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Full-day kindergarten : issues and planning for implementation

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Full-day kindergarten : issues and planning for implementation

Abstract

Many school districts have begun implementing full-day, every day kindergarten programs as opposed to half-day, every day programs or full-day, alternate day programs. This study focuses on the issues and concerns involved when making the transition from a half-day or alternate day kindergarten program to a developmentally appropriate full-day program. A brief history of kindergarten is presented and research is examined and reported upon concerning areas of financial considerations, classroom set-up, organization and maintenance, curriculum development, and parental involvement for full-day kindergartens.

A survey of parents and guardians of future kindergarten students in a small, rural, Midwest, parochial school system that is considering a transition from a full-day, alternate day kindergarten schedule to one that meets full-day, every day is presented and discussed. Parental concerns expressed in the survey are addressed and recommendations are proposed.

Full-day Kindergarten: Issues and Planning for Implementation

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by

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ABSTRACT

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A survey of parents and guardians of future kindergarten students in a small, rural, Midwest, parochial school system that is considering a transition from a full-day, alternate day kindergarten schedule to one that meets full-day, every day is presented and discussed. Parental concerns expressed in the survey are addressed and recommendations are proposed.

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CHAPTER 1

The pressures of changing economic and social conditions in our society are forcing educators and parents across the country to reconsider the traditional half-day kindergarten attendance pattern, replacing it with the full-day kindergarten (Cryan, Sheehan, Wiechel, & Baden-Hedden, 1992). During the past two decades the number of children attending a full-day kindergarten program as opposed to a half-day program has increased dramatically (Olsen & Zigler, 1989). As of 1991, almost 60% of first and second grade students attended full-day kindergarten (Karweit, 1992).

Studies have been conducted comparing the cognitive and behavior outcomes of full-day versus half-day kindergarten programs.

Both the retrospective and the longitudinal studies provide clear evidence positively linking participation in full-day kindergarten to test performance, at least through the first grade. The difference between full-day kindergarten and half-day kindergarten was evident in standardized test performance (approximately 5 to 10 percentile-point differences favoring full day), fewer grade retentions (17% - 55% fewer retentions favoring full day), and lower incidence of Chapter 1 placements (50% - 90% fewer Chapter 1 placements favoring full day) (Cryan, Sheehan, Wiechel, & Bandy-Hedden, 1992, p.188).

In a subsequent study of kindergarten behavior outcomes, analysis showed significant differences related to schedule for originality, independent learning, involvement in classroom activities, productivity with peers, intellectual dependency, failure/anxiety, unreflectiveness, holding back or withdrawn, blaming, and approach to teacher. Each of these differences favored the full-day kindergartners (Cryan, Sheehan, Wiechel, & Bandy-Hedden, 1992).

Problem Statement

Although related literature describes many benefits for students who attend full-day kindergarten, many persons who have observed trends in kindergarten scheduling argue that the real issue underlying the value of kindergarten programs is that of creating developmentally appropriate learning environments for all kindergarten students, regardless of the length of the school day. The literature review will show that concern for developmentally appropriate kindergarten education was not historically the sole force in moving from full to half-day programs. A comprehensive view of the full versus half-day question is needed to assure an unclouded focus on what is developmentally appropriate for children.

Rationale

Rather than simply adding on to the length of the kindergarten school day in an effort to increase teaching time, we need to reevaluate the total kindergarten curriculum and focus on creating learning experiences for our young students that will have a positive impact on their total development.

The major challenge facing kindergarten is to provide developmentally and individually appropriate learning environments for all kindergarten children. To do this, we need to move beyond our preoccupation with more readily alterable features of kindergartens, such as the length of the school day. Lengthening the school day provides more opportunities for learning, but the actual use of time is still the critical issue. Other advantages of full-day kindergarten, such as consistent schedules in the school, helping working parents by providing a longer school day, and the possibility of more individualized attention for young children, deserve careful consideration (Karweit, 1992, p. 84).

Research Questions

What issues and planning concerns should be investigated in an effort to effectively make the transition from a half-day or a full, alternate-day kindergarten program to a developmentally appropriate full-day kindergarten program?

