

Port Angeles School District
Kindergarten Study Task Force Report
February 23, 2004

BACKGROUND

Beginning in February 2003 the Board of Directors requested the formation of a Kindergarten Study Task Force to make a recommendation regarding kindergarten enrichment program options. District kindergarten teachers, Title I reading support teachers, a developmental pre-school teacher, and a central services staff member met to discuss enhanced kindergarten programs for our district's children. Current literature indicates remarkable growth in student learning as a result of enhanced kindergarten programs. With increased accountability at every level of the system, from kindergarten through graduation, it was determined that a study of alternate kindergarten programs could inform our decisions regarding program offerings and a task force should be convened.

The Kindergarten Study Task Force comprised twelve members, including one board member, Jessica Schreiber; four kindergarten teachers, Kathy Wesley, Roni Prince, Jeanne Wolfley, and Linda Waknitz; two elementary school principals, Mary Hebert and Michelle Olsen; two parents, Cheryl Baumann and Vicki Helwick, two community members without children in school, Michele Delli Gatti and Cynthia Martin, ad hoc; and the task force's non-voting chair, Mary Ann Unger.

The Kindergarten Study Task Force held its first meeting on February 11, 2003, and set meeting dates through May 2003. The task force did not complete its work during 2002-2003 and continued its work during 2003-2004.

This report has been designed to present the directive from the board and superintendent, describe the task force composition, provide a summary of task force meetings, and provide board members with recommendations following the study.

Appendix A displays the questions asked during site visits and telephone interviews. Appendix B summarizes the site visits. Appendix C provides a summary of articles and research reviewed by the task force. Appendix D provides the list of task force members.

PARAMETERS

The task force was asked to examine research, seek input from staff and community members, visit schools implementing alternate kindergarten programs, and examine current practices within and outside Port Angeles School District. With this background information the task force was asked to make recommendations in three areas: (1) the advisability and expected outcomes of changing from a half-day program to an alternate kindergarten enrichment program; (2) determine who would participate in an alternative program; and (3) when the program would begin if the recommendation proved feasible.

PROCESS

The task force began its work by reviewing a variety of articles and information regarding early childhood education and research about alternate kindergarten programs. The focus of several research articles was all-day kindergarten programs and their impact on student learning. The members of the task force discussed the implications for kindergarten programs in the Port Angeles School District based on the information reviewed. Summaries of the articles are provided in Appendix C.

The task force invited Patra Boots from the Sequim School District to a meeting to discuss the process and pitfalls encountered when Sequim examined the options to change from a half-day kindergarten program to a full-day program. Ms. Boots gave the task force copies of questions they used when visiting other districts, their recommendation to the board of directors, and the process they followed.

Steve Finch, elementary principal from Grant Street Elementary School in Port Townsend School District, joined the task force for one meeting to describe their all-day kindergarten program. Following his presentation a team of kindergarten teachers from Port Angeles made a site visit to the all-day kindergarten program at Grant Street Elementary School.

During the spring of 2003 several members visited Port Townsend's all-day kindergarten program. The task force members indicated they were interested in visiting other programs to see other models. Plans were made for visits to Edmonds School District and Enumclaw School District. Teams from the task force visited each of these districts in January 2004. A summary of each visit is found in Appendix B.

LITERATURE REVIEWED

The task force primarily focused on, reviewed, and researched three models for kindergarten programs. A half-day model as it currently exists within our district and half-day models that provide alternative curriculum were reviewed. We then heard about the model currently in place at Dry Creek and Jefferson wherein only some at-risk students are identified to remain at school all-day. The final model reviewed was an all- or full-day model in which students remain at school for a full day, every day.

The task force examined literature indicating that all-day programs are effective for all students and all students benefit from a longer school day experience. The literature is also very clear to point out that the largest gains and most change occurs with students entering kindergarten with the lowest skills. Even students who arrive well-prepared for kindergarten will benefit from an enhanced and extended day program. It will also help Port Angeles School District students keep pace with their peers who are receiving this additional instruction in more and more kindergarten programs throughout the state and nation. Most programs studied began by offering a full- *and* part-day option for parents. The part-day option generally ends after the first or second year of implementation as most parents have opted for the all-day program.

