

The Full Story on Full Day

AN ANALYSIS OF FULL-DAY KINDERGARTEN IN WASHINGTON STATE



HANNAH LIDMAN
ELIZABETH YATES
JOHN R. BURBANK

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Economic Opportunity Institute

ABOUT THE AUTHORS

Hannah Lidman is the Economic Opportunity Institute's (EOI) policy associate for early learning and K-12 education. She holds a master's degree in public administration from Seattle University and a bachelor's degree in government from Cornell University. Prior to joining the staff of the Economic Opportunity Institute (EOI) Hannah provided policy analysis and research for the Washington State Institute for Public Policy (WSIPP) and the Washington State Legislature; and public affairs consulting to various local and national nonprofit organizations.

Elizabeth Yates, an intern with EOI, is pursuing her bachelor's degree in international relations at Tufts University and expects to graduate in 2008.

John R. Burbank, the executive director of EOI, also contributed to this brief.

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ABOUT THE ECONOMIC OPPORTUNITY INSTITUTE

The Economic Opportunity Institute is a public policy institute that develops practical policy solutions to some of the most pressing problems facing middle-class and low-income families in Washington—solutions that result in long-term economic security.

EOI staff research issues, develop policy solutions, and build coalitions to move policy forward. State and national legislators, community leaders, locally elected officials, and leaders in communities throughout the United States rely on EOI for analyses and policy development.

The Economic Opportunity Institute currently focuses on pragmatic policy solutions in these areas: state revenue and taxation, family leave insurance, retirement security, early childhood education, K-12 and higher education funding, and health care.

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Executive Summary

All children deserve the best chance to succeed. It is their right and it is our responsibility. The Washington State Constitution enshrines “ample provision for the education of all children” as the primary duty of the state, and the people and their representatives bear this responsibility because it is critical to the welfare of our community. Quality education lays the foundations for a thriving society: successful individuals, an informed and engaged populace, strong institutions, economic growth and vitality, and individual financial security.

The last several decades have seen an abundance of research stressing the importance of the early years of a child’s education and extolling the benefits of quality early learning initiatives. Full-day kindergarten is one such initiative. Full-day kindergarten results in increased academic achievement and school readiness for participants. It not only produces positive, long-term economic benefits for individuals and society, it also results in immediate returns for families, schools, and Washington State’s bottom line.

The Economic Opportunity Institute conducted an exhaustive literature review of local and national research, interviewed administrators of full-day kindergarten programs in Washington State, collected data from states across the country, conferred with staff from various local agencies and organizations, and reviewed laws and legislation on the topic. The goal of this policy

brief is to distill the information gained through our inquiries and provide policy makers, opinion leaders, and interested individuals with a comprehensive analysis of full-day kindergarten in Washington State.

The key findings of this research are:

- Fewer than half of incoming kindergarten students are prepared for the challenges of the classroom. High levels of student unpreparedness are prevalent throughout Washington’s public education system, as evidenced by failure to pass elementary school assessments in reading and math and by the necessity for high school-level remediation for incoming college students.
- National and local research demonstrates that full-day kindergarten results in positive academic and social benefits for students. As compared to their peers in half-day kindergarten, full-day students perform at higher levels in the fundamental areas of reading and math. These academic gains made in the full-day classroom may also persist into later grades, bolstering overall early academic achievement. Further, full-day kindergartners are more socially and emotionally prepared for first grade than their counterparts in half-day classes.

- Full-day kindergarten produces cost savings to schools as fewer students will require remediation services in later grades or be retained in a lower grade level. Parents and families also experience financial benefits in the form of increases in income and/or decreases in childcare expenses. The state's financial responsibility for childcare subsidies may also decrease as kindergarten students spend more time in the classroom.
- Fewer than 40% of kindergartners in Washington State participate in full-day kindergarten. Availability of the program is limited and adequate funding is difficult to secure. The state limits funding to cover only half-day kindergarten, requiring districts to search out additional financial support for full-day programs. As a result of limited resources, low-income and high-income students are the most likely to have access to full-day kindergarten while middle-class students are forced to do without.
- Full-day kindergarten is a growing national trend. Every year, an increasing number of students across the nation enter a full-day classroom. A number of states require all school districts to offer full-day kindergarten or mandate that all students attend it. In addition, over half the states strongly encourage the provision of full-day kindergarten by providing school districts with a variety of funding incentives.
- Education and policy leaders in Washington State recently recognized full-day kindergarten as an integral part of a quality education. The final report of the Washington Learns committee recommended that voluntary full-day kindergarten be phased-in for all students. Unfortunately, while the 2007 Legislature did initiate a phase-in of full-day kindergarten, funding for all students will not be provided until the 2016-2017 school year. In the meantime, over 300,000 students will be denied state support for full-day kindergarten.
- All children in Washington critically need full-day kindergarten. A decade is too long to wait. Full-day kindergarten constitutes a fundamental part of basic education and should be treated and legislated as such. The current state budget surplus presents a perfect opportunity to make a smart investment in the children and future of Washington State. The long and short-term benefits to be gained more than justify the cost of implementation.

The Economic Opportunity Institute develops practical and effective proposals to increase the well-being and economic security of middle and low-income families in Washington State. Full-day kindergarten offers the opportunity to ensure the success of our children and families, and to enhance the state's economy vitality all while helping to realize the constitutionally mandated paramount duty of our state.

I. A Community Ready for Change

In Washington State and across the nation, reforming public education to meet the demands of a changing economy has dominated public policy discourse for the last two decades. The new economic climate demands a skilled and highly educated workforce that can keep pace with a knowledge-based world. Policymakers, opinion leaders, and researchers have come to a general understanding that a strong system of education is built upon a child's first opportunities to learn. We now know that the more attention and resources paid to the early years of education, the greater the chance children have to overcome barriers and seize opportunities for future academic and personal success.

At the request of Governor Christine Gregoire, the 2005 Legislature formed the Washington Learns committee to perform a comprehensive review of the state's system of public education. The work of the committee was divided into three primary areas: early learning, kindergarten through twelfth-grade (K-12) education, and higher education/workforce training. The final report of the committee, issued in November of 2006, contained a number of strategies to "bring us closer to a world-class, learner-focused, seamless education system for Washington." One of the main visions threaded throughout the work of Washington Learns is the importance of linking the three different systems of education into one streamlined cohesive educational pathway.

Washington Learns recommended the phase-in of voluntary full-day kindergarten for all students as one critical step in this process. Providing quality early learning and early schooling opportunities, of which full-day kindergarten is a key component, is good for children, families, schools and communities, and boosts long-term economic vitality. Full-day kindergarten delivers a significant public good, creating a nexus point where early intervention can result in benefits far beyond the costs incurred.

We face a pervasive culture of unpreparedness at every level in public education in Washington. In 2006, only 46 percent of fourth graders tested passed all three subjects of the Washington Assessment of Student Learning (WASL).² Just over half of high school students in the Class of 2008 met the state's Certificate of Academic Achievement graduation requirement after taking the 10th-grade WASL test for the first time.³ One in four students immediately entering four-year universities in the state must take remedial high school-level courses in English, math, or both. For those entering community college, three in five students require remediation.⁴ Every year, from bottom to top, a large number of students in Washington's public schools fall short of meeting basic expectations.

All students face the danger of stumbling when they do not receive a strong foundation for learning. Even in the earliest educational experiences, students

¹ Washington Learns. (2006). *Washington Learns: World-class, learner-focused, seamless education*. Olympia, WA: Office of the Governor, p. 18.

² Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction. *Washington State report card* (website). See: <http://reportcard.ospi.k12.wa.us/waslCurrent.aspx?schoolId=1&reportLevel=State&orgLinkId=1&yrs=1>. Input codes: 4th grade, all, 2005-2006, numbers.

³ Ibid. Input codes: 10th grade, all, 2005-2006, and numbers. Students graduating in 2008 are required to receive a Certificate of Academic Achievement, acquired when the student meets or exceeds standard on the reading, writing, and math subject areas of the 10th-grade Washington Assessment of Student Learning.

⁴ Washington Higher Education Coordinating Board. (2005). *Status report on college readiness*. Olympia, WA: Author.

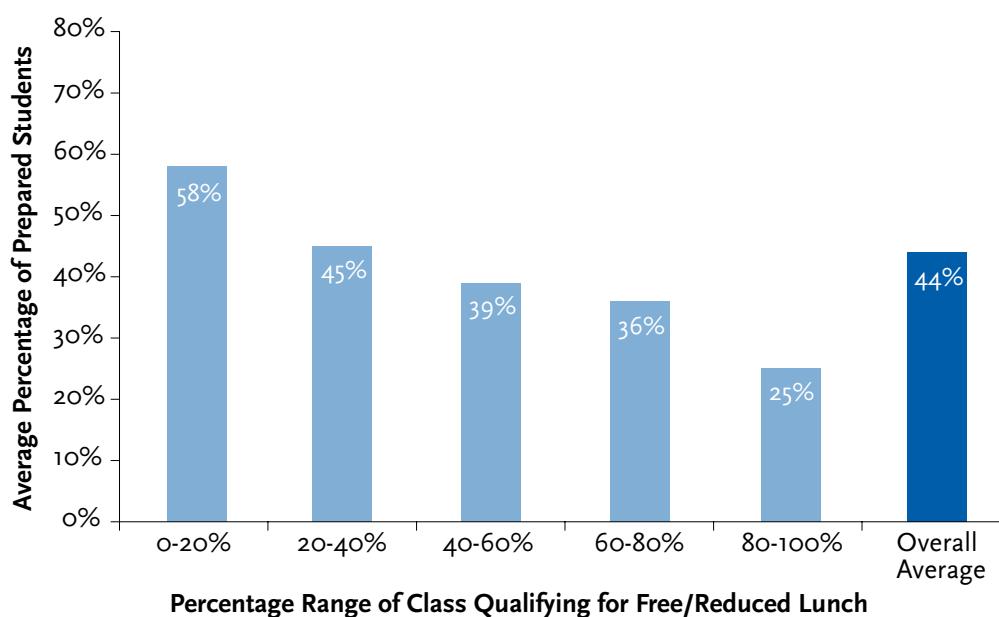
from all backgrounds can and do fail to meet basic standards. A recent survey of student readiness conducted for the Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI) found 56 percent of incoming kindergartners in 2004 were not adequately prepared for the academic and social challenges of kindergarten. On average, more than two out of five children attending kindergarten in middle-class classrooms were not ready to learn. In classes where the majority of students qualify for free or reduced-price school meals (a good indicator of student poverty) only one quarter of students were considered ready for kindergarten (see Exhibit 1).⁵ Further, teachers commented they felt school preparedness has been “decreasing over time.”⁶

When taken together these data clearly illustrate a broad pattern: a large number of students are not prepared

for kindergarten and grade school, are not meeting high-school graduation requirements, and finally are not prepared for college. It is also clear that not being ready to learn afflicts children from all incomes. It could be the result of difficult family conditions, the saturation of television and internet entertainment, a lack of reading in the home, a surfeit of privilege or of poverty, the lack of parental attention, or any number of other factors.

