

Mississippi
Kindergarten Guidelines



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This manual has been prepared for use by administrators, counselors, teachers, and other authorized staff in the schools of Mississippi and is to be used as a guide for the operation of kindergarten programs.

Kindergarten Philosophy and Goals

The kindergarten program shall reflect an understanding of child development principles. These principles shall be embodied in the curriculum design and general learning environment. The instructional delivery is to be organized around learning centers where opportunities are provided for children to acquire skills and concepts that include problem-solving, decision-making, questioning, evaluating, and discovering.

The realistic goals for kindergarten education are as follows:

1. Develop a positive self-concept.
2. Achieve intellectual growth.
3. Enlarge student's world of people, experiences, ideas, and things.
4. Increase competence and skills in reading, writing, listening, thinking, and speaking.
5. Increase the skills involved in physical coordination.
6. Increase competence in dealing with emotional feelings and social situations.
7. Increase competence in self-direction and independence.
8. Develop cooperative trusting relationships.
9. Develop natural curiosity and creative potential.

Learning Principles

Effective educational planning for young children takes into account knowledge of human growth and development. The learning principles that guide this planning include the following:

1. Children learn as total persons (emotionally, socially, physically, and intellectually).
2. Children go through similar stages of development, but at individual rates.
3. Children learn through their senses (hearing, seeing, touching, tasting, and smelling).
4. Children learn through active involvement (exploring, playing, manipulating, and problem-solving).
5. Children learn through attitudes as well as through content; therefore, attention should be given to methods, emotional climate, environment, and teacher-child interaction.
6. Children learn through play; therefore, sensitivity to the value of play is required, for it is through play that children create their own meaning and learning schemes. Play is the work of the child.

Section I. Requirements for Enrollment of Children in Public Schools

A. Entrance Age:

1. **Required Age:** A kindergarten pupil shall have reached the age of five years on or before September 1.
2. **Required Documentation:** A birth certificate and immunization record are required for all kindergarten students and shall be presented to the proper school authority.
3. **[MS Code 37-15-9] Requirements for Enrollment:**

(1) Except as provided in subsection (2) and subject to the provisions of subsection (3) of this section, no child shall be enrolled or admitted to any kindergarten which is a part of the free public school system during any school year unless such child will reach his fifth birthday on or before September 1 of said school year, and no child shall be enrolled or admitted to the first grade in any school which is a part of the free public school system during any school year unless such child will reach his sixth birthday on or before September 1 of said school year. No pupil shall be permanently enrolled in a school in the State of Mississippi who formerly was enrolled in another public or private school within the state until the cumulative record of the pupil shall have been received from the school from which he transferred. Should such record have become lost or destroyed, then it shall be the duty of the superintendent or principal of the school where the pupil last attended school to initiate a new record.

(2) Subject to the provisions of subsection (3) of this section, any child who transfers from an out-of-state public or private school in which that state's law provides for a first-grade or kindergarten enrollment date subsequent to September 1, shall be allowed to enroll in the public schools of Mississippi, at the same grade level as their prior out-of-state enrollment, if:

- (a) The parent, legal guardian or custodian of such child was a legal resident of the state from which the child is transferring;
- (b) The out-of-state school from which the child is transferring is duly accredited by that state's appropriate accrediting authority;
- (c) Such child was legally enrolled in a public or private school for a minimum of four (4) weeks in the previous state; and
- (d) The superintendent of schools in the applicable Mississippi school district has determined that the child was making satisfactory educational progress in the previous state.

SOURCES: Codes, 1942, Sec. 6225-03; Laws, 1953, Ex Sess, ch. 24, Sec. 3; 1976, ch. 390, Sec. 1; 1986, ch. 464; 1987, ch. 315; 1994, ch. 607, Sec. 19; Laws, 2003, ch. 397, § 2, SB 2394, eff from and after July 1, 2003.

B. Compulsory-School-Age and Withdrawal:

[MS Code 37-13-91] (2) (f) "Compulsory-school-age child" means a child who has attained or will attain the age of six (6) years on or before September 1 of the calendar year and who has not attained the age of seventeen (17) years on or before September 1 of the calendar year; and shall include any child who has attained or will attain the age of five (5) years on or before September 1 and has enrolled in a full-day public school kindergarten program. Provided, however, that the parent or guardian of any child enrolled in a full-day public school kindergarten program shall be allowed to disenroll the child from the program on a one-time basis, and such child shall not be deemed a compulsory-school-age child until the child attains the age of six (6) years.

