

Full-Day Kindergarten

The percentage of kindergarteners enrolled in full-day programs has nearly tripled since the late 1970s, jumping from 28 percent to 77 percent nationwide between 1977 and 2013. Although full-day kindergarten enrollment in the West is the lowest in the country, Utah still falls well below the regional average. In Utah, kindergarten is not mandatory; of those 5-year-olds who do attend, only 13 percent were enrolled in full-day programs as of 2013 (down from 18 percent in 2010).¹

Increasing the availability of full-day kindergarten programs is one of the ways Utah can help ensure that all its students have the skills and resources they need to succeed academically.

It's Beneficial for Kids

Overall, children who spend time in full-day kindergarten programs are more likely to devote time every day to core academic skills like reading and math than children who spend time in half-day kindergarten programs. Full-day kindergarten:

- Allows teachers more time to promote formal and informal learning;
- Reduces the number of disruptive transitions in a child's day; and
- Helps children get used to a schedule similar to that which they will have in first grade.

In the short-term, children attending full-day kindergarten programs tend to do better in school than do children attending half-day programs, and show stronger overall academic gains in kindergarten. Particularly for children who have had limited learning and social experiences — or who are at risk due to developmental problems, family stress, or other factors — a high quality, full-day kindergarten program may offer the best opportunity to reduce the impact of these risks from the very beginning.²

It's Preferred by Parents

The vast majority of parents prefer full-day kindergarten for their children. In a study conducted by the National Center for Education Statistics, 100 percent of full-day parents and 72 percent of half-day parents noted that they would have chosen full-day kindergarten for their child if given the opportunity again.³ In Utah, school districts offering full-day kindergarten have reported that fewer than 5 percent of parents who are offered the full-day option turn down the opportunity.⁴

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To help all Utah children achieve academic success, it is critical that we maximize early learning opportunities, particularly for low-income children and others who may need additional supports to reach the school readiness threshold. Like high-quality Pre-K, full-day kindergarten programs offer solid academic, social-emotional, and other benefits for the children and families who participate.



¹ See Melissa Proctor & Shawn Teigen, *Lessons from Our Neighbor: Learning from Colorado's Educational Success*, UTAH FOUNDATION (Jul. 6, 2015), available at <http://www.utahfoundation.org/uploads/rr731.pdf>.

² See Mary Ann Rafoth et al., *Kindergarten – Full Versus Half-Day: Information for Parents and Early Childhood Educators*, NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF SCHOOL PSYCHOLOGISTS (2004), available at http://www.naspcenter.org/assessment/kindergarten_ho.html; see also Child Trends Data Bank, *Full-day Kindergarten: Indicators on Children and Youth*, CHILD TRENDS (Feb. 2015), available at http://www.childtrends.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/06/102_Full-day-Kindergarten.pdf.

³ See Nat'l Educ. Assoc., *Full-Day Kindergarten Facts: All Children Benefit from High-Quality Full-Day Kindergarten Programs*, available at http://www.nea.org/assets/docs/HE/mf_idkfactsheet.pdf.

⁴ See Kirsten Stewart, *Does all-day kindergarten work? Figuring it out isn't kids' stuff*, THE SALT LAKE TRIBUNE (Aug. 21, 2009), available at http://archive.sltrib.com/story.php?ref=/news/ci_13164697.