No matter what the reasons, up and down the income ladder family circumstances and popular culture conspire to make too many children miss a step before they even begin kindergarten. Quality early educational experiences, especially full-day kindergarten, can help change this picture to one where all students advance through public education and into the world ready to learn and succeed.

EXHIBIT 1: Students Prepared for Kindergarten by Classroom Income Level



Source: Pavelcheck, D. (2005). *Student readiness for kindergarten: A survey of kindergarten teachers in Washington State*. Olympia, WA: Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction, p. 21.

⁵ Pavelcheck, D. (2005). *Student readiness for kindergarten: A survey of kindergarten teachers in Washington State*. Olympia, WA: Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction, pp. 20-21.

⁶ Ibid: p. i.

II. Benefits for Students in Full-Day Kindergarten

Full-day kindergarten provides a myriad of benefits for students and for the broader community. From increased academic achievement and school readiness to more time for meaningful instruction and increased continuity in coursework, full-day kindergarten lays the foundation for a robust public education.

points better than half-day students on cognitive math and reading tests, and up to 15 points better in tests in the first and second grades.⁸ Another evaluation of full-day students in public schools showed a 22 percent increase in math score gains and a 32 percent increase in reading gains over students in half-day programs.⁹

FULL-DAY KINDERGARTEN STUDENTS ACHIEVE AT HIGHER LEVELS

Full-day kindergarten and its benefits have long been subjects of study for the educational research community. Over the last several decades, a large body of research on full-day kindergarten programs shows students in full-day programs consistently make greater academic progress than their peers in half-day programs.

On the local front, students enrolled in full-day kindergarten in Washington State also exhibit greater academic achievement and academic progress than their peers attending half-day programs. Data from four diverse school districts (Tonasket, Yakima, Edmonds, and Hood Canal) illustrate the immediate and persistent effects of full-day kindergarten.

In particular, when comparisons are made between the cognitive test scores of students in half-day programs and those in full-day programs, full-day kindergartners have been shown to progress more quickly in the key areas of literacy and math.⁷ For example, one study found that students in full-day programs scored up to 17 percentile

In Tonasket full-day kindergarteners emerge more prepared to meet grade-level expectations. Yakima full-day students continue to outperform their half-day peers in reading assessment. And in Edmonds and Hood Canal, students who attended full-day kindergarten exhibit the lasting effects of their kindergarten experiences in reading, writing, and math into the third and fourth grades (see Exhibits 2 through 5).¹⁰

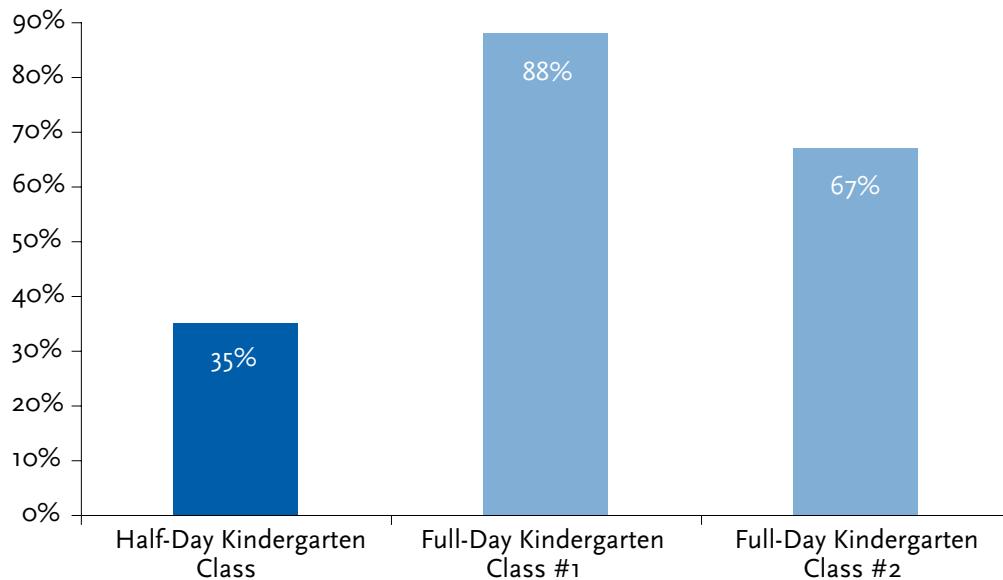
⁷ Lee, V.E., Burkam, D.T., Ready, D.D., Honigman, J., & Meisels, S.J. (2005). Full-day versus half-day kindergarten: In which program do children learn more? *American Journal of Education*, 112.; Elicker, J. & Mathur, A. (1997). What do they do all day? Comprehensive evaluation of a full-day kindergarten. *Early Childhood Research Quarterly*, 12: 459-480.; and Walston, J.T. & West, J. (2004). *Full-day and half-day kindergarten in the US: Findings from the Early Childhood Longitudinal Study, kindergarten class of 1998-1999* (NCES 2004-078). Washington, DC: National Center for Education Statistics.

⁸ Ohio State Department of Education, Division of Early Childhood Education. (1992). *The effects of preschool attendance & kindergarten schedule: Kindergarten through grade four, a longitudinal research study*. Columbus, OH: Author.

⁹ Walston & West (2004).

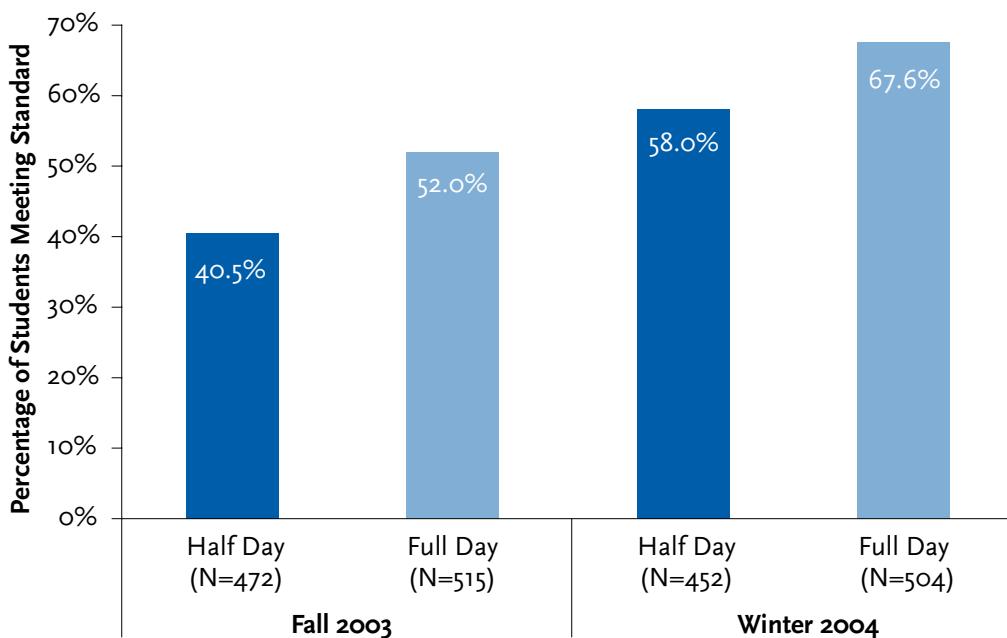
¹⁰ Exhibits 2 through 5 were drawn from OSPI's early learning toolkit district profiles. The methodologies used by each school district in comparative analysis were not described. Each district follows particular policies for admission into full-day kindergarten and therefore it is particularly significant that all districts show advanced achievement for full-day kindergarten students.

EXHIBIT 2: Tonasket School District: 2004-2005 Students Reading at Grade Level upon Entering First Grade, by Kindergarten Class¹¹



Source: data taken from OSPI. (n.d.). *Early learning toolkit: Effective practices in Washington State (Tonasket School District)*. Olympia, WA: Author.

EXHIBIT 3: Yakima School District: 2003-2004 Second Grade Reading Assessment Full-Day vs. Half-Day Kindergarten Students¹²

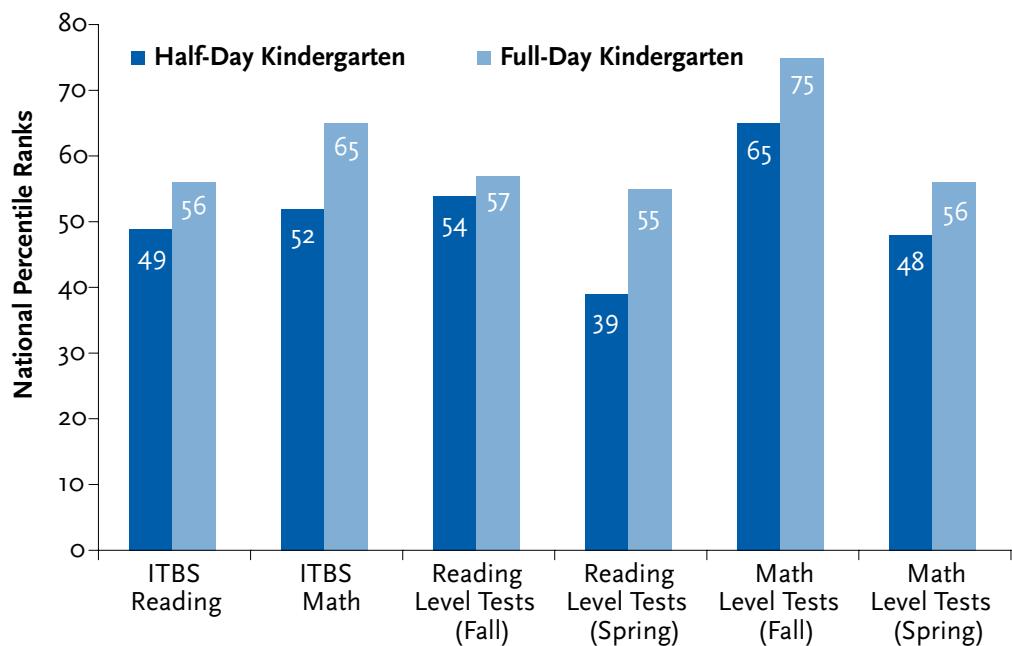


Source: OSPI. (n.d.). *Early learning toolkit: Effective practices in Washington State (Yakima School District)*. Olympia, WA: Author.

¹¹ The Tonasket School District tracked three kindergarten classes in the 2003-2004 school year: two full-day classes and one half-day class.

