



Parents want it. Kids benefit from it. Educators believe in it.

3 Things Utah Can Do

**to ensure RIGHT-SIZED ACCESS
to FULL-DAY KINDERGARTEN**



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MOVING TOWARD Maximum Access to Parent-Preferred Kindergarten

Extended hours of kindergarten instruction are considered by many educators and researchers to be a critical early learning intervention for children who are at risk for falling behind, academically, once they start school.¹

For years, though, Utah's rate of participation in full-day kindergarten – considered by many a critical early learning opportunity, particularly for kids who are at risk for falling behind once they start school – has hovered at the bottom of the national charts. The average rate of participation, nationally, is about 80%.² In Utah, only about 20% of kids enrolled in kindergarten participate in a full day of instruction.³ Another 4% of kindergartners participate in optional extended-day programs that comprise more than half a day of school (two to three hours), but less than a full day of instruction (six to seven hours).⁴

This low rate of participation in full-day kindergarten is sometimes speculated to be a result of Utah's cultural and religious traditions. However, the organic growth of full-day kindergarten opportunities statewide, even in rural communities considered “traditionally conservative,” presents an encouraging challenge to this assumption. Based on information gathered from diverse communities throughout the state, we assert that Utah's low rate of full-day kindergarten participation is driven not by cultural factors, but by insufficient access to full-day kindergarten at the levels Utah communities and families desire.

After reviewing the research, talking to educators and community leaders statewide, and hearing from all kinds of families (from rural to urban, low-income to middle-class, Utah natives and new residents), our conclusion is:

Utah families are ready for greater access to full-day kindergarten, and many districts and charters are more than ready to meet that need.

It is time for Utah to fund kindergarten as it funds other elementary grades, while preserving the right of parents to choose whatever type of kindergarten - half-day, full-day or none - they think is best for their children.

In order to get to a place where Utah's kindergarten programming, statewide, is "right-sized" for the many diverse families in all of Utah's unique communities, our state will need three things:

- 1. A stable, reliable state funding stream**
- 2. District and charter planning, driven by parent preference**
- 3. Local and regional early childhood coordination**

“It makes a lot more sense to intervene before issues get out of hand. It's a lot of work - time, money, energy - to try to help a kid get back on track once they get to middle school or high school. Kids who fall behind start to act out, they don't want to come to school. Then it's a discipline problem, as well.

Why wouldn't we intervene at five and six, instead of 15 or 16?”

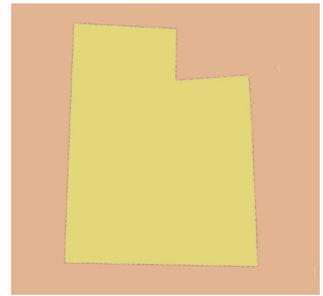
Utah is well-poised to take a big step forward in early education, simply by increasing access to full-day kindergarten for families who want to participate. We can phase full funding into our state budget over the next three years. We can offer support to districts and charters seeking input from parents, and provide regional planning assistance for teacher recruitment and physical facility efforts. We can incentivize the local and regional coordination - between community programs, public schools, private child care providers and other critical early childhood stakeholders - that is sorely needed in so many communities.

The three broad recommendations contained within this publication are not meant to represent a comprehensive, detail-rich plan for implementation in every community across the state. Rather, they are meant to lay a foundation for a conversation that is long overdue.

Our hope is that state leaders will step forward to help key community stakeholders to come together to determine the concrete steps we need to take together to better meet the needs of Utah families with young children.

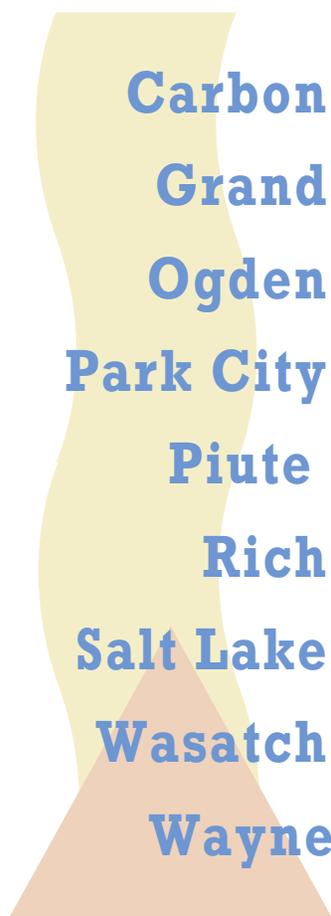


KINDERGARTEN Across Our State



76%

of Utah kids in kindergarten are enrolled in half-day classes for the 2019-2020 school year.



Nine school districts in Utah offer 100% - or close to 100% - of their kindergarten classes for a full day.

Half-Day Kindergarten (HDK):

Classes range from fewer than 2.5 hours, to slightly more than 3.0 hours. By administrative rule, districts must offer at least 2.0 hours of kindergarten instruction per day. The standard schedule for half-day kindergarten is to begin morning classes at the same time as other elementary grades, and end at the lunch break. Afternoon classes begin after the lunch break, and end either slightly before, or at the same time, as all other grades in the same elementary school.

Optional-Extended-Day Kindergarten (OEK):

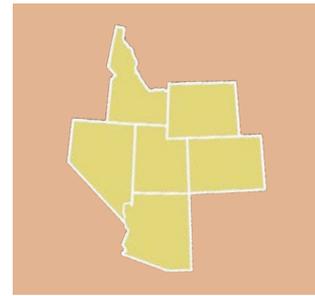
The ways in which districts offer OEK vary dramatically (sometimes even between schools in the same district). Some OEK programs provide only 45 to 60 minutes of supplemental instruction, for students most academically at-risk. In schools that offer both morning and afternoon HDK sessions, this additional instruction may take place over the lunch period. Other OEK programs offer a second half-day session for academically at-risk children. Some programs retain children for the entire school year; others provide additional hours of instruction only until the child catches up to their peers.

Full-Day Kindergarten (FDK):

This means that the kindergartners in an elementary school attend class for the entire school day, or slightly less than the entire school day. Kindergarten classes start and end at the same time as all other grades in the same elementary school - though with substantial curriculum and activity differences, to ensure the age-appropriateness of kindergarten programs. Full-day classes typically entail between 6.0 and 7.5 hrs of instruction, transitions and play-based learning activities.

Carbon School District has offered FDK in ALL its kindergarten classrooms for nearly 20 YEARS.

UTAH & Its Neighbor States



Utah is on point with its state neighbors with regard to keeping kindergarten optional, but lags behind when it comes to state funding for full-day kindergarten.

Even among the states immediately bordering Utah, there is much diversity regarding the provision of full-day kindergarten. Leading the pack, **WYOMING's** legislature approved funding for full-day kindergarten in every elementary school via HB139 back in 2006. **NEVADA's** statewide funding of full-day kindergarten in all elementary schools was fully implemented as of the 2017-18 school year. **COLORADO** is the most recent addition to the full-day funding group, with state funding available for full-day classes for 85% of all kindergartners in that state, starting with the 2019-2020 school year.

IDAHO may be next to join the group. Late in 2019, Republican Governor Brad Little's "Our Kids, Idaho's Future" Task Force recommended that the state fund full-day kindergarten for all interested families. **UTAH** and **ARIZONA** are the stragglers, providing state funding only for half-day kindergarten and leaving districts to make up the difference, with no plan in place to change.

	<i>Kindergarten Attendance Mandatory</i>	<i>Districts Must Offer Some Kindergarten</i>	<i>Districts Must Offer Full-Day Kindergarten</i>	<i>State Funding Pays for Full-Day K for All/Most Students</i>
Utah	N	Y	N	N
Idaho	N	N	N	N
Nevada	Y	Y	N	Y
Colorado	N	Y	N	Y
Wyoming	N	Y	N	Y
Arizona	N	Y	N	N

UTAH

vs the rest of the nation



56%

U.S. kindergartners attending full-day classes in 1998-99.*

Despite common assumptions, Utah isn't all that different from other states, with regards to the laws and regulations related to the provision of kindergarten.

79%

U.S. kindergartners attending full-day classes in 2017-18.*

Most states do not require their school districts to offer anything more than a half day of kindergarten. And in most states, attendance in kindergarten - regardless of whether half- or full-day kindergarten is offered - is NOT mandatory. Parents are allowed to choose whether to send their children to kindergarten, based on family preference and interest.

20%

Utah kindergartners in full-day classes, 2018-19.**

Utah is most different from other states when it comes to how many children have access to full-day kindergarten.

We are dramatically below the national average in terms of how many children attend full-day kindergarten, and there is reason to believe that this is due not to any unique cultural characteristics. Rather, this low participation rate is driven by limited access that falls far short of what families want, and what many children need to succeed.

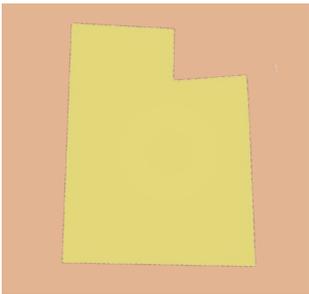
At-risk students perform better when involved in extended-day kindergarten, and yet only

30%

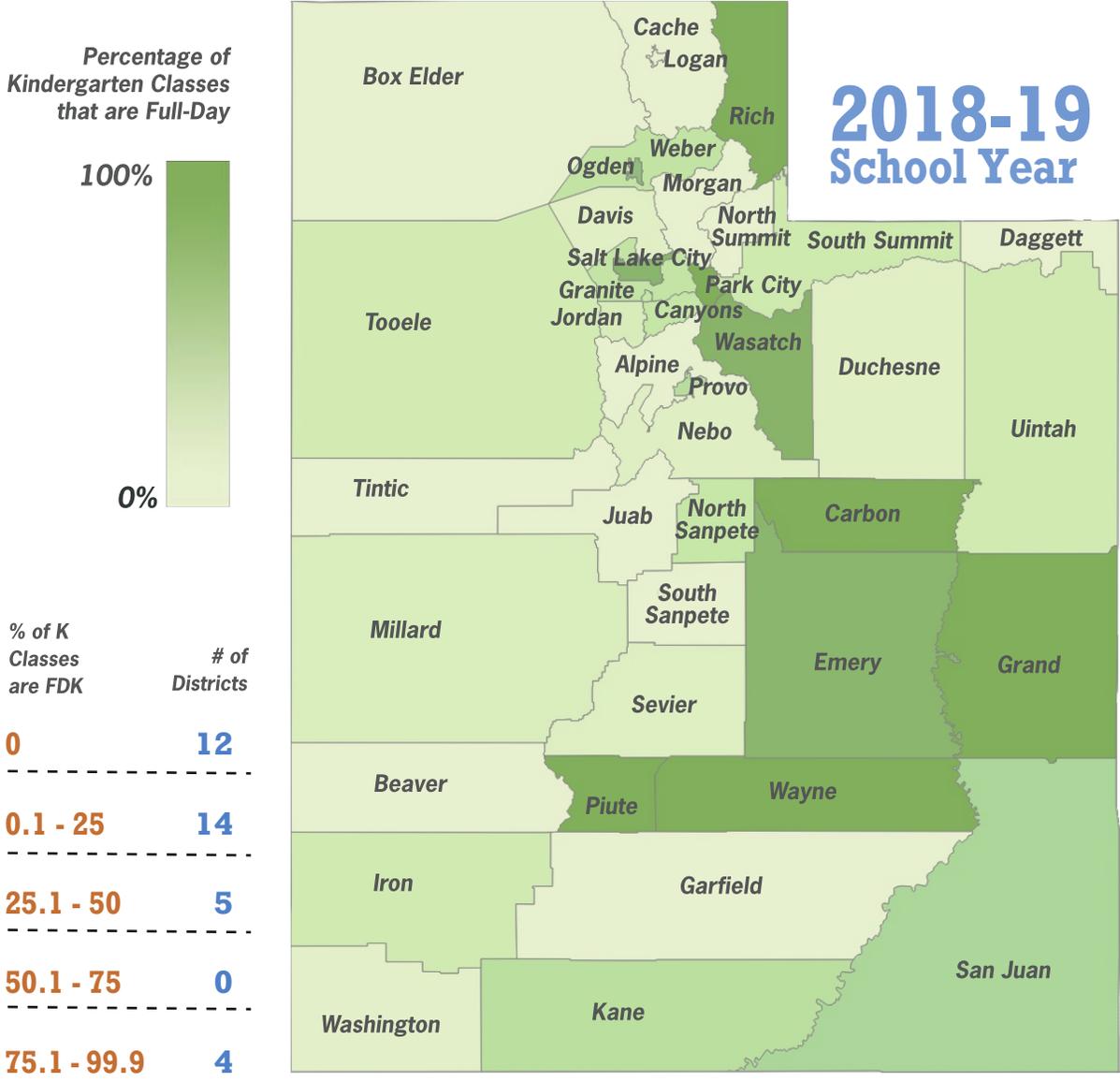
of Utah kids living in Intergenerational Poverty are enrolled in an extended-day program.^

Only 17 states & DC require kindergarten attendance.

