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FULL DAY EVERY DAY KINDERGARTEN: CONSIDERATIONS FOR POLICYMAKERS

Brief History: In summer 2006, The Minneapolis Foundation announced a focus on promoting universal Full Day Every Day Kindergarten (FDED-K) in Minnesota as a strategy for closing the achievement gap.¹ In the context of broad interest in early learning and achievement gap issues, FDED-K has been embraced in various forms by various political groups. DFLers in both houses picked up on universal FDED-K as important and doable this session. Governor Pawlenty and GOP legislators support the idea of targeted, not universal, FDED-K.

State of the State: Minnesota provides for Full Day Everyday Kindergarten in four ways:^{2,3} 1) About \$7 million annually is allocated in First Grade Preparedness funds for qualifying high poverty schools, currently this includes 66 public and charter schools, 2) schools may reallocate general education money from 12th graders who graduate early, 3) Title 1 money may be used for FDED-K, and 4) classroom reduction funds may be used. Currently, 210 of Minnesota's 399 school districts provide FDED-K. An additional 48 districts provide Half Day Kindergarten with half-day enrichment options through community education, for which parents pay a fee. This is NOT considered FDED-K. Minnesota statute notes that "Admission to a public school is free"⁴ and as such, the Department of Education stance is that parents should not pay in part or full for Kindergarten.

What the Research Says

- **How do the kids do in the short term?**

In short, evidence from the best national studies of Full Day Every Day Kindergarten (FDED-K) shows small increases in math and reading achievement for all children, with larger increases for those children with risk factors.⁵ Research does not show any consistent increases in children's social or behavior skills as a result of FDED-K.

- **How do the kids do in the long term?**

Academic advantages from FDED-K present at the end of Kindergarten tend to fade after 2nd grade, and there is no apparent long-term increase of nonacademic skills. There is some evidence that children in FDED-K exhibit lower math skills and social and behavior skills by 5th grade than those attending Half Day K.⁶ This may be due to the quality of programs implemented rather than FDED-K *per se*.

- **How does FDED-K compare to quality preschool?**

Research on the effects of quality preschool shows stronger and broader positive outcomes than are apparent from the studies of FDED-K. That is, FDED-K does not make as big of a difference, as lasting of a difference, or a difference in the number of areas for children as quality preschool does. There are no cost-benefit studies of FDED-K to know how it would compare to the double digit returns that have been found for quality preschool investments.⁷

Other Considerations

- **What about Minnesota programs?**

In general, existing data on Minnesota schools show similar results to national studies. FDED-K gets kids to the first grade "starting line" ahead of their peers who did not have FDED-K.^{8,9} Some Minnesota studies also show that FDED-K participants continue with higher academic results through first grade, but longer term results have not yet been studied.

- **What do parents and teachers want?**

While some have framed FDED-K as a strategy for closing the achievement gap, the reality is that the increase in providing FDED-K comes from changing needs and desires of parents.¹⁰ Nationally, teachers also report a preference for FDED-K. Teachers in a Minnesota study report that FDED-K allows for more individualized attention and a deeper level of instruction in Kindergarten, and improved social skills and emotional adjustment in children at first grade entry.¹¹

- **Would it help or hurt family life?**

The National Council of Family Relations provides a checklist for considering the impact of public policies on families.¹² An informal U of M review of the impact FDED-K on families suggests that universal FDED-K could have a positive effect on family well-being by easing transitions, providing more family choices, and strengthening family-school relationships.

*provided by



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For more information about FDED-K or early childhood programs, contact Karen Cadigan at the Center for Early Education and Development 612-626-8723 or cadigan@umn.edu, or the Minnesota Department of Education Early Learning at 651-582-8397

Considerations for Implementation of FDED-K:

District incentive vs. disincentive: Currently Minnesota has a disincentive for districts to provide FDED-K because there is no difference in funding for Full and Half Day K and because kindergarten funding is at a lower level than 1st grade. Twenty-seven other states provide K funding that is more than or equal to first grade funding.^{13, 14}

Access and teachers: Although FDED-K does not appear to have the same benefits in the short, or long term on children's development as high quality pre-K opportunities do, it may be easier and more efficient to implement universally because the children are already identified, and a systematic way for training and licensing teachers is in place.

Quality control: As with early childhood care and education, the factors that make or break the impact of FDED-K relate largely to program inputs including: training of teachers, staff/child ratio, amount of learning time, comprehensiveness of services, curriculum approaches, and alignment with first grade standards.

Not a “double dose”: The extra half-day of kindergarten adds another 1/3 of actual instruction, not another half day of instruction. Programs that do result in increased learning are those with attention to instructional time for children.¹⁵

Nonacademic skills should be included: The long term benefits of early childhood programs come largely from improvements in non-academic skills such as self-control and interpersonal skills. Currently, FDED-K does not appear to have these same nonacademic benefits. Greater attention to these skills in the implementation and study of FDED-K may result in better future outcomes.

1. The Minneapolis Foundation, “All Day Every Day Kindergarten: Let’s Give All Minnesota Children the Opportunity to Succeed,” <http://www.minneapolisfoundation.org/AllDayKindergarten/overview.htm> (accessed February 1, 2007).

2. Minnesota Department of Education, “Eligible First Grade Preparedness Sites 2006-2007,” http://www.education.state.mn.us/MDE/Learning_Support/Early_Learning_Services/Kindergarten/First_Grade_Preparedness/index.html (accessed February 1, 2007).

3. Minnesota Department of Education, “The Three R’s of Full Day Programming for Kindergarteners: Rubric, Resources and Reporting,” <http://education.state.mn.us/mdeprod/groups/EarlyLearning/documents/Presentation/011015.pdf> (accessed February 1, 2007).

4. Minnesota Statute § 120A.20 Admission to public school. Subdivision 1. http://ros.leg.mn/bin/getpub.php?pubtype=STAT_CHAP_SEC&year=current§ion=120A.20+&image.x=24&image.y=8 (accessed February 13, 2007).

5. Vi-Nhuam Le, et al., “School Readiness, Full-Day Kindergarten, and Student Achievement: An Empirical Investigation” http://www.rand.org/pubs/monographs/2006/RAND_MG558.sum.pdf (accessed February 1, 2007).

6. Judy A. Temple, et al. “Preschool Education, Educational Attainment, and Crime Prevention: Contributions of Cognitive and Non-Cognitive Skills,” <http://www.earlychildhoodrc.org/papers/temple.pdf> (accessed February 1, 2007).

7. James J. Heckman and Dimtriy V. Masterov, “The Productivity Argument for Investing in Young Children,” http://www.earlychildhoodrc.org/papers/heckman_investing.pdf (accessed February 1, 2007).

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9. St. Croix River Valley Education District, “SCRED Reading Model and All Day Every Day Kindergarten,” (presentation, 2006).

10. Patricia Clark and Elizabeth Kirk, “All-day kindergarten: Review of Research” *Childhood Education*, 76(4) (Summer 2000): 228-231.

11. Wahlstrom and Hanson, “District 191.”

12. Policy Institute for Family Impact Seminars, University of Wisconsin-Madison, “National Council on Family Relations Checklist for Assessing the Impact of Policies and Programs on Families,” http://www.ncfr.org/pdf/public_policy/Family_Impact_Analysis_Checklist.pdf (accessed February 1, 2007).

13. Kristie Kaueerz “Full Day Kindergarten: A Study of State Policies in the United States,” <http://www.ecs.org/clearinghouse/62/41/6241.pdf> (accessed February 1, 2007).

14. Minnesota Department of Education, “Three R’s.”

15. Le, et al., “School Readiness.”