

FKC Accreditation Standards 2012

The Florida Kindergarten Council (FKC) seeks to establish and maintain exemplary educational and ethical standards through its services and accreditation processes. FKC does not certify safety or guarantee financial stability, as adherence to the standards outlined below remains the responsibility of member schools.

1.1 Membership

_____ 1.1.1 The school must adhere to the principles set forth in the bylaws and code of ethics.

_____ 1.1.2 The school should provide instructional personnel to serve on evaluation committees at the request of the FCIS/FKC Associate Director for Accreditation.

_____ 1.1.3 The minimum number of children enrolled in the school must be at least twenty-five students to attain membership.

2.1 Evaluation

_____ 2.1.1 The self-study must have involvement from faculty members and other constituents of the school, as appropriate.

_____ 2.1.2 The school should start as soon as possible to conduct its self-study. The self-study must be completed at least two weeks before the evaluation, and copies sent to all members of the evaluation committee and the FCIS/FKC Executive Director at that time.

_____ 2.1.3 Each individual committee member is to be provided a packet containing a map of the school, teachers' names and class assignments, schedule of the classes and room numbers, student handbook, enrollment according to grade, and any other information that will assist the committee.

_____ 2.1.4 During the on-campus visit, a room closed to all others should be set aside for the committee to meet and confer. The room should also be equipped with the items and documents noted on the "*Documents for Review*" on page 39. Lunch should be available at the school so that the committee will not lose time during the evaluation.

_____ 2.1.5 A school should maintain a regular schedule on the day or days of the evaluation, avoiding tests and audio/visual materials which are more than incidental to the day's lesson. The committee needs to observe the teaching process.

3.1 Governance and Leadership

_____ 3.1.1 The school shall be organized as a corporation (either for profit or not for profit), as a proprietorship, an ecclesiastical (church-related) affiliation or a partnership.

_____ 3.1.2 All materials shall contain accurate information concerning philosophies, objectives, accreditation status, facilities, program and statement of non-discrimination.

_____3.1.3 The school shall provide for strategic long-range planning and the implementation of the plan as feasible and appropriate. The plan should include continuous progress in the following areas:

- Curriculum/Program
- Technology
- Finances
- Facility
- Faculty and staff
- Marketing and development

The plan should include timeline, persons responsible and budget impact.

_____3.1.4 A qualified individual is designated to lead and be responsible for the early childhood program at all times.

_____3.1.5 The director, supervisor or principal of the early childhood programs must have at least a bachelor's degree and several years of teaching and/or related administrative experience. The director is charged with assuming responsibility of the day-to-day operations of the program, maintaining program policies, and monitoring the program's compliance with applicable requirements of civil authorities. The director's leadership addresses the program's goal of fostering the intellectual, physical, social, emotional and character development of children. A clearly understood table of organization for the school exists, with written job descriptions which specify levels of responsibilities and reporting relationships.

_____3.1.6 The director/administrator is responsible for hiring staff that support the philosophy and mission of the program.

_____3.1.7 The governing body shall generate necessary resources for providing and maintaining the physical facilities and all approved programs of the school.

_____3.1.8 Schools with a governing body shall develop and maintain procedures for the board which are reviewed and signed by all governing body members annually. These procedures should include a conflict of interest policy.

_____3.1.9 The governing body shall support the head in establishing and maintaining appropriate personnel policies, salaries, and benefits for faculty and staff.

_____3.1.10 The administration and supervision of the school are the chief responsibilities of a school head chosen by the governing body to develop, organize and lead the administration, faculty and staff, carryout policies; and oversee the day-to-day operation of the school.

_____3.1.11 Parent organizations: Member schools should organize and maintain effective parent organizations to ensure good school-home communication and relationships.

3.2 Philosophy and Objectives

_____3.2.1 The school shall have a written philosophy by which the school's entire program is developed and maintained.

_____3.2.2 Admission procedures shall reflect and be consistent with the school's educational philosophy and mission.

_____3.2.3 The school shall have a curriculum consistent with its philosophy and objectives, designed to effectively fulfill the needs of the students enrolled.