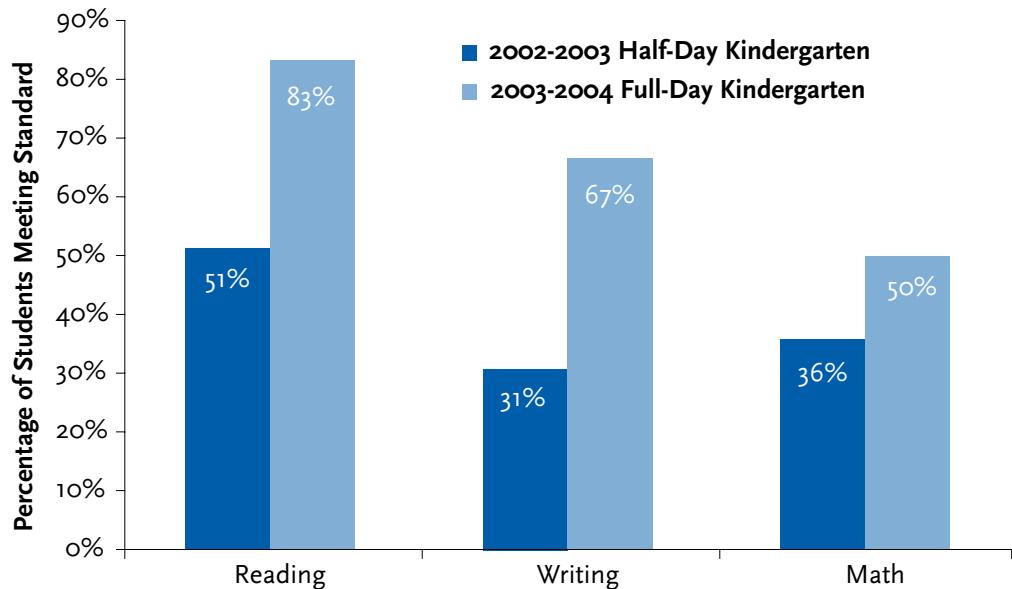
¹² The reading assessment used for this analysis was the MASI-R Fluency Analysis. ‘Percentage of students meeting standard’ means the percentage of students who have reached the fluency benchmark on the MASI-R Fluency Analysis. ‘Fluency’ refers to reading words (or letters) accurately, rapidly and efficiently.” Personal communication (phone conversation) with Sue Geiger, K-12 Reading Administrator, Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction, May 29, 2007.

EXHIBIT 4: Edmonds School District: Percentile Ranking Comparisons in Six Measures of Third Grade Achievement Among Four Cohorts¹³



Source: OSPI. (2004). *Early learning toolkit: Effective practices in Washington State (Edmonds School District), Full-day kindergarten follow-up of four cohorts of students, April 2004*. Olympia, WA: Author.

EXHIBIT 5: Hood Canal School District: Fourth-Grade WASL Met-Standard Rate Comparison for Two Cohorts of Kindergarten Classes¹⁴



¹³ ITBS is the Iowa Test of Basic Skills. In this exhibit, National Percentile Ranks (NPRs) are the average percentile score of the group tested compared to all other students tested nationally. For example, if a cohort received an average national percentile ranking of 65 on a particular test, it means that the cohort scored better, on average, than 65 percent of students who took the test nationwide, and only 35 percent scored as well or better than the cohort. The cohorts used in this example were full and half-day kindergarten students from 1999-2000, 2000-2001, 2001-2002, and 2002-2003.

¹⁴ OSPI describes performance on the WASL according to four levels: 1 – well below standard, 2 – below standard, 3 – met standard, and 4 – exceeds standard. The WASL met-standard rate refers to the percentage of students who met or exceeded the standard, or levels 3 and 4.

Increased student achievement in full-day kindergarten is typically attributed to a variety of features inherent in a full-length class day. A nationwide study found that on average, full-day classes spend 30 percent more time on reading and language arts studies, and 46 percent more time on mathematics than half-day classes. However, not all of the time is spent on formal lessons. Teachers report they appreciate the flexibility of the longer days because it allows more time not only for class instruction, but also for small-group activities, independent learning, and individual attention.¹⁵

The 2004 survey of Washington State kindergarten teachers reported that one of their greatest challenges was meeting academic goals for the year.¹⁶ Teachers stated that full-day classes create an environment that is less rushed and stressful for both the teachers and the students. They believe the calmer, relaxed atmosphere is more conducive to learning and teaching.

One of the more significant features of full-day kindergarten is that the proven benefits have been shown to have a greater impact on students from disadvantaged backgrounds. This is particularly true in the area of math, where disadvantaged students often begin even further behind.¹⁷ With an increase up to 550 hours over the school year, classroom activities and coursework can be tailored more specifically to meet the needs of the individual student, allowing the student to progress to the best of their ability. As teachers expand the curriculum horizontally, students enjoy greater satisfaction and achievement because they are able to explore themes and units in more depth.¹⁸

In March of 2007 the Washington State Institute for Public Policy, at the request of the Washington State Legislature, released a report addressing the evidence-based effects of full-day kindergarten programs. The study analyzed 23 scientifically rigorous full-day kindergarten evaluations and presented findings corroborating the outcomes of the research summarized above. According to the report, full-day kindergarten, when “compared with half-day kindergarten, produces a statistically significant boost to test scores during, or shortly after, kindergarten.”¹⁹

The advantages of full-day kindergarten also extend into later grades. Teachers report that students who attend full-day programs are better prepared for first grade than their peers who attend half-day kindergarten.²⁰ Some research, including that of some Washington school districts depicted above, shows advanced achievement into the third and fourth grades. Other areas of improved academic performance for full-day students in later grades include decreases in referrals to special education and decreases in rates of grade retention.²¹ However, other research, including the recent Washington State Institute for Public Policy study, questions whether the initial gains from full-day kindergarten are sustained in later grades.²² So far, little investigation has been conducted on the causes of the erosion effects indicated in some studies. Several possible explanations have been raised, including the mingling of half-day and full-day students in later grades where teachers might focus their time and attention on students who enter with lower skill levels.²³

¹⁵ Walston & West (2004).

¹⁶ Pavelcheck (2005).

¹⁷ Walston & West (2004).

¹⁸ Elicker & Mathur (1997).

¹⁹ Aos, S., Miller, M. & Mayfield, J. (2007). *Benefits and costs of K-12 educational policies: Evidence-based effects of class size reductions and full-day kindergarten* (Document No. 07-03-2201). Olympia, WA: Washington State Institute for Public Policy.

²⁰ Elicker & Mathur (1997).

²¹ Plucker, J.A. & Zapf, J.S. (2003). *Short-lived gains or enduring benefits? The long-term impact of full-day kindergarten*. Bloomington, IN: Center for Evaluation & Education Policy.

²² Rathburn, A., West, J., & Germino Hausken, E. (2004). *From kindergarten through third grade: Children's beginning school experiences*. Washington, DC: National Center for Education Statistics.

²³ Wolgemuth, J.R., Cobb, R.B., Winokur, M.A., Leech, N., & Ellery, D. (2006). Comparing longitudinal academic achievement of full-day and half-day kindergarten students. *The Journal of Educational Research*, 99(5): 206-209.

STUDENTS SHOW GAINS IN SOCIAL GROWTH AND SCHOOL READINESS

Full-day kindergarten has also been shown to produce social and emotional benefits for the students as they mature over the course of the year. In 2005, WestEd, a well-known educational research organization, published a policy brief on full-day kindergarten stating that students “do better with the transition to first grade, show significant gains in school socialization..., and are equipped with stronger learning skills.”²⁴

Full-day students also appear to be more comfortable in their surroundings. They demonstrate greater ease in initiating independent learning, involvement in classroom activities, interaction with one another, and in their relationship with their teacher.²⁵ They also show less fatigue and daily frustration than their half-day peers, likely as a result of social and emotional maturity.²⁶ Further, two longitudinal studies of full-day kindergarteners reported increased attendance rates during elementary school.²⁷

By attending full-day kindergarten classes, children benefit from extended exposure to a learning environment and from the reduction in the number of physical disruptions and relocations throughout a typical school day. Furthermore, due to increasing participation in pre-kindergarten programs, kindergarten can no longer be considered the single common point of entry for children into a classroom-type environment. Full-day kindergarten plays a vital role in easing the transition for children from different pre-kindergarten, child care, and home settings to the challenges of formal schooling in first grade. A full day schedule is best able to facilitate this transition, and to extend the comprehensiveness of the standard K-12 system.²⁸

Research demonstrates the majority of children benefit both academically and socially from the experience of full-day kindergarten. Full-day kindergarten is an integral part of strong basic education, providing all children with a clear pathway for lifelong learning. It should be noted that full-day kindergarten, while critical, is only one part of a robust system of early education. Investment in universal full-day kindergarten for all students should not preclude investment in other important early learning and elementary school initiatives such as universal pre-kindergarten and the reduction of early primary school class sizes.

²⁴ WestEd. (2005). *Full-day kindergarten: Expanding learning opportunities*. San Francisco, CA: Author.

²⁵ Cryan, J., Sheehan, R., Weichel, J., & 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.

²⁶ Elicker & Mathur (1997).

²⁷ Weiss, A.D.G & Offenberg, R.M. (2002). *Enhancing urban children's early success in school: The power of full-day kindergarten*. Paper presented at the annual meeting of the American Educational Research Association, New Orleans, LA; and Hough, D. & Bryde, S. (1996). *The effects of full-day kindergarten on student achievement and affect*. Paper presented at the annual meeting of the American Educational Research Association, New York. As cited in WestEd (2005).

²⁸ Elicker & Mathur (1997).

III. Benefits for Schools, Families, and the Public

SAVINGS TO SCHOOLS AND DISTRICTS

A number of case studies in recent years have shown that students who attend full-day kindergarten are less likely to repeat a grade, resulting in long-term cost savings to districts that can then invest this money into other educational programs.²⁹ According to one administrator, full-day students are far less likely to need remedial reading classes, tutoring, or future additional assistance.³⁰ For schools, full-day kindergarten is a two-pronged investment that directly benefits kindergartners as well as the whole student body.

In 2003, the Bremerton School District completed a simple analysis on the costs and benefits of offering full-day kindergarten to all students in the district. Their results show an operational cost savings of \$3,000 per student per year and over \$400,000 for one cohort of 93 kindergartners from first through fifth grade.³¹ Additional savings to school districts offering full-day kindergarten would come from the decreased need for mid-day transportation to and from the half-day programs and, for those districts that employ them, a decreased demand for school crossing guards in the middle of the day.

INCREASED WORK HOURS AND WAGES

Financial benefits from full-day kindergarten also extend to parents and

families. As of 2005, over 60 percent of mothers with at least one child under six were active members of the workforce.³² Many of the kindergarten-age children in working single-parent or two-parent households attend, at their parent's expense, before and/or after-school childcare.

With full-day kindergarten, those parents who stay at home to provide before or after school care for their kindergartner will have increased opportunities to move into the workforce. The calculation provided on the next page (Exhibit 6) describes a scenario where a parent who provided care for their child at home during off-school hours worked for the three additional hours their child now spends in a full-day kindergarten program. Even for a parent earning below the state median income an additional three hours a day would result in a significant increase in income over the course of a year. Some parents would have the opportunity to move into the workforce full time, further increasing the annual household income, as well as gaining non-wage compensation such as health coverage.³³

Were almost 11,000 parents in Washington to take advantage of a minimum of three additional work hours per day at \$10 per hour, these families would see a combined increase in income of \$58 million in one year.