KINDERGARTEN Availability in Utah



Utah State Board of Education data show that 49,071 kindergarten students were enrolled for the 2018-2019 school year, in 41 school districts and 114 charter schools. The chart below shows the percentage of classes in each school district that were reported as full-day in that school year.



22.5% of kindergarten classrooms in Utah **CHARTER SCHOOLS** are full-day.

Data used in this table from the Utah State Board of Education, 2019.

OVERVIEW:

Utah is Ready for State-Funded Full-Day Kindergarten

Currently, the demand for full-day kindergarten greatly outpaces the ability of most Local Education Authorities (LEAs) to supply it.

LEAs that would like to offer more full-day kindergarten options to families in the community, are hampered in doing so primarily by a lack of sufficient reliable, stable funding. Some LEAs also face additional resource barriers, particularly lack of physical facility space and potentially of kindergarten-certified educators.

In the summer of 2019, Utah's state office of education (known as the Utah State Board of Education or USBE) sent a survey to all LEAs about their kindergarten programming. About half of all 41 school districts responded, along with several dozen independent charter schools.

Respondents shared information about their kindergarten offerings (which looked quite different from district to district, and from school to school), perceived local demand for additional full-day kindergarten classes, and expected barriers to expanding access to full-day kindergarten classes. Some survey respondents represented LEAs that already offer full-day kindergarten to every interested student in their community, while others offer little to no kindergarten instruction beyond the basic half-day of programming.

From these responses, we learned that Utah LEAs began offering extended or full-day kindergarten starting as early as 20 years ago and as recently as last year. After initially opting to offer extended- or full-day kindergarten to their communities, none of our survey respondents later reduced the number of available extended- or full-day classes.

Slightly more than half of survey respondents indicated that, based on their experience and community interactions, more families in their area would be interested in participating in full-day kindergarten programs, if those programs became available. Estimates of how many more students would enroll in full-day kindergarten if more classes were offered ranged from a handful of students to more than one thousand.

Perhaps the most compelling argument for the state-funded expansion of full-day kindergarten options in Utah is the district- and charter-level efforts already undertaken, without mandate or state funding, to meet the needs of families in their communities.

At least nine Utah school districts – Carbon, Park City, Ogden, Salt Lake, Piute, Rich, Wasatch, Wayne and Grand – report that all, or nearly all, of their kindergarten classrooms in school year 2019-2020 are being held for the length of a full school day. Similarly, charter schools around the state have made the commitment to offer most or all of their kindergarten classes for a full day (Bear River Charter School in Logan, Scholar Academy in Tooele, Ogden Preparatory Academy, to name a few).

“There was little public resistance when we switched all five classrooms to full-day. And now it's just what we do.

We really work hard to make sure that there is still play, appropriate transitions, and other important development steps. That is all worked into the longer day - all the social emotional objectives. It's not little kids sitting at desks. It's not all about academics.”

In the above mentioned school districts, the most common justification for the decision to offer full-day kindergarten to all interested families was the overwhelming evidence of academic improvement among children receiving additional hours of instruction. Some of these districts took advantage of the Optional Extended-Day Kindergarten (OEK) funding made available in 2007 by legislation appropriation, but at least a couple (Carbon and Grand) had prioritized full-day kindergarten expansion before this funding was available, in response to the positive gains full-day students were making. Administrators in Carbon, Grand and Ogden report that consistent improvement in proficiency scores on DIBELS and other validated assessments maintain their level of confidence and comfort with the full-day programming expansions undertaken in their districts.

Several school districts indicate that another motivation for full-day kindergarten expansion is the growing proportion of incoming students who are at risk for academic failure later in elementary school. Administrators express concern that more children are entering their kindergarten programs with very little foundational knowledge, social and emotional aptitude, and behavioral preparation. These educators report feeling a sense of urgency, with regards to bringing these children up to speed before the start of first grade, given the long-term implications of starting elementary school below proficiency.



**Grand
County SD**

Ogden School District is sufficiently confident in this early investment that the district is footing the bill for full-day kindergarten expansion at the expense of other urgent district needs. In a district where student needs are increasing in inverse proportion to the student population, Ogden's local tax dollars and other alternate funding streams cannot keep up.

Similarly, in Rich School District, administrators report that even as the student population stays largely stable, incoming students are more academically vulnerable than ever before. Both kindergarten classrooms in Rich School District have been full-day for at least six years. Administrators report that there were two primary motivations behind that move. First, the district was seeing more kindergarten students enroll with little to no literacy proficiency; a full day of instruction allowed those children to catch up to their peers, while also preserving time for age-appropriate play and unstructured learning activities. Second, it was inefficient and expensive to bus children from around the rural district to school on a separate schedule, for just a couple of hours of instruction. The former reason, however, greatly outweighed the latter.

In fact, in the districts that have stretched all available funding streams to offer full-day kindergarten to all, or nearly all, interested families, "urgent need" is a common refrain. Nearly two decades ago, Carbon School District began offering full-day kindergarten in 100% of its kindergarten classrooms. New local taxes were levied around 2000 to ensure that full-day kindergarten would be available to all children whose families wanted to send them. In 2020, full-day kindergarten is now simply the norm for families living in the school district.

Carbon County struggles with high rates of unemployment, substance abuse and incarceration. These issues can create chaos within local families with young children. Thus, community leaders see full-day kindergarten and pre-school - both important early education opportunities - as a critical part of community reinvestment. Young children enter school with many risk factors; educational success, through early interventions like full-day kindergarten, offers at least one reliable protective factor.

The district recently surveyed families with children attending Castle Heights Elementary to see if there would be community support for transitioning a full-day classroom to half-day, in order to alleviate capacity issues. There was little interest among parents in reverting back to half-day sessions. This reflects a trend we saw among states: once the education system in the state moved in the direction of offering more hours of kindergarten instruction, none returned to the half-day model.

“What motivated us to move toward the 35 full-day classrooms we have now? The data.

Our testing showed that we were getting much better results with our OEK kids. We could see that our at-risk kids were surpassing their peers, thanks to the extra investment of time.”

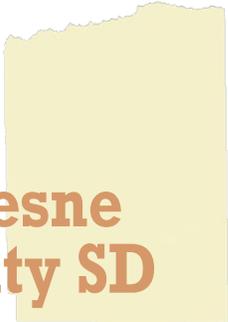


Several other districts – including Washington, Kane, and Box Elder – have been slowly transitioning half-day classrooms into full-day classrooms. Again, these expansions are occurring in response to overwhelmingly positive education gains for students enrolled in full-day classes.

Parent and family interest in full-day kindergarten for their children is so strong that some parents admit to living in one district where there are few if any full-day classrooms, but enrolling their child in a different district where full-day kindergarten is available. And parents aren't just willing to travel for the opportunity; those who can, are willing to pay for it, as well.

“Full-day kindergarten would be much-supported in our community, I think. In this area, we’ve got some deep pockets of intergenerational poverty, families with low educational attainment, kids who are ELL (English language learners), grandparents who have to go back into the workforce because they’re raising their kids’ kids.

Families want full-day kindergarten not just because it would fit their schedules better, but also because they know it would be beneficial for their kids.”



**Duchesne
County SD**

In at least two districts – Canyons and Murray – extra hours of “enrichment” instruction are offered free-of-charge to children who test below proficiency; children who are not below proficiency can be enrolled in these programs by their parents, if those parents are willing and able to pay out-of-pocket. The fact that many families take advantage of this tuition-based “enrichment” opportunity to access additional kindergarten instruction, is more evidence that demand for full-day and extended hour options is outpacing districts’ ability to supply enough “seats” with available funding. This method of covering kindergarten costs has serious equity pitfalls, however, in that low-income children may not have the same access (despite district-level scholarship programs) to optional “enrichment” instruction as children in wealthier families.

Several districts that offer a mix of full- and half-day sessions report that there is more desire among families in the community than there is space for students in full-day kindergarten classrooms. These districts predict that participation in full-day kindergarten would be close to 100%, if they were able to make as many seats available as there is community interest. In particular, small- to medium-sized rural districts – including Sevier, Duchesne

and Juab – would readily expand if additional state funding were available to do so. In Duchesne, administrators report that many parents would like a full-day kindergarten option for their student. Currently, there is only sufficient funding for a “revolving-door”-style approach, wherein new kindergarten students who are struggling are invited to participate in additional instruction opportunities on an “as-needed” basis.

Even in areas where administrators think that not all families would be interested in the full-day option, administrators can see the need for at least some expansion. For example, 10 out of 11 elementary schools in Box Elder School District offer at least one classroom of full-day kindergarten. Five of those elementary schools are classified as Title 1 schools; academic need and parental interest indicate that at least these five schools in Box Elder would benefit from additional full-day classrooms, should funding become available.

For some families, of course, the preference is for no kindergarten, or only a half day of instruction. Districts that have expanded have been sensitive to family needs with regard to enrollment and attendance. In all districts that offer full-day instruction in all or most of their current kindergarten classrooms, administrators report that at least a few families choose not to participate. Some families receive special permission to pick up their children at the half-day mark, even as the rest of the class continues instruction into the afternoon. Some elementary schools still offer one or more classrooms of seats for students whose parents prefer the half-day option.

In school districts and charter schools where full-day kindergarten is offered, educators report that it is overwhelmingly embraced by the community. In these districts, we see that when full-day kindergarten is available, the vast majority of families choose to take advantage of the opportunity.

"I am a big proponent of family choice.

Parents are our first and best educators. I would never tell a parent what to do with their child.

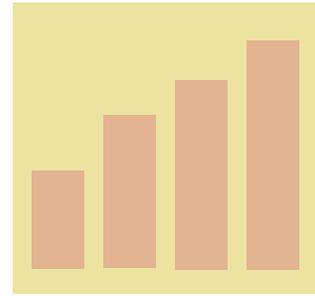
We have a body of evidence, though, about early childhood literacy and what has to happen to make sure kids are set up for success, in academics and in life.

“Our little strugglers – kids from difficult socio-economic backgrounds, families that aren’t able to spare all the time needed to bring them along – they tend to get further and further behind.

The gap just gets wider, without intervention early on.”



