

Wait, Still No Optional Full-Day Kindergarten for Your Family?

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Written by: Anna Thomas



Labor Day weekend is in the past, the “heat dome” has cracked, and we are well on our way into the 2022-23 school year. Oh, and the majority of Utah families *still* have no choice when it comes to their child’s kindergarten program.

Ensuring that all Utah families have access to the type of kindergarten program that is right for their child – be it [half-day or full-day](#) – remains a top priority of Voices for Utah Children this school year. The current reality in our state is that most families would prefer to attend optional full-day kindergarten (FDK), but aren’t able to access it at their neighborhood or charter school.

We are proud of the progress we and our many amazing partners have made together over the past several years:

- From \$7.5 million in state funding for optional full-day kindergarten programs in 2018 to \$36.7 million available in for the current school year!
- From fewer than 25% of Utah kids with access to optional FDK in 2018 to more than 40% with access in the current school year!

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Nonetheless, Utah remains dead last in the nation in terms of kindergarteners who have access to a full-day program. Most states haven't seen that low of a rate of participation in FDK for decades.

Many Utah parents want it, many Utah schools want to offer it, but the funding available to expand optional FDK is simply insufficient. As a result, in our state, a family's home address remains the single greatest determining factor as to whether that family has the chance to participate in an optional full-day kindergarten program.

We believe 2023 is the year to turn this around – by passing legislation that guarantees future education funding for optional full-day kindergarten for as many families as would like to participate.

During the 2022 legislative session, Utah policymakers had the opportunity to pass such a bill: [HB193, Full-Day Kindergarten](#), sponsored by Rep. Steve Waldrip and Sen. Ann Millner. By the end of the session, however, the [original bill had been scaled back in funding, and stripped of critical provisions](#) that supported schools in expanding their optional FDK programs. The additional funding helped many schools increase access to optional FDK, but close to 60% of families still have no chance to participate.

With [the support of thousands of Utah families with young children](#), our coalition partners are determined to pass a legislative solution in 2023 that will do right by all Utah kindergarteners, regardless of where they live in the state. Check out our [Fall 2022 Full-Day Kindergarten](#) video below, and visit the [Utah Full-Day Kindergarten Now Coalition](#) website for ideas on how to be part of the solution!