

TEXAS EDUCATION CODE
CHAPTER 29 ~ SUBCHAPTER E
PREKINDERGARTEN PROGRAMS

Sec. 29.153. Free Prekindergarten for Certain Children.

(a) A district shall offer prekindergarten classes if the district identifies 15 or more children who are eligible under Subsection (b) and are at least four years of age. A school district may offer prekindergarten classes if the district identifies 15 or more eligible children who are at least three years of age. A district may not charge tuition for a prekindergarten class offered under this section.

(b) A child is eligible for enrollment in a prekindergarten class under this section if the child is at least three years of age and:

(1) is unable to speak and comprehend the English language;

(2) is educationally disadvantaged;

(3) is a homeless child, as defined by 42 U.S.C. Section 11434a, regardless of the residence of the child, of either parent of the child, or of the child's guardian or other person having lawful control of the child;

(4) is the child of an active duty member of the armed forces of the United States, including the state military forces or a reserve component of the armed forces, who is ordered to active duty by proper authority;

(5) is the child of a member of the armed forces of the United States, including the state military forces or a reserve component of the armed forces, who was injured or killed while serving on active duty; or

(6) is or ever has been in the conservatorship of the Department of Family and Protective Services following an adversary hearing held as provided by Section 262.201, Family Code.

(c) A prekindergarten class under this section shall be operated on a half-day basis. A district is not required to provide transportation for a prekindergarten class, but transportation, if provided, is included for funding purposes as part of the regular transportation system.

(d) On application of a district, the commissioner may exempt a district from the application of this section if the district would be required to construct classroom facilities in order to provide prekindergarten classes.

(e) Each school district shall develop a system to notify the population in the district with children who are eligible for enrollment in a prekindergarten class under this section of the availability of the class. The system must include public notices issued in English and Spanish.

(f) A child who is eligible for enrollment in a prekindergarten class under Subsection (b)(4) or (5) remains eligible for enrollment if the child's parent leaves the armed forces, or is no longer on active duty, after the child begins a prekindergarten class.

Added by Acts 1995, 74th Leg., ch. 260, Sec. 1, eff. May 30, 1995. Amended by Acts 1999, 76th Leg., ch. 62, Sec. 4.01, eff. Sept. 1, 1999; Acts 2001, 77th Leg., ch. 596, Sec. 1, eff. June 11, 2001.

Amended by:

Acts 2006, 79th Leg., 3rd C.S., Ch. [5](#), Sec. 6.01, eff. May 31, 2006.

Acts 2007, 80th Leg., R.S., Ch. [850](#), Sec. 4, eff. June 15, 2007.

Acts 2007, 80th Leg., R.S., Ch. [1406](#), Sec. 1(a), eff. September 1, 2007.

Sec. 29.1531. Tuition-Supported and District-Financed Prekindergarten.

(a) A school district may offer on a tuition basis or use district funds to provide:

(1) an additional half-day of prekindergarten classes to children eligible for classes under Section 29.153; and

(2) half-day and full-day prekindergarten classes to children not eligible for classes under Section 29.153.

(b) A district that offers a prekindergarten program on a tuition basis:

(1) may not adopt a tuition rate for the program that is higher than necessary to cover the added costs of providing the program, including any costs associated with collecting, reporting, and analyzing data under Section 29.1532(c); and

(2) must submit the proposed tuition rate to the commissioner for approval.

Added by Acts 2001, 77th Leg., ch. 596, Sec. 1, eff. June 11, 2001.

Sec. 29.1532. Prekindergarten Program Requirements.

(a) A school district's prekindergarten program shall be designed to develop skills necessary for success in the regular public school curriculum, including language, mathematics, and social skills.

(b) If a school district contracts with a private entity for the operation of the district's prekindergarten program, the program must at a minimum comply with the applicable child-care licensing standards adopted by the Department of Protective and Regulatory Services under Section 42.042, Human Resources Code.

(c) A school district that offers prekindergarten classes shall include the following information in the district's Public Education Information Management System (PEIMS) report:

(1) demographic information, as determined by the commissioner, on students enrolled in district prekindergarten classes, including the number of students who are eligible for classes under Section 29.153;

(2) the numbers of half-day and full-day prekindergarten classes offered by the district; and

(3) the sources of funding for the prekindergarten classes.

Added by Acts 2001, 77th Leg., ch. 596, Sec. 1, eff. June 11, 2001.