3.3 Academic Program

_____3.3.1 The council requires evidence of the school's continuing study of the curriculum and evaluation of program effectiveness through a comprehensive curriculum guide. The guide should include the following components:

- A clear philosophy that guides the decisions that affects all curriculum
- A consistent format across grade levels
- Goals and objectives
- Instructional resources
- Assessment
- Any additional information specific to grade level or discipline
- Scope and sequence may be a separate document or included within your curriculum guide to assure articulated progress from grade to grade

_____3.3.2 An integral part of each school's philosophy and program emphasizes the moral and ethical development of the child as well as service to both the school and the community at large.

_____3.3.3 Parent-teacher conferences shall be scheduled and documented, at least once per year, to discuss student progress. Progress reports shall be given at regular intervals.

_____3.3.4 The academic program has a clearly defined expectation for student learning. The school must provide developmentally appropriate opportunities and experiences for all students to meet the intellectual, emotional, physical and social needs of its students.

_____3.3.5 Early childhood programs must provide experiences for growth in social development, language arts, math, science, social studies, tactile development, music, arts and physical development. (For more details, see section on curriculum guidelines, p. 23.)

_____3.3.6 Instructional materials such as textbooks and equipment to support effective teaching must be appropriate to the goals of the curriculum, sufficient in quality, quantity and variety.

_____3.3.7 A child entering the five-year-old level shall be five years old by the dates established by Florida state law. Any deviation from this regulation shall take into account the emotional and physical development of the child. If a child is enrolled who does not comply with the entry dates established by state law, a clear notice will be given to the parents that the child may not be eligible to enter the first grade in a public or private school.

_____3.3.8 **For non-FCIS Schools that include elementary grades (1, 2, or 3):** The instructional program should be structured to provide students the opportunity to acquire knowledge, skills, and understanding in the following areas:

- language Arts, including reading, writing and speaking
- mathematics
- natural Sciences

- social Sciences (including an awareness of other cultures)
- world languages
- health and physical education
- Art, music and drama
- Integrated computer technology

_____ 3.3.9 **Special Purpose Schools:** Special purpose schools are established and maintained for varying types of exceptional education. The school must be principally an academic institution providing basic instruction in the conventional area of education. Variations from the Council Standards must be justifiable. The school’s philosophy must be specific enough in its statements so the program can be judged against it for quality and application of educational techniques suitable to effectively serve its student population.

_____ 3.3.10 Extended day programs operated by the school shall be consistent with the philosophy and mission of the school. It is required that the extended care child: adult ratio is consistent with the FKC classroom ratio (Standard 3.4). Schools must limit their extended day program to students enrolled in their school.

3.4 Enrollment

_____ The following **child:adult*** ratio per class will be maintained:

18 months – 23 months	12:2 ~ Aide required
2 years	14:2 ~ Aide required
3 years	15:1 ~ Aide available
4 years	20:1 ~ Aide available
5 years	20:1 ~ Aide available

(Effective August 2011)

***One adult must be the qualified teacher.**

3.5 Professional Staff

_____ 3.5.1 Regularly scheduled faculty meetings shall be held.

_____ 3.5.2 A plan for an annual scheduled faculty evaluation shall be in place. New employees should be evaluated within the first six months.

_____ 3.5.3 Instructional staff is trained in the use and presentation of the curriculum. Opportunities for instructional staff to share their input regarding the curriculum are provided annually.

_____ 3.5.4 Instructional staff members shall spend the major part of the day teaching in the field(s) in which they are academically prepared. If the academic preparation is out of field, a minimum of 12 semester hours and/or in-service equivalents must be obtained in the field in which the individual is teaching.

_____ 3.5.5 All full and part-time employees must submit to a background check and fingerprinting in compliance with the screening required by the state (Level II screening). Any

educator working with children age 5 and younger must resubmit fingerprints every five years. (DCF). (FL State Certified teachers after 1984 comply with this standard.)

_____3.5.6 Administrative policies are issued to faculty and staff in written form. Employee handbooks require a signed acknowledgement of receipt. Each school must maintain an effective orientation program for new staff.