SOURCES: Laws, 1977, ch. 483, Sec. 1; 1982, Ex Sess, ch. 17, Sec. 21; 1987, ch. 460, 1991, ch. 308, Sec. 1; 1991, ch. 539, Sec. 2; 1992, ch. 516, Sec. 1; 1992, ch. 524, Sec. 8; 1993, ch. 543, Sec. 3; 1994, ch. 604, Sec. 1; 1995, ch. 570, Sec. 1, eff from and after passage (approved April 7, 1995); Laws, 1998, Ch. 566, § 6, HB 1443, eff July 1, 1998. Amended by Laws 2000, Ch. 397, Sec. 1, SB3043; Laws, 2003, ch. 397, § 1, SB 2394, eff from and after July 1, 2003.

Section II. Physical Settings and Outside Play

A. Physical Settings:

1. Guidelines for New and Existing Structures:

a. Classrooms:

- The classroom shall consist of a minimum of 600 square feet.
- Kindergarten classrooms shall be located at ground level.
- Every closet latch shall be such that children can open the door from the inside.
- The maximum distance to an exit from any point in the building shall not exceed 150 feet. The maximum distance from the classroom door at the corridor to an exit shall not exceed 100 feet.
- Where multiple kindergarten units occur within a school, it is recommended that they be grouped adjacent to one another for teacher and child interaction and for optimum use of common facilities.
- It is recommended that each kindergarten classroom have a work counter of at least 12 feet with at least one sink. The sink should be stainless steel or porcelain, standard with gooseneck fitting on one side and a drinking bubble on the other side. It is recommended that the sink have cold water only. A paper towel dispenser accessible to students and a trash receptacle should be located near the sink.

- It is recommended that 110 volt wall plugs be located every 10 feet to 15 feet around the classroom. Safety covers should be provided for wall sockets not in use.

b. Bathrooms:

- Every toilet room door lock (applicable only for restrooms attached to classrooms) shall be designed to permit opening of the locked door from the outside in an emergency, and the opening device shall be readily accessible to the staff.
- In the event of an emergency, adults shall be able to get to students, regardless of the student restroom location (classroom or hallway).
- It is recommended that the classroom not be located more than 125 feet from a bathroom.
- A toilet room in the classroom is recommended for kindergarten children.

c. Furniture and Floors:

- Furniture shall be of an appropriate height, and will vary to meet the needs of all children.
- Tables and chairs shall be the primary type of student furniture.
- It is recommended that each classroom have an area rug or individual carpet squares to be used for large group meetings.

d. Space:

- Open storage units known as cubbies are recommended for every two students. Each cubical needs to be four feet high and two feet wide with coat hanging space at the bottom and a storage area at the top. Coat hooks should be installed 36 inches from the floor.
- It is recommended that adequate storage space be made available in the classroom, both for student materials and teacher materials. Storage space for teachers should be available above the reach of the children.

2. Additional Guidelines for New Structures:

- All building construction shall conform to the Southern Building Codes, the American Disabilities Act, the Life Safety Codes, and to any other building codes.
- Individual toilet rooms are required to accommodate the physically handicapped and be in compliance with ADA regulations.

B. Outside Play Area:

1. Guidelines for Designated Play Areas:

- a. A designated area for supervised outside periods during the kindergarten day shall be provided.
- b. It is recommended that kindergarten students not simultaneously share an area with children in grades three or above during designated outside periods.

2. Guidelines for Protection from Hazards:

- a. Appropriate play premises or areas shall be provided to facilitate learning and ensure safety, in accordance with public playground safety guidelines.
- b. The outside play area shall have defined boundaries to protect children from environmental hazards.

Section III. Organizational Procedures and Staff

A. Organization:

1. **Required Ratio:** The teacher-pupil ratio shall be 1:22 maximum. If a full-time assistant teacher is assigned to the kindergarten classroom, the teacher-pupil ratio shall not exceed 1:27.
2. **Recommended Ratio:** To enhance pre-reading instruction, to provide more individualized instruction, to promote more time on task, and to minimize disruptions, it is recommended that the teacher-pupil ratio not exceed an enrollment of 16 per teacher. If an assistant teacher is assigned to the kindergarten classroom, it is recommended that the teacher-pupil ratio not exceed an enrollment of 22 per teacher/assistant teacher team. The employment of an assistant teacher is recommended to assist the certified teacher regardless of teacher-pupil ratio.
3. **Required Length of School Day and Term:** The length of the school day and school term shall be the same as that of the other grades of the elementary school.
4. **Required Physical Activity Time:** Students shall participate in physical activity for a minimum of 30 minutes during the school day, in accordance with MS Code 37-13-134.
5. **Recommended Quiet Time:** Students should engage in a minimum of 30 minutes of quiet time daily. Activities during quiet time may include individual

activities, sustained silent reading, listening to books on tape, drawing, or resting, as appropriate for each individual student.

