

FULL-DAY KINDERGARTEN

Purpose

The Full-Day Kindergarten Task Force was charged with the responsibility of studying the feasibility of a full-day kindergarten program, including the community's response to such a program and the enrollment/program implications.

Issues Studied

Since September 2001, members of the Full-Day Kindergarten Task Force have studied the research on educationally appropriate kindergarten programs. Task Force members visited full-day and alternate-day kindergarten programs in other school systems, read countless research articles, searched the internet for relevant information, and talked with members of the Brownsburg community about their questions and concerns. In addition, members considered a wealth of data from two full-day kindergarten classes piloted at Delaware Trail Elementary. The predominate themes that surfaced as the research was completed were the following: providing child-centered, developmentally appropriate instruction; minimizing transitions and interruptions throughout the day; and balancing opportunities for academic, intellectual and social/emotional growth in a child-friendly atmosphere. The questions/issues studied by the Full-Day Kindergarten Task Force were as follows:

1. Which type of student benefits the most from a full-day kindergarten program?
2. Are younger children ready for a full-day kindergarten program?
3. Is there an academic advantage for those children who attend a full-day program?
4. What is the economic impact of a full-day program on daycare facilities?
5. Does the Brownsburg community support full-day kindergarten?

Options Considered

Initially, there were two options considered by the Full-Day Kindergarten Task Force. The first was whether or not a full-day kindergarten program would become, over time, the program model of choice for Brownsburg Community School Corporation, and the second was whether parents would be given the opportunity to choose between a half-day and full-day kindergarten program. As committee members became more and more involved in the study of kindergarten programs, they quickly realized the viability of a third option, instituting an alternate-day kindergarten schedule (i.e., students attending kindergarten two full days and one half day each week). Below is a summary of the options that were studied and considered.

1. Continuing with the current kindergarten program (half-day morning and afternoon kindergarten classes and two full-day kindergarten classes).
2. Implementing, over time, a full-day/half-day kindergarten model, and ultimately eliminating the half-day kindergarten model.
3. Implementing, over time, a full-day/alternate-day kindergarten model, and ultimately eliminating the half-day kindergarten model.
4. Implementing a full-day kindergarten model.

Summary of Research and Data Collected

This information was gathered from a review of the research, a compilation of parent and community survey results, observations made while visiting exemplary kindergarten programs, and an on-going review of the pilot full-day kindergarten programs at Delaware Trail Elementary.

Full-Day Kindergarten Review of the Research

1. Children who attend full-day programs consistently progress further academically than children who attend half-day programs.

2. At-risk children make the greatest gains in a full-day kindergarten program.
3. Children who attend full-day kindergarten programs have a better balanced, less hurried day.
4. Full-day kindergarten allows for larger blocks of instructional time for whole group, small group, and/or individual instruction.
5. A curriculum that allows for the academic, social and emotional needs of five and six year olds does not seem to pressure kindergarten children.
6. Parents strongly value the increased opportunity to communicate with their child's teacher.
7. Teachers strongly value the increased flexibility and the opportunity for individualized instruction that a full-day program provides.

Alternate-Day Kindergarten

Review of the Research

1. Alternate-day kindergarten allows for more actual teaching time—approximately 8% more instruction compared to half-day kindergarten.
2. Children who attend alternate-day kindergarten make greater academic gains than children in half-day programs.
3. Alternate-day kindergarten provides a better balanced, less hurried day for children.
4. The alternate-day schedule allows for larger blocks of instructional time for whole group, small group, and/or individual instruction.
5. The alternate-day schedule permits children to complete unfinished work during the school day without rushing.
6. Children in an alternate-day kindergarten program have more time for hands-on activities and discovery through exploration.
7. An alternate-day kindergarten program introduces children to a full day of school, easing the transition from kindergarten to first grade.

Survey Results

Survey results from both the Task Force Community Information Night held on November 6, 2001, and the Full-Day Kindergarten Community Information Night held on January 24, 2002, indicated that parents strongly support a full-day kindergarten program. Survey results collected from the November 6 meeting indicated that 72% of the community members surveyed felt parents should be given a choice between half-day and full-day kindergarten. Of the community members surveyed at the close of the Full-Day Kindergarten Community Information Night, 78% felt parents should be offered a choice between full-day and half-day kindergarten, and 85% felt parents should be given a choice between full-day and alternate-day kindergarten. Only 6% of the parents surveyed at the meeting held on January 24, felt half-day kindergarten should be the only program available in Brownsburg Schools (Chart #1).

