

Section 2

BOE agenda

4/8/13

**MATERIAL FROM BOARD AGENDA**

**MARCH 18, 2013**

# WESTPORT PUBLIC SCHOOLS

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**ELLIOTT LONDON**  
*Superintendent of Schools*

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To: Members of the Board of Education  
From: Elliott Landon  
Subject: Five Day, Full Day Kindergarten  
Date: March 18, 2013

At our meeting of March 4, the Board agreed to discuss the above-referenced subject at the meeting of March 18 and to vote upon it at the meeting of April 8.

To provide further background information for the Board, I have included for your perusal a copy of a typical Kindergarten schedule within the framework of a 3 full day/2 extended day schedule and a sample of a Kindergarten schedule within a five day, full day framework.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Elliott", with a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.

## Sample Current Kindergarten Schedule in Westport

|               | <b>Monday</b>                  | <b>Tuesday</b>                           | <b>Wednesday</b>                         | <b>Thursday</b>                          | <b>Friday</b>                  |
|---------------|--------------------------------|--|--|--|--------------------------------|
| 8:15 – 8:25   | Arrive, unpack                 | Arrive, unpack                           | Arrive, unpack                           | Arrive, unpack                           | Arrive, unpack                 |
| 8:25 – 8:45   | Morning Meeting                | Morning Meeting                          | Morning Meeting                          | Morning Meeting                          | Morning Meeting                |
| 8:45 – 9:15   | Reading Workshop               | Reading Workshop                         | Choice Centers                           | Reading Workshop                         | Reading Workshop               |
| 9:15 – 9:40   | Fundations (Phonics)           | Fundations (Phonics)                     | Fundations (Phonics)                     | Fundations (Phonics)                     | Fundations (Phonics)           |
| 9:40 – 9:50   | Snack                          | Snack                                    | Snack                                    | Snack                                    | Snack                          |
| 9:50 – 10:20  | Writing Workshop               | Choice Centers                           | Writing Workshop                         | Choice Centers                           | Writing Workshop               |
| 10:20 – 10:35 | Choice Centers                 | Interactive Read-aloud or Shared Reading | Interactive Read-aloud or Shared Reading | Interactive Read-aloud or Shared Reading | Choice Centers                 |
| 10:40 – 11:30 | Recess/Lunch                   | Recess/Lunch                             | Recess/Lunch                             | Recess/Lunch                             | Recess/Lunch                   |
| 11:30 – 12:00 | Spanish                        | Technology (11:30 – 12:10)               | Spanish                                  | Spanish                                  | Music                          |
| 12:00 – 12:30 | Math                           | Math                                     | Math                                     | Math                                     | Math                           |
| 12:30 – 1:00  | Pack-up, Read-aloud, Dismissal | PE                                       | PE                                       | Science or Social Studies                | Pack-up, Read-aloud, Dismissal |
| 1:00 – 1:20   |                                | Shared Reading                           | Snack                                    | Shared Reading                           |                                |
| 1:20 – 1:35   |                                | Snack                                    | Library (1:15-1:45)                      | Snack                                    |                                |
| 1:35 – 1:55   |                                | Science or Social Studies                | Science or Social Studies (1:45 – 2:00)  | Art (1:35 – 2:20)                        |                                |
| 1:55 – 2:25   |                                | Choice Centers or Recess                 | Choice Centers or Recess                 | Interactive Writing (2:20 – 2:45)        |                                |
| 2:25 – 3:00   |                                | Pack-up, Read-aloud, Dismissal           | Pack-up, Read-aloud, Dismissal           | Pack-up, Dismissal                       |                                |

## Sample Full-day Kindergarten Schedule in Westport

|               | <b>Monday</b>            | <b>Tuesday</b>            | <b>Wednesday</b>          | <b>Thursday</b>           | <b>Friday</b>             |
|---------------|--------------------------|---------------------------|---------------------------|---------------------------|---------------------------|
| 8:15 – 8:25   | Arrive, unpack           | Arrive, unpack            | Arrive, unpack            | Arrive, unpack            | Arrive, unpack            |
| 8:25 – 8:45   | Morning Meeting          | Morning Meeting           | Morning Meeting           | Morning Meeting           | Morning Meeting           |
| 8:45 – 9:15   | Reading Workshop         | Reading Workshop          | Reading Workshop          | Reading Workshop          | Reading Workshop          |
| 9:15 – 9:40   | Fundations (Phonics)     | Fundations (Phonics)      | Fundations (Phonics)      | Fundations (Phonics)      | Fundations (Phonics)      |
| 9:40 – 9:50   | Snack                    | Snack                     | Snack                     | Snack                     | Snack                     |
| 9:50 – 10:20  | Writing Workshop         | Writing Workshop          | Writing Workshop          | Writing Workshop          | Writing Workshop          |
| 10:20 – 10:35 | Shared Reading           | Shared Reading            | Shared Reading            | Shared Reading            | Shared Reading            |
| 10:40 – 11:10 | Choice Centers           | Choice Centers            | Choice Centers            | Choice Centers            | Choice Centers            |
| 11:10 – 11:20 | Emergent Read-aloud      | Emergent Read-aloud       | Emergent Read-aloud       | Emergent Read-aloud       | Emergent Read-aloud       |
| 11:20 – 12:10 | Recess/Lunch             | Recess/Lunch              | Recess/Lunch              | Recess/Lunch              | Recess/Lunch              |
| 12:10 – 12:55 | Math                     | Math                      | Math                      | Math                      | Math                      |
| 12:55 – 1:25  | Spanish                  | Music                     | Spanish                   | PE                        | Spanish                   |
| 1:25 – 1:35   | Snack                    | Snack                     | Snack                     | Snack                     | Snack                     |
| 1:35 – 1:50   | Interactive Read-Aloud   | Interactive Read-Aloud    | Interactive Read-Aloud    | Art<br>1:35 – 2:20        | Read-Aloud                |
| 1:50 – 2:20   | Choice Centers or Recess | Choice Centers or Recess  | Choice Centers or Recess  |                           | Choice Centers or Recess  |
| 2:20 – 2:50   | PE                       | Science or Social Studies | Science or Social Studies | Science or Social Studies | Science or Social Studies |
| 2:50 – 3:00   | Pack-up, Dismissal       | Pack-up, Dismissal        | Pack-up, Dismissal        | Pack-up, Dismissal        | Pack-up, Dismissal        |

\* Technology and Library are integrated into reading, writing workshop, math, or content area instruction.

\*\* Science and social studies times do not reflect the recommended instructional time of 30 minutes per day, because some of this instruction is integrated into interactive read-aloud and shared reading (for example, reading a book about plants or insects) and writing in the content area during writing workshop (for example, drawing and labeling something they observe in science, or writing about family, community in social studies.) Teachers may also do an activity in Morning Meeting that focuses on math, science or social studies.

\*\*\* Social Skills is embedded in Morning Meeting, Snack, Choice Time, Recess and Interactive Read-Aloud



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March 13, 2013

To: Elliot Landon, Superintendent of Schools  
Board of Education, Westport Public Schools

From: Cynthia Gilchrest, Director of Elementary of Education  
Dr. Susie Da Silva, Principal, King's Highway Elementary School  
Elementary Leadership Team

Enclosed you will find 4 sections of materials that you requested at the most recent March 4 Board of Education meeting.

Section 1: *A day in the life of a kindergarten student*

Section 2: *The Common Core Standards in kindergarten in contrast to the previous standards*

Section 3: *Research on recommended instructional minutes for reading*

Section 4: *Research on full day kindergarten*

# DRG Data on Class Size and Full-Day Kindergarten

| District | Davien | Easton | Redding | New<br>Canaan | Ridgefield | Weston | Wilton | Westport |
|----------|--------|--------|---------|---------------|------------|--------|--------|----------|
| All day  | Y      | Y      | Y       | Y             | Y          | Y      | Y      | N        |
| K        |        |        |         |               |            |        |        |          |
| K        | 19-23  | 21-22  | 21-22   | 16-20         | 20-21      | 18-20  | 23     | 22       |
| 1        | 19-23  | 21-22  | 21-22   | 16-20         | 20-21      | 18-20  | 23     | 22       |
| 2        | 20-25  | 21-22  | 21-22   | 16-20         | 24         | 20-24  | 25     | 22       |
| 3        | 20-25  | 21-22  | 21-22   | 16-20         | 25-26      | 20-24  | 25     | 25       |
| 4        | 21-26  | 21-22  | 21-22   | 20-24         | 25-26      | 20-24  | 25     | 25       |
| 5        | 21-26  | 21-22  | 21-22   | 20-24         | 25-26      | 20-24  | 25     | 25       |

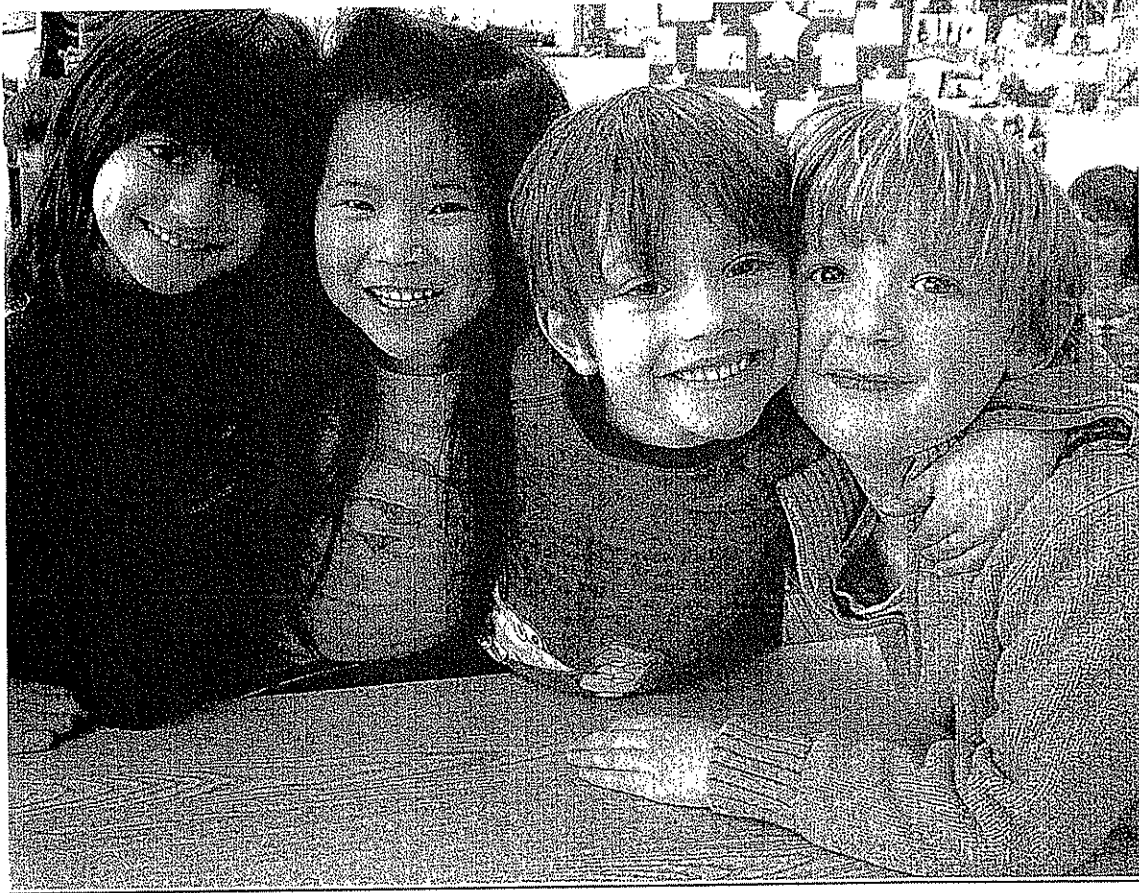
\*Easton/Redding do not have guidelines (dependent on number of teachers and annual budget)

# Section 1

*A Day in the Life of a Kindergarten Student*



## Welcome to Kindergarten!



**Step inside a kindergarten classroom in Westport to catch a glimpse of kindergarten in action! Walk through some of the various subject areas a typical kindergartener may experience on any given day. You will see that the day is full of joyful learning through engaging games, hands-on experiences, and both socially and developmentally appropriate curriculum activities.**

**Social Skills:** The Westport Social Skills curriculum plays an integral role in fostering positive self-esteem in our students. Students begin each day with Morning Meeting, a time in which a classroom community is created. Together, they participate in a greeting, an opportunity to share, a group activity, and they read a short message from their teacher. Throughout the day the social skills curriculum is infused in various curricular areas. Through games, books, and activities kindergarteners begin to learn how to understand empathy, to be advocates for themselves, to recognize hurtful behavior, and to accept each others' differences.



Students engage in group and partner activities as part of the Social Skills curriculum.

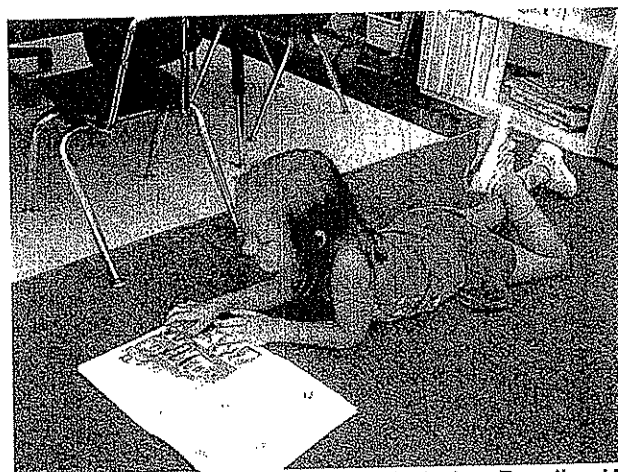
### **Balanced Literacy:**

**Interactive Read Aloud:** This year our kindergarten teachers received extensive professional development focused around the concept of Interactive Read Aloud, which provides students the opportunity to be exposed to higher level text read by the teacher. While listening to the text, students are encouraged to think critically, form opinions about the text while relating it to critical literacy lenses, and communicate their thinking to their peers. What does this actually look like in kindergarten? Students sit captivated by their teacher reading the text. They truly hang on every word. Then, they turn and talk, "Knee to knee" with a partner, to share their ideas about the text. For example, while listening to *Copy Cub*, students debate whether or not Copy Cub truly understands the "rules" of hide-and-seek, or whether he just wants to be found by his mommy in order to get a cuddle. They are able to make connections and use evidence from the text to support their thinking, all while enjoying listening to a story.



Kids sit "knee-to-knee" to share their opinions during an Interactive Read Aloud.

**Reading Workshop:** This year the students and teachers were thrilled with their new Reading Workshop units of study. During the October Emergent Storybook unit of study, created to address the Common Core State Standards, students were immersed in classic storybooks which they also enjoy reading at home. In order to prepare for this unit, teachers read and re-read favorite storybooks several times to students. The students learned about main characters by identifying them as the "stars" of the stories. They learned to interact with a text by acting it out with their friends, or making their voices match that of the voice of the Gingerbread Man, Corduroy, or the Three Little Pigs. Later during the February unit of study, kindergarten readers became superheroes to be able to read anything they want to read. They applied their superpowers to find and highlight sight words within their books, glue sounds together, or point under the words while reading. The kids light up as they transform into *Super Readers*, the most powerful superheroes of all!



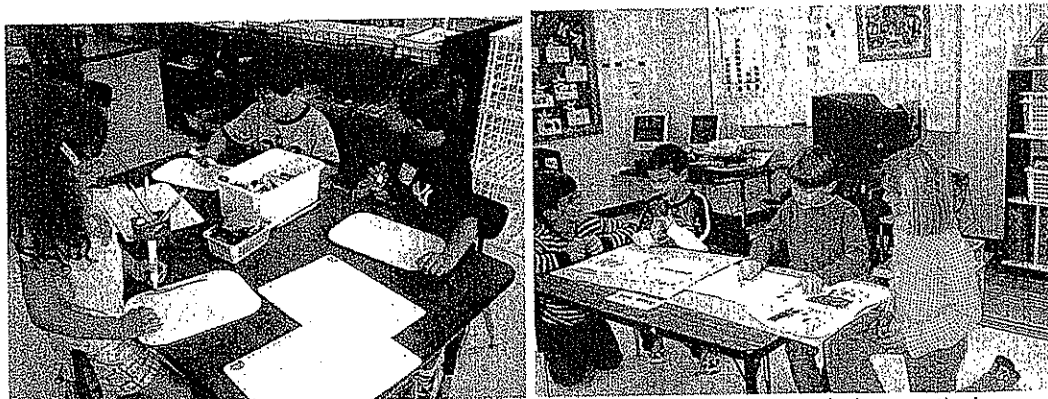
A kindergarten student is enjoying a book during Reading Workshop.

**Word Study/Fundations:** During Fundations students engage a multi-sensory approach to phonemic awareness and word study. Echo the Owl is always present during Fundations to add some extra fun to their learning. The students know that when Echo appears, they should “echo” the words and sounds they hear.



“Echo the Owl” helps teach letter sounds to students during Fundations lessons.

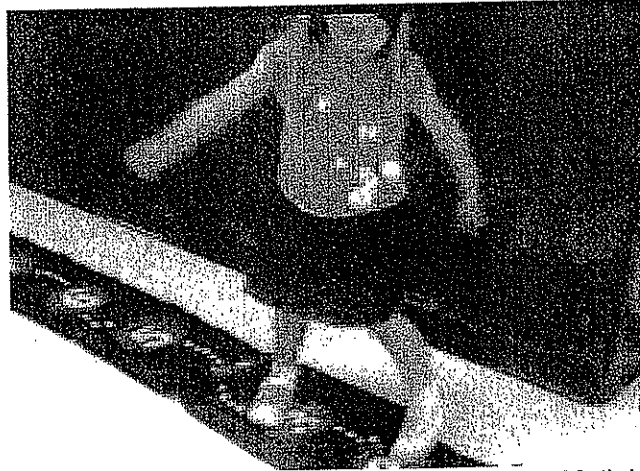
**Writing Workshop:** Students have the chance to confer with peers throughout the writing process. They can use markers, crayons, pencils, and type of paper choice to capture their ideas. Often times classical music may be heard in the background. Students build a lifelong love for writing as they learn to tell stories, make lists, draft letters, and provide instructions all through writing!



During writing, students are encouraged to confer with partners, and choose their own writing tools to express their ideas through illustrations first, then letters and words.

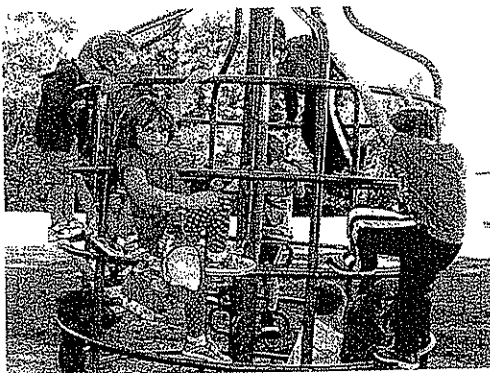
**Math:** The Singapore Math program has concrete experiences embedded in every single lesson. In order to gain a solid foundation for number sense, our kindergarten students are experiencing math through playing with manipulatives

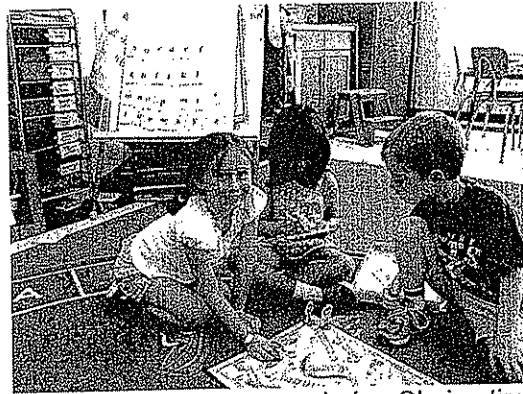
and engaging in games, all of which take time. The Look and Talk activities also play a major role in helping students to understand that math uses numbers and symbols to represent ideas. Many times, children do not even realize they are “doing math” because they are having so much fun playing with their friends! During a math lesson you may notice a kindergartener tossing bean bags into hula hoops to count out numbers, jumping hopscotch to add or subtract, or designing his or her own beaded bracelets to represent a number bond.



Movement and play are incorporated into Singapore Math lessons.

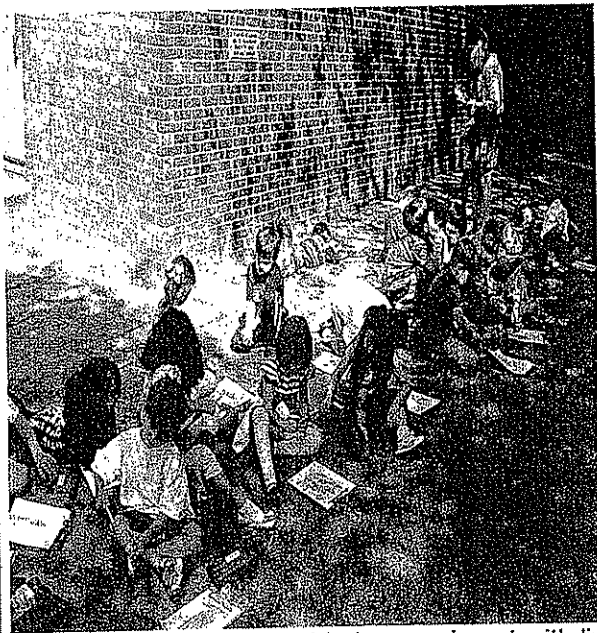
**Choice Time/Recess:** Students are given daily opportunities to engage in choice time and recess. During choice time you may find a kindergartener building with blocks, pretending to dine at Sakura, playing Chutes and Ladders, or creating an artistic masterpiece. Outside at recess kids have an opportunity to play with all of their grade level peers. Socialization is a critical component of the kindergarten experience and the Westport Social Skills curriculum. Recess and Choice time also provide opportunities for students to learn conflict resolution skills and learn to share and take turns.





Students enjoy kinesthetic movement throughout the day and play games during Choice time.

**Science:** If you ever have the chance to witness a class full of 5 year olds play with live worms while designing their own inquiry based science experiments, you will surely see pure delight from these students. Unfortunately, fitting in an inquiry based science experiment on a Monday or Friday is next to impossible given the current kindergarten schedule; which can be disappointing to students, given that many of our students will tell you that those experiments are a highlight of their kindergarten experience. Often times our little scientists must head outside with their clipboards and sketch paper in order to record what they notice about the world around them.



Science is a favorite for many students! During science they are able to experiment with live worms as well as spend time outside noticing seasonal changes and cloud patterns.

**Social Studies:** Kindergarten is a time for students to explore being individuals. The students discover similarities and differences among each other and their families. They learn about customs and traditions that families follow. Each student has an opportunity to be in the spotlight throughout the course of the year. This gives them the opportunity to take time to learn about and celebrate each other.



A kindergarten student teaches the class about family traditions during Social Studies.

As you can see, kindergarten is full of fun for our little learners. Students are playing and interacting with each other while making discoveries about the world around them.

# Section 2

*The Common Core Standards in  
kindergarten in contrast to the previous  
standards and Common Core research*



## Kindergarten Literacy Standards

The new Common Core State Standards include more rigor than the previous Connecticut State Curriculum Standards.

An example of the shift towards more complex learning at the Kindergarten level:

### Previous Westport Curriculum Standard:

#### 0.8 USE OF LITERATURE

Students will develop an awareness of and will interact with literature in a variety of formats for the purposes of personal enrichment and information **with assistance**.

