

# Planning the Use of Time in Kindergarten



**Issued Jointly by :**

Office of Early Childhood  
*and*  
Accreditation and School Improvement

Nebraska Department of Education  
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## Purpose of this Booklet

This booklet is intended to assist kindergarten teachers and elementary administrators as they plan and organize learning opportunities for young children. Schedules and learning experiences for grades one through six (or eight) are discussed in a separate brochure, *"Planning the Weekly Schedule in the Elementary Grades."*



Kindergarten is a very special educational experience for young children. Designing the kindergarten program requires careful thought and planning by kindergarten teachers and any others who may have involvement in the program. Whether kindergarten is the beginner grade of an elementary school, a part of a multiage grouping, or is a program separate from an elementary school, the program should be guided by fundamental beliefs and philosophies appropriate for the very young learner.

## Instructional Hour Requirements

The minimum time requirements for the school year are established in Nebraska state law. The minimum time required for kindergarten is 400 hours of instruction per year. This is a flexible standard which permits a school to organize the kindergarten program in virtually any pattern of days or hours.

Increasingly, kindergarten is being organized as a full-day program. When kindergarten is full-day a public district is able to access additional State Aid to assist in funding. For a program to be considered full day for State Aid purposes, it must be offered for the minimum time required of the elementary grades (1032 hours per year).

Local school boards are required through Rule 10 (accreditation) and Rule 14 (approval) to develop a policy which defines instructional time. The local policy should establish clear direction for teachers and administrators regarding what activities may be counted as part of the minimum required time. Rule 10 and Rule 14 direct that lunch time may not be counted in the minimum 400 hours (or the 1032 hours in the case of a full-day program).

# The Weekly Schedule

The weekly schedule addresses requirements and reflects best practice. . . .

Rule 10 and Rule 14 require that each elementary school have on file a representative weekly schedule for each classroom teacher encompassing experiences in reading and language arts, mathematics, social studies, science, health, physical education, art, and music. These regulations are intended to assure that children experience a well rounded curriculum on a weekly basis while giving the schools flexibility in organizing their program.

The way the kindergarten teacher structures and uses time in the classroom and works with the children within that time schedule is a direct reflection of the philosophy and orientation of the program. Schedules for the kindergarten should be sensitive to the developmental characteristics and individual learning capabilities of five-year-olds.



Children should have opportunities to experience a broad array of activities both within the group times and extended blocks of time during which children self select activities individually or with small groups of classmates. The State Board of Education, in its policy for essential educational opportunities, has recommended that all elementary schools provide all-day, every-day kindergarten. The day should be organized with sufficient predictability to support children's need for stability and with sufficient flexibility to allow the group to respond to unplanned learning opportunities.

No matter how the overall schedule is organized in a particular school (half-day, alternate full-day, or full-day ) the day is the basic unit of time. The most important variable in the planning of the kindergarten program is not the length of the day, but the quality, variety, and suitability of the learning experiences that children find there.

# The Kindergarten Instructional Program



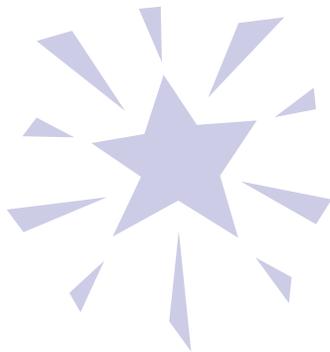
The kindergarten instructional program should help all children expand understandings in the broad curricular areas by providing rich experiences and activities appropriate for young learners. Therefore, the kindergarten schedule:

- ♥ Provides time for group and individual planning with and by the children.
- ♥ Has balance of active and quiet activities.
- ♥ Allows children to tend to personal needs.
- ♥ Organizes the teacher's time so that she/he can work with individual children and with small groups and be able to observe individual children to document their progress.
- ♥ Has some time for group activities such as stories, music, and games.
- ♥ Remembers the contribution outdoor activities make to children's motor development and to their understanding of natural phenomena.
- ♥ Allows time to visit other areas of the school, such as the library media center.
- ♥ Has time for nourishment and rest.
- ♥ Saves time for cleanup by the children.
- ♥ Provides time for reviewing and evaluating the day's activities.



