Serving PK3 & PK4: A Comparison

Topics	PK3	PK4	Additional Information
LEA's Service to PK	Serving eligible 3-year-old students is a local decision made by the LEA.	LEAs that identify at least 15 eligible 4-year-old students must offer a PK program.	TEC 29.153 (a-1)
PK Eligibility	Age criteria: Child must be 3 by September 1st Eligibility criteria are the same for PK3 and PK4.	Age criteria: Child must be 4 by September 1st Eligibility criteria are the same for PK3 and PK4.	TEC 29.153 (b) Link to PK Eligibility FAQs: https://tea.texas.gov/academics/early-childhood-education/early-childhood-education-faqs#pkeligibility
Enrollment	LEAs have the authority to determine how many eligible 3-year-old students to serve.	LEAs that identify at least 15 eligible 4-year-old students must offer a PK program for all eligible 4-year-old students, who are able to enroll throughout the school year.	TEC 29.153 (a-1)
Use of Waiting Lists	Allowed	Not allowed	TEC 29.153 (a-1)
Registration	LEAs may begin registration for PK3 on or after April 1 of each school year.	LEAs may begin registration for PK4 on or after April 1 of each school year. Registration for eligible 4-year-old students must be allowed throughout the school year.	
Funding	PK3 is funded for eligible students using ½ day Foundation School Program (FSP) funding based on students' average daily attendance (ADA).	PK4 is funded for eligible students using ½ day Foundation School Program (FSP) funding based on students' average daily attendance (ADA). LEAs can fund the remaining full-day costs of PK4 through other sources of funding, i.e., local district share funding, early education allotment funds, Title 1, and/or federal funding.	TEC 29.153 (c) TEC 48.005 (a) (4)

Topics	PK3	PK4	Additional Information
Tuition	Tuition may be charged to provide: half-day and full-day prekindergarten classes to children who are ineligible for free prekindergarten classes; and an additional half-day of prekindergarten classes to those 3-year-old children who are eligible for free prekindergarten classes	Tuition may be charged to provide: half-day and full-day prekindergarten classes to children who are ineligible for free prekindergarten classes;	Prekindergarten Tuition: https://tea.texas.gov/academics/early-childhood-education/prekindergarten-tuition
Half-day vs full-day & Required Minutes	Half-day and/or full-day programs are allowed. LEAs who choose to offer a full-day PK3 program would need to fund the other half-day with other sources of funding. A half-day PK3 program requires 32,400 instructional minutes per year.	A full-day program is mandatory unless the LEA has a current full-day prekindergarten waiver in place with TEA. A full-day prekindergarten program for eligible four-year-old students requires 75,600 operational minutes per year.	Link to waiver application: https://tea.texas.gov/texas-schools/waivers/state-waivers Full-day Prekindergarten Exemption Process: https://tea.texas.gov/sites/default/files/Full-day%20Prekindergarten%20Exemption%20Process%20-%20Accessible.pdf
Partnerships with early childhood centers and/or Head Start	Allowed and encouraged	Allowed and encouraged	Link to ECE Partnership webpage: https://tea.texas.gov/academics/early-childhood-education/early-learning-public-private-partnerships
Curriculum	Curriculum used in a PK3 classroom should align with all the TX PK Guidelines.	Curriculum used in a PK4 classroom must align with all the Texas PK Guidelines.	TEC 29.167; TAC 102.1003 (b) Link to the HQ PK webpage (curriculum): https://tea.texas.gov/academics/early-childhood-education/hqpk-curriculum Link to the Instructional Materials List (SBOE): https://tea.texas.gov/sites/default/files/P2021%20Instructional%20Materials%20Adopted.pdf

Topics	PK3	PK4	Additional Information
Learning Environment	Best practice regarding the learning environments for PK (both PK3 and PK4) are detailed in the Early Childhood Program Self-Assessment (PK Version) – pages 12-13.	Best practice regarding the learning environments for PK (both PK3 and PK4) are detailed in the Early Childhood Program Self-Assessment (PK Version) – pages 12-13.	Link to the Early Childhood Program Self-Assessment documents: https://tea.texas.gov/academics/early-childhood-education/early-childhood-program-self-assessments
Daily Schedule	Some information regarding daily schedules for PK (both PK3 and PK4) is available on page 13 of the Early Childhood Program Self-Assessment (PK version). Additional information for Daily Schedules will be included in the Texas PK Guidebook.	Some information regarding daily schedules for PK (both PK3 and PK4) is available on page 13 of the Early Childhood Program Self-Assessment (PK version). Additional information for Daily Schedules will be included in the Texas PK Guidebook.	TX PK Guidelines: https://tea.texas.gov/academics/early-childhood-education/texas-prekindergarten-guidelines Link to the Early Childhood Program Self-Assessment documents: https://tea.texas.gov/academics/early-childhood-education/early-childhood-program-self-assessments
Student Progress Monitoring	Student progress monitoring is an important part of the teaching cycle and is considered a best practice with all age groups. Eligible PK3 students should be assessed at BOY and EOY in the 5 developmental domains using a tool on the Commissioner's List; if an LEA conducts assessment with eligible PK3 students using an approved tool, the BOY and EOY data must be submitted into the ECDS annually. In a mixed-age group classroom (PK3 and PK4), the teacher should implement progress monitoring that is developmentally appropriate for each age group and may adjust or exclude PK3 students if the assessment is deemed developmentally inappropriate. The use of formative assessment tools is encouraged to inform instruction.	Eligible PK4 students must be assessed at BOY and EOY in the 5 developmental domains using a tool on the Commissioner's List. The BOY and EOY data must be submitted into the ECDS annually. The use of formative assessment tools is encouraged to inform instruction. *5 developmental domains: Emergent Literacy Reading, Emergent Literacy Writing, Language & Communication, Math, and Health & Wellness.	TEC 29.169 (c) TAC 102.1003 (c) Link to the HQ PK webpage (progress monitoring): https://tea.texas.gov/academics/early-childhood-education/hqpk-progress-monitoring Link to Data Driven Instruction in ECE webpage: https://tea.texas.gov/academics/early-childhood-education/data-driven-instruction-in-early-childhood-education Commissioner's List of Approved Prekindergarten Assessment Instruments: https://tea.texas.gov/sites/default/files/Appendix_H_Final_List_of_Pre-K_Recommendations.pdf

