



NEW AMERICA
FOUNDATION

Kindergarten Program Participation Type

Definition:

The type of Kindergarten program the student is enrolled in.

Option Set:

Full-Day kindergarten – A Kindergarten program that is the same length of the instructional day as first grade. FullDayKindergarten

Part-Day kindergarten – A Kindergarten program that is a portion of the length of the full-day Kindergarten instructional day. PartDayKindergarten

Extended day kindergarten – A Kindergarten program that is an extension of a part-day kindergarten that results in the instructional day being the same length as first grade. ExtendedDayKindergarten

New America Foundation Comments

The New America Foundation appreciates the U.S. Department of Education’s efforts to help education stakeholders standardize data collection practices through the Common Education Data Standards. Users of the data, including policymakers, researchers, and practitioners, rely on comparable, reliable information, and the CEDS are a critical step in that direction. However, we also recognize that the definitions set forth now will drive future reporting efforts; therefore, it is imperative that the Department create clear and usable definitions now in order to be able to collect better data into the future. Therefore, New America proposes a change to the definition of the “Kindergarten Program Participation Type” data element.

Currently, “Kindergarten Program Participation Type” is defined as full-day, part-day, or extended-day attendance. However, limiting the options so severely precludes the possibility of collecting rich data about children’s educational experiences in kindergarten. Since each state determines the length of a school day for a first-grader, the amount of time a child will be in school in a full-day kindergarten classroom varies from state to state. One child may be in school for six hours per day, and another for eight, but the data would suggest that those children received an equivalent amount of instruction. Differences in the length of the school year account for another disparity that is obscured by a data definition like the one proposed here.

Moreover, the data element as it is currently written includes no indication of whether the kindergarten program is free to parents or tuition-driven. Though kindergarten is often billed as a part of the larger first-through-twelfth-grade educational system, parents are frequently required to pay for at least a portion of their children’s kindergarten education. There is virtually no source of information to determine how many children are served by tuition-driven versus tuition-free kindergarten programs, especially at the program or school district levels.

The New America Foundation recommends the definition be rewritten to provide more granular information about the kindergarten program in question. Specifically, we suggest that kindergarten programs be reported as the number of minutes of classroom time per week, and per year. This is similar to existing data definitions, like the one used for learning time at School Improvement Grant-recipient schools in explore.data.gov files, and would be a far more useful measure of kindergarten learning time for end users. Rather than list an option set, the question should be open to programs’ numeric submissions.

Additionally, a new data element should include a count of the number of students receiving free public kindergarten versus the number receiving wholly tuition-funded and the number receiving partially tuition-funded kindergarten. It is critical that policymakers at the federal, state, and local levels know how their dollars are being spent, and that information is unavailable via existing data resources and under the proposed CEDS data regime.

These comments were written by the New America Foundation’s Early Education Initiative. New America submitted a related comment for the data element “Prekindergarten Daily Length.”

Prekindergarten Daily Length

Definition:

The portion of a day that a pre-kindergarten program is provided to the students it serves.

Option Set:

Full-day	FullDay
Part-day	Part-day
Not provided	NotProvided

New America Foundation Comments

The New America Foundation appreciates the U.S. Department of Education's efforts to help education stakeholders standardize data collection practices through the Common Education Data Standards. Users of the data, including policymakers, researchers, and practitioners, rely on comparable, reliable information, and the CEDS are a critical step in that direction. However, we also recognize that the definitions set forth now will drive future reporting efforts, so getting the definitions right now could allow for more valuable data later. Therefore, New America proposes a change to the definition of the "Prekindergarten Daily Length" element.

Currently, "Prekindergarten Daily Length" is defined as full-day or part-day programs, or as information that is not provided. However, limiting the options so severely excludes the possibility of collecting rich data about children's educational experiences in pre-kindergarten. Pre-K programs across localities, school districts, and states could vary significantly. Some children might receive only four hours of pre-K, while others receive a full six-hour day, and yet both could be considered "full-day." Assuming each school had their children enrolled for 180 days, that difference in hours becomes the equivalent of 60 days over the course of the year. In other words, one reportedly full-day program has one-third less instruction than the other full-day program. Differences in the length of the school year account for another disparity that is obscured by a data definition like the one proposed here.

The New America Foundation recommends the definition be rewritten to provide more granular information about the pre-kindergarten program in question. Specifically, we suggest that pre-K programs be reported as the number of minutes of classroom time per week, and per year. This is similar to existing data definitions, like the one used for learning time at School Improvement Grant-recipient schools in explore.data.gov files, and would be a far more useful measure of pre-kindergarten learning time. Rather than list an option set, the question should be open to programs' numeric submissions.

These comments were written by the New America Foundation's Early Education Initiative. New America submitted a related comment for the data element "Kindergarten Program Participation Type."