Investing in Full-Day Kindergarten is Essential

Full-day kindergarten benefits children academically.
- Children who attend full-day kindergarten learn more in reading and math over the kindergarten year than those in half-day programs.\(^1\)
- Full-day kindergarteners exhibit more independent learning, classroom involvement, productivity in work with peers and reflectiveness than half-day kindergarteners.\(^2\)
- Children in full-day kindergarten classrooms spend more time in self-initiated activities and teacher-directed individual work and less time in large group instruction.\(^3\)

Full-day kindergarten benefits children developmentally and socially.
- Full-day kindergarten allows a more consistent schedule for children and reduces the ratio of transition time to class time, reducing stress for children.\(^4, 5\)
- Children in full-day programs are more likely to approach the teacher and less likely to express withdrawal, anger, shyness or blaming behavior than half-day kindergarteners.\(^6\)

Full-day kindergarten helps close the achievement gap.
- At-risk students who received full-day kindergarten through Montgomery County, Maryland’s Kindergarten Initiative 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 first, second and third grade.\(^8\)
- 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 on average.\(^9\)
- Research from the Minneapolis Public Schools showed that minority children in full-day kindergarten gained literacy skills faster than peers in half-day classes. School officials credit full-day kindergarten with helping to close the achievement gap between low-income and more affluent children.\(^10\)

Parents prefer full-day kindergarten.
- 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.\(^11\)
- In one 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.\(^12\)
Teachers prefer full-day kindergarten.
- Teachers report that full-day kindergarten:
  - allows children more flexibility and more time to do activities during free choice times;
  - allows more appropriate challenges for children at all developmental levels;
  - helps ease the transition to first grade;
  - allows more time for teachers to work with children and their parents on a one-to-one
    basis and to discuss children’s progress with parents;
  - allows more time for curriculum planning; and
  - helps teachers to incorporate a greater number of thematic units in the year and cover
    them more in-depth.

Kindergarten in Massachusetts
Research shows that full-day kindergarten (FDK) benefits children’s academic, social and emotional development. Through the Kindergarten Grant Program, the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (ESE) provides support to local school districts to transition part-time kindergarten classes to FDK and improve the quality of full-day programs. Funding for the Kindergarten Development Grant line item peaked at $33.8 million in FY08 and has since been reduced to $23.95 million in FY13. The proportion of Massachusetts’ children enrolled in full-day kindergarten classrooms is 87% in fiscal year 2013, up from 29% in fiscal year 2000.

- Massachusetts children are not required to attend school until age 6.
- Massachusetts school districts are required to offer half-day kindergarten, but student attendance is not mandatory.
- 69,719 children are enrolled in public school kindergarten.
- 87% of Massachusetts’ public school kindergarteners are in full-day classes. 13% are in half-day classes.

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4 Ibid.