_____3.5.7 Kindergarten through grade three teachers: All teachers in grades kindergarten through grade 3 must have a bachelor's degree or a foreign equivalent (not including art and music). *Teachers of physical education who do not meet this standard, as of July 2002, must be enrolled in a program and take a minimum of 6 hours per year until the standard is met. Teachers of a centralized library shall be supervised by a trained library media specialist.*

_____3.5.8 Grade Prekindergarten Four: The teacher of the four-year-old program (teachers hired after January 1, 2007) shall have a bachelor's degree from an accredited institution. If the academic preparation is out of the field of early childhood education, a minimum of 12 relevant semester hours or their in-service equivalents shall be obtained. Those teachers of the four-year-old program (hired before January 1, 2007) that are grandfathered in must have a bachelor's degree by the year 2012. (Conclusion of 2012-13 year)

_____3.5.9 18 months through Prekindergarten Three: Instructional personnel of the 18 month, two and three year-old children will comply with ONE (1) of the following:

- A bachelor's degree; if the degree is out of field, 12 semester hours and/or its equivalent* in early childhood education must be obtained.
- An associate of arts degree in early childhood/child development or at least a CDA credential. (By July 1, 2014 a CDA credential will no longer meet the standard; a **minimum** of an associate of arts degree will be required.) **

*Equivalent is the following ratio: 20 inservice or workshop hours = one semester hour

****NOTE: CDA certified faculty members hired prior to the 2011-12 year will be grandfathered in; all faculty members hired after 2011-12 must meet this standard.)**

_____3.5.10 Each school shall provide the services of qualified **technology personnel**. Personnel with overall responsibility for technology shall have a bachelor's degree, plus 12 hours of instruction in technology, or technical certifications and experience that are suitable to manage and oversee the school's technology operations. Technology personnel who work directly with students in the use and integration of technology must have a bachelor's degree that includes 12 hours of instruction in educational technology or in general education courses. Schools that outsource and/or supplement technology functions may hire technology consultants that possess technical certifications in the areas they are expected to support. All technology personnel must keep abreast of current technological trends.

3.6 Records

_____ 3.6.1 Schools must maintain student records in a fire proof file or vault. All electronically maintained records will be backed up and stored in a separate location.

_____ 3.6.2 The student cumulative folders shall contain permanent and current records showing the following documentation:

- birth certificate, passport or certified documentation of date of birth
- name and address.
- parent/legal guardian's name
- attendance
- diagnosed health issues
- physical examinations
- evidence of state required immunizations
- cumulative academic progress
- progress reports to parents/legal guardians
- results of standardized tests.

_____ 3.6.3 Grade and progress reports must be distributed to parents/legal guardians at regular intervals. The distribution may include online assessments and performance indicators.

_____ 3.6.4 If the school administers standardized tests to individuals, groups, and classes with results, norms, and medians, or other meaningful interpretations being filed, the school should demonstrate its regular review and use of testing data. These records must be retained on a permanent basis.

_____ 3.6.5 Legal requirements for student and personnel records:

- a) Schools with grades K-3, which are closing, must comply with the Florida law, which requires its permanent student records to be turned over to the county school district or to the FKC State Office.
- b) Secured personnel files should be maintained for all employees, instructional and non-instructional, in compliance with federal and state labor laws. Personnel files should include the following:
 - state mandated screenings
 - professional development documentation
 - evaluations
 - copy of college transcripts

3.7 School Sessions

_____ 3.7.1 The school day and school year shall be carefully planned to include the academic class schedule, laboratory periods, if necessary, study periods, assemblies, periods of recreation and physical education, and periods for nonacademic extracurricular activities.

_____ 3.7.2 The school year shall conform to the Florida Compulsory School Attendance Law, as directed by the State Board of Education for private school:

- a minimum of 170 days; and

- a minimum of 540 instructional hours for kindergarten
- a minimum of 720 instructional hours for grades 1-3

3.8 Business and Finance

_____ 3.8.1 The financial resources and management of the school shall be such as to sustain an approved educational program consistent with the school's philosophy and objectives. Evidence of financial stability in the form of an annual financial review or audit must be prepared by a certified public accountant. A financial compilation will not fulfill this requirement. The school's most recent financial report, along with the financial review or audit, shall be provided to the evaluation committee chairman.

_____ 3.8.2 The school's financial review/audit, the school's most recent financial report, and budget shall be provided to the chair of the evaluation committee at least two weeks prior to the visit.

_____ 3.8.3 All personnel shall be covered by liability insurance. Liability insurance shall be adequate for the size of the school and provide minimum limits of \$500,000 per occurrence. The school must have coverage of \$1,000,000 per occurrence and \$3,000,000 aggregate.

_____ 3.8.4 The governing body approves compensation and benefits policies. Policies reflect an effort to compensate and retain quality staff by including benefits such as health coverage, sick leave, vacation leave, Social Security and the opportunity to participate in a retirement plan.