Sec. 29.1533. Establishment of New Prekindergarten Program.

Before establishing a new prekindergarten program, a school district shall consider the possibility of sharing use of an existing Head Start or other child-care program site as a prekindergarten site.

Added by Acts 2003, 78th Leg., ch. 790, Sec. 1, eff. Sept. 1, 2003.

Sec. 29.154. Evaluation of Prekindergarten Programs.

The commissioner of education, in consultation with the commissioner of human services, shall monitor and evaluate prekindergarten programs as to their developmental appropriateness. The commissioners shall also evaluate the potential for coordination on a statewide basis of prekindergarten programs with government-funded early childhood care and education programs such as child care administered under Chapter 44, Human Resources Code, and federal Head Start programs. That evaluation shall use recommendations contained in the report to the 71st Legislature required by Chapter 717, Acts of the 70th Legislature, Regular Session, 1987. For the purpose of providing cost-effective care for children during the full workday with developmentally appropriate curriculum, the commissioners shall investigate the use of existing child-care program sites as prekindergarten sites. Following the evaluation required by this section, the commissioners, in cooperation with school districts and other program administrators, shall integrate programs, staff, and program sites for prekindergarten, child-care, and federal Head Start programs to the greatest extent possible.

Added by Acts 1995, 74th Leg., ch. 260, Sec. 1, eff. May 30, 1995.

Sec. 29.155. Kindergarten and Prekindergarten Grants.

(a) From amounts appropriated for the purposes of this section, the commissioner may make grants to school districts and open-enrollment charter schools to implement or expand kindergarten and prekindergarten programs by:

- (1) operating an existing half-day kindergarten or prekindergarten program on a full-day basis; or
- (2) implementing a prekindergarten program at a campus that does not have a prekindergarten program.

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(b) A school district or open-enrollment charter school may use funds received under this section to employ teachers and other personnel for a kindergarten or prekindergarten program and acquire curriculum materials or equipment, including computers, for use in kindergarten and prekindergarten programs.

(c) To be eligible for a grant under this section, a school district or open-enrollment charter school must apply to the commissioner in the manner and within the time prescribed by the commissioner.

(d) In awarding grants under this section, the commissioner shall give priority to districts and open-enrollment charter schools in which the level of performance of students on the assessment instruments administered under Section 39.023 to students in grade three is substantially below the average level of performance on those assessment instruments for all school districts in the state.

(e) The commissioner may adopt rules to administer this section.

(f) Notwithstanding Section 7.056(e)(3)(I), the commissioner may waive a requirement prescribed by this subchapter to the extent necessary to implement a grant awarded under this section or Section 29.156.

(g) From amounts appropriated for the purposes of this subsection, the commissioner may also provide for:

(1) coordinating early childhood care and education programs;

(2) developing and disseminating for programs described by Subdivision (1) prekindergarten instructional materials and school-readiness information for parents; and

(3) developing standards for model early childhood care and education coordination.

(h) The model program standards developed under Subsection (g) must focus on pre-literacy skills, including language acquisition, vocabulary development, and phonological awareness.

(i) In carrying out the purposes of Subsection (g), a school district or open-enrollment charter school may use funds granted to the district or school under this subsection in contracting with another entity, including a private entity.

(j) If a school district or open-enrollment charter school returns to the commissioner funds granted under this section, the commissioner may grant those funds to another entity, including a private entity, for the purposes of Subsection (g).

Added by Acts 1999, 76th Leg., ch. 396, Sec. 2.01, eff. Sept. 1, 1999. Amended by Acts 2003, 78th Leg., ch. 790, Sec. 2, eff. Sept. 1, 2003.

Sec. 29.156. Grants for Educational Component of Head Start.

(a) From funds appropriated for the purpose, the commissioner shall make grants for use in providing an educational component to federal Head Start programs or similar government-funded early childhood care and education programs.

(b) The commissioner shall adopt rules for implementation of this section, including rules prescribing eligibility criteria for receipt of a grant and for expenditure of grant funds.

Added by Acts 1999, 76th Leg., ch. 396, Sec. 2.01, eff. Sept. 1, 1999.

Sec. 29.1561. Administration of Early Childhood Care and Education Programs.

(a) The commissioner may waive a law or rule relating to early childhood care and education programs:

- (1) to the extent that the law or rule is more restrictive than required by federal law; or
- (2) to the extent necessary to comply with federal law.