#### **0.8.1 Recognize Literature Elements**

0.8.1.4 Begin to identify that books have characters, setting, and plot (LA)

0.8.1.5 Identify character traits and make personal connections (IL)

What it means:

- The previous standard (0.8.1.4) required students to identify characters from a story with assistance (ex. Peter is a character from *Peter's Chair*).
- The previous standard (0.8.1.5) required a student to identify a character trait with assistance (ex. The fox was sly.)

### New Common Core State Standard

#### ELA-Kindergarten-Reading: LITERATURE STANDARDS

#### **Key Ideas and Details**

K.RL.3 With prompting and support, identify characters, settings, and major events in a story.

#### **Integration of Knowledge and Ideas:**

K.RL.9 With prompting and support, compare and contrast the adventures and experiences of characters in familiar stories.

What it means:

- The new standard (K.RL.3) still requires students to identify characters from a story with prompting and support (ex. Peter is a character from *Peter's Chair*).
- The new standard (K.RL.9) requires a student to understand the adventures and experiences of characters in a given story. Then the student will apply higher level thinking to compare and contrast those experiences with the adventures and experiences of another character from a different story. (ex. *Noisy Nora*, *Peter's Chair* and *Nobody Notices Minerva* are similar because they all have star characters that have to adjust to having a new sibling, but they are different because Peter runs away, Nora hides from her family, and Minerva acts naughty.)
  - This shift can be met by:
    - Increased opportunities for Interactive Read Aloud
    - Increased opportunities for partner conversations
    - More exposure to classic storybooks (Emergent storybook unit)
    - More exposure to character rich texts (Character unit)
    - Increased time for Balanced Literacy and Reading Workshop.

## Kindergarten Math Standards

The new Common Core State Standards include more rigor than the previous Connecticut State Curriculum Standards.

*An example of the shift towards more complex mathematical learning at the Kindergarten level:*

### **Previous Westport Curriculum Standard:**

#### **Numerical and Proportional Reasoning**

**2.2 Students should use numbers and their properties to compute flexibility and fluency and to reasonably estimate measures and quantities.**

a. Count, adding one more to the previous number, and group and count by ones and tens.

(1) Count to and past 10 to 20, then to 30, and group and count objects by 10.

What it means:

- The previous standard (2.2) required students to count to 30 by ones and tens.

### **New Common Core State Standard**

#### **Kindergarten Math Standards**

#### **K.CC Counting and Cardinality**

**Know number names and the count sequence.**

K.CC.1 Count to 100 by ones and by tens.

K.CC.2 Count forward beginning from a given number within the known sequence (instead of having to begin at 1.)

What it means:

- The new standard (K.CC.1) requires students to count to 100 by ones and tens, whereas the previous standard only required students to count to 30.
  - This shift can be met by:
    - Increased opportunities for counting.
    - Increased awareness of base-ten (counting by 10's).
    - Building and decomposing numbers
    - Unit 19, Singapore Math (Numbers to 100)

# Variation in Children's Experience of Kindergarten and the Common Core

by Kyle Snow, PhD

**H**istorically, kindergarten marked children's first entry into formal, primarily public education in the United States. However, increasingly children are coming to kindergarten having spent some time in structured, center-based care. For example, 63.8% of children born in 2001 were enrolled in a center-based program the year prior to kindergarten entry (Flanagan & McPhee 2009). Kindergarten might not mark children's entry into formal, structured classrooms, but it continues to be the first year for which children's experiences are governed by policies set within the public K-12 education system.<sup>1</sup> As a result, kindergarten provides a bridge within early childhood, linking a time during which children spend their years in a wide range of settings prior to kindergarten, and primary education, where children spend their days in a more structured setting learning with their age mates from a common teacher, teaching to a shared set of expectations and standards (at least within classrooms, districts, and typically, states). It also marks the "line in the sand" between early learning standards (for children 5 and younger) that address all domains to primary and secondary education (K-12) standards, which focus on academic content.

Although the early childhood period spans birth through age 8, this continuum of learning has a clear demarcation when children enter kindergarten. Due to differences in auspice, standards, and teacher qualifications, the role of kindergarten in a birth to third grade continuum of learning is the topic of much discussion (e.g., Kauerz 2005; Russell 2011). As Vecchiotti (2003, 6) noted:

Kindergarten suffers from the middle child syndrome, caught between early education and public education, because it shares features with both educational levels.... Although the kindergarten classroom is affiliated with the public education system at the elementary school level, the diversity in the provision and structure of kindergarten resembles the diverse programs of the early education and care system for preschoolers and infants/toddlers.

## NAEYC, Kindergarten, and Common Core Start Standards<sup>2</sup>

The Common Core begins with kindergarten, and provides standards for each grade level of elementary and secondary education. NAEYC believes that learning standards, along with program quality standards and teacher standards that are developmentally appropriate and build in a forward progression and address all areas of children's development and learning, are important components of early childhood education. Standards should never be used to deny entry to kindergarten, to retain a child in a grade, or to hinder access to early intervention or other support services. (See Joint Statement, as well as position statements on Kindergarten entry, Early learning standards, Professional preparation standards.)

RESEARCH

POLICY

PRACTICE

With the implementation of the Common Core, kindergarten will mark the first year in children's lives when expectations for children's development and learning (in English language arts and mathematics) will be common across most of the country.<sup>3</sup> Put another way, the output of the education system in kindergarten (the Common Core State Standards) will be the same, despite structural differences in how kindergarten is provided and despite differences in selection of curricula, formative assessments, and professional development from state to state, district to district, perhaps even school to school. (In addition to the structural differences discussed in this paper, kindergarten classrooms will implement a number of curricula and utilize a number of assessment tools and strategies to meet this set of expectations, which we discuss in a separate paper.)

This paper focuses on the structural elements of the kindergarten experience of American children and the new context of the Common Core standards. There are several compelling reasons for this. First, as noted above, for the first time, children across the country (meaning across differing states) will be taught with the same learning outcomes identified. However, we know that children's experience of kindergarten, especially when they enter and how long their school day is, varies across states, and even within states. Likewise, the preparation of teachers in kindergarten classrooms, including their credentialing, varies across states. While a common set of high yet achievable goals, with appropriate supports to teachers and schools, can contribute to closing known achievement gaps at the start of school, differences in children's access to and experiences of kindergarten may tend to widen, rather than reduce, these gaps. This paper will consider how differences in the opportunity to learn through publicly funded kindergarten may affect the potential for children to reach a common set of standards across these differences. Specifically, this paper focuses on structural variations in the provision of kindergarten, including length of school day and age of entry, as well as variation in the preparation of kindergarten teachers.

### A Note on Data Sources

As Guernsey and Hoff (2012) recently noted, data on kindergarten are surprisingly difficult to obtain. States report data on kindergarten programs and enrollments in ways that are not always comparable between states. The data cited in this paper are drawn primarily from the US Department of Education. Data on policies and enrollment are drawn from the Condition of Education 2012 (Aud et al 2012). These data themselves are drawn from a number of other sources, principally the US Census Bureau's Current Population Survey. However, data are reported by age, with a break in what data are reported occurring between ages 5 (participation in kindergarten or earlier programs) and 6 and later (enrollment in school). So it is not possible from these sources to accurately count all of the 6-year-olds, for example, who may be enrolled in a kindergarten program. Likewise, in these data it is not possible to distinguish first-time enrollments from repeat enrollments, which account for about 5% of kindergarten enrollments each year (Zill, Loomis, & West 1998; Hong & Raudenbush 2006; Malone et al 2006). Additional data about kindergartners and kindergarten programs are drawn from the three cohorts included in the Early Childhood Longitudinal Study (ECLS)—the kindergarten class of 1998–99 (ECLS-K:98), the kindergarten class of 2010–2011 (ECLS-K:2010), and the birth cohort of children born in 2001 (ECLS-B).



## STRUCTURAL VARIATIONS IN KINDERGARTEN

**W**hile kindergarten may mark the initial year children enter school, it remains unique even within the K–12 system. Unlike grades 1–12, where most children are exposed to the same basic structure of education (especially length of school day), there are significant variations in how kindergarten is provided (i.e., length of day) and the age at which children may enter (i.e., age of entry). This section discusses both of these elements of variation across states' kindergarten programs.

### State policies around provision of kindergarten

According to the National Center for Education Statistics (Aud et. al 2012), as of 2010 a total of 43 states require districts to offer kindergarten. Unlike all other years in K–12 education, kindergarten is the only year where there is variation in the length of school day. Children in other elementary grades (grades 1 and higher) generally attend school for the same number of hours per day. Generally speaking, kindergarten is either provided as a full school day (typically about 6 hours) or as a half-day program (generally 2–3 hours),<sup>4</sup> with children attending kindergarten either in the morning or afternoon. Of the 43 states offering kindergarten, 11 are required to offer full-day services (although two states allow parents to opt for half-day programs). Within states that do not require that kindergarten be provided, all districts have the option of providing half- or full-day programs (Bush 2011). However, the mandated availability of kindergarten is not to be confused with kindergarten enrollment. For example, across all states, only 16 require attendance in kindergarten programs. Clearly, more programs are provided, and more children are enrolled, than is mandated by state policies.

### Enrollment in kindergarten

Describing the actual enrollment of children in kindergarten is surprisingly difficult (Guernsey & Holt 2012). The most authoritative data come from the Current Population Survey, and are reported in the *Condition of Education 2012* (Aud et. al 2012). However, these data report on enrollment for children under the age of 6 in “preprimary” programs that include kindergarten, and enrollments for children over the age of 6 are not provided by grade level. As noted below, kindergartners, as a group, have tended to be older, and therefore increasingly likely to include 6-year-olds as first-time entrants (which cannot be identified in these data). Using these official data, in 2010, 94.5% of 5- to 6-year-olds were enrolled in school in 2010, a trend that has been relatively stable since at least the early 1970s. These data do not specify the grade level for these children, or the length of day. That information is provided for 5-year-olds, however. In 2010, 86.3% of 5-year-olds were enrolled in some form of educational program, including 55.4% of 5-year-olds enrolled in full-day kindergarten and 17.5% enrolled in half-day kindergarten (Aud et. al 2012).<sup>5</sup> In all, these data suggest that nearly all children ages 5 to 6 have enrolled in school, and the

majority of 5-year-olds enrolled in kindergarten are enrolled in full-day programs.

Other data derived from the Early Childhood Longitudinal Studies (ECLS)<sup>6</sup> provide a similar, but more nuanced view of kindergarten programs and children who enroll in them.<sup>7</sup> In the 1998–99 school year, 61% of all US schools that provided a kindergarten program offered at least one full-day kindergarten class and 47% offered at least one half-day class (some schools offered both; Walston & West 2004). Publicly provided kindergarten accounts for the vast majority of enrollments (about 90% reported among first-time enrollments in fall of 1998, fall of 2006 or fall 2007, and fall 2010). Among children entering kindergarten for the first time in fall 1998, 56% attended a full-day program, although the percentage of children enrolled in full-day programs was higher in private schools than public schools (67% versus 54%) (Walston & West 2004). When children born in the United States in 2001 entered kindergarten for the first time in fall of 2006 or fall 2007, 74.8% were enrolled in full-day programs (Flanagan & McPhee 2009).

The data above suggest a dramatic increase in the availability of (and enrollment into) full-day kindergarten programs (nearly 20 percentage points). However, nearly one-quarter of children continue to be enrolled in half-day programs. As states and local educational systems continue to grapple with funding challenges, the continued or increased availability of kindergarten cannot be assured. Yet, even in the absence of the research discussed below about the impact of half- versus full-day kindergarten participation, the difference in hours of kindergarten is apparent. Compared with children in full-day programs, these children spend about half as many hours in kindergarten.

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### Half- and Full-day Kindergarten Programs

A number of authors have noted that the primary difference between half- and full-day programs is simply the number of hours children are exposed to a structured school program (e.g., Ackerman et al. 2005; Walston & West 2004). But there may also be important differences in how the extra time in full-day kindergarten is used. Data from the ECLS-B:98 suggest that teachers in full-day kindergarten classes organize instruction in much the same way as teachers in half-day classes, so children in full-day programs benefit from “more” time, not “different” activities allowed by the longer day.<sup>8</sup> Walston and West reported that compared to half-day kindergarten classes, full-day kindergarten classes spent, on average, more time each day on teacher-directed whole class, small group, and individual activities and they spend more time on child-selected activities. When looked at proportionate to time spent in the classroom, the percentage of time spent in different types of activities, and focused on specific content or other learning objectives is similar between half- and full-day programs (Walston & West 2004). At best this means less total time for children in half-day programs spent in all activities, but others (e.g., Elicker & Mathur 1997) have noted that compared with children in half day programs, children in full-day programs experienced less large-group, teacher-directed activities and more time in child-directed and play activities. As Rathbun (2010) concluded,

the important consideration when comparing half and full day kindergarten is how the extra time spent in the classroom is used to support children's learning.

### Effects of half-day versus full-day kindergarten attendance

A number of authors have noted that the primary difference between half- and full-day programs is simply the number of hours children are exposed to a structured school program (e.g., Walston & West 2004; Ackerman, Barnett, & Robin 2005). But there might also be important differences in how the extra time in full-day kindergarten is used. Data from the ECLS-B:98 suggest that teachers in full-day kindergarten classes organize instruction in much the same way as teachers in half-day classes, so children in full-day programs benefit from "more" time, not "different" activities allowed by the longer day. When looked at proportionate to time spent in the classroom, the percentage of time spent in different types of activities and focused on specific content or other learning objectives is similar between half- and full-day programs (Walston & West 2004). At best, this means less total time for children in half-day programs spent in all activities. However, others (e.g., Elicker & Mathur 1997) have noted that compared with children in half-day programs, children in full-day programs experienced less large group, teacher-directed activities and more time in child-directed and play activities. Likewise, Walston and West (2004) reported that compared to half-day kindergarten classes, full-day kindergarten classes spent, on average, more time each day on teacher-directed whole class, small group, and individual activities and they spend more time on child-selected activities. As Rathbun (2010) concluded, the important consideration when comparing half- and full-day kindergarten is how the extra time spent in the classroom is used to support children's learning.

The extra time provided by full-day kindergarten seems to result in better learning outcomes for children, primarily reported using achievement test scores. Collectively the research appears to indicate that attending full-day kindergarten has a positive association with academic achievement during kindergarten compared to half-day kindergarten (e.g., Walston & West 2004; Lee et al 2006; Votruba-Drzal, Li-Grining, & Maldonado-Carreña 2008; Cooper et al 2010). In a meta-analysis of studies comparing half-day to full-day kindergarten, Cooper et al (2010) estimate that the extra time spent in kindergarten accounts for about 25% of the difference between children in cognitive measures. The research on full-day kindergarten versus half-day kindergarten on nonacademic skills is much more limited. Zvoch and colleagues' (2008) indicate that full-day kindergarten results in better attendance, less grade retention, greater social adjustment than half-day kindergarten.

There is some evidence that full-day kindergarten has the greatest benefit for children who are from high-risk groups or are English language learners (e.g., Dhuey 2011; Hall-Kenyon, Bringham, & Korth 2009). These children show the greatest gains when compared to their peers in half-day kindergarten. However, the apparent advantage appears to fade over time (e.g., Lee et al 2006; Wolgemuth et al 2006; DeCicca 2007; Votruba-Drzal, Li-Grining,

& Maldonado-Carreña 2008), although as Cooper et al (2010) conclude, identifying why the effects fade requires extensive additional study.

These data suggest a clear benefit to children's learning, especially academic content in early elementary school, in full-day kindergarten programs compared with half-day programs. However, the apparent "fade-out" of this advantage is not well understood, nor are the effects on important areas of child development other than academic achievement well researched. Because the Common Core has a focus on English language arts and mathematics, states implementing the Core may recognize benefits of full-day programs and push for greater availability. However, states may also recognize the benefits of more time focused on academic content, and push for greater amounts of instructional time in these areas even within half-day programs at the expense of time spent on activities and instruction that address the broader developmental and learning needs of children.

## AGE OF ENTRY INTO KINDERGARTEN

Just as states vary in their policies mandating the availability of kindergarten (and its length), they also vary in their policies around compulsory age of attendance and age of eligibility for kindergarten. The result is that there is great variation in the age of which children enter kindergarten, either through differences in mandated availability and compulsory enrollment policies, or through parental choice of when to enroll their children in kindergarten. The question, "At what age should children enter kindergarten?" is a source of continued debate in the research and policy world, and one with important implications for children, families, and kindergarten teachers (Stipek 2002). What is apparent, however, is that children are older when entering kindergarten now, and in each subsequent grade, than they have been historically (Colasanti 2007). Variouslly called "the graying of kindergarten" (Bracey 1989) or "the lengthening of childhood" (Deming & Dynarski 2008), variation in the age of entry results in a wide range of ages at which children will encounter the Common Core in kindergarten. This section summarizes the variation in age of entry and what research suggests about the implications for children who enter school at younger or older ages.

### State policies about age on entry to kindergarten

States establish policies about the compulsory age of attendance in school, as well as age of eligibility to enroll in kindergarten and requirements to enroll in kindergarten. As of 2010, of 43 states mandating the availability of kindergarten, 16 also required that children attend kindergarten. Of these 16, nine mandated that children be enrolled at age 5. A total of six states have policies that allow parents to delay enrollment of otherwise



age-eligible children; all six have compulsory enrollment at age 5.

Regardless of the compulsory age of attendance, states with kindergarten programs also mandate age-eligibility for enrollment into kindergarten programs (see Colasanti 2007, for a state-by-state listing as of 2005). Age eligibility is typically determined relative to a child's fifth birthday. Children turning 5 before their state's cut-off date are eligible to enroll. As Colasanti (2007) notes, these cut-off dates have trended increasingly earlier in the year, resulting in eligible children being older at the time of enrollment.

Taken together, these variations in state policies results in a very diverse education landscape for children ages 5 to 6. State variation in the compulsory age of attendance, requirements that children enroll in kindergarten and the ages at which they become eligible (and the possibility of delaying entry in many states of local school systems) means that within and between states, children's age of entry into kindergarten can be expected to vary dramatically.<sup>9</sup> As noted above, describing the range of children's ages when enrolling in kindergarten is challenging, but the Early Childhood Longitudinal Study groups can provide some indication at the national level.

Among children entering kindergarten for the first time in fall 1998, 88% were 5 to 6 years old, with 4% reported to be older and 9% reported to be younger (West, Denton, & Germino-Hausken 2000). Most (81%) of the children born in 2001 were between the ages of 5 and 6, while 16.4% were older (Flanagan & McPhee 2009).<sup>10</sup> In the fall of 2010, 89% of first-time kindergartners were between the ages of 5 to 6, with 4% older than 6 and 7% younger than 5 (Mulligan, Hastedt, & McCarroll 2012). These national averages, however, while illustrating the range of ages present in kindergarten classrooms nationally, do not reflect state-by-state variations in age of eligibility and other policies that may lead different states' kindergartners to tend to be younger or older.

### Effects of older and younger age at enrollment

The arguments made about the assumed advantages of starting kindergarten older, rather than younger, are well known in the field (e.g., Stipek 2002; Deming & Dynarski 2008). These arguments have contributed to states' changes in their age-of-entry policies (described above) and also contribute to parents' choice to delay kindergarten entry for their otherwise eligible children (a practice called *redshirting*). But to what extent does starting kindergarten later actually lead to positive outcomes for children?

There is evidence that starting kindergarten older, rather than younger, does lead to higher scores on achievement tests (e.g., Datar 2006; Malone et. al 2006; NICHD Early Childhood Research Network 2007; Deming & Dynarski 2008; Elder & Lubotsky 2009; Robertson 2011). These papers all find small, sometimes statistically significant differences in children's cognitive skills and abilities during the very early years of school, but by third grade most differences have disappeared. While very few studies have examined differences in areas other

than achievement during the school years, those that have (e.g., NICHD Early Childhood Research Network 2007) report no significant relationships between these outcomes and child age of entry. Others (e.g., Lincove & Painter 2006; Deming & Dynarski 2008; Dobkin & Ferreira 2010) have found only minor or no significant impact of differences in age of entry to kindergarten on adolescent and adulthood social and economic outcomes.

The consistency of findings of early differences, despite the related finding that these effects tend to fade over time, is compelling. However, despite this consistency, the research remains muddled. For example, the practice of delaying kindergarten entry is more prevalent among some groups of children, especially boys (Graue & DiPerna 2000), confounding the effects of the age of enrollment with factors that may shape a decision to delay entry. Very few studies have been able to examine closer variations in age of entry (e.g., children just before or just after the age cut-off) to disentangle when and how the advantage fades (e.g., Morrison, Griffith, & Alberts 1997). Some children who enter school older (i.e., they were redshirted) may have instead enrolled in a high-quality prekindergarten program and benefitted from it, while others may have delayed entry out of concerns that they were not adequately prepared for school, yet did not enter a prekindergarten program. Given that most children experience some form of center-based programming before kindergarten entry, the age of entry into kindergarten has profound effects on programs provided to children prior to school entry. Finally, enrollment policies, regardless of the ages specified, generally result in up to one year of variation in age. When these policies allow for delayed entry, that variation can stretch to nearly twice that range, to say nothing of the potential for children who are repeating kindergarten (and so would typically be one year older than their traditional first-time entry peers). This potential diversity in ages likely has significant implications when establishing learning standards for children in kindergarten, as discussed more fully below.

## IMPACT OF VARIATIONS IN KINDERGARTEN EXPERIENCE WITHIN THE COMMON CORE

As described above, differences between states and school districts in the provision of kindergarten of different durations (half or full-day) and age of enrollment create a range of possible experiences for young children in kindergarten. These variations can dramatically alter the opportunities for young children to meet expectations identified by the Common Core (as well as state standards that may exist in addition to the Core).

The difference between half-day and full-day kindergarten programs may have profound effects on children's kindergarten experience. States with half-day programs have less than half the instructional time than do states with full-day programs. Implementing a common set of curriculum standards regardless of the duration of kindergarten increases the likelihood that

those areas included in the core (language arts and mathematics) will be more densely concentrated in half-day programs than in full-day programs, potentially decreasing time to address children's needs in other developmental areas. Of course, a difference in the number of hours children spend in kindergarten alone cannot compensate for differences that may exist in the nature of their experience and the preparation and effectiveness of their teachers (Patall et al.2010).

It is also possible that instruction to meet the Common Core that is not possible within a half-day kindergarten program may be "pushed" to either before- or after-school programs (where they exist) or prekindergarten programs. Before- and after-school programs may not be appropriately staffed or prepared to implement strategies to support the kindergarten standards. Prekindergarten programs are guided by early learning standards (where applicable) that might not align with the Common Core. In either case, programs that "wrap around" the kindergarten experience might not be available to all children, creating the potential for opening gaps in readiness and early achievement. Of course, beyond these practical considerations is the ethical consideration of what the purpose of these programs is, and to what extent should that purpose be affected by policies and practices not directly applicable to them? To the extent possible, programs must be made available to children to ensure they have appropriate opportunities to meet the expectations of the Common Core and other kindergarten standards within the state.

