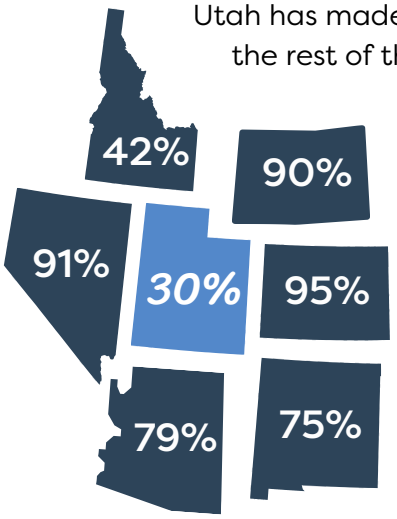


Invest in Utah Kids:
The Future of Full-Day Kindergarten

Voices for Utah Children is working with our partners at United Way of Salt Lake and Utah PTA to see that every Utah family that wants full-day kindergarten, has the opportunity to participate!

Utah has made progress in recent years, but we have far to go to catch up with the rest of the country. Thanks in part to our colleagues at the Utah State Board of Education, we are able to provide this snapshot of where Utah kindergarten is right now, and where it can be in the future!

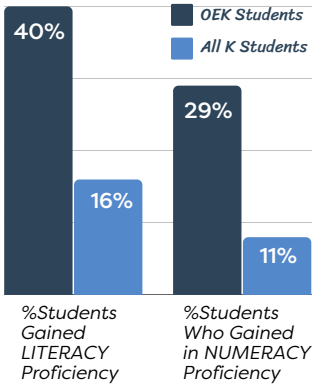


Graphic 1. Full Day Kindergarten participation rates for Utah and neighboring states (Utah data from USBE, other data calculated from IPUMS CPS).

Utah remains far behind the rest of the nation in terms of access to full-day kindergarten (FDK).

Most of our neighboring states offer much greater access to full-day programs, and therefore boast much higher rates of student participation.

Recently, Idaho's State Board of Education voted to endorse a plan for full state funding of full-day kindergarten.



Graphic 2. Literacy and Numeracy Proficiency Gains for OEK students vs. All Kindergarten students (USBE data, SY2019).

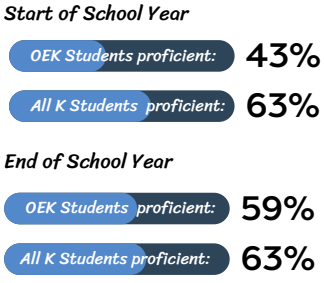
State and district-level data show that students make greater gains in FDK classrooms than in half-day classrooms.

This is especially true for kids who are at risk for entering first grade behind their peers, including Multilingual Language Learners and children whose families are experiencing economic disadvantage.

Often, kids in Optional Enhanced Kindergarten (OEK) programs start far behind their peers, but surpass them in both proficiency and classroom composure by the end of the school year.

Only 43% of OEK students started 2019-2020 school year in the top proficiency category for literacy. At the end of the school year, 59% were in the top category.

By comparison, 63% of all K students started in the top literacy category, and 63% ended in the top category.



Graphic 3. Literacy Proficiency Gains for OEK Students at the beginning of the school year vs. end of school year (USBE data, SY2019)



Utahns from all types of families support expansion of full-day kindergarten - even if it means not getting a tax cut.

There is a persistent myth that Utahns don't participate in FDK because of personal or cultural preference. This is not true. The issue is one of access. In districts where FDK is offered, participation rates are typically more than 85%. Washington County School District recently expanded its full-day programming and 96% of invited families chose to participate.

68% of registered Utah voters support "making FDK available in all public schools" for interested families (including 61% who have a stay-at-home parent in the household).