(b) Notwithstanding any restriction imposed by this title, the commissioner may administer grants for early childhood care and education programs under Section 29.155 or 29.156, including Head Start and Early Head Start programs, in a manner that provides the greatest flexibility allowed under federal law.

(c) The commissioner by rule may establish a program to provide incentives to providers of early childhood care and education programs that, to the greatest extent practicable, provide coordinated services authorized under Section 29.158(c).

Added by Acts 2003, 78th Leg., ch. 790, Sec. 3, eff. Sept. 1, 2003.

Amended by:

Acts 2005, 79th Leg., Ch. [275](#), Sec. 1, eff. September 1, 2005.

Sec. 29.157. Ready to Read Grants.

(a) From funds appropriated for the purpose, the commissioner shall make grants as provided by this section in support of pre-reading instruction.

(b) The commissioner shall establish a competitive grant program for distribution of at least 95 percent of the available appropriated funds. Grants shall be used to provide scientific, research-based pre-reading instruction for the purpose of directly improving pre-reading skills and for identifying cost-effective models for pre-reading intervention. The commissioner shall distribute the grants in amounts not less than \$50,000 or more than \$150,000 to eligible applicants to be used for:

- (1) professional staff development in pre-reading instruction;

- (2) pre-reading curriculum and materials;
- (3) pre-reading skills assessment materials; and
- (4) employment of pre-reading instructors.

(c) A public school operating a prekindergarten program, or an eligible entity as defined by Section 12.101(a) that provides a preschool instruction program and that meets qualifications prescribed by the commissioner, is eligible to apply for a grant if at least 75 percent of the children enrolled in the program are low-income students, as determined by rule of the commissioner.

(d) As a condition to receiving a grant, an applicant must commit public or private funds matching the grant in a percentage set by the commissioner. The commissioner shall determine the required percentage of matching funds based on the demonstrated economic capacity of the community served by the program to raise funds for the purpose of matching the grant, as determined by the commissioner. Matching funds must equal at least 30 percent, but not more than 75 percent, of the amount of the grant.

(e) The commissioner shall develop and implement performance measures for evaluating the effectiveness of grants under this section. Those measures must correlate to other reading diagnostic assessments used in public schools in kindergarten through the second grade.

(f) The commissioner may adopt rules as necessary for the administration of this section.

Added by Acts 1999, 76th Leg., ch. 402, Sec. 1, eff. Sept. 1, 1999. Renumbered from Sec. 29.155 by Acts 2001, 77th Leg., ch. 1420, Sec. 21.001(17), eff. Sept. 1, 2001.

Sec. 29.158. Coordination of Services.

(a) In a manner consistent with federal law and regulations, each prekindergarten program provider, Head Start and Early Head Start program provider, and provider of an after-school child-care program provided at a school shall coordinate with the agency, the Texas Workforce Commission, and local workforce development boards regarding subsidized child-care services.

(b) The coordination required by this section must include:

(1) providing to an applicant for a child-care service information regarding:

- (A) child-care resource and referral agencies serving the applicant's community;
- (B) information and referral providers serving the applicant's community; or
- (C) the prekindergarten program, local child-care and development fund

contractor, or Head Start program administrator serving the applicant's community; and

(2) coordinating to ensure, to the extent practicable, that full-day, full-year child-care services are available to meet the needs of low-income parents who are working or participating in workforce training or workforce education.

(c) The coordination required by this section may also include:

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(1) cooperating with each state agency regarding child-care or child-development studies conducted by that agency;

(2) collecting data necessary to determine a child's eligibility for subsidized child-care services or a prekindergarten, Head Start or Early Head Start, or after-school child-care program, to the extent that the collection of data does not violate the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act of 1974 (20 U.S.C. Section 1232g);

(3) cooperating to provide for staff training and professional development activities;

(4) identifying and developing methods for the collaborative provision of subsidized child-care services and prekindergarten, Head Start or Early Head Start, or after-school child-care program services, including:

(A) operating a combined system for eligibility determination or registration processes so that an applicant may apply for all services available in an applicant's community through a single point of access;

(B) sharing facilities or staff; and

(C) increasing the enrollment capacity of those programs;

(5) identifying child-care facilities located in close proximity to prekindergarten, Head Start or Early Head Start, or after-school child-care programs;

(6) coordinating transportation between child-care facilities identified under Subdivision (5) and a prekindergarten, Head Start or Early Head Start, or after-school child-care program; and

(7) coordinating with the State Center for Early Childhood Development to develop longitudinal studies to measure the effects of quality early childhood care and education programs on educational achievement, including high school performance and completion.