Variations in the age of entry also exist between states, and in some states where parents can opt to delay entry for up to one year, such variation may exist within classrooms. Age heterogeneity in kindergarten classrooms is expected, when standards are established within each state, they are (possibly) accounted for as expectations for 5-year-olds and those for 6-year-olds may be expected to vary. Adoption of the Common Core, however, means that the expectations for kindergarten children (at least in English language arts and mathematics) will be common across classrooms, irrespective of state or local variations in age of entry policies. With various consortia efforts under way among states, including those aimed at developing assessments aligned with the Common Core, there is great potential for a "one-size-fits-all" approach to take hold in the development of materials to support the Core (including assessments and curricula). It is not clear how much flexibility will exist in these materials to allow them to be effectively used across classrooms with large variation in the ages of children.

## TEACHER PREPARATION AND ASSIGNMENT IN KINDERGARTEN

One commonality within the tremendous diversity in the structure of kindergarten across the country and the children that enroll, and variation in quality of programs, is the presence of a teacher responsible for the kindergarten classroom. However, there are dramatic differences in how teachers in kindergarten

are prepared and whether they receive certification in early childhood or elementary education. As Fromberg (2006) has argued, the complexity and diversity of the kindergarten experience underscores the importance of preparation and of teachers. Especially during the transition into and through the early years of school, the dramatic variation in children's experience and development requires a sophisticated understanding of child development. In 2010 the National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE 2010) called for a dramatic increase in the amount of developmental science content included in teacher training programs. A similar concern is voiced by Lutton (2012) in laying out standards for the preparation of early childhood educators. By increasing teachers' understanding of child development and developmental processes, preparation programs can provide teachers with deeper understanding of how to adopt methods to ensure their children meet standards. NAEYC's Professional Preparation standards (Lutton 2012) are intended for teachers working with children from birth through age 8. However, not all teachers who are assigned to teach kindergarten are prepared in an early childhood education preparation program. Just as individual teachers' preparation may vary, states offer a range of credentials that highlight the levels at which teachers are (presumably) prepared to effectively teach. In a review of state credentials for elementary school teachers, Bornfreund (2011) notes that while some states offer licenses that span more or fewer grades (e.g., K-6 versus pre-K-3), there are incentives for teachers to pursue licenses that provide more options for their ultimate placement, so credentials that cover a broader range tend to be preferred by teachers. In addition, Bornfreund (2011) notes that in general, states that license teachers specifically in the early education span tend to use that license for early childhood specialists, who are less likely than other teachers to be assigned to kindergarten classrooms. The methods necessary to effectively teach young children vary from those that are used in teaching older children, even within the elementary years. Teachers certified to teach across the elementary school grades may have limited experience with younger children, possibly undermining their effectiveness.

## CONCLUSION

Implementation of the Common Core State Standards in English language arts and mathematics starting in kindergarten underscores the state-by-state variation in how kindergarten is provided, when children enroll, and who provides their classroom instruction. While a common set of achievable, challenging standards is an important component of education, expecting a common set of standards to be reached in the absence of common delivery systems is potentially challenging, and may have unintended, negative effects (e.g., Meisels 1992). This paper highlights three specific areas in which kindergarten differs from state to state—provision of kindergarten and its duration, age of entry, and teacher preparation. Each of these areas represent variations in children's access to kindergarten programming to meet the Common Core standards. Each also underscores the need for greater attention to be paid to the

critical year in children's learning and education within the larger birth to work or college continuum (see also Bryant & Clifford 1992), and the need to consider how quality can be assured in kindergarten classrooms so that they provide the best possible frame through which standards (Common Core and otherwise) may be met.

## Considerations for Policymakers

Given the variations in kindergarten, and that nearly every state has adopted the Common Core standards, states and school districts should leverage this change in public policies to create better quality and more equitable kindergarten experiences for all children:

- Children's mastery of literacy and mathematics is connected to their social and emotional development (executive functioning) and physical development. States should adopt standards for the additional domains not covered by the Common Core, but critical to academic and developmental success: social, emotional and physical development; approaches to learning. Standards should not be developed through a back-mapping of standards for the higher grades; instead, they should reflect a forward progression of child development and learning. The 2008 National Research Council Report on child assessment stated "A parallel effort to raise the attention of practitioners in the K through 12 arena to the importance of social/emotional development and approaches to learning not only would improve the learning environment for element children, it would create a better environment to address alignment issues."
- Standards and assessments intended to align to learning standards should never be used to deny entry to kindergarten retain a child in kindergarten.
- When assessments are directed to a narrow set of skills, the very competencies that make academic success possible may be ignored. Federal, state and local assessment policies should focus on the use of assessments across all domains and throughout the year for the purpose of improving instruction and teacher professional development, and not for high-stakes accountability for children, teachers, programs or schools.
- All children should have access to high quality kindergarten experiences, including the equitable dosage of support and teaching that addresses all domains of development and learning and access to special education and other supportive services as needed for their optimal success throughout the kindergarten year.
- States should also provide for credentialing that recognizes teachers' need for specialized preparation for working young children ages birth through eight years old. Teachers of kindergarten age children should have preparation in teaching programs that meet the NAEYC Professional Preparation standards, a performance-based set of standards for teaching children from birth through age 8. With the variability of children's age and development upon entry to kindergarten, it is important that kindergarten teachers have the specialized knowledge of teaching and developmentally appropriate teaching practices.
- District and school administrators — are decision makers that can support or hinder effective instruction and services for young children. State entities that develop and implement credentials for school administrators who oversee or make decisions about curriculum, assessment and professional development should include a requirement for knowledge of child development and learning.
- States and districts should design, implement and utilize assessments of young children in ways that promote better instructional practice and services. States and districts should heed the cautions of the National Academies of Sciences reports on the unique issues of assessing young children, the state of assessments, and the unintended consequences of inappropriate uses of assessment information for children, teachers, and schools.

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# EDUCATION WEEK

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## COMMENTARY

# The Half-Day Kindergarten-Common Core Mismatch

By Laura A. Bornfreund

This fall, millions of 5-year-olds donned backpacks full of school supplies for the first time as they headed off to kindergarten. Depending on where they live, however, these children are having widely divergent experiences, with some attending full-day kindergarten and others offered only half-day classes. And yet the new national English/language arts and math standards they are expected to meet are exactly the same.

Under the Common Core State Standards, kindergartners will be challenged by new and higher expectations. Forty-six states and the District of Columbia have signed up for the common core (one of those states, Minnesota, adopted only the ELA standards). Will teachers be able to help their kindergarten pupils reach the common goals when those children are only attending for half a school day? Or might the instruction needed to meet the standards be pushed to before- or after-school programs or prekindergarten programs, as a recent report from the National Association for the Education of Young Children cautioned?

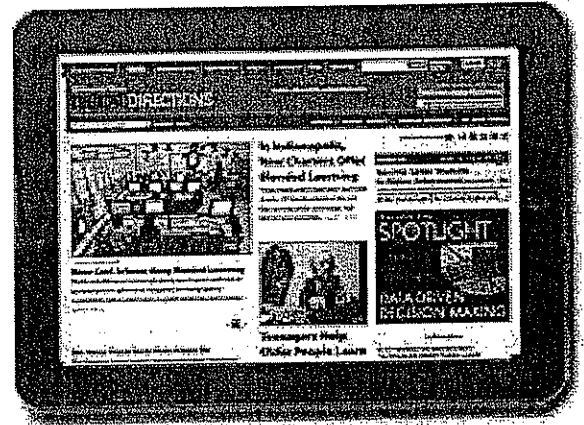
Children enrolled in half-day kindergarten receive less instructional time, likely experience a narrowed curriculum, have less time for experimentation and exploration, and enjoy fewer opportunities for play. Many states and school districts already require a 90-minute uninterrupted reading block in elementary schools. It's likely that others may choose to adopt the 90-minute reading policy because of the demands of the common core. Focusing on early reading and language development is important, but in half-day kindergarten—which rarely lasts longer than three hours a day—that reading block would leave only about 90 minutes each day for deep learning in mathematics, science, social studies, and the arts, not to mention time for physical activity and socializing, which are so important to kindergartners' development.

How many American children are in half-day kindergarten? It's nearly impossible to know because states are not required to keep track, and decisions about kindergarten have been left to local districts in most places. When school districts do choose to provide a full day of kindergarten, it is

"In half-day programs, will state standards for other subjects play

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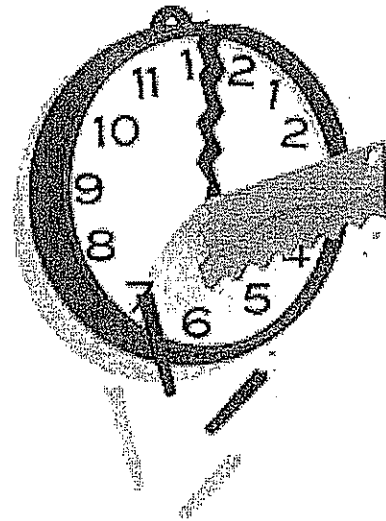
vulnerable to funding cuts because in most states it is not required by law.

second fiddle to the common core?"

According to an analysis by the Children's Defense Fund, only 10 states and the District of Columbia require that districts provide full-day kindergarten for all children. Some states require only a half-day. Six states have no kindergarten requirement at all, although most districts still offer at least half-day kindergarten. Thirteen states allow districts to charge parents for part of a **full day of kindergarten**.

Even before the arrival of the common core, many experts have advocated full-day kindergarten, arguing that children who attend it are more prepared for later learning in school, post higher academic achievement in later grades, and display more advanced social, emotional, and behavioral development, which also helps them learn in later grades.

A half-day allows less time for teachers to include inquiry-led instruction, child-centered play, exploration and hands-on activities—all important learning opportunities. Additionally, kindergartners in half-day programs have less time to be with teachers who know how to help them develop and practice social-emotional skills, such as understanding feelings, managing emotions, regulating behavior, and developing empathy. While the common core only directs what should be taught in reading and math and not how it should be taught, teachers in half-day programs may feel the need to resort to more direct instruction rather than employ strategies that match how young children best learn.



—Illustration by Chris Whetzel

In Pennsylvania, for example, according to the state's science standards, kindergartners are supposed to begin learning about similarities and differences between living things. One example of an activity for this standard is to observe the growth of a living thing—a frog, perhaps—and document it through drawings and writings. In half-day programs, will state standards for other subjects play second fiddle to the common core? Will kids miss out on lessons such as this for additional instruction in reading and math? Teachers can and should select informational texts on science-related topics to use during reading lessons. This is actually a **requirement** of the common-core reading standards. But reading about a frog's life cycle is very different from actively observing, discussing, and explaining it. Children need both. Teachers may find it challenging to fit both into a three-hour day.

A teacher from the South Huntington district in New York illustrated the problem in a letter to the school board when it was considering cutting full-day kindergarten despite the common core: "So there will be no time for calendar, morning message (I can't even begin to tell you how many skills are developed through this activity), playing, singing, character education, socializing, fine motor skills, art, painting, cutting, handwriting, learning how to work as a group, telling stories, sharing their favorite things, listening to more than one story a day, technology, fitness breaks, using their imaginations, making new friends at recess, exploring their kindergarten classroom through activities > workstations, etc."

Some districts are making or discussing making the shift from half-day to full-day kindergarten because of the new standards. School districts across Connecticut provide

examples. In an **article** in the *Suffield Patch*, an online publication, the Suffield, Conn., superintendent of schools, Karen Baldwin, said there isn't enough time in a half-day to implement the common core. And according to an **article** in the *Hartford Courant*, the superintendent of the Wethersfield, Conn., public schools, Thomas Y. McDowell, said of the common core: "The bottom line is we cannot deliver our present-day kindergarten curriculum in a half-day model." In another article from Connecticut, Bethel Associate Superintendent Janice Jordan said a full day of kindergarten allows for the time needed to support the new standards and to have appropriate time for play.



I'm happy to see that change is afoot in some districts. But states must act as well to keep full-day kindergarten off the chopping block in districts when budgets are slim. The common-core standards provide a clear, consistent, and challenging framework for what children should know and be able to do in math and reading. To help children reach the high expectations and have a well-rounded kindergarten experience, states should fund a full day of kindergarten and require school districts to provide it.

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# The Common Core State Standards: Caution and Opportunity for Early Childhood Education

**naeyc**

RESEARCH

POLICY

PRACTICE

# The Common Core State Standards: Caution and Opportunity for Early Childhood Education

As of fall 2012, 45 states have adopted the Common Core State Standards for English language arts and mathematics. The development and adoption of these standards has drawn a great deal of debate in both the K-12 and early education fields. As states adopting the Core standards are moving towards implementation, the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) has developed this paper to provide a frame for this ongoing dialogue. This frame is built around the four central themes articulated in NAEYC's position statement on early learning standards. These themes have guided the development and implementation of learning standards in early childhood, and are used here to underscore the potential contributions that that early childhood field can continue to make in implementing learning standards for children as they enter school. In addition to providing a framework for dialogue, this paper encourages dialogue so that early childhood education can work in concert with K-12 education to ensure that learning standards for young children, before they enter school and as they progress through the early elementary years, are consistent with our accumulated knowledge and experience as a field. The paper closes with a summary of activities being undertaken by NAEYC and actions that may be taken by early educators to meet this goal.

## **Suggested citation:**

National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC). 2011. *The Common Core State Standards: Caution and Opportunity for Early Childhood Education*. Washington, DC: National Association for the Education of Young Children.

An earlier draft of this paper was reviewed by Kathy Hirsh-Pasek (Temple University), Sam Meisels (Erikson Institute), Ben Russell (Boston Public Schools), Jason Sachs (Boston Public Schools), and Kathy Thornburg (University of Missouri). Their extensive comments and questions greatly improved the quality of this paper. However, the content of this paper is solely the responsibility of NAEYC.

# The Common Core State Standards: Caution and Opportunity for Early Childhood Education

**T**he Common Core State Standards (CCSS) Initiative is a state-led effort coordinated by the National Governors Association Center for Best Practices (NGA Center) and the Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO) in partnership with Achieve. According to the CCSS Initiative website (<http://www.corestandards.org/about-the-standards>), the goal of the initiative is to:

provide teachers and parents with a common understanding of what students are expected to learn. Consistent standards will provide appropriate benchmarks for all students, regardless of where they live... These standards define the knowledge and skills students should have within their K-12 education careers. (n.p.)

While the focus of the initiative is to ensure college and career readiness, the application of the project reaches across the K-12 spectrum.

The Common Core State Standards (commonly referred to as the "Common Core") have begun to dominate the landscape in K-12 education and have attracted commentary from the early childhood education community as well. As states move toward implementation, the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) is launching an effort to consider both the concerns and opportunities being raised within the field. This paper outlines the reasons for NAEYC's interest in the Common Core, and it attempts to provide a framework for the early education field to consider not only the aspects of the Common Core that may pose threats to early childhood education, but also those aspects that may provide early childhood education with the opportunity to exert its

collected research and experience upward into K-12 education. NAEYC maintains that the establishment of clear, attainable learning goals is critical in ensuring that all children receive the highest quality of educational experiences.

## FOCUSING ON THE COMMON CORE IN EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION

The Common Core is of particular interest to NAEYC for two reasons.<sup>1</sup> First, the application of the Common Core to K-3 overlaps with NAEYC's interest in the latter years of early childhood during which children enter school and progress through the early elementary grades. For these children, the development and implementation of the Common Core will have a direct and immediate impact. Second, there is the potential for the Common Core to impact programs for young children prior to kindergarten entry. Together, these two systems capture the early years of children's continuum of learning. Along this continuum there may be positive effects (e.g., providing consistent learning benchmarks for all children across the country) as well as negative effects (e.g., the potential for pressure on early childhood programs to focus more on English language arts and mathematics). Therefore, NAEYC is launching an effort to identify potential advantages and highlight potential dangers to early childhood education as the Common Core moves into implementation.

In April 2010, NAEYC and the National Association of Early Childhood Specialists in State Departments of Education (NAECS/SDE) issued a joint statement to coincide with the announcement of the CCSS Initiative.<sup>2</sup> While NAEYC applauded the launch of the Common Core and the inclusion of standards for kindergarten through third grade, several concerns and cautions were also noted. At the time, these concerns were primarily focused on the restricted range of domains included in the initial launch of the Common Core, which focused exclusively on language arts and mathematics (though the potential for standards in other academic areas was also indicated). In noting the limited range of attention, the statement issued by NAEYC and NAECS/SDE "expressed concern...that effort on only two content domains could result in the unintended consequence of narrowing curriculum and instructional practice to the detriment of student learning." Of particular concern was the absence of social and emotional development and approaches to learning, although the lack of attention to the whole child was generally noted.

The Common Core State Standards Initiative has received criticism on these and a number of philosophical, political, and practical grounds. It is not the purpose here to revisit these. Instead, NAEYC recognizes that nearly all states (46 as of September 25, 2012) have committed to adopting the Common Core, so our focus is on ensuring that the implementation of the Common Core, especially its continued development, expansion, and evaluation, moves to address the

concerns of the NAEYC membership and the early childhood education field.

As states have adopted the Common Core, there has been growing discussion within the early childhood community about the "unintended consequences" noted in NAEYC's initial response to the Common Core. These consequences include concerns about the allocation of time and resources to support the content of the Common Core relative to areas not included in these standards, and about the means by which schools will assess children's progress in meeting the standards.<sup>3</sup>

However, the Common Core may also provide opportunities for the early childhood community to add to the discourse about educational reform and work to ensure that research and practical experience within the early childhood education field can, and should, contribute to the shape of the Common Core during the early years of schooling. The implementation of the Common Core provides a unique opportunity for the early childhood education field to be "present and vocal," as Ryan and Goffin (2008) encourage, not just within early childhood education but also in the broader education system (see also Hyun 2003), through its promotion of the use of evidence-based best practices at all levels of education. At the same time, though, as Halpern (forthcoming) notes, more closely connecting early childhood education with traditional K-12 educational practices also poses threats to the central ideas in early education as the K-12 system exerts a downward pressure of increased academic focus and more narrowed instructional approaches. This threat also provides an opportunity, however, for early education to exert "upward pressure" toward the K-12 system by advocating for practices successfully used in early childhood education to be adopted into the K-12 space. This, of course, means advocating for the use of developmentally appropriate practices (Copple & Bredekamp 2009; NAEYC & NAECS/SDE 2003), and it also allows for the opportunity to underscore the fundamental features of early childhood education, including the focus on the whole child and consideration of the larger social and cultural world in which the child lives.

## THE ROLE OF LEARNING STANDARDS IN EDUCATION

**N**AEYC has long promoted excellence in early childhood education for all young children from birth through age 8. Through its accreditation systems for programs serving young children and programs preparing teachers of young children, NAEYC has advanced a goal of equity in opportunity for all children to reduce or eliminate disparities in learning and educational outcomes. The Common Core initiative was launched to meet a similar goal—to ensure that *all* children are prepared for success in college at the completion of their K-12 education.

There is a long history of education reform in the United States that addresses disparities in achievement through the development of standards that, if universally applied, should produce equity in opportunities to learn (e.g., Harris & Herrington 2006). However, some experts question the effect

of variations in standards—and variations in how students' proficiencies are identified through assessment—on explanations of students' achievement (e.g., Reed 2009). Likewise, changes in standards and their assessment alone may not be adequate interventions to improve performance and close achievement gaps (Darling-Hammond 1994). Addressing uneven standards may set the stage for common expectations, but placing too much responsibility on uneven curriculum standards obscures disparities in other critical areas, including funding allocations for materials, opportunities to learn, and wide variation in teacher and school quality (e.g., Akiba, LeTendre, & Scribner 2007; Darling-Hammond 2006). Indeed, in the NAEYC and NAECS/SDE (2002) position statement concerning early learning standards, the content of the standards is considered to be only one piece of the larger early education system, which must be coupled with providing necessary supports to teachers (in training and ongoing learning opportunities, as well as developmentally appropriate curriculum materials) and valid assessment systems aligned to the standards to ensure that expectations for children's learning are developmentally appropriate.

NAEYC and NAECS/SDE (2002) support standards for young children, and the benefits of these standards extend into the early elementary years and beyond. For example, NAEYC and NAECS/SDE (2002, p. 4) note, "Clear, research based expectations for the content and desired results of early learning experiences can help focus curriculum and instruction, aiding teachers and families in providing appropriate, educationally beneficial opportunities for all children." However, the NAEYC and NAECS/SDE statement articulates four conditions under which early learning standards should be developed and implemented. Comparing these conditions against the development and implementation of the Common Core may provide avenues for early education and K-12 education systems to become more closely aligned in purpose. Each of these four conditions is briefly summarized and discussed in connection with the Common Core in the sections that follow.

### **1. Early learning standards should emphasize significant developmentally appropriate content and outcomes.**

The initial set of Common Core standards speaks to young children's development in English language arts and mathematics, as previously noted. While there is movement toward common standards in other cognitive or academic domains (e.g., science, see <http://www.nextgenscience.org/>), there has not yet been systematic consideration given to critical domains outside of these areas. This is at odds with the importance given to six domains of child development included as part of the kindergarten entry assessments (KEAs) called for by the Race to the Top and Early Learning Challenge, as well as the early childhood education focus on the whole child.

Even within the limited domains covered by the Common Core, there is room to legitimately question the degree to which the standards are developmentally

appropriate. While there may be a research basis for their content, critical content and age validation of the Common Core has yet to be realized. Elements of the Common Core may represent changes in state standards, for example an increased focus on nonfiction text in earlier grades, the impact of which has yet to be fully explored. It is worth noting, as well, that although (at the time of this writing) the Common Core excludes domains other than English language arts and mathematics, their absence in the Common Core does not preclude states (or districts) from maintaining or adopting standards in other developmental areas, individually or in collaboration. However, these standards will not likely be common across states, which suggests that they will be variable both in their content and in the degree to which they align with the content in the Common Core. These standards should also be considered for their appropriateness.

## **2. Early learning standards are developed and reviewed through informed, inclusive processes.**

The Common Core standards were developed at a remarkably fast pace that some early childhood professionals have criticized. The process of developing early learning standards calls upon multiple stakeholders with possibly differing points of view to consider the content of standards not only at the time of their launch but also as they are implemented over time. This allows standards to persist over time to become better at guiding opportunities to optimize children's learning. Therefore, as states move toward implementation of the Common Core, experts in early education and K-12 education can ensure that the standards are continually reviewed for appropriateness to the diversity of children beginning public schooling, and for consistency with emerging research.

Some of the early critiques of the Common Core (e.g., Meisels 2011; Zubrzycki 2011) should be further developed and explored, and become the focus of critical analysis as states implement the Common Core. While there may have been a limited voice for early childhood education in the development of the Common Core, this voice can and should be encouraged and heard as part of an ongoing process of examination of the Common Core as it is implemented. If such an ongoing review process is not apparent, the early childhood education field can exert its voice by holding the developers and implementers accountable for such an ongoing review.

This is perhaps most critical at the points where the Common Core standards intersect with early learning standards. Aligning standards for K-12 with early learning standards presents a number of challenges, including the very real potential for "push-down," where the K-12 standards may exert pressure on states to modify their oftentimes well-developed early learning standards to align with those for programs serving older children. The early childhood field should not allow for alignment to flow only downward but should advocate for the "push-up" of early childhood standards to inform ongoing development of K-12 standards, including those in areas not part of the Common Core.

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### 3. Early learning standards gain their effectiveness through implementation and assessment practices that support children's development in ethical, appropriate ways.