²⁹ Ackerman, D.J., Barnett, W.S., & Robin, K.B. (2005). *Making the most of kindergarten: Present trends and future issues in the provision of full-day programs*. New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University, National Institute for Early Education Research.

³⁰ Personal communication (personal interview) with Bette Hyde, Superintendent, and Linda Sullivan, Director of Early Learning, Bremerton School District, June 9, 2006.

³¹ OSPI. (n.d.). *Early learning toolkit: Effective practices in Washington State (Bremerton School District)*. Olympia, WA: Author. This analysis assumes that none of the students in the cohort would meet kindergarten benchmarks without full-day kindergarten and would all require remedial resource room services. Conversations with staff and analysts from the Bremerton School District revealed the analysis cited actually results in \$550,000 in savings. Personal communication (phone conversation) with Linda Sullivan, Director of Early Learning, Bremerton School District, May 23, 2007.

³² National Association of Childcare Resource and Referral Agencies. (2006). *Child care in America: Basic facts*. Arlington, VA: Author. See: <http://www.naccra.org/docs/childcareinamericafactsheet.pdf>.

³³ Part-time employees are much less likely to be offered any type of fringe benefit than are full-time employees. Lockhart, R. (2007). *Washington State employee benefits report*. Olympia, WA: Employment Security Department, Labor Market and Economic Analysis Branch, p. 2.

EXHIBIT 6: Potential Increase in Household Income Resulting From More Work Hours

Hours of work gained per day through full-day kindergarten³⁴	3 hours
126% of the state minimum wage³⁵	\$10 per hour
Wages gained per day	\$30 per day
Number of school days per year	180 days
Wages gained per year per parent	\$5,400 per year
Kindergarten enrollment³⁶	approx. 72,000 students
Full-day kindergarten enrollment (assumed 75% participation rate)	54,000 students
Number of parents taking advantage of add. working hours (assumed 20% impact, calculated on one parent per child)	10,800 parents
Possible total combined wages gained per year	\$58,320,000 per year

³⁴ Kindergarten is defined in Washington State statute as a minimum of 450 hours of instruction over a 180-day school year (RCW 28A.150.220(1)(a)). SB 5841 as passed the Legislature in 2007 requires any full-day kindergarten program to provide at least 1,000 hours of instruction over the school year, increasing the time in the kindergarten classroom from 2.5 hours to 5.5 hours per day.

³⁵ As of 2007, the minimum wage in Washington State is \$7.93 per hour. See: Washington State Department of Labor and Industries minimum wage website: <http://www.lni.wa.gov/WorkplaceRights/Wages/Minimum/default.asp>.

³⁶ OSPI's grade-level October 2006 Headcount enrollment document, available on the OSPI data administration website at <http://www.k12.wa.us/DataAdmin/default.aspx>.

³⁷ Schraeger, L. & Rowswell, S. (2005). *Licensed child care in Washington State, 2004*. Olympia, WA: Department of Social and Health Services (now moved to the Department of Early Learning). Each childcare provider sets its own age-based fee structure. A child in kindergarten may count as a 'school-age student' or as a 'preschooler', two common age categorization levels, at two different facilities. Personal communication (phone conversation) with Steve Rowswell, Child Care Market Survey Data Administration Manager, Washington State Department of Early Learning, May 18, 2007.

³⁸ The part-time rate typically applies to children spending five or fewer hours in child care per day, or fewer than 25 hours per week. Schraeger & Rowswell (2005).

³⁹ Lee (2005), Elcker & Mathur (1997), & Cryan (1992).

⁴⁰ Families in Washington earning less than twice the federal poverty level are eligible to receive childcare subsidies from the state.

DECREASE IN CHILDCARE EXPENSES

Those parents who place their child in center-based or family care situations will likely see lower childcare fees when their child is in a full-day classroom. The costs of child care vary widely across the state.³⁷ The additional three hours per day spent in the full-day kindergarten classroom would result in a significant drop in time spent in private childcare settings during the school year as many full-day kindergartners would only require 'part-time' child care instead of the more expensive 'full-time' care.³⁸ Parents of these children would see their financial responsibility for the cost of child care decrease substantially.

The full extent of the increases in disposable income for families cannot be tallied without further research and data collection. However, full-day kindergarten will result in a large number of families in Washington experiencing financial gain either from an increase in

hours worked or a decrease in childcare expenses, resulting in more for families to save and spend. The additional income spent on taxable items, multiplied across the large number of families affected, will add to the public coffers. Full-day kindergarten will lessen the financial burden for the parents and benefit state and local governments and thus the public as a whole. Additionally, full-day kindergarten will result in reduced government-subsidized childcare costs.³⁹

DECREASE IN PUBLIC SUBSIDIES OF CHILD CARE

The state subsidy rate for eligible children⁴⁰ in full-time child care is twice that for part-time child care. As the students receiving childcare subsidies move into full-day kindergarten programs and spend less time in child care, the state will pay less for childcare subsidies. Exhibit 7 shows the difference in monthly per student subsidy payments for an eligible kindergarten

student in full-time vs. part-time center-based care.

Subsidy rates are tied to the cost of child care and vary by region. Therefore, the calculation below gives cost savings in two exemplar regions.⁴² Multiplying such monthly per student savings across the potentially large number of eligible children who would experience this change, the state would realize a sizeable decrease in subsidy payments.

LONG-TERM SAVINGS

Reducing costs for schools, parents, and government-subsidized child care constitute only one facet of the community benefits reaped through investing in early childhood education. Research shows that successful educational initiatives targeting young children may also result in substantial reductions in social spending by the state.

Several long-term studies have been conducted over the past forty years to assess the effects of high-quality intensive early childhood education initiatives, of which full-day kindergarten is one component. Multiple studies found a dramatic decrease in participants' relative delinquency rates, crime rates and welfare dependency, along with increased long-term academic achievement and adult earning potential. The initial investment in early learning

reduced government spending and boosted economic performance.⁴³

A new book by economist Robert Lynch estimates that the benefits to the public of universal high quality pre-kindergarten, fully phased-in by the 2008-2009 school year, would far outstrip the costs within fewer than 20 years nationally and 22 years in Washington State. His analysis estimates that by 2050, Washington State would see \$17 billion in total benefits, including the increased compensation of participants and the savings to individuals from reduced crime.⁴⁴ This research indicates that early intervention is one of the most effective ways of influencing the long-term success of students.

As there are currently no long-term cost-benefit analyses estimating the financial effects of full-day kindergarten, we can only look to the research of Lynch and others to get a sense of the kind of return on investment possible. Most likely, a comprehensive analysis that takes into account the savings to schools, families, and the public plus the increase in public funds resulting from an increase in disposable income would show huge benefits. Such research would provide the evidence to back up what we already know: universal full-day kindergarten meets a critical need for our children and is a smart investment in our community.

⁴¹ Rowswell, S. (2007). *Child care subsidy rates – November 2005*. Olympia, WA: Department of Early Learning, data provided via email.

⁴² Region 2 includes Benton, Columbia, Franklin, Kittitas, Walla Walla, and Yakima counties. Region 4 encompasses King County. Schraeger & Rowswell (2005). These regions were used for comparative purposes as they tend to have the lowest and highest subsidy rates of all the regions, respectively.

⁴³ Lynch, R.G., (2004). *Exceptional returns: Economic, fiscal and social benefits of investment in early childhood development*. Washington, DC: Economic Policy Institute: Washington DC.

⁴⁴ Lynch, R.G. (2007). *Enriching children, enriching the nation: Public investment in high-quality prekindergarten*. Washington, DC: Economic Policy Institute: Washington DC.

EXHIBIT 7: Difference in Monthly Childcare Subsidy Payments Between Full-Time and Part-Time Care⁴¹

	Region 2 – SE Washington	Region 4 – King County
Full-time subsidy rate for kindergarten students	\$394 (\$17.91 daily rate x 22 days)	\$559 (\$25.40 daily rate x 22 days)
Part-time subsidy rate for kindergarten students	\$197 (\$8.96 daily rate x 22 days)	\$279 (\$12.70 daily rate x 22 days)
Monthly Per Student Savings to State	\$197 per month	\$280 per month

IV. Access to Full-Day Kindergarten in Washington State

Full-day kindergarten programs have multiplied across Washington State, even while the Legislature denied full-time status to kindergarten students and the funding to accompany such a change. In the past decade, full-day kindergarten has been funded and implemented independently by local school districts.

In 2004, the Economic Opportunity Institute and Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction conducted a survey of early learning programs in Washington's school districts.⁴⁵ The survey found 43 percent of responding districts offered full-day kindergarten to at least some of their students and another 11 percent offered extended-day programming to some percentage of kindergartners.⁴⁶ Half of the surveyed full-day kindergarten programs served 75 to 100 percent of kindergarten students within the district. Another 9 percent served 50 to 75 percent of students, and 24 percent of programs targeted specific demographic clusters of children and served less than one-quarter of students.

Many districts deem it necessary to go beyond the state mandate of half-day kindergarten to provide more instruction to some, if not all, kindergarten students. But the numbers also show that the great majority of students in the state still do not have access to full-day kindergarten. Forty percent of the districts running full- or extended-day

kindergarten programs reported being unable to meet the demand.⁴⁷ In the current school year, 2006-2007, only 37 percent of kindergartners attend full-day kindergarten in the state's public schools.⁴⁸

ADEQUATE AND STABLE FUNDING IS HARD TO FIND

Most school districts in Washington State cannot afford to offer full-day kindergarten programs, and those that do must make difficult fiscal trade-offs in order to make these programs available. The state basic education funding formula, which covers approximately 70 percent of all public education spending in the state, defines kindergarten as a half-day program and only provides enough funds to cover the cost of half-day instruction. Any district that decides to offer full-day kindergarten must raise money to fund the program from other sources. One of the major sources has been Initiative 728 (I-728).

Approved by voters in 2000, I-728 dedicates a portion of the state property tax and lottery revenues to the Student Achievement Fund. The fund then annually allocates money to school districts on a per-student basis for class-size reduction, extended learning opportunities, professional development, early childhood programs, and the building improvements required to facilitate these activities. The Initiative

⁴⁵ Speck, E. (2004). *Beyond the mandate: An analysis of a survey of school district early learning programs in Washington State*. Seattle, WA: Economic Opportunity Institute.

⁴⁶ 47% of the 296 school districts in the state responded to the survey. Though the survey did not receive responses from all school districts, the geographic, economic, and ethnic demographics of the responding districts on the whole reflect those of the entire state. One exception is that a slightly higher percentage of urban school districts responded over rural districts.

⁴⁷ Speck (2004).