The research examined indicates students attending all-day kindergarten programs are less likely to be referred to special education programs. The statistics indicate a lower drop-out rate for

students participating in an all-day program. The research also refers to increased parent involvement over time for the parents of children in all-day kindergarten programs. These additional benefits were considered as important long-term implications for implementing an enhanced kindergarten program.

There is consensus among the task force members that the model for all-day kindergarten currently operating at Dry Creek and Jefferson Elementary Schools is exemplary and supports the most at-risk students to gain skills needed to be successful in grade one. If a staged model is chosen from the recommendations, finding a way to support a similar program at all schools is viewed as a necessary first step. Regardless of the model implemented for kindergarten, the members believe extra support is necessary and should be continued for our most at-risk kindergarteners. The task force agreed any model eventually recommended to the board be made available to all children at no additional cost to their families.

The task force members agree that our current half-day model does not allow for the enriching and challenging curriculum they would like all children to experience. Time constrains the teachers' ability to provide an exploratory (interactive, talking, and doing), child centered program that is meaningful and challenging. Understanding the constraints of our current program model, the task force members wish to underscore the exemplary work our kindergarten teachers are currently offering. The teachers are doing a fantastic job of providing a narrowed focus of content. Teachers simply do not have the time to support children's learning in a wider range of developmentally appropriate activities during a half-day.

MAJOR ISSUES CONSIDERED

Although the task force was not asked to consider financial implications, some issues did occur during discussion and are included here. Tuition to attend an enhanced kindergarten program, busing, facility capacity, impact to other district programs, impact to teachers' collaborative time, parental preferences, and the need for support through state-level funding of all-day kindergarten were thought to have potential financial impacts on a kindergarten model change.

The task force believes an all-day kindergarten program is of such high value that no tuition should be charged, thus allowing free access to the program for all kindergarten age students. A tuition-based model is not recommended due to the large number of low-income families in our district, the inequitable results in student achievement if we were to not have enough subsidized and scholarship spaces in our all-day kindergarten program, and the problems inherent in collecting fees or tuition from parents.

Some cost savings from busing would be made if kindergarten students attended an all-day program. In February 2003 Jerry Eldred estimated the savings in busing at approximately \$75,000. The committee considered this a positive implication for an all-day program model.

The task force understands that examining our facilities to ensure there is adequate and appropriate space for an all-day program will be a necessary activity prior to full implementation.

The model in place at Dry Creek and Jefferson extends the day for a small group of students exhibiting the greatest academic need. The students are selected according to academic need and exit the program as their skills meet or exceed the average level of their classmates. The composition of the extended day class is fluid, based on student need. The economic impact would be a .5 FTE teacher for the extended day program at each elementary school. This has been accomplished at two elementary schools through the use of Title I funding. Title I funding is not sufficient to provide this program at all elementary schools without changing the Title I program design at those schools. The task force believes the Dry Creek and Jefferson model is of high quality and considers it worthy of consideration should funding be available but limited.

The task force wishes to minimize impacts to other district programs should an all-day program be implemented. To this end, the task force discussed the options and possibility of diminishing the impact by suggesting a levy dedicated to the support of an all-day kindergarten model. The levy would provide the community with an opportunity to voice their desire for an all-day program. It would also provide funding when other sources of revenue to support new programs are diminishing.

An all-day kindergarten program would support the recommendation put forward by the Collaborative Time Task Force. Time needed for kindergarten teacher collaboration would offset the additional instructional time kindergarten students will receive in excess of the State Minimum Basic Education Requirements.

Understanding the financial impact generated through an all-day kindergarten program, the task force members request that the Board of Directors write a letter to our governor and legislators calling for funding to districts to support all-day kindergarten for all students. This seems particularly important in light of new requirements of the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) legislation.

