



**ARIZONA STATE SENATE**  
*Forty-ninth Legislature, First Regular Session*

**PROGRAM PRESENTATION**  
Early Kindergarten Programs

Background

State law requires children to be five years of age before entering kindergarten by September 1 of the current school year (A.R.S. § 15-821). The statute permits a governing school board to admit children who have not reached the required age if it is determined that a student's admittance is in the best interest of the child and the child will reach the age of five by January 1 of the current school year. Some governing school boards allow principals at the school site, in consultation with parents, teachers and school psychologists, to determine whether a child is prepared to enter kindergarten or first grade before reaching the eligible age as required by statute.

The Attorney General issued an opinion in September 2000 regarding state funding for early kindergarten programs. The opinion stated that the program must be designed, based on state standards and district curriculum, for children to advance from kindergarten to the first grade in order for those students to be considered kindergarten students for the purposes of state funding.

Fiscal Information

In FY 2007-2008, 117 school districts and 162 charter schools reported a total of 5,802 early kindergarten students of which 2,246 are reported as being retained in kindergarten in FY 2008-2009.

Those students repeating kindergarten are funded twice through the school finance formula at a cost of approximately \$10 million for the current fiscal year.

Although kindergarten students count as only one-half average daily membership in the school finance formula, they generate additional funding through the weighting system with the K-3 weight and the kindergarten weight.

Attachments

School District and Charter School early kindergarten enrollment data.

Prepared by Senate Research  
February 3, 2009  
SM/jas