**Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education
Office of Learning Supports and Early Learning**

**FISCAL YEAR 2017 TUITION AND LOTTERY POLICIES (FOR SCHOOL YEAR 2016-2017)
FOR QUALITY FULL-DAY KINDERGARTEN GRANTEES (FUND CODE 701)**

*NOTE: Lottery Policies begin in the middle of page 4. Tuition Policies begin below.*

1. **TUITION POLICIES FOR FULL-DAY KINDERGARTEN GRANT DISTRICTS**

All school districts are required to provide a free, part-time kindergarten education for eligible children. Although the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (Department) strongly encourages all districts to offer full-day kindergarten (FDK) free of charge, districts may charge tuition for hours beyond the 425 instructional hours required for part-time kindergarten.

Districts receiving state funds under the Quality FDK grant program that charge tuition for the second half of the day must abide by the following requirements and submit a signed Statement of Assurance and Sliding Fee Scale Worksheet to the Department’s Office of Learning Supports and Early Learning (OLSEL). These tuition related documents can be found on the [Kindergarten Grant website](http://www.doe.mass.edu/kindergarten/grants.html). All School Committees and the staff involved in kindergarten registration and determining income eligibility should also be informed of these policies.

1. **Chapter 70 and Student Information Management System (SIMS) data reporting**:
Districts can get reimbursed through [Chapter 70](http://www.doe.mass.edu/finance/chapter70/) for students attending FDK for free. Students whose families are charged tuition for the second half of the FDK program *cannot* be counted as full-time students (1 FTE) for Chapter 70 reimbursement. Please make sure to identify these children correctly on the SIMS data submission in October 2016. Use “KF” for children attending **K**indergarten for **F**ree, and use “KT” for **K**indergarten students whose families pay **T**uition.
2. **Children on Individualized Education Programs (IEPs):**
Children on IEPs must attend FDK free of charge if their IEP specifies a full-day placement. If FDK is not district-wide, space should be reserved for children with IEPs that specify full-day placements.
3. **Definition of family, for tuition purposes:**
For the purpose of determining financial assistance with kindergarten tuition, “family” is defined as parent(s)/legal guardian(s) and his/her/their dependent children.
4. **Tuition payments:**
	1. ***Children in foster care with temporary guardians, or children in the care of grandparents:*** Tuition should be waived for foster parents authorized for care by the Department of Children and Families (DCF), or who serve as temporary guardians, or for grandparents serving as the child’s guardian(s).
	2. ***Siblings:***

Districts must offer families a discounted tuition for siblings attending FDK programs in the same year, as follows:

* The family pays the full assessed tuition for the first child, using the sliding fee scale;
* The family pays ½ of the assessed tuition for the second child, using the sliding fee scale; and
* The family pays ¼ of the assessed tuition for the third child, using the sliding fee scale.
	1. ***Children of parents with disabilities:*** In cases where a parent/guardian is disabled,
	long- or short-term, districts are encouraged to consider making exceptions regarding fees. Disability payments (through SSI or other system) are counted as income. Documentation of the inability to work can include a doctor’s note or SSDI.
1. **Tuition cap:**

The Department reserves the right to cap the tuition that grantees charge families. The tuition cap for FY17 is $4,000. Families earning 25% or less of the State Median Income (SMI) *cannot* be charged tuition.Free tuition is *suggested* for families earning 26-50% SMI, and the maximum tuition that can be charged for this SMI range is 10-18% of annual tuition or $400-$720 . Refer to the [FY17 Kindergarten sliding fee scale worksheet](http://www.doe.mass.edu/kindergarten/grants.html) for the formulas that determine the maximum percentage of annual tuition that can be charged per income level.

