

Full-day kindergarten (FDK) is an important component of comprehensive early learning programs that provide a strong foundation for academic success. Successful early learning programs include pre-K, full-day kindergarten, school district partnerships with early learning providers, and transition plans from early learning into kindergarten. In addition, FDK should have a meaningful, rigorous, and aligned curriculum. FDK also helps close the opportunity and achievement gaps by providing children that need additional help more instructional time. Numerous school districts have seen benefits from FDK including:

Saving Schools Money by Identifying Learning Disabilities Earlier:

- Teachers surveyed in Bremerton found that FDK allowed them to identify potential learning disabilities earlier in students.¹ This allows potential disabilities to be addressed early in a student's career, perhaps lessening the need for special education later on.

Improving Reading and Math Performance:

- Students who attend FDK programs make larger gains in reading and math when compared to their peers in half-day programs.²
- Bremerton School District found students in the 2008-09 second grade cohort that participated in Bremerton's FDK performed better on DIBELS (Dynamic Indicators of Basic Early Literacy Skills) literacy assessments than students who received half-day kindergarten instruction elsewhere.³
- In 2013 in Evergreen School District, over 90% of the students that had FDK are reading at or above grade level as measured by the Individual Reading Inventory. However, most of the current students in first and second grades that are significantly behind in reading only had half-day kindergarten.⁴

Saving Schools Money by Decreasing Grade Repetition:

- Participants in Philadelphia's FDK were more than twice as likely as non-kindergarten participants and 26% more likely than half-day participants to make it to the third and fourth grades without having to repeat a grade.⁵ This represents a major cost savings to school districts and allows resources to be diverted to other educational programming.

Increasing Achievement in Later School Years:

- Studies have found a positive relationship between attending FDK and performance in later school years, due to greater "independent learning, classroom involvement, productivity in work with peers, and reflectiveness than half-day kindergarteners."⁶
- Students who attend FDK enter primary grades with a smoother transition into first grade, are better at understanding and demonstrating appropriate behavior, and have better academic skills.⁷

Making Students Better Prepared for First Grade and Beyond:

- In Bremerton, the majority of FDK teachers and principals (70 percent) that were surveyed believe that FDK students are better prepared for first grade compared to half-day students.⁸

- In this video Bremerton’s Linda Sullivan Dudzic provides more information about FDK in the district: <http://www.childrensdefense.org/newsroom/multimedia-gallery/videos/education/linda-sullivan-dudzic-1.html>

Closing the Opportunity and Achievement Gaps:

- Because of FDK, children make gains in reading and math achievement which closes the gap between the highest- and lowest-performing students by nearly one-third in reading and by one-fourth in math.⁹
- In addition, research shows that FDK is especially beneficial for children who are English Language Learners.¹⁰

Aligning More Effectively to Meet Common Core Standards:

- Kindergarten students are being held to new and more rigorous academic standards. While these standards are consistent across states, WA is behind the nation in implementing FDK. Nationwide, 65 percent of kindergarteners are in full-day programs but in WA only 47 percent of kindergarteners are in FDK. However, only half of those children (22 percent) are in state-funded FDK.¹¹
- The Common Core standards for kindergarten were developed with the assumption that children have access to FDK. Without fully implementing FDK in Washington, we're setting some children and teachers up to be less able to meet those standards because they do not have the same number of instructional hours. We know that our neediest kids need the most classroom time. We would never suggest that some kids should have a part-time experience in 4th grade, and others have a full-time experience.
- Common Core expects kindergartens to master skills like these:¹²
 - Spell simple words phonetically, drawing on knowledge of sound-letter relationships.
 - Actively engage in group reading activities with purpose and understanding.
 - Solve addition and subtraction word problems, and add and subtract within 10.
 - For any number from 1 to 9, find the number that makes 10 when added to the given number.
 - Analyze and compare two- and three-dimensional shapes, in different sizes and orientations, using informal language to describe their similarities, differences, parts, and other attributes.

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¹ Hanover Research. (March 2011). *Full-Day Kindergarten Survey Analysis*. Washington, DC, p. 3.

² Lidman, H., Yates, E., & Burbank, J. (2007). *Full story on full day: An analysis of full day kindergarten in Washington State*. Seattle, WA: Economic Opportunity Institute, p. 13.

³ Children’s Defense Fund. *The Facts About Full-Day Kindergarten*. <http://www.childrensdefense.org/child-research-data-publications/data/the-facts-about-full-day.pdf>

⁴ Conversation with Evergreen Public Schools Superintendent John Deeder, March 5, 2013.

⁵ Viadero, D. (April 17, 2002). Study: Full-Day Kindergarten Boosts Academic Performance. Education Week, www.edweek.org.

⁶ Rothenberg, D. (1995). *Full-Day Kindergarten Programs*. Urbana, IL: ERIC Clearinghouse on Elementary and Early Childhood Education. <http://www.ericdigests.org/1996-1/full.htm>.

⁷ WestEd. (April 2005). *Full Day Kindergarten: Expanding Learning Opportunities*. WestEd Policy Brief, p. 1. http://www.wested.org/online_pubs/po-05-01.pdf.

⁸ Hanover Research. (March 2011). *Full-Day Kindergarten Survey Analysis*. Washington, DC, p. 3.

⁹ Foundation for Child Development. *PreK-3rd: Putting Full-Day Kindergarten in the Middle*. <http://fcd-us.org/sites/default/files/FINAL%20Kindergarten%20Brief.pdf>; Conversation with OSPI, Dec. 13, 2012.

¹⁰ Foundation for Child Development. *PreK-3rd: Putting Full-Day Kindergarten in the Middle*. <http://fcd-us.org/sites/default/files/FINAL%20Kindergarten%20Brief.pdf>; Conversation with OSPI, Dec. 13, 2012.

¹¹ Foundation for Child Development. *PreK-3rd: Putting Full-Day Kindergarten in the Middle*. <http://fcd-us.org/sites/default/files/FINAL%20Kindergarten%20Brief.pdf>; Conversation with OSPI, Dec. 13, 2012.

¹² Children’s Defense Fund. *Full-Day Kindergarten: Why Does it Matter?* <http://www.childrensdefense.org/child-research-data-publications/data/full-day-kindergarten-why-does-it-matter.html>.