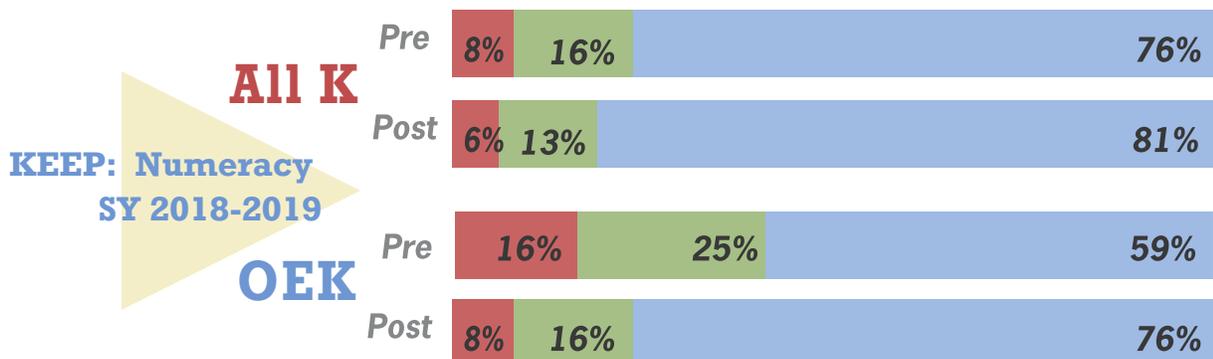
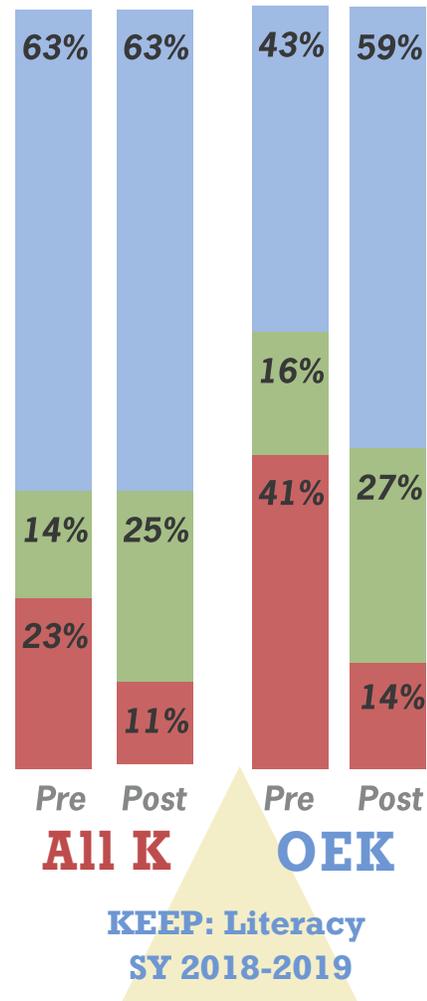
FDK & OEK show good results



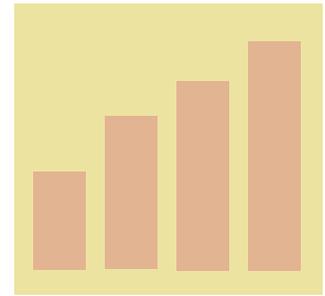
Results from the Kindergarten Entry and Exit Profile, or KEEP (first administered in fall 2017) show that participating in extended day programs provides additional learning gains for students most in need of extra help.⁵

While 23% of all students enter kindergarten at Proficiency Level 1 (the lowest) in literacy, 41% of children in Optional-Extended Day Kindergarten programs enter at Proficiency Level 1. These programs, funded through state-funded grants through the Utah State Board of Education, are intended specifically to provide expanded learning opportunities to those children who score lowest on the KEEP before entry into kindergarten. After participating in an OEK program, only 14% of those students remained at Proficiency Level 1. On the Literacy portion of the entry exam, 40% of students who participated in an OEK program moved up one or more performance levels, compared to 16% of all kindergarten students. Similar strong gains were made by OEK students in numeracy proficiency. While 16% of OEK students started kindergarten at Proficiency Level 1, only 8% finished at that level. In contrast, the percentage of students assessed at Proficiency Level 3 (the highest) grew from 59% to 76%.

Level 3 (highest proficiency)
Level 2
Level 1 (lowest proficiency)



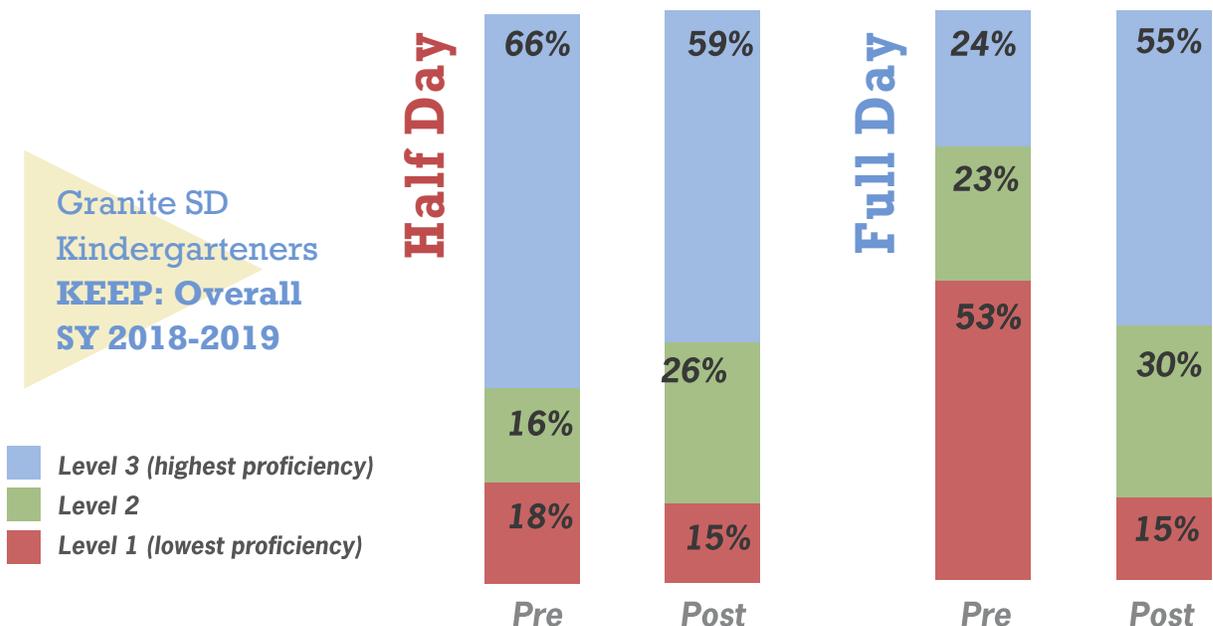
FDK & OEK show good results



“I have been telling people for years that it works - and now we have the data to show that it works. We are prioritizing full-day for our lowest-performing kids, and they are finishing the year on par with their peers.”

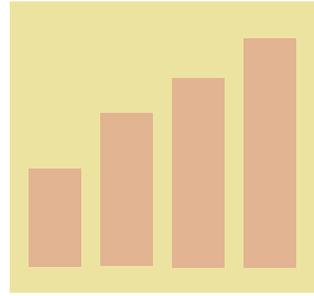
Granite School District is one of the largest in the state, and is one of the United Way of Salt Lake's Promise Partnership communities. The district is home to a vibrant and diverse student population, with a variety of complex needs, including many refugee students and other English Language Learners, as well as poverty rates higher than the state average.

In order to help these young people start school prepared to learn and succeed, Granite SD has cobbled together enough funding to offer full-day kindergarten to about 75% of their incoming students in 2019-2020. Early educators in Granite are committed to overcoming barriers to achievement for at-risk kids. Still, kindergarten teachers in the district weren't sure what to expect when their classrooms changed to the full-day format. They were quickly won over by the strong academic gains showed by students. "After teaching half-day kinder for years, I have been pleasantly surprised at the huge growth I have seen. The kids are learning so much!"



All data used on this page was obtained from, and used with permission of, Granite School District, 2020.

FDK & OEK show good results



Washington County School District has an annual enrollment of about 2,200 kindergartners. Just four years ago, the district began the school year with one full-day class and one extended-day class; all others were half-day. By the 2018-19 school year, they offered 11 full-day classes. This current school year, they more than tripled the available full-day classrooms to 35. This strong growth of full-day kindergarten offerings has been driven by impressive outcomes as revealed by literacy assessment scores. District data consistently show that full-day classes are highly effective at bringing struggling students up to - and beyond - their peers' level of proficiency.

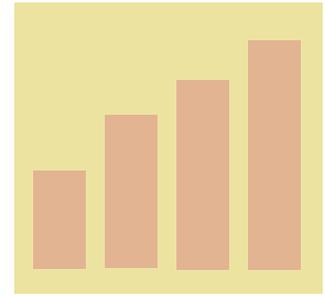
Washington County SD

"We started by offering extra hours of instruction just to the kids who were testing farthest below proficiency.

By the end of the year, those kids who had been struggling, were actually leading their peers."

	OEK	HDK
SY2013-14	(average)	(average)
Start of Year	16	82
End of Year	195	192
SY2014-15		
Start of Year	19	79
End of Year	197	192
SY2015-16		
Start of Year	17	80
End of Year	196	194
SY2016-17		
Start of Year	20	80
End of Year	196	192

FDK & OEK show good results



“Early literacy development is the best investment for our students. Our full-day kindergarten kids were performing better on assessments, and we are finding that they are better prepared for the upper grades.”

Ogden SD

FDK	Finish the School Year At or Above Benchmark
Of All Students BELOW Benchmark at Start of Year	85.6%
Of All Students WELL BELOW Benchmark at Start of Year	65.8%

The tables above and below show percentages by row. For example, 85.62% of the students who were enrolled in full-day kindergarten and started the school year below benchmark, also scored at or above benchmark when assessed at the end of the year.

HDK	Finish the School Year At or Above Benchmark
Of All Students BELOW Benchmark at Start of Year	77.8%
Of All Students WELL BELOW Benchmark at Start of Year	43.6%

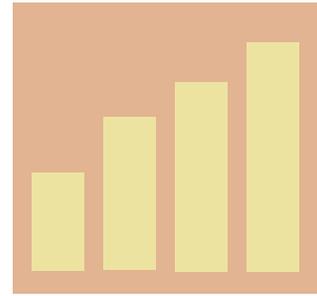
Ogden City School District's kindergarten enrollment is about one-third that of Washington County (with 772 students enrolled for the 2019-20 school year). According to administrators, this urban school population has been decreasing in size, but growing in academic need, over the past several decades.

The district's composite analysis of student performance over five school years (from 2014-15 to 2018-19) shows their full-day kindergarten students making better progress than their half-day peers, which aligns with expectations based on national research. The district's commitment to early literacy, coupled with the positive results seen in their full-day programs, led Ogden SD to expand that full-day programming to nearly 100% of all their kindergarten classrooms.

	FDK	HDK
SY2018-19	(average)	(average)
Start of year	19	30
End of Year	151	146

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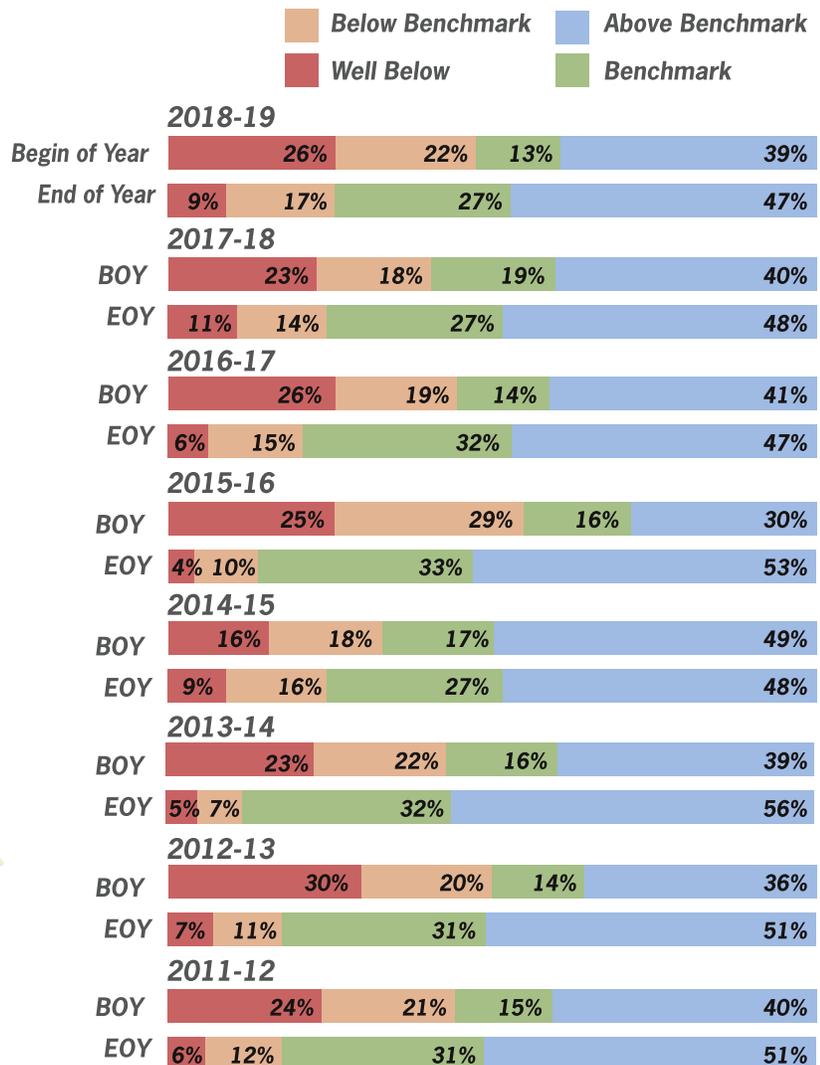
FDK & OEK show good results!