## Use of the Time Chart

The following charts (located on pages 5 and 6) are intended to provide guidance in developing an appropriate schedule for the kindergarten day and week. The suggested time allotments shown in the chart have been designated to portray both half-day and full-day kindergarten programs. The critical dimension in these schedules is the proportion of time allotted for the different routines of the day, not the actual sequence of the activities.



# Daily Planning in the Kindergarten Classroom

Half-Day Program (AM and/or PM Session)	<b>ARRIVAL</b>	Opening (15 min.)	Work Time (60 min.)	Snack (10 min.)	Active Play Time (15 min.)	Centers (50 min.)	Closing (15 min.)	<b>DEPARTURE</b>
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## OPENING ACTIVITIES

**Opening activities** are time for children to:

- ◆ Participate in opening routines (roll, lunch count, calendar, morning message, etc.)
- ◆ Hear about new or special activities/materials to be used that day

## CENTERS

**Centers** provide time for children to:

- ◆ Participate in child-initiated activities that are supported by the teacher and other adults
- ◆ Carry out purposeful play in various centers such as language and literacy, socio-dramatic play, blocks, art, math, music, science, etc.
- ◆ Become deeply involved in activities of their choosing at a complex level
- ◆ Make a plan for what they will do and carry out that plan

## SNACK TIME

**Snack** is a time for children to:

- ◆ Experience new foods and learn about nutrition
- ◆ Socialize with friends
- ◆ Learn self-help skills
- ◆ Practice math skills by helping to prepare/distribute snacks

## QUIET TIME

**Rest Time** (may be reduced as year progresses) is time for children to:

- ◆ Relax and sleep as necessary
- ◆ Listen to quiet music
- ◆ Find out there are ways to rest and relax without sleeping
- ◆ Look at books
- ◆ Use quiet materials individually

## WORK TIME

**Work Time** is time for children to:

- ◆ Learn about group participation and apply social rules
- ◆ Participate in small group, large group, or individual work related to content area learning
- ◆ Participate in experiences that integrate content areas (social studies, science, math, literacy, art and music)
- ◆ Practice new skills through appropriate instructional strategies
- ◆ Learn about new skills and concepts in content areas
- ◆ Work with the teacher individually or in a small group practicing new skills, etc.

## ACTIVE PLAY

**Active Play** is time for children to:

- ◆ Move freely using their whole bodies in indoor and outdoor settings
- ◆ Play age-appropriate group games with adult support as needed
- ◆ Use playground equipment and other large motor equipment safely
- ◆ Play cooperatively with others

## SPECIALS

**Specials** are time for children to:

- ◆ Gain skills in areas such as physical health and development, music, art, computers, and character education
- ◆ Practice these skills in appropriate ways

## CLOSING ACTIVITIES

**Closing Activities** are time for children to:

- ◆ Verbalize in the group setting what they have done and/or learned that day
- ◆ Share things they have made throughout the day
- ◆ Plan for the next day

Full-Day Program (either alternate days or every day)	<b>ARRIVAL</b>	(AM)	Opening (20 min.)	Work Time (50 min.)	Snack (15 min.)	Active Play (15 min.)	Work Time (40 min.)	Lunch and Recess (60 min.)	<b>DEPARTURE</b>
		(PM)	Quiet Time (20 min.)	Work Time (40 min.)	Specials (30 min.)	Active Play (15 min.)	Centers (75 min.)	Closing (15 min.)	

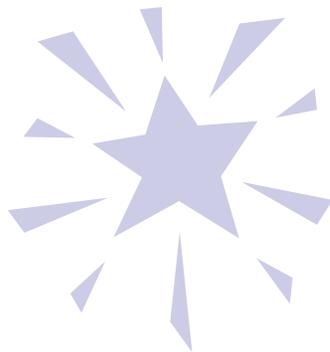
NOTE: All times shown are approximate; however, the relative proportion of time allotted to different types of activity should not vary. (e.g.—The proportion of time devoted to work time should exceed the group time. This applies to both half-day and full-day programs.)

## Good Points to Remember

The schedule should be organized to allow for the majority of the learning experiences to be integrated across subject areas. It is not desirable to plan a schedule characterized by short time slots and specific subject designations. This type of schedule generally characterizes a program where most of the activities are directed to the whole group by the teacher and where there is considerable dependence on commercial workbooks or worksheets, approaches not thought to represent best practice for the kindergarten.



