

TRANSITION TO KINDERGARTEN POLICY

This policy sets the Commission’s expectations regarding Transition to Kindergarten (TK) programs using the Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction’s (OSPI) rules (WAC 392-425) and guidance ([Transition to Kindergarten \(ospi.k12.wa.us\)](https://ospi.k12.wa.us)), following the Legislature’s adoption of Transition to Kindergarten in RCW 28A.300.072 ([RCW 28A.300.072: Transition to kindergarten program. \(wa.gov\)](https://www.wa.gov)). The Commission will develop a TK-specific application and evaluation criteria for interested schools to apply to offer a TK program. Specifications of that process, including timeline, a rubric and approval process will be provided in the application.

Transition To Kindergarten

Transition to kindergarten programs are for students who:

- will be age 4 by August 31 of the year in which they enroll; and
- has been determined through an approved screening process¹ to be in need of additional preparation to be successful in kindergarten the following school year.

If a charter public school adopts a screening instrument that OSPI has identified as an appropriate screening tool, the Commission will presume that the tool is appropriate screening process.²

Under the legislation that authorized Transition to Kindergarten, OSPI administers Transition to Kindergarten (TK), and OSPI was required to adopt rules regarding state funding for TK and rules establishing the minimum standards and requirements for TK. RCW 28A.300.072; WAC 392-425. TK is not considered basic education, and there is not an entitlement for students. Funding is only available for students who meet eligibility requirements. RCW 28A.300.072.

Educational Equity

The Commission believes that Kindergarten readiness is critical for short and long-term student academic achievement. Additionally, research indicates that students who are cognitively and behaviorally ready to enter Kindergarten have better long-term career and life outcomes.³ As such, the Commission believes that TK has the potential to support student readiness in ways that could significantly improve student outcomes and narrow the opportunity gaps currently seen in public education.

The Commission has chosen to allow charter public schools to offer TK programs in alignment with its Educational Equity Policy⁴ which states:

¹ The Legislature specifically authorized TK for charter public schools and requires screening. However, other than for TK, charter schools are not allowed to do admission screening.

² At the time this policy is being adopted, OSPI has identified several sample screening instruments that would be appropriate to use for TK screening. [Transition to Kindergarten \(ospi.k12.wa.us\)](https://ospi.k12.wa.us). Other screening instruments may be used but will not be *presumed* to be appropriate screening tools.

³ Magnuson, K., Duncan, G., Lee, K. & Metzger, M. “Early School Adjustment and Educational Attainment.” 2016. Reardon, S. and Portilla, X. “Recent Trends in Income, Racial, and Ethnic School Readiness Gaps at Kindergarten Entry.” 2016. Also see, [Kindergarten Readiness and 3rd Grade Outcomes \(ospi.k12.wa.us\)](https://ospi.k12.wa.us).

⁴ This language is found in the Educational Equity Policy adopted on June 27, 2019. Should the language in the Educational Equity Policy be updated, the language will be updated accordingly.

The Commission is committed to closing opportunity gaps between the state's most and least privileged groups of students within the educational system. It has a moral obligation and legal obligation to cultivate public charter schools where socio-economic status and protected groups status such as race, gender, language, sexual orientation, national origin, and disability cease to be a predictor of academic and life outcomes. Educational equity benefits all students and our entire community.

Given the importance of Kindergarten readiness and the impact it can have on a student's long-term life outcomes, the Commission is obligated to only approve proposals from operators who are prepared to offer high-quality TK programs that meet the standards and requirements established by OSPI. In addition, the Commission has an obligation to evaluate the financial impact of the addition of a Transition to Kindergarten to a Commission authorized charter public schools.

Transition To Kindergarten Expectations

I. TK programs must meet the Minimum Standards established by OSPI for Transition to Kindergarten in accordance with RCW.28A.300.072. The OSPI requirements include, but are not limited to, a determination of local early learning program need and coordination, required staff qualifications, student eligibility requirements, and instructional requirements. Schools implementing a Transition to Kindergarten program must adhere to OSPI guidelines and rules. WAC 392-425. Also see OSPI's Transition to Kindergarten webpage, currently located here: [Transition to Kindergarten \(ospi.k12.wa.us\)](https://ospi.k12.wa.us).

II. Before notifying OSPI of the intent to offer Transition to Kindergarten, a charter public school must obtain approval from the Commission. In order to implement a TK program, a charter public school must first obtain approval from the Commission. The application process will provide an opportunity for the Commission to assess the quality of the school's proposed TK program and evaluate the evidence that the school can implement a TK program consistent with the school's academic, financial, and organizational obligations. After the Commission has approved a TK application, and given notice to OSPI of the school's approval to offer a TK program, a contract Amendment will be required before a school can offer TK. Transition to Kindergarten requires an amendment to the Charter Contract.⁵

TK students are able to matriculate to Kindergarten from TK, however, the charter public school will not be held to the same recurrent enrollment standards for TK to Kindergarten matriculation. Given the availability and unique offering that TK provides, the Commission does not believe a charter public school should be penalized regarding recurrent enrollment if a family chose to unenroll their student for Kindergarten.

This policy does not represent an exhaustive list of qualifications and requirements for TK providers. The Commission reserves the right to implement qualifications and requirements that supplement the OSPI Minimum Standards and Requirements, through a Commission-developed application process, for schools that are interested in providing a TK program.

Transition To Kindergarten Commission Specific Best Practices

⁵ This will in most cases will involve a new and/or modified Enrollment Policy (which must be approved by the Commission) to address the specific requirements of TK.

I. The Commission requires charter public schools to provide evidence of community and provider outreach and collaboration. Due to the boundary-less nature of charter public schools, the Commission expects that this outreach is conducted, at minimum, within the traditional school district bounds where the school is located.

II. Classrooms must be staffed by certificated teachers 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. The Commission strongly encourages schools to hire teachers who have Early Childhood and/or Early Childhood Special Education Endorsements or are National Board Certified in Early Childhood. The Commission will evaluate the overall capacity and experience of the school's leadership team with regards to early childhood education. The Commission expects that all TK staff, particularly those without early childhood education endorsements, receive significant professional development to meet the needs of TK students prior to and throughout the school year. This includes, but is not limited to:

- The prevention of mis/over identification of students in need of special education services;
- The developmental needs of TK-aged students and how they differ from that of Kindergarten students;
- The development and adaptation of curriculum for TK students; and
- Best practices for family engagement and involvement.

III. Transitional Kindergarten programs are encouraged by the Commission to be fully integrated into school buildings, with access to transportation, specialists, recess, lunch in the school cafeteria and all aspects of the school day available to kindergarten students. Attention should be given to the developmental capabilities and needs specific to young children in these settings. Additionally, schools are encouraged to provide the same family opportunities to the parents and guardians of TK students. All eligible children enrolled in a transition to kindergarten program be assigned a statewide student identifier and that the transition to kindergarten program be considered a separate class or course for the purposes of data reporting requirements in RCW [28A.320.175](#).