"We can't control a lot of what happens in our kids' lives. But the more success we can give them in school, that's a protective factor and can help combat the traumas they encounter early on. If we can help students to be successful in the early grades, we are giving them a chance to be successful later on."



Carbon School District began offering full-day kindergarten in all of its elementary schools, in all classes, around 2000. In the initial phases of Carbon SD's move to full-day kindergarten, professional development was critical. Kindergarten teachers had structured their classroom schedules and curriculum around the half-day schedule, and required support and assistance adjusting to the longer day with their students. It has been nearly twenty years since Carbon SD had any data about student performance in HDK classes, to compare to the progress made by their FDK students. But they can show positive outcomes for those FDK students, every year, for as long as they have been using the DIBELS literacy assessment.



STEP ONE:

A Stable, Reliable State Funding Stream

Many LEAs report that lack of funding has been their greatest impediment to expanding more kindergarten classrooms to full day.

We heard this from administrators and educators in Alpine, Cache, Granite, Juab, Millard, Murray, Ogden, San Juan, Sevier, South Sanpete, Uintah and Washington Schools Districts – as well as from multiple charter schools throughout the state.

Specifically, administrators say that temporary, one-time state funding for programs like extended-day kindergarten can unintentionally create program instability and cultural resistance. “It takes time to build support in a district or school for a new initiative,” says one Ogden School District administrator. “Educators are reluctant to invest in professional development and new assessments for something that looks like it might ‘go away’ after a few years, as with grant funding.”

Currently, kindergarten funding is apportioned to districts and charter schools at the reduced rate of .55 the standard Weighted Pupil Unit (WPU), which is \$3,532 for the 2019-2020 school year, for each enrolled kindergartener.⁶ This amounts to approximately \$1,943 per kindergarten student, which is \$1,599 short of a full WPU. To grow a kindergarten classroom from a half day to a full day, schools need to make up at least this gap in funding with other, non-WPU dollars. A school would require, at minimum, an additional \$31,980 to make up the difference for a class of 20 full-day kindergartners.

In addition to the .55 WPU available for each enrolled kindergarten student, there is an additional \$7.5 million appropriated by the state legislature to support “optional-extended day” kindergarten. This funding stream was instituted in 2007 via SB49, “Optional-Extended Day Kindergarten,” as one-time funding, outside the Basic School Funding formula, and to be administered by the Utah State Board of Education (USBE). This funding has been re-appropriated annually since, but must be separately approved as one-time funding each year, outside of the WPU funding appropriations process.⁷

In 2017, the legislature designated an additional \$3.087 million per year, for three years, to be used for a “Kindergarten Supplemental Enrichment Program,” or KSEP, also to be administered by USBE.⁸ About \$2.88 million of this total annual amount was pass-through federal funding from the Temporary Aid for Needy Families (TANF) program. As per federal directive, this created explicit restrictions on the use of KSEP funding (children served through programs utilizing KSEP need to come from families meeting TANF thresholds). Accordingly, there was additional paperwork and reporting required for districts utilizing KSEP dollars. In addition, KSEP and OEK funding could not both be used at a single school site (as per administrative rule), and KSEP funding will be exhausted after the 2019-2020 school year.

Individual schools within districts also have access to some funding streams that can be designated for expanded kindergarten programming. Schools throughout the state report using various combinations of federal Title 1, state Necessarily Existent Small Schools Act (NESSA), and state Teacher-Student Success Act (TSSA) funding to cover the expenses of their full-day kindergarten programming. This school-specific funding, particularly that offered by the state (NESSA and TSSA), is usually insufficient on its own to cover the cost of the single additional kindergarten teacher needed to expand to full-day programming in an elementary school. Additionally, these school-specific funding streams, when used on full-day kindergarten, then are not available to be used on other pressing school needs.

“We did a survey of our families. The top reason they wanted full-day kindergarten was they want their children to be better prepared for school and for those first-grade transitions.”



Canyons SD

A slightly more controversial approach (it has been prohibited in some states), is accepting payments from families who wish to participate in a full day of programming, but don’t qualify by virtue of academic need. Canyons School District is in the fourth year of its “Kindergarten Supplemental Hours of Instruction” program. Under this framework, children who qualify for additional instruction hours by virtue of low proficiency scores are able to attend a full day of class at no cost. Children who do not test low enough to attend for free, can be enrolled by parents willing and able to pay \$295 per month (\$2,950 for the school year). Canyons offers scholarships to families who need financial assistance; about 13% of tuition students are on scholarship.

Beginning in the 2019-2020 school year, Murray School District also is offering tuition-based supplemental kindergarten instruction. Modeled after Canyons School District, the Murray program collects sufficient tuition (in addition to other available funding sources) to cover the cost of two 24-student classrooms of full-day kindergarten in non-Title 1 schools (all Title 1 schools offer full-day classes that are funded by non-tuition funding streams). Both districts report enthusiastic levels of participation by local families.

"Too often, I find that people think, the littler the kid, the less teaching expertise is needed. And it's the exact opposite. You should have your best, most knowledgeable teachers working with the little kids. That is when it matters most. It is the foundation for everything else."

**Southeast Education
Service Center**
Utah Rural Schools Association

School districts do have various taxing mechanisms available for generating additional income to fund full-day kindergarten (among other diverse district-specific educational programming).⁹ At least a few school districts have supported their full-day kindergarten programs with dedicated local funding raised through voted and board leeway. These are property tax increases that can be enacted either with the consent of school-district residents (voted leeway) or of the district school board (board leeway). State law caps the overall allowable rate of local taxation by voted and board leeway, respectively, based on the taxable value of property within the district; the state guarantees matching funds, per WPU, for each local level increment. The funding raised from these local levies is used to pay for a variety of community-specific public education purposes, in addition to kindergarten instruction expansion where offered.

This funding stream also presents equity challenges. Some school districts – particularly those with student populations concentrated in suburban neighborhoods, as well as those in areas with many vacation or second homes – are able to raise substantial funding through relatively small tax increases. To wit, Park City School District far outpaces all other school districts in estimated local property tax revenue generated per WPU and related state funding guarantees.¹⁰

Other counties – such as those with sparse populations, depressed or unstable economic activity, and higher rates of intergenerational poverty – may lack the tax base to raise substantial local education dollars, even when taxing at a higher proportion of authorized capacity.

“I have found that some of our parents don't really know how to get their kids on track for academic success.

School wasn't really part of their life growing up, so they don't understand how important these formative years are. There isn't always a lot of reading being done at home.

The question for a lot of parents out here might be, 'Do we do the homework, or do I fix the fence?'"



Rich SD

Duchesne School District, for example, is currently taxing at significant rates relative to voted local and board levy capacities, and is actually above capacity with regard to its capital local levy.¹¹ The district nonetheless does not have sufficient funds to transition half-day classrooms to full-day classrooms.

Utah LEAs deserve credit for the creativity and commitment shown in their unique pursuits of kindergarten programming that best serves their distinct school communities. However, these patchwork funding approaches present some troubling equity issues, and also demand substantial budgetary sacrifices that would be unnecessary were the state to fund kindergarten as it does all other elementary school grade levels.

The state government has the ability to fund full-day kindergarten for interested districts and schools in a manner that offers maximum stability and reliability for families and communities.

In the long-term, state leaders should seek to move its enhanced kindergarten funding effort from its current one-time-only budget line item, into the same ongoing budget formula that provides funding for all other elementary and secondary grade-level students. Funding full-day or extended-day kindergarten through the Basic School Budget would signal that Utah truly considers early education as important and valuable as formal instruction for older children. And after all, the state's mandate is to provide K-12 education - not 1-12 education.

Our legislative leaders have an immediate opportunity to show that commitment to early education. Representative Lowry Snow (R-St. George) has introduced HB99, “Enhanced Kindergarten Amendments,” with the full support of the Utah State Board of Education, for consideration during the 2020 General Session.¹²

This legislative proposal looks similar to HB42, also introduced by Rep. Snow and co-sponsored by Senator Ann Millner (R-Ogden), from 2016.¹³ The major difference between the two is that in 2020, there is substantially more quantitative data from our schools to show that investment in OEK

programming serves Utah kids well.¹⁴ Accordingly, HB99 has already attracted early support from numerous entities and individuals, including: the Governor’s Commission on Education Excellence; the United Ways of Utah; and multiple individual schools districts throughout the state.

In proportion to the demonstrated positive impacts of the state’s current OEK investment, HB99 will include a \$18.6 million funding request, to be added to the \$7.5 million that hopefully will be re-approved in 2020 (and which amount has remained unchanged since 2007). This new level of investment will substantially grow the number of children who can access optional hours of kindergarten enrichment throughout the state. HB99 also is necessary to replace the \$3.087 million in KSEP funding, which will expire at the end of the 2019-2020 school year.

For the 2019-2020 school year, legislators allocated approximately \$10.9 million to support district efforts to provide enhanced kindergarten instruction. A full WPU for the 2019-2020 school year is \$3,532. The legislature already allocates schools .55 WPU for every enrolled kindergartener. If an additional .45 WPU (\$1,598.40) boosts one kindergartener into a full day of quality instruction, then the legislature can congratulate itself for supporting the equivalent of about 6,625 little full-day learners. This represents only about 13.5% of all enrolled kindergartners for the current school year.¹⁵

By passing and funding HB99, legislators would be boosting their support up to the level of \$26.15 million – that’s about 15,820 students receiving a full day of quality instruction, thanks to their state legislators, or 32.4%.¹⁶

In addition to passing HB99 during the 2020 session, legislative and education leaders can and should begin making district- and charter-informed plans to fully fund the kindergarten options Utah parents want, as efficiently and effectively as possible. This means not only growing available OEK funds over the next several years, but also figuring out the appropriate

"Our teachers can cover a lot more of the curriculum, while also freeing up time for the kids to just be kids. Children need to play and discover, to have social time together.

With a half-day, it's hard for the kids to get much more than the academics. With a full day, it's much more well-rounded. There is enough time for discovery through play."

Kane SD

“There is a demand for it, that’s the primary reason we offer full-day kindergarten classes. Parents want it.

Some are saying, ‘my kid is ready for the challenge.’ For others, the longer schedule is more convenient for the family. Whatever the parents’ reason, we would rather have these kids here with us for the full-day anyway. It helps us down the road, having the children in a high-quality setting for the full school day. They are much more ready to enter first grade.”



time to move these funds out of a separate line item, and into the WPU system. Currently, .55 WPU is designated for each kindergartener reported to be enrolled by October of the school year. In order to preserve flexibility for parents and, by extension, districts and charters, the state should be prepared to continue to offer .55 WPU for each child enrolled in half-day kindergarten, while providing 1.0 WPU for kindergartners enrolled in full-day.

If LEAs continue to fund kindergarten programming through a patchwork of state, federal and local funding, we will continue to fail Utah families who wish to enroll their kindergartners in full-day programs. Access to the programs these families want will be uneven and inequitable across the state, with a profound negative impact on families living in intergenerational poverty (IGP). Currently, only 30% of students from IGP families have access to optional-extended day kindergarten programming funded by the state.¹⁷

State leaders are in an excellent position to ensure a stable, reliable funding stream for kindergarten programming, statewide, that reflects the needs and desires of Utah families with young children.