_____ 3.8.5 The school's compensation policy shall be available to and understood by the employee.

_____ 3.8.6 Schools shall publish a list of tuition and fees as well as its refund policy.

_____ 3.8.7 The school must demonstrate its financial health by maintaining an **asset-to-liabilities ratio of 1.5:1 or better**. Any exception to this ratio must be justified to the Chair of the committee and accepted by the FKC Board of Directors.

_____ 3.8.8 Additional financial situations that must be justified to FKC:

- a) Annual debt service in excess of 10% of the school's annual operating budget
- b) Current liabilities in excess of current assets
- c) Lack of a definite plan for repayment of debt
- d) A substantial portion of debt at excessive interest rates
- e) A substantial portion of debt with provision for a "balloon" repayment or which is callable on demand of the lender
- f) Any debt that is owed to a staff member, officer or trustee of the school
- g) Repeated operation at a deficit in the current operating statement
- h) Any significant downward trend in enrollment

_____ 3.8.9 The current budget shall include individual line items for the following:

- a) library/media
- b) technology
- c) professional development

_____ 3.8.10 All funds should be under the control of the head of school or the board.

3.9 Development

_____3.9.1 If the school is nonprofit, the school must follow fundraising procedures appropriate to its needs, which include capital gift campaigns, annual fund drives, alumni development initiatives, and deferred gift efforts.

3.10 Health, Safety and Facility (including playgrounds)

_____3.10.0 Children shall be supervised by a designated adult at all times.

_____3.10.1 Schools must provide evidence of compliance with all applicable state and county health, safety, fire, and sanitation codes, including immunization schedules and any other county regulations.

_____3.10.2 The plant, equipment, and facilities shall be suited to the purpose and adequate for the operation of the total program of the school. They shall be maintained and operated in a manner assuring the health and safety of the students, faculty, and staff in compliance with all applicable laws.

_____3.10.3 Key administrators and at least one faculty member in every building/wing of the on-campus staff must be properly trained and prepared to administer **first aid** and **CPR** treatment. Staff is alerted to special health conditions of children. Adequate first aid supplies are maintained that are available to faculty and staff but not to children.

_____3.10.4 Space shall be provided for the isolation of ill students.

_____3.10.5 Fire extinguishers shall be sufficient in number and type, properly placed around the school, and maintained and inspected regularly. A log of regular fire/disaster drills shall be maintained and fire/disaster drill procedures shall be posted in each classroom. Attendance shall be taken to account for all students.

_____3.10.6 Each school shall have a written emergency/crisis plan that is reviewed and updated annually. Emergency phone numbers or 911 is posted by telephones that have 911 access.

_____3.10.7 A blood-borne exposure control plan is in place, and annual training is provided to all employees regarding blood-borne pathogens and the use of universal precautions.

_____3.10.8 All schools that have programs for students under 3 years of age **must** be licensed by the state of Florida and must hold proper documentation. (Exception: schools that qualify for religious exemption)

_____3.10.9 Potential safety hazards shall be corrected, or student access shall be controlled. Preschool and elementary schools must be fenced from hazards.

_____3.10.10 A school policy shall be in place which registers and approves all visitors on campus.

_____3.10.11 An arrival and dismissal procedure that ensures a safe arrival and departure for students shall be in place.

_____3.10.12 Appropriate school personnel should document all accident reports and give to parents.

_____3.10.13 Outdoor equipment shall be scaled appropriately and be sufficient to provide physical activities, social development and imaginative expression. Outdoor play area shall be 45 square feet per child on the playground at any given time and have a balance of sun and shade.

_____3.10.14 Play area shall be equipped, fenced and supervised. Appropriate cushioning materials of recommended depths are used under equipment such as swings and climbing apparatus following national playground safety standards.

_____3.10.15 Drinking water shall be readily accessible to children. Drinking fountains shall be clean and well maintained.

(Additional best practices are found on page 21-22)

4.1 Transportation

_____4.1.1 Drivers shall be properly licensed and in compliance with Level II screening.

_____4.1.2 Vehicles shall be regularly inspected by qualified personnel.

_____4.1.3 Vehicles shall not be overcrowded and there shall be a seat for each child when in use. Children in vehicles shall be under adult supervision at all times. Current state and local regulations shall be followed with regard to child safety restraints. First aid kits should be available in all school owned and contracted vehicles.