- * What financial considerations are pertinent to the operation of full-day kindergarten program as opposed to a half-day or alternate-day program?

- * How is a full-day kindergarten program set up, organized, and maintained?

- * What curricular additions should be considered when making a transition from half-day or alternate day kindergarten to a full-day program?

- * What should be done to involve and inform parents, guardians, and the school community when changing to a full-day kindergarten program?

Purpose Statement

Full-day kindergarten programs continue to expand throughout the United States despite the fact that they have been the subject of controversy.

“Protagonists and antagonists alike raise questions about where kindergarten children should spend their time, with whom, doing what, and how they should be doing what they do” (Fromberg, 1987, p. xi).

Because full-day kindergarten programs are a reality, or are becoming a reality in many communities across the country, this study will focus on the issues and concerns involved when making the transition from a half-day or an alternate day kindergarten program to a developmentally appropriate full-day kindergarten program.

Applicability of Topic

Literature was reviewed and summarized in an effort to address questions and concerns involved when considering the transition from an alternate day kindergarten program to a full-day, every day kindergarten program at the author's school. Additionally, research literature was studied and utilized to generate potential courses of action in the development of appropriate learning environments for full-day kindergarten students.

Scope of Review

The literature search for this study was limited to sources from the past ten years. The searches were made through a local education agency and a local university library and included extensive use of the ERIC database system. A survey of the parents or guardians of future kindergarten students in one rural, Midwest elementary school considering a change to full-day kindergarten was also examined and the results reported.

Limitations of the Study

Limited literature is available that makes direct comparisons between full-day and half-day kindergarten programs. No literature was found that compares full-day, every day kindergarten programs to those that operate full-day, alternate days.

Definitions

Alternate day kindergarten:

Typically 5 days in 2 weeks, 5 hours per day kindergarten schedule (Cryan, Sheehan, Wiechel, & Bandy-Hedden, 1992).

Chapter 1:

Classes that are federally funded for students who read below grade level and come from lower socio-economic groups (Maggart & Zintz, 1986, p. 482).

Developmentally appropriate:

Positive changes in the individual as a result of multiple influences. Higher levels of achievement as a result of structured, natural interactions with the physical and social environment (Spodek, 1988).

Full-day kindergarten:

Typically 5 days per week, 5 hours per day kindergarten schedule (Cryan, Sheehan, Wiechel, & Bandy-Hedden, 1992).

Half-day kindergarten:

Typically 5 days per week, 2.5 hours per day kindergarten schedule (Cryan, Sheehan, Wiechel, & Bandy-Hedden, 1992).

CHAPTER 2

Kindergarten History

The kindergarten was originally created in Germany over 150 years ago. It has been reconstructed many times since to serve different purposes. The original kindergarten, introduced by Friedrich Froebel (1782-1852), was designed to teach children philosophical idealism. This characterizes the original ideal of the kindergarten which was brought to America in 1856. Kindergarten theory and practice changed with the development of scientific education in the first quarter of the twentieth century. Influenced by developmental theorists like G. Stanley Hall and learning theorists like Edward L. Thorndike, kindergartens were redesigned to teach children proper habits that would be the basis for adult behavior (Spodek, 1988).

Later, as psychoanalytic theory rose to popularity, kindergartens were designed to provide emotional protection. Children would use kindergarten play activities to rid themselves of childhood conflicts that could lead to neurotic complexes in adulthood (Spodek, 1988).

In the latter third of the nineteenth century and the first third of the twentieth century, large numbers of immigrants needed to be assimilated into American society. During this same period, kindergartens began to be incorporated into the elementary school, serving as a transition between children's homes and the elementary school (Spodek, 1988).

The kindergarten movement in America began with all-day, every day programs. Kindergarten was reduced to a half-day double session in the 1950's primarily because of cost and space considerations (Puleo, 1988).

Cutting the day in half might have been sold to the public on developmental grounds (the children need more contact with their

mothers, need naps at home, and so forth), but half-days were instituted more because of pragmatic factors such as overcrowding in existing school buildings due to fluctuations in the population of 5-year-olds (Caldwell, 1989, p. 263).