Review of Carmel Clay's Full-Day and Alternate-Day Kindergarten Programs

On January 16, 2002, member of the task force traveled to Carmel to visit the full-day and alternate-day kindergarten programs. The day began with a rather lengthy discussion with Dr. Libbie Conner, Assistant Superintendent for Curriculum and Instruction. Dr. Conner provided a wealth of information regarding full-day and alternate-day kindergarten. Task force members found it helpful to talk with someone who had asked the same questions and had faced the same obstacles they were confronting. Committee members particularly enjoyed visiting Carmel Elementary School's kindergarten program. What was learned from Carmel is that full-day and alternate-day kindergarten programs can be academically rigorous, and yet very child centered. Brownsburg teachers were particularly impressed with the activities students participated in during discovery time. They were surprised by the children's advanced math ability: the children were writing addition and subtraction number sentences. Brownsburg teachers also noted that the number of wall words displayed far exceeded the number of words Brownsburg kindergartners had been exposed to at the same point in the school year. Task Force Committee members commented that we could be expecting more from our kindergarten students.

Chart 1 – Full-Day Kindergarten

COMMUNITY INFORMATION NIGHT SURVEY RESULTS

January 24, 2002

These are the results from all the surveys received on the Community Information Night. We had 68 surveys returned to us.

1. Brownsburg Community School Corporation should offer only a full-day kindergarten program.

Agree: 28 or 42%
Disagree: 36 or 54%
Undecided: 3 or 4%

2. Brownsburg Community School Corporation should offer only a half-day kindergarten program.

Agree: 4 or 6%
Disagree: 56 or 82%
Undecided: 8 or 12%

3. Brownsburg Community School Corporation should offer parents a choice between a full day or a half-day program.

Agree: 53 or 78%
Disagree: 8 or 12%
Undecided: 7 or 10%

4. Brownsburg Community School Corporation should offer only an alternate day kindergarten program.

Agree: 8 or 12 %
Disagree: 54 or 79%
Undecided: 6 or 9%

5. Brownsburg Community School Corporation should offer parents a choice between a full day or alternate day kindergarten program.

Agree: 58 or 85%
Disagree: 5 or 7%
Undecided: 5 or 7%

Meeting with Kindergarten Teachers
February 5, 2002

On the afternoon of February 5, the Coordinator of Elementary Education met for approximately one and one-half hours with kindergarten teachers to discuss the work of the Full-Day Kindergarten Task Force and to provide a forum for teachers to share their questions and concerns regarding full-day and alternate-day kindergarten. All eleven of the corporation's kindergarten teachers were in attendance at this meeting.

The teachers were very supportive of the two full-day kindergarten programs being piloted at Delaware Trail Elementary. What attracted teachers the most to the full-day kindergarten model was larger blocks of instructional time that strongly support the *Building Blocks* approach to literacy currently being used throughout the corporation. In addition, more instructional time for small group and one-on-one instruction, and a balanced, less hurried day for children were also reasons teachers supported the full-day program. Teachers felt a full day of kindergarten met the needs of most students, but the parents of kindergartners should be given a choice as to whether or not they wanted their child to attend full-day kindergarten. All of the teachers said that, without question, they would be interested in teaching full-day kindergarten.

It also appeared teachers were very interested in alternate-day kindergarten, recognizing that a full day of school offers a more balanced, less hurried schedule for children. However, the only alternate-day kindergarten schedule teachers were interested in adopting was the one in which children attended school two full days a week and a half-day on Friday. The teachers felt if the task force was seriously considering alternate-day kindergarten, an alternate-day program should be piloted in much the same way full-day kindergarten had been piloted during the 2001-2002 school year.

Some of the teachers' concerns regarding full-day and alternate-day kindergarten related to special area class schedules and the needs of those children who require physical therapy and speech and language therapy. In addition, the kindergarten teachers asked to visit full-day and alternate-day kindergarten programs and attend workshops on full-day and alternate-day kindergarten.

Review of Brownsburg Community School Corporation's Pilot Full-Day Kindergarten Program

Certainly we are very proud of the half-day kindergarten programs currently being offered at Brownsburg Community School Corporation, but in the spirit of continuous improvement, two full-day pilot kindergarten programs were begun in the fall of 2001. No one anticipated the overwhelming support the full-day kindergarten program has received from both the parents of full-day kindergarten students and community members. In a parent survey sent home in early November, parents reported that with the exception of their children being a bit tired at the beginning of the year, they had no concerns regarding the full-day program. Parents were amazed by the academic gains their children had made since the beginning of the school year, and they were pleasantly surprised by how much their children loved coming to school. When comparing the academic gains of those children who attend full-day kindergarten with those who attend half-day kindergarten, the following observations can be made:

1. Full-Day Kindergarten students' written language skills far exceed those students who attend half-day kindergarten (Chart #2 and #5).
2. Twenty of the thirty-six full-day kindergarten students are upper emergent readers. Typically, in a half-day kindergarten program at the close of the school year, there are five or six upper emergent readers (Chart #5).
3. Full-Day Kindergarten students performed better than half-day students in recognizing basic sight words (Chart #3 and #4).