(d) In coordinating child-care services under this section and in making any related decision to contract with another provider for child-care services, the agency, Texas Workforce Commission, local workforce development boards, and each prekindergarten program provider, Head Start and Early Head Start program provider, and provider of an after-school child-care program provided at a school shall consider the quality of the services involved in the proposed coordination or contracting decision and shall give preference to services of the highest quality. Any appropriate indicator of quality services may be considered under this subsection, including whether the provider of the services:

(1) meets the Texas Rising Star Provider criteria described by 40 T.A.C. Section 809.15(b);

(2) is accredited by a nationally recognized accrediting organization approved by the Texas Workforce Commission and the Department of Protective and Regulatory Services;

(3) meets standards developed by the State Center for Early Childhood Development;

or

(4) has achieved any other measurable target relevant to improving the quality of child care in this state.

(e) Any coordination required by this section that involves a prekindergarten program must be approved by the commissioner.

Added by Acts 2003, 78th Leg., ch. 790, Sec. 4, eff. Sept. 1, 2003.

Sec. 29.159. Provision of Certain Information.

(a) Except as otherwise provided by this section, each provider of government-funded child-care services shall, at the time that a child is enrolled with the provider, furnish to the child's parent information regarding:

(1) effective early education settings; and

(2) any indicators that a child is ready for kindergarten that have been developed at the time the child is enrolled.

(b) If a provider does not have sufficient resources to provide the information specified by Subsection (a), the provider shall:

(1) furnish the parent with the appropriate telephone numbers or Internet sites through which the parent may obtain the information; or

(2) refer the parent to a local child-care resource and referral agency.

Added by Acts 2003, 78th Leg., ch. 790, Sec. 4, eff. Sept. 1, 2003.

Sec. 29.160. Demonstration Projects.

(a) The State Center for Early Childhood Development, in conjunction with a school district, regional education service center, institution of higher education, local government, local workforce development board, or community organization, may develop a quality rating system demonstration project under which prekindergarten program providers, licensed child-care facilities, or Head Start and Early Head Start program providers are assessed under a quality rating system.

(b) In developing the quality rating system demonstration project, the State Center for Early Childhood Development is entitled to:

(1) reasonable access to the sites at which the programs to be rated are operated, which may include sites under the authority of school districts or the Department of Protective and Regulatory Services; and

(2) technical assistance and support from the agency, the Texas Workforce Commission, and the Department of Protective and Regulatory Services to the extent that those agencies have the ability to provide assistance and support using existing agency resources.

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(c) A school district, regional education service center, institution of higher education, local government, local workforce development board, or community organization may develop one or more coordination-of-resources demonstration projects under which government-funded child-care and early education services, including Head Start and Early Head Start, prekindergarten, and after-school child-care program services, child-care services provided by nonprofit or for-profit entities, and faith-based child-care programs, are operated in a coordinated and integrated manner. An entity that develops a proposed demonstration project under this subsection must obtain approval of the project from the state agency or agencies with regulatory jurisdiction over the subject matter involved in the project. Approval of a project under this subsection must be made contingent on development of a memorandum of understanding regarding the child-care and early education coordination and integration that is:

- (1) entered into by each entity participating in the project;
- (2) certified by the State Center for Early Childhood Development as meeting any standards developed under Section 29.155(g); and
- (3) consistent with the applicable provisions of this section and applicable laws and regulations in a manner that at a minimum maintains existing child-care and early education program requirements and does not waive any existing health and safety standards.

(c-1) The memorandum of understanding required under Subsection (c) shall provide for:

- (1) equal decision-making authority for entities participating in the project;
- (2) uniform eligibility criteria for the project to the extent authorized by state and federal law;
- (3) development of streamlined enrollment procedures and simplified forms for children eligible for services under the project;
- (4) strategies for the colocation and management of staff and for facilitation of effective communication among staff members;
- (5) alignment and coordination of program calendars;
- (6) delineation of responsibilities for the provision of instructional supplies and materials and food services;
- (7) development and implementation of a system by which eligible children are referred for services among the participating entities in a manner that complies with applicable laws and regulations;
- (8) periodic meetings of the participating entities to address concerns relating to the administration and operation of the project; and
- (9) periodic meetings of the participating entities to address common standards for the professional development of program staff and to create opportunities to ensure that local communities have effective program staff.