The consistent budget surpluses reported over the past several years stand in stark contrast to the boom-and-bust economic fortunes of various communities trying to meet the varied, growing needs of their student populations. District and charter administrators say that funding a full WPU for kindergartners enrolled in full-day kindergarten could free up dollars that are needed for other critical LEA needs, such as school nurses, special education specialists and job certification programs for high school students. Funding full-day kindergarten with state dollars, and eventually through the WPU system as with every other public school grade, would signal both a commitment by state leaders to early education and an appreciation of the increasingly complex student needs that LEAs are expected to meet.

INCREASE STATE Funding for OEK

HB 99

During the 2020 General Session of the Utah State Legislature, Rep. Lowry Snow will introduce HB99, "Enhanced Kindergarten Amendments." This bill is a top priority for many early education boosters, including:

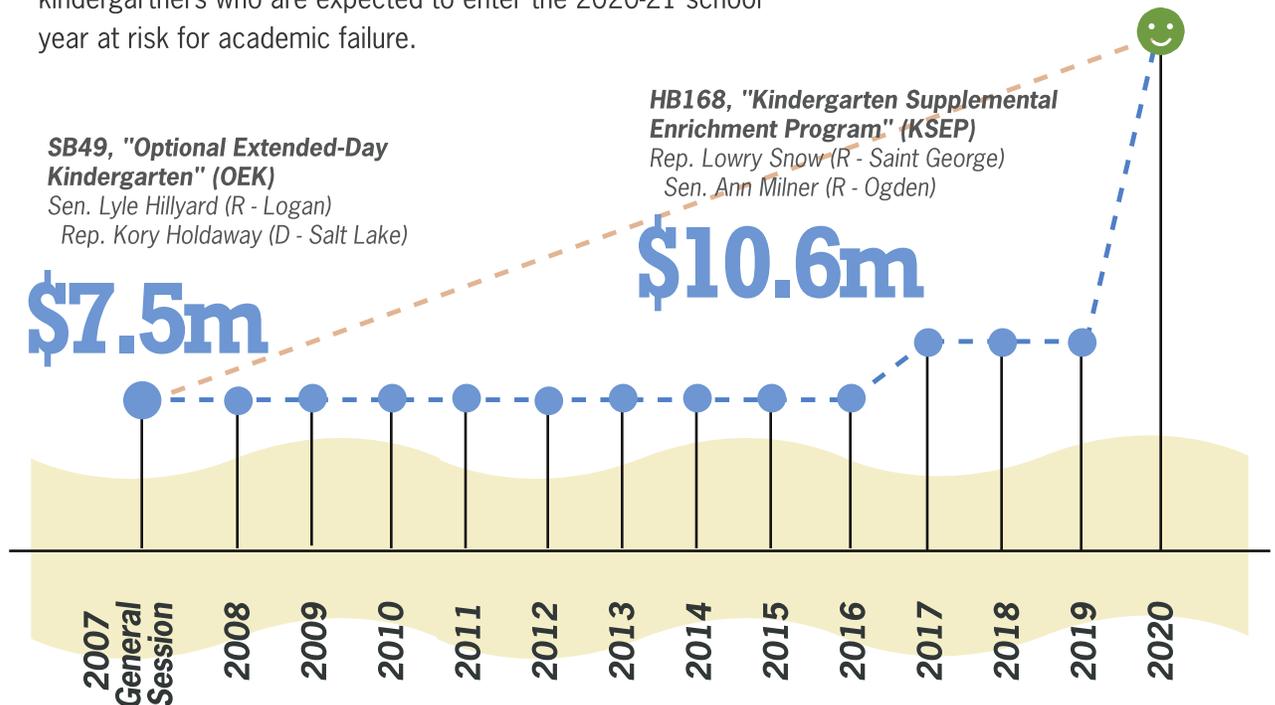
- the **Utah State Board of Education (USBE)**
- the **United Ways of Utah**
- the **Governor's Commission on Education Excellence**

HB99 will stress accountability for recipient kindergarten programs. LEAs that receive funding through the OEK grant program (administred by USBE) will need to show that their programs are producing positive results for their students. Participation in the OEK grant program is voluntary. The bill will include a \$18.6 million appropriations request. By USBE's calculation, this will provide OEK access to most or all of Utah kindergartners who are expected to enter the 2020-21 school year at risk for academic failure.

"Enhanced Kindergarten Amendments"

Rep. Lowry Snow (R - Saint George)
Sen. Lyle Hillyard (R - Logan)

\$26.1m



State funding for OEK remained flat for a decade, before a limited pot of federal dollars was appropriated to boost the program enough to cover growth in costs. Funding plateaued again until this year, when legislators have a chance to fund academic interventions for an unprecedented number of Utah kindergarteners.

BOOST FUNDS to cover 32% of kids

HB 99

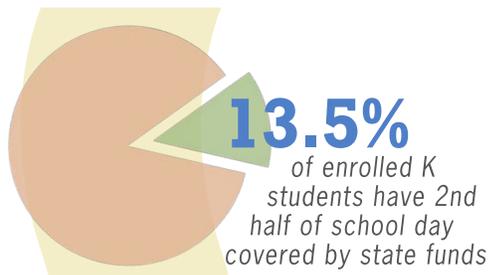
Just how much "optional extended-day kindergarten" have state leaders been able to purchase for their investment so far - and how much more could they do? The simplest way to compare "apples to apples," from school year to school year, is to calculate how many "afternoons" the state could have supplied for each "morning kindergarten only" student. As part of the regular education budget, the legislature appropriates the equivalent of 55% of a full Weighted Pupil Unit (WPU) for each enrolled kindergartner reported by LEAs in October of the current school year. So, to pay for the equivalent of a full day of instruction, the state would need to boost that payment up to 1.0 WPU for each enrolled kindergarten - a difference of 45% of a WPU.

School Year	Kindergarten Enrollment	State OEK Funding	% of Kindergartners Who Could Attend Full-Day (7)
2007-08 <i>Year OEK Funding Established</i>	47,712	\$7.5m	13.9%
2016-17 <i>Year Before KSEP Funding Added</i>	49,973	\$7.5m	10.5%
2017-18 <i>Year KSEP Funding Added (3 yrs only)</i>	49,229	\$10.6m	14.5%
2019-20 <i>Current SY</i>	48,789	\$10.6m	13.5%
2020-21 <i>Earliest SY HB99 Funding Could Be Used</i>	48,789	\$26.1m	32.4%

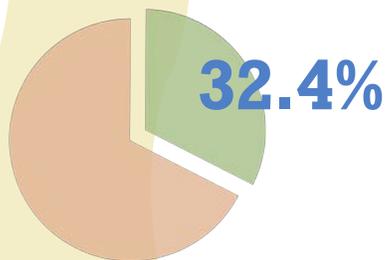
SIMPLE MATH for Full State Funding



2019-2020 SY Current State OEK investment



2019-2020 SY State OEK investment after HB99



Currently, the state only contributes enough education funding, through the OEK and KSEP grant programs, to cover the second half of a school day for about 13.5% of enrolled kindergarten students. Passing HB99, "Enhanced Kindergarten Amendments," during the 2020 General Session, would provide a BIG boost, up to 32.4% of kindergarten students during the 2020-21 school year. Over the next three legislative sessions, state leaders could increase their investment in this critical early education intervention to support 90% of all enrolled kindergartners in Utah. Those three years would provide ample time for districts and charters to survey parents and plan to expand enough FDK classrooms to meet community needs. The 2022 General Session would be a good time to move OEK funding into the base budget line item as 1.0 WPU for full-day students, and .55 for half.

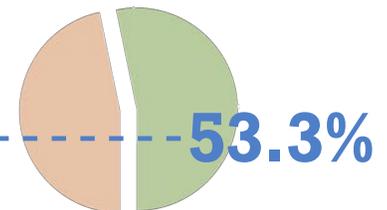
Legislative Session

If an additional **\$18.6m** were to be added to the OEK program each session, total investment would be:

Percent of Utah K students who could have access to optional full-day kindergarten(8):

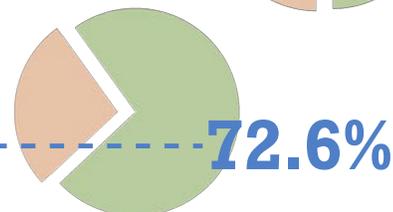
2021

\$44.7m



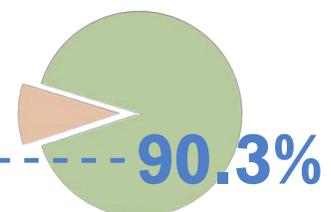
2022

\$63.3m



2023

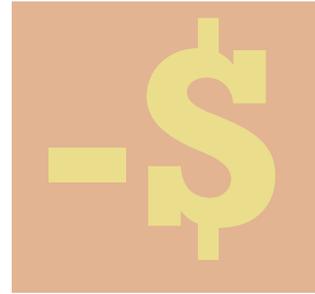
\$81.9m



For a description of how these figures were obtained and calculated, see Endnotes #16 and #18.

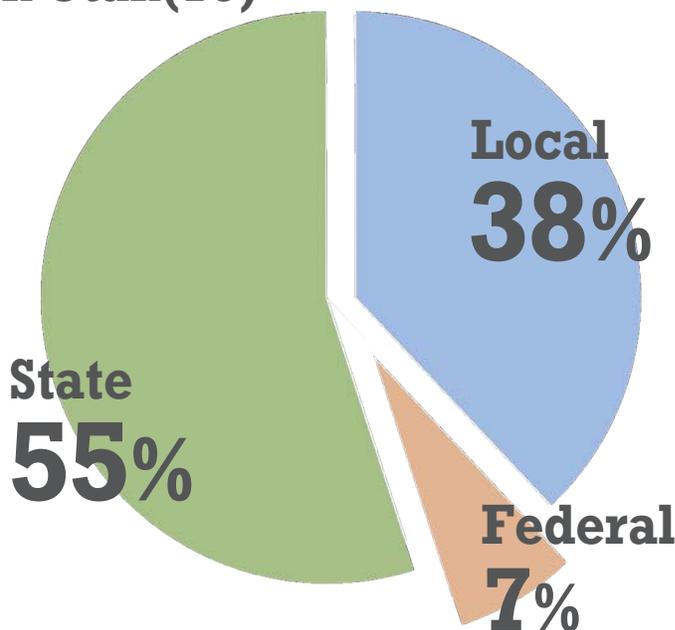
FINDING FUNDS

What Schools Do Now



Currently, districts and charters are weaving together a creative patchwork of various funding streams to provide more than just a half a day of kindergarten for their youngest students. Some of these funding sources - the OEK and KSEP grant programs, and the uncommon tuition model of "Supplemental Hours of Kindergarten - are available to cover only kindergarten programs. Other funding streams can be used to cover a variety of costs. Schools and districts that use local property tax money, Title 1 dollars or TSSA/NESS funding for their kindergarten programming **must make difficult decisions about which other school costs will not be covered.**

Breakdown of Total Education Funding in Utah(19)



Title 1

(Federal funding for schools with 35%+ students in poverty²⁰)

Local Property Taxes

OEK

(State grant program for Optional Extended-Day Kindergarten)

KSEP

(Limited state grant program, using federal TANF funds, for Kindergarten Supplemental Enrichment Programs)

Tuition

(Only used for optional "enrichment" programming, as per state law²¹)

TSSA

(Teacher Student Success Act: state funding distributed directly to schools)

NESS

(Necessarily Existent Small Schools: special state funding for rural schools with small populations)

Most common sources of funding used by school districts in Utah to cover costs of full- and extended-day kindergarten programs.

STEP TWO:

District and Charter Planning, Driven By Parent Preference

If local leaders throughout Utah knew that in time for the 2023-24 school year, there would be sufficient state funding to support full-day kindergarten for any child whose family is interested, most school districts and independent public charter schools would start drawing up their individualized plans for expansion right away.

Effective kindergarten expansion should result in community-specific programming that is able to meet the unique needs of local families. Our research revealed that districts that have expanded their full-day kindergarten offerings, did so only after surveying – formally or informally – families within the surrounding community to assess interest and support.