Topics	PK3	PK4	Additional Information
Teacher Qualifications	A PK teacher serving eligible 3-year-old students within a district must be appropriately certified. It is best practice for open-enrollment charters and districts of innovation to hire teachers that are appropriately certified in EC to teach PK3 students. Open-enrollment charters must follow the specifications within their charter contract regarding the certifications of their teachers, including those teaching PK3 students. Districts of innovation must follow their local innovation plans regarding the certification of their teachers, including those teaching PK3 students.	A PK teacher serving eligible 4-year-old students must be appropriately certified *and* have an "additional qualification." This is applicable to districts, open-enrollment charters, and districts of innovation.	TEC 29.167 (b) TAC 102.1003 (d) Link to the HQ PK webpage (teacher qualifications): https://tea.texas.gov/academics/early-childhood-education/hqpk-teacher-qualifications Link to Teacher Additional Qualification Options document: https://tea.texas.gov/sites/default/files/Teacher-Qualification-Options.pdf Link to Division of Educator Certification webpages: https://tea.texas.gov/texas-educators/certification
Teacher-to-Student Ratio	LEAs should attempt to maintain a student to teacher ratio of 11:1 in a PK3 classroom. Due to the developmental needs of 3-year-old students, the use of paraprofessionals to lower the student to teacher ratio is highly recommended.	LEAs must attempt to maintain a student to teacher ratio of 11:1 in a PK4 classroom. Due to the developmental needs of 4-year-old students, the use of paraprofessionals to lower the student to teacher ratio is highly recommended.	TEC 29.167 (d) TAC 102.1003 (h) Link to the HQ PK webpage (student-teacher ratio): https://tea.texas.gov/academics/early-childhood-education/hqpk-student-teacher-ratio

Topics	PK3	PK4	Additional Information
Family Engagement Plan	LEAs should write, implement, and put on their website a family engagement plan that contains the six required components.	LEAs must write, implement, and put on their website a family engagement plan that contains the six required components. The family engagement plan contains six required components: • Facilitating family-to-family support • Establishing a network of community resources • Increasing family participation in decision-making • Equipping families with tools to enhance and extend learning • Developing staff skills in evidence-based practices that support families in meeting their children's learning benchmarks • Evaluating family engagement efforts and using evaluations for continuous improvement	TEC 29.168 TAC 102.1003 (e) Link to the HQ PK webpage (family engagement): https://tea.texas.gov/academics/early-childhood-education/hqpk-family-engagement Link to the *Family Engagement Plan Sample Activities*: https://tea.texas.gov/sites/default/files/FE-Plan-Activities.pdf
Program Evaluation	LEAs should select and implement appropriate methods of evaluating their prekindergarten program using child outcome data and make the results of the program evaluation available to families. It is recommended that LEAs use the PK version of the Early Childhood Program Self-Assessment as their program evaluation tool.	LEAs must select and implement appropriate methods of evaluating their prekindergarten program using child outcome data and make the results of the program evaluation available to families. It is recommended that LEAs use the PK version of the Early Childhood Program Self-Assessment as their program evaluation tool.	TEC 29.169 TAC 102.1003 (g) Link to the HQ PK webpage (program evaluation): https://tea.texas.gov/academics/early-childhood-education/hqpk-program-evaluation Link to the Early Childhood Program Self-Assessment: https://tea.texas.gov/academics/early-childhood-education/early-childhood-program-self-assessments

Topics	PK3	PK4	Additional Information
Mixed-Age Group Classrooms	PK3 and PK4 students can be served in the same classroom. *Classrooms with eligible four-year-old students must meet all the High-Quality Prekindergarten Components.	PK3 and PK4 students can be served in the same classroom.	
Meals	Students must be offered meals/snacks in alignment with the National School Lunch Program.	Students must be offered meals/snacks in alignment with the National School Lunch Program.	https://squaremeals.org/Programs/NationalSchoolLunchProgram.aspx
Transportation	Offering transportation for PK3 students is a local decision. Transportation can be funded as part of the LEA's regular transportation system.	Offering transportation for PK4 students is a local decision. Transportation can be funded as part of the LEA's regular transportation system.	TEC 29.153 (c)

Additional resources are available on the Early Childhood Education webpages at https://tea.texas.gov/academics/early-childhood-education.