



## MISSISSIPPI KINDERGARTEN GUIDELINES

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Published, 2015



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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. Intensify intellectual growth.
3. Enlarge 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 current 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.

**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. Required Guidelines for Existing Structures**

##### **a. Classrooms**

- The classroom shall consist of no less than 35 square feet per child with 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.
- Safety covers are placed on all wall sockets which are 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).
- The classroom will not be located more than 125 feet from a bathroom.

**c. Furniture**

- 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.

**d. Floors**

- It is required that each classroom have an area to be used for large group meetings. It is recommended that each classroom have an area rug or individual carpet squares to be used for large group meetings. It is recommended that the area have a rug, carpet squares, crates with cushions, or other comfortable seating.

**e. Building Codes**

- All building construction shall conform to the 2012 International Building Codes, the American Disabilities Act, the Life Safety Codes, and to any other city or county building codes.

**2. Optional Guidelines for Existing Structures**

**a. Classrooms**

- 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.

**b. Bathrooms**

- A toilet room in the classroom is recommended for kindergarten children.
- It is recommended that toilet seats in bathrooms be from 10 to 13 inches from the floor.
- It is recommended that lavatories be 24 inches from the floor.

**c. Furniture**

- At least two small bookcases or book display shelves are desirable.
- A desk, chair, file cabinet and/or personal area should be provided within the classroom for teachers.

**d. Floors**

- Classroom areas, not carpeted, should be covered with resilient flooring or other easily cleaned material. Roll-type resilient flooring has the advantage of a minimum amount of jointing.

**e. Storage and Space**

- Base cabinets are recommended below all counters. Doors should be attached to some cabinets and some should be left open to serve as shelves. An open cabinet (18 x 24 inches and 24 x 36 inches) will accommodate the large paper used for easel painting.
- Cabinets, 12 inches deep, are recommended over the entire counter area for general storage.
- Open storage units known as cubbies are recommended for every two students. Each cubicle 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.
- Adequate storage space should be provided. The storage units may include one wall of built-in cabinets or moveable storage sections. Most storage units should be accessible to children to facilitate independence and responsibility within the classroom. Storage space, above the reach of the children, is recommended for use by teachers.
- Adequate space for display of children's work should be provided. Bulletin boards can be located on walls and/or fastened to the backs of cabinets and bookcases.
- If space within the school is available, it is recommended that a teacher work area of 180 to 200 square feet be allocated for use by every two to three kindergarten teachers. This area is needed for individual assessment of children, conferencing with parents, making classroom materials, and planning meetings.

**3. Required Guidelines for New Structures Established after July 2017**

**a. Classrooms**

- The classroom shall be a minimum of 1,000 square feet.
- The minimum classroom width shall be 24 feet except in pod-type structures.
- Classroom lighting shall contain operable standard fluorescent lights with area controls that provide adequate lighting. Switches within reach of the children will be located at the doors. Toilet rooms shall contain lighting fixtures.
- The maximum distance to an exit from any point in the building shall not exceed 150 feet. The maximum distance from the interior classroom door at the corridor to an exit shall not exceed 100 feet.
- Kindergarten classrooms are to be located at ground level.

**b. Bathrooms**

- Each classroom shall contain a minimum of one bathroom that shall consist of a toilet and lavatory, or at the district's option the lavatory may be omitted if the work counter area is equipped with a sink and is in close proximity to the toilet room door. The toilet paper holder is required and is to be placed within a child's reach from the toilet.
- Individual toilet rooms are required to accommodate the physically handicapped and be in compliance with ADA regulations.
- Every toilet room door lock 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.

**c. Furniture**

- 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.

**d. Floors**

- Classroom areas, not carpeted, must be covered with resilient flooring or other easily cleaned material. Roll-type resilient flooring has the advantage of a minimum amount of jointing.

**e. Building Codes**

- All building construction shall conform to the 2012 International Building Codes, the American Disabilities Act, the Life Safety Codes, and to any other city and county building codes.

**f. Storage and Space**

- Open storage units (cubbies) shall be provided for each student.
- Wall receptacles shall be placed 10 feet to 15 feet apart in each classroom. Any receptacle in the counter area should not be located near a sink. A minimum of six outlets is required. Safety covers should be provided for wall sockets.
- Every closet latch shall be such that children can open the door from the inside.
- Built-in cabinets or portable storage areas shall be constructed to promote accessibility of materials to the child in order to encourage the selection of activities, to facilitate room clean-up, and to serve as learning center dividers.

