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

In most cases, TK students will continue into regular kindergarten the following year, however there may be instances when a TK student is promoted to first grade instead.

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.
• Provisions of a curriculum that offers a rich, varied set of experiences that assist students in:
  o Developing initial skills in the academic areas of reading, mathematics, and writing.
  o Developing a variety of communication skills.
  o Providing experiences in science, social studies, arts, health and physical education, and a world language other than English.
  o Acquiring large and small motor skills.
  o Acquiring social and emotional skills, including successful participation in learning activities as an individual and as part of a group.
  o 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.

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.
• 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®.
• 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.

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.

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 administer the ELPA21 and use kindergarten English Language Proficiency (ELP) standards in TK?
Yes, just as with Kindergarten students, districts must meet the civil rights obligations to identify and serve potentially eligible English learners. Districts must adhere to the OSPI Bilingual Education Program Guidance to ensure civil rights obligations are addressed for all English learners.

Brief description of the identification process – see Program Guidance for details:

1. All families complete the Home Language Survey (HLS) form or Home Language Survey questions within the district’s enrollment form. The required questions are a) What language did your child learn first? and b) What language does your child use the most at home?
2. If a language other than English is reported for either question, then the student is given the state-approved English language proficiency screener (ELPA21 screener) to determine if they are an eligible English learner.

Brief description of English language development (ELD) instruction – see Program Guidance for details:

- All eligible English learners must receive ELD instruction.
- The state-approved English language proficiency standards are used to provide ELD instruction.
- All eligible English learners must be assessed annually with the state-approved assessment (annual ELPA21) to document their progress with English language development. All eligible English learners enrolled in school during the annual test window must be assessed. This includes recently enrolled students.
- ELD instruction can take place within core instruction/content classes with a qualified teacher (e.g., ELL or Bilingual Ed endorsed) co-teaching or doing push-in ELD services. ELD instruction does not need to be in a separate class or outside of content instruction.
- Project GLAD, SIOP, CALLA, SDAIE and other sheltered instruction strategies provide ELs with meaningful access to content instruction. These important teaching strategies are not ELD instruction.
- ELD instruction is intensive, tailored to the student’s proficiency level, and is designed to exit the student from ELD services in the least amount of time.
- ELL or Bilingual Ed endorsed teachers, who can be fully funded through the Transitional Bilingual Instruction Program, provide the most effective ELD instruction. When eligible ELs receive ELD instruction from qualified teachers, they exit ELD services much faster and have stronger academic outcomes. Most exited ELs outperform their English speaking peers in English language arts and math assessments.
How should TK be reported?

- **P223 reporting and Basic Education Allocation funding:** A TK student should be reported in the “kindergarten” grade.
- **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 – Grade Level.

**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.

**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.

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.

Contact Information
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