RECOMMENDATION

The Kindergarten Study Task Force unanimously supports a recommendation for all-day kindergarten for all students within the Port Angeles School District.

Understanding that all parents may not choose this option, it is suggested that parents be provided an option to pick up their children at a half-day time. No penalty or consequences would be imposed for students attending half-day.

Knowing our current economic circumstances, we understand that a model that is phased in over time may be more feasible. For this reason, our second priority for recommendation is the implementation of the model in place at Dry Creek and Jefferson. The Dry Creek and Jefferson model has demonstrated positive academic results for the students enrolled. Dry Creek has provided this model for four years and has data to support the improved student achievement resulting from its implementation.

The task force recommends the new model be sustainable over time. Some districts have used I-728 funding for the all-day program; however, the task force was concerned that this type of

funding source could lead to a model that would not be sustainable if grant funds were discontinued.

The task force further recommends the following items to ensure successful implementation of an all-day kindergarten program:

- Professional development for teachers of an all-day kindergarten program must be provided prior to and during implementation.
- Outreach for parent education and involvement in understanding early childhood development as well as school participation will be important.
- Collection of baseline data and longitudinal data to support the expected improvement in student performance is highly recommended. They may include a “satisfaction survey” and data on behavioral, social, and emotional growth as well as academic performance.

Further financial suggestions:

- The task force would like to reiterate its request for a letter from the Board of Directors to our governor and legislators calling for sufficient funding to districts to support all-day kindergarten for all students, particularly in light of new requirements of NCLB.
- The members of the task force discussed providing an option to the public through our levy system to support all-day kindergarten. It was suggested that this option allows the community to show its support for an all-day program and that it would create a funding source that would not impact other programs.

Appendix A

Kindergarten Study Task Force Questionnaire

School Observed or Contacted:

Date:

Person Interviewed:

Position Held:

Person Who Interviewed:

- **Main Question:**
 - Why did you begin a full-day kindergarten program in your district?
 - When did you begin your full-day program?
 - Have you studied the success of your program and how?
 - What have been the outcomes for your program?
 - What have been the greatest challenges of beginning your all-day program and what suggestions do you have for handling them?
- Does the district provide parents a choice of full or ½ day kindergarten? How is this structured to make it work? What happens if you can't fulfill a parent's request?
- If only some students attend full day, how to you determine who enrolls? How do you make sure education is equal when some don't get in and others do?
- Did you consider having parents pay? How is that determined? What did you do to educate the community before you began offering full day?
- How is the program funded? Have provisions been made to keep this funding going?
- What hours do students attend? What is the average class size? Do you use paraprofessional support throughout the day?
- When do your teachers receive their planning time? Is there a time built in for planning with specialists?
- What support do you have for at-risk children?
- How do you differentiate instruction for varied learning abilities?

Appendix B

Site Visit Summaries

**Enumclaw, Westwood Elementary
January 14, 2004**

There are 24 students in each classroom. The student day runs from 9:00 a.m. – 3:30 p.m. each day. The teacher is supported by having a para for two hours each morning and a specialist time four days a week for pe/music.

Teachers were told in the spring of 2003 that all teachers would begin teaching a full-day program beginning in fall 2004. Teachers were not asked or involved in a committee to determine if it should be done. Teachers were given a week of training in the summer with literacy specialist, Darla Woods. Darla Woods has come back during the school year for at least three days of follow ups. The two teachers at Westwood felt that they could not have made the change to a full day program without the Darla Woods training.

Another item to note was that each teacher was given \$1,000 to buy tables, materials, and other items that were needed to support this change to a full day program. The teachers at Westwood used the majority of their money to buy tables that were more conducive to students working in cooperative groups.

All of the Enumclaw elementary schools have a full day program. There were some parents at the beginning of the year who were interested in the half-day program (7 parents). Due to the small numbers a part time program was not put into place. There is one child who only comes every other day as the mom only wants him participating half time.

All of the kindergarten students attend the full day program free of charge. The kindergarten program at this point is being funded by I-728 dollars. The teachers were not sure what would happen to the programs if this source of funding disappears. They did share that if the program went back to half-day that they would not continue teaching at the kindergarten level. They would move to first grade.