B. Staff:

- 1. Required Licensure for Teachers:** All district professional positions requiring licensed staff must be filled by staff that are properly licensed and endorsed as required by state law and federal requirements of the *No Child Left Behind Act of 2001* (NCLB).
- 2. Requirement for Assistant Teachers:** The assistant teacher must qualify for employment under the existing assistant teacher regulations.
- 3. Professional Development for Staff:**
 - a. Required Professional Development:** School systems must provide regular training related to principles and methods of early childhood education and reading instruction for all kindergarten teachers, assistant teachers, and program administrators. Training should reflect appropriate best practices for early childhood (Pre-K through Grade 3) and should be evidence- or research-based.
 - b. Recommended Professional Development:** It is recommended that all persons responsible for supervising the kindergarten program attend workshops and/or seminars regarding kindergarten implementation and supervision.

Section IV. Curriculum, Materials, and Assessment

A. Curriculum:

- 1. Instructional Day:** The instructional day shall include large and small group activities, learning center activities, and individual instructional activities. Subjects for kindergarten shall be integrated through a unit/thematic format. The curriculum shall include integrated language arts (reading, listening, thinking, speaking, writing, and viewing), music, art, math, social studies, science, dramatic play, and physical activities.
- 2. Learning Centers:**
 - a. Daily Use:** Learning centers with concrete materials shall be used on a daily basis. A minimum of three centers containing concrete manipulative materials shall be in simultaneous use during each designated center time.

The following are examples:

- Reading Center
- Creative Arts Center
- Science Center
- Math Center
- Language Arts Center
- Cooking Center
- Blocks, Wheel toys, and Construction Center
- Sand and/or Water Center
- Woodworking Center
- Music Center
- Library Center
- Listening Center
- Dramatic Play
- Creative Writing Center
- Social Studies Center
- Technology Center

c. Daily Schedule: It is recommended that every child be engaged in learning center activities for a minimum of 100 minutes per day.

d. Curriculum Standards: Teachers shall use, at a minimum, the *Mississippi Curriculum Frameworks* and the *Common Core State Standards for Mathematics* and *English Language Arts* to guide instruction. Resources for curriculum planning may be added as desired by each school district.

B. Educational Materials:

1. Required Cost for New Classrooms: The initial expenditure for any new classroom for equipment, instructional materials and consumable supplies shall be a minimum of \$2,000 per classroom.

2. Required Cost for Materials: The district shall spend a minimum of \$200 per classroom per year on instructional materials and consumable supplies. This money is in addition to the Educational Enhancement Fund monies allocated to each teacher. Educational materials shall reflect the instructional needs and implementation of learning activities described for kindergarten.

3. Recommended Cost for New Classrooms: It is recommended that the initial expenditure for any new classroom for equipment, furniture, instructional materials, and consumable supplies should be increased to a minimum of \$5,000 per classroom.

- 4. Recommended Cost for Materials:** It is recommended that each year the district spend a minimum of \$500 per classroom on instructional materials and consumable supplies in addition to the Educational Enhancement Funds (EEF). This is needed to replenish instructional materials that have been lost or damaged through years of use.

C. Assessment:

- 1. Standardized Testing:** It is recommended that pencil-paper group standardized tests not be used as evaluation measures for kindergarten children.
- 2. Documentation:** It is recommended that assessment of kindergarten skills be documented through use of a variety of techniques and procedures to include: checklists, performance scales, portfolios of children's work, anecdotal records, observational reports, video and audio tape recordings, experience charts, photographs, and informal tests.
- 3. Needs Assessments:** A continuous evaluation through use of a variety of techniques, procedures, and tools shall be used to determine individual student's social, emotional, and academic enrichment needs. The evaluation shall be based on the learning outcomes in the required curriculum standards.

Section V. Parent Participation

- 1. Required Handbook:** Each school district shall develop and distribute a parent handbook.
- 2. Recommended Parent Conferences:** Regular parent involvement is recommended through such activities as orientation, open house, teacher/parent conferences, and ongoing collaboration between parents and school to enhance the learning process.

Section VI. Transportation

School Bus Safety: It is recommended that a safety monitor be appointed on each school bus to board and de-board the bus. School bus drivers should promote a safe and positive environment through appropriate interaction with the students.