More recently there has been a resurgence in the popularity of full-day kindergarten programs. Reasons for the resurgence vary. Educators stress the acquisition of basic skills and the value of teachers having additional time to attend to individual pupil needs. There are also hopes of reducing grade retentions and stemming the tide of special education and remedial placements. Working women, whose numbers have grown, also express a need for full-day kindergarten. The fact that a large number of schools have available space due to national enrollment decline has enhanced the trend (Puleo, 1988).

Financial Considerations

Class size in the full-day kindergarten should not represent an increase from the half-day. Furnishing a new kindergarten classroom may cost between \$3,000 and \$8,000. The budget should be adequate to meet some of the following start-up considerations:

Additional salaries. Allocations must be made to cover kindergarten teacher and aide salaries and fringe benefits.

Additional Expendable materials. The arts and writing consumables double in cost for each classroom.

Other facilities. Lunchroom services may need to be increased.

Transportation. Additional bus service will be needed at the start and end of the kindergarten day. The midday bus service for half-day kindergarten budget would be eliminated in a full-day program.

State aid. It may be possible to gain an increase in state aid (Fromberg, 1987).

Classroom Set-up

Considerations also must be made as to what type of furnishings need to be placed in the classrooms.

The addition of a full-day kindergarten program means creating an artificial environment for 20 to 30 young bodies and one or two adults who are enclosed in a finite box of space for five or six hours a day. Some thought should be given to creating a kindergarten environment that resembles the atmosphere of a home child-care setting. It should include snug and quiet places where children can find comfort and privacy. The kindergarten room should be a studio, laboratory, library, lounge, and park, all rolled into one (Fromberg, 1992, p. 28).

Organization and Maintenance

Although there is no unanimity on the issue of what young children ought to learn during the kindergarten period (Spodak, 1981, as cited in Harding & Safer, 1988) there do appear to be some general patterns in the use of the extended time period of the full-day kindergarten. In most cases the time was used for specific purposes, primarily to allow for structured activities based on the individual needs of children (Winter & Klein, 1970, as cited in Harding & Safer, 1988); play, painting, and group activities (Helmich, 1985, as cited in Harding & Safer, 1988); and the development of social relationships (Herman, 1984, as cited in Harding & Safer, 1988). "The implication is that instead of a

formalized academically oriented curriculum, individualized programs based on the developmental readiness of each child should be prepared and carried out in the full-day kindergarten” (Harding & Safer, 1988, p. 60).

There are a number of occasions during the school day when participation in whole-group activity is reasonable (story time, celebrations, special resources such as films or visitors, group discussions, plays and performances, music and movement education, sports, sharing work, lunch, rest time). A professional teacher in the full-day kindergarten spends the majority of time working with small groups and individuals. Teachers will spend most of their time instructing and circulating. In well-organized, effective classrooms, teachers spend more time on instruction and less time on procedural distractions (Fromberg, 1987, p.73).

During a full kindergarten day, whole-group planning times might be scheduled at the beginning of the morning and afternoon, and possibly a shorter gathering period could be scheduled toward the end of the morning and afternoon. Frequent mini-planning sessions with individuals and small groups should be conducted throughout the day, as the teacher circulates (Fromberg, 1987).

Curriculum Development

Some educators see kindergarten as primarily a socializing experience, allowing children to adjust to life in the elementary school. Others believe that kindergartens should focus more on teaching academic skills.

Parents and teachers should not be misled by the false dichotomy between socializing kindergartens and academic kindergartens.

Socialization is a continuous process, within the society at large and within each social institution or social group. Kindergarten children need

socialization experiences just as all students do. However, the socialization of kindergartners includes learning the student role, learning the importance of academic learning, and learning basic literacy and mathematical skills (Spodek, 1988, p. 210).

For full-day kindergarten education, the issue is not *either academics or* socialization. The issue is to help kindergarten children achieve academic and personal success by using experiential means, through concrete experiences that are largely physical, intuitive, affective, and social (Fromberg, 1987).