This surveying allowed administrators to invest in additional teachers and rearrange classroom space within elementary schools with confidence, knowing that the new kindergarten programming would be able to improve and evolve over time. Talking to local families also helped district and charter school leaders to understand and address individual family concerns about the length of the day, and the importance of age-appropriate curriculum and activities for kindergarteners. Administrators can then communicate regularly with students' families about how their children are adjusting to the longer school day.

The experiences of school districts that have already dramatically expanded their full-day programs show that some families continue to choose either half-day kindergarten, or no kindergarten at all, even when full-day programming is available. Ogden School District still maintains half-day classrooms in two of their elementary schools. According to administrators, the communities feeding into those two schools are more affluent than others in the district, and “families haven't expressed the same interest in full-day programs there as families in

“The need for this extra intervention is so great in our area. It's hard to explain to people who aren't struggling in the ways that some of our families struggle. I know it's hard to believe, but we literally have children who show up to their first day of kindergarten never having been read to.”

**Ogden
City SD**



our other elementary schools' boundaries.” One rural administrator reported that the local elementary teacher works with a couple of families who wish to pick up their students half-way through the day, while the rest of the class continue with the full-day programming.

We heard from only one district that added full-day programming, and then rolled in back in response to parent feedback. In that case, Juab School District created a single full-day classroom at one elementary school in the district. Qualifying students from around the district – those who tested far below proficiency and required substantial intervention to catch up – were placed in this class. Families of students who lived far from the elementary school where their kindergarten class was hosted, struggled with the transportation burdens. They also missed having their child in their neighborhood school (often with their friends and siblings). After two years of experimenting with this model, Juab School District stopped offering this single full-day classroom. Now, they offer a short period of academic intervention for at-risk students, at their own elementary school, between morning and afternoon half-day kindergarten sessions.

Some larger districts, anticipating substantial challenges with finding enough physical space for additional full-day kindergarten classrooms, don't bother to ask families about their kindergarten preferences. But with positive signals from state government about future funding – such as an announcement that the state will eventually provide 1.0 WPU for kindergartners enrolled in full-day kindergarten, or establish a special capital fund for expanding physical classroom space – we believe these districts would be more likely to engage in parent polling.

Based on the high rate of participation in full-day kindergarten where it is offered – around Utah, as well as in neighboring states with similar cultural and political characteristics – we anticipate that polling of parents will reveal that a majority of Utah families would prefer to have their children in full-day kindergarten programs.

This level of interest will almost certainly vary between districts and charter schools, and no LEA should be required to offer kindergarten programming that is not desired or supported by students' families. But each LEA should have the ability to meet the expressed needs of the families they serve, and they should have the state's support in doing so.

Once LEAs are comfortable that they have a clear sense of how much additional full-day programming is required to meet community needs, they can begin to plan how to meet those needs through their kindergarten programming. Research on full-day kindergarten expansion in other states, as well as in districts around Utah, indicates that LEAs are most likely to encounter two primary barriers to full-day kindergarten expansion: physical facility space and available certified teachers.

Planning for an Expanded Education Workforce

Utah's shortage of available teachers is well-documented and often-discussed by state policymakers.²² Some district administrators express concern that this shortage could impact their ability to recruit enough certified teachers to staff new full-day classrooms. In addition to the overall teacher shortage, difficulties with kindergarten teacher recruitment could be exacerbated by the fact that kindergarten teachers are required to hold an additional certification to teach in Utah.

And although they are required to hold an additional certification, kindergarten teachers in Utah on average make substantially less than their colleagues teaching grades one through six. According to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, kindergarten teachers without a special education certification, can expect to make an average annual salary of \$48,320; by comparison, the average annual salary for an elementary school teachers in general (again, non-special education), is \$59,880.²³

When Ohio invested in full-day kindergarten expansion as part of a three-tiered approach to addressing poverty in that state, some schools found creative ways to address this issue. Some districts (about one third of those surveyed by Ohio's Legislative Office of Education Oversight) hired aides and/or paraprofessionals, rather than certified teachers, to assist lead teachers in instructing larger classrooms.²⁴

Surprisingly, some districts did not think that teacher retention and recruitment would be a substantial impediment to expanding full-day kindergarten options. Their lack of concern is affirmed by the experience of most districts that have already expanded 100%, or close to 100%, of their

"I don't think there is a teacher in any school district that works harder than our kindergarten teachers. I think they have the hardest job in our district.

There is no 'down time,' there is no lecture that you can catch your breath after. Kindergarten is just all 'go!' We keep saying that we need to pay and recruit teachers for STEM and other specialty areas, but we're not talking about our kindergarten teachers. They are right there, at the most formative time for these little kids."



kindergarten classrooms to full-day. Though a couple districts reported that they struggled to ensure that all new kindergarten teacher positions were filled initially, teacher recruitment did not prevent a substantial barrier to expansion in the long-term.

Making Space for More Early Education

In 2019, Colorado legislators approved a massive investment in early education, including state funding to support tuition-free, all-day kindergarten for every family wishing to participate. Unsurprisingly, some districts struggled to take advantage of this new funding due to practical barriers, including limited physical facility space. In response, the legislature appropriated an additional \$25 million for a special full-day kindergarten capital construction fund.²⁵

Utah is likely to experience similar capital needs to support full-day kindergarten, though this need will not be uniform across districts.

Administrators in both urban and rural school districts areas – including Duchesne, Granite, and Uintah – reported that they don't believe expansion of full-day kindergarten opportunities for local families would be hindered by available physical space. Their predictions are affirmed by the experience of districts that share similar demographic characteristics, and have experienced few issues finding available classroom space (specifically, both Ogden and Carbon County school districts).

School districts that serve Utah's quickly-growing suburban areas and "bedroom communities" are likely to experience the greatest difficulty overcoming this barrier, and will need the most time and support to plan around current facility limitations. Administrators in Alpine, Cache, Canyons, Davis, Jordan and Box Elder all reported that growing student populations are already creating pressure on available physical facilities designed around half-day kindergarten programs.

Expansion planning in these areas would be well-informed by the experiences of their fellow Utah school districts, as many have already come up with plans to overcome space limitations. For example, Kane School District is preparing to break ground on a new elementary school in Kanab that will allow for all three kindergarten classrooms to expand to full-day programming. Kane SD's other three elementary schools, which are much smaller, already offer full-day kindergarten to all interested families.

Juab School District recently transitioned its sixth-graders out of elementary schools and into the junior high school; administrators believe that a few additional adjustments could be made to accommodate full-day programming in all four of its elementary schools. Administrators in Murray School District report that a similar adjustment could be made in that district to accommodate more full-day kindergarten classes (along with sensible use of portables).

This grade-adjusting approach worked for Park City School District, which coupled its full-day kindergarten expansion with the roll-out of a new public preschool program for all four-year-old children in 2015. In order to accommodate the influx of new early learners in their elementary schools, grades were reshuffled districtwide. Elementary schools became pre-school through fifth grade (Pk-5) institutions. One middle school covers grades six and seven, while the other handles grades eight and nine. Park City High School serves tenth, eleventh and twelfth graders.

Several school districts expressed both a concern about limited physical space and an enthusiastic willingness to overcome that barrier and expand full-day kindergarten offerings as soon as possible.

Early educators in Washington County School District indicated a willingness to use modular/portable classrooms for older students, in order to free up classrooms for new full-day kindergarten students. A regional administrator with the Utah Rural Schools Association, who has also served as a school principal and a district superintendent in rural Utah, speculated that other districts would be willing to do the same.

The best thing state leaders could do to support LEA-level parent surveying and subsequent planning, would be to show LEAs that there will be a reliable, stable funding source available in the immediate future.

Early education administrators in many LEAs have been thinking about full-day kindergarten expansion for some time; the promise of a state funding stream would justify putting those thoughts onto paper in the form of concrete plans.

State leaders also need to show that they understand that some districts – specifically the aforementioned large suburban districts – will need more support and technical assistance in overcoming physical space barriers. Districts with rapidly expanding student populations have continued to build elementary schools around the half-day concept, even as parent interest in full-day programs has grown. Designating a capital fund for full-day kindergarten expansion, utilizing one-time education dollars, would help to assuage concerns in these districts about their ability to access full WPU funding for kindergarten students.

***“The research was overwhelming, the assessment scores made it clear. Just 2.5 hours a day to hit all our learning objectives, with age-appropriate breaks and transitions throughout the day, simply was not sufficient.*”**

On top of that, we live in a community with a lot of poverty, where parents have several jobs. Now we can be an option that provides families with a full day of high quality, age-appropriate learning in a safe environment.”

**Grand
County SD**



Sending Signals

State leaders could signal to interested districts and charters to begin their Kindergarten Program Planning now in any number of ways. Here are just a few suggestions:

The legislature can authorize **a time-limited “Kindergarten Access Task Force,”** to determine a funding path toward maximum access to programs that reflect parent preference (and create the necessary attendant legislative proposals).

The Governor can direct his Commission on Education Excellence to develop **a supplemental “Kindergarten Education Roadmap,”** outlining a three-year funding and implementation plan for accomplishing maximum access to families’ preferred kindergarten options.

Legislative leadership, the Governor's office and the Utah State Board of Education can **release a joint letter, announcing state leaders' intention** to work toward the creation of more kindergarten opportunities to meet the needs of Utah families.

The newly-created Early Childhood Commission could make kindergarten expansion a focus of its early work, with **"right-sized" kindergarten programs (aligned and coordinated with child care providers, community organizations and state-funded preschool)** as the capstone of a well-coordinated early childhood system.

STEP THREE:

Local and Regional Early Childhood Coordination

Full-day kindergarten programming should not be expanded in a vacuum. Private child care providers will experience impacts to their center- and home-based programs. The preschool curriculae used in both private and public programs may need to be adjusted. Local Head Start programs may require adjustment. Transportation schedules – particularly between schools and community programs or private child care settings – will be disrupted.

The need for careful community- and district-level planning for expansion of full-day kindergarten options directly implicates another critically important challenge in Utah: overall coordination of early childhood care and services at the community level, with a particular emphasis on successful transition of young children into kindergarten and first grade.²⁶

Whether a child spends her early years in a public pre-school setting, under the care of a home-based child care provider, or at home with her own parents, that child will most likely enter Utah's public school system by the age of six. At that point, the state of Utah – as per its own constitution and statutory obligations – will be responsible for providing a free and effective education to that child. It is in the best interest of all our children to have various community services, early education programs, child care programs and other stakeholders work together to make sure each child is prepared to succeed and thrive once they embark on their formal education.

Coordination between stakeholders is required to ensure convenience and consistency for children and their families. Utah communities benefit from a variety of early childhood programs – from home visiting and early intervention for special needs children, to Head Start and UPSTART, Waterford's on-line learning program for pre-school age children. But state leaders have now consistently acknowledged that these programs don't cooperate and collaborate as well as they should, primarily due to the fact that they are scattered between various agencies and organizations, with little shared governance.

This concern led to the establishment of Utah's new Early Childhood Commission in 2019, and the codification of its official advising body, the Early Childhood Utah (ECU) Advisory Council.²⁷ At the outset of 2020, the full Early Childhood Commission has met twice. The ECU Advisory Council, which has a number of issue-specific subcommittees, meets more frequently and is in the process of generating recommendations for better alignment of government services for families with young children.

State-level program alignment is important. But good transitions for young children require coordination at the more accessible level of community, where the people who actually work with those children live, work and raise their own families.

Different communities around Utah have been coming to this realization on their own, even as the Early Childhood Commission attempts to grapple with statewide early childhood service coordination from Salt Lake City. For example, the Park City Community Foundation began in 2019 to convene an Early Childhood Alliance that coordinates early childhood care and services in Park City and its surrounding communities. Park City's Early Childhood Alliance recently hired a coordinator (an employee of the Park City Foundation) and regularly hosts more than a dozen community stakeholders at its monthly meetings. The group includes representatives from Park City School District, local health care providers who work with young children, private child care providers, church communities with charitable programs and home visiting programs. The group is committed to ensuring that all children born in Summit County have a chance to succeed in life. Toward that end, stakeholders work together to reduce overlap between programs so more community needs can be met effectively for families with young children. Rather than compete, organizations and agencies try to support one another, while leveraging their unique strengths to meet specific family needs.

