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# Teacher Perceptions of the Advantages and Disadvantages of the Effects of Full-Day Versus Half-Day Kindergarten in Suburban New Jersey Public Schools

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**TEACHER PERCEPTIONS OF THE ADVANTAGES AND  
DISADVANTAGES OF THE EFFECTS OF FULL-DAY VERSUS HALF-DAY  
KINDERGARTEN IN SUBURBAN NEW JERSEY PUBLIC SCHOOLS**

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**Submitted in Partial Fulfillment  
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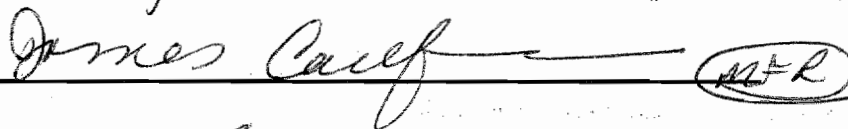
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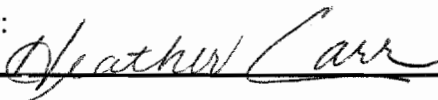
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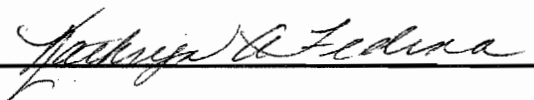
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## Abstract

### Teacher Perceptions of the Advantages and Disadvantages of the Effects of Full-day Versus Half-day Kindergarten in Suburban New Jersey Public Schools

Kindergarten is viewed as a critical year to provide students with the foundational skills for academic success. Teachers and parents are advocating increased instructional time, more than is currently available in a half-day kindergarten program. A full-day kindergarten program places increased demands on a school district's available resources, requiring additional teachers, materials, and space. To justify this reallocation of district resources, educators and administrators are researching to determine the benefits, if any, of a full-day kindergarten program versus half-day kindergarten. The purpose of this study is to investigate teachers' perceptions of the impact of full-day kindergarten versus half-day kindergarten in suburban New Jersey public schools. The setting of this study took place in two suburban middle-class public school districts in northern New Jersey. In a qualitative study, the researcher conducted focus groups with teachers to gather information to determine factors that affect a child's development in a full-day versus half-day kindergarten. The focus groups, consisting of a total of nine participants, were designed to ascertain the educators' perceptions of advantages and/or disadvantages, instructional methodologies, program effects on academic achievement, and the social and behavioral growth and development of students in full-day versus half-day kindergarten settings.

The findings of this study indicated that the advantages appear to outweigh the disadvantages substantially of full-day kindergarten versus half-day kindergarten, and there is strong agreement about the benefits of providing depth of content, additional time for centers and play/social skills development in a full-day kindergarten. Teachers perceive more advantages than disadvantages of the full-day versus half-day program but express concern about children who may chronologically and developmentally not be ready for full-day; for some children a full-day was too long. Academic demands and the need for additional play/social development were cited as drawbacks of the half-day program. The overarching theme that connected teachers' perceptions was "time." Conclusions of the study found that the efficacy of full-day kindergarten cannot be evaluated based on a single domain, in that kindergarten clearly benefits children's development in many domains. Other measures to address critical components for expanding half-day kindergarten to full-day programs may be explored in ensuring a student's educational success.

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## DEDICATION

This study is dedicated to my brothers, Salvatore and Ernest, and my sister, Adrienne, for always believing in me and to Ray, who made me laugh, encouraged me every day and was quite astute to build an addition on the house at the same time that I was delving into this degree so that I could not concentrate too much on the construction. To Sal, who forever told me, "I will always support you in whatever you do" but did not make it to the end of this journey with me.

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## CHAPTER 1

### INTRODUCTION

Elicker (2000) suggested that kindergarten is viewed as a critical year to provide students with the prerequisite foundational skills for academic success. Kindergarten teachers are expected to address social, physical, behavioral, and academic skills and to individualize instruction to provide the support and, at times, the intensive remediation necessary for students to develop the skills essential for school success. Teachers and parents are advocating increased instructional time, more than is currently available in a half-day kindergarten program. A full-day kindergarten program places increased demands on a school district's available resources, requiring additional teachers, materials, and classroom space. To justify this reallocation of district resources, educators and administrators are researching to determine the benefits, if any, of a full-day (FD) kindergarten program versus half-day (HD) kindergarten.