⁴⁸ Aos (2007): p. 11. This percentage comes from personal communication between WSIPP staff and OSPI staff regarding preliminary findings from an upcoming OSPI survey of district kindergarten programs.

went into effect in 2001 and funds were made available to districts. However, the 2003 Legislature amended I-728 to reduce the per-student allocation by over 40 percent. The immediate cause of the I-728 funding reduction was a state budget shortfall resulting from recession, but the state also faces a long-term structural deficit. Sustaining and enhancing educational programs will be impossible in the long term without restructuring of Washington's taxation system.⁴⁹

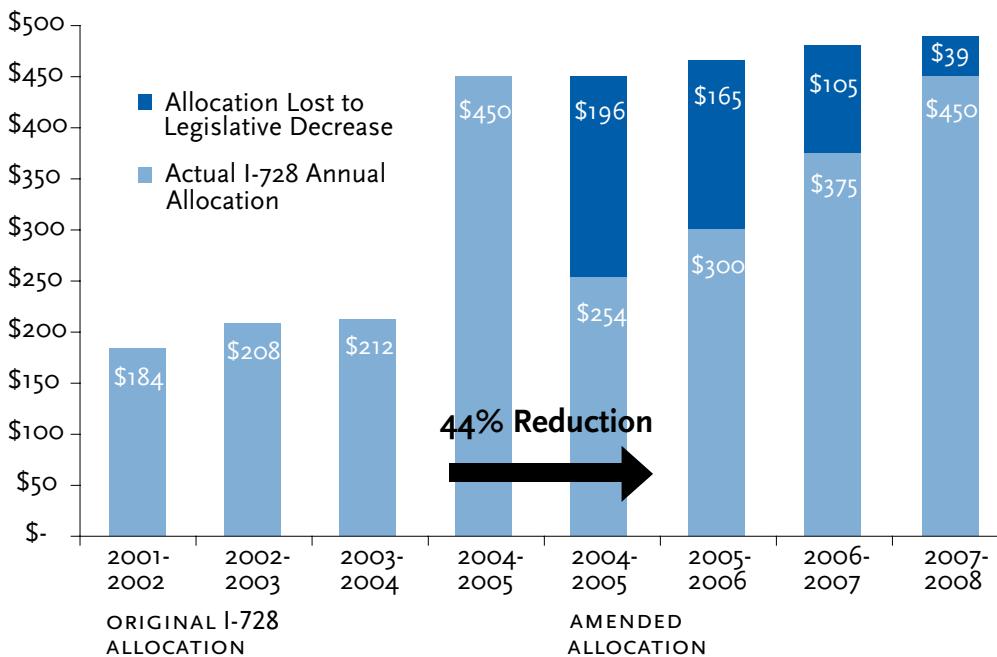
While the per-student allocations will return to the levels approved by voters in 2008, schools, districts, and their students have lost a great deal of financial support in the meantime (see Exhibit 8).

Given the wide variety of vital issues I-728 funding is meant to address, districts using this money to offer full-day

kindergarten clearly put a high value on its benefits. Despite long-term stability concerns, I-728 remains the largest source of funding for full-day kindergarten in the state. Sixty-seven percent of districts providing full- or extended-day programs reported that I-728 dollars go toward supporting their programs. Fifty-eight percent of the full-day kindergarten programs surveyed were started after 2001, after the first dispersal of I-728 funding, with the number of new programs steadily increasing since that time.⁵⁰

Beyond I-728, the most common funding sources for full-day kindergarten are tuition provided by parents, Title I (federal funds allocated for at-risk and low-income students)⁵¹, and local levies. However, most of these sources cannot fully fund any one district's program, no matter how limited in scope. Most programs use a combination of sources.

EXHIBIT 8: Initiative 728 Per-Student Allocations, Original and Amended



Source: Washington State Senate Ways and Means Committee. (2007). *A citizen's guide to Washington State K-12 finance*. Olympia, WA: Washington State Legislature. Lost allocation figures derived from the Consumer Price Index calculator at <http://www.minneapolisfed.org/research/data/us/calc/>.

⁴⁹ In 2002 the Washington State Tax Structure Study Committee issued a report that found Washington's system of taxation inequitable to middle-class and low-income families, subject to large fluctuations in revenue, and is and will continue to be inadequate in meeting the demand for state expenditures. Washington's current tax system creates an ongoing "structural deficit," or the gap between state revenues and demand for state expenditures, that will continue to grow every year. Washington State Tax Structure Study Committee. (2002). *Tax alternatives for Washington State: A report to the Legislature*. Olympia, WA: Author; and Watkins, M. & Smith, J. (2003). *It's not just the recession: The budget crisis and Washington State's structural deficit*. Seattle, WA: Economic Opportunity Institute.

⁵⁰ Speck (2004).

⁵¹ Title I, Part A is a federal program designed to increase access to high-quality education in high-poverty areas. School districts receive grants and then allocate the majority of funds to schools in the district according to the size of the low-income student population. Of the individual schools receiving Title I funding those with more than 40% low-income students may use the money to fund school-wide programs to serve all students in the school. Schools not eligible or not choosing to institute school-wide programs must use the funds on programs and services for specific at-risk or failing students. OSPI (n.d.). *At-a-glance: Overview of Title I, Part A*. Olympia, WA: Author. See: <http://www.k12.wa.us/TITLEI/pubdocs/At-A-Glance-TitleIOverview.doc>.

The districts in Washington State most likely to offer full-day kindergarten are those with either a low or a high proportion of low-income students.⁵² The primary sources of available funding help to explain the uneven distribution of programs across the state. In districts with few low-income students, schools can justify charging tuition for full-day kindergarten. At the other end of the spectrum, poorer districts can operate programs using Title I funds targeted to serve high percentages of low-income students. This funding division creates a system of unequal access disproportionately excluding middle-class students whose parents cannot afford tuition and who realize little benefit from federal supplementary funding (see Exhibit 9).

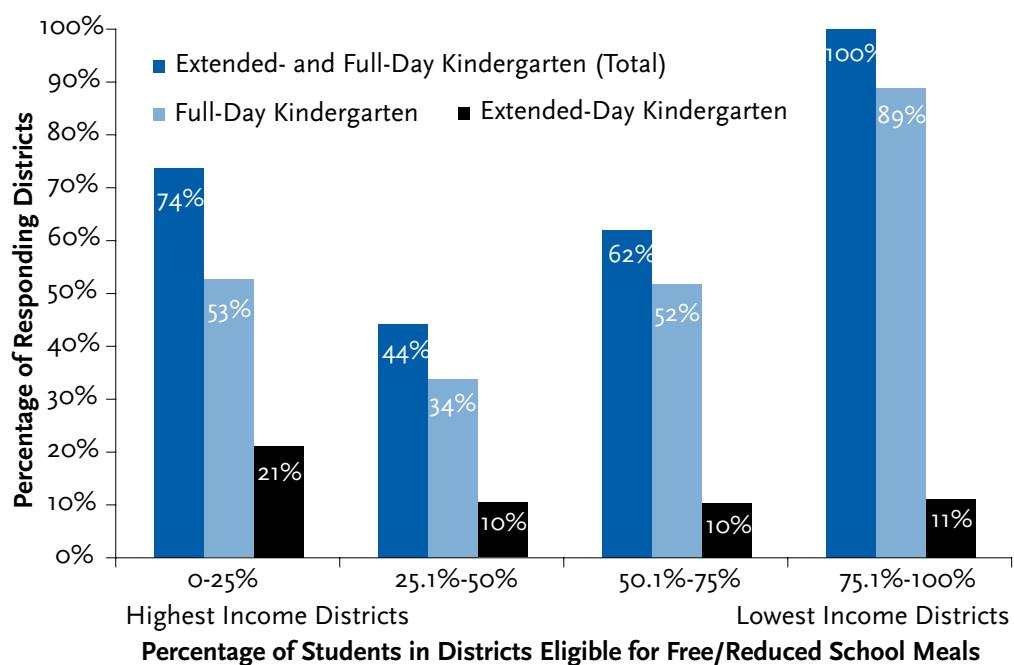
Most schools in the state do not receive enough Title I funding to imple-

ment full-day kindergarten programs. Neither are most schools able to serve all the students whose parents cannot afford to pay tuition. The basic fact is that the majority of schools simply cannot afford to offer full-day programs to all students without increased state funding.

COMMITMENT AND FUNDING RESULT IN THRIVING LOCAL PROGRAMS

As the following district profiles illustrate, full-day kindergarten programs have catalyzed significant educational progress in school districts across the state. These successes provide the policy foundation for statewide adoption of universal voluntary full-day kindergarten.

EXHIBIT 9: Full-Day Kindergarten Access by School District Income Level, 2003-2004



⁵² Speck (2004).

Source: Speck, E. (2004). *Beyond the mandate: An analysis of a survey of school district early learning programs in Washington State*. Seattle, WA: Economic Opportunity Institute, Figure 3.

Yakima School District

The Yakima School District in South Central Washington is one of the few districts in the state that provides universal access to full-day kindergarten for all students. Over two-thirds of Yakima students are eligible for free or reduced school meals and close to 30 percent are bilingual and/or English language learners. An initial pilot program provided one full-day kindergarten class in each elementary school, targeting high-risk students. When I-728 money became available full-day kindergarten became universally available to every kindergarten student, with impressive results.

Even the schools with the highest number of disadvantaged students showed marked improvement on the cognitive assessments used to determine progress. Yet success is not only a measurement of test scores. Parents and teachers in Yakima report that one of the most positive effects is in the attitude of the students. “They really view school as learning and motivating,” said Yakima Schools Director of Teaching and Learning Dr. Karen Campbell. “Kindergarten has become achievement and learning oriented.”

The district has found full-day kindergarten programs to be cost effective, in that the initial expenses have been more than compensated for by the reduction in spending on remedial and individual reading and teaching help in the early grades. This is one example of how the benefits of full-day kindergarten accrue to the students, schools, and districts as a whole.⁵³

Bremerton School District

After five years of positive experience with innovative early learning initiatives, the Bremerton School District began offering universal full-day kindergarten this school year (2006-2007). Like many districts and states, Bremerton began offering full-day kindergarten as a pilot program for at-risk students. However, rather than determining access based on socio-economic status, students were selected based on their performance in the first six weeks of kindergarten, after which those that needed more help stayed for the rest of the day.

The first cohort of these students is now in third grade, and all but a few have maintained or improved upon their gains from kindergarten. The district estimates that it saves \$3,000 per at-risk student through this program, as the majority of them don’t need the remedial reading assistance they would have otherwise required.

The academic, emotional and cognitive success of these students convinced the district that full-day kindergarten was a worthy investment for all of their students. “We know it works for at-risk kids, why not do it for all kids?” said Bremerton District Early Learning Director Linda Sullivan. Out of the nearly 400 students registered for kindergarten in June of 2006, all but a handful of families had opted for full-day kindergarten. The program is being funded by a combination of I-728 funds and a local levy. However, the district is so confident in the potential of the program that they are predicting the costs will be easily compensated. “If we continue the way that we’ve seen it pay off, then we’ll recover those funds in the first year.”⁵⁴

⁵³ Personal communication (phone interview) with Karen Campbell, Director of Teaching and Learning, Yakima Schools, June 14, 2006; Summary results of the Dynamic Indicators of Basic Early Literacy Skills (DIBELS) provided by Greg Day, Director of Academic Assessment, Yakima Schools; and information included in a report by Brown, J. (2003). *Early learning and care survey results: Districts find innovative ways to expand programs*. Seattle, WA: Economic Opportunity Institute.

