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Comparing Longitudinal Academic Achievement of Full-Day and Half-Day Kindergarten Students

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ABSTRACT The authors compared the achievement of children who were enrolled in full-day kindergarten (FDK) to a matched sample of students who were enrolled in half-day kindergarten (HDK) in mathematics and reading achievement in Grades 2, 3, and 4, across years after they left kindergarten. Results showed that FDK students consistently had significantly higher achievement at the end of kindergarten than did their HDK counterparts, but that advantage largely disappeared by the end of first grade. Interpretations and implications are given for that finding.

Key words: academic achievement of full- and half-day kindergarten students, mathematics and reading scores in elementary grade

Consistent with increases in pre-kindergarten enrollment and the number of parents working outside of the home, full-day kindergarten (FDK) has become increasingly popular in the United States (Clark & Maxwell, 1997). The number of students attending FDK classes in the United States rose from 32% in 1990 (National Center for Education Statistics, 2003), reflecting societal changes and newly emerging educational priorities. Whereas kindergarten students were required to perform basic skills, such as naming the alphabet and counting to 20, they are now expected to demonstrate reading/evaluation and mathematical reasoning while maintaining the focus and self-control necessary to wait for long periods of time (Oshiro, 2005).

FDK classes, it should have empirical evidence that children who attend FDK maintain greater achievement than children who attend half-day kindergarten" (p. 276). According to the literature, there is mounting evidence that supports the academic, social, and language development benefits of FDK curricula (Cryer, Shulman, Wachtel, & Beach-Hodges, 1992; Hoag & Field, 1996; Kauer, 1992; Lee, 1992; Nelson, 2000). Successful FDK programs specifically extend traditional kindergarten objectives and use what they know to affect children more effectively to fully integrate new learning (Kauer, 1992). Furthermore, most education stakeholders support FDK because they believe that it provides academic advantages for students, meets the needs of busy parents, and allows parents school readiness to be more effective (Ohio State Legislative Office of Education Oversight, 2002, 2003, 1997).

Length of School Day
According to Wang and Johnson (1999), the "major argument for full-day kindergarten at the additional hour in school would better prepare children for first grade and would result in a decreased need for grade retention" (p. 27). Furthermore, extending the kindergarten day provides educational advantages resulting from increased academic emphasis, time on task, and content coverage (Kauer, 1992; Nelson, 2000; Dick, McCoy, & Sage, 1992). Additionally, FDK also resulted in a longer school day allowing teachers to provide a relaxed classroom atmosphere in which children can experience kindergarten activities in a less hurried manner (McCormick & Teich, 1998). Kauer (1992) argued that consistent school schedules and longer school days help parents to better manage their work responsibilities while providing more time for social and attention for young children.

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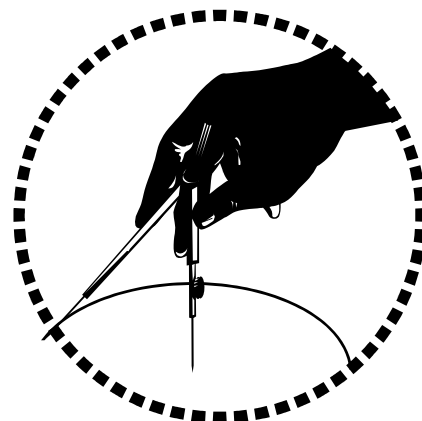
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