- Davis Co: 73%
- Salt Lake Co: 71%
- Weber Co: 65%
- Utah Co: 64%
- Washington Co: 59%
- All Others: 67%

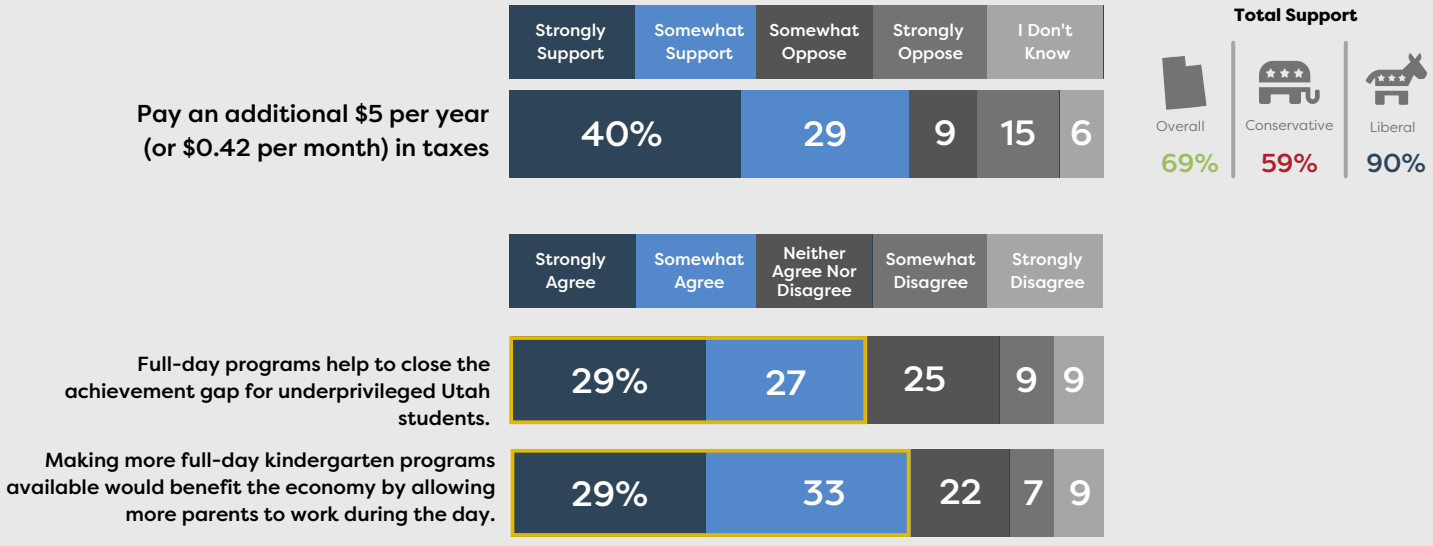
3X

three times as many registered voters rate full-day kindergarten as better than half day programs, than those who say half-day is better.

57-69%

are willing to pay more in taxes in order to expand full-day kindergarten in Utah, depending on the amount ($65 or $5 per year).

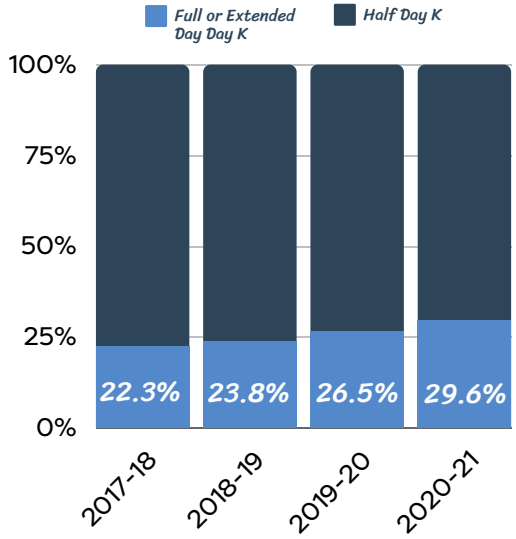
**All data points on this page are from a statewide poll of 1,976 registered voters in Utah, conducted by Y2 Analytics, with a margin of error of +/- 2.2.%. For more survey results, visit www.utahchildren.org.



