



Addressing Immediate Funding Gaps for Transition to Kindergarten

2025 Supplemental Operating Budget Decision Package

RECOMMENDATION SUMMARY

The state budget provides funding for Transition to Kindergarten (TK)—a program dedicated to assisting eligible children in need of additional preparation to be successful in kindergarten the following school year. The Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI) provides funding to school districts based on the distribution formula established under RCW 28A.150.260 using the actual number of children enrolled in the program, similar to how a kindergartener is funded. The funding provided in the state budget will not cover the costs of current enrollment in TK. OSPI is requesting additional funding for fiscal year 2025 to align with actual enrollment.

FISCAL DETAIL

Operating Expenditures	FY 2024	FY 2025	FY 2026	FY 2027
Fund 001-1 (Program 25)	\$0	\$20,961,000	\$0	\$0
Total Expenditures	\$0	\$20,961,000	\$0	\$0
Biennial Totals	\$20,961,000		\$0	
Staffing	FY 2024	FY 2025	FY 2026	FY 2027
FTEs	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
Average Annual	0.0		0.0	
Object of Expenditure	FY 2024	FY 2025	FY 2026	FY 2027
Obj. N	\$0	\$20,961,000	\$0	\$0
Revenue	FY 2024	FY 2025	FY 2026	FY 2027
Fund 001-1	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
Total Revenue	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
Biennial Totals	\$0		\$0	

PACKAGE DESCRIPTION

What is the problem, opportunity, or priority you are addressing with the request?

Transition to Kindergarten (TK) is a legislatively established and authorized program for children who are at least 4 years old by August 31 and have been identified through a screening process to be in need of additional preparation to be successful kindergarten students in the following school year. The state budget (Senate Bill 5950, Sec. 523) provides funding for the implementation of House Bill 1550 (2023), the Transition to Kindergarten program. OSPI provides funding to school districts based on the distribution formula established under RCW 28A.150.260 using the actual number of annual average full-time equivalent eligible children enrolled in the program, similar to how a kindergartener is funded.

Based on projected enrollment for the 2024–25 school year, the funding provided in the state budget will not fully cover the costs of TK. OSPI requests that the Legislature provide additional funding for state fiscal year 2025 to align with actual student enrollment.

What is your proposal?

This request is for the state to provide the additional funds needed to fund the actual enrollment of students in the state's Transition to Kindergarten program.

How is your proposal impacting equity in the state?

1. At the forefront of every program, policy, and decision, OSPI actively focuses on ensuring all students have access to the instruction and support they need to succeed in our schools. This proposal is focused on the needs of our most vulnerable students, particularly Washington's 4-year-olds who have not had access to early learning or who need additional support and preparation in order to be ready for kindergarten. Kindergarten readiness is a strong predictor of whether students will meet the college readiness proficiency standard on the third-grade state assessments in math and English language arts. Providing additional supports for students who have demonstrated the need for additional time and preparation actively improves equity, as these students are better equipped with the tools and confidence that allows them to show up to school ready to learn with their peers.
2. Because this proposal is a maintenance level request that does not change any policy, OSPI did not engage with communities.
3. See above response.
4. Transition to Kindergarten helps level the playing field for all students as many families do not have access to affordable, high-quality early learning opportunities. Transition to Kindergarten is an effective strategy for closing opportunity gaps.

What are you purchasing and how does it solve the problem?

This funding will pay for students who are currently enrolled in the Transition to Kindergarten program, as outlined in RCW 28A.300.072 (6)(a).

What alternatives did you explore and why was this option chosen?

OSPI does not see a viable alternative. If funds are not provided to support the students currently enrolled in the program, school districts may have to make mid-year cuts to the program which will negatively impact students, families, and educators across the state.

What resources does the agency already have that are dedicated to this purpose?

There are no resources outside of Section 523 in the state Operating Budget.

ASSUMPTIONS AND CALCULATIONS

Expansion, reduction, elimination or alteration of a current program or service:

None. This is a funding adjustment needed to fund the current services being provided to students and their families.

Detailed assumptions and calculations:

The baseline for these calculations was the current projected enrollment and funding drivers for the TK program in the approved state budget for fiscal year 2025. The current approved budget allows for maximum expenditures for the TK program of \$69,659,000 for fiscal year 2025. This is based on an assumed student enrollment of 5,665. There is another \$300,000 appropriated in the budget that is used to administer the program.

The projected TK enrollment included in this request for the 2024–25 school year represents the values provided to the OSPI from school districts. Actual TK enrollment is projected at 8,034; or 2,369 students more than the assumption in the state budget.

With the current levels of funding, current projections show that OSPI could make full payments in monthly apportionment for TK programs up until a partial payment in March apportionment.

To fund TK programs for the remainder of fiscal year 2025, OSPI would need an additional \$20,961,000 in the 2025 Supplemental Operating Budget.

This would bring the total appropriation for TK in fiscal year 2025 to \$90,620,000 including the \$69,659,000 already provided in the biennial budget.

Workforce assumptions:

None.

Historical funding:

Fiscal Year 2026

- Total Funds = \$73.4 million
- Near General Fund = \$73.4 million
- Other Funds = \$0.0

Fiscal Year 2027

- Total Funds = \$74.6 million
- Near General Fund = \$74.6 million
- Other Funds = \$0.0

STRATEGIC AND PERFORMANCE OUTCOMES

Strategic framework:

This funding ensures that districts are provided resources to implement the program of Transition to Kindergarten as outlined in House Bill 1550 (2023).

Performance outcomes:

Funding provided for the Transition to Kindergarten program must be expended only for the support of operating a TK program, ensuring that these funds are used solely for the education and supports of children who are in need of additional preparation to be successful in kindergarten the following year. Kindergarten readiness is a strong predictor of whether students will meet the college readiness proficiency standard on the third-grade state assessments in math and English language arts (ELA). A recent OSPI study¹ found that students who were kindergarten-ready in Literacy and in Math were more than 1.5 times as likely than their peers to meet the college readiness proficiency standards on the third grade ELA and math assessments.

OTHER COLLATERAL CONNECTIONS

Intergovernmental:

None.

Stakeholder impacts:

None.

Legal or administrative mandates:

None.

¹ https://ospi.k12.wa.us/sites/default/files/2023-08/kindergarten-readiness-and-3rd-grade-outcomes_0.pdf

Changes from current law:
N/A

State workforce impacts:
N/A

State facilities impacts:
N/A

Puget Sound recovery:
N/A

Governor's salmon strategy:
N/A