



COLLEGE READINESS CONSORTIUM

Research to Practice Brief

Welcome to the second University of Minnesota College Readiness and Achievement Gaps *Research to Practice Brief*. The *Research to Practice Brief* provides school leaders with information and resources on current Minnesota issues related to closing achievement gaps and preparing students for postsecondary success. Each brief provides guidance on one topic and includes resources available at the University of Minnesota and beyond. School leaders can use the *Research to Practice Brief* as a framework for applying current research to best meet their school's needs.

2013 All-day Kindergarten Legislation

The 2013 legislature made a simple but profound change by fully funding all-day kindergarten for all students. School districts were not required to offer all-day kindergarten, but many rushed to find space and adjust elementary lunch schedules to incorporate the entering kindergarten class of 2015. According to the Minnesota Department of Education, 95% of all Minnesota kindergartners attended all-day kindergarten this year (2014-15), up from 62% the previous year.

The rationale for the funding was the growing body of research demonstrating that students who attend all-day kindergarten outperform their peers on academic achievement assessments and are better prepared for first grade. This is true for English learners, too (the subject of the first Research to Practice Brief.)

Principles from the Research

The all day kindergarten on which the evidence of increased academic achievement is based includes these essential elements:

1. "All day" means six or more hours per day, five days a week. This includes time for breakfast, lunch and recess.
2. All day kindergartners should spend 120 minutes on reading and 30 on language arts (not in one block, but across the day and across subjects.)

All day kindergarten should be a rigorous experience without losing the child's sense of discovery and play. Educators sometimes underestimate what a kindergartener is capable of doing. At the same time, planning for developmentally appropriate activities is critical because children ages 5 and 6 can be at very different stages of development.

Whether half or full day, all kindergarten instruction should:

1. Include substantial amounts of play-based activity, designed with intention.

2. Emphasize collaboration and inquiry.
3. Integrate oral expression and writing with reading print and digital materials. Kindergartners are highly motivated to write, combining pictures, letters and words – remember they don't know that they 'can't write'.
4. Include hands-on manipulatives.

How Should School Leaders Apply the Research?

Implementing all-day kindergarten is an opportunity for schools to review their kindergarten practices and not simply extend the time. Some districts may be surprised to find significant variation in instruction, challenge and outcomes across classrooms. Even schools that implemented all-day kindergarten this year will find it valuable to assemble a district-wide team to design or refine their model for next fall, using their learnings from this year. The team should include early childhood specialists, kindergarten teachers, and first-grade (even second grade) teachers. Parents are important stakeholders as well. Kindergarten should not be viewed in isolation, but integrated into a seamless model of development.

The team should set up frameworks for how time is used. Children at this age learn from play. Intentionally designed play helps students build core skills of getting along with others and self-control. Content instruction should integrate subjects, and balance teacher and child directed activities in developmentally appropriate ways. The framework should help teachers push students to go deeper in their thinking and actions. Review the kindergarten writing samples in Appendix C of the [Common Core English Language Arts Standards](#) (Minnesota adopted the ELA Common Core) to see just how far five year olds can go.

There are practical challenges to implementing all-day kindergarten. Twice as many kindergarten classrooms are needed, with more materials, and transportation patterns will change. Children need to learn how to navigate a lunchroom, and the cafeteria schedule has to incorporate them. Recess, especially in Minnesota's climate, is time consuming. The framework should address these issues.

What Does Effective All Day Kindergarten Look Like in the Classroom?

A visit to an all-day kindergarten classroom may find the students playing in different centers, with the teacher working with a few students. For example, the teacher may sit at a table with three or four students and discuss several plants that are sitting on the table with written labels. Integrating science, language arts and math, the teacher prompts the students with questions, such as which plant is taller. In the discussion students or the teacher might pick up measuring tools, look at the written words, write or draw observations in their journals, and create a hypothesis about why one plant is taller. If the visitor asks, the kindergartners should be able to talk about what they are doing.

A return visit might well find the teacher reading out loud to all students. The teacher explicitly models strategies for figuring out meaning, such as sounding out words, summarizing, or stating her understanding from the context. Later the students rotate through small groups applying the strategies to texts at their appropriate reading levels while the teacher guides them. The other students work

independently, perhaps in constructed centers, rereading leveled texts, poems, charts in the room, or books of choice. The reading materials may relate to numbers, science or social studies, such as weather or community helpers. All students write about what they are reading. The teacher may ask a question or students respond to a sentence prompt, such as “I wonder...” Students build oral language by sharing what they wrote with a partner. Later the students come back together and share. These experiences are spread throughout the day and are not in one long literacy block.

Resources

Professional Development

[Minnesota Department of Education](#) has offered seminars on full-day kindergarten and is developing guidance for schools.

Books

- *Developmentally Appropriate Practices: Focus on Kindergarten*. Copple, C., et.al. 2013. NAEYC.
- *The Intentional Teacher: Choosing the Best Strategies for Young Children's Learning*. Epstein, A. 2007. NAEYC
- *Opening Minds: Using Language to Change Lives*. Johnston, P. 2012. Stenhouse Publishers.

References

The [Common Core English Language Arts Standards](#) include many text exemplars for kindergarten and first grade in Appendix B, and student writing samples in Appendix C.

The [National Association for the Education of Young Children](#) has [position statements and standards](#) that are useful references. The literacy statements were developed with the [International Reading Association](#).

The University of Minnesota’s [Center for Applied Research and Educational Improvement](#) published a study on [Five-Year Academic Outcomes for a Cohort of All-Day Kindergarten: What Policies Should Follow?](#)

The Brief is created by the U of M's College Readiness Consortium and Professor Michael Rodriguez, who advises President Kaler on University efforts to close achievement gaps. Many thanks to Debra Peterson, Ann Ruhl Carlson and Shelley Berken, who contributed the ideas and resources for this edition. For more information about current education research, read CEHD's Vision 2020 blog: <http://cehdvision2020.umn.edu/cehd-blog/>

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