



Position Statement on High Quality Kindergarten

Michigan Association for the Education of Young Children (MiAEOYC) believes every child should have access to a high quality kindergarten classroom. Two developments in Michigan have affected the kindergarten classroom: (1) most school districts offer full-day kindergarten doubling the time spent in the classroom; and (2) student learning expectations are more rigorous.¹

To ensure students successfully learn and develop, we believe all children should receive what they need to arrive to kindergarten ready to learn, and all schools should be ready to meet the diverse abilities of their incoming students. Students require a kindergarten classroom staffed with educated and trained teachers who fully understand how young children develop and learn; and are able to implement appropriate strategies.

The documents listed in the footnote provide more complete criteria and recommendations for a high quality kindergarten classroom.

Research supports our belief that high quality kindergarten classrooms and teachers:

- Create a community of learners that respects individuals and diversity²
- Utilize the environment, daily schedule, research-proven teaching methods and guidance to enhance development and learning of the whole student³
- Plan and implement a balanced curriculum tied to the Michigan Academic Standards⁴
- Use appropriate assessment to plan for individual and group learning^{2,3}
- Establish strong, positive partnerships with families^{2,3}
- Participate in professional learning relevant to working with young children⁵
- Coordinate and collaborate with preschool and pre-kindergarten educators to ease the transition into Kindergarten⁶

¹ Bassok, D., Latham, S., & Rorem, A. (2016). *Is kindergarten the new first grade?* AERA Open. Retrieved from <http://ero.sagepub.com/content/2/1/2332858415616358>

² Copple, C.; Bredekamp, S.; Koralek, D.; & Charner, K. (eds). (2013). *Developmentally appropriate practice: Focus on kindergartners*. Washington, D.C., naeyc.

³ National Association for the Education of Young Children. (2009). *Developmentally appropriate practice in early childhood programs serving children from birth through age 8*. Retrieved from <http://www.naeyc.org/files/naeyc/file/positions/PSDAP.pdf>

⁴ Michigan Academic Standards. (2010). *Michigan Academic Standards page*. Retrieved from: http://www.michigan.gov/mde/0,4615,7-140-28753_64839_65510---,00.html

⁵ Michigan Department of Education. (November 2014). *Michigan core knowledge and core competencies for the early care and education workforce*. Retrieved from https://www.michigan.gov/documents/mde/MI_CKCC_10-13-14R_471355_7.pdf

⁶ U.S. Department of Education, Office of Elementary and Secondary Education (October, 2016). *Non-Regulatory Guidance Early Learning in the Every Student Succeeds Act: Expanding Opportunities to Support our Youngest*

Key Points:

- All students need opportunities to learn and schools need to be ready to support that learning.
- Curriculum, assessment, and instruction should appropriately meet each student's developmental levels.³
- All teachers need education and experience in early childhood education.
- Administrators should attend professional learning with teachers.

Frequently Asked Questions:***What does kindergarten teacher education look like?***

- We recommend entry level education options expand to include:
 - BA in Early Childhood Education
 - Elementary Certification with the Early Childhood Endorsement (ZS)
 - MA in Early Childhood Education

What are methods a Kindergarten can use to engage families?

- Provide teachers and families with time to set individualized educational goals, discuss school and at-home strategies to attain the goal, and meet throughout the year to measure progress on the goals. This could include one home visit prior to the school year starting, a 30-minute fall conference, and a 30-minute spring conference.
- Track, assess, and adjust family engagement offerings with a goal of engaging a higher percentage of families year over year.
- Design family engagement events based on the needs and interests of the families. For example, have a time for students and families to visit the classroom and teachers prior to the first day of school, keep the classroom home page updated, or cut out classroom materials at home.^{2 3}
- Support the continuum and alignment of Kindergarten and its preceding and subsequent grade levels through individualized, classroom, and program-wide transition practices that include partnerships with families.

What does a high quality Kindergarten Classroom look like?

- Implement a Kindergarten curriculum aligned from preschool through third grade⁶, and use instruction designed to meet the needs of each student in all areas of development (social, emotional, physical, and cognitive).
- Research on best practices in early childhood suggests the following: :
 - Limit Kindergarten group sizes: 1 adult to 18 children. Other states that have higher educational achievement than Michigan limit their Kindergarten class sizes⁷
 - Ensure students have access to learning opportunities, and do not remove learning experiences as a discipline approach⁸

Learners, Washington, D.C. <http://www2.ed.gov/policy/elsec/leg/essa/essaelguidance10202016.pdf>

⁷ Massachusetts Budget and Policy Center. (April 2015). *The right size for learning: Class sizes in Massachusetts*.

Retrieved from http://massbudget.org/report_window.php?loc=The%20Right%20Size%20for%20Learning.html

⁸ U.S. Department of Health and Human Services and U.S. Department of Education (2014). *Policy statement on*

- Designate no less than 60-consecutive minutes per day to student's self-initiated learning while teachers interact with students and continue to scaffold their learning.⁹
- Be informed of both benefit and risks of media, and work with families to coordinate media time to assure adequate physical activity and sleep for students.¹⁰
- Extending the classroom space by using the outdoors as a learning environment where students have at least 60-continuous minutes of self-initiated learning in addition to the 60-consecutive minutes experienced in the classroom.⁹

Michigan Stories

This story features a person in early childhood care and education, including Kindergarten, known to MiAEYC members. The name has been changed.

A teacher in a Kindergarten classroom: Rebecca is a teacher who taught in a Michigan Kindergarten classroom for a few years before leaving her role to work in the Great Start Readiness Program. She described her work as being difficult in the Kindergarten setting. She wasn't able to give students time to play and she felt guilty for making students sit still for much of the day. She could tell that the curriculum wasn't developmentally appropriate for their age and she decided that she couldn't do it any longer. She now works in a play based program where students are encouraged to learn in hands-on ways. She feels relieved and is happy to be giving the students experiences that promote healthy development in all areas.

Rebecca's experiences teaching in a Kindergarten classroom align with those of 229 other Kindergarten teachers in the state of Michigan.¹¹

expulsion and suspension policies in early childhood settings. Retrieved from http://www.acf.hhs.gov/sites/default/files/eecd/expulsion_suspension_final.pdf

⁹ Miller, E. & Almon, J. (2009). *Crisis in the Kindergarten: Why Children Need to Play in School.* Retrieved from http://www.allianceforchildhood.org/sites/allianceforchildhood.org/files/file/kindergarten_report.pdf

¹⁰ American Academy of Pediatrics. (November 2016). *Media use in school-age children and adolescents.* Retrieved from <http://pediatrics.aappublications.org/content/138/5/e20162592>

¹¹ Gallant, P. A. (2009). *Kindergarten teachers speak out! Too much, too fast, too soon!* Reading Horizons. Retrieved from http://scholarworks.wmich.edu/cqi/viewcontent.cqi?article=1057&context=reading_horizons