

FUNDING EXTENDED/FULL DAY KINDERGARTEN

In January 2004 State Superintendent of Public Instruction, Susan Castillo, announced her "Ready for School" initiative for young children in Oregon. The initiative includes three elements: increasing the number of eligible students served through the Oregon Pre Kindergarten Program, promoting full-day kindergarten for Title 1 schools, and enhancing early childhood content standards and observational assessments.

In March 2004 Superintendent Castillo distributed a document to assist districts in designing extended/full-day kindergarten programs by utilizing Title 1 funds.

The purpose of this document is to respond to the queries from districts that are interested in information about costs and planning for extended/full-day kindergarten programs without Title funds. Most often these are the districts that either do not have Title funds or have already targeted funds elsewhere.

This paper provides projected costs for various options for funding full-day kindergarten. Many school districts are employing a variety of strategies to fund these programs in Oregon. Cost considerations go beyond the funding of a half-day teacher. Each district has unique circumstances that will impact the ability and decision to fund full-day kindergarten programs as well as the way the program design. School districts may want to consider one or more of the options included at the end of this document.

BACKGROUND

Full-day kindergarten programs increase learning time for young students by lengthening the time that students attend school, in comparison the traditional half-day or all-day-every-other-day kindergarten models. Districts select to offer extended or full-day kindergarten for a variety of reasons and may extend that time in various ways:

- Extend learning time by a desired increment each day for identified students attending a half-day program.
- Extend learning time by increasing days for identified students attending an all-day-every-other-day model.
- Extend the school day for all or some kindergarten students to a length consistent with other primary grades.

QUALITY EDUCATION MODEL COSTS FOR FULL-DAY KINDERGARTEN

The Quality Education Model (QEM) is one way to estimate costs for full-day kindergarten. For Oregon to implement a statewide QEM for kindergarten, the estimated cost for an additional half-day would be approximately \$44 million. The QEM is based on prototype schools for which the elementary prototype assumes a school size of 340 students, 40 of which are kindergarteners. Under the conditions that currently exist in Oregon, a school that has 40 kindergarten students would have one kindergarten teacher. To move to a full-day kindergarten for all of those students would require one additional teacher per school. Costs for hiring an additional teacher, as estimated in the QEM, include salary, benefits and professional development expenses for the teacher. For statewide full-day kindergarten programs in Oregon, the QEM estimates costs for 2004-2005:

- Per student cost for half-day (class size of 24) = \$5,241
- Per student cost for full-day (class size of 24) = \$6,718

These estimates assume that the only added costs are teachers and professional development, but no supplies or other costs. Another assumption is that the per-student fixed costs do not rise.

FUNDING OPTIONS

A sampling of school districts in Oregon revealed a variety of ways that districts were currently funding and operating full-day kindergarten programs. Many districts are going beyond the state requirement and the legislative funding to offer these programs. Below is a summary of the findings from those districts sampled and from other resources that provided such information. These lists are not exhaustive but may provide ideas to explore when considering full-day kindergarten.

METHODS FOR FUNDING FULL DAY KINDERGARTEN

- General funds
- Blending federal and general funds or special grants
- Special grants (community, state, federal)
- Small and Rural Schools Achievement (SRSA) funds
- Tuition charges (with scholarships available)
- Funds saved from reduced transportation costs
- Tuition based on community rates for child care
- Tuition on a sliding scale for the non required half day

METHODS TO CONTAIN COSTS

- Offer half day programs first semester and increase to full day second semester
- Increase/extend the time less than a half day (one hour or so)
- Offer volunteer work to parents who cannot afford tuition
- Offer fewer free full-day programs (not in all schools)
- Focus on special areas where extra funding may be available (e.g. English Language Learners, dual immersion programs, low performance schools)
- Offer both full day and half day programs

SELECTION PROCESSES

- First come, first served
- Lottery
- Residence

PROGRAM FOCUS

Districts reported that the instructional focus was a combination of developmental and academic experiences for students with an emphasis on projects, centers, and socialization as well as reading, writing and mathematics.

In some specific cases it was reported that literacy and language development was extended and in other cases that specialized subjects such as physical education and music were added to the curriculum.

For districts having offered full-day kindergarten for several years, it was reported that approximately 90% of the students who attended those programs were now meeting grade level benchmarks on the Oregon statewide assessments.

Considerations to Include in Planning

Program Design

The research is clear that extended time needs to be *quality* time in order to impact student achievement. Articulated curriculum, schedules, and instructional approaches will make effective use of any additional time.