Many people believe that the additional time that children spend in school will make full-day kindergarten look increasingly like a teacher-oriented primary grade. It is therefore important for principals and teachers to use the additional time (of a full-day program) for appropriate and worthwhile activities that are child-centered and conceptually rich (Fromberg, 1992).

Full-day kindergarten programs make a difference when the added time is used in ways related to developmental and academic readiness. Positive effects for children are achieved when:

1. Time is spent providing a variety of education activities related to the academic, social, emotional and physical needs of kindergarten children;
2. Academic readiness appropriate to the kindergarten child's developmental level is emphasized;
3. School adjustment is facilitated through structured times for play and social interaction;
4. Positive attitudes towards school are fostered through child and parent education and staff development (Harding & Safer, 1988).

Adjusting the kindergarten curriculum to the previous experiences of the children is an important issue. Classroom activities should be developed that accept the apparent precocity of learning products and that concentrate more on strengthening the processes needed for the contemporary developmental tasks and those tasks that lie ahead (Caldwell, 1989). Researchers working in the field of child development have found that young children require multifarious experiences and abundant opportunity for physical, social, and verbal interaction. There is also research demonstrating that children need environment that allows them to express and develop their inherent curiosity and intelligence through play, exploration, and creativity, as well as through more structured activities (Olsen & Zigler, 1989). Many states are developing guidelines for activities for children under six, stressing the needs of young children for play, for physical activity, for having opportunities to choose what they do, and for making the classroom an environment where children can acquire social skills and enhance self-esteem (Caldwell, 1989).

A critical dimension for providing academic instruction in kindergarten is the need for developmentally appropriate play. Not only is play important for the emotional and social development of young children, it also is necessary for learning academic skills. Painting, playing with lettered blocks, movement activities, sociodramatic play, and field trips are some specific kindergarten play activities that nurture the ability to read (Harding & Safer, 1988). "Play integrates the rational and intuitive aspects of our experience. It is a process by which young children achieve cognitive development by reconciling the aesthetic, physical, and socioemotional means of learning. Thus, play is the ultimate integrator of experience" (Fromberg, 1987, p. 58).

Parental Involvement

It is important to secure the support of the parents from the onset when altering school programming. Making the transition from a half-day or alternate day kindergarten program to a full-day program is a major task that requires as much patronage as possible to be successful. It is reasonable to assume that parents want what is best for their children. It is the responsibility of the kindergarten teacher, with the support of the administration, to see that the parents are well-informed as to how a full-day kindergarten program benefits their children.

There are several ways in which communications can be made to give parents a positive view of the full-day kindergarten curriculum and to show how significant learning is taking place in the classroom. Teachers can report on individual and group learning activities by arranging for parent conferences and parents' group meetings. One-line notes can be sent home to a few parents each day. There could be a periodic, one-page kindergarten newsletter. It is particularly important to let parents know which skills the children are learning as they engage in concrete, playful-appearing activities (Fromberg, 1987, p. 40).

In early childhood education, there is a tradition of partnership between home and school that often involves professional educators informing parents about child development and suggesting ways in which parents can improve their children's performance. Research suggests that families and communities infuse children with important strengths on which teachers might build, and to which schools might adapt. Therefore, it may be useful for a principal and/or a kindergarten teacher to arrange home visits by the kindergarten staff (Fromberg, 1992).

In essence, teachers of a full-day kindergarten program should confer with parents often. Teachers should plan with parents for cultural activities at the school and should keep them informed of, and involved with curriculum activities.

CHAPTER 3

Background

A full-day, alternate day kindergarten program has been in operation in a small, rural, Midwestern, parochial school system for thirteen years. Bussing was not available to this school during mid-day which made the prospect of having a half-day kindergarten program unfeasible. Many people involved with the education of the children in this school system began to question the effectiveness of the alternate-day kindergarten program. Various factors contributed to the query of efficiency in the existing kindergarten program:

- a) Some students had difficulty retaining knowledge of concepts taught from one scheduled school day to the next due to the number of non-contact days between contact school days.
- b) Several public and parochial schools in the surrounding communities went to full-day, every day kindergarten schedules, which had created a slight decline in enrollment for this school's alternate-day program.
- c) Child care facilities for the children on non-contact days were difficult to find and the child care was quite costly.
- d) Most of the students who enter kindergarten at this school have had two years of preschool experience and are academically and socially prepared for a more extensive kindergarten program than what could be offered in the alternate-day program.