Learning standards, or content standards, provide the "what" of education, but they do not describe the "how" of education. The content standards set the goal toward which teaching and learning opportunities are directed for young children. The "how" of learning should be aligned to the content standard through our understanding of best practices to increase the chances of attaining the goal, even as the goal itself needs to be aligned with our knowledge of children's learning processes. Likewise, content standards should inform how children's learning is assessed so that children can show proficiency—this is often called performance standards for children. Setting the curriculum standards is but one piece of the educational enterprise, and work on other elements within the frame provided by the Common Core is only just beginning. Especially critical is maintaining methods of instruction that include a range of approaches—including the use of play as well as both small- and large-group instruction—that are considered to be developmentally appropriate for young children. Likewise, approaches to assessing young children and the appropriate use of assessment data will increasingly become concerns as the Common Core moves from design to implementation.

Standards are meant to ensure that we set high yet achievable goals for all children. As such, we are ethically bound to ensure that these standards (the "what") and their implementation (the "how") and their assessment are free from bias and are developmentally appropriate for all children entering school. The tremendous diversity among children, including those from diverse cultural and linguistic backgrounds and those with disabilities, warrant special consideration in ensuring that the standards and their implementation and assessment work to close gaps and disparities rather than widen them. Likewise, assessment of progress in meeting standards should be governed by long-standing practices and beliefs that recognize the importance of appropriate assessment while also recognizing the challenges in building accountability systems for young children around high-stakes testing (e.g., NAEYC & NAECS/SDE 2001, 2003; Snow & Von Hemel 2008).

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### 4. Early learning standards require a foundation of support for early childhood programs, professionals, and families.

Researchers in early education and in K-12 education point out that establishing appropriate and challenging content standards is one element of a high-performing education system, but these standards require a system of supports for implementation. As noted previously the Common Core provides the "what," but its success in moving children toward college and work readiness relies upon a foundation of supports. Schools need to ensure that there is adequate time for implementation of the Common Core without jeopardizing time for activities that address children's needs not included in the current



standards. Teachers need appropriate tools to address each standard, including aligned curricula and related resources; they may need additional training as well. Finally, families need to be provided with necessary information in order to be able to understand the learning goals established by the standards and identify roles that they may take to support their children's education.

## THE EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION VOICE IN THE COMMON CORE

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**B**ased upon the long history of early learning standards—and lessons learned by the early learning community throughout the course of their development and implementation—NAEYC urges early childhood education professionals to actively engage in the dialogue about the Common Core State Standards and their implementation. Critical to this dialogue will be informed voices who can join their deep understanding of standards in general, and early learning and Common Core standards in particular, with knowledge of research and practice in early childhood education. The early childhood education field is uniquely able to join this knowledge and experience with that provided by our colleagues working in K–12 education to ensure that the Common Core meets its goals of promoting college and career readiness for all children.

## WHAT IS NAEYC DOING?

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**I**n the coming months, NAEYC will be undertaking a number of activities to encourage and support this dialogue. At our Annual Conference and National Institute for Early Childhood Professional Development, sessions developed by NAEYC staff as well as those submitted by experts in the field will be readily identified. A series of webinars is being developed by NAEYC, alone and in conjunction with other partnering organizations, to ensure that there is a clear understanding about the intent and content of the Common Core, as well as the possibility for thoughtful dialogue about potential concerns. Finally, NAEYC is developing a series of issue briefs that, we hope, will act to spark discussion within the early childhood education community about what we know (and do not know) about early childhood education and how we can create meaningful connections between what have historically been two separate education models: early childhood education and K–12 education.

## WHAT CAN I DO?

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**A**s the Common Core begins to be implemented, there are many potential opportunities for us in the early childhood education community to engage in the process with our colleagues in K–12 education. First, the early childhood education community should take advantage of all available opportunities to encourage those in K–12 education to consider the collected

experience and research knowledge from the early childhood education field in the implementation of standards, including the view that content standards do not exist in isolation (as noted previously). Especially in states, districts, or schools where implementation of the Common Core threatens other areas of children's development, the early childhood education community must share research on the importance of other domains of child development that are not only important in their own right but are also important because the interrelatedness of child development also supports children's development in Common Core content areas. Early childhood education professionals, especially those already working within elementary school settings as teachers, administrators, or providers of teacher training or professional development, can work directly with those in the K-12 setting to bring fundamental early childhood education principles to be on implementing the Common Core, especially developmentally appropriate practice.

Those working in programs serving children before kindergarten should become familiar with the Common Core and other k-12 content standards as well as their early learning standards, not only to prepare children for school, but also to identify potential mismatches (or lack of alignment) that undermine the potential of early childhood education to nurture children's learning and development. Professionals who are working in early childhood education policy and research can engage CCSSO, NGA, Achieve, and others nationally, within each state, and possibly within each district that has begun implementation by monitoring and commenting on developments through web updates, and participating in scientific and implementation meetings where possible.<sup>4</sup>

In this call for early childhood education to find its voice, it is also imperative to suggest that this voice should be as strong in its critical appraisal of the Common Core as it is in vocalizing its positives. Combining deep knowledge of early childhood education with an accurate understanding of the Common Core is critical in ensuring that the early childhood education field continues to work in support of the highest quality education for all children as they progress along the continuum of learning.

## CONCLUSION

Our goal, as always, is focused on providing the highest quality of early childhood educational experiences that are appropriate to children's developmental status and respectful of diversity. There is much about the Common Core that can contribute to this goal, much that can be further enhanced with the guidance provided through experts in the early childhood education field, and perhaps some things that may arise as critical concerns that need immediate attention. The reality is that the Common Core State Standards are present in K-12 education. The early childhood education community can work to ensure that long-held ideals and evidence-based approaches to supporting the development of young children operate in concert with common standards to ensure equity in educational opportunity and achievement for all children.

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Kindergarten pupils Piper Stephan, left, and Delaney Lane read to each other at Triadelphia Ridge Elementary School in Glenelg, Md. Maryland is one of 46 states to adopt new common standards in math and English/language arts for K-12.

—Matt Roth for Education Week

Educators Walk a Tightrope between Academics and Young Children's Developmental Needs. *Education Week* 31 (13): 1, 20-21. [http://www.edweek.org/ew/articles/2011/12/07/13prek\\_ep.h31.html?r=1461126056](http://www.edweek.org/ew/articles/2011/12/07/13prek_ep.h31.html?r=1461126056).

## (ENDNOTES)

1 While generally associated with early childhood education, NAEYC focuses on programs serving children from birth to age 8. During this time children may encounter recognized systems of early childhood care and education which serve children from birth until school entry (sometimes referred to as 0-5) as well as the earliest years of K-12 education (referred to as K-3). Early childhood education is used to define programs that serve children until they enter school, but the early education field as represented by NAEYC also includes professionals working with, and programs designed for, children in the early elementary grades as well.

2 This statement is available at <http://www.naeyc.org/files/naeyc/file/policy/NAEYC-NAECS-SDE-Core-Standards-Statement.pdf>.

3 Both of these concerns may also be fueled by provisions within federal education funding that give priority to adoption of the Common Core.

4 The key starting points in following developments related to the Common Core include the Common Core State Standards Initiative website (<http://www.corestandards.org>) and Achieve (<http://www.achieve.org/achieving-common-core>). Two groups working on developing assessments related to the Common Core are the Partnership for Assessment of Readiness for College and Careers (<http://www.parcconline.org/achieving-common-core>) and Smarter Balanced Assessment Consortium (<http://www.smarterbalanced.org/k-12-education/common-core-state-standards-tools-resources/>).

# Section 3

*Research on recommended  
instructional minutes for reading*

## CMCSS Literacy Block Framework

The research by the National Reading Panel indicates that *all* children benefit from initial instruction that is direct, systematic and explicit. Some Comprehensive Core Reading Programs (CCRPs) contain guidance for, and examples of, this type of instruction. Districts and schools that are using core reading programs (those supported by scientifically-based reading research or SBRR) will include skill building and practice at the appropriate grade levels for the five essential elements of reading instruction (fluency, vocabulary, phonics, phonemic awareness and text comprehension).

The Report from the Tennessee Reading Panel recommends that all elementary schools provide students with a 90 minute uninterrupted reading block daily. Student writing in response to reading is included in the 90 minute reading block, but formal instruction in the writing process or instruction in grammar is scheduled outside the ninety minutes. Integration of the writing process and grammar instruction within a comprehensive, balanced literacy approach requires the 90-minute reading block be extended to 120 minutes.

The 90- or 120-minute literacy block supports the high quality, effective reading instruction necessary in the typical K-6 classroom. Whole class introduction and/or review is conducted during approximately the first ten minutes of the daily reading block. During this time, the teacher reviews previously learned vocabulary words as well as concepts or skills, with particular attention to those upon which the necessary day's lesson may be built.

The 90 minutes in the Literacy Block are minutes designated for the five essential components of reading instruction, spelling, writing, and small group instruction. Small group instruction allows the teacher to differentiate instruction by forming small flexible groups to meet students' needs and to have students work independently on anchor activities.

Below are three examples of literacy blocks. Table 1 is a **suggested** guide for the 90-minute literacy block for kindergarten through 3<sup>rd</sup> grade. Table 2 provides a **suggested** guide for a 120-minute reading block for kindergarten through 3<sup>rd</sup> grade. Table 3 provides a **suggested** guide for a 120-minute reading block for 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> grade. These are examples only and can be **modified** to align with district goals, standards, and instructional decisions made by individual schools.

Adapted from *The Professional Development Framework* (2005), EXPAND THE REACH project, funded by the U.S. Office of Elementary and Secondary Education and managed by DTI, a Haverstick Company.

Source: Carol G. Thigpin, EXPAND THE REACH Technical Assistance Specialist, [cgtassociates@comcast.net](mailto:cgtassociates@comcast.net) 615-754-4878

| Example: 90 minute Reading Block with Additional Time for Immediate Intensive Intervention (iii) |   |  |   |   |   |   |   |   |
|--|---|--|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Instruction  | Possible Time   | Class Configuration                                      |   |   |   |   | Examples of Teacher-Led Instruction   |   |
| 90 minutes daily   | 30-45 minutes   | Whole Group  |   |   |   |   | Implement Comprehensive Core Reading Program (CCRP)   |   |
|  |   |  |   |   |   |   | <b>Phonemic Awareness:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Blending &amp; Segmenting word parts &amp; sounds in words</li> </ul> <b>Phonics &amp; Fluency:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Letter-sound correspondence</li> <li>Blending words</li> <li>Choral reading decodable book</li> </ul> <b>Vocabulary &amp; Comprehension:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Robust vocabulary instruction</li> <li>Pre-reading strategies</li> <li>During reading strategies</li> <li>Post reading strategies</li> </ul> |   |
|  | 45-60 minutes   | Differentiated Instruction- Small Groups (Group 1 - 4**) |   |   |   |   | Implement CCRP resources and supplemental materials/programs  |   |
|  |   | *15 minutes for each group                               | M | T | W | Th  | F   | Group 1: segment sounds with Elkonin boxes gradually adding letters representing those sounds throughout the week.  |
|  |   | Session 1 (15 min)                                       | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1   | 1   | Group 2: word building with letters & pocket chart, read decodable book including words built. Culminating with fluent reading of decodable text without teacher support. |
| Session 2 (15 min)   | 2   | 2  | 2 | 2 | 2 | Group 3: read decodable book practicing blending words introduced in whole group, and fluent reading. Culminating with shared reading related to theme on the students' instructional level focusing on blending words, vocabulary, and use of comprehension strategies modeled in whole group. |   |   |
| Session 3 (15 min)   | 3   | 4  | 3 | 4 | 3 | Group 4: shared reading related to theme with a book on the students' instructional level focusing on vocabulary and use of comprehension strategies modeled in whole group.  |   |   |
| 20 minutes   | Immediate Intensive Intervention (iii):<br>Group 1 receives additional time, smaller group size, and very explicit instruction to meet their intensive intervention needs on a daily basis. |  |   |   |   | Supplemental and/or intensive intervention materials/programs   |   |   |
|  |   |  |   |   |   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Apply blending words previously taught in complete sentences that include known high frequency words.</li> <li>-Apply blending strategies using decodable text gradually releasing teacher support.</li> </ul>  |   |   |

\* This sample class has four small flexible groups that are formed based upon broad screen/progress monitoring and on-going progress monitoring assessment results. The teacher meets with two groups daily during sessions 1 and 2. While working with groups 3 and 4 on a rotating basis, group 3 receiving small group instruction 3 days per week, and group 4 receiving small group instruction 2 days per week. When students are not at the teacher-led station receiving explicit instruction, students will be working in small groups at literacy centers/stations reinforcing skills taught during whole group/teacher-led small group.

\*\* Small group size can vary, but the immediate intensive intervention group should be no larger than 3-5 students.

**Table 2**  
**Kindergarten – 3<sup>rd</sup> Grade**  
**120-Minute Literacy Block (an example)**

| Suggested Time Allocation | Activity   |
|---------------------------|--|
| 10                        | <b><u>Introduce/Review Lesson</u></b>  |
| 20                        | <p><b><u>Whole Class Instruction</u></b> *</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Activate and build on prior knowledge; predicting or other pre-reading activities</li> <li>• Vocabulary Lesson</li> <li>• Read story (use during reading strategies such as chunking, questioning, checking predictions, making predictions and so forth)</li> <li>• After reading activity: story mapping; summarizing, retelling</li> <li>• Reader's Response</li> </ul>   |
| 15                        | <b><u>Phonemic Awareness and/or Phonics</u></b>  |
| 30                        | <p><b><u>The Writing Process/Grammar Instruction</u></b>**</p> <p>(Includes a daily writing activity integrated with grammar instruction. The goal is to help students gain skills to bring a written piece to publication status once each two weeks).</p>  |
| 45                        | <p><b><u>Small Group Instruction</u></b> with the teacher three reading groups (15 minutes each)<br/>           (Note: Teachers generally meet with the group of very proficient readers, two to three times a week; with the "on target" or average readers daily and with the struggling readers daily with a longer period of time on some days.</p> <p><b><u>Anchor Activities</u></b> - Students not involved in small group instruction will work on activities independently, with others at their seats, or at literacy learning stations.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Practice Fluency—repeated readings with a partner or tape recorder</li> <li>• Paired reading</li> <li>• Reading response writing</li> <li>• Write word building words in the word journal</li> <li>• Research projects</li> <li>• Developing books</li> <li>• Completing reading-related graphic organizers</li> <li>• Word sorts; making words</li> <li>• Draw a picture of vocabulary word</li> <li>• Draw or write in the beginning, middle, and end of the story</li> <li>• Listening</li> <li>• Reading boxes</li> <li>• Computer</li> <li>• Spelling</li> <li>• Reader's Theater</li> <li>• Strategy practice</li> </ul> |

Note: Depending on the lesson and skills being taught, whole class instruction may not be a daily activity. When whole class instruction is not necessary extra time will be available.

\*\*When introducing a new trait in writing, or when doing a timed writing, the writing block may take the entire thirty minutes.

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Source: Carol G. Thigpin, EXPAND THE REACH Technical Assistance Specialist, cgtassociates at [cgtassociates@comcast.net](mailto:cgtassociates@comcast.net) 615-754-4878



\*\*The recommendation is that writing be included in all aspects of the reading block to support learning, but instruction in the writing process is taught during the writing block.

**Table 3**  
**4<sup>th</sup> – 5<sup>th</sup> grade**  
**120-Minute Literacy Block (an example)**

| Suggested Time Allocation | Activity  |
|---------------------------|---|
| 10                        | <b><u>Introduce/Review Lesson</u></b>   |
| 20                        | <p><b><u>Whole Class Instruction</u></b> *</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Activate and build on prior knowledge; predicting or other pre-reading activities</li> <li>• Vocabulary Lesson</li> <li>• Read story (use during reading strategies such as chunking, questioning, checking predictions, making predictions and so forth)</li> <li>• After reading activity: story mapping; summarizing, retelling</li> <li>• Reader's Response</li> </ul>  |
| 30                        | <p><b><u>The Writing Process/Grammar Instruction</u></b>**</p> <p>(Includes a daily writing activity integrated with grammar instruction. The goal is to help students gain skills to bring a written piece to publication status once each two weeks).</p>   |
| 60                        | <p><b><u>Small Group Instruction</u></b> with the teacher three reading groups (20 minutes each)<br/>(Note: Teachers generally meet with the group of very proficient readers, two to three times a week; with the "on target" or average readers daily and with the struggling readers daily with a longer period of time on some days.</p> <p><b><u>Anchor Activities</u></b> - Students not involved in small group instruction will work on activities independently, with others at their seats, or at literacy learning stations.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Practice Fluency—repeated readings with a partner or tape recorder</li> <li>• Paired reading</li> <li>• Reading response writing</li> <li>• Write word building words in the word journal</li> <li>• Research projects</li> <li>• Developing books</li> <li>• Completing reading-related graphic organizers</li> <li>• Word sorts; making words</li> <li>• Draw a picture of vocabulary word</li> <li>• Draw or write in the beginning, middle, and end of the story</li> <li>• Listening</li> <li>• Reading boxes</li> <li>• Computer</li> <li>• Spelling</li> <li>• Reader's Theater</li> <li>• Strategy practice</li> </ul> |

Note: Depending on the lesson and skills being taught, whole class instruction may not be a daily activity. When whole class instruction is not necessary extra time will be available.

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\*\*When introducing a new trait in writing, or when doing a timed writing, the writing block may take the entire thirty minutes.  
\*\*The recommendation is that writing be included in all aspects of the reading block to support learning, but instruction in the writing process is taught during the writing block.

Adapted from *The Professional Development Framework* (2005), EXPAND THE REACH project, funded by the U.S. Office of Elementary and Secondary Education and managed by DTI, a Haverstick Company.

Source: Carol G. Thigpin, EXPAND THE REACH Technical Assistance Specialist, cgtassociates at [cgtassociates@comcast.net](mailto:cgtassociates@comcast.net) 615-754-4878

| Example: 90 minute Reading Block with Extended Time for Immediate Intensive Intervention (120 minutes total)                               |                        |   |   |   |   |    |   |  |
|--|------------------------|---|---|---|---|----|---|--|
| Instruction  | Possible Range of Time | Class Configuration                                       |   |   |   |    | Examples of Teacher-Led Instruction   |  |
| 120 minutes daily  | 30-45 minutes          | Whole Group   |   |   |   |    | Implement Comprehensive Core Reading Program (CCRP)   |  |
|  |                        |   |   |   |   |    | <b>Phonemic Awareness:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Blending &amp; Segmenting word parts &amp; sounds in words</li> </ul> <b>Phonics &amp; Fluency:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Letter-sound correspondence</li> <li>Blending words</li> <li>Choral reading decodable book</li> </ul> <b>Vocabulary &amp; Comprehension:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Robust vocabulary instruction</li> <li>Pre-reading strategies</li> <li>During reading strategies</li> <li>Post-reading strategies</li> </ul> |  |
|  | 75-90 minutes          | Differentiated Instruction- Small Groups (Groups 1 - 4**) |   |   |   |    | Implement CCRP resources and supplemental and/or intervention materials/programs  |  |
|  |                        | *20-35 minutes based on group needs                       | M | T | W | Th | F   | Group 1: segment sounds with Elkonin boxes gradually adding letters representing those sounds throughout the week. Apply blending words in complete sentences that include known high frequency words. Culminating with applying blending strategies using decodable text gradually releasing teacher support. |
|  |                        | Session 1 (35 min)  | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1  | 1   | Group 2: word building with letters & pocket chart, read decodable book including words built. Culminating with fluent reading of decodable text without teacher support.  |
|  |                        | Session 2 (20 min)  | 2 | 2 | 2 | 2  | 2   | Group 3: read decodable book practicing blending words introduced in whole group, and fluent reading. Culminating with shared reading related to theme on the students' instructional level focusing on blending words, vocabulary, and use of comprehension strategies modeled in whole group.                |
| Session 3 (20 min)   |                        | 3   | 4 | 3 | 4 | 3  | Group 4: shared reading related to theme with a book on the students' instructional level focusing on vocabulary and use of comprehension strategies modeled in whole group   |  |
| Group 1 receives more time, smaller group size, and very explicit instruction to meet their intensive intervention needs on a daily basis. |                        |   |   |   |   |    |   |  |

\* This sample class has four small flexible groups that are formed based upon broad screen/progress monitoring and on-going progress monitoring assessment results. The teacher meets with two groups daily during sessions 1 and 2. While working with groups 3 and 4 on a rotating basis, group 3 receiving small group instruction 3 days per week, and group 4 receiving small group instruction 2 days per week. When students are not at the teacher-led station receiving explicit instruction, students will be working in small groups at literacy centers/stations reinforcing skills taught during whole group/teacher-led small group.

\*\* Small group size can vary, but the immediate intensive intervention group should be no larger than 3-5 students.



## 120-Minute Literacy Block Schedule: Grades K-3

| <i>Time</i>   | <i>Literacy component and brief description</i>   |
|---|---|
| <b>30 minutes</b>   | <b>Phonics</b><br><br>Direct, explicit, systematic instruction of letter-sound correspondences and spelling patterns, including phonological awareness, morphology, word relationships, and etymology according to standards. Words selected for phonics lesson can also address vocabulary needs.<br><br>Multisensory activities to reinforce phonics concepts (e.g. spelling with magnetic letters, writing on dry erase boards, sorting words)   |
| <b>60 minutes</b><br><br>(15-25 min.)*<br><br>(30-40 min.)* | <b>Reading Instruction</b><br><br>Direct Reading Instruction: shared reading or interactive read-aloud with complex text, focus on specific reading strategy<br><br>Small Group Instructional Time (Students should have enough time to rotate through at least two activities.) <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Independent Reading (daily): This station provides an opportunity to practice the day's reading strategy and complete a during-reading activity based on the mini-lesson (graphic organizers, Post-it notes, or other active reading products are recommended).</li><li>• Small Group Literacy Instruction: These groups are led by the teacher. Teachers should meet with at least two groups each day. The frequency that each group meets should be determined by student reading data.</li><li>• Literacy Work Stations: Opportunities to practice other developmentally-appropriate literacy skills. (See K-5 Literacy Work Station Norms.)</li></ul> |
| (5 min.)  | Share and final check for understanding: Students share how they accomplished the reading objective during their independent reading or literacy work stations.   |

\*Kindergarten will be on the lower end of this time frame; 3<sup>rd</sup> grade will be on the higher end.

|                   |   |
|-------------------|---|
| <b>30 minutes</b> | <b>Writing Instruction</b>  |
| (5-10 min.)       | Mini-lesson on specific writing strategy (includes modeled writing)   |
| (15-20 min.)      | <p>Student writing practice:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Writing task should be related to topic of mini-lesson</li> <li>• Steps of the writing process should be followed: prewrite, draft, revise, edit, and publish (Students are not expected to complete each step each day. Rather, these steps should be taught over the course of an entire unit.)</li> <li>• Several weeks should be spent using the writing process in order to publish a piece of writing (At least one piece of writing in each genre-based unit should be taken through the entire writing process and published.)</li> </ul> |
| (5 min.)          | Share: Students share their work with a friend or in a larger group.  |



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## 120-Minute Literacy Block Schedule: Grades 4-5

| <i>Time</i>   | <i>Literacy component and brief description</i>   |
|---|---|
| <b>20 minutes</b>   | <b>Phonics and Morphology</b><br><br>Direct, explicit, systematic instruction of letter-sound correspondences and spelling patterns and/or morphology, word relationships, vocabulary, and etymology (according to Standards and based on classroom data)<br><br>Multisensory activities to reinforce phonics concepts (e.g. spelling with magnetic letters, writing on dry erase board, word sorting)  |
| <b>60 minutes</b><br><br>(30-35 min.)<br><br>(20-25 min.) | <b>Reading Instruction</b><br><br>Direct Reading Instruction: shared reading of complex text (focus on specific reading strategy)<br><br>Small Group Instructional Time (Students should have enough time to rotate through one to two stations.) <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Independent Reading (daily): This station provides an opportunity to practice the day's reading strategy and complete a during-reading activity based on the mini-lesson (graphic organizers, Post-it notes, or other active reading products are recommended).</li><li>• Guided reading: These groups are led by the teacher. The frequency that each group meets should be determined by student reading data.</li><li>• Literacy Work Stations Opportunities to practice other developmentally-appropriate literacy skills. (See K-5 Literacy Work Station Norms.)</li></ul> |
| (5 min.)  | Share and final check for understanding: Students share how they accomplished the reading objective during their independent reading or literacy work stations.   |

---

|                   |  |
|-------------------|--|
| <b>40 minutes</b> | <b>Writing Instruction</b>   |
| (5-10 min.)       | Mini-lesson on specific writing strategy (includes modeled writing)  |
| (25-30 min.)      | Student writing practice: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Writing task should be related to topic of mini-lesson</li><li>• Steps of the Writing Process should be followed: prewrite, draft, revise, edit, publish (Students are NOT expected to complete each step each day. Rather, these steps should be taught over the course of an entire unit.)</li><li>• Several weeks should be spent using the writing process in order to publish a piece of writing (At least one piece of writing in each unit should be taken through the entire writing process.)</li></ul> |
| (5 min.)          | Share: Students share their work with a friend or in a larger group.   |

# Section 4

*Research on full day kindergarten*





## Recent Research on All-Day Kindergarten

**Author:** Patricia Clark

**Source:** Educational Resource Information Center (U.S. Department of Education)



In the fall of 1998, of the 4 million children attending kindergarten in the United States, 55% were in all-day programs and 45% were in part-day programs (West, Denton, & Germino-Hausken, 2000, p. v). The growing number of all-day programs is the result of a number of factors, including the greater numbers of single-parent and dual-income families in the workforce who need all-day programming for their young children, as well as the belief by some that all-day programs better prepare children for school.