⁵⁴ Personal communication (personal interviews) with Bette Hyde, Superintendent, and Linda Sullivan, Early Learning Director, Bremerton School District, June 9, 2006.

Bellevue School District

The Bellevue School District has been improving and expanding their full-day kindergarten program for two decades. As one of the wealthier school districts in the state, the district had the ability to explore early learning initiatives before other areas could find the funding. For the first ten years, Bellevue's full-day program was completely tuition based. By 1997, full-day kindergarten classes were available at nearly all of the elementary schools.

Unfortunately, those who could not afford the tuition were not able to participate, and the district was unable to find funding to subsidize them. However, the elementary school principals were so confident in the potential of the program that they refused to continue to deny access to the lower-income students. A decision was made to increase the size of classes in grades 1-5 and to raise tuition, so that scholarships could be provided for low-income families to send their children to full-day kindergarten.

These sacrifices were successful in increasing access. In the 2005-2006 school year, 83 percent of all kindergarteners in Bellevue were enrolled in full-day classes. Unfortunately, some middle-class families remain ineligible for scholarships and are unable to afford the program. Without state assis-

tance, many other kindergarteners in the same situation will continue to be excluded.

This is unfortunate because full-day kindergarten has become such an integral part of the K-12 system in Bellevue. As a high-performing district where student test scores are well above state averages on nearly every exam and in every grade, high academic standards begin early. "Kindergarten has a very specific curriculum and we have both reading and math expectations for our kindergarteners," explained Bellevue Assistant Superintendent of School Administration and Curriculum Development Jan Zuber. By investing time and energy in the early stages of academic development, Bellevue creates a solid foundation for later success.⁵⁵

These are just a few of the many districts throughout the state that have experienced the benefits of full-day kindergarten. These districts know that full-day kindergarten should be a fundamental part of basic education throughout the entire state. Other states have also come to recognize the value of a full-day curriculum. As a result an increasing number of students across the country are getting the chance to participate in full-day kindergarten as states create or increase their public investment.

⁵⁵ Personal communication (email) from Dr. Jan Zuber, Assistant Superintendent of School Administration and Curriculum, Bellevue Schools, June 16, 2006.

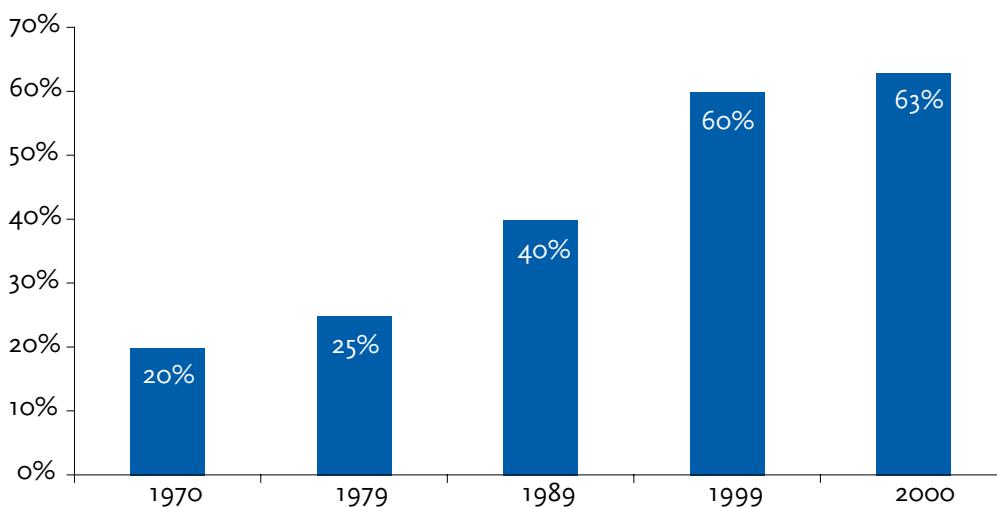
V. Full-Day Kindergarten Across the Country

Full-day kindergarten has become a staple of basic education in the United States. Across the country the number of students attending full-day programs has steadily grown to over 60 percent, up from a mere 20 percent in 1970 (see Exhibit 10).⁵⁶

The existence of programs in other states is contingent upon two factors: legislation and funding. Some federal money, such as from the No Child Left Behind Act, is distributed to school districts and put toward full-day kindergarten. However, the funding of education primarily falls to the states, and full-day kindergarten receives the bulk of its financial support from state and local resources.

In all, eleven states have adopted public policy for universal full-day kindergarten. As of the 2006-2007 school year, seven states⁵⁷ require that all districts offer voluntary full-day kindergarten to all students, and fully fund every kindergarten student as a full-time student. By the 2008-2009 school year districts in Delaware will also be required to offer full-day kindergarten. Two states, Louisiana and West Virginia, currently require all kindergarten students in public schools to attend full-day programs. In addition, by the 2007-2008 school year all students in Maryland will be subject to a similar requirement (see Exhibit 11).⁵⁸

EXHIBIT 10: Percentage of Kindergarten Students Enrolled in Full-Day Programs in United States



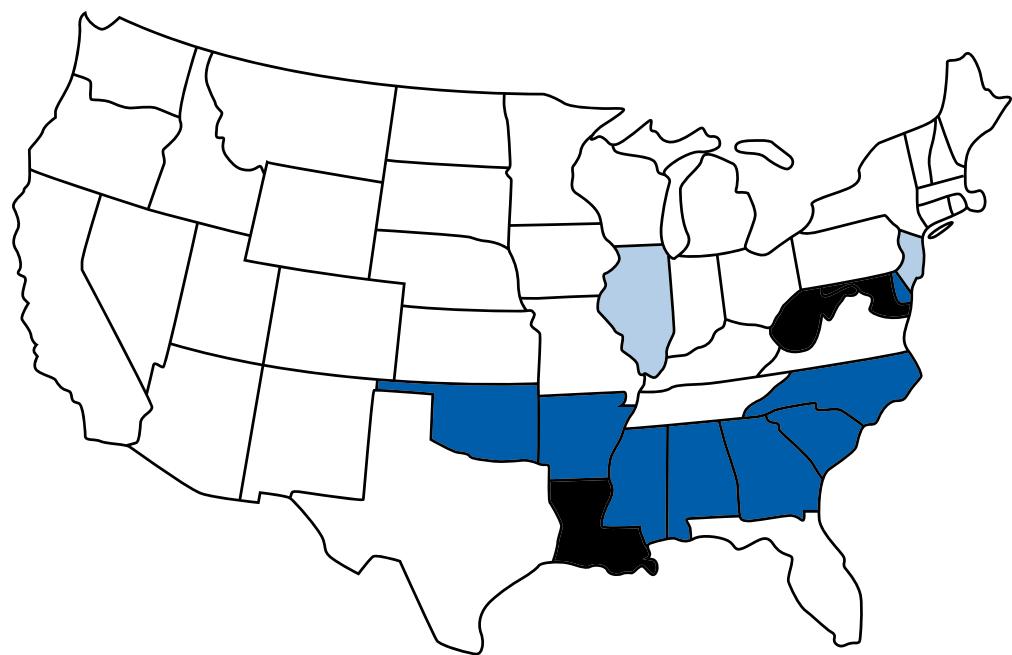
Sources: Kauerz, K. (2005). *Full-day kindergarten: A study of state policies in the United States*. Denver, Co: Education Commission of the States, p. 2; and US Census Bureau. (2000). Scholars of all ages in *The population profile of the United States*. Washington, DC: Author.

⁵⁶ US Census Bureau. (2000). Scholars of all ages in *The population profile of the United States*. Washington, DC: Author.

⁵⁷ Alabama, Arkansas, Georgia, Mississippi, North Carolina, Oklahoma, and South Carolina. Delaware in 2008. Kauerz, K. (2005). *Full-day kindergarten: A study of state policies in the United States*. Denver, Co: Education Commission of the States.

⁵⁸ Personal communication (phone conversations) with staff from the Maryland and Delaware departments of education, March 28, 2007. By the 2008-2009 school year each Delaware school board will be required to provide full-day kindergarten to all students plus at least one half-day kindergarten class if more than 18 students in the district request such an option.

EXHIBIT 11: States with Full-Day Kindergarten Requirements



■ States requiring all school districts to offer voluntary full-day kindergarten

Alabama
Arkansas
Georgia
Mississippi

■ States requiring all kindergartners to attend full-day kindergarten

North Carolina
Oklahoma
South Carolina
Delaware

■ States requiring specific school districts to offer voluntary full-day kindergarten

Illinois
New Jersey

Sources: Kauerz (2005) and conversations with staff from state departments of education. Contacts provided upon request.

Beyond those states with universal full-day kindergarten requirements⁵⁹, six states provide a strong incentive for districts to offer a full-day option by funding full-day kindergarten at a level equal to or greater than the amount funded for first grade (see the Case Study on New Mexico on page 21). Washington, DC also provides more funding for any type of kindergarten program than for first grade.⁶⁰ Additionally, in April of 2007, North Dakota approved full state funding for voluntary full-day kindergarten for any school districts choosing to provide it beginning in the 2008-2009 school year.⁶¹ In

doing so, all states with strong funding incentives structurally and fiscally integrate full-day kindergarten into their provision of a basic K-12 education.

A further 15 states emphasize the value of full-day kindergarten by requiring or funding participation on a lesser scale. New Jersey and Illinois require only specific districts to provide full-day programs (see Box 1). Some states run programs where districts may apply for state funding for full-day programs and are chosen based on the proportion of at-risk or low-income students in the district or if the district has never previ-

59 Several of the states with universal full-day requirements also utilize incentivized funding. Georgia and Illinois both fund full-day at levels equal to or higher than first grade, and North and South Carolina fund all kindergarten, full or half day, at a higher level than first grade. Kauerz (2005).

60 The five states are Alaska, Nebraska, New Mexico, New York, and Wisconsin. Kauerz (2005).

61 Personal communication (phone conversation) with Anita Decker, Director of Approval & Accreditation, North Dakota Department of Public Instruction, May 29, 2007.

ously offered full-day programming. Other states appropriate funding to districts for at-risk students and then allow the districts to utilize the money for full-day programs or other initiatives.

Every year new states introduce legislation to make full-day kindergarten

a part of public education. Between January and March of 2007, legislation was proposed in three states requiring districts to offer voluntary full-day kindergarten, and legislators in seven states proposed increased funding for districts offering full-day programs.⁶²

BOX 1: Full-Day Kindergarten in “The Abbott Districts” Of New Jersey

In New Jersey a series of court decisions determined that students in the poorest districts in the state have a fundamental right to the same educational opportunities as those in wealthier districts. In 1973, the New Jersey Supreme Court held that the ultimate responsibility for providing adequate public education rests with the state rather than the local districts.

In another decision in 1998, the New Jersey Supreme Court found the education provided to students in certain urban school districts to be inadequate and thus unconstitutional. In order to close the gap and provide the students in these districts with an adequate education, the court ordered the State of New Jersey to provide special funding for programs to 28 urban school districts with the highest percentages of low-income students, at-risk students, and students of color. A portion of the funding ordered to these “Abbott Districts” is required to go towards the provision of universal preschool and full-day kindergarten for all students in these districts.