The teachers shared that the strengths of the program are many:

1. Time to teach subject areas more in-depth
2. Time to teach a balanced literacy program. This means one hour of guided reading and literacy centers with one hour of writing groups which include shared writing and author's chair.
3. Teachers are not rushing through curriculum.
4. Teachers are able to offer instruction to students at their instructional level and in small groups.
5. Teachers felt that the progress of students in January was comparable to where students in the past have been at the end of the year.
6. Teachers credit a large portion of their success to the fact that they have "fully" implemented the Darla Woods Walter program.

Michelle Olsen
Jefferson Principal

Appendix B, continued

Enumclaw, Westwood Elementary, continued

January 14, 2004

I recently observed an all-day kindergarten class in the Enumclaw School District. The two teachers had training by Darla Wood Walters on her literacy and writing strategies. It seemed to be very effective. We observed the students totally engaged in their writing and small reading groups. Their skill level was very close to a first grade level. The support with para time was extremely important to making this small group time effective. The day was broken up nicely with three small recesses and 30 minutes of specialist time every day. I do have concerns about their support of low and at-risk students. Their student body had a much smaller proportion of free and reduced lunch students as compared to our district. We would appear at this time to have more students at-risk than this district.

I would like to go back late spring to observe again and have feedback from these very helpful and knowledgeable ladies. It would be interesting to see if their enthusiasm was still as strong after a full school year. It was a very enjoyable and informative day and my time was well spent observing this school.

Linda Waknitz
Hamilton Elementary

Appendix B, continued

**Edmonds School District
Site Visit – January 22, 2004**

I observed kindergarten programs at two elementary schools in the Edmonds SD on January 22 with Jessica Schreiber. The first school was Meadowdale Elementary. This school had one all-day program that met five days per week and another half-time program that met two and three days alternately each week.

The all-day program had a teacher that had taught PE for 16 years, first grade for a year or so, second grade for one year, and four years in this program. Edmonds does not dictate which of two adopted language arts curriculum programs buildings need to adopt. This classroom was using Harcourt. I did not see any lessons using this. I think the day might start with this. We observed students coloring worksheets, copying words from a list, cutting worksheets, going to recess, and having lunch in a common lunchroom. It appeared that there was little movement in the classroom. I had the impression that a longer day there was used to just add more seatwork. The students had three recesses each day and one half-hour of specialist time each day. There was a para-educator in the classroom each morning

I observed the all-day program at Beverly Elementary in the afternoon. They also have three recesses and a specialist each day. This program uses the Wright Group for language arts. There was lots of movement during the time we were there. They did a MTW lesson with “box it and take it” type boxes. On the walls were writing samples that students had written with a prompt such as “I see a _____”. The teacher was new to this school but a long-time kindergarten teacher who obviously loved what she was doing.

I did not sense that the Edmonds district had a common goal for all-day K. The programs were pretty much left up to the classroom teacher. They did have to meet literacy standards at the end of the year and were in the middle of screening for their quarterly report cards.

I appreciated the opportunity to visit with these teachers. They were very welcoming and gracious. I did come away from both programs feeling very good about what we are doing here in Port Angeles with our kindergarten students!

Kathy Wesley
Kindergarten teacher
Hamilton Elementary

Appendix B, continued

**Edmonds School District
Site Visit – January 22, 2004**

Each elementary school in the Edmonds School District has at least one full-day kindergarten class and one half-time kindergarten class. Parents are given the choice of which program their child will attend. Tuition is charged for the all-day program, although some scholarships are available.

At-risk kindergarten students are not formally identified to receive additional Title I assistance. Parents whose children are struggling academically or socially are encouraged to place their children in a half-time kindergarten program. The following year the child will be enrolled in the all-day class.

Beverly Elementary:

In the full-day kindergarten class a variety of reading and writing activities were scheduled during the morning. An educational assistant was in the classroom for one hour during the literacy block. During this time the teacher and assistant were able to instruct small groups of children. Later in the morning the children participated in phonic and writing activities, working as a whole group and independently.

