

Full-Day Kindergarten Fact Sheet

Benefits of Full-Day Kindergarten

- Children who attend full-day kindergarten learn more in reading and math over the kindergarten year than those in half-day programs.¹
- Children in full-day kindergarten programs receive 40-50% more instruction than children enrolled in half-day kindergarten programs. More instructional time in full-day kindergarten allows for increased learning activities and strategies such as: group read-aloud, peer tutoring, mixed-ability grouping, and child-initiated activities.²
- Children who attend full-day kindergarten spend 30% more time on reading and literacy instruction and 46% more time on mathematics than children in half-day programs.³
- Full-day kindergarteners exhibit more independent learning, classroom involvement, productivity in work with peers and reflectiveness than half-day kindergarteners.⁴
- Full-day kindergarten allows for a more consistent schedule for children and reduces the ratio of transition time to class time, reducing stress for children.^{5,6}
- Parents of children in full-day kindergarten report higher levels of satisfaction with their children's schedule and curriculum and the program's support for working families.

Full-Day Kindergarten Helps Close the Achievement Gap

- At-risk students who received full-day kindergarten through the Kindergarten Initiative in Montgomery County, Maryland made significantly greater progress in language proficiency than comparable children in half-day kindergarten.⁷
- A study of 17,600 Philadelphia children found that full-day kindergarten helps children from low-income families perform better and saves the school district millions of dollars through significantly reduced grade retention in the first through third grades.⁸
- Research from Lowell Elementary School in Albuquerque, New Mexico, where the average entering kindergartener was already 22 months below grade level, showed that children in the school's half-day kindergarten made an average gain of 5.4 months during a 9 month period, while children in the full-day classes made a 16 month gain.⁹
- Studies of Minneapolis Public Schools showed that minority children in full-day kindergarten gained literacy skills at a faster pace than peers in half-day classes.¹⁰

Strong Public Support for Full-Day Kindergarten

- Eighty-one percent of Massachusetts voters support full-day kindergarten for all Massachusetts children.¹¹
- Among parents who report that their communities do not offer full-day kindergarten, 61% say they would rather send their child to full-day than half-day kindergarten.¹²
- In one national study, after the second year of a full-day kindergarten pilot, 100% of the full-day parents and 72% of the half-day parents indicated that, if given a choice, they would have selected the full-day program for their child.¹³

Kindergarten Policy in Massachusetts

The mandatory school age for children in Massachusetts is six. Current Massachusetts regulations mandate that 425 hours of kindergarten be provided by all public school districts and be made available to all children. This translates to roughly 2.5 hours per day, however, there is some local variation in how kindergarten is offered from district to district in terms of hours per day and days per week. The state defines full-day kindergarten as a minimum of 850 hours per year.

Massachusetts Public School Kindergarten, 2015-2016 school year¹⁴	
Kindergarten enrollment	66,024
Number of children enrolled in full-day kindergarten (FDK)	61,317 (93%)
Number of children enrolled in half-day kindergarten	4,707 (7%)
Number of districts offering: Kindergarten*	312
At least one FDK classroom	306
Half-day kindergarten only	6
FDK districts offering: District-wide FDK	253
(District-wide free FDK)	(242)
Partial FDK, not district-wide	53
<small>*Includes 36 charter schools, all offer tuition-free, school-wide FDK</small>	
Districts charging tuition for FDK	65
Grant-funded districts that charge tuition	27
Non-grant districts that charge tuition	38

The proportion of Massachusetts' children enrolled in full-day kindergarten classrooms has increased to 93% from 29% in FY00. This gradual shift from half- to full-day programming at the school district level has been aided by steady state investment in high-quality full-day kindergarten, informed by research and standards of developmentally appropriate best practices. Remaining kindergarten policy challenges include tuition, program quality, and alignment of practice to support the larger continuum of birth-third grade.

In the 2015-16 school year, 98% or 306 of the 312 school districts and charter schools serving kindergarten-aged children in the state offered at least one full-day kindergarten classroom. Of these, 253 offer full-day kindergarten district-wide and 53 offer it partially and maintain some half-day classrooms. Only five districts do not offer full-day kindergarten: Carlisle, Concord, Georgetown, Needham, and Tewksbury. Statewide, 7% of Massachusetts' kindergarteners are enrolled in half-day kindergarten.