Full-day kindergarten access has grown slowly in recent years. Stable funding remains the greatest barrier to expanding programs to match student need and community interest.

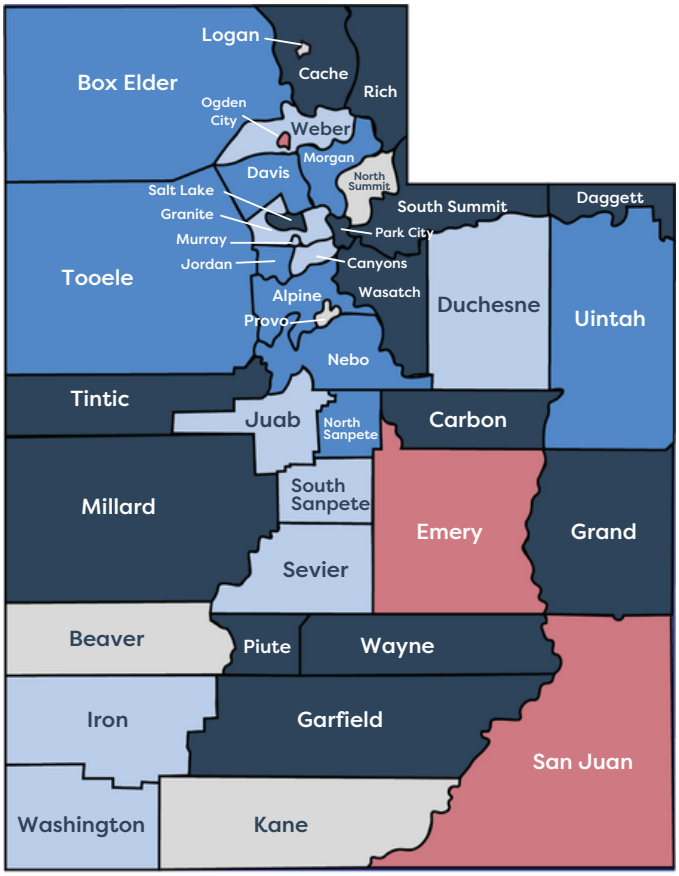
Due to limited state funding for FDK programs, most districts and charters are unable to offer enough spaces for all interested families. This results in inequitable access to a valuable early education intervention.

Only about one in every four Utah children has the chance to attend FDK, even if that is what their family wants for them. Where a child happens to live, in addition to academic need, is the primary factor that decides whether they can attend FDK. In many areas, only children with the most intense academic needs are able to be part of a full-day classroom.



Graphic 4. Percentage of Full Day Kindergarten programs offered in the state compared to Extended Day and Half Day Kindergarten programs (USBE data).

Full-day kindergarten access across the state continues to be inequitable.



Only 15 out of 41 school districts offer FDK to more than three-quarters of their students. Approximately 32% of charter school kindergarten students are able to participate in FDK.

