



## Full-Day Kindergarten: Setting Students Up for Success

### Full-Day Kindergarten

Enrollment in full-day kindergarten (FDK) has steadily risen over the past half-century, with 65% of kindergarteners now enrolled in FDK nationwide.<sup>1</sup> FDK has been proven to better prepare students for school, increase student achievement and social-emotional development, and decrease remedial and special education needs later in a student's career. At last count, the percentage of Washington's kindergarten students attending a full-day program was 47%.<sup>2</sup> This includes students that are enrolled in programs funded by local levies or parent co-pays, in addition to the 22% enrolled in state-funded programs.

### Legislative and Funding History of Full-Day Kindergarten in Washington State

Legislation in 2007 first added state funding to support FDK.<sup>3</sup> In 2009, as a part of HB 2261, FDK was added to the definition of basic education, with statewide implementation to be completed in the 2017-2018 school year.<sup>4</sup> The recent Washington State Supreme Court decision, *McCleary v. Washington State*, affirmed that as a part of basic education, the state must provide funding for full-day kindergarten for every child in Washington State by 2017-2018; however, the court found that the state is not on track to do so.<sup>5</sup>

Initial appropriations for 2007-08 funded 10% of schools, expanding to 20% in 2008-09, and little progress has been made in increasing enrollment since then. Additional funding was not added until the 2011 legislative session, when a small amount increased the percentage of students served to 22%. The funding for the 2012-2013 school year is \$48 million for over 17,600 kindergarteners at 222 schools. At this pace, full implementation will not be reached until the 2090-2091 school year.<sup>6</sup> To reach full implementation by 2017-2018, enrollment needs to increase by at least 15.6% of kindergarteners each year, with 38% of children enrolled in 2013-2014, 53% in 2014-2015, and so on. For each 15.6% that is added to enrollment, at least an additional \$33 million will need to be allocated.<sup>7</sup>

### Benefits of Full-Day Kindergarten

#### *Academic Achievement*

Students who attend FDK programs make larger gains in reading and math when compared to their peers in half-day programs.<sup>8</sup> Studies have also shown 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."<sup>9</sup>

#### *School Readiness*

FDK also shows benefits in the school readiness of children. In Bremerton, the majority of FDK teachers and principals (70 %) that were surveyed believe that FDK students are better prepared for first grade compared to half-day students.<sup>10</sup> Students who attend FDK enter primary grades with a smoother transition into first grade, better at understanding and demonstrating appropriate behavior, and with better academic skills.<sup>11</sup> This enables students to grow and learn from a solid foundation built in their earliest years of schooling.

School readiness is particularly important since recent WaKIDS (Washington Inventory of Developing Skills) data found not all children are prepared for kindergarten. For example in 2012, 79 percent of children that participated in WaKIDS performed at the expected level for physical

development. However, only 52 percent demonstrated expected skills in math. It is important to note that the children assessed did not represent the demographics of the state's entering kindergarteners, since schools with the highest poverty levels have state-funded, full-day kindergarten and the majority of WaKIDS participants are in full-day kindergarten. FDK helps to catch these students up to expected levels and prepare for first grade.

### *Reduced Grade Repetition and Special Education*

FDK decreases the need for remedial course work and special education enrollment for many students, which saves the state and local school districts money. A 2002 study found that 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.<sup>12</sup> This represents a major cost savings to school districts and allows resources to be diverted to other educational programming.

Teachers surveyed in Bremerton also indicated that FDK allowed them to identify potential learning disabilities earlier in students.<sup>13</sup> This allows potential disabilities to be addressed early in a student's career, perhaps lessening the need for special education later on.

### *Reduced Childcare Costs*

Full-day kindergarten provides an additional 3 hours of instruction per school day. This reduces the number of hours that families need to pay for childcare, saving families money and allowing parents to work more hours. The reduced need for childcare also saves the state money by reducing the need for childcare subsidies for low-income families.

### **Want to get involved?**

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<sup>1</sup> Foundation for Child Development. *PreK-3<sup>rd</sup>: Putting Full-Day Kindergarten in the Middle*. <http://fcd-us.org/sites/default/files/FINAL%20Kindergarten%20Brief.pdf>.

Ackerman, D., Barnett, W., & Robin, K. (March 2005). *Making the most of kindergarten: Present trends and future issues in the provision of full day programs*. National Institute for Early Education Research, p. 2.

<sup>2</sup> Conversation with OSPI, Dec. 13, 2012.

<sup>3</sup> Engrossed Second Substitute Senate Bill 5841 (2007), <http://apps.leg.wa.gov/documents/billdocs/2007-08/Pdf/Bills/Senate%20Bills/5841-S2.E.pdf>

<sup>4</sup> Engrossed Substitute House Bill 2261 (2009) <http://apps.leg.wa.gov/billinfo/summary.aspx?year=2009&bill=2261>

<sup>5</sup> Washington State Supreme (2012), *McCleary, Venema, and NEWS v. State of Washington*.

<http://www.courts.wa.gov/opinions/pdf/843627.opn.pdf>

<sup>6</sup> Washington State Supreme Court (2012) *McCleary v. Washington State*.

<sup>7</sup> OSPI internal calculations

<sup>8</sup> 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.

<sup>9</sup> 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> Accessed Feb 6, 2011

<sup>10</sup> Hanover Research. (March 2011). *Full-Day Kindergarten Survey Analysis*. Washington, DC, p. 3.

<sup>11</sup> WestEd. (April 2005). *Full Day Kindergarten: Expanding Learning Opportunities*. WestEd Policy Brief, p. 1.

[http://www.wested.org/online\\_pubs/po-05-01.pdf](http://www.wested.org/online_pubs/po-05-01.pdf) Accessed March 2, 2011

<sup>12</sup> Viadero, D. (April 17, 2002). Study: Full-Day Kindergarten Boosts Academic Performance. Education Week, [www.edweek.org](http://www.edweek.org).

<sup>13</sup> Hanover Research. (March 2011). *Full-Day Kindergarten Survey Analysis*. Washington, DC, p. 3.