Chart 2 – Full-Day Kindergarten

February Writing Levels

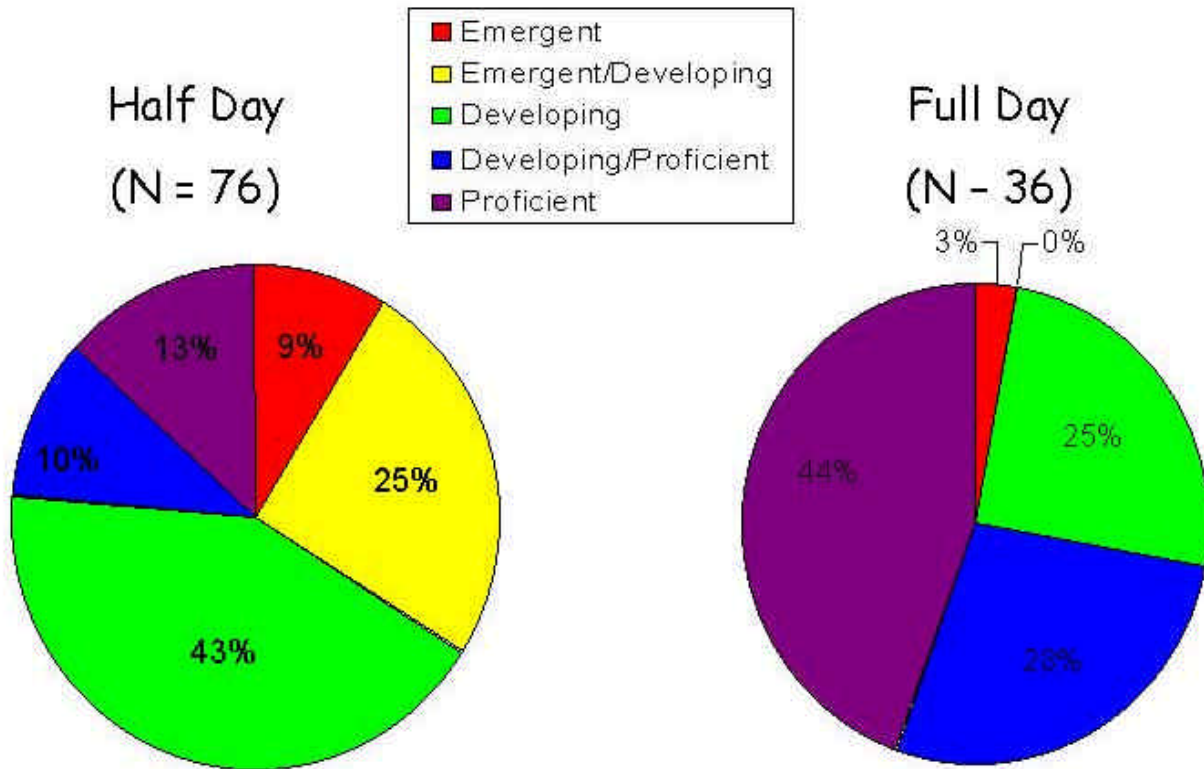


Chart 5 – Full-Day Kindergarten

Developmental Reading and Writing Levels **Developmental Reading Levels**

Early Emergent Level

Early emergent readers are just learning that illustrations and books tell a story. Children do not have a clear sense of letters or vocabulary words.

Upper Emergent Level

Upper emergent readers grasp many of the basic concepts of print, know many of the letters and sounds, and recognize a minimum of twenty high-frequency words. These students are developing independence by beginning to integrate strategies and to gain meaning from print.

Developmental Writing Levels

Emerging

Emerging writers make marks on a page and randomly fill a page with lines and letter shapes.

Developing

Developing writers create letters, numbers, words, and images a reader can interpret. They attempt to write simple words of two to four letters. Typically the developing writer can write at least one readable sentence.

Proficient

Proficient writers can use a range of simple words, and can write one, two, three (or more) readable sentences. Proficient writers write legibly, with most letters (upper and lower case) formed correctly.