A special task force committee was organized at this school to research the possibility of making a transition from the existing alternate-day kindergarten schedule to a full-day, every day schedule. The task force committee consisted of the school principal, two school board members, two parents, the current kindergarten teacher, and a first grade teacher.

In an effort to discern attitudes of the parents and guardians of future kindergarten students regarding a full-day kindergarten program, the task force committee designed and administered a survey (see Appendix).

Survey Design

The task force committee worked collaboratively to develop the survey. They first viewed and evaluated survey instruments related to the subject of full-day kindergarten from schools in the same geographic area. Next, the committee designed a paragraph to introduce the reasons for the survey to families from the community who had children eligible for kindergarten in the following five years and to explain conditions of the survey. The third step was to devise the specific survey statements from which the parents or guardians of future kindergarten students could choose as their kindergarten schedule preference.

Because tuition is charged to attend the parochial school that prepared and conducted the survey, the task force committee realized that financial considerations could be a key factor for families. Determining which school their children should attend and the feasibility of affording the additional cost of tuition for a full-day kindergarten program had to be considered. The task force committee designed the survey to include two options from which the parents or guardians could choose: All day, alternate day kindergarten with tuition at 60% of the full, yearly amount per student (as was currently in existence), or full-day kindergarten with tuition at 100% of the full, yearly amount per student. Many families in the area had previously sent their children to surrounding schools that offered full-day kindergarten. The committee added a space for parents or guardians to indicate the possibility of their children attending kindergarten elsewhere if this school continued the alternate-day program. There are no

other alternate-day or half-day kindergarten programs offered in surrounding schools. Therefore, the task force committee did not include a survey option pertaining to the choice of an alternative program at another school in the event that this school proceeded with a full-day kindergarten schedule. An area for additional comments was placed toward the bottom of the survey.

Survey Population and Administration

Names of the future kindergarten students and their parents or guardians were obtained from baptismal records from the churches with which the school is associated. The task force committee obtained names and addresses of those children who would be eligible for kindergarten during any of the next five school years. A copy of the survey was mailed to 147 families of future kindergarten students.

Survey Data Collection Procedures

The survey form included a due date and the school address for returning forms. All survey returns were routed to the school principal, who kept a tally sheet of data returned as well as the survey forms. The tally sheet was organized according to kindergarten school years of the future students.

CHAPTER 4

A total of 89 parents or guardians of future kindergarten students in a small, rural, Midwestern, parochial school system responded to the survey (see Appendix) regarding kindergarten schedule preferences. This resulted in a return rate of 60.5%. In a breakdown of data collected, 31 (34.8%) of the responses represented parents or guardians of children who will attend kindergarten during the 1997-1998 school year, 21 (23.6%) responses represented 1998-1999 kindergarten students, 18 (20.2%) responses represented 1999-2000 kindergarten students, 10 (11.2%) responses represented 2000-2001 kindergarten students, and 9 (10.1%) responses represented 2001-2002 kindergarten students. Of the total number of respondents to the survey (see Table 1), 29.1% indicated that they would prefer the school continue an all day, alternate day kindergarten program (as was currently in existence at the time of the survey) with the tuition at 60% of the full amount.

Insert Table 1 about here

When considering the alternative of a full-day, every day kindergarten program, 64% of those responding to the survey (see Table 2) were in favor of this option with the tuition at 100%. Three of the 57 respondents who preferred a full-day kindergarten program for their children also indicated that they would send their child elsewhere if the school were to retain the alternate day program. This represents a figure of 3.3% of the total respondents or 5.2% of those respondents who chose the full-day option on the survey.

Insert Table 2 about here

Some (6.9%) of the respondents to the survey did not indicate a preference choice of those offered on the survey. Instead, they stipulated an alternate preference of a half-day, every day kindergarten program in the comment area.