In Box Elder and Rich School Districts, educators coordinate less formally, and within a narrower purview, to help families prepare their children for the transition to kindergarten. In Box Elder, the district hosts a "pre-school round-up" with private community-based preschool providers in the area, to share information about learning expectations for children entering kindergarten. In Rich County, the largest private community-based preschool provider in the area used to be a kindergarten teacher for the school district; they work together to plan an annual on-site kindergarten visit for the preschoolers before they begin attending elementary school.

In Price, the Care About Childcare Region 6 Office (hosted by Utah State University's Eastern Campus) has started to convene monthly meetings for early education stakeholders in the Carbon County area. The Carbon County Early Childhood Alliance grew out of friction between private child care providers, local Head Start programs and Carbon County School District. Stakeholders felt as if they were "competing" to recruit children to their programs, and not communicating enough about the academic expectations children would face once they entered school. The Care About Childcare office was a natural convening point; staff members regularly work with families and childcare providers throughout the county, and are the nexus of many professional development and training opportunities for early educators.

It is particularly important to note that any expansion of full-day kindergarten programming in Utah will take place in the midst of a crisis of child care accessibility.

The Center for American Progress and other national entities have confirmed what many Utah families already know: that affordable, accessible child care is out of reach for most Utah parents of young children.²⁸ Without careful planning and coordination, expansion of full-day kindergarten programs could inadvertently put more pressure on an already-stressed child care sector.

Child care providers who are currently serving kindergarten-aged children, may experience difficulty continuing to provide services for younger children, should kindergarten expansion substantially change their enrollment figures. The licensing requirements for child care providers in Utah demand that younger children (birth to two years) be tended in smaller ratios (four children to one teacher/provider) than older children (eight children to one teacher/provider). Child care providers, particular those who provide center-based care and education, are concerned that fewer older children in their programs will mean substantial disruption for an already tenuous business model. Parents already struggle to find and pay for infant and toddler care; the cost of such care is higher than that for older children, as it is at least twice as expensive to provide.

Private child care providers in Utah have already expressed concerns about the potential business impacts of expanding both preschool and full-day kindergarten offerings for free to families through the public school system. These concerns are based partly on some providers' personal experiences trying to operate child care centers in areas where school districts have already expanded these early education opportunities, and is confirmed by other professionals working in the sector.

School districts have a mixed record when it comes to collaboration with local child care providers. In some areas, public school early educators and private sector providers participate in coordinated professional development and training programs, often through Care About Childcare Resource & Referral offices. In other areas, providers struggle to communicate with district administrators about transportation, assessments, special student needs and academic expectations. With state encouragement of more coordination between schools, child care providers and other stakeholders, we could see improved academic outcomes for children, while also alleviating potential child care access issues.

In Wisconsin, for example, school districts partnered with private childcare centers in order to overcome physical capacity issues when expanding full-day kindergarten options. School districts were encouraged to partner with private child care programs in their communities, and some school districts actually paid for certified district educators to teach kindergarten classes in private child care centers.²⁹

State early education leaders must continue to pursue system alignment at the state level, but also should be exploring ways to incentivize, encourage and support community-level early education coordination.

The benefits of this type of coordination will persist well beyond the expansion of full-day kindergarten programming. It is at this level that some of the creative preschool mixed-delivery systems we see in other states have been generated, wherein public schools and private child care providers share teachers, classrooms and professional development opportunities. Texas and Illinois have both leveraged local partnerships to accommodate expanded state-funded preschool opportunities. In addition to overcoming physical space limitations, such partnerships can help to reduce transportation and disruptive transitions for young children and their families.

The “community” part of “community coordination” looks very different, obviously, depending on where one is in the state. For some of Utah’s far-flung “frontier” counties, where a school district is serving only a few dozen kindergarten children every year, “community” coordination makes sense on a regional scale. The Rural Schools Administration provides a template for such representation, with regional hubs serving multiple rural counties (for example, the Central Utah Educational Services – or CUES – district includes Tintic, Juab, South and North Sanpete, Sevier, Piute and Wayne Counties). In highly-populated urban areas, such as Salt Lake City or West Valley City, even a city- or school-district-wide coordination effort might be too large to be manageable. Neighborhoods, or high school “feeder” networks, may provide a more sensible scale for coordination.

For community coordination to be effective, “community” needs to be defined by local stakeholders who are best acquainted with the invisible boundaries of their shared experiences.

These are the on-the-ground actors who work with children and their families on a regular basis, and understand from lived experience where communication and coordination is failing to occur. Their working relationships with one another can make the difference with regards to how well the needs of local families with young children are met.

CONCLUSION:

Time to Move Forward

Early education represents a critical investment in our children. Building skills and confidence in the early years will set our kids up for future success. Successful kids grow into successful adults, and successful adults eventually form the vibrant, skilled workforce Utah needs to drive its thriving economy.

Expanding access to full-day kindergarten is the simplest next step Utah can take to increase its investment in early education – and, by extension, in future academic success for all our kids.

Recognizing the importance of early education in preparing children to learn in school – and, in particular, in closing preparation gaps for our more challenged youngsters – and to provide a solid footing for all Utah students to read proficiently by the end of third grade, the Utah State Board of Education approved Early Learning as the first of four priorities in its new Strategic Direction. To reach its 2022 target of 65.5% literacy proficiency (from 48.6% in 2018) and a variety of other academic targets related to proficiency and equity, a key strategy to meet Utah’s improved Early Learning goal is to “increase optional access to high-quality extended-day kindergarten programs.”³⁰ Pursuant to that strategy, USBE is the driving force behind HB99, “Kindergarten Enhancement Amenements.”

The Governor’s Commission on Education Excellence has long championed early education, with the expansion of both optional extended-day kindergarten and preschool opportunities featured in the 10-Year Education Roadmap released in 2017.³¹ In October 2019, the Commission unanimously agreed that funding for more optional extended-day kindergarten was among its top priorities for the 2020 legislative session.³² Accordingly, the 2020 Governor’s budget recommended an increase of \$18.6 million of new funding for optional extended-day kindergarten.³³

In 2016, the Utah State Legislature also (partially) endorsed an expansion of state-funded full-day kindergarten opportunities for Utah families. Rep. Lowry Snow (R-Saint George) introduced HB42, “Early Learning Amendments,” which would have appropriated \$17.5 million to be used for “optional enhanced kindergarten” competitive grants. The bill received a near-unanimous vote of support in the House Education Committee, followed by passage on the House floor with 77% of representatives voting in favor. The Senate Education Committee vote was unanimous for a favorable recommendation, as was the Senate’s floor vote on “second reading.” The bill, despite this overwhelming support, stalled before the necessary “third reading.” Though apparently philosophically supportive, House and Senate leadership stopped short of making a financial commitment to the full proposal.³⁴

Utah’s Parent-Teacher Association (PTA), an affiliate of the national PTA that is also organized at local, council and state levels in Utah, was a strong supporter of HB42, as well. The organization stated that the legislative proposal aligned with its priority to support programs that help children succeed in school.³⁵

Early education is also a concern of the state Intergenerational Welfare Reform Commission, whose primary goal is to measurably reduce the number of Utah families in the cycle of poverty. State leaders working on these intergenerational poverty initiatives stress that child well-being is a critical key to success later in life. Focus areas of child well-being include early childhood development and education, with a five-year goal to align all systems involved in early childhood development. The intended outcome is that our state has the capacity to prepare those children, most at risk of remaining in a cycle of intergenerational poverty, to finish their kindergarten year ready to succeed in school.³⁶

It is time for the state legislature to stand as a leader in the statewide effort to ensure that every Utah family that wants to send their child to a full-day kindergarten program, or any kindergarten program of their choosing, is able to do so.

ENDNOTES

1. See Appendix A.
2. National average rate of kindergarten participation in 2017, as reported by the National Center for Education Statistics. Available at <https://nces.ed.gov/fastfacts/display.asp?id=516> (last accessed February 2, 2020).
3. Utah State Board of Education data for school year 2018-19, available upon request from USBE staff, Department of Teaching and Learning.
4. Ibid.
5. The KEEP assessment does not measure student performance by using the same standards and questions at the beginning of the year as at the end of the year. Rather, the version of the KEEP assessment administered at the start of the school year assesses student proficiency against what students are expected to know at the beginning of kindergarten. The version of the KEEP assessment administered at the end of the school year assesses student proficiency against what students are expected to know at the beginning of first grade.
6. For an example of how kindergarten funding is considered in the Basic School Program budget, visit the archived Compendium of Budget Information (COBI) at <https://cobi.utah.gov/2015/311/financials> (last accessed February 3, 2020); kindergarten funding is included in a separate line item within that budget, to account for the differential calculation of .55 WPU for each student.
7. Enrolled language of SB49, "Optional Extended-day Kindergarten," available at <https://le.utah.gov/~2007/bills/sbillint/SB0049.htm> (last accessed February 3, 2020). Legislative appropriation for state FY2015-16 can be seen in the archived COBI at <https://cobi.utah.gov/2015/1596/financials> (last accessed); the \$7.5 million appropriation is clearly marked as "Beginning Non-Lapsing," which means that the program must be submitted and approved as a one-time budget line item each year, in the legislative appropriations process.
8. Enrolled language of HB168, "Kindergarten Supplemental Enrichment Program," available at <https://le.utah.gov/~2017/bills/static/HB0168.html> (last accessed February 3, 2020). Legislative appropriation for HB168 can be reviewed in the archived COBI for FY2017-18, <https://cobi.utah.gov/2017/1/issues/10814> (last accessed February 3, 2020).
9. General overviews of these location education funding mechanisms are available from: USBE (<https://www.schools.utah.gov/file/145f8ae8-f015-4164-a5d8-bddef37c6e40>) (last accessed February 3, 2020); the Utah Taxpayers Association (<https://utahtaxpayers.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/04/FD2019-School-Spending-Report.pdf>) (last accessed February 3, 2020); and local school districts, such as this one from Tooele County School District (<https://1.cdn.edl.io/YwCQHvhdIKq6zGwTqTB0PynP0HLMf7yibGrD6L4Xq8Yjal3l.pdf>) (last accessed February 3, 2020).
10. Information presented in September 5, 2019, meeting of the Tax Restructuring and Equalization Task Force; slide deck available at <https://le.utah.gov/interim/2019/pdf/00003816.pdf> (last accessed February 3, 2020).
11. Ibid.
12. This legislative proposal, with its appropriation of additional funding for the Optional Extended-Day Kindergarten program administered by USBE, was among the top five legislative priorities for the Board, as voted in December 2019. News reporting on this public expression of support can be reviewed here: <https://www.deseret.com/utah/2019/12/5/20997696/state-school-boards-funding-growth-value-of-wpu-and-optional-extended-day-kindergarten>; and here: <https://www.deseret.com/utah/2019/12/4/20993530/utah-full-day-kindergarten-board-education>.
13. Language of legislative proposal, and attendant legislative votes, are available at <https://le.utah.gov/~2016/bills/static/HB0042.html> (last accessed February 3, 2020).
14. Kindergarten Entry and Exit Profile (KEEP) data available from Utah State Board of Education, Department of Teaching and Learning. Also reflected in district level data, available directly from school districts (including Washington County, Carbon, Ogden and Granite).
15. The actual number of students served by OEK grant funding fluctuates from year to year, and includes students served by a variety of very different programs. Some districts use OEK funding to pay for a short period of supplemental instruction (45 to 60 minutes), and sometimes on a rotating basis (one student may participate for only a few months, and then "cycle out" once they have caught up with their peers). Other districts use OEK as part of a patchwork of funding to cover a full day of kindergarten, for all students in the class, for the entire school year. In order to make a year-to-year comparison about the investment impact of state OEK dollars, we have calculated the number of .45 WPUs that could be covered by, in 2007, \$7.5 million – or the amount required, per student, to increase the standard .55 WPU for an enrolled kindergarten for a half day of instruction, to a full 1.0 WPU (the same as is provided for an enrolled public school student of any grade, first through twelfth). We have made this calculation for each year, using an updated kindergarten enrollment for that year, and the actual WPU for that year, until the 2020-21 school year. For future school years, we have predicted a 4% increase in the WPU (the same increase as was appropriated by the legislature during the 2019 general session) for each year. We have used the kindergarten enrollment for the 2019-20 school year as a safe prediction for kindergarten classes in the following three years (in fact, kindergarten enrollment has decreased slightly each year, from the 2016-17 school year to the 2019-20 school year). Figures following were obtained either directly from USBE staff or from the following pages on the USBE website [<https://www.schools.utah.gov/data/reports?mid=1424&tid=4> (enrollment figures, last accessed on February 2, 2020), and <https://www.schools.utah.gov/File/04d86516-f5fd-4251-bba0-5d0ea08d2b74> (WPU figures, last accessed on February 2, 2020)]: 2006-07 School year: 47,721 total K enrollment, \$2,514 WPU; 2016-17: 49,973, \$3,184; 2017-18: 49,229, \$3,311; 2018-19: 49,116; 2019-20: 48,789, \$3,532. Predicted figures used to calculate investment impact in students served in 2020-21 school year: 48,789 total K enrollment, \$3,673 (2019-20 WPU+4%).