Research during the 1970s and 1980s on the effects of all-day kindergarten yielded mixed results. In a review of research on all-day kindergarten, Puleo (1988) suggested that much of the early research employed inadequate methodological standards that resulted in serious problems with internal and external validity; consequently, the results were conflicting and inconclusive. Studies conducted in the 1990s also produced mixed results; however, some important trends appeared. This Digest discusses the academic, social, and behavioral effects of all-day kindergarten, as well as parents' and teachers' attitudes and the curriculum in all-day kindergarten classes.

### Academic Achievement

Despite the generally mixed results concerning the effect of all-day kindergarten on academic achievement in the 1970s and 1980s, consistent findings appeared concerning the positive effect on academic achievement for children identified as being at risk (Housden & Kam, 1992; Karweit, 1992; Puleo, 1988). Research reported in the 1990s shows more consistent positive academic outcomes for all children enrolled in all-day kindergarten (Cryan, Sheehan, Wiechel, & Bandy-Hedden, 1992; Elicker & Mathur, 1997; Fusaro, 1997; Hough & Bryde, 1996; Koopmans, 1991). Cryan et al. (1992) conducted a two-phase study that examined the effects of half-day and all-day kindergarten programs on children's academic and behavioral success in school. In the first phase of the study, data were collected on 8,290 children from 27 school districts; the second phase included nearly 6,000 children. The researchers found that participation in all-day kindergarten was related positively to subsequent school performance. Children who attended all-day kindergarten scored higher on standardized tests, had fewer grade retention's, and had fewer Chapter 1 placements.

Hough and Bryde (1996) looked at student achievement data for 511 children enrolled in half-day and all-day kindergarten programs in 25 classrooms. Children in the all-day programs scored higher on the achievement test than those in half-day programs on every item tested.

In a study of the effectiveness of all-day kindergarten for the Newark, New Jersey, Board of Education, Koopmans (1991) looked at two cohorts of students: one in its third year of elementary school and the other in its second year. There were no significant differences in reading comprehension and math scores on the California Test of Basic Skills (CTBS) for the first cohort; however, both reading comprehension and math scores were higher for students in the second cohort who had attended all-day kindergarten.

Elicker and Mathur (1997) also found slightly greater academic progress in kindergarten and higher levels of first-grade readiness for children in an all-day kindergarten program. Teachers reported significantly greater progress for all-day kindergarten children in literacy, math, and general learning skills.

Finally, in a meta-analysis of 23 studies on all-day kindergarten, Fusaro (1997) concluded that children who had attended all-day kindergarten achieved at a higher level than children in half-day kindergarten programs. According to Fusaro, all-day kindergarten accounted for approximately 60% of the variance in outcome measures.

## **Social and Behavioral Effects**

Most studies on all-day kindergarten have focused on academic achievement; however, some researchers have also examined social and behavioral effects. Cryan et al. (1992) asked teachers to rate half-day and all-day kindergarten children on 14 dimensions of classroom behavior. According to researchers, a clear relationship emerged between the kindergarten schedule and children's behavior. Teachers rated children in all-day kindergarten programs higher on 9 of the 14 dimensions; there were no significant differences on the other 5 dimensions. Other researchers who have studied social and behavioral outcomes found that children in all-day kindergarten programs were engaged in more child-to-child interactions (Hough & Bryde, 1996) and that they made significantly greater progress in learning social skills (Elicker & Mathur, 1997).

## **Attitudes About All-Day Kindergarten**

Recently, researchers have examined parents' and teachers' attitudes towards all-day kindergarten, as well as considering academic, social, and behavioral effects. Both parents and teachers whose children were enrolled in all-day kindergarten were generally satisfied with the programs and believed that all-day kindergarten better prepared children for first grade (Hough & Bryde, 1996; Elicker & Mathur, 1997; Housden & Kam, 1992; Towers, 1991). Teachers and parents also indicated a preference for all-day kindergarten because of the more relaxed atmosphere, more time for creative activities, and more opportunity for children to develop their own interests (Elicker & Mathur, 1997).

Parents reported that all-day kindergarten teachers provided suggestions for home activities more frequently (Hough & Bryde, 1996). They also felt that the all-day kindergarten schedule benefited their children socially (Towers, 1991).

Teachers surveyed felt that the all-day program provided more time for individual instruction (Greer-

Smith, 1990; Housden & Kam, 1992). They also indicated that they had more time to get to know their children and families, thus enabling them to better meet children's needs (Elicker & Mathur, 1997).

## Curriculum in All-Day Kindergarten

Researchers who have looked at the types of activities children are engaged in, how teachers structure time, and how teachers interact with children during instructional time have found that the greatest percentage of time in both half-day and all-day kindergarten programs is spent in teacher-directed, large-group activity (Elicker & Mathur, 1997; Morrow, Strickland, & Woo, 1998). Elicker and Mathur (1997) note that, although the average amount of time spent in large-group teacher-directed activity is greater in all-day classrooms than in half-day classrooms, the percentage of total time spent in teacher-directed activity was 16% less in all-day programs.

Some studies (Hough & Bryde, 1996; Morrow et al., 1998) found that all-day kindergarten teachers utilized small-group instruction and provided for small-group activities more frequently than half-day teachers. Hough and Bryde also found more individualized instruction in all-day programs, when compared with half-day programs.

An interesting pattern occurred when Elicker and Mathur (1997) compared data collected from the first and second years of their study. They noted that many of the differences in kindergarten programming became stronger during the second year of implementation. They found that children in the all-day classrooms in the second year of implementation were "initiating more learning activity and receiving more one-to-one instruction from their teachers" (p. 477). Further research in this area is needed to determine whether, over time, all-day kindergarten teachers restructure the curriculum to accommodate the increased amount of time available to them and the children in more developmentally appropriate ways.

## Summary

There seem to be many positive learning and social/behavioral benefits for children in all-day kindergarten programs. At the same time, it is important to remember that what children are doing during the kindergarten day is more important than the length of the school day. Gullo (1990) and Olsen and Zigler (1989) warn educators and parents to resist the pressure to include more didactic academic instruction in all-day kindergarten programs. They contend that this type of instruction is inappropriate for young children.

An all-day kindergarten program can provide children the opportunity to spend more time engaged in active, child-initiated, small-group activities. Teachers in all-day kindergarten classrooms often feel less stressed by time constraints and may have more time to get to know children and meet their needs.

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By STEPHANIE REITZ, Associated Press

HARTFORD, Conn. (AP) — If she lived in one of Connecticut's richest or poorest communities, Kristen Bilotta-Brzozowski could be confident that her young daughter would be starting full-day kindergarten this fall.

Like residents of many middle-income communities, the Coventry mother has seen a patchwork of other towns expanding in recent

years from half-day kindergarten to full days. Now, her local school board hopes to do the same this fall— but until Coventry's budget is finalized and it's a done deal, she isn't getting her hopes up.

As Connecticut lawmakers consider sweeping reforms intended to close the achievement gap between wealthy and poor school districts, another gap is growing: the disparity between communities that offer full-day kindergarten and those that don't.

All of the state's seven poorest municipalities provide full-day kindergarten, as do many other communities with large pockets of poverty and educational challenges such as a significant number of children learning English as a second language.

On the other end of the spectrum, many of the state's 50 richest towns have had full-day kindergarten for years and others recently added it, such as Weston, or plan to this fall, such as Glastonbury and Brookfield.

But many blue-collar Connecticut communities, onetime farming towns and small suburbs find themselves in a dilemma: Their budgets are too tight to afford full-day kindergarten without cuts elsewhere, yet they're not quite poor enough to qualify for extra state or federal help or to draw support from private foundations.

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It's a disparity that Bilotta-Brzozowski sees as a real estate [broker](#) fielding questions from potential homebuyers, including some who've left her hometown of Coventry for Mansfield or other nearby towns with full-day kindergarten.

"I really have my fingers crossed for us this fall. I feel like we've been waiting long enough for it," said Bilotta-Brzozowski, whose older children attended private kindergarten programs so they could have full-day classes, and whose daughter Giovanna starts kindergarten this fall at Coventry Grammar School.

As of last fall, 73 Connecticut school districts offered full-day kindergarten to all children. That's an increase from 65 districts in 2010.

Those that don't have full-day offerings provide half-day classes or a blended schedule, in which children some get half-day classes and others, often those with special needs, are in all day. Some other districts have a schedule that's longer than a half day but shorter than a full day.

Lawmakers have considered bills in recent years that would require all districts to provide the option of free, full-day kindergarten, as 10 other states do, but they've fallen short because of cost concerns.

Connecticut is among 45 states that have adopted tougher nationwide curriculum standards known as Common Core, in which students will be expected to meet high literacy and math goals before advancing to the next grade.

Some education advocates worry children without access to full-day kindergarten will start at a disadvantage compared with peers, creating geography-based achievement gaps in a state that's already trying to eliminate disparities between rich and poor students.

Robert Rader, executive director of the Connecticut Association of Boards of Education, said some districts have been able to launch full-day kindergarten because enrollment growth has slowed and they can reassign teachers and coordinate bus schedules without much extra cost.

"There are [financial](#) considerations and sometimes space issues, but this is one thing that will help all children be prepared to learn as they move into the public schools," Rader said of full-day kindergarten. "It will especially help those who might otherwise start off behind and possibly never catch up."

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1 National education experts say Connecticut's patchwork of full-day and half-day kindergarten mirrors a similar pattern throughout the U.S. [View Comments](#)

In addition to the 10 states that require full-day kindergarten for all students, 34 states including Connecticut require at least a half-day for all children, though local districts can expand to full days. Six others have no requirements in their laws, according to a recent review by the Washington, D.C.-based Children's Defense [Fund](#).

The disparity in the length of kindergarten days will become especially evident when students must meet those tougher Common Core standards, said Cathy Grace, the organization's director of early childhood development policy.

"If you're looking at some (kindergarten) children having a 2 1/2-hour day versus a 5-hour day, and given what they're expected to master, in my estimation there's no humanly possible way to provide everything they're supposed to be taught," Grace said. "That leaves some children without a level playing field before they even begin their educational journey."

That weighs heavily on the minds of many Connecticut educators as they ponder ways to switch from half-day to full-day kindergarten.

Alan Beitman, superintendent of the regional school district that includes Harwinton and Burlington, said a slowdown in enrollment in recent years might provide the breathing room to make the change this fall, but that the costs might later become unbearable if enrollment starts climbing again.

"Once you've instituted it, it's not the kind of thing you'd turn around and end," Beitman said.

Sharon Beloin-Saavedra knows that from her experience as the school board president in New Britain, where keeping a full-day kindergarten schedule has meant letting its class sizes creep up from 20 to 26, and cutting guidance counselor spots elsewhere and some middle school electives.

"If you asked me, 'Is there a sacred cow in your budget that you'd do anything to save?' I'd say yes, and that it's all-day kindergarten," she said. "That being said, it's a constant struggle to afford it and we've literally sacrificed whatever else we can."

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# Full-Day Kindergarten: *An Advocacy Guide*

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## Methodology

To develop this guide, we began by reviewing the contemporary research on full-day kindergarten. We then interviewed kindergarten teachers, experienced NEA state-level staff and elected leaders. The interviews were designed to gather information about what we should include in the guide—not just content, but tools and techniques that readers and activists would find helpful. Many of the people we interviewed had extensive experience as state-level activists in the areas of early childhood education and kindergarten. Finally, we conducted case studies, looking carefully at how NEA affiliates in the states of West Virginia and New Mexico worked to support the passage of state-wide full-day kindergarten policies.

National Education Association

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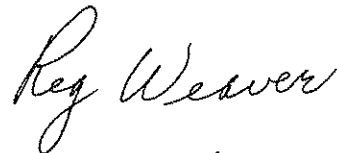
**K**indergarten is a magical time in a child's life. During kindergarten, children learn to get along with each other, they discover the joy and challenge of reading and writing, and they learn what it means to be in school.

We know that kindergarten is a key "bridge year" for children—a year for children to move from unstructured play and early learning to the more structured learning environment of formal schooling.

For children to grow and thrive in kindergarten, they need a few very simple things: they need care and attention from their teacher and education support professionals; they need developmentally appropriate activities that engage them as young learners; and they need time to process information and to move between activities. Quality full-day kindergarten programs ensure that children have the time and attention they need from their teachers to be successful learners.

Kindergarten teachers prefer full-day kindergarten to half-day kindergarten. Studies show that parents prefer full-day kindergarten as well. States and communities should support these views and provide resources to ensure that quality full-day kindergarten programs are available to every child. This includes resources for providing teachers and education support professionals with the training and support they need to succeed in kindergarten classrooms.

Today approximately 60 percent of America's children attend full-day kindergarten—it's time that we make full-day kindergarten available to all of America's children!



*Reg Weaver, President*

*National Education Association*



“Without question, today the number one challenge facing American public education is the achievement gaps among different students. And, also without question, NEA is committed to doing everything within its power to close these gaps.”

—Reg Weaver, President and  
John I. Wilson, Executive Director,  
National Education Association

**T**he National Education Association (NEA) has embarked on a broad-based initiative to close achievement gaps in American public education. As part of this process, NEA is developing tools and techniques to help affiliates address gaps on a range of fronts—including class size, parent involvement and early childhood education.

In this advocacy guide, we focus on the importance of full-day kindergarten as a strategy for closing gaps. Why full-day kindergarten? Full-day kindergarten provides an essential bridge between prekindergarten and the primary grades. It enables children to develop the academic, social and emotional skills they need to be successful. By laying a strong foundation, full-day kindergarten can boost student performance, access and attainment later in school.

## Achievement Gaps Defined

NEA identifies achievement gaps because we choose to include the many students who may not be achieving at the high standards needed to be successful. Most of us are familiar with the gaps associated with these student characteristics:

- **Race and ethnicity**
- **Income levels**
- **Language background**
- **Disability status**
- **Gender**

In addition, we recognize that gaps across these categories are evidenced in a variety of data, including but not limited to:

- **Performance:** Who is scoring at the proficient or above levels on standardized state assessments, the National Assessment for Educational Progress and the Scholastic Aptitude Test (SAT)?
- **Access:** Who is enrolled in Advanced Placement classes, who has access to algebra in the middle grades and who is taking college preparatory classes?
- **Attainment:** Who graduates on time, goes on to college or technical training, completes postsecondary education or attains advanced degrees?

—Source: NEA, *Closing Achievement Gaps: An Association Guide*

## How to Use the Guide

This guide is designed to give NEA leaders, members and staff the tools, resources and research you will need to successfully advocate for full-day kindergarten in your state. Early childhood advocates, parents and community groups can also use the guide to bring full-day kindergarten to their state or district. All audiences can use the guide as a starting point for gathering information and developing an effective legislative plan.

As you page through the guide, look at the overview of each section. In some instances, basic advocacy and organizing tips are given—experienced advocates may want to skip over these tips.

- The first section of the guide includes the latest research on full-day kindergarten, emphasized with vital talking points.
- In the second section, you'll find tools for mapping the policy and political landscape pertaining to full-day kindergarten in your state.
- In the third section, we've included resources for planning your legislative strategy—advocacy tips, coalition building strategies, responses to opposition arguments, and communication techniques, among other tools.
- The fourth section outlines NEA's full-day kindergarten policy priorities. This section also includes model legislation.
- The last section describes the passage of full-day kindergarten legislation in New Mexico and West Virginia. Take time to read through these state stories as you begin your own journey.
- Throughout, you'll find examples of effective practices used by full-day kindergarten supporters across the United States.

## Full-Day Kindergarten Helps Close Achievement Gaps: What the Research Says

“Attempting to repair reading skills in fourth grade is far more expensive and risky than guaranteeing good reading skills in kindergarten.”

—Reg Weaver, President,  
National Education Association

### SECTION OVERVIEW

FULL-DAY KINDERGARTEN HELPS CLOSE ACHIEVEMENT GAPS

WHAT THE RESEARCH SAYS

- **Full-Day Kindergarten Boosts Student Achievement p. 4**
- **Full-Day Kindergarten Improves Students' Social and Emotional Skills p. 5**
- **Full-Day Kindergarten Is a Sound Educational Investment p. 5**
- **Teachers Prefer Full-Day Kindergarten p. 6**
- **Full-Day Kindergarten Is Optimal for Parents p. 7**



## **I**ntrouction

Full-day kindergarten is a sound educational investment. Research demonstrates that full-day kindergarten, though initially more costly than half-day kindergarten, is worth the expense. Full-day kindergarten not only boosts students' academic achievement, it strengthens their social and emotional skills as well. Additionally, it offers benefits to teachers and parents—teachers have more time to work with and get to know students, and parents have access to better teaching and care for their children. Everyone gains!

### **Full-Day Kindergarten Boosts Student Achievement**

Longitudinal data demonstrate that children in full-day classes show greater reading and mathematics achievement gains than those in half-day classes.

In their landmark longitudinal study of full-day versus half-day kindergarten, researchers Jill Walston and Jerry West found that students in full-day classes learned more in reading and mathematics than students in half-day classes—after adjusting for differences in race, poverty status and fall achievement levels, among other things.

*All* students experienced learning gains. By giving students and teachers more quality time to engage in constructive learning activities, full-day kindergarten benefits everyone.

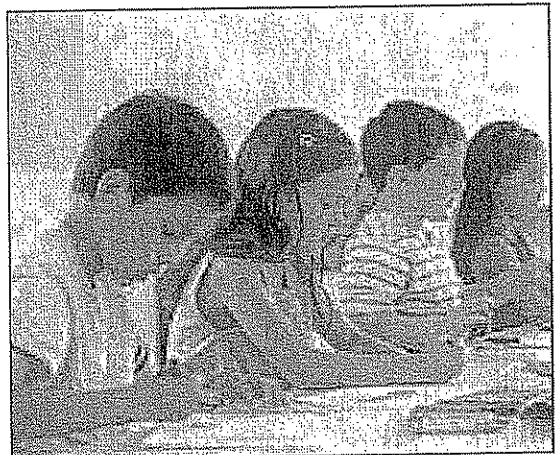
Full-day kindergarten can produce long-term educational gains, especially for low-income and minority students.

In a study comparing national and Indiana research on full-day and half-day kindergarten programs, researchers found that compared to half-day kindergarten, full-day kindergarten leads to greater short-term and long-term gains.

In one Indiana district, for example, students in full-day kindergarten received significantly higher basic skills test scores in the third, fifth and seventh grades than students who attended half-day or did not attend kindergarten at all. The researchers also found that the long-term benefits of full-day kindergarten appeared to be greatest for students from disadvantaged backgrounds. And full-day kindergarten helped to narrow achievement gaps between groups of students.

In a study of over 17,000 students in Philadelphia, researchers found that “by the time they reached the third and fourth grades, former full-day kindergartners were more than twice as likely as children without any kindergarten experiences—and 26 percent more likely than graduates of half-day programs—to have made it there without having repeated a grade.”

—Deborah Viadero, Reporter, *Education Week*



## Full-Day Kindergarten Improves Students' Social and Emotional Skills

A full day of learning offers several social, emotional and intellectual benefits to kindergarteners. They have more time to focus on activities, to reflect on activities and to transition between activities.

If children are taught by quality teachers using age-appropriate curricula in small classroom settings, they can take full advantage of the additional learning time—social, emotional and intellectual—that a full day allows. Further, research demonstrates that children adjust well to the full-day format. While some parents worry that full-day kindergarten is too much for kids, research shows that 5-year-olds are more than ready for a longer day. They also do better in a setting that allows them time to learn and explore activities in depth.

## Full-Day Kindergarten Is a Sound Educational Investment

Recent research has demonstrated that funds invested in quality early education programs produce powerful returns on investment.

Viewing half-day kindergarten as a vehicle for saving money is shortsighted. In recent years, a number of researchers have begun doing economic analyses of early childhood education programs. They are finding that investments in quality early childhood programs generate returns of 3-to-1 or even higher—that's at least \$3 for every \$1 invested.

Robert Lynch, a researcher who has extensively studied this issue, points out, "Even economists who are particularly skeptical about government programs make an exception for high-quality early childhood development programs."

By helping to develop students' academic abilities, and by improving their social and emotional skills, effective early childhood programs can lower grade retention and dropout rates.

Full-day kindergarten provides a bridge between prekindergarten programs and the early elementary years.

Full-day kindergarten enables students to successfully navigate from prekindergarten to early elementary grades. In America today, an estimated 69 percent of children attend community-based prekindergarten programs. For most children, kindergarten is not their first full-day experience. For all children, even those who are away from home for the first time, full-day kindergarten sets the stage for first grade and beyond by helping students make the transition to more structured learning.

"The practice of scheduling kindergarten students for only half-day has been more a function of economics (less expensive to schedule two groups of children for half-day each) than of early childhood education concerns."

—Sherrill Martinez,  
Director, Planning and  
Research Section, Kansas  
State Department of  
Education

Full-day kindergarten enables teachers to assess students' needs and abilities more effectively, leading to early intervention.

Children spend more time in a formal school setting in full-day kindergarten. Teachers have more time to get to know kids, and to work with specialists to identify and evaluate kids' needs, skills and abilities. School personnel can then work with parents to develop plans to address children's learning challenges early. This saves money and resources over the long term, and increases the odds that children will be successful later in school.

### **Teachers Prefer Full-Day Kindergarten**

Full-day kindergarten helps teachers improve student learning.