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(c-2) A demonstration project established under Subsection (c) must include a program evaluation component that, in addition to assessing child-care and early education outcomes for young children, demonstrates:

- (1) the extent to which program quality has been enhanced;
- (2) the extent to which the number of children being served by full-day, full-year programs has increased;
- (3) the extent to which professional development training or activities engaged in by program staff has increased; and
- (4) that there has been no weakening of standards or diminishment of services.

(d) An entity that obtains approval of a coordination-of-resources demonstration project is entitled to a waiver or modification of any existing rule, policy, or procedure of the agency, the Texas Workforce Commission, or the Department of Protective and Regulatory Services that impairs the coordinated provision of government-funded child-care services, provided that the waiver or modification does not adversely affect the health, safety, or welfare of the children receiving services under the project. In addition, if applicable, the appropriate state agency must seek on behalf of the entity any available federal waiver from a federal rule, policy, or procedure imposed in connection with a Head Start program that impairs the coordinated provision of government-funded child-care services. Not later than the 30th day after the date on which a state agency becomes aware of an applicable federal waiver under this subsection, the state agency shall notify the appropriate entity of the date by which the state agency intends to seek the waiver.

(e) The State Center for Early Childhood Development and any other entity that implements a demonstration project under this section must provide a report to the legislature and to the state agency or agencies with regulatory jurisdiction over the subject matter involved in the project. The report must include:

- (1) an evaluation of the effectiveness of the project; and
- (2) recommendations on statewide implementation of the project.

(f) The report required by Subsection (e) must be provided at the time specified jointly by the state agency or agencies with regulatory jurisdiction over the subject matter involved in the demonstration project.

Added by Acts 2003, 78th Leg., ch. 790, Sec. 4, eff. Sept. 1, 2003.

Amended by:

Acts 2005, 79th Leg., Ch. [275](#), Sec. 2, eff. September 1, 2005.

Sec. 29.161. School Readiness Certification System.

(a) The State Center for Early Childhood Development, in conjunction with the P-16 Council established under Section 61.076, shall develop and adopt a school readiness certification system for use in certifying the effectiveness of prekindergarten programs, Head Start and Early Head Start programs, government-subsidized child-care programs provided by nonprofit or for-profit entities, government-subsidized faith-based child-care programs, and other government-subsidized child-care programs in preparing children for kindergarten. The system shall be made available on a voluntary basis to program providers seeking to obtain certification as evidence of the quality of the program provided.

(b) In developing and adopting the system, the center shall seek the active participation of all interested stakeholders, including parents and program providers.

(c) The system must:

(1) be reflective of research in the field of early childhood care and education;

(2) be well-grounded in the cognitive, social, and emotional development of young children;

(3) apply a common set of criteria to each program provider seeking certification, regardless of the type of program or source of program funding; and

(4) be capable of fulfilling the reporting and notice requirements of Sections 28.006(d) and (g).

(d) The agency shall collect each student's raw score results on the reading instrument administered under Section 28.006 from each school district using the system created under Subsection (a) and shall contract with the State Center for Early Childhood Development for purposes of this section.

(e) The State Center for Early Childhood Development shall, using funds appropriated for the school readiness certification system, provide the system created under Subsection (a) to each school district to report each student's raw score results on the reading instrument administered under Section 28.006.

(f) The agency shall:

(1) provide assistance to the State Center for Early Childhood Development in developing and adopting the school readiness certification system under this section, including providing access to data for the purpose of locating the teacher and campus of record for students; and

(2) require confidentiality and other security measures for student data provided to the State Center for Early Childhood Development as the agency's agent, consistent with the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act of 1974 (20 U.S.C. Section 1232g).

Added by Acts 2005, 79th Leg., Ch. [275](#), Sec. 3, eff. September 1, 2005.

Amended by:

Acts 2007, 80th Leg., R.S., Ch. [921](#), Sec. 4.005, eff. September 1, 2007.

Acts 2007, 80th Leg., R.S., Ch. [1340](#), Sec. 3, eff. June 15, 2007.