#### Historical Background

Prior to 1990, research results on the benefits of FD kindergarten as compared to HD kindergarten were ambiguous. While some studies (comparison studies) indicated greater achievement of students who attended FD kindergarten (Adcock, Hess, & Mitchell, 1980; Brierley, 1987; Goodwin, 1989), other studies (longitudinal studies) reported no academic difference between students who attended FD and HD programs

(Evans & Marken, 1983; Savitz & Drucker, 1984). Studies conducted since 1990 have indicated that all students benefit from attending FD programs; however, gains are greatest for children judged to be at-risk and/or children of low socio-economic status (Elicker & Mathur, 1997; Evansville-Vanderburgh School Corporation, 2004; Fusaro, 1997; Hildebrand, 2001; Wang & Johnston, 1999). Studies on the benefit(s) of attendance in a FD versus a HD kindergarten program have focused on student academic gains. Accumulating evidence (observations of instructional time in kindergarten classrooms) indicates that variations in how teachers use instructional time and actual time-on-task impact student learning (Hardy, Lawler-Prince, & Slate, 1993).

Historically, most kindergarten programs were modeled after traditional nursery schools with "curriculum goals that emphasized play, socialization, and easing the transition from home to school (Elicker & Mathur, 1997, p. 460). Since the 1990s the focus of kindergarten programs has shifted from the development of play and socialization skills to the development of academic skills (Elicker & Mathur, 1997). Early childhood experts have criticized the trend to highly structured academic kindergarten programs and advocate strongly for more developmentally appropriate programming that provides opportunities for child-initiated classroom activities (Bredekam & Copple, 2002). (The in-depth study addresses developmentally appropriate practices in early childhood programs).

How time is spent in full-day kindergarten programs is different both quantitatively and qualitatively from how time is spent in half-day kindergarten (Cryan, Sheehan,

Wiechel, & Bandy-Hedden, 1992). Hardy et al. (1993) reported that practices found to meet the needs of young children, such as small-group instruction and individualized teacher-student interactions, were rarely observed in HD kindergarten classrooms.

Conversely, the additional instructional time in FD kindergarten, when compared to other arrangements, often results in greater use of child-initiated activities, less time in teacher-directed group activities, more small-group and individualized instruction, and engagement in a significantly greater number of child-to-child social interactions (Cryan et al., 1992; Hough & Bryde, 1996; Elicker & Mathur, 1997; Martinez & Snider, 2001). Elicker and Mathur (1997) found that, when compared to other options, FD kindergarten programs provided higher levels of active engagement and higher levels of positive affect, in both absolute and proportional terms. (The research provided longitudinal data).

Head Start was on the scene long before the movement for universal pre-kindergarten. President Lyndon Johnson unveiled Head Start as a centerpiece in his War on Poverty in 1965. It has grown to a \$6.7 billion enterprise enrolling 915,000 preschoolers. Efforts to expand preschool as the first link in the Pre-K-3 progression must take note of Head Start. An overriding shortcoming of Head Start is that the gains it produces seem to fade despite the expenditure of \$86 billion on 25 million children over 40 years. Lurking behind any analysis of Head Start's cognitive effect is the question of the program's purpose. Disputes over Head Start too often take the form of an either/or argument—the program should lean toward academics or toward physical-social-emotional needs. It is a debate predicated on the false notion that good preschool

education cannot fulfill both objectives. The larger issue has to do with identifying the role that Head Start should play in the merging movement toward universal pre-kindergarten and as a first step in PreK-3.

There is an increasing trend in school districts across the nation to provide young children with a FD kindergarten option in an effort to prepare them better to enter first grade (Wirt, et al., 2004). As a result, the benefits and challenges of implementing FD programs have become a popular topic among educators, politicians, and the general public. In the state of New Jersey, according to the NJ Public School Funding report of November 15, 2006, funds are to be devoted specifically to all school districts designated to implement a FD kindergarten program. Focus is to be placed on more disadvantaged school districts first with a long-term commitment in place to continue until all school districts in New Jersey have FD kindergarten programs. The NJ Public School Funding report also sustains early childhood education in that it states that New Jersey supports high-quality preschool for all children in A and B district factor group (DFG) school districts and for children who qualify for free and reduced price meals in all other districts.

### Theoretical Framework

Children's experiences in kindergarten exert a major impact on their subsequent learning and school success, as argued by Vecchiotti (2001), in a study which examines student, family, and school factors that influence student achievement. In a

“constructivist theory” approach students are actively engaged in learning and a strong emphasis is on learning with concrete activity and practical relevance. John Dewey’s “learn by doing” and student-centered philosophies (Matthews, 2003) lie at the heart of a constructivist environment which directly correlates with an effective kindergarten program. This theory provides the general framework for selecting the variables for the study.

#### Statement of the Problem

Teachers perceive advantages and disadvantages to FD kindergarten versus HD kindergarten in suburban New Jersey public schools. How does full-day kindergarten influence instructional methodologies and academic, social and behavioral development? A discussion of successful kindergarten programs considers leadership, the preconditions of stability that permit and facilitate comprehensive changes taking place, and the critical relationship between the core elements of curriculum, instruction, and assessment. A governmental initiative indicated that early childhood, birth through age 8, has been found to be a critical time for children to develop the physical, emotional, social and cognitive skills they will need for the rest of their lives (The White House, 2002). Thus, when considering curricular and instructional leadership, school administrators must strive to answer the critical query, what of the kindergarten program itself?