On average, students in full-day kindergarten spend about twice as much time in school as children in half-day programs do. As a result, teachers get to know students much better. They are able to develop a richer understanding of students' needs and, in turn, to develop activities and lessons to meet those needs.

### **The Benefits of Full-Day Kindergarten: Teachers' Perspectives**

In a study evaluating teachers' views on full-day kindergarten, teachers reported a number of benefits for themselves as well as for children and parents, including:

- Participating in full-day (kindergarten) eased the transition to first grade, helping children adapt to the demands of a six-hour school day.
- A longer school day offered more flexibility and more time to do activities during free-choice times.
- Having more time made kindergarten less stressful and frustrating for children because they had time to develop interests and activities more fully.
- Participating in the full-day schedule allowed more appropriate challenges for children at all developmental levels.
- Children with developmental delays or those "at-risk" of experiencing school problems had more time for completing projects and for needed socializing with peers and teachers.
- More advanced students had time to complete long-term projects.
- Having full-day kindergarten assisted parents with child care.
- Having more time made child assessment and classroom record keeping more manageable for teachers.
- Switching to full-day kindergarten gave teachers more time for curriculum planning, incorporating a greater number of thematic units in the school year, and offering more in-depth coverage of each unit.

—Source: Sherrill Martinez and Lue Ann Snider, *Summary of Research: Full-Day Kindergarten*, citing James Elicker and S. Mathur's study, "What do they do all day?"

### **Full-Day Kindergarten Is Optimal for Parents**

Full-day kindergarten provides parents with better support for their children.

For parents who work outside the home, full-day kindergarten means that children do not have to be shuffled between home, school and child care. For all parents, there is more continuity in the child's day, less disruption and more time for focused and independent learning.

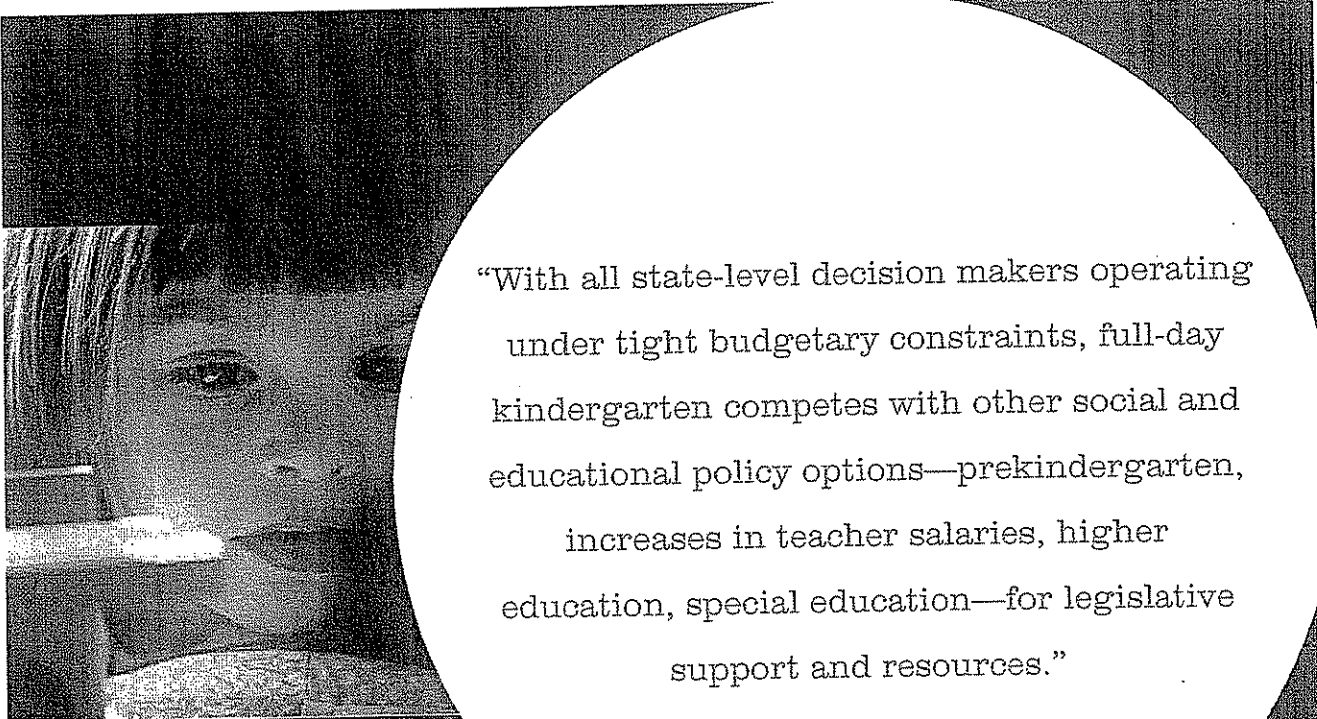
A 2000 study published by the National Center for Educational Statistics found that after the second year of a full-day kindergarten program, 100 percent of full-day parents and 72 percent of half-day parents noted that, if given the opportunity again, they would have chosen full-day kindergarten for their child.



"Rhianna Wilson was worried that her son, Timothy, would be overwhelmed in an all-day program. He wasn't. 'He just learns more quickly,' she said. 'The other day he announced that he wanted to be a paleontologist.'"

—Tara Manthey, "What a Difference All Day Makes," *The News Tribune* (Tacoma, WA)

## Mapping the Landscape of Full-Day Kindergarten in Your State



“With all state-level decision makers operating under tight budgetary constraints, full-day kindergarten competes with other social and educational policy options—prekindergarten, increases in teacher salaries, higher education, special education—for legislative support and resources.”

—Anthony Raden,  
*Achieving Full-Day Kindergarten  
in New Mexico: A Case Study*

### SECTION OVERVIEW

#### MAPPING THE LANDSCAPE OF FULL-DAY KINDERGARTEN IN YOUR STATE

##### **I. Policies**

Understanding and Mapping Full-Day Kindergarten Policies p. 10

Estimating Costs and Paying for Full-Day Kindergarten p. 11

Preparing a Legislative Strategy p. 14

##### **II. Resources**

Assessing Your Organizational Commitment p. 14

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##### **III. People—Potential Support and Opposition**

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Assessing Your Opposition: Preparing to Respond p. 16

## Introduction

A keen understanding of the political terrain is a crucial factor in organizing a campaign. This is especially true for full-day kindergarten, where politics and policies vary considerably from state to state and often from district to district.

This section is designed to help you map the landscape surrounding full-day kindergarten in your state and to gather the information needed to undertake your campaign. This section is divided into categories: Policies, Resources and People. As you read through the categories, answer the questions and begin to develop an action plan. Don't be daunted by the number of questions. Rather, think of them as a starting point for discussion and reflection.

## POLICIES

### Gaining an Understanding of Full-Day Kindergarten in Relation to Early Education and Prekindergarten

Become familiar with the prekindergarten, early education or child care movement in your state. Are there coalitions organized around prekindergarten? Around child care? How do they view full-day kindergarten? How many private kindergarten providers are there in your state? How organized and vocal are these providers? What impact would public full-day kindergarten have on them?

Early education and prekindergarten advocates are well organized in many states. Look for ways to join forces with them. Full-day kindergarten should be part of every comprehensive early education initiative.



#### Early Education for All

In Massachusetts, a coalition of early education advocates teamed up to promote Early Education for All, a state-wide campaign with a provision for full-day kindergarten. Kathryn Boudreau, president of the Massachusetts Teachers Association, is a member of the Early Education for All advisory committee.

#### Early Education for All has three primary goals:

- Every preschool-aged child has access to a high-quality early childhood education that meets professionally accepted standards, is staffed by well-trained early educators, and is delivered through a mix of public and private programs
- Creation of a state system to improve the training, education and compensation of the work force specializing in early childhood and school-age education
- Access to high-quality, full-school-day public kindergarten for all families who desire it

For more information, visit [www.strategiesforchildren.org/eea/eea\\_home.htm](http://www.strategiesforchildren.org/eea/eea_home.htm).

## Mapping the Status of Kindergarten in Your State

As you think about what kindergarten should look like in your state, begin by thoroughly researching the current status of kindergarten in your state. How many children attend kindergarten? Of those, what percentage attend full-day versus half-day? What percentage of public schools in your state offer full-day kindergarten? How many children attend private kindergartens? Are children required to attend kindergarten? At what age are children required to attend school?

You should be able to obtain this information from your state department of education. The Education Commission of the States also tracks kindergarten attendance and legislation in each state at [www.ecs.org](http://www.ecs.org).

### Determining the Price Tag of Full-Day Kindergarten

Advocates for full-day kindergarten identify cost as the biggest challenge facing full-day kindergarten supporters. As you define what a full-day kindergarten program would look like in your state (see Section IV: What Full-Day Kindergarten Should Include, page 27), ask the following questions:

- How much would it cost to implement a comprehensive full-day kindergarten program throughout your state? Factors to consider include teacher salaries, teacher training and professional development, paraprofessional salaries, curriculum development, assessment, classroom space, school lunches, transportation and miscellaneous administrative costs associated with implementing full-day kindergarten.
- How do education funding formulas work in your state? Is kindergarten funded at the same level as other grades? In most states, it is not.

As you develop cost estimates, look for ways to save money. You could realize a net savings, for example, if buses ran only twice a day instead of three. You should also include calculations on the return on investment. Those numbers can be very persuasive to policymakers and the general public.



### A Snapshot of Full-Day Kindergarten in the United States

- The Education Commission of the States estimates that over 60 percent of children in the United States attend full-day kindergarten. By contrast, in 1979 just over 25 percent of kindergartners were enrolled in full-day programs.
- Only nine states, most of which are located in the southeastern United States, require full-day kindergarten for all kindergartners.

To support full-day kindergarten programs, states employ a patchwork of funding programs—combining per-child funding formulas (which often differ between kindergarten and first grade), federal funds such as Title I, and state categorical funds. If not mandated by the state, full-day kindergarten programs remain vulnerable to funding cuts.

### **State Funding for Full-Day Kindergarten**

Funding levels for full-day kindergarten vary considerably from state to state. Some states provide more or equivalent funding for kindergarten students than for post-kindergarten students; others provide significantly less than they do for students in first grade and beyond.

For comprehensive information on state kindergarten funding, see "How Most States Fund Full-Day Kindergarten," Education Commission of the States, August 2005 ([www.ecs.org/clearinghouse/63/10/6310.htm](http://www.ecs.org/clearinghouse/63/10/6310.htm)). Also visit the ECS Kindergarten Database at [www.ecs.org/html/educationIssues/EarlyLearning/KDB\\_intro.asp](http://www.ecs.org/html/educationIssues/EarlyLearning/KDB_intro.asp).

### **Identifying Ways to Pay for Full-Day Kindergarten**

As you formulate your legislative strategy, it is important to think about how your state can pay for full-day kindergarten—where will the funds come from? What other budget priorities are coming up in the next legislative session? Should you make full-day kindergarten part of a larger early education package? Or part of a larger education-spending package? What are your association's other education priorities? How might full-day kindergarten compete with those priorities? Why should it take precedence over other priorities? If you are not able to pass a full-day kindergarten bill this year, how will you pass one next year, or the following year?



### **Scrutinizing the Money Flow: Paying for Full-Day Kindergarten Through Cost Savings**

Think New Mexico, an organization advocating for full-day kindergarten in New Mexico, worked with a former state budget director to do a line-by-line review of the state budget. The team identified a number of programs that could be trimmed or eliminated. They then released a report to the press identifying these programs and explaining how the cost savings could be used to pay for full-day kindergarten. The strategy was successful—the New Mexico press highlighted Think New Mexico's report, and presented full-day kindergarten as an affordable policy option.



### Trims in State Budget Could Fund Full-Day Kindergarten

The following excerpt from an article published by *The Santa Fe New Mexican* illustrates how the newspaper presented full-day kindergarten as an affordable policy option.

A Santa Fe group claims the state government could afford to fund full-day kindergarten by eliminating wasteful and unnecessary spending from its existing budget.

"The bottom line is that there is already sufficient revenue to pay the cost of implementing full-day kindergarten," concludes the group, called Think New Mexico, in a new report.

The report, "*Setting Priorities: How to Pay for Full-Day Kindergarten*," was released this week as part of the think tank's preparations for a lobbying campaign at the 2000 Legislature. The recommendations include calls for the state to stop operating its visitor-information centers, end preferential tax treatment for volume cigarette sales and horse racetracks, create new oversight for state agency contracts and eliminate jobs at the Public Regulation Commission.

The study comes as the state is moving toward "performance-based" budgeting that is intended to bring new scrutiny to longstanding programs, expenses and practices. About half of the state's yearly budget is spent on education.

State law now mandates that schools offer a half day or 2 hours of kindergarten for 5-year-olds. About 15 percent of 5-year-olds in New Mexico attend full-day kindergarten, compared with a national average of nearly 55 percent.

Many politicians, including Martin Chavez, the Democratic gubernatorial candidate defeated last year by Gov. Gary Johnson, have made full-day kindergarten a campaign priority.

But the proposal has always been stopped at the legislature mostly because of costs.

"I don't know of anybody that's in opposition to mandatory full-day kindergarten. The stumbling block has always been the financial end of it," said Sen. John Arthur Smith, D-Deming, who intends to introduce a bill in the 2000 Legislature calling for the full-day change.

"We recognized," think-tank founder Fred Nathan said, "that full-day kindergarten carries a price tag with it and, therefore, we felt an obligation to explain how the state could pay for it."

—Source: Martin Hummels, "Trims in State Budget Could Fund Full-Day Kindergarten," *The Santa Fe New Mexican*, December 3, 1999, pp.A-1.

**"I don't know of anybody  
that's in opposition  
to mandatory full-day  
kindergarten. The stumbling  
block has always been the  
financial end of it."**

—Sen. John Arthur Smith, D-Deming, NM

## Preparing a Legislative Strategy

As you prepare your campaign, think carefully about how to work with your state legislature. When will you begin the campaign? How will you get legislators on board? Who should you work with in the legislature to ensure passage of your bill? In West Virginia, advocates of full-day kindergarten worked closely with members of the education committees in both houses, as well as well-respected legislators outside of those committees. In New Mexico, full-day kindergarten supporters focused their efforts on members of the appropriations committees because supporters knew the primary debate would be about the affordability of full-day kindergarten.

Who will sponsor your legislation? Who will write the legislation? Do you have the governor's support? If not, how will you get it? Does it make sense to try to pass a ballot initiative—if your state has that option, as many states in the West do—instead of going through the legislature? If so, what kind of campaign would that strategy require?

You will need to know what your state's legislative calendar looks like as well. When is education legislation typically drafted? When do committees meet? For more information on when state legislatures meet and how they operate, visit the National Conference of State Legislatures Web site: [www.ncsl.org/programs/legman/legman.htm](http://www.ncsl.org/programs/legman/legman.htm).

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## RESOURCES

### Assessing Your Organizational Commitment

This kind of campaign requires a long-term organizational commitment to be successful. Begin by determining who will lead this effort in your association. Think about the following: What organizational resources will the campaign require? (For more information, see Section III: Organizing Tools on page 17.) Can your government relations, media and research teams work together on this campaign? Who will spearhead the campaign? How does this issue fit into your other organizational priorities? How will you sustain the campaign over time?

### Finding Examples of Effective Full-Day Kindergarten Programs in Your State

Look for effective public full-day kindergarten programs in your state. Contact education researchers in your state to help you locate effective full-day programs. Go online to look for newspaper articles about effective programs in your state. How can you use those examples of effective programs to help make your case? Advocates in New Mexico used an evaluation comparing full-day and half-day kindergarten outcomes in an Albuquerque school to persuade lawmakers.

### Networking With Other States

Advocates who have worked to support full-day kindergarten in other states are an important resource. What can you borrow from legislation that others have drafted?

- Go to NEA's Closing the Achievement Gaps site ([www.achievementgaps.org](http://www.achievementgaps.org)) to view examples of legislation from West Virginia and New Mexico. Contact NEA affiliates in states that have passed full-day kindergarten legislation.
- Also see the ECS Web site ([www.ecs.org](http://www.ecs.org)) for more detail on kindergarten legislation in each state.



## PEOPLE—POTENTIAL SUPPORT AND OPPOSITION

### Identifying Potential Coalition Partners

Take time to evaluate potential partners. Consider early education groups such as your local affiliate of the National Association for the Education of Young Children ([www.naeyc.org](http://www.naeyc.org)) or a national group like Pre-K Now ([www.preknow.org](http://www.preknow.org)). Who else might you work with? Education associations? Parent groups? Social service agencies?

As you assess potential partners, look for nontraditional allies, like business groups. In New Mexico, support from the Hispanic business leaders association as well as the Association of Commerce & Industry of New Mexico, the equivalent of the state Chamber of Commerce, helped full-day kindergarten advocates gain ground in the state legislature and with the governor.

Also think about groups like the AFL-CIO, as well as ACORN (Association of Community Organizations for Reform Now) and other community activist groups. They can be important allies in this work.

### Assessing Parents' Views— Parents as Allies

Parents are perhaps the most important constituency on this issue—especially parents of small children. It is important to know where parents stand.

Have you surveyed parents to determine what their views are? (See the next section, Organizing Tools, for more information on surveys.) Look for ways to involve parents as allies. How does full-day kindergarten help them? If some parents are opposed to full-day kindergarten, find out why. How can you change their minds or counter their opposition? How can you involve the state Parent Teacher Association and local parent-teacher organizations in your campaign? Find out where they stand on this issue.

### Assessing Kindergarten Teachers' and Other Teachers' Views—Teachers as Allies

Kindergarten teachers are a vital constituency. They work most closely with kindergartners and can provide crucial and credible voices in support of particular policies. Additionally, they will be directly affected by the outcome of your work. How will you engage them in your initiative? Have you surveyed them? Are they willing to support your efforts? What about 1-3 teachers? How will you involve your broader membership in the campaign? How does full-day kindergarten benefit them?

Successful organizing campaigns should include teachers as spokespersons and supporters. As you reach out to teachers, identify possible champions. Who will speak forcefully and effectively on your behalf?

"If I had to do it over again,  
I would have involved more  
kindergarten teachers in our  
campaign."

—Perry Bryant, former lobbyist  
with the West Virginia Education  
Association



### **Assessing the Views of Education Support Professionals— Teacher Aides, Bus Drivers and Others as Allies**

Like teachers, education support professionals such as teacher aides, bus drivers, cafeteria workers and others have an important stake in this issue. How would half-day to full-day schedule changes affect various support professionals? Where do they stand on this issue? How can you work with their unions to gain support for your work?

### **Assessing School Administrators' and Local School Officials' Views—Administrators as Allies**

School administrators, administrators' organizations and local school officials such as school board members can be valuable allies. Legislators look to these leaders for advice, and you will need their support to move your proposal forward. What do your state's principals believe? Superintendents? The state board of education? How will you engage them as allies? How can you get their associations on board with you?

### **Enlisting Champions**

As you assess your support, look for champions who are willing to join forces with you. Champions are important for several reasons. They can provide visible support for your work, they can use power and influence to sway the views of legislators and other leaders, and they can galvanize public opinion. Consider how parents, teachers, administrators, business leaders, celebrities and influential politicians—such as the governor, state legislators and national political leaders from your state—can be advocates for your work. Community leaders and researchers can also be helpful champions. As you identify possible candidates, think about what they can gain from working with you, and why this issue is important to them.

#### **An Important Supporter of Full-Day Kindergarten**

In New Mexico, supporters engaged the governor's wife, Dee Johnson, as a champion of full-day kindergarten. This served a dual purpose—she publicly endorsed full-day kindergarten and she privately urged her husband, who had been critical of the initiative, to sign the full-day kindergarten bill once it was passed by the state legislature.

### **Assessing Your Opposition: Preparing to Respond**

It is also important to know who your likely opponents will be, who their allies are, what arguments they will make and what strategies they will use to counter your work.

Opponents in New Mexico and West Virginia included:

- Fiscal conservatives in the state legislature
- Government officials who favored local control of education
- Principals and district leaders opposed to the structural changes embedded in moving from half-day to full-day kindergarten
- Conservative parent groups

Additionally, you are likely to face opposition from groups opposed to the NEA—those who see your work on this issue as just another way to bolster the power of the union or secure jobs for teachers. How will you rebut their arguments?

## Organizing Tools—Before, During and After the Campaign



“Good information is essential, but if you don’t have the right people in place who care about your issues, you will face unnecessary roadblocks—lobbying begins at election time.”

—Jan Reinicke, Executive Director,  
Iowa State Education Association

### SECTION OVERVIEW

#### ORGANIZING TOOLS—BEFORE, DURING AND AFTER THE CAMPAIGN

- **Getting Started** p. 18
- **Building a Coalition to Support Your Campaign** p. 19
- **Launching the Campaign** p. 19
- **Responding to Opposition—Counterarguments for Opposition Arguments You May Face** p. 22
- **Moving Forward After Passage—or Failure** p. 26

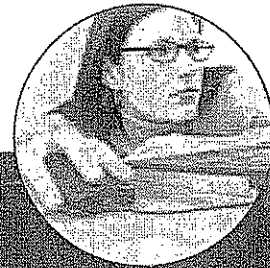
## **I**ntrouction

In organizing a campaign, it is essential to begin with a clear vision of where you want to go and know how you plan to get there. Included in this section are strategies, techniques and tools for undertaking a successful full-day kindergarten campaign in your state. This is just a starting place. Use it, along with the Web tools referenced here, as you begin organizing your initiative.

### **Getting Started**

As you begin your campaign, review the factors discussed in Mapping the Landscape of Full-Day Kindergarten on page 9.

- Identify who will coordinate the campaign within your association.
- Note what resources you will need, including staff time for media relations, research and government relations; funds; and materials. As you determine what resources you will need, think long term. Advocates of full-day kindergarten often say that they wished they'd known how long the work would take. Legislative processes are slow—often campaigns like this take years. In addition to having the right idea, you have to be in the right place at the right time to make it happen, and you typically must make compromises along the way. Be prepared to dig in for the long haul.
- This guide contains much of the research you'll need to get started. Draft a background paper or some talking points about the current state of kindergarten—and, more broadly, early education—in your state. Pinpoint what else you need to learn.
- Begin to develop a preliminary policy proposal. (Use the next section, What Full-Day Kindergarten Should Include: Policy Priorities, as a starting place.)



### **Grassroots Organizing on the Web**

In addition to the NEA's online Legislative Action Center ([www.nea.org/lac/index.html](http://www.nea.org/lac/index.html)), here are other advocacy toolkits available on the Web:

**For more comprehensive information about NEA's work on closing the achievement gaps, download *Closing Achievement Gaps: An Association Guide* at [www.achievementgaps.org/nea/Associationguide.pdf](http://www.achievementgaps.org/nea/Associationguide.pdf).**

**For an excellent overview of legislative advocacy, visit the Community Toolbox Web site: [http://ctb.ku.edu/tools/en/sub\\_section\\_main\\_1253.htm](http://ctb.ku.edu/tools/en/sub_section_main_1253.htm)**

**For early education coalition building and other advocacy tips, see the National Association for the Education of Young Children's Toolbox for Advocates at [www.naeyc.org/policy/toolbox.asp](http://www.naeyc.org/policy/toolbox.asp).**

### **Building a Coalition to Support Your Campaign**

- As you begin to do research and develop a policy proposal, identify the groups you want and need to work with. Link up with allies, but also look for new partners, such as business groups, that can help accomplish your objectives. Groups like the Business Roundtable ([www.businessroundtable.org/taskForces](http://www.businessroundtable.org/taskForces)) and Corporate Voices for Working Families ([www.cvworkingfamilies.org](http://www.cvworkingfamilies.org)) are strong supporters of quality early childhood education.
- Next, begin reaching out. Meet with group representatives to share your policy proposal and answer their questions.
- Get buy-in and support. Make sure additional groups are willing to join your campaign. Often coalitions use a memorandum of agreement to ensure that everyone knows what resources they will be expected to provide, including public endorsements, staff time to work on legislation development, and lobbying assistance.
- Decide who will do what. You may want to lead the campaign or work with another group that will take the leadership role. An early education group or parent organization, for example, may be better positioned to lead the effort. Who leads is not as important as what the partnership accomplishes. All participants, however, must have a clear understanding—in writing—about who is responsible for what and who has sign-off authority on communications and legislative changes.