**6. Sliding fee scale:**Grantees that charge tuition *must* implement the Department’s sliding fee scale to ensure equity for all families. Tuition increases gradually from the selected “free” point (e.g., at or below 25% of SMI) up to full tuition (e.g., above 100% of SMI). In addition:

a. Districts must consider eligibility for *discounted or waived tuition* for any family that may be unable to pay the whole tuition due to unpredicted adverse circumstances at any time during the school year (e.g., serious illness of a parent, homelessness, loss of family business or job, foster care, grandparent/guardian age 65 or older and retired, etc.).

b. Applications and information submitted by families for tuition assistance are protected by the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA).

c. Districts must send a copy of the sliding fee scale to OLSEL for approval before making it available to families. A copy of the anticipated scale should be submitted along with the Statement of Assurance to the Department for approval, via email (achievement@doe.mass.edu) or fax (781-338-3090) at least two weeks before providing the scale to families.

**7. Payment options:**

Only one tuition payment, may be collected before the start of the school year, this includes deposit payments collected at registration. Any payment collected prior to the start of the school year should not exceed 50% of the annual tuition. Districts *must* give families payment options for the remaining tuition. These options may include tuition collected on a monthly basis, or through a payment schedule with a minimum of two payments. In addition: Families that do not honor their tuition commitment must be contacted directly
(e.g., email, letter, and phone) to determine if unpredicted circumstances have limited their ability to pay, if an alternative payment option can be arranged, or if a part-time kindergarten schedule is necessary.

**8. Deposits:**

Deposits to reserve a place in FDK classes are allowable, if the amount is applied to the annual tuition; **non-refundable deposits are not permissible under this policy.** Deposits cannot exceed 10% of the annual tuition and should be adjusted for low-income families based on the sliding fee scale. Deposits collected prior to the start of the school year count as the one tuition payment that may be collected before the start of the school year as outlined above in #7.

**9. Fees:**
No additional costs may be charged, including late fees. Other costsrelated to the FDK program (e.g., magazine subscriptions for children) must be included as part of the tuition, with the possible exception of field trips (see #10).

**10.** **Field trips:**
Field trips are important for enhancing the educational experiences and exposure to curriculum content standards. While the Department encourages districts to factor field trips costs into the school’s operational cost, the grant budget, and/or the tuition, it is understood that there may be a need to charge fees for the field trips. If this is the case, the district must use the sliding fee scale structure to proportionally calculate the fees charged to families depending on income, e.g., families earning up to 25% SMI should not be charged the fee for a field trip.

**11. Accounting of tuition funds:**
Districts must have a methodology for calculating its annual tuition, including an estimate of the cost for operating the second half of the day and the existing sources of funding that will support these costs. In addition, budget processes should include an accurate tracking of the children whose families pay tuition and how much has been collected from each family in total. These cost calculations and other relevant data are subject to programmatic and fiscal review by the Department.

**12. Use of tuition funds:**
Tuition collected for FDK must be allocated to a revolving account to be used exclusively for the FDK program. Budget processes must allow for the accurate tracking of how these funds are spent within the FDK program. These data are subject to review by the Department.

 In addition, districts must have a process for annually reviewing the tuition calculations and determining whether refunds to families and/or a change in the annual tuition amount for the following school year are needed.

**13. Written tuition policy:**
A written policy consistent with this policy must be made available to all families interested in FDK in advance of enrollment. Information must include annual tuition, eligibility for the sliding fee scale, how to apply for tuition assistance, and any related policies. Information should be provided in the languages families can understand to ensure equal access.

1. **LOTTERY SYSTEMS**

While the Department strongly encourages districts to have district-wide FDK available for its students, it is understood that space and funding considerations may prevent the district from making FDK available for all age-eligible kindergarten students. In these cases, districts may choose to design and implement a lottery system in order to make decisions about which children will be offered the FDK program. For grantees that implement a lottery system, the following policy guidelines must be followed.

1. Lotteries must be equitable and conducted through a public process, and selections must be made by a disinterested party (a person or persons who has/have no personal stake in the outcome and/or conflict of interest).
2. Spaces must be reserved for children with IEPs that specify a full-day placement.
3. Lotteries cannot be balanced by gender or at-risk status of the students.

Districts wishing to discuss any of these requirements may contact OLSEL via 781-338-3010 or achievement@doe.mass.edu.