The recipient communities have responded very well to these reforms: enrollment in preschool and full-day kindergarten rose dramatically, and kindergarten teachers reported that children who participated in Abbott preschools were better prepared than those who had not. The number of districts covered by the ruling has grown to 31 districts, and in 2000 another 17 rural school districts sued to become “Abbot Districts”.

Sources: Liss, B. (2005). Defining T and E: Court battles over school funding rage on as the playing field grows more crowded. Newark, NJ: Rutgers University, The Institute on Education Law and Policy.; and Achilles, C., Frances, C., & Walker, E.M. (2005). The Impact of the 1998 Abbott v. Burke decision on educational progress in New Jersey high poverty districts: What have we learned? Berkeley, CA: University of California, Berkeley, Boalt Hall School of Law, Earl Warren Institute on Race, Ethnicity and Diversity.

62 “Connecticut, Indiana, and Rhode Island lawmakers proposed legislation that would require school districts to offer full-day kindergarten. Legislators in Arizona, Colorado, Indiana, Minnesota, North Dakota, Ohio, and Oregon proposed new funding to reimburse school districts that choose to offer voluntary, full-day kindergarten. Utah’s proposal would appropriate funds to expand full-day kindergarten to the state’s Title I schools.” National Conference of State Legislatures. (2007). *Child care and early education legislative update: Proposed legislation, January 1–February 28, 2007*. Denver, CO: Author. See: <http://www.ncsl.org/programs/cyl/legupfebo7.htm>.

Although many states clearly recognize full-day kindergarten as an effective initiative worthy of investment, most still fail to provide universal access leaving participation extremely uneven. In states with less comprehensive or consistent support for full-day kindergarten, the responsibility for adequate early education falls on the individual districts and schools. As in Washington State, independent resources may include local levies or tuition-based programs. The latter is generally used in districts or schools where the majority of the families can afford the expense, and are then able to subsidize the minority of families who cannot. Forcing reliance on local resources leaves many students without access to full-day kindergarten, nearly 40 percent nationally and over 60 percent in Washington.

While the overall percentage of the student population in full-day programs has dramatically increased, participation and access is highly dependent on income level. The schools most likely to offer full-day kindergarten are either those in poorer urban or rural districts where public funding is available to target disadvantaged students, or in more affluent districts where the communities can afford the expense independently. Again, as in Washington, the children most likely to be excluded from such programs are from middle-class families.⁶³

In states that don't currently offer universal access to full-day programs, the popularity and demand for them is steadily increasing. Each year, states consider or pass legislation to appropriate funds, initiate pilot programs, or create exploratory commissions to investigate full-day kindergarten. Such initial forays are often followed by legislation to create or expand the programs statewide. In comparison to other states Washington is falling behind.

GLOBAL CHALLENGE STATES AND FULL-DAY KINDERGARTEN

Washington Learns identified seven states against which Washington's progress towards a "world-class" system of education should be measured.

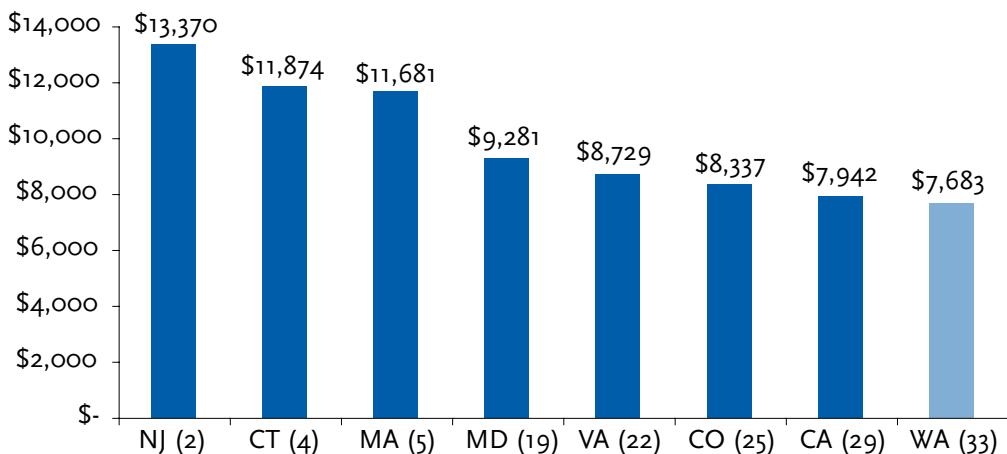
The Global Challenge States are the highest ranked states on the Progressive Policy Institute's New Economy Index according to 21 indicators of competitive potential. The seven states are: California, Colorado, Connecticut, Maryland, Massachusetts, New Jersey and Virginia.

In relation to these seven states, Washington fares relatively poorly when compared on important indicators of investment in students: per student spending on K-12 education and the percentage of full-day kindergarten enrollment. Washington State ranks last in per pupil spending and sixth out of eight on full-day kindergarten enrollments (see Exhibits 12 & 13).

⁶³ Lee (2005).

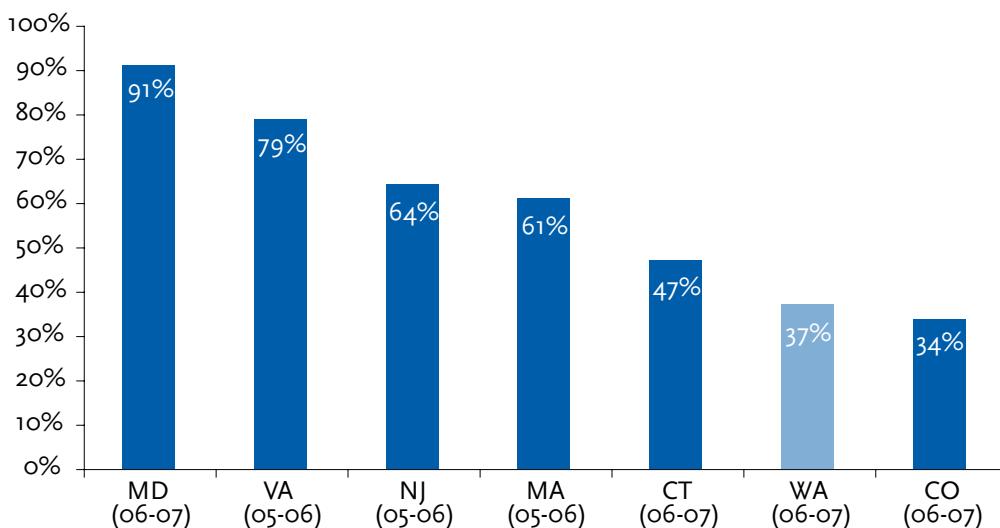
EXHIBIT 12: State and Local Public K-12 Expenditures Per Student, 2004-2005

State (National Ranking)



Source: National Education Association. (2006). *Rankings and estimates 2005-2006*. Washington, DC: Author

EXHIBIT 13: Full-Day Kindergarten Enrollment By State in '05-'06/'06-'07



Sources: Personal communication with and documentation provided by state education agency staff, March-April, 2007.⁶⁴
Contacts provided upon request.

Notes: The graph contains the most current full-day enrollment data available. Virginia, New Jersey and Massachusetts were only able to provide data from the 2005-2006 school year. California's full-day kindergarten enrollment data were not available at the time of the request and therefore were not included in the comparison.

⁶⁴ Colorado Legislative Council (2007). Staff Fiscal Note: SB07-026. See: [http://www.leg.state.co.us/clics/clics2007a/csl.nsf/billcontainers/17AF271E6545AD6087257251007B9651/\\$FILE/SBo26_0o.pdf](http://www.leg.state.co.us/clics/clics2007a/csl.nsf/billcontainers/17AF271E6545AD6087257251007B9651/$FILE/SBo26_0o.pdf); Virginia Department of Education (2006). 2005-2006 School membership: Division totals by grade (excel spreadsheet). http://www.doe.virginia.gov/VDOE/dbpubs/Fall_Membership/2005/readme.htm; and (2006). School divisions offering half-day kindergarten (excel spreadsheet); Massachusetts Department of Education. (2007). Report on the Kindergarten Development Grants: Transition planning for full day kindergarten, quality full day kindergarten. Malden, MA: Author; and Aos (2007).

CASE STUDY: FULL-DAY KINDERGARTEN IN NEW MEXICO GROWS INTO UNIVERSAL PROGRAM

The full-day kindergarten program in New Mexico serves as a model for organic policy development. After decades of struggling with one of the lowest performing public education systems in the country, state political and education leaders searched for new approaches to improve the education system by targeting non-English-speaking and disadvantaged students, while also addressing the needs of middle-class and wealthy students.

Educators who knew their students needed help and attention in the earliest stages of their academic careers focused on full-day kindergarten. In 1993, the state government commissioned an All-Day Kindergarten Task Force to investigate the concept. Their initial inquiry found broad-based support for full-day programming among teachers, parents, and administrators.⁶⁵ A bill allocating \$12 million for full-day kindergarten was introduced into the state legislature, but failed due to budgetary concerns and a lack of political will.⁶⁶

It would be another seven years before a bill supporting full-day programs in New Mexico would be successful. During the intervening years, attitudes and perceptions regarding a full-day schedule gradually shifted to create widespread support for a comprehensive full-day kindergarten program universally available throughout the state. During this time, school districts in New Mexico received no state support for full-day kindergarten. Despite limited resources and a variety of

challenges, a majority of districts in the state used whatever funding they could find to fund full-day kindergarten programs. By 1999, 51 of New Mexico's 89 school districts offered full-day programs, with 33 districts offering some full-day classes in every school, and 18 districts with full-day classes only in select schools.⁶⁷

Even with creative funding strategies and a clear majority of districts committed to full-day kindergarten only 14.1 percent of kindergarteners in New Mexico were able to participate, even as analysis proved many of the programs to be highly successful. One Albuquerque elementary school found the average scores of full-day kindergarteners to be three times higher than the average of their peers in half-day classes.⁶⁸

Eventually, the combined force of strong evidence and political pressure led to the passage of legislation funding full-day kindergarten available to all students. The legislation was carefully crafted and incorporated several key components. The legislative plan was to phase-in the implementation, beginning in the 2000-2001 school year, giving priority to districts with the highest determined need, and completing the process in the 2004-2005 school year with universal access. The legislation specifically mandated that early literacy be a primary focus in all classes receiving state funding and that teachers apply English literacy tests at the beginning and end of the year, in order to determine progress. The legislation further mandated teachers to undergo ongoing professional development training. In addition, a comprehensive evaluation of each program is required annually to ensure effectiveness and consistency with the state-

65 Raden, A. (2002). *Achieving full-day kindergarten in New Mexico: A case study*. New York, NY: The Foundation for Child Development.

66 Ibid.

67 Think New Mexico. (1999). *Increasing student achievement in New Mexico: the need for universal access to full-day kindergarten*. Santa Fe, NM: Author.