Academically, the success of the full day class has not been formally assessed. Informally, the principal felt that more material is covered with more in-depth curriculum. The kindergarten teacher and a first grade teacher both agreed that the children in the full-day program have better social skills. The children know and follow behavior expectations, get along well with others and are able to handle a full-day in first grade better than the children in the half time kindergarten program.

Meadowdale Elementary:

During the afternoon the children in the all day kindergarten class read a booklet together and did a math unifix patterning activity and work-paper. The children displayed good social skills.

Summary:

The philosophy of the all-day kindergarten classes we visited in Edmonds differs from the philosophy of the Kindergarten Study Task Force. The two Edmonds schools offered an all-day program for the more academically able students. The at-risk children were on a two year kindergarten program. Our task force's recommendation is to implement an all-day kindergarten program which would focus on additional time for children with low academic skills, while also providing an enriched program for all kindergarten students.

Roni Prince
Cynthia Martin

Appendix C

Titles and Summaries of Articles

Clark, Patricia. *Recent Research on All-Day Kindergarten*, (Clearinghouse on Elementary and Early Childhood Education, 2001). (ERIC document Reproduction No. EDO-PS-01-3)

Clark reported mixed results from previous studies on the impact of full-day programs for kindergarten students. More recent research shows consistent positive academic outcomes for all children enrolled in all-day kindergarten. As much as 60% of the variance in increased academic outcome measures is attributed to all-day kindergarten. The studies also found positive results in measures of social and behavioral skills for students in all-day programs.

Elicker, James. (2000). "Full-Day Kindergarten: Exploring the Research," *Phi Delta Kappa International*.

Elicker underscores our changing societal needs and the importance of learning in the early years. Lost learning opportunities in the early years are difficult to regain and attention is being focused on the quality and effectiveness of kindergarten programs. The length of the school day for kindergarten students was listed as one component and teacher skill and philosophy was critical to student achievement. Elicker presents five conclusions: (1) students in all-day kindergarten consistently progress further academically; (2) There is tentative evidence that all-day kindergarten has stronger, longer-lasting academic benefits for children from low-income families; (3) no current evidence that the academic achievement gains of all-day kindergarten persist beyond first grade; (4) no evidence for detrimental effects of all-day kindergarten; (5) kindergarten teachers and parents strongly value the increased flexibility.

Elicker, James and Mathur, Sangeeta. (1997). "What Do They Do All Day? Comprehensive Evaluation of a Full-Day Kindergarten," *Early Childhood Research Quarterly* 12, no.4.

This was a very technical article that we found referenced in many of the other articles reviewed. This summary is limited to the discussion at the conclusion of the article. A variety of benefits of full-day kindergarten programming, compared to a traditional half-day program and these differences became stronger during the second year. Teachers saw children in full-day classrooms as better able to engage in classroom activities. Parents perceived similar benefits. Academic outcomes at the end of the kindergarten year indicated slightly greater progress and higher levels of first grade readiness among children in full-day programs. They concluded participation in a full-day kindergarten program provided an enjoyable and developmentally-appropriate experience, with some academic and developmental advantages over the traditional half-day program. They found no evidence for any detrimental effects of full-day kindergarten.

Evansville Vanderburgh School Corporation. (1988). "A Longitudinal Study of the Consequences of Full-Day Kindergarten through Grade Eight."

(<http://www.evsc.k12.in.us/evscinfo/kindergarten/stdy1988.html>)

The majority of full-day kindergarten teachers, primary teachers and parents of children in full-day programs are in favor of full-day programs. There was no

significant difference in school attendance. Children who attend full-day kindergarten have positive feelings about their experience. Children who attend full-day kindergarten have higher conduct marks on report cards in the primary grades. These children consistently have higher achievement test scores in all areas tested except handwriting. This achievement carried into grades one, two and three.