**4. Optional Guidelines for New Structures**

**a. Classrooms**

- All kindergarten units within one school or building should be grouped in the same general vicinity for optimum use of common facilities.

- It is recommended that 110 volt wall plugs be located every 10 to 15 feet about the classroom.
- A minimum of 50 square feet of window area per unit is recommended. Windows should be located no more than two feet from the floor. Windows should open from the inside for ventilation purposes. A generous glass window area is recommended to overlook the playground and promote an indoor-outdoor atmosphere. Roofing overhang and installation blinds or shutters should be provided to combat excessive sunlight.
- Careful consideration should be given to the locating of kindergarten units in new structures. Each classroom should have a door opening onto the playground or other attractive outdoor space. A six-foot roof overhang makes the outdoor area useable on a rainy day as an outdoor learning center.

**b. Bathrooms**

- One bathroom is recommended for every eight kindergarten units.

**c. Furniture**

- At least two small bookcases or book display units should be provided.
- A body-length, shatter-proof wall or floor mirror should be located in close proximity to the dramatic play/housekeeping center area or in close proximity to the toilet area.
- A desk, chair, file cabinet, and/or personal area should be provided within the classroom for teachers.
- A teacher work area of 180 to 200 square feet minimum should be allocated for use by every two to three kindergarten teachers. A proportionately larger space shared by all kindergarten teachers in a school would suffice. This room should be made inviting through use of carpeting and appropriate furniture. Also included should be a four-drawer file cabinet, two chairs, a work counter, or table storage shelving.

**d. Floors**

- A 9 x 12 foot area rug or individual carpet squares of low-pile high-density fiber should be used to carpet a portion of each classroom.

**e. Storage and Space**

- Cubbies should be four feet high and two feet wide with coat hanging space at the top and below. Coat hooks should be placed 36 inches from the floor.
- It is recommended that base cabinets be placed below all counters. Doors should be attached to some cabinets and some should be left open to serve as shelves. Open cabinets 18 x 24 inches and 24 x 36 inches will accommodate the large paper used for easel painting.

- It is recommended that 12-inch deep upper wall cabinets be located at adult height over the counter area.
- It is recommended that an upright 3 x 5 cabinet be provided for every two kindergarten classrooms. Utility cabinets will be used for storage of brooms, mops, and other large items.
- Adequate space for display of children's work should be provided. Bulletin boards can be located on the walls and/or fastened to the backs of moveable cabinets and bookcases.

## B. Outside Play Area

1. **Required Guidelines for Designated Areas:** A designated area for supervised outside periods during the kindergarten day shall be provided. It is required that kindergarten students not simultaneously share an area with children in grades three or above during designated outside periods. All new and remodeled playgrounds are required to follow the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 so that the facility is readily accessible to and usable by individuals with disabilities. Further information can be found in the Public Playground Safety Handbook published by U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission.
2. **Required Guidelines for Protection from Hazards:** Developmentally appropriate play premises and/or equipment shall be provided to facilitate learning and ensure safety, in accordance with public playground safety guidelines. The outside play area shall have defined boundaries to protect children from environmental hazards.
3. **Optional Guidelines for Play Area:** It is recommended that kindergarten students simultaneously share an area with only children in grade one. It is recommended that the outdoor play area be a minimum of 4,300 square feet for two kindergarten classes. For each additional class, another 1,400 square feet is recommended. A covered area should be located on the playground to allow children protection from the sun and to serve as a play area during inclement weather. It is recommended that this area be 225 to 300 square feet for each kindergarten class, with a sloped concrete surface to shed water.

## Section III. Organizational Procedures and Staff

### A. Organizational Requirements

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 2:27.

2. **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.
3. **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. The physical activity does not have to take place continuously. Weather permitting, physical activity should take place outside.

## **B. Organizational Recommendations**

1. **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.
2. **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.

## **C. Staff**

### **1. Required Educator Certification**

- a. **Teacher:** Public school kindergarten teachers must hold one of the following endorsements: Pre-K – K (153), Elementary Education K – 3 (116), Elementary Education K – 4 (152), Elementary Education K – 6 (120), Elementary Education K – 9 (115), or Nursery – Kindergarten (151). By fall 2016, new kindergarten teachers seeking an initial elementary education license must make a passing score on the Pearson Foundations of Reading Assessment in accordance with MS Code 37-3-2.
- b. **Assistant Teacher:** IN GENERAL – Each local educational agency receiving assistance under this part shall ensure that all paraprofessionals hired after the date of enactment of the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 and working in a program supported with funds under this part shall have:
  - (A) completed at least 2 years of study at an institution of higher education;
  - (B) obtained an associate's (or higher) degree; or

- (C) met a rigorous standard of quality and can demonstrate, through a formal State or local academic assessment —
  - (i) knowledge of, and the ability to assist in instructing, reading, writing, and mathematics; or
  - (ii) knowledge of, and the ability to assist in instructing, reading readiness, writing readiness, and mathematics readiness, as appropriate.

