

**House File 460 - Introduced**

HOUSE FILE 460

BY EHLERT

**A BILL FOR**

1 An Act relating to play-based learning in preschool,  
2 prekindergarten, and kindergarten.

3 BE IT ENACTED BY THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE STATE OF IOWA:

unofficial

1 Section 1. Section 256.11, subsection 1, paragraphs a and b,  
2 Code 2025, are amended to read as follows:

3 a. If a school offers a prekindergarten program, the program  
4 shall be designed to help children to work and play with  
5 others, to express themselves, to learn to use and manage their  
6 bodies, and to extend their interests and understanding of the  
7 world about them. The prekindergarten program shall encourage  
8 cooperative efforts between home and school and shall focus on  
9 community resources. The prekindergarten program shall include  
10 at least ninety minutes of play-based learning during each half  
11 school day and at least one hundred eighty minutes of play-based  
12 learning during each full school day. Except as otherwise  
13 provided in this subsection, a prekindergarten teacher shall  
14 hold a license certifying that the holder is qualified to teach  
15 in prekindergarten. A nonpublic school which offers only a  
16 prekindergarten may, but is not required to, seek and obtain  
17 accreditation.

18 b. If the board of directors of a school district contracts  
19 for the operation of a prekindergarten program, the program shall  
20 be under the oversight of an appropriately licensed teacher. If  
21 the program contracted with was in existence on July 1, 1989,  
22 oversight of the program shall be provided by the district. If  
23 the program contracted with was not in existence on July 1, 1989,  
24 the director of the program shall be a licensed teacher and the  
25 director shall provide program oversight. Any director of a  
26 program contracted with by a school district under this section  
27 who is not a licensed teacher is required to register with  
28 the department of education. The prekindergarten program shall  
29 include at least ninety minutes of play-based learning during  
30 each half school day and at least one hundred eighty minutes of  
31 play-based learning during each full school day.

32 Sec. 2. Section 256.11, subsection 2, Code 2025, is amended  
33 to read as follows:

34 2. The kindergarten program shall include experiences  
35 designed to develop healthy emotional and social habits and

1 growth in the language arts and communication skills, as well  
2 as a capacity for the completion of individual tasks, and  
3 protect and increase physical well-being with attention given  
4 to experiences relating to the development of life skills and,  
5 subject to section 279.80, age-appropriate and research-based  
6 human growth and development. The kindergarten program shall  
7 include at least forty-five minutes of play-based learning during  
8 each school day. A kindergarten teacher shall be licensed to  
9 teach in kindergarten. An accredited nonpublic school must meet  
10 the requirements of this subsection only if the nonpublic school  
11 offers a kindergarten program; provided, however, that section  
12 279.80 shall not apply to a nonpublic school.

13 Sec. 3. Section 256.11, subsection 19, Code 2025, is amended  
14 by adding the following new paragraph:

15 NEW PARAGRAPH. *Ob.* "Play-based learning" means a pedagogical  
16 approach that emphasizes play and child-directed experiences in  
17 promoting learning and that includes developmentally appropriate  
18 strategies that can be integrated with existing learning  
19 standards. "Play-based learning" includes social imitation,  
20 learning through expression, and unstructured play within the  
21 classroom setting where it is a time for the discovery of each  
22 child's individual talents, abilities, and needs. "Play-based  
23 learning" does not include time spent in recess or as part of a  
24 physical education course or instruction.

25 Sec. 4. Section 256C.3, subsection 3, Code 2025, is amended  
26 by adding the following new paragraph:

27 NEW PARAGRAPH. *i.* Provision for at least ninety minutes of  
28 play-based learning during each half school day and at least  
29 one hundred eighty minutes of play-based learning during each  
30 full school day. For purposes of this paragraph, "play-based  
31 learning" means the same as defined in section 256.11, subsection  
32 19.

33 Sec. 5. Section 256E.7, subsection 2, paragraph g, Code 2025,  
34 is amended by adding the following new subparagraph:

35 NEW SUBPARAGRAPH. (01) The educational standards established

1 in section 256.11, subsections 1 and 2, related to play-based  
2 learning.

3 Sec. 6. Section 256F.4, subsection 2, Code 2025, is amended  
4 by adding the following new paragraph:

5 NEW PARAGRAPH. r. Be subject to and comply with the  
6 requirements of section 256.11, subsections 1 and 2, relating to  
7 play-based learning in the same manner as a school district.

8 EXPLANATION

9 The inclusion of this explanation does not constitute agreement with  
10 the explanation's substance by the members of the general assembly.

11 This bill relates to play-based learning in preschool,  
12 prekindergarten, and kindergarten.

13 The bill defines "play-based learning" as a pedagogical  
14 approach that emphasizes play and child-directed experiences in  
15 promoting learning and that includes developmentally appropriate  
16 strategies that can be integrated with existing learning  
17 standards.

18 The bill requires school districts, accredited nonpublic  
19 schools, charter schools, and innovation zone schools to  
20 incorporate at least 90 minutes of play-based learning during  
21 each half school day and at least 180 minutes of play-based  
22 learning during each full school day into the prekindergarten  
23 program. Schools are required to incorporate at least 45 minutes  
24 of play-based learning each school day into the kindergarten  
25 program. The bill also requires preschools that operate under  
26 Code chapter 256C (statewide preschool program) to provide for at  
27 least 90 minutes of play-based learning during each half school  
28 day and at least 180 minutes of play-based learning during each  
29 full school day.