Hopkins, Pam and Katims, Nancy. (Summer, 2002). "A Longitudinal Study of Full-time Kindergarten," *SIRS*, Vol.1, No. 3.

Across three years of tracking the progress of students in full-day kindergarten in the Edmonds School District found positive results in favor of students in the full-time program.

Karweit, Nancy, (March 1992). "The Kindergarten Experience," *Educational Leadership* 82-86.

"Although it is useful to guarantee that all children have the same opportunities for the same amounts of kindergarten education, the real issue is the quality of the experience." Karweit emphasizes the importance of a change in philosophy and professional development for teachers if they are to provide a significant difference in student achievement as a result of increased time at school.

National Association for the Education of Young Children. (1990). Guidelines for Appropriate Curriculum Content and Assessment in Programs Serving Children Ages 3 through 8: A position statement of the National Association for the Education of Young Children and the National Association of Early Childhood Specialists in State Departments of Education. Washington, DC: Author.

This article was dedicated to guidelines for developmentally appropriate curriculum content, its implementation, and assessment. The article describes 20 curriculum content guidelines and 20 suggestions for using the curriculum guidelines. These guidelines would be an appropriate resource for review during the planning and initial implementation phases of a new program model.

Brewster, Cori, and Railsback, Jennifer, (2002). "Full-Day Kindergarten: Exploring an Option for Extended Learning," Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory.

This brochure is a review of the literature regarding alternate kindergarten programs. Many of the points highlighted were reviewed in other articles put before the task force. Two sections that will be useful for school districts implementing a full-day program are "Considerations for Parents" and "Considerations for Policymakers." Conclusions drawn included significant benefits to at-risk or disadvantaged students, fewer daily transitions for young children, and greater social and academic success for students enrolled in all-day programs.

Phillips, Vicki, and Crawford, Marilyn. (2003). "Beyond Alphabets and Apples: In Pursuit of Quality Teaching."

This paper distributed at a Bill & Melinda Gates *foundation* network meeting spoke to the importance of opportunities for ongoing, high quality opportunities

for teacher learning. As a result of implementing such a system, this school district saw significant improvement in student achievement. They began their professional development opportunities at the kindergarten teacher level and built on their learning and the corresponding increased student achievement to drive the need and desire for professional development throughout the system. This system also focused on the conditions under which quality professional development could thrive.

Rothenberg, Dianne. (1984). Full-Day or Half-Day Kindergarten. ERIC Digest (ED256474) Urbana, IL: ERIC Clearinghouse on Elementary and Early Childhood Education. (http://www.ed.gov/databases/ERIC_Digests/ed256474.html)

This article used the following headings to review findings from previously completed studies and research: 1) changes in family patterns, 2) Schools and full-day kindergarten, 3) advantages of full-day programs, 4) disadvantages of full-day programs, 5) advantages of half-day programs, and 6) disadvantages of half-day programs. The conclusions states: The length of the school day is only one dimension of the kindergarten experience. Other important issues include the nature of the kindergarten curriculum and the quality of teaching. In general, research suggests that, as long as the curriculum is developmentally appropriate and intellectually stimulating, either full-or half-day scheduling can provide an adequate introduction to school.

Appendix D

Kindergarten Task Force Membership

	Task Force Composition	Volunteers	✓
1	Board Member (1)	Jessica Schreiber	✓
2	Kindergarten Teachers (4)	Roni Prince (Jefferson)	✓
3		Linda Waknitz (Hamilton)	✓
4		Kathy Wesley (Hamilton)	✓
5		Jeanne Wolfley (Dry Creek)	✓
6	Elementary School Principals (2)	Mary Hebert (Dry Creek)	✓
7		Michelle Olsen (Jefferson)	✓
8	Parents (2) – <i>each from a different school</i>	Vicki Helwick (Jefferson)	✓
9		Cheryl Baumann (Jefferson)	✓
10	Community Representatives (2) – <i>without children in school</i>	Michele Delli Gatti	✓
11		Cynthia Martin	✓
12	Chairperson (1) – non-voting	Mary Ann Unger	✓

✓ Board-approved