By fall 2018, it is recommended that assistant teachers have an associate's degree in early childhood education, child development, or an equivalent field.

2. **Required Professional Development for Staff:** 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.

## 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. **Curriculum Standards:** Teachers shall use, at minimum, the state-adopted kindergarten standards to guide instruction. Evidence-based resources for curriculum planning may be added as desired by each school district.
3. **Learning Centers**
  - a. **Daily Use:** Instructional delivery shall be organized primarily using learning centers. A minimum of 3 containing books, manipulatives, and creative art materials shall be organized, arranged, and labeled so that they are accessible to children. All centers should include non-fiction and fiction books, writing materials, and creative arts materials that are appropriate to children's developmental states. Learning centers shall be in simultaneous use during each designated learning center time, with children rotating through learning centers as the primary method of

learning. The centers should integrate thematic unit concepts with the content of the competency areas as indicated below.

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
- Motor Development Center

**b. Space Limitations:** If space is very limited, some centers may be combined.

**c. Time Constraints:** Every child enrolled in a kindergarten program should be engaged in learning center activities for the purpose of learning and mastery of performance standards for a minimum of 120 minutes per day.

**d. Technology Use:** Students should have access to technology in the classroom on a regular basis.

## **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 adequate to equip a classroom of 20 children or the number being served if more than 20 - a minimum of \$4,000 per classroom.

**2. Required Cost for Existing Instructional and Consumable Materials:** The district shall spend a minimum of \$1,000 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. It is recommended that teachers be able to indicate the needs for classroom educational materials. Students should have access to technology in the classroom on a regular basis.

- 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 a minimum of \$10,000 per classroom. Students should have access to technology in the classroom on a regular basis.

### C. Assessment

- 1. Individualized Screening Assessments:** Schools must conduct vision and hearing screenings for all kindergarten students within the first 30 days of enrollment. By fall of 2018, a comprehensive health screening, approved by the Mississippi Department of Education, and referrals are required for all kindergarten students.
- 2. Standardized Testing:** All kindergarten students are required to participate in the state-approved kindergarten readiness assessment. Paper and pencil standardized tests, completed by students, are not developmentally appropriate and shall not be used in entirety. However, standardized test sections that assess developmentally appropriate writing skills (e.g., sentence structure, writing form) are permissible and may be used.
- 3. Needs Assessments:** A continuous evaluation through use of a variety of techniques, procedures, and tools shall be used to determine individual students' social, emotional, and academic enrichment needs. The evaluation shall be based on the learning outcomes in the required curriculum standards.
- 4. 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.

## Section V. Parent Participation and Transportation

- A. Parent Participation:** Families are viewed as partners and their child's first teacher. Teachers should assist parents with information and resources that could help their children. Parents should have the opportunity to volunteer in the classroom and participate in enrichment opportunities.
  - 1. Required Handbook:** Each school district shall develop and distribute a parent handbook. The handbook should include information that addresses

the kindergarten philosophy, goals, and information unique to a kindergarten program (e.g. curriculum, credentials, and assessments).

2. **Required Parent Conferences:** Parent/teacher conferences shall be conducted two times during the school year to inform parents or guardians of the child's progress. If documented attempts to meet with parents or other responsible persons fail, telephone conferences can be substituted.

Communication should be conducted on a regular basis. Communication between school and home could consist of notebooks/folders, newsletters, conferences, emails, phone calls, etc.

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.

3. **Volunteer Participation:** Parents, guardians, and community members should be encouraged to participate in various activities such as developing learning games for home or classroom use, sharing information with the class about their work skills or profession, or sharing their talents with the children through varied activities. **Volunteers should not be in the classroom without a teacher or assistant teacher present and cannot be used to meet the minimum adult-to-child ratio.** Volunteers should participate in an orientation session, sign a confidentiality agreement, and agree to a background check.

- B. **School Bus Safety:** All kindergarten programs must abide by MS Code Section 37-41-3 and the **National Highway Transportation Safety Association (NHTSA) Guidelines**. 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.

Source: *Miss. Code Ann. §37-1-3, §37-21-7 (Revised 1/2016)*