### **Launching the Campaign**

- Work with partner groups to conduct additional research, if necessary, and flesh out your policy proposal.
- Develop a plan and a timeline for implementing your proposal—either through your state legislature or through a ballot initiative. Make sure to include the state department of education and the governor's office in your plan. How will you work with them?
- Develop three to five key messages to support your campaign. Based on your mapping research, develop messages that promote your idea and address key arguments of the opposition. These messages can serve as organizing tools for building coalitions and developing communications plans.
- Put together a communications plan. What information do you want to release to the press? When will you release it? How will you counter opposition? Who will handle press calls? Requests for interviews? Make sure to develop talking points for everyone who communicates with the press so that you put forth a consistent message.

### **Surveying Parents, Teachers and Administrators**

Surveys are a powerful tool in advocacy campaigns. They give lawmakers insight into the views of their constituents, and they give advocates public opinion research to back claims from scientists and researchers.

In the case of full-day kindergarten, surveys or, at the very least, focus groups, are essential. In New Mexico, advocates used parent, teacher and administrative survey data to convince legislators that there was broad-based support for full-day kindergarten.

There are a number of tools advocates can use to develop, administer and analyze surveys, such as Survey Monkey ([www.surveymonkey.com](http://www.surveymonkey.com)), an easy-to-use "one-stop shop" for online surveys.

- Decide how you will fund your proposal. Advocates of full-day kindergarten identify cost as the most important issue. A number of states with full-day kindergarten programs have phased them in, providing state funds to the neediest schools first. What would a phase-in program in your state look like? Are there state funds that could be used to jump-start the program?
- Create a legislative strategy. Decide who will sponsor your legislation—and be strategic about your choice. Determine which techniques will get the number of votes needed for passage of the legislation—in-person lobbying, dissemination of research, legislative forums, media coverage and letter writing, for example.
- Be prepared to respond to opposition. What are your opponents' arguments? How will you counter them? Strategize with advocates in other states, such as New Mexico and Maryland, with full-day kindergarten programs already in place. What strategies did they find most successful? What lessons did they learn?

### **Getting Positive—and Free—Press for Your Campaign**

In New Mexico, positive media coverage was a crucial factor in the passage of full-day kindergarten legislation. Think New Mexico, the primary advocate for full-day kindergarten in New Mexico, used a number of press strategies to gain positive media coverage.

"We knew that the best way to get to the legislature—and the only way to get the public involved—was to go to the media and get their support," Nathan (Think New Mexico's director) said. From September through the legislative session, representatives from Think New Mexico met with writers and editors from the state's major newspapers (The Santa Fe New Mexican, The Albuquerque Journal and The Albuquerque Tribune), which responded with extensive coverage and several enthusiastic editorial endorsements. Nathan also wrote op-ed articles published in local papers.

As the three major newspapers began to cover the legislation and campaign, the organization received interview requests from radio and television stations across the state, as well as from smaller regional and local newspapers. Within a span of five months, Nathan conducted dozens of interviews with print journalists and appeared on radio and television on at least six separate occasions. The press also frequently quoted the legislative sponsors and prominent Think New Mexico board members.

Nathan went out of his way to provide journalists with information or to encourage coverage of breaking developments. "He knew the media very well," said one reporter who recalled Nathan walking into the capitol media room on an almost daily basis. The reporter commented that while Nathan's knowledge and intellectual honesty gave him credibility, his "persistence sometimes annoyed the capitol beat reporters." As the vote neared, Think New Mexico maximized the free media coverage to reach legislators; on one occasion, for example, the organization distributed copies of a positive article about the legislation to the offices of every legislator in the Senate and House.

—Source: Anthony Raden, *Achieving Full-Day Kindergarten in New Mexico: A Case Study*



- If you decide to undertake a state-wide initiative, determine how many signatures you need to get the initiative on the ballot, decide how you will get those signatures, and map out a media strategy and a public relations campaign for gaining public support. Study other successful ballot initiatives. What strategies have they used?
- Involve members in letter writing or e-mail campaigns to help ensure passage of the legislation. See NEA's Legislative Action Center ([www.nea.org/lac/writing.html](http://www.nea.org/lac/writing.html)) for effective letter writing and e-mail techniques.
- Create a set of short fact sheets to promote the campaign. Persuasive, data-driven fact sheets describe the benefits of full-day kindergarten, outline your campaign's policy goals and counter opponent's arguments. They can be useful as background material for meetings with the media and champions and as a general advocacy tool.
- Consider collective bargaining as a tool in your advocacy campaign. Look for ways to build full-day kindergarten issues—such as class size, class time, professional development and appropriate curricula—into teachers' contracts. For more information on using collective bargaining as an advocacy tool, see *Closing Achievement Gaps: An Association Guide* ([www.achievementgaps.org/nea/Associationguide.pdf](http://www.achievementgaps.org/nea/Associationguide.pdf)).
- Make sure you have the support of the governor. If your legislation passes, you will need the governor's signature before your bill becomes a law. Use coalition partners and other supporters to ensure the governor is on your side. See the New Mexico case study on page 36 for more information about how advocates worked with the governor's wife as well as the New Mexico business community to urge the governor to sign full-day kindergarten legislation.
- Prepare to negotiate. Although the goal of the campaign is to achieve certain policy objectives, any legislative process will include negotiation on a number of topics. Before moving forward with your legislative strategy, determine which issues you will be willing to negotiate, and which ones are deal breakers.

"It is really important to reach primary teachers in this campaign who may be less politically involved than teachers who teach older students. They know what kids need and what teachers need."

—Amanda Rutledge, Vice Chair, Early Childhood Educator's Caucus, Former Kindergarten Teacher, Texas Education Association



## Responding to Opposition

Here are some arguments against full-day kindergarten and counterarguments you can make:

### ● ARGUMENT I:

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**“Full-day kindergarten is too expensive.”**

#### COUNTERARGUMENTS:

**“It is not as expensive as you might think.”**

*Know what the cost of full-day kindergarten will be in your state. In Arizona, for example, Governor Janet Napolitano asked for \$21 million in 2005 to expand full-day kindergarten. This would have brought the total cost for full-day kindergarten in Arizona to \$46 million out of a budget of nearly \$8 billion.*

**“We can pay for it.”**

*Have a plan ready for how the state will pay for it—perhaps beginning with a phase-in period. Once cost estimates had been done in the state of New Mexico, for example, Think New Mexico conducted a systematic assessment of the state budget and identified programs that could be cut to pay for full-day kindergarten.*

**“We save money in the long run.”**

*Though the initial cost might be higher than half-day kindergarten, kids in full-day kindergarten learn more, are less likely to experience grade retention, are more likely to succeed later in school, etc.*

**“Quality early childhood programs have at least a 3-1 return on investment.”**

*Be able to produce the evidence. Show what the long-term cost savings will be for your program.*

### ● ARGUMENT II:

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**“There are other more important priorities—for example, the state should spend money on prekindergarten instead of full-day kindergarten.”**

#### COUNTERARGUMENTS:

**“Full-day kindergarten should be part of any comprehensive early education program.”**

*For supporting evidence, see the Early Education for All Web site: [www.strategiesforchildren.org/eea/eea\\_home.htm](http://www.strategiesforchildren.org/eea/eea_home.htm).*

**“This is a simple step we can take as we move toward implementing a comprehensive early education program.”**

● ARGUMENT III:

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**“Full-day kindergarten cuts into family time.”**

COUNTERARGUMENTS:

**“Full-day kindergarten enriches family time by improving children’s learning and their adjustment to elementary school.”**

**“Comparison studies show that parents prefer full-day kindergarten to half-day kindergarten.”**

**“Full-day kindergarten saves families’ time and energy. Children do not have to be shuffled between school and child care.”**

● ARGUMENT IV:

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**“Five-year-olds aren’t ready to spend a full day in school.”**

COUNTERARGUMENTS:

**“Research shows that 5-year-olds are ready to spend a full day in school.”**

*Be ready to cite the studies.*

**“Research also shows that full-day kindergarten is preferable for kids—socially, emotionally and intellectually.”**

*Children have time to learn and explore at a slower pace and in more depth.*

**“Teachers get to know kids better in full-day kindergarten.”**

*Teachers are better able to nurture and care for children in a full-day setting.*

● ARGUMENT V:

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**“Children don’t need full-day kindergarten; they learn more during time with their parents or family members.”**

COUNTERARGUMENTS:

**“Research shows that all children learn more in full-day kindergarten.”**

**“Full-day kindergarten provides an ideal learning setting for all children.”**

*This includes those children with stay-at-home parents. Kindergartners are taught by certified teachers who specialize in the needs and learning styles of young children.*

**“Many children don’t spend much time with parents and family members during the day.”**

*Instead, they are shuffled between kindergarten and child care.*

As you read through these arguments, think about the strategies your opponents and their allies may use. If they release research with findings that counter your research, how will you respond? Who are their supporters in the state legislature? How powerful are they? Who can you enlist on your side to help ensure that you will win the day?

## TALKING POINTS—WHAT THE RESEARCH SAYS

### **1. Full-Day Kindergarten Boosts Student Achievement**

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**Longitudinal data demonstrates that children in full-day classes show greater reading and mathematics achievement gains than those in half-day classes.**

Walston, Jill and West, Jerry. *Full-Day and Half-Day Kindergarten in the United States: Findings from the Early Childhood Longitudinal Study, Kindergarten Class of 1998-99*. U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, 2004. <http://nces.ed.gov/pubs2004/web/2004078.asp>.

Ackerman, Debora J., Barnett, W. Steven, and Robin, Kenneth B. *Making the Most of Kindergarten: Present Trends and Future Issues in the Provision of Full-day Programs*. National Institute for Early Education Research, March, 2005. <http://nieer.org/docs/?DocID=118>.

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**Full-day kindergarten can produce long-term educational gains, especially for low-income and minority students.**

Plucker, Jonathan A, Eaton, Jessica J., Rapp, Kelly E., et. al. *The Effects of Full Day Versus Half Day Kindergarten: Review and Analysis of National and Indiana Data*. Center for Evaluation and Education Policy, January 2004. [www.doe.state.in.us/primetime/pdf/fulldaykreport.pdf](http://www.doe.state.in.us/primetime/pdf/fulldaykreport.pdf).

Cryan, John R., Sheehan, Robert, Wiechel, Jane, and Bandy-Hedden, Irene G. "Success outcomes of full-day kindergarten: More positive behavior and increased achievement in the years after." *Early Childhood Research Quarterly*, 1992, v. 7, no. 2, 187-203.

Education Commission of the States. *Full-Day Kindergarten Programs Improve Chances of Academic Success*. *The Progress of Education Reform* 2004, ECS, v. 5, no. 4, September 2004.

Montgomery County Public Schools. *Early Success: Closing the Opportunity Gap for Our Youngest Learners*. Montgomery County (Maryland) Public Schools, July 2004, [www.mcps.k12.md.us/departments/superintendent/docs/early\\_success.pdf](http://www.mcps.k12.md.us/departments/superintendent/docs/early_success.pdf)

Viadero, Debra. "Study: Full Day Kindergarten Boosts Academic Performance." *Education Week*, April 17, 2002, v. 21, no. 31, p. 14.

### **2. Full-Day Kindergarten Improves Students' Social and Emotional Skills**

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**A full day of learning offers social, emotional and intellectual benefits to kindergartners. They have more time to focus on activities, to reflect on activities and to transition between activities.**

Ackerman, Debora J., Barnett, W. Steven, and Robin, Kenneth B. *Making the Most of Kindergarten: Present Trends and Future Issues in the Provision of Full-day Programs*. National Institute for Early Education Research, March, 2005. <http://nieer.org/docs/?DocID=118>.

Cryan, John R., Sheehan, Robert, Wiechel, Jane, and Bandy-Hedden, Irene G. "Success outcomes of full-day kindergarten: More positive behavior and increased achievement in the years after." *Early Childhood Research Quarterly*, 1992, v. 7, no. 2, 187-203.

### **3. Full-Day Kindergarten Is a Sound Educational Investment**

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**Recent research has demonstrated that funds invested in quality early education programs produce powerful returns on investment.**

Heckman, James J. and Masterov, Dimitriy V. *The Productivity Argument for Investing in Young Children*. Working Paper 5, Invest in Kids Working Group, Committee for Economic Development, October 2004. <http://jenni.uchicago.edu/Invest/>.

Lynch, Robert. *Exceptional Returns: Economic, Fiscal and Social Benefits of Investment in Early Childhood Education*. Economic Policy Institute, 2005. [www.epinet.org/content.cfm/books\\_exceptional\\_returns](http://www.epinet.org/content.cfm/books_exceptional_returns).

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**Full-day kindergarten provides a bridge between prekindergarten programs and the early elementary years.**

Education Commission of the States. *Full-Day Kindergarten: A Study of State Policies in the United States*. ECS, June 2005. [fcd-us.org/PDFs/ECS\\_FDK.pdf](http://fcd-us.org/PDFs/ECS_FDK.pdf).

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**Full-day kindergarten enables teachers to assess students' needs and abilities more effectively, leading to early intervention.**

Plucker, Jonathan A, Eaton, Jessica J., Rapp, Kelly E., et. al. *The Effects of Full Day Versus Half Day Kindergarten: Review and Analysis of National and Indiana Data*. Center for Evaluation and Education Policy, January 2004. [www.doe.state.in.us/primetime/pdf/fulldaykreport.pdf](http://www.doe.state.in.us/primetime/pdf/fulldaykreport.pdf).

### **4. Teachers Prefer Full-Day Kindergarten**

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**Teachers get to know students better; they are able to develop a richer understanding of students' needs and, in turn, to develop activities and lessons to meet those needs.**

Elicker, J. and Mathur, S. "What do they do all day? Comprehensive evaluation of a full-day kindergarten." *Early Childhood Research Quarterly*, v.12, no. 4, pp. 459-480, 1997.

### **5. Full-Day Kindergarten Is Optimal for Parents**

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**Comparison studies demonstrate that parents prefer full-day kindergarten.**

Early Education for All. "Investing in Full-Day Kindergarten Is Essential." Citing West, Jerry, Denton, Kristin, and Germino-Hausken, Elvira. *America's Kindergartners*. National Center for Educational Statistics, 2000.

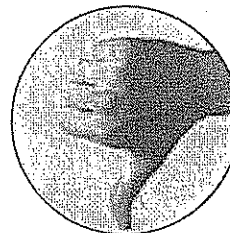
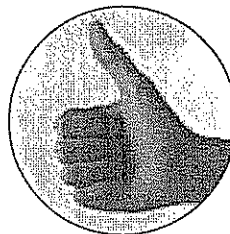
Education Commission of the States. *Full-Day Kindergarten: A Study of State Policies in the United States*. ECS, June 2005. [fcd-us.org/PDFs/ECS\\_FDK.pdf](http://fcd-us.org/PDFs/ECS_FDK.pdf).

“One of the things we have learned from doing this work for many years is that you have to be in it for the long term—don’t give up. Adjust to changes and build support among a broad coalition of groups.”


—Jim Griess, Executive Director, and Jay Sears, Director of Instructional Advocacy, Nebraska Education Association

### Moving Forward After Passage—or Failure

- If your initiative is successful, your work is far from over. You will need to help ensure that the legislation is successfully enacted. Consider creating an implementation working group within your coalition. This group can help oversee issues such as funding, professional development and curriculum development, among others. As you develop your campaign plan, include this phase of the process in your plan.
- If your proposal is unsuccessful, decide where you will go next. Work with your coalition to determine why the campaign failed. Was it too costly? If so, why? Who were your primary opponents? Why were they opposed to your campaign? How can you hold them accountable for their opposition? Determine what your next steps will be. Do you want to reintroduce the legislation in the next session? Should you make alterations to it first?



## What Full-Day Kindergarten Should Include: Policy Priorities



“NEA knows what works in the classroom—the same ingredients that are supported by research, by parents, and by teachers and education support professionals: strong parental involvement, qualified and certified teachers, small class sizes that allow for individual attention, and books and materials aligned with high standards—and high expectations—for every child.”

—Reg Weaver, President,  
National Education Association

### SECTION OVERVIEW

#### WHAT FULL-DAY KINDERGARTEN SHOULD INCLUDE: POLICY PRIORITIES

- **NEA'S Full-Day Kindergarten Policy Priorities p. 29**
- **NEA Model Legislation p. 30**

## Introduction

For children to reap the benefits of full-day kindergarten, they need more than just additional time for school. Research demonstrates that the most successful full-day kindergarten environments are staffed by licensed, certified teachers and paraprofessionals who receive ongoing professional development, teach in small classroom settings and involve parents as partners in the learning process.

Both the structure of the learning environment and the curriculum should be aligned with that of other primary grades and with prekindergarten, so that kindergarten can serve as a bridge year for children. Activities should engage children's minds and bodies, allowing them to improve literacy and numeracy skills, as well as social and emotional abilities.



### NEA's Commitment to Full-Day Kindergarten

At its 2003 representative assembly, NEA committed to work toward the following goals:

**That all 3- and 4-year-old children in the United States should have access to a full-day public school prekindergarten that is of the highest possible quality, universally offered and funded with public money not taken from any other education program.**

**That full-day kindergarten for all 5-year-old children should be mandated in every public school in this country. These kindergartens should support the gains children made in prekindergarten, provide time for children to explore topics in depth, give teachers opportunities to individualize instruction and offer parents opportunities to become involved in their children's classrooms.**

—Source: *NEA on Prekindergarten and Kindergarten*



**NEA's Full-Day Kindergarten Policy Priorities**

| Issue                                  | Commitment  |
|--|---|
| <b>Mandatory Full-Day Attendance</b>   | <p>Full-day does not designate a specific number of hours but means that kindergarten should be in accord with the regular school day.</p> <p>Full-day kindergarten should be universal (available in all schools) and mandatory.</p>   |
| <b>Teacher Certification</b>           | <p>Kindergarten teachers, support professionals and administrators should be considered qualified if they hold the license or certification that the state grade requires for their employment.</p>   |
| <b>Class Size</b>                      | <p>NEA supports an optimum class size of 15 students for regular programs and smaller class sizes for programs that include students with exceptional needs. As with prekindergarten, smaller classes generate the greatest gains for younger children.</p>   |
| <b>Alignment</b>                       | <p>State policymakers should ensure learning standards for kindergarten are created and aligned both with early learning standards and standards for first grade and beyond.</p> <p>The Education Commission of the States recommends that learning standards for kindergarten be implemented comprehensively across five key domains: physical and motor development, social and emotional development, approaches toward learning, cognitive development, and language and literacy development.</p>  |
| <b>Professional Development</b>        | <p>Educators—teachers, support professionals and administrators—should have access to high-quality, continuous professional development that is required to gain and improve knowledge and skills and that is provided at school district expense.</p>  |
| <b>Funding</b>                         | <p>Kindergarten should be funded in the same manner as the rest of the public school program, but the money should come from new funding sources. This does not necessarily mean that new taxes should be imposed. It does, however, mean that the necessary financing for mandatory, full-day, public school kindergarten, including the need to recruit and equitably pay qualified teacher and support professionals, should not be obtained at the expense of other public school programs.</p> <p>Public funds should not be used to pay for children to attend private kindergarten. Any portion of public money, even "new" money, going to private kindergartens, which are open to some but not all children, will reduce resources available to public school kindergartens, which are available to all children.</p> |
| <b>Parent Involvement</b>              | <p>Because kindergarten is the bridge to the more structured school experience, training programs should be made available to help parents and guardians take an active role in the education of their kindergarten children. Parents and guardians should be encouraged to visit their children's schools and maintain contact with teachers and other school personnel.</p>   |
| <b>Curriculum</b>                      | <p>In kindergarten, as with prekindergarten, all areas of a child's development should be addressed: fostering thinking and problem solving, developing social and physical skills, and instilling basic academic skills.</p>   |
| <b>Assessment</b>                      | <p>Assessment of the child's progress should also address all areas of a child's development: physical, social, emotional and cognitive. Many sources of information should be used and children should be given opportunities to demonstrate their skills in different ways, allowing for variability in learning pace and for different cultural backgrounds. As in prekindergarten, large-scale standardized testing is inappropriate. The purpose of assessment should be to improve the quality of education by providing information to teachers, identifying children with special needs and developing baseline data.</p>   |
| <b>Teacher Assistants</b>              | <p>Adult supervision is vital. Each kindergarten teacher should have the support of a full-time teacher assistant.</p>  |
| <b>Flexibility in Age Requirements</b> | <p>To give children the best possible chances to benefit from kindergarten, NEA recommends that 5 be the uniform entrance age for kindergarten. The minimum entrance age (of 5) and the maximum allowed age (of 6) should not be applied rigidly, however. In joint consultation with parents and teachers, a school district should be allowed to make case-by-case exceptions to age requirements.</p>  |

## NEA Model Legislation

The following model legislation has been developed by NEA to assist you as you draft legislation appropriate for your state. Use it as a starting point for conversation with partners, lawmakers and colleagues.

To establish a preschool and full-day kindergarten program, and for other purposes.

January x, 200X

### A BILL

Be it enacted by the xxx and the xxx of the State of \_\_\_\_\_

#### Section 1. Short Title.

This Act may be cited as 'The Prekindergarten and Full Day Kindergarten Act.'

#### Section 2. Findings.

The Legislature finds the following:

- (1) Prekindergarten programs are essential to supporting the cognitive, social, emotional, and physical development of young children.
- (2) Kindergarten programs are essential to ensuring the school readiness of children when they enter the 1st grade.

#### Section 3. Purpose.

The purpose of this Act is expand preschool and full-day kindergarten opportunities for children aged three, four, and five.

#### Section 4. Program Authorization.

The State Department of Education (hereinafter referred to as the designated State agency) shall establish a program to provide for the development of -

- (1) High-quality full-day, full-calendar-year universal prekindergarten for all children age 3 and 4; and
- (2) Full day kindergarten program for all children age 5 in the State.

#### Section 5. Plan and Requirements.

(a) State Plan-- The designated State agency shall develop a plan to implement the program described in section 4. Such plan shall include each of the following:

- (1) A description of the universal prekindergarten program that will be established and how it will support children's cognitive, social, emotional, and physical development.
- (2) A description of the full day kindergarten program that will be established and how it will ensure school readiness for such children.
- (3) A statement of the goals for the universal prekindergarten and the full day kindergarten programs and how such goals will be measured through program outcomes and other means.
- (4) A description of how the designated State agency will involve representatives of early childhood program providers that sponsor programs addressing children 3, 4, and 5 years old.
- (5) A description of how the designated State agency will coordinate with existing State-funded prekindergarten programs, federally funded programs (such as Head Start programs), public school programs, and child care providers.
- (6) A plan to address the shortages of qualified early childhood education teachers, including how to increase such teachers' compensation to be comparable to that of public school teachers.
- (7) How the designated State agency will provide ongoing professional development opportunities to help increase the number of teachers in early childhood programs who meet the State's education or credential requirements for prekindergarten teachers.

