

Transitional Kindergarten Programs in Washington State: Describing 2022-23 Programs, Educators, and Students

The 2022 Washington State Legislature directed WSIPP to report on Transitional Kindergarten (TK) programs offered by school districts, including a description of TK students. The assignment required several additional components: comparing TK with the state’s income-targeted public early learning program (ECEAP), describing district rationale and funding for early learning programs, and reviewing TK programs and evaluation research in other states.

Background

TK is a publicly funded school-based early learning program for children in the year before kindergarten. Two other states—California and Michigan—have established TK programs. Since 2019, an increasing number of Washington’s districts have opted to offer TK. School districts have the authority to determine most details of TK program implementation.

Findings

Most TK districts in 2022-23 offered standalone, school-day programs aligned with the regular school year.

- Some districts blended TK with kindergarten or pre-kindergarten classes.
- Some districts started their TK programs later in the year to coordinate recruitment and facilitate eligibility screening or because they offer a 20-week TK program.

Districts reported that they offer TK to address a community need for early learning or a lack of affordable early learning for families ineligible for other public options and because of expected school-readiness benefits for students.

Updates

In 2023, the Legislature replaced TK with the *Transition to Kindergarten* program and directed the Office of the Superintendent for Public Instruction to adopt rules setting new statewide program standards by the 2024-25 school year.

TK Fast Facts: 2022-23

	TK was in 44% of districts and at 247 schools ; most districts offered TK in only one school districtwide
	73% of the 337 TK classes served only TK students; average TK class size was 16.8 students
	Of 4,700 TK students , 88% were four years old; 16.3% had prior early learning; 9% had an IEP during TK
	78% of TK teachers held a relevant endorsement; 66% had taught PK-1 st grade
	Most teachers in TK and ECEAP classrooms reported daily reading and math; rates were higher in TK classrooms

Assignment Details

Assigned in 2022 Legislative Session
ESSB 5693, Supplemental Operating Budget

Full report available on [WSIPP's website](#)

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