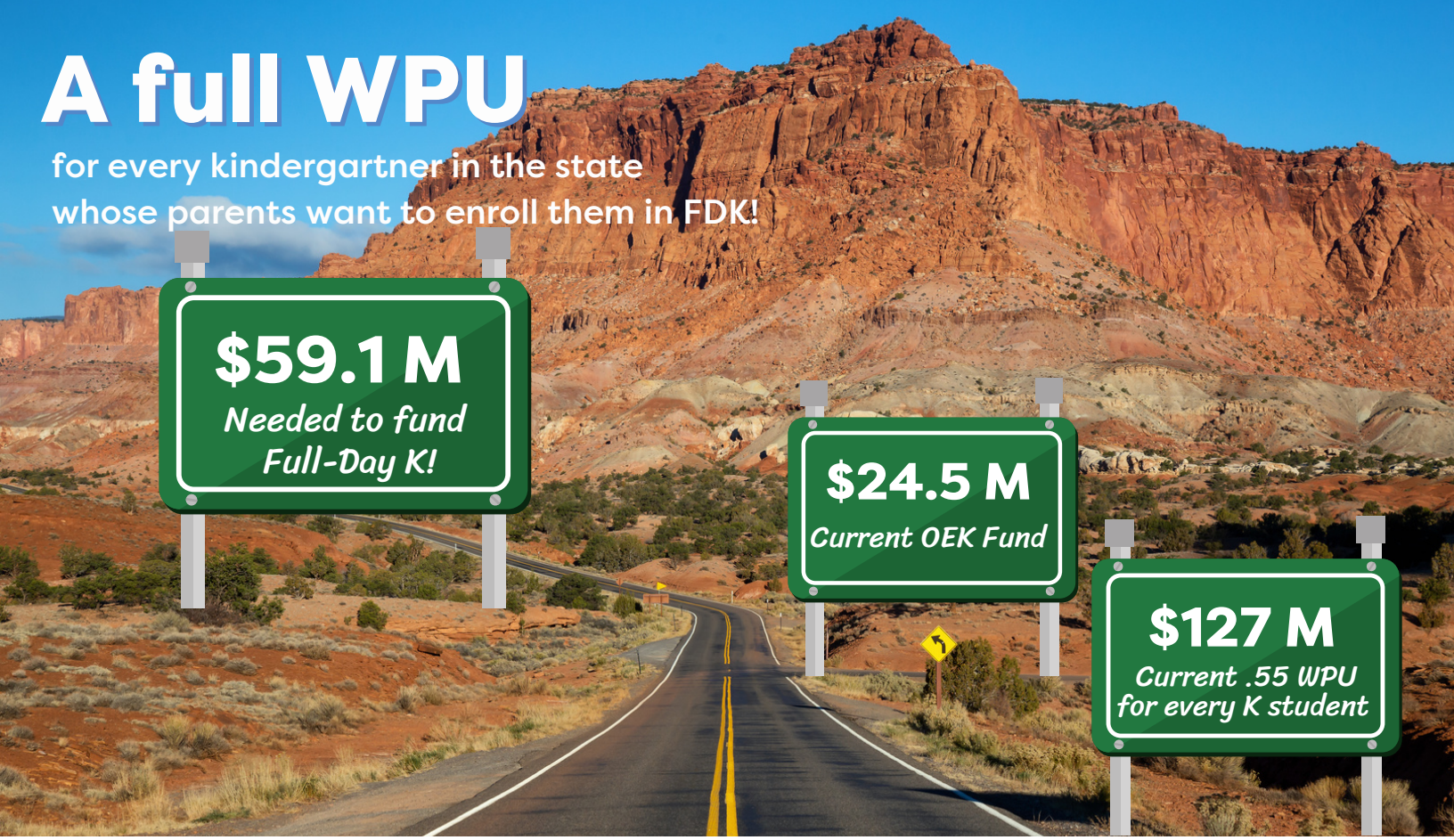
These are the 15 school districts that offer full-day programming to 75% or more of their kindergarten students:

- Carbon (96.4%)
- Daggett (90.9%)
- Garfield (100%)
- Grand (100%)
- Millard (95%)
- Ogden City (76%)
- Park City (100%)
- Piute (100%)
- Rich (100%)
- Salt Lake (86.1%)
- South Summit (100%)
- Tintic (100%)
- Wasatch (99.7%)
- Wayne (100%)

n=9, 0-19%
n=10, 20-39%
n=5, 40-59%
n=3, 60-79%
n=14, 80-100%

A full WPU

for every kindergartner in the state
whose parents want to enroll them in FDK!



Utah could offer full-day kindergarten to every interested family with minimal additional investment built up over three years.

To ensure equitable access to FDK programming for all interested families, our state government can provide a stable funding source via a full Weighted Pupil Unit (WPU) for every full-day kindergarten student, just as it does for students in grades 1 through 12.

Below is the percentage of Utah kindergarten students who could have access to FDK if approximately $20 million were added each year to currently available state kindergarten funding.