- (8) A plan to address how the programs will meet the needs of children with disabilities, limited English proficiency, and other special needs;
- (9) A plan to provide transportation for children to and from the programs;
- (10) A plan to ensure parents of children enrolled in the program are actively involved with and engaged in their child's education.

(b) Local Requirements:

- (1) In General- An eligible program provider receiving funding under this Act shall—
  - (A) Maintain a maximum class size of 15 children;
  - (B) Maintain a ratio of not more than 10 children for each member of the teaching staff;
  - (C) (i) Ensure that all prekindergarten and kindergarten teachers meet State requirements for teachers under applicable State law; and
  - (ii) Document that the State is demonstrating significant progress in assisting such teachers on working toward a bachelor of arts degree with training in early childhood development or early childhood education;
  - (D) Meet all health and safety standards required for prekindergarten programs.
- (2) Local Application- Program providers under this Act shall submit an application to the designated State agency under this Act containing the following:
  - (A) A description of the program to be provided;
  - (B) A statement of the demonstrated need for a program, or an enhanced or expanded program, in the area served by the eligible program provider;
  - (C) A description of the age-appropriate and developmentally appropriate educational curriculum to be provided that will help children be ready for school and assist them in the transition to kindergarten (as applicable to prekindergarten programs);
  - (D) A description of how the eligible program provider will collaborate with existing community-based child care providers and Head Start programs, as appropriate;
  - (E) A description of how students and families will be assisted in obtaining supportive services available in their communities;
  - (F) A plan to promote parental involvement in the program;
  - (G) A description of how teachers will receive ongoing professional development in early childhood development and education.

**Section 6. Professional Development Set-Aside.**

A designated State agency may set aside a portion of funding under this Act for ongoing professional development activities for teachers and staff at prekindergarten and kindergarten programs that wish to participate in the programs under this Act. Funds set aside under this subsection may be used for ongoing professional development—

- (1) To provide prekindergarten and kindergarten teachers and staff with the knowledge and skills for the application of recent research on child cognitive, social, emotional, and physical development, including language and literacy development, and on early childhood pedagogy;
- (2) To provide the cost of education needed to obtain a credential or degree with specific training in early childhood development or education;
- (3) To work with children who have limited English proficiency, disabilities, and other special needs; and
- (4) To select and use developmentally appropriate screening and diagnostic assessments to improve teaching and learning and make appropriate referrals for services to support the development and learning of children in such programs.

**Section 7. Definition.**

In this Act the term 'eligible program provider' means a prekindergarten program provider that is—

- (A) A public school;
- or
- (B) A Head Start program.

## State Stories

“Our central message was always an educational message: full-day kindergarten provides long-term educational benefits. An investment in full-day kindergarten is an investment in the educational future of our children.”

—Charles Bowyer, Government Relations, Professional Issues and Research, National Education Association-New Mexico

### SECTION OVERVIEW

#### STATE STORIES

- **West Virginia—Meeting the Needs of Students, Parents and Teachers p. 34**
- **New Mexico—A Lesson in Patience, Persistence, Compromise and Focus p. 36**

### **West Virginia—Meeting the Needs of Students, Parents and Teachers**

West Virginia is one of nine states, most of which are located in the southeastern United States, with mandatory full-day kindergarten. The West Virginia law requiring full-day kindergarten was passed in the early 1990s, and full-day kindergarten was implemented throughout the state by the mid-1990s.

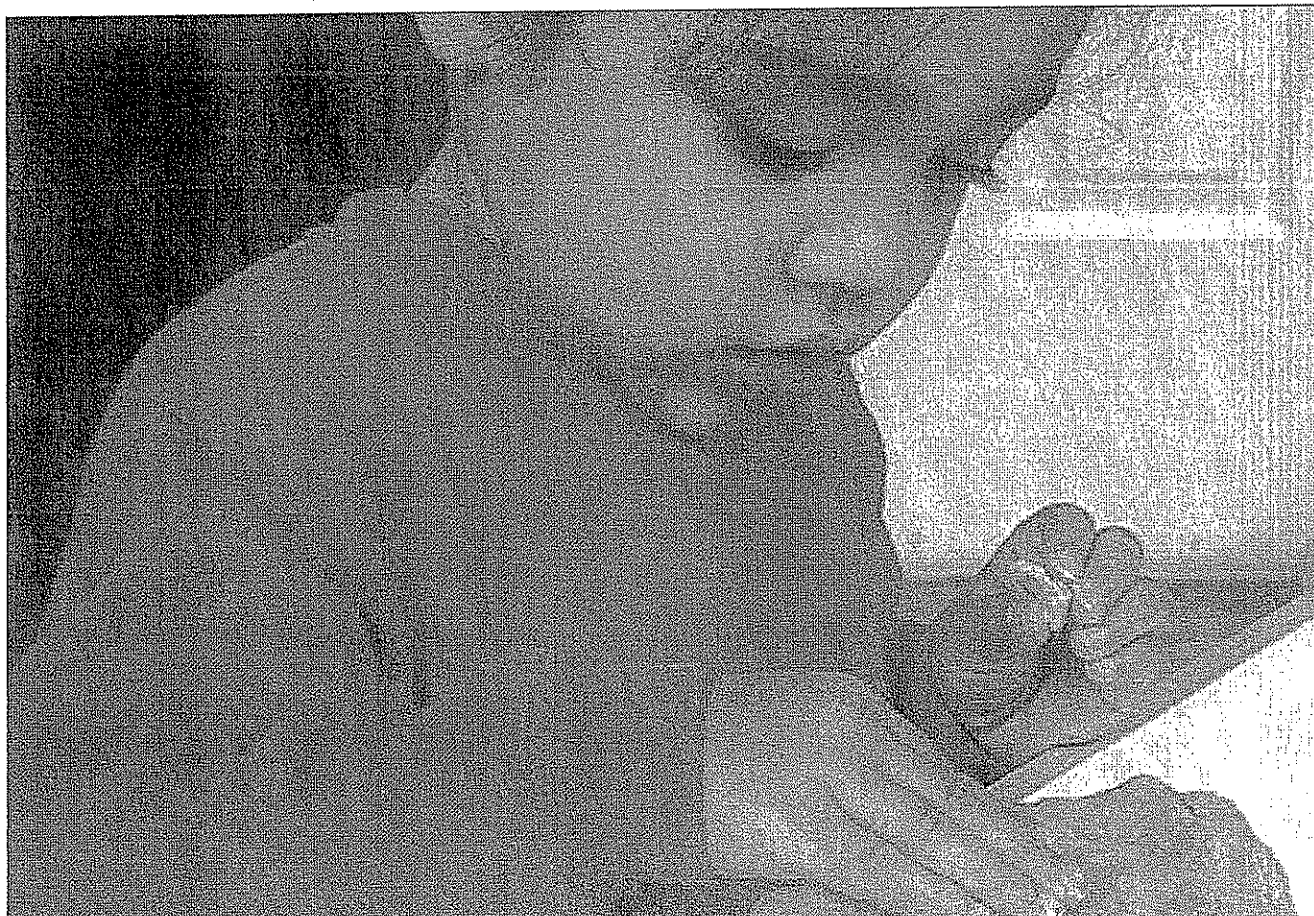
“Full-day kindergarten made sense for West Virginia—from an educational and an economic perspective.”

—Perry Bryant, former lobbyist with the West Virginia Education Association

The West Virginia Education Association (WVEA) was actively involved in the passage of full-day kindergarten legislation because it made sense from educational and economic perspectives.

At the time full-day kindergarten legislation was passed, a number of districts in the state—especially in the western part—faced declining enrollment. Schools were closing and teachers were being transferred or fired. Additionally, as a rural state, West Virginia could not afford to have multiple bus schedules to accommodate kindergartners.

Full-day kindergarten provided a way of more effectively meeting the needs of students while at the same time saving teachers’ jobs and saving districts’ money. Because enrollments were declining in a large portion of the state, the need for additional classroom space was an issue only for districts in the eastern panhandle—where population was growing at the time and continues to grow.



The WVEA teamed up with county superintendents to support passage of full-day kindergarten legislation. The group worked with the education committees of the West Virginia House and Senate, and gained the support of influential legislators. At the time, there was not significant opposition to the bill.

The passage and subsequent implementation of full-day kindergarten in West Virginia was not without challenges, however. Some schools in the eastern panhandle struggled to find classroom space and some parents voiced concern about how longer days—in some cases, coupled with long bus rides—would affect their children.

“Looking back, one of the things we would have done differently,” notes Bryant, “is involve more parents as supporters.”

Full-day kindergarten has provided a number of benefits to parents, however. As Cathy Jones, who coordinates early education program at the West Virginia Department of Education, notes, “West Virginia has a lot of working parents. Public full-day kindergarten programs ensure working parents that their children are well educated and well cared for. All parents receive those benefits.”

Currently, the WVEA is working in partnership with early education groups in the state to support the passage of a comprehensive public prekindergarten program. “The work we did on full-day kindergarten really helped set the stage for the work we are doing now,” explains Bryant.

**A snapshot of full-day kindergarten in West Virginia:**

| Issue                                  | Meets NAE Policy Recommendations  |
|--|---|
| <b>Mandatory Full-Day Attendance</b>   | <b>YES</b> —Kindergarten is “full day/every day” and tied to the regular school calendar. Kindergarten is universal (available in all schools) and mandatory. |
| <b>Teacher Certification</b>           | <b>YES</b> —Kindergarten teachers must be appropriately certified. The state requires a kindergarten certificate.   |
| <b>Class Size</b>                      | <b>NO</b> —Classes are capped at 20 students.   |
| <b>Alignment</b>                       | <b>YES</b> —Content standards are required for each grade. Alignment is built into content standards that are followed in each grade.                         |
| <b>Professional Development</b>        | <b>YES</b> —The state provides ongoing professional development for teachers and principals.  |
| <b>Funding</b>                         | <b>YES</b> —Full-day kindergarten is fully funded by the state.   |
| <b>Parent Involvement</b>              | <b>SOMEWHAT</b> —Parents are required to register children and participate in pre-screening programs.   |
| <b>Curriculum</b>                      | <b>YES</b> —The state of West Virginia has a mandated state-wide curriculum for each grade, including kindergarten.   |
| <b>Assessment</b>                      | <b>NO</b> —Informal assessments are mandated by the state, but no formal assessments are required in kindergarten.  |
| <b>Teacher Assistants</b>              | <b>YES</b> —The law stipulates that if there are 11 or more students, teachers must have an aide in the classroom.  |
| <b>Flexibility in Age Requirements</b> | <b>NO</b> —The kindergarten age requirement is uniform throughout the state.  |

## **New Mexico—A Lesson in Patience, Persistence, Compromise and Focus**

The state of New Mexico began implementing a state-wide full-day kindergarten program in the 2000-2001 school year. Now, kindergartners attend school full day in every school in the state. Though New Mexico eventually ended up phasing in full-day kindergarten, proponents of full-day kindergarten did not initially envision a phase-in period. An important part of New Mexico's story is how the phase-in solution was eventually reached and the benefits it offered.

"Our central message was always an educational message: full-day kindergarten provides long-term educational benefits. An investment in full-day kindergarten is an investment in the educational future of our children."

—Charles Bowyer, Government Relations, Professional Issues and Research, National Education Association-New Mexico

The push for full-day kindergarten in New Mexico began in the early 1990s. Mike Gladden, a school superintendent concerned about the academic preparedness of the young children in his school system, worked with his state senator, Pete Campos, to pass a memorial to study the feasibility of offering full-day kindergarten throughout the state of New Mexico. In summer 1993 the state's Public Education Department teamed up with the New Mexico legislature's Education Study Committee to form a full-day kindergarten task force.

The task force conducted a literature review and surveyed parents, teachers and school administrators about their attitudes toward the expansion of full-day kindergarten. A majority of parents and teachers supported full-day kindergarten, and all of the administrators surveyed with full-day programs in place favored the full-day approach. The task force then drafted a report, making the case for full-day kindergarten. The report included cost calculations for implementing full-day kindergarten and referenced an Albuquerque school evaluation that favorably compared full-day classes to half-day classes.

### **Key Steps in the New Mexico Full-Day Kindergarten Advocacy Process**

With abundant experience at confronting the political and budgetary realities that state policymakers face, full-day kindergarten supporters effectively:

- Defined a problem (inadequate student achievement)
- Offered a policy solution (full-day kindergarten)
- Built political pressure and momentum (through media coverage and endorsements and the support of influential individuals and constituencies)
- Provided policymakers with funding solutions and implementation strategies (recalculating projected costs, identifying funding sources)
- Monitored and influenced implementation after passage of the legislation (attending to the selection of schools; offering teacher training opportunities)

—Source: Anthony Raden, *Achieving Full-Day Kindergarten in New Mexico: A Case Study*

Based on this report, supporters introduced a bill in the 1994 legislative session to begin implementing full-day kindergarten in selected districts. Though the bill appeared to have popular support, it ultimately failed in committee. In his case study of full-day kindergarten in New Mexico, Anthony Raden notes that the bill was likely defeated for two reasons: there were concerns about funding equity in districts with low property values, and some conservative parents were opposed to the bill on the grounds that it constituted state intervention in family life.

For several years, the drive to pass a full-day kindergarten bill gave way to other education priorities. Gary Johnson, a conservative businessman, was elected governor in 1994 on an education platform that included an emphasis on local control. Though he initially professed support for full-day kindergarten, his first legislative package did not include funds for the program, and public education supporters found themselves battling the governor on other fronts, including the voucher issue.

The full-day kindergarten issue continued to resurface, though. In 1998 another full-day kindergarten bill was introduced. But after the New Mexico Public Education Department increased the estimated amount of funds required to implement the program to approximately \$103 million—with \$38 million for teacher salaries, \$65 million for additional classroom space and \$500,000 for transportation—again the bill failed in committee. In response, supporters of full-day kindergarten proposed a three-year phase-in period, and managed to pass a prekindergarten package that included funds for full-day kindergarten in 1999. In a larger battle with the legislature over vouchers, the governor then vetoed the package, along with a number of other education provisions.

A key turning point for full-day kindergarten in New Mexico was the founding of Think New Mexico (TNM), a bipartisan research and advocacy organization created by Fred Nathan, an attorney and former special counsel in the New Mexico attorney general's office. As special counsel, Nathan worked with the New Mexico legislature for seven years. When he left the attorney general's office to found Think New Mexico, he intended to focus on important yet seemingly intractable issues facing New Mexico. He built a high-profile bipartisan board of directors, and with a few small grants from New Mexico foundations, set about working on TNM's first issue: full-day kindergarten.

Interviews with Anthony Raden, Nathan and TNM board members point to several reasons why they selected full-day kindergarten as their first issue:

- The board members agreed that New Mexico needed to do much more on the early education front.
- Full-day kindergarten was a manageable piece of the larger pre-K issue.
- It was a "potentially winnable issue." As Nathan put it, "I thought that it would be a long shot, but achievable."

TNM's strategy was simple, yet effective. Though the concept of full-day kindergarten had been gathering support in New Mexico for a number of years, advocates had not managed to successfully implement a full-day kindergarten program. The TNM board and staff knew that

"Think New Mexico pointed out that while 54.7% of 5-year-olds attended full-day kindergarten programs nationally, only 14.7% did so in New Mexico. New Mexico children were way behind their peers in educational achievement."

—Anthony Raden, *Achieving Full-Day Kindergarten in New Mexico: A Case Study*



they would need to win over the governor, which would require the support of the business community, and they would need to convince legislators that New Mexico could afford full-day kindergarten. With these two factors in mind, they began their campaign.

- First, they issued a report, making the case for full-day kindergarten—framing it as an essential and affordable program—and held a press conference to announce the findings in the report. As the legislative session drew near, they issued a second report, outlining how the state could pay for full-day kindergarten by cutting some costly, and arguably unnecessary, programs.
- They worked hard to get free positive media coverage—writing op-eds, meeting with writers and editors at the state’s major papers, and giving radio and TV interviews.
- They identified and worked with popular legislators on both sides of the aisle to cosponsor the legislation.
- Using the connections of a powerful board, they gained the support of New Mexico’s political and business leaders—including the governor’s wife, Dee Johnson, and the Association of Commerce and Industry, New Mexico’s most powerful business organization. This set the stage for the governor to eventually sign the legislation into law.
- Finally, TNM members “staffed the legislature” by acting as legislators’ aides before the vote. In a state where legislators receive very little compensation and little to no staff support, this kind of attention made a huge difference.

Raden notes in his case study that “teachers unions” were reluctant to support the passage of full-day kindergarten. Not so, says Charles Bowyer, National Education Association-New Mexico’s government relations, research and professional issues coordinator.

“We were always supportive of full-day kindergarten, but we wanted to make sure that there was enough funding for the program,” explains Bowyer. “We were concerned about how the passage of full-day kindergarten would impact other programs, vis-à-vis funding. At the time, we were working on other legislation.... We wanted to make sure that this reform was not at the expense of other reforms.”

When asked what NEA-NM would have done differently, Bowyer notes that they would have started by supporting a phase-in process for implementing full-day kindergarten. “It took us (the coalition supporting full-day kindergarten) a long time to reach that compromise. If we had begun with a phase-in approach, we could have saved a lot of time and frustration—it was just too expensive otherwise,” explains Bowyer.

### **Staffing the Legislature**

Every morning during the session, Nathan checked in personally with the legislative sponsors (Taylor, Wilson and Smith). If they needed anything—a typed speech, talking points, photocopies—he and his staff took care of it. Nathan and his allies spoke to every legislator in the House and Senate, shaping arguments to appeal to the person’s ideological leanings and legislative priorities. “We tried to make a marketing package that was attractive to everyone to counter all objections out there,” Senator Smith said. To Republicans, in particular, they tended to emphasize that the reform could be done in a fiscally prudent manner and would bring a high return on investment. To all politicians, they claimed that full-day kindergarten would boost student achievement—an affordable and popular reform that made enormous sense educationally and politically.

—Source: Anthony Raden, *Achieving Full-Day Kindergarten in New Mexico: A Case Study*

Ultimately, the phase-in compromise was appealing to a wide range of people. It was much more palatable to legislators, and it enabled NEA-NM to simultaneously work for salary increases for teachers and support full-day kindergarten.

### The Right Solution at the Right Time

Andy Lenderman, a journalist who covered the education beat for *The Albuquerque Tribune*, points to several conditions and factors that made the timing ideal for passage of full-day kindergarten legislation. First, parents in the state, “tired of being dead last in every single education category,” were anxious for educational change and improved student outcomes. Second, with a booming economy, the state was “flush,” with a significant budgetary surplus from which new programs could be funded. Finally, legislators (who were up for re-election) and the governor (who endured criticism for vetoing the previous year’s budget and various education initiatives) had pledged to take action to revitalize the state’s educational system. Political and economic forces, therefore, converged to allow full-day kindergarten, an idea drifting on the political landscape for years, to emerge as a feasible and popular reform strategy on the state’s legislative agenda.

—Source: Anthony Raden, *Achieving Full-Day Kindergarten in New Mexico: A Case Study*

### A snapshot of full-day kindergarten in New Mexico:

| Issue                                  | Meets NEA Policy Recommendations  |
|--|---|
| <b>Mandatory Full-Day Attendance</b>   | <b>NO</b> —Full-day kindergarten is universal (available in all schools), but not mandatory. More than 98 percent of parents choose to send their children to full-day kindergarten.  |
| <b>Teacher Certification</b>           | <b>YES</b> —Kindergarten teachers must be appropriately certified.  |
| <b>Class Size</b>                      | <b>YES</b> —The ratio between teacher and students is 1 to 15. Classes with 15 to 20 students must be provided with a teacher’s assistant.  |
| <b>Alignment</b>                       | Not specified in the statute (according to the ECS Kindergarten Database).  |
| <b>Professional Development</b>        | <b>YES</b> —The state provides ongoing professional development for teachers and principals.  |
| <b>Funding</b>                         | <b>YES</b> —Full-day kindergarten was phased in across the state from 2000–2001 to 2004–2005. It is now fully funded by the state as part of the state’s regular education funding formula.   |
| <b>Parent Involvement</b>              | Not specified in the statute (according to the ECS Kindergarten Database).  |
| <b>Curriculum</b>                      | <b>NO</b> —There is no mandated state curriculum. However, the statute specifies that programs must contain an early literacy program tied to reading research, and that they must be child-centered and developmentally appropriate. |
| <b>Assessments</b>                     | <b>YES</b> —Schools are required to conduct a variety of assessments, including reading and literacy assessments.   |
| <b>Teacher Assistants</b>              | <b>YES</b> —The law stipulates that if there are 15 to 20 students, teachers must have an assistant in the classroom.   |
| <b>Flexibility in Age Requirements</b> | <b>NO</b> —The age requirement (5) is mandatory throughout the state. All students must attend at least half-day kindergarten if they turn 5 by September 1.  |

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High/Scope Educational Research Foundation. *Lifetime Effects: The High/Scope Perry Preschool Study Through Age 40.* November 2004. [www.strategiesforchildren.org/eea/3research\\_summaries/05\\_HighScope.pdf](http://www.strategiesforchildren.org/eea/3research_summaries/05_HighScope.pdf).

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## **Additional Organizations/Web Sites**

### **Early Education for All**

[www.strategiesforchildren.org/eea/eea\\_home.htm](http://www.strategiesforchildren.org/eea/eea_home.htm). This Massachusetts campaign is a coalition of leaders from business, early childhood, labor, religion, health care, education and philanthropy, working in partnership with parents, grassroots leaders and state policymakers to make publicly funded, high-quality preschool education and full-day public school kindergarten available to every Massachusetts child. The Web site features full-day kindergarten research as well as draft legislation.

### **Full-Day Kindergarten: Exploring an Option for Extended Learning**

Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory. [www.nwrel.org/request/dec2002/index.html](http://www.nwrel.org/request/dec2002/index.html). Contains resources for parents, teachers, school administrators and policymakers.

Education Commission of the States—Kindergarten Database. [www.ecs.org/ecsmain.asp?page=/html/educationIssues/ECSStateNotes.asp](http://www.ecs.org/ecsmain.asp?page=/html/educationIssues/ECSStateNotes.asp). Includes comprehensive information on state kindergarten funding and statutes.

### **National Association for the Education of Young Children**

[www.naeyc.org](http://www.naeyc.org). NAEYC is dedicated to improving the well-being of all young children with a focus on birth to age 8. See the Early Childhood Issues section of their Web site for research and advocacy information.

### **National Conference of State Legislatures**

[www.ncsl.org](http://www.ncsl.org). Maintains detailed information about state legislatures, including when they meet and how they are structured.

### **National Institute for Early Education Research**

[www.nieer.org](http://www.nieer.org). NIEER supports early childhood education initiatives by providing objective, nonpartisan information based on research. The NIEER Web site contains an Expert Database with profiles and contact information for experts in early childhood education.

### **Pre-K Now—Resources**

[www.preknow.org](http://www.preknow.org). Pre-K Now is a public education and advocacy organization that advances high-quality, voluntary prekindergarten for all 3- and 4-year-olds. Visit the Resources section of their Web site for more information about the early education climates in different states.