

# 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.<sup>1</sup>
- Full-day kindergarteners exhibit more independent learning, classroom involvement, productivity in work with peers and reflectiveness than half-day kindergarteners.<sup>2</sup>
- 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.<sup>3</sup>

## 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.<sup>4,5</sup>
- 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.<sup>6</sup>

## 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.<sup>7</sup>
- 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.<sup>8</sup>
- 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.<sup>9</sup>
- 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.<sup>10</sup>

## 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.<sup>11</sup>
- 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.<sup>12</sup>

## 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.<sup>13</sup>

## Kindergarten in Massachusetts<sup>14</sup>

Research shows that full-day kindergarten (FDK) benefits children's academic, social and emotional development.<sup>15</sup> 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 \$25.7 million for FY10. The proportion of Massachusetts' children enrolled in full-day kindergarten classrooms is now 77%, up from 38% in 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.
- 68,610 children are enrolled in public school kindergarten.
- 77% of Massachusetts' public school kindergarteners are in full-day classes. 23% are in half-day classes.

<sup>1</sup> Lee, Valerie E., Burkam, David T., Honigman, Joann & Meisels, Samuel. (2006). Full-Day vs. Half-day Kindergarten: Which Children Learn More in Which Program. *American Journal of Education*, 112; Votruba-Drzal, E., Li-Grining, C. P., & Maldonado-Carreño, C. (2008). A developmental perspective on full- versus part-day kindergarten and children's academic trajectories through fifth grade. *Child Development*, 79, 4, pp. 957-978.

<sup>2</sup> Cryan, John R.; Sheehan, Robert; Wiechel, Jane; & Bandy-Hedden, Irene G. "Success Outcomes of Full-Day Kindergarten: More Positive Behavior and Increased Achievement in the Years After." *Early Childhood Research Quarterly* 7 (2): 187-203, June 1992. As cited in: "What Should Parents Know About Full-Day Kindergarten?" ACCESS ERIC Parent Brochure, based on the 1995 ERIC Digest Full-Day Kindergarten Programs by Dianne Rothenberg. Available: [www.eric.ed.gov/archives/kinder.html](http://www.eric.ed.gov/archives/kinder.html).

<sup>3</sup> Elicker, James, & Mathur, Sangeeta. "What do they do all day? Comprehensive evaluation of a full-day kindergarten," *Early Childhood Research Quarterly*, 12(4), 459-480, 1997.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid.

<sup>5</sup> "What Should Parents Know About Full-Day Kindergarten?" ACCESS ERIC Parent Brochure, based on the 1995 ERIC Digest Full-Day Kindergarten Programs by Dianne Rothenberg. Available: <http://www.eric.ed.gov/archives/kinder.html>.

<sup>6</sup> Cryan, John R.; Sheehan, Robert; Wiechel, Jane; & Bandy-Hedden, Irene G. "Success Outcomes of Full-Day Kindergarten: More Positive Behavior and Increased Achievement in the Years After." *Early Childhood Research Quarterly* 7 (2): 187-203, June 1992. As cited in: "What Should Parents Know About Full-Day Kindergarten?" ACCESS ERIC Parent Brochure, based on the 1995 ERIC Digest Full-Day Kindergarten Programs by Dianne Rothenberg. Available: [www.eric.ed.gov/archives/kinder.html](http://www.eric.ed.gov/archives/kinder.html).

<sup>7</sup> Nielsen, Jennifer & Cooper-Martin, Elizabeth. *Evaluation of the Montgomery County Public Schools Assessment Program: Kindergarten and Grade 1 Report*, Montgomery County Public Schools Office of Shared Accountability, September 2002. Available: [www.mcps.k12.md.us/info/press/Kinder-Grade1Report.pdf](http://www.mcps.k12.md.us/info/press/Kinder-Grade1Report.pdf)

<sup>8</sup> Viadero, Debra. "Study: Full-Day Kindergarten Boosts Academic Performance." *Education Week*, April 17, 2002. Available: [www.edweek.org/ew/story.cfm?slug=31kinder.h21](http://www.edweek.org/ew/story.cfm?slug=31kinder.h21)

<sup>9</sup> Warrick, Sandra. *A Three Year Study of the Effectiveness of Full-Day Kindergarten at Lowell Elementary School*, October 1993; as cited in Think New Mexico, *Increasing Student Achievement in New Mexico: The Need for Universal Access to Full-day Kindergarten*, Santa Fe, NM: Author, Fall 1999.

<sup>10</sup> Minneapolis Public Schools, *Narrowing the Gap in Early Literacy: Evidence from Minneapolis Public Schools Kindergarten Assessments*, November 2002. Available: [http://www.mpls.k12.mn.us/news/news\\_release/all\\_day\\_k.shtml](http://www.mpls.k12.mn.us/news/news_release/all_day_k.shtml)

<sup>11</sup> Elicker, J. & Mathur, S. "What do they do all day? Comprehensive evaluation of a full-day kindergarten." *Early Childhood Research Quarterly*, 12(4), 459-480 (1997).

<sup>12</sup> West, Jerry, Denton, Kristin, & Germino-Hausken, Elvira. *America's Kindergartners*. Washington, DC: National Center for Educational Statistics, 2000. Available: <http://nces.ed.gov/pubs2000/2000070.pdf>.

<sup>13</sup> Elicker, James, & Mathur, Sangeeta. "What do they do all day? Comprehensive evaluation of a full-day kindergarten." *Early Childhood Research Quarterly*, 12(4), 459-480, 1997.

<sup>14</sup> Massachusetts Department of Education. (2010). Legislative report: Kindergarten Development Grants. Retrieved from <http://www.doe.mass.edu/research/reports/0310kindergarten.pdf>

<sup>15</sup> Evidence on the benefits of full-day kindergarten: Lee, V. E., Burkam, D. T., Honigman, J. and Meisels, S. (2001). *Full-Day vs. Half-day Kindergarten: Which Children Learn More in Which Program*. Paper presented at the annual meeting of the American Sociological Association, Anaheim, CA, 2001; Cryan, J. R., Sheehan, R., Wiechel, J., and Bandy-Hedden, I. G. (1992). Success outcomes of full-day kindergarten: More positive behavior and increased achievement in the years after. *Early Childhood Research Quarterly*, 7(2): 187-203; Elicker, J. and Mathur, S. (1997). What do they do all day? Comprehensive evaluation of a full-day kindergarten, *Early Childhood Research Quarterly*, 12(4): 459-480.

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