When districts only partially offer full-day kindergarten, there may be a high demand for limited spaces, requiring families to submit to a lottery or a waiting list. In school year 2015-16, 65 school districts

required families to pay a fee for their children's participation in the full-day program. Fees vary widely across the state – for districts charging tuition for full-day kindergarten, average annual tuition per child is \$3,358. Tuition averages \$3,264 in grantee districts and \$3,426 in non-grantee districts.¹⁵ In February 2007, the Department of Education placed a \$4,000 cap on the tuition charged to parents whose children attend kindergarten classrooms funded by the Massachusetts Kindergarten Development Grants. There are no tuition caps in other school districts.

A recent analysis by Massachusetts Budget and Policy Center found that a shift to universal, free full-day kindergarten would require an increase in the state foundation budget of \$77.5 million, with \$29.3 million coming from Chapter 70 state aid and the remainder being the local education contribution. This would provide free full-day kindergarten to an additional 8,760 children currently in half-day programs or paying tuition for full-day program.¹⁶

Massachusetts Kindergarten Development Grants

In FY00, the Commonwealth began a long-term plan to support cities and towns in the transition to full-day kindergarten with the creation of the Massachusetts Department of Education's Kindergarten Development Grant program. Public school districts can receive two types of Kindergarten Development Grants:

1. *Transition Planning for Full-Day Kindergarten* grants help districts transition half-day classes to full-day, providing start up costs, professional development, and curriculum development the year prior to implementation of full-day kindergarten. In FY16, this grant was awarded to four districts: Boylston, Canton, East Bridgewater, and Norton, that combined will enroll approximately 140 students in full-day kindergarten in September, 2016.¹⁷
2. *Quality Full-Day Kindergarten* grants were awarded to 164 districts in FY16, provided their classrooms with support for a range of quality improvements: increased staff; special needs inclusion; transition planning between preschool, kindergarten, and first grade; expanded professional development opportunities for teachers and staff; National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) accreditation support, and curriculum development based on the state curriculum frameworks.¹⁸

Funding for the Kindergarten Development Grant line item peaked at \$33.8 million in FY08 and has since been reduced to \$23.95 million at the start of FY15, and \$18.59 million after mid-year "9C" budget cuts. Grant funding per classroom has decreased steadily from \$14,900 in FY08 to \$11,252 in FY12, an amount that supports on average 10.5% of the cost of a full-day kindergarten classroom. As the kindergarten grant amounts have decreased in recent years, some grantee districts have raised tuition rates.¹⁹

Kindergarten Policies ²⁰	# of States
Districts Must Offer Kindergarten	46
Students Must Attend Kindergarten	16
Districts Must Offer Full-Day Kindergarten	12
Students Must Attend Full-Day Kindergarten	2
Compulsory School Age:	
Age 5 years	9
Age 6 years	26
Age 7 years	14
Age 8 years	2

Kindergarten Policy in Other States

Kindergarten offerings and attendance requirements vary widely by state and even by district within some states.

- Every state pays for kindergarten in at least some districts for a portion of the school day.
- Eleven states and Washington D.C require school districts to offer full-day kindergarten: Alabama, Arkansas, Delaware, District of Columbia, Georgia, Maryland, Mississippi, North Carolina, Oklahoma, South Carolina, as well as West Virginia and Louisiana, two states that require all students to attend.
- Ten states, including Massachusetts, provide more funding for full-day kindergarten than half-day.²¹
- Eighteen states do not provide different funding for

full- and half-day kindergarten and fund kindergarten at a lower level than 1st grade.

The Early Education for All Campaign

The Early Education for All Campaign works to ensure that children in Massachusetts have access to high-quality early education and become proficient readers by the end of third grade. EEA is a broad-based coalition of leaders from business, early childhood, labor, religion, health care, education and philanthropy, allied with parents, grassroots leaders and policymakers on behalf of children and families. To realize this vision, EEA seeks:

- Language-rich home environments
- High-quality infant/toddler supports
- High-quality pre-kindergarten
- High-quality full-day kindergarten
- PK-3 systems alignment and support
- High-quality instruction and professional development

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