Often, the most difficult aspect of planning an appropriate kindergarten instructional program is working around the fixed schedules of others in the school setting. This would include finding appropriate time for visiting the school library; for helping teachers such as special education and curriculum specialists; for all-school activities such as assemblies, disaster drills, lunch, and so on. Each situation is unique and no blanket response can be provided to address this issue. Some generalizations can be helpful:



- ♥ Remember that kindergarten children's need for stability and predictability suggests that most of the day's activity should be carried on in their own classroom. Moving from place to place wastes time and creates opportunities for inappropriate behavior. In addition, going to another room for some subjects diminishes opportunities for correlation and sometimes puts small children in physical spaces intended for older children (for example, using the tables and chairs in an art room designed for high school students). If subject matter specialists (art, music, or physical education) are assigned to the kindergarten, they should work closely with the kindergarten teacher to plan activities which relate to what is currently happening in the classroom. Most of the time that specialist should come to the kindergarten room to work with the children.
- ♥ Encourage special education teachers to come to the classroom to work with children so that the support they provide to special needs children will be connected to the ongoing life of the classroom.
- ♥ Do not allow the regularly scheduled time slots for special teachers and outside activities to fragment the overall schedule. Try to arrange the schedule so that interruptions occur at natural transition times (e.g. just before lunch).
- ♥ Examine the overall impact of participation in a particular activity on the ongoing activities in the classroom. Sometimes it might be better to decline participation, if that is an option.
- ♥ Conclude the day in the kindergarten classroom so that important recall and evaluation of the day's happenings occur there for all children.

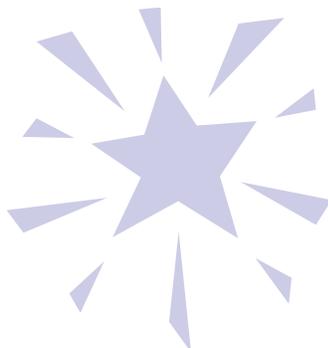


## REFERENCES

The Nebraska Department of Education publishes a number of resources to assist teachers in planning and carrying out programs which are both developmentally appropriate and intellectually rigorous:

- ♥ Rule 10 (Regulations and Procedures for the Accreditation of Schools) May 17, 2010.
- ♥ Rule 14 (Regulations and Procedures for the Legal Operation of Approved Nonpublic Schools) January 14, 1996.
- ♥ Nebraska and Iowa Departments of Education. (2001). The Primary Program: Growing and Learning in the Heartland. Lincoln, NE: Nebraska Department of Education. May be ordered by calling 402-471-3184.
- ♥ Curriculum Frameworks, and other resources for various subject areas may be ordered by calling 402-471-6692.
- ♥ Additional resources on kindergarten including many videos and books may be borrowed at no cost from the Early Childhood Training Center (1-800-89CHILD) or visit their website at:

<http://www.education.ne.gov/OEC/ectc.html>



## The following additional resources are suggested:

Fisher, B. (1998). *Joyful Learning in Kindergarten*. (2<sup>nd</sup> ed.). Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann.

Jones, E, Evans, K., & Rencken, K.S. (2001). *The Lively Kindergarten: Emergent Curriculum in Action*. Washington, DC : National Association for the Education of Young Children.

Katz, L. & Chard, S. (2000). *Engaging Children's Minds: The Project Approach*. (2nd ed.). Norwood, NJ: Ablex.

Neuman, S.B, Copple, C., & Bredekamp, S. (2000). *Learning to Read and Write: Developmentally Appropriate Practices for Young Children*. Washington, DC : National Association for the Education of Young Children.

Wasserman, S. (2000). *Serious Players in the Primary Grades*. (2<sup>nd</sup> ed.). New York, NY: Teachers College Press.

Nebraska educators may access and print a copy of this booklet via the website at:

<http://www.education.ne.gov/OEC/publications.html>  
and/or to request a copy of this booklet and its companion, "Planning the Weekly Schedule in the Elementary Grades" please contact the Office of Early Childhood at 402-471-3184, or Accreditation and School Improvement at 402-471-2444. You may also mail your request in to the Department of Education, Office of Early Childhood, PO Box 94987, Lincoln, NE 68509-4987.

August 2011