CHAPTER 5

Summary and Discussion of Literature Review

The purpose of this study was to focus on the issues and concerns involved when making the transition from a half-day or an alternate day kindergarten program to a developmentally appropriate full-day kindergarten program. A brief history of kindergarten was presented to establish background for kindergarten program trends. Research was examined and reported upon in areas of financial considerations, classroom set-up, organization and maintenance, curriculum development, and parental involvement. This study's author considered these to be essential areas of concern when making a change to a full-day kindergarten program.

Kindergartens in America began with full-day, every day programs and the original transition from full-day kindergartens to half-day kindergarten programs was not a developmentally driven change but rather was instituted due to practical factors such as school overcrowding and population fluctuations (Caldwell, 1989). Consideration of what was best for the students seems to have been ignored or at best superseded by economic or physical space concerns. Many schools today are reversing the transition and there has been a resurgence of full-day kindergarten programs. This author feels that reasons for the resurgence of full-day kindergarten are based on the availability of space, parental demands, and, most importantly, the developmental needs of young children. Educators are making a positive response to society's changing needs in general and children's educational needs in particular when reinstating full-day kindergartens.

When organizing and maintaining a full-day kindergarten program, professional teachers should incorporate whole-group activities but spend the majority of each day instructing small groups of students and individuals. Teachers need to organize programs based on the developmental needs of each individual student.

The full-day kindergarten classroom should be set up in a way that promotes an atmosphere of comfort and security for the students. Since the kindergarten experience is often a child's first encounter with life away from a home setting, it is important for educators to provide a climate to which children can easily adapt and that can become an extension of their previous life experiences.

A controversy arises among researchers and educators when discussing *what* should be taught in full-day kindergarten programs. This disagreement could be characterized as academic versus developmental kindergartens. This study proposes that academic and developmental kindergartens need to be combined to help young children achieve success. Full-day kindergarten educators should establish curriculums that meet the social, cognitive, physical, and academic needs of each kindergarten student.

School officials also need to consider many financial issues when making a transition from a half-day or alternate day kindergarten program to a full-day one. If the budget is not adequate, the full-day kindergarten program may not be able to operate efficiently and, consequently, may have a detrimental effect on the program itself and, ultimately, the students involved with the program.

The research indicates that there has been a traditional partnership between home and school that involves parents working with educators in the best interest of the children's development. In agreement with the research

literature, this author believes open communication between parents and teachers is essential for building positive community and for cultivating a full-day kindergarten program where benefits for students are maximized and where significant learning can take place.

Summary and Discussion of Survey

Analysis of the survey of parents or guardians of future kindergarten students in a small, rural, parochial school system concerning kindergarten schedule preferences indicated that the majority of parents or guardians (64%) prefer to have their kindergarten child attend full-day kindergarten as opposed to an alternate day program. Only 29.1% of those who returned surveys opted for the alternate day preference for their child. All of the 6.9% of respondents who did not choose either alternate day kindergarten or full-day kindergarten indicated their preference of kindergarten programming to be that of half-day. If the school were to continue to offer the alternate day kindergarten program, 3.3% of survey respondents would choose to send their child to another school that offered a full-day program.

The concerns expressed in the comment area of the survey necessitate significant consideration of specific issues in kindergarten education. A few of the respondents stated that they preferred full-day kindergarten due to financial situations. It is more cost effective to pay 100% tuition for full-day kindergarten than to pay 60% tuition for an alternate day program coupled with child care costs for those days their child is not in attendance at school.

Several of the parents or guardians who chose the continued alternate day program preference were concerned that five year old children are not physically ready to attend school full-day, five days a week. This concern was addressed in an article by Harding and Safer (1988):

Parents and administrators have questioned the developmental maturity of young children, their ability to attend a full day of school and their potential to achieve success. Although parents and teachers initially expressed concern over the ability of children to endure the longer kindergarten hours, once children were involved in a full-day program, they, along with their parents and teachers preferred having the extra time and used it well. Based on studies, there is no evidence that being in kindergarten all day is detrimental to children's development and, in fact, when time spent in kindergarten does have an effect, it is a positive one (p. 59).

