplemental supports to TK students?

Yes, as long as the following conditions have been met:

- Students need to be enrolled.
- Students must qualify using multiple measures in one of the following areas: English Language Arts (ELA), math, academic readiness.
- Services for identified students must be provided in ELA, math, academic readiness, or behavior content areas.
- Services must be in addition to core.

TK students are subject to LAP reporting, as with any K–12 student. Districts should be aware that enrollment in TK may impact a school’s LAP high poverty allocation.

How are TK programs different from Jump Start or other summer kindergarten transition programs?

Districts engage in a wide range of kindergarten transition services to support children and families in making a successful start to their K–12 journey. Many districts offer short summer “Jump Start programs” to familiarize children with the expectations of kindergarten and provide targeted supports to increase children’s preparedness.

Transitional Kindergarten is a kindergarten program model. It occurs during the regular school year and must adhere to the requirements established in [RCW 28A.150.315](#), including the provision of 1,000 instructional hours for full-day programs, prorated to the start of the program. Districts offering TK should continue to offer a range of transition services for all children and families leading up to the regular kindergarten year.

Can Transitional Kindergarten classrooms be combined with other sources of funding intended for 3–5 year olds, like Head Start and the Early Childhood Education Assistance Program (ECEAP)?

There may be instances where it makes sense to serve preschool and TK students together in the same classroom. As long as TK students are enrolled in the classroom as kindergartners and provided kindergarten instruction, and the program meets K–12 rules, they could be claimed for kindergarten funding – even if there are preschool students in the same classroom. Students enrolled as preschoolers should be counted separately from TK students. The classroom must meet the requirements of all funding sources.

Are students enrolled in TK programs and teachers that provide TK instruction part of the K-3 Class Size Compliance calculation?

Yes, TK students and teachers will be included to calculate a district’s K-3 Compliance calculation. This calculation allows districts that demonstrate a required class size to maximize their K-3 funding.

For more information on this calculation, refer to the [K-3 Class Size Compliance FAQs](#).

Districts with TK programs that begin after October 1 and whose teachers are not included in the S275 reporting and have the specific duty roots available in the above FAQ will report these supplemental teachers' FTE to OSPI via an Excel based tool called the [Supplemental Teacher Reporting Tool](#).

Are TK students and teachers included in the monthly K-3 class size reporting? Yes, for the monthly K-3 class size reporting done in EDS, districts must include their TK enrollment and teachers under the grade K category.

What are the minimum and maximum required class sizes?

There is no required class size, however TK students and teachers are included to calculate a district's [K-3 Compliance](#).

Can TK be offered in charter and tribal compact schools?

Yes, charter and tribal compact schools can offer a TK program and collect state funding, the same as they would get for Kindergarten students who are 5 years old as of September 1.

Charter schools should connect with their authorizer prior to implementing their TK program.

If a TK program is offered at a school that has been identified for high poverty, would they generate additional High Poverty LAP funds?

Yes, if a school is eligible for the LAP High Poverty Enhancement, then all of the student FTE at that school generate the funding, including the TK students.

Can Transitional Kindergarten be half-day?

Just as with regular kindergarten, districts must offer a full-day TK program. Families may choose to enroll their child for less than full-time. Districts shall accommodate part-time students within their full-day program, claiming the appropriate FTE based on the child's enrollment.

If a child qualifies for ECEAP, may a district enroll one child in ECEAP in the morning session and TK in a half-day afternoon session.

No, dual enrollment is not allowed. Enroll students in a TK **or** ECEAP program: students cannot be claimed for both programs. The [2021-22 Enrollment Reporting Handbook](#) provides the following guidance on TK programs.

Our TK schedule addresses physical and social emotional needs to self-regulate with a rest time. Is this appropriate for inclusive TK?

Rest time is appropriate for four-year-old children with quiet options available for children that no longer nap.

What curricula are appropriate for TK?

Districts may select any research-based, whole child curriculum based on developmental

continuum that is appropriate for four-year-old and five-year-old children, including High Scope, *MyTeachingStrategies Creative Curriculum*®, or OWL.

Contact Information

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