68 Ibid.

69 New Mexico Administrative Code, Title 6, Chapter 30, Part 5.

wide curriculum.⁶⁹

One distinctive feature of New Mexico's approach is the state does not require all districts to offer full-day programming. Instead the state created a permissive system where districts must apply for full-day funding, at a funding level higher than that for first grade. No district has waived the additional funding.⁷⁰ Full-day kindergarten was phased-in over a five-year period and by the 2004-2005 school year, 100 percent of districts in New Mexico offered voluntary full-day kindergarten.

Universal full-day kindergarten in New Mexico can serve as a model program for Washington State. It demonstrates how passionate commitment to educational opportunity and effective strategies on the part of school districts and communities can result in the creation of a comprehensive statewide program out of a multitude of individual programs. All kindergarten students in New Mexico now have equal access to full-day kindergarten and an increased opportunity to learn and achieve. The permissive approach to public policy worked because all districts recognized the benefits of the full-day experience and the state encouraged adoption by providing funding incentives.

⁶⁹ Kauerz (2005): p. 7.

VI. Washington's Recent Action to Increase Access to Full-Day Kindergarten

Washington State is making progress towards creating a more robust and high-quality system of public education. But full-day kindergarten and the majority of students who will benefit from it are being left behind.

LEGISLATURE PASSES INCOMPLETE FULL-DAY KINDERGARTEN LEGISLATION

When the Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI) submitted its budget request to the Office of the Governor, OSPI asked for \$117 million in the 2007-2009 biennium to implement Washington Learns' recommendation for the phase-in of voluntary full-day kindergarten.⁷¹ The proposal in the budget request described a four-year phase-in for all kindergarten students, beginning in the schools with the highest percentage of students eligible for free or reduced-price meals. However, when the Governor's budget was finalized, OSPI's proposal had been dramatically cut. The Governor's proposal and the legislation embodying it prolonged the phase-in to a ten year process and further limited the funding to only those students qualifying for free or reduced meals.

The legislation and budget proviso that passed the Legislature and were sent to the Governor covered all students. Unfortunately, the ten-year programmatic phase-in remained.⁷² Further, the

legislation explicitly stated the funds allocated to support full-day kindergarten cannot be considered part of basic education funding.

It will be 2016 before all districts have funds for full-day kindergarten. In the meantime a large number of kindergarten students will not have the opportunity to participate. In the 2007-2008 school year, nearly 65,000 students entering kindergarten will not receive state support to enable participation in a full-day program. The following year 58,000 kindergartners will miss out, and so on. Due to the decade-long ramp-up strategy, almost 325,000 students will have been denied state support by the time the state will fund all kindergartners (see Exhibit 14). Further, without being designated a part of basic education there is no guarantee that state funding for full-day kindergarten could not be stripped away at any time.

As shown in the graph on income and school readiness (Exhibit 1), middle-class students face significant barriers to being ready for the academic challenges of kindergarten. Yet, the students who already have relatively high levels of access to full-day kindergarten will be the first to receive funding while the majority of middle-income students will continue to wait. These students, all students, deserve the foundation for an excellent education: full-day kindergarten. We will not realize a 'world-class' education system if something so fundamental takes a decade and denies

⁷¹ OSPI. (2006). *Supporting achievement, 2007-2009 operating budget: Full day kindergarten*, AA. See: <http://www.k12.wa.us/LegisGov/2007Documents/FullDayKindergarten2007-09.pdf>.

⁷² Senate Bill 5841(2007). The ten-year phase-in period is not defined in the text of the legislation, but rather laid out in the fiscal note attached to the bill.

⁷³ This estimate is based on the state's 2006-2007 kindergarten enrollment (72,541), taken from OSPI's grade-level October 2006 Headcount enrollment document, referenced above. The estimate assumes kindergarten enrollment will stay relatively stable over the next ten years.

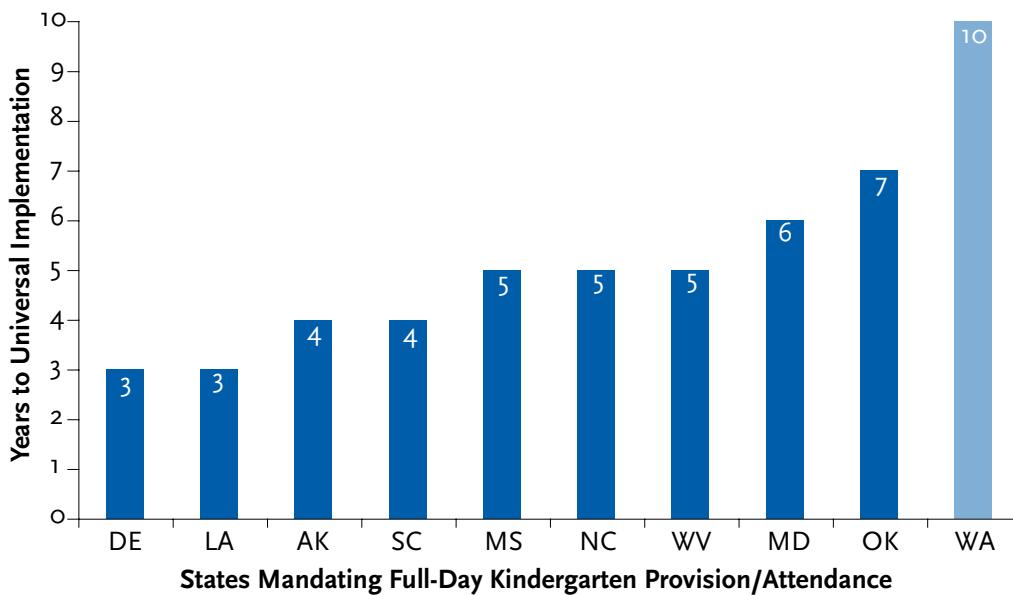
EXHIBIT 14: Estimate of Kindergarten Students Receiving Washington State Funding for Full- and Half-Day Instruction over 10-Year Phase-In⁷³

Year	School Year	Students Funded For Full-Day	Students Funded for Half-Day
1	2007-2008	7,200	64,800
2	2008-2009	14,400	57,600
3	2009-2010	21,600	50,400
4	2010-2011	28,800	43,200
5	2011-2012	36,000	36,000
6	2012-2013	43,200	28,800
7	2013-2014	50,400	21,600
8	2014-2014	57,600	14,400
9	2015-2016	64,800	7,200
10	2016-2017	72,000	0
Total Number of Students Denied Full-Day Kindergarten Funding			324,000

opportunity to over 300,000 children. As part of the background research for this brief, the Economic Opportunity Institute (EOI) contacted legislative and/or department of education staff from states currently or soon to be requiring full-day kindergarten attendance or provision. Of the eleven states, EOI staff spoke with representatives from nine states. The

conversations revealed that seven of these states had or have mandated universal full-day kindergarten requirements to be implemented in five years or less. Only two of the states legislated periods longer than five years from the passage of the enacting legislation through the school year in which all school districts had to meet requirements (see Exhibit 15).⁷⁴

EXHIBIT 15: Length of Full-Day Kindergarten Phase-In Periods Across the Nation



Source: Phone conversations with staff from the Arkansas, Delaware, Louisiana, Maryland, Mississippi, North Carolina, Oklahoma, South Carolina, and West Virginia education agencies and/or legislatures, April-May, 2007. Contacts provided upon request.

⁷⁴ Phone conversations with staff from the Arkansas, Delaware, Louisiana, Maryland, Mississippi, North Carolina, Oklahoma, South Carolina, and West Virginia education agencies and/or legislatures, April-May, 2007. Contacts provided upon request. It should be noted that EOI collected only information regarding the length of phase-in periods and did not collect information about funding mechanisms or the manner in which phase-ins were accomplished.

VII. A Vital and Smart Investment of Public Funds

“Education is the single most important investment we can make for our children, our state, our economy, and our future.”⁷⁵

—Governor Christine Gregoire

The Washington State Constitution mandates that public education is the government’s highest priority. Article IX, Section I states: “It is the paramount duty of the state to make ample provision for the education of all children residing within its borders, without distinction or preference on account of race, color, caste, or sex.”⁷⁶ The text of the full-day kindergarten enacting legislation specifically excludes full-day kindergarten from being considered part of basic education, and thus exempt from the state’s constitutional mandate. However, the districts, schools, teachers, parents, and students that currently reap rewards from full-day kindergarten know, despite any legal language to the contrary, full-day kindergarten is an essential tool in helping children succeed and a critical part of basic public education in Washington State.

The Washington State Institute for Public Policy estimates “providing full-day kindergarten to all children in Washington could increase state education expenditures by \$190 million” per year.⁷⁷ The enacted budget for the 2007-2009 biennium shows a surplus of more than \$700 million dollars.⁷⁸

Given the dire need of students in the public schools and the enduring impact of early education programs, the state has a responsibility to invest a portion of this surplus in granting all children a greater opportunity to thrive by universalizing access to full-day kindergarten. This is a small price to pay to help ensure the academic and personal success of current and future generations. In deciding upon the 2008 supplemental budget appropriations, the 2008 Legislature should look to the numbers, the research, the children, and the future. Each of these will point to full-day kindergarten as a smart investment in our schools, families, and communities; an investment needed now for all kindergartners.

A recent poll of Washington State voters found that the most important legislative issue on which to focus policies and spending was K-12 education.⁷⁹ In recognizing public education as the main public interest issue, both the state and the people are acknowledging the value of a well-educated populace and the parallels that exist between an excellent educational system, an effective democracy, and a strong economy. There exists broad-based understanding that civic and economic vitality are

⁷⁵ Washington Learns (2006): p. 3.

⁷⁶ Washington State Constitution, Article IX, Section I. See: http://www.courts.wa.gov/education/constitution/index.cfm?fa=education_constitution.display&displayid=Article-09.

⁷⁷ Aos (2007): p. 11.

⁷⁸ Washington State Office of Financial Management. (2007). *2005-2007 with 2007 Supplemental Budget, and 2007-2009 Enacted Budget balance sheet*. Olympia, WA: Author.

⁷⁹ Partnership for Learning. (2004). *Voter survey, August 2004*. Seattle, WA: Author. See: <http://www.partnership4learning.org/resources/PFLVoter-SurveyAug04.pdf>.

⁸⁰ Boots, S.W. (2005). *Building a 21st century economy: The case for investing in early education reform*. Washington, DC: The New America Foundation.

intimately linked to public education.⁸⁰ Inherent in the relationship between education, democracy and the economy is an emphasis on early learning. The cognitive gains made in the extra hours of a kindergarten class may seem small initially, but it is these gains that can translate to greatly improved inquiry and productivity in later years.

Whether we look to academic achievement, social and emotional develop-

ment, school readiness, the financial impact on families and the community, the long-term return on investment, or the stories from participating schools; we find that full-day kindergarten works. To fulfill the primary mandate of the Washington State Constitution and ready our children for the demands of the 21st century, we must fund full-day kindergarten for all students as a cornerstone of basic education.



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1900 N. Northlake Way, Suite 237
Seattle, WA 98103
206.633.6580