In a study (Puleo, 1988) that dealt with concerns that full-day programs were more tiring, causing more illness or absences toward the end of the week, records of kindergarten students were monitored over a 27 week period. No significant difference in the weekly pattern of attendance was found. This study also sought to establish how full-day kindergarten absentee rates compared to total absentee rates of the student population in respective schools. The researchers concluded that the absence rate among full-day kindergartners was somewhat less than the average absence rate of the rest of the student population at their schools.

Another common concern among respondents to the survey who did not choose the full-day option was that of curriculum adjustment. The skepticism stated was that the curriculum would not be extensive enough to prevent boredom in some students. This author contends, in accordance with the research literature reviewed, that a successful full-day kindergarten program is one that individualizes instruction and fosters the imagination and motivation of

each child. When curriculum is centered around individualized programs, there is no room for students to become bored.

In the act of responding to the survey, parents and guardians in the community displayed that they are interested in their children's education. Because 64% of the respondents preferred to have their child attend a full-day kindergarten program, the author of this study has proposed that the school involved make the transition to institute a developmentally appropriate, full-day kindergarten program. School officials and educators should communicate openly with all the parents and guardians in an effort to ease the transition and to shed positive light on the full-day kindergarten program.

Conclusions and Recommendations

Full-day kindergarten programs are beneficial to children's development when they are set up and operated in a manner that focuses on the social, cognitive, physical, and academic growth of each child. Full-day kindergarten programs provide opportunities for educators of young children to meet the developmental needs of individual students more effectively and meet the needs of today's changing society.

When contemplating the implementation of a full-day kindergarten program, school officials and early childhood educators should consider the following suggestions:

- a) Make sure the budget is adequate to ensure efficient implementation and operation.
- b) Set up the classroom in a manner that will promote comfort and security for the students.
- c) Organize and maintain a program that is based on developmental needs of each individual child.

- d) Establish a curriculum that combines social, cognitive, physical, and academic instruction.
- e) Communicate openly and often with parents.

In conclusion, when full-day kindergarten programs are developed to retain the rights of kindergarten children to have distinctly human and satisfying learning experiences in school while keeping open the possibility for great expectations in their lives, then the programs will be successful. Fromberg (1987) summarizes this attitude with her statement: "The basic business of the full-day kindergarten should be to provide concrete experiences that raise questions that help children and teachers make connections and leave children and teachers feeling both satisfied and thirsting for more" (p. xiii).

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Table 1

Survey of Kindergarten Program Preferences

All Day, Alternate Day Program Preference With Tuition at 60% of Full Amount

Kindergarten School Year	Number Who Chose This Preference	%
1997 -1998	11	12.3
1998 -1999	5	5.6
1999 -2000	4	4.5
2000 -2001	2	2.2
2001 -2002	4	4.5
	n = 26	29.1

Table 2

Survey of Kindergarten Program Preferences

Full-day Program Preference With Tuition at 100%

Kindergarten School Year	Number Who Chose This Preference	%
1997 - 1998	19	21.3
1998 - 1999	15	16.9
1999 - 2000	13	14.6
2000 - 2001	6	6.7
2001 - 2002	4	4.5
	n = 57	64

APPENDIX

Dear Families,

A special task force representing (school name) Board of Education and staff is gathering information as they study the possibility of offering all day, every day kindergarten. They would like input from area families. Be assured that this survey is strictly for informational purposes and does not commit you to any type of decision. Please mark the statement below that best describes your opinion. We would also invite any comments you might have regarding an all day, every day kindergarten program. The results of this survey will be presented to the Board of Education on (day and date). Please return this survey to (school name and address) by (day and date).

____ At this time, I would prefer an all day, alternate day kindergarten program (as is currently in existence) with the tuition at 60% of the full amount.

____ At this time, I would prefer a full day, every day kindergarten program with the tuition at 100%.

____ If (name of school) continues to offer the present all day, alternate day program, I would send my child elsewhere for a full day, every day program.

Comments:

Parent/Guardian Signature

Thank you for completing this kindergarten survey. As always, thank you for your support of (name of school).

Sincerely,

Principal