

Full-Day vs. Half-Day Kindergarten

There is serious doubt about the results produced by full-day kindergarten and even bigger questions about whether it is the best use of limited education resources.

California-based RAND Corporation's December 2006 report, *School Readiness, Full Day Kindergarten, and Student Achievement*, examined data from a nationally representative sample of almost 7,900 students and found "that full-day kindergarten programs may actually be detrimental to mathematics performance and nonacademic readiness skills."

The study established that "children who had attended a full-day program at kindergarten showed poorer mathematics performance in fifth grade than did children who had attended a part-day kindergarten program."

A 2004 policy brief, *The Effects of Full Day versus Half Day Kindergarten*, by the Center for Evaluation and Education Policy (CEEP) at Indiana University did its best to praise full-day kindergarten but could only go so far as to say "there are no negative outcomes commonly associated with full day kindergarten, and that – at worst – full day kindergarten and half day kindergarten have similar effects."

One of the CEEP studies looked at 1,830 kindergartners in a "large urban school district in Indiana" and then analyzed their third grade test scores on the I-Step in math and language. In that case researchers found "evidence that the differences between full and half day students are negligible."

Negligible? Not exactly the results you want in exchange for hundreds of million of dollars a year.

Nearly all the research on kindergarten shows that children in full-day kindergarten are afforded a modest academic edge over children in half-day kindergarten when measured at the end of their kindergarten year. However, that initial advantage completely disappears by third grade.

The main reason for funding all-day kindergarten is a belief that most children will fare better throughout their school career if they start attending class for the entire day. But the scientific evidence has consistently shown this belief is incorrect.

In 2005, the Goldwater Institute conducted a comprehensive review of education progress locally and across the country of students that enrolled in pre-school, half-day kindergarten and all-day kindergarten.

This review found that some all-day kindergarten students fared slightly better in reading, writing and math in the first grade, but this advantage fades rather quickly.

By the end of third grade, students who had enrolled in all-day kindergarten performed no better in their classes than students who went to kindergarten for a half-day only.

More recently, a study by the U.S. Health and Human Services Department released in January 2010 found that any benefits from Head Start pre-school classes disappear by the end of first grade.

Simply put, all-day kindergarten, pre-school, and other early childhood education programs are not effective over time.

http://www.rand.org/pubs/monographs/2006/RAND_MG558.sum.pdf

<http://www.goldwaterinstitute.org/article/4547>

http://www.hslda.org/docs/nche/Issues/E/HeadStart_Feb_3_2010.asp

http://www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/opre/hs/impact_study/

http://www.eric.ed.gov/ERICWebPortal/search/detailmini.jsp?_nfpb=true&_ERICExtSearch_SearchValue_0=ED507847&ERICExtSearch_SearchType_0=no&accno=ED507847