_____4.1.4 Adequate insurance must be maintained on all vehicles. The minimum amount of vehicular coverage shall be at least \$300,000 per individual and \$500,000 per occurrence. The recommended amount is \$1,000,000 per occurrence/\$3,000,000 aggregate.

5.1 Library/Media Center

_____5.1.1 The library/media center has adequate facilities (central or decentralized) and technological resources to support the school's philosophy, mission and its programs.

_____5.1.2 The library/media center has a definite and appropriate budget to meet the needs of the educational program.

_____5.1.3 The library/media center has adequate print and electronic resources to support the educational program.

_____5.1.4 Either a centralized or decentralized library shall be utilized by students. The library shall contain a minimum of ten (10) quality hardbound books per student. Selection of the books shall be determined in accordance with the developmental needs of the young child.

_____5.1.5 Books, materials and audio visual equipment shall be systematically organized and formally listed, whether the library is centralized or decentralized.

_____5.1.6 A variety of well-maintained media equipment shall be available for classroom use.

6.1 Technology

_____6.1.1 The school has adequate technology staff and the infrastructure to support its mission and philosophy. Each school shall provide the services of qualified technology personnel (standard 3.5.10).

_____ 6.1.2 The school is responsible for the following policies and documentation regarding technology and its use:

- a) Written technology plan to support the school's mission and philosophy
- b) An acceptable use policy for technology that is disseminated and understood throughout the school community
- c) Set of minimum competencies for use and integration of technology for faculty
- d) System for professional growth opportunities for teachers to remain current in technology skills and applications

7.1 Student Discipline and Morale

_____7.1.1 The school shall have a well-defined discipline policy which reflects the philosophy of the school, written and distributed to students, parents, and faculty. There shall be evidence that this policy is understood and is effectively in operation. Corporal punishment is not permitted.

_____7.1.2 There shall be evidence of self-discipline, care and concern for fellow students, and a level of positive morale necessary for an effective and productive school community.

8.1 Communication

_____8.1.1 A process is in place to ensure good communication among staff.

_____8.1.2 The parent/guardian handbook satisfactorily explains:

- the program's philosophy
- policies
- day-to-day functions
- conference schedules
- visitation policy and communication protocols

_____ 8.1.3 Parents/guardians are expected to sign an acknowledgement of receipt and agreement of support of the parent/guardian handbook.

Additional best practices include:

- _Attendance shall be taken and recorded before children board a vehicle for transportation on a field trip, and again, upon return to the school. Written field trip policies and procedures are in place that ensures the safety and supervision of students.
- _All cleaning supplies, chemicals, gardening and maintenance tools shall be stored out of children's reach.

- _ A written policy is in place indicating when children who are removed from school for health reasons may return to school.
- _ Hand washing procedures are in place and posted.
- _ A written policy that complies with the requirements of state and county health departments for storing medications has been developed and made available to the parents/guardians of the children in the program.
- _ A medical log is maintained that includes a record of all medications given to children, the time the medication was given, and the person who administered the medication.
- _ Hot water heaters are set for 110 F or less if the heated water is accessible to children.
- _ All electrical outlets in the wall are covered to prevent children from being shocked by electricity.
- _ All buildings shall have ample space for the program. The buildings shall be of sound construction, provide sufficient light and ventilation, and be properly cleaned. Heating and air conditioning units shall be adequate.
- _ Closets, storage places and shelves shall be provided for needed equipment and classroom materials.
- _ Students shall be provided with individual storage areas or cubbies.
- _ Bathrooms shall have outside ventilation and there shall be at least one toilet and one wash basin for every twenty (20) children, with a minimum of two (2) for each school.
- _ Floor coverings shall be kept clean and safe.
- _ All furniture and equipment shall be scaled appropriately for the age of the children and there should be sufficient tables and chairs of suitable size to meet the needs of the group. All toys, equipment and furnishings shall be safe and maintained in a sanitary condition.
- _ Lunchroom and kitchen areas shall be inspected and adequately equipped to meet the needs of the school, which must comply with all state and local regulations.
- _ There shall be an appropriate variety of equipment available to meet the needs of the school curriculum in the following areas: art, science, music, language arts, math, social studies, technology, and physical education, indoor and outdoor play.