- **Curriculum.** Decisions about curriculum and curriculum models should be based on the goals of the existing district kindergarten programs and any additional goals identified for an extended-day or full-day program.
- **Scheduling.** Frequently the reason for implementing a full-day kindergarten is to provide more in-depth instruction in content areas, most commonly language development, literacy, and math. Another reason is to allow time

for a broadened curriculum, incorporating other content areas such as science, social science, and the arts, all of which can further support language development, literacy, and math learning goals. The longer day allows the teacher to plan more intentionally for teaching children social skills such as problem solving and group process. In addition, other specialists within the school may be available to the kindergarten class.

- **Guidelines for Student Participation.** If an extended-day program is designed exclusively for a selected group of students identified as being in the greatest need, as in Targeted Assistance schools, it will be important to define to the community the student selection and participation criteria. All parents of kindergarten students will need to understand the philosophy of the extended-day program and why it is not available for all students. In addition it will be important to clarify that the district's current attendance policy for kindergarten will be consistent with the policy for the rest of the school.

Staff Considerations

- **Staffing.** Changing the focus of current Title I-A programs to extended-day or full-day kindergarten may require additional teacher training, reassignments, and additional staffing.
- **Staff Development.** Kindergarten teachers may need support in transitioning to an extended-day or a full-day program. Planning time, scheduling, grouping, use of instructional assistants or volunteers, and time for specialists are all examples of program elements that will significantly change when implementing a new program. Offering professional development and opportunities to visit existing programs might be considerations in supporting the kindergarten staff.
- **Communication.** The purpose of exploring full-day kindergarten may need to be addressed to the general public. The expected outcomes may need to be clarified. Communication about school and district needs assessments, data, and planning will help the community understand the scope of the issues and the decisions made at the local level.
- **Parent Involvement.** Schools are encouraged to engage parents in program and service delivery planning.

Facilities Considerations

- **Space.** Adding full-day kindergarten for all students may increase the number of classrooms needed for the program. Providing extended-day kindergarten may also require additional instructional space.
- **Transportation.** Schools will need to address transportation requirements. A full-day kindergarten program may allow use of the existing elementary bus schedules to transport students. An extended-day program for a targeted group of students might involve an additional bus run or a commitment from parents for transportation.
- **Food Services.** Full-day or extended-day kindergarten students will need to be included in the scheduling for the school lunch program.

Program Evaluation

A program model with clearly stated desired outcomes assures program focus and direction. The determination of elements to measure may include such things as:

- Student performance (test scores, work samples, readiness benchmarks)
- Student behavior (socialization skills, attendance)
- Program impact (referrals to special education and other support programs)

The impact of a full-day or extended-day kindergarten program on statewide assessment results will not be apparent for several years. Schools and districts may want to take this into consideration and review data, plan strategically, and apply research to any funding and program decisions as a way to balance long-range and short-term goals and strategies.

Resources

Overview

Full Day Kindergarten: Exploring an Option for Extended Learning. Jennifer Railsback and Cori Brewster. Northwest Region Educational Laboratory, December 2002.

<http://www.nwrel.org/nwreport/jan03/kind>

This booklet is an introduction for those wanting to learn more about full-day kindergarten. It summarizes the major issues surrounding the full-day kindergarten program. It lists the benefits reported by students, parents, and teachers. Included are the characteristics of effective kindergarten programs, tips for successfully implementing the program, and considerations for parents and policymakers. The book profiles four Pacific Northwest programs, describing the design and what teachers have learned about successful implementation. It also presents a sampling of recent research, a list of resources, a sampling of kindergarten literacy and school readiness resources; and a list of the references used to develop the booklet.

Planning and Schedules

Information about sample full-day kindergarten schedules is available at the links listed below.

- <http://www.geocities.com/Athens/Aegean/2221/fdk.html>
Two versions of a seven-hour schedule with links to sample descriptions of the listed activities, benefits, and/or challenges.
- http://users.stargate.net/~cokids/Classroom_Schedules.html
Two teachers provide samples of their seven-hour schedules.

- <http://www.evsc.k12.in.us/evscinfo/kindergarten/sched.htm>
A full-day six-hour kindergarten schedule is reviewed.
Evansville-Vanderburgh School Corporation (school district), Evansville,
Indiana.
- <http://www.brownsburg.k12.in.us/LRTFR2002/Full-day.pdf>
A report by an Indiana school considering a full-day kindergarten.
- http://www.ode.state.or.us/iasa/swphandbook03_04.doc
Materials developed by the Department to assist districts in planning for
school-wide projects.