Chart 3 – Full-Day Kindergarten

Reading Basic Words

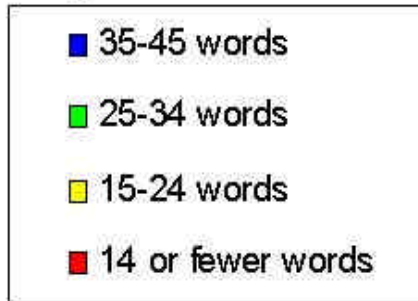
Name _____

the	and	purple	you	he
it	was	they	or	at
yellow	is	she	in	I
as	a	green	of	on
red	with	dog	orange	if
blue	to	brown	black	for
has	said	look	me	mom
dad	cat	big	white	can
not	this	that	are	be

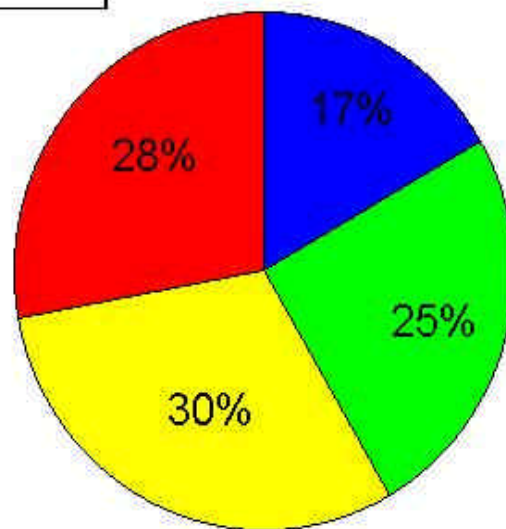
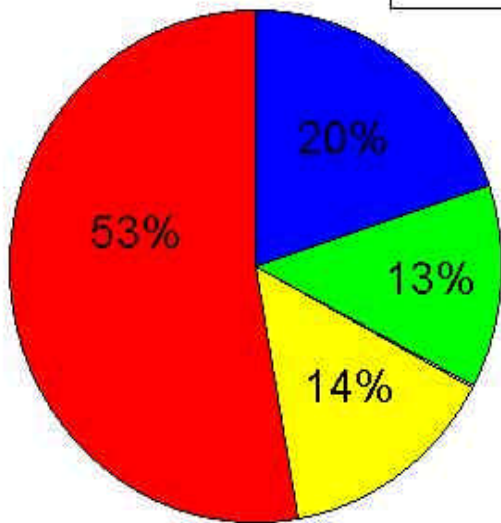
Chart 4 – Full-Day Kindergarten

Basic Sight Words- February

Half-Day
(N = 76)



Full-Day
(N = 36)



The greatest documented academic gains of full-day kindergartners were in the areas of written language skills and reading ability. It has been more difficult to assess the children's progress in the area of mathematics because of limited assessment instruments. Teachers will continue to search for ways to test the students' math ability by May. After this assessment has taken place, a comparative analysis will be made between the performance of half-day and full-day kindergarten students. However, at this point in time it appears that full-day kindergartners far exceed half-day kindergartners in their understanding of end-of-the-year kindergarten math concepts. Overall, it is also important to note that kindergartners were assessed in February with three full months of school remaining, a time period in which children often make the greatest gains.

Recommendations

1. Implement a full-day kindergarten program, provided additional monies can be procured from the Indiana Department of Education or from some alternate funding source.
2. Implement a full-day/alternate-day kindergarten program over a five-year period.
3. Phase out the half-day kindergarten program.

Implementation Schedule for Full-Day/Alternate Day Kindergarten Program

Spring 2002

1. Kindergarten teachers will visit full-day and alternate-day kindergarten programs.
2. Members of the Full-Day Kindergarten Task Force will continue to explore methods of funding a full-day kindergarten program.
3. The kindergarten registration form will be revised to offer parents a choice among full-day, alternate-day and half-day kindergarten.

Summer 2002

1. Mrs. Cindy Hamilton and Mrs. Peggy Thompson, will offer a half-day workshop on how to meet the needs of children in a full-day kindergarten program. The workshop will be offered the week of June 4, for all interested kindergarten teachers.
2. A Community Information Evening will be held for Brownsburg Day Care and Pre-school providers, as well as interested kindergarten parents. The purpose of the evening will be to outline the full-day and alternate-day kindergarten programs and describe the changes that have been made to the Brownsburg kindergarten curriculum with the mandate of the Indiana Academic Standards.
3. A lottery will be held to determine who will attend the full-day and alternate-day kindergarten programs. Kindergarten parents will be notified the week of July 1.

2002-2003

1. Two pilot alternate-day kindergarten programs will begin. If space is available, one full-day kindergarten class will be added.

2003-2004

1. If, at the close of the 2003 school year, the alternate-day kindergarten program has proven to be successful, half-day kindergarten will be eliminated.

2004-2007

1. As space and monies become available, sections of full-day kindergarten will be added. In the final phase of implementation, each elementary building will offer full-day and alternate-day kindergarten programs. However, if 75% or more of the parents at a school prefer one program, then that will be the only program offered at that site.

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