16. Similarly, these figures were calculated by predicting that K enrollment will stay the same over the next three years (a conservative budgetary prediction, as a very slight decrease is likely based on recent trends), and that the WPU would be increased by 4% each year. For example, if HB99 is passed and \$18.6 million added to the OEK program during the 2020 General Session, the overall investment amount for this budget line item would be \$26.1 million. This amount of funding would cover the .45 WPU (.45 x (\$3532 x 1.04)) per student necessary for 15,820 kindergarten students to be funded for a full WPU (or 32.4% of 48,789 total enrolled kindergarteners, as conservatively predicted for SY2020-21).
17. From “Eighth Annual Report on Intergenerational Poverty, Welfare Dependence and the Use of Public Assistance,” the annual report of Utah’s Intergenerational Welfare Reform Commission (2019). Available at <https://jobs.utah.gov/edo/intergenerational/igp19.pdf> (last accessed February 3, 2020).
18. If yet another \$18.6 million were appropriated by the legislature in the 2021 General Session, overall funding for the OEK program would rise to a total of \$44.7 million, to be distributed and spent during the 2021-21 school year. Our predictions for the investment impact of this funding include stable overall kindergarten enrollment (48,789) and a WPU increase of 4% (\$3,673*1.04). Using this figures, \$44.7 million would cover the .45 WPU per student necessary for 26,003 kindergarten students to be funded for a full WPU (or 53.3% of 48,789 total enrolled kindergartners).
19. Information presented in September 5, 2019, meeting of the Tax Restructuring and Equalization Task Force; slide deck available at <https://le.utah.gov/interim/2019/pdf/00003816.pdf> (last accessed February 3, 2020).
20. An overview of the basic parameters of federal education funding under Title 1, Part A, of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act is available from National Center for Education Statistics at <https://nces.ed.gov/fastfacts/display.asp?id=158> (last accessed February 3, 2020).
21. Public schools are required by state rule to offer at least two hours of kindergarten instruction (R277-419-2.31); as per the state constitution, this instruction must be provided free to all children (Utah State Constitution, Article 10, Section 1). Canyons and Murray School Districts describe their tuition-based enrichment programs as completely optional, and to be considered above-and-beyond the free, public kindergarten offered for one half of a school day, for all enrolled students.
22. Utah’s shortage of qualified teachers is well documented in “A Vision For Teacher Excellence,” a report released in October 2019 by Envision Utah. Report available at https://www.envisionutah.org/images/Vision_for_Teacher_Excellence.pdf (last accessed February 3, 2020). The Associated Press covered this teacher shortage, as part of a national trend, in August 2019, as well. Article available <https://www.usnews.com/news/politics/articles/2019-08-23/teacher-shortage-protests-complicate-educator-pay-dynamics> (last accessed February 2020).
23. U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, Occupational Employment Statistics, May 2018 State Occupational Employment and Wage Estimates – Utah. Available at https://www.bls.gov/oes/2018/may/oes_ut.htm#25-0000 (last accessed February 3, 2020).
24. As described in “Lessons Learned From Implementing All-Day Kindergarten,” Indiana Family Impact Series (2001). Available at https://www.purdue.edu/hhs/hdfs/fii/wp-content/uploads/2015/07/s_infis03c02.pdf (last accessed February 3, 2020).
25. As described in “Tuition-free, Full-Day Kindergarten Commences in Colorado,” New America (2019). Available at https://www.purdue.edu/hhs/hdfs/fii/wp-content/uploads/2015/07/s_infis03c02.pdf (last accessed February 3, 2020).
26. Utah’s lack of coordination and alignment within the system of early childhood care and education is well documented in the “Early Childhood Services Study,” produced by the Utah Department of Workforce Services and the University of Utah’s Utah Education Policy Center, and released in December 2017. Available at <https://jobs.utah.gov/occ/EarlyChildhoodServicesStudy.pdf> (last accessed February 3, 2020).
27. An Early Childhood Commission initially was proposed in legislation by Rep. Rebecca Chavez-Houck (co-sponsored by Senator Ann Milner) during the 2018 General Session; HB319, “Early Care and Learning Coordination Amendments” failed to complete the entire legislative process. Language of legislative proposal, and attendant legislative votes, are available at <https://le.utah.gov/~2018/bills/static/HB0319.html> (last accessed February 3, 2020). Utah’s Early Childhood Commission was established in 2019 with the passage of HB47, “Early Childhood Coordination Amendments,” sponsored by Rep. Lowry Snow and Sen. Ann Milner. Final enrolled language available at <https://le.utah.gov/~2019/bills/static/HB0047.html> (last accessed February 3, 2020).
28. Reported by, among others, the Center for American Progress, as part of its 2019 Early Learning Factsheet series; available at <https://cdn.americanprogress.org/content/uploads/2019/09/12072409/Utah.pdf> (last accessed February 3, 2020).
29. See reporting by The Cap Times, an online news organization based, and reporting on civic issues, in Madison, Wis., about negotiations over expansion of “4K” kindergarten programming. Available at https://madison.com/ct/news/local/education/child-care-center-concerns-at-center-of-hearing-on-k/article_016b448b-7714-55d6-b0b9-627b124c5e8e.html (last accessed February 3, 2020).
30. Information about USBE’s Strategic Plan can be reviewed at <https://www.schools.utah.gov/board/utah/strategicplan> (last accessed February 3, 2020). Academic targets and language about “Early Learning goal” taken from <https://www.schools.utah.gov/file/174006b1-6ad5-44f2-8e1d-81079c6df543> (last accessed February 3, 2020).
31. Utah Education Roadmap 2018-2027, produced by the Governor’s Commission on Education Excellence, released in 2017. Available at <https://site.utah.gov/governor/wp-content/uploads/sites/40/2018/12/Utah-Education-Roadmap.pdf> (last accessed February 3, 2020).
32. As reported by KUER 90.1 News, about the October 8, 2019 meeting of the Governor’s Commission on Education Excellence. Available at <https://www.kuer.org/post/governors-education-commission-puts-teacher-compensation-list-2020-legislative-priorities#stream/0> (last accessed February 3, 2020).
33. Governor Herbert’s Recommended Budget for FY2021 Budget, released January 2020. Available at <https://gomb.utah.gov/current-budget/> (last accessed February 3, 2020).
34. Language of legislative proposal, and attendant legislative votes, are available at <https://le.utah.gov/~2016/bills/static/HB0042.html> (last accessed February 3, 2020).
35. As described in Utah PTA informational handout from 2016. Available at <http://www.utahpta.org/bills/2016/Utah%20PTA%202016%20Bill%20Sheet.pdf> (last accessed November 26, 2019).
36. From “Eighth Annual Report on Intergenerational Poverty, Welfare Dependence and the Use of Public Assistance,” the annual report of Utah’s Intergenerational Welfare Reform Commission (2019). Available at <https://jobs.utah.gov/edo/intergenerational/igp19.pdf> (last accessed February 3, 2020).

APPENDIX A

Research shows that children benefit from developmentally-appropriate full-day kindergarten as part of an early learning continuum.

Studies comparing full-day and half-day kindergarten suggest that full-day kindergarten more effectively serves children to accelerate academic achievement and social, emotional, and behavior development, including reducing later chronic absence. Furthermore, full-day kindergarten particularly benefits student groups that are more likely to enter school behind their peers (e.g., English learners, students with disabilities, students from socioeconomically disadvantaged families), narrowing achievement gaps.

In a full-day kindergarten program, teachers have more time to provide effective instruction, differentiate for a variety of learners in their classroom, and offer interventions to low-performing students to meet standards. Additionally, teachers have more opportunities to offer child-directed activities and classroom experiences that enhance and promote children's cognitive, social and emotional skills.

Full-day kindergarten programs differentially benefit groups of students who are at risk for academic failure.

- Gottfried and Le (2016) found that relative to part-day kindergarten, full-day kindergarten attendance is associated with higher achievement scores among students with disabilities at the end of the kindergarten school year. The relationships between full-day kindergarten attendance and outcomes varied by type of disability classification, Significant achievement effects emerged only for children with learning and communication disorders.
- Chang and her colleagues explored the longitudinal effects of all-day kindergarten program on the academic performance of students from diverse racial backgrounds and social class to the end of first grade. Importantly, students from low SES families and Hispanic background displayed enhanced reading achievement in all-day kindergarten. (Chang, Singh, Filer, & Sung, 2009).
- Hahn et al. assessed the extent to which full-day kindergarten, compared with half-day kindergarten, prepares children, particularly those from low-income and minority families, to succeed in primary and secondary school and improve lifelong health. The study found that full-day kindergarten improves academic achievement, a predictor of longer-term health benefits. Also, if targeted to low-income and minority communities, full-day kindergarten can advance health equity. (Hahn et al., 2014)
- Gibbs (2014) tested the impact of full- versus half-day assignment on students' literary skills at the end of the kindergarten year and found that full-day assignment had a substantial, positive effect when comparing

students across treatment conditions within the same school. In particular, Hispanic students realized large full-day kindergarten effects (0.70 s.d.), and notably this impact was statistically different than that experienced by students who are not Hispanic.

- Full-day kindergarten provides additional time to develop cognitively and socially, and is beneficial to students who may have experienced developmental delays, disabilities, or may not been afforded quality preschool opportunities (per WestEd, 2005).

Full-day kindergarteners have highed acadmic achievement when compared to half-day kindergarten.

- Thompson & Sonnenschein (2016) found that full-day children were more likely to attain early word reading by the end of kindergarten which, in turn, predicted higher reading scores in first, third, and fifth grades. Early word reading attainment was associated with decreased SES-related reading gaps in elementary school.
- Lee and her colleagues (2006) examined whether full-day kindergarten increases learning, using a nationally representative sample of over 8,000 kindergartners and 500 U.S. public schools that participated in the Early Childhood Longitudinal Study, Kindergarten Cohort. They found that children who attend schools that offer full-day programs learn more in literacy and mathematics than their half-day counterparts (Lee, Burkam, Ready, Honigman, & Meisels, 2006).
- Bingham and Hall-Kenyon (2013) investigated the effect of full- and half-day kindergarten programs on English language learners (ELL) and English-only-speaking children's literacy and mathematics performance in a large urban school district. They found that all children (both ELL and non-ELL) in full-day kindergarten settings performed significantly better on spring literacy assessments and mathematics when compared to children in half-day settings (Bingham & Hall-Kenyon, 2013).
- Gibbs (2014) tested the impact of full- versus half-day assignment on students' literary skills at the end of the kindergarten year. The study found that full-day assignment had a substantial, positive effect when comparing students across treatment conditions within the same school.
- Data from the Early Childhood Longitudinal Study: Kindergarten Class of 1998-99 show children in full-day kindergarten programs achieving statistically greater gains in early literacy skills than their peers in half-day programs.
- Studies indicate that compared to half-day K programs, full-day K increases students' academic achievement, literacy and language development, readiness for the primary grades, and can also benefit children socially and emotionally and increase attendance in later grades (WestEd, 2005).



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