Longitudinal and statistical studies show that more and more students in the United States enter kindergarten with limited emergent literacy skills and are lacking a strong foundation in the English language (Denton, 2000, Long, 1997; West et. al., 2000). In



many districts, the increased emphasis on standards and accountability, combined with higher numbers of educationally and economically disadvantaged students, has led schools to lengthen the school day. Consistent findings of all-day kindergarten are evident concerning the positive effect on academic achievement for children identified as being at risk (Housden & Kam, 1992; Karweit, 1992; Puleo, 1988). Research which addresses kindergarten program types and class size on early academic performance has also shown that while students show increased academic gains when enrolled in FD kindergarten, the gains are greater for minority and disadvantaged students when compared to students from non-disadvantaged backgrounds (Yan & Lin, 2004).

This researcher is interested in the impact of a FD kindergarten vs. HD kindergarten program. Thus, the researcher's questions emerge as follows: What are teachers' perceptions of the advantages and/or disadvantages of FD versus HD kindergarten? What are the instructional methodologies in a FD versus HD kindergarten? How does academic achievement differ in a FD versus HD kindergarten? How does FD versus HD kindergarten impact students' social and behavioral interactions?

#### Need for the Study

Implementation of FD kindergarten continues to create controversy. Educators and taxpayers debate the educational, social, and behavioral advantages of implementing FD kindergarten in view of the added financial burden that this places on a school district. At the state department level, administrators and taxpayers point to the

additional staff, materials, and space that a full-day program requires at a time when taxpayers are feeling overburdened by property taxes (Indiana Department of Education, 2004) and many school districts are finding it difficult to pass school budgets. This view is challenged when we consider the staggering long-term financial costs of providing remedial services for students who experience failure (Slavin et al., 1994). Academic failure in the early grades may have severe consequences with respect to self-esteem, social development, and opportunities for advanced education and meaningful employment (Lyon, 2001). The personal and societal costs of school failure are positively correlated with unemployment, low wages, poverty, and crime (Mercer, Campbell, Miller, Mercer, & Lane, 2000).

Thus, the question facing many school districts who are considering whether or not to implement a FD kindergarten is: Do the benefits justify the allocation of finances and classroom space at a time when budgets are being reduced and/or cut? As of July 2005, legislation in New Jersey reduced the spending growth limitation from 3% to 2 ½%, allowed retention of surplus from 6% to 3%, reduced the spending growth limitation for courtesy busing, restricted the use of second ballot finance options, and required the commissioner of education's approval for budget line item transfers that exceed 10%. It has been projected that this legislation will disrupt facility plans and negatively impact instruction and co-curricular activities. School leaders will find it increasingly difficult to balance these restrictions with sharp increases in fixed costs over which they have no control, such as health benefits, insurance, and utilities.

### Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to investigate teachers' perceptions of the impact of FD kindergarten versus HD kindergarten in suburban New Jersey public schools and determine how the aspects of these two programs benefit or detract from a child's educational experience.

### Significance of the Study

While the literature reports research on full and half day kindergartens, little has been found regarding the perceptions of teachers who have taught both configurations and who are at the heart of the instructional process. This segment of the profession is in a unique position to experience growth and development first hand. Filling this void as this study hopes to do may provide insights valuable to the body of research on the subject.

### Main Research Question

The central focus of this study is to gain insight in understanding FD kindergarten versus HD kindergarten programs. The researcher will seek answers to the following question: What are teachers' perceptions of the advantage(s) and/or disadvantage(s) of the effects of FD kindergarten as compared to HD kindergarten in suburban New Jersey public schools?

### Subsidiary Questions

1. What are teachers' perceptions of the advantages and/or disadvantages of FD versus HD kindergarten?
2. What are the instructional methodologies in a FD versus HD kindergarten?
3. How does academic achievement differ in a FD versus HD kindergarten?
4. How does FD versus HD kindergarten impact student's social and behavioral interactions?

### Definition of Terms

For the purpose of this study, the following definitions are provided for clarity and consistency.

- Child-Initiated:** Child engages in free play, learning centers, and cooperative learning activities (Elicker & Mathur, 1997).
- Full-day Kindergarten:** Kindergarten classes offered 5 days a week for 5 hours or longer.
- Half-day Kindergarten:** Kindergarten classes offered 5 days a week for approximately 3 hours (Elicker & Mathur, 1997).
- Instructional:** Teacher strategies that focus on teaching and learning of subject matter content (Elicker & Mathur, 1997).
- Quality:** Global construct that refers to classroom-level variables that affect children's development. These variables include

developmentally appropriate instructional methodologies/structures, teacher-student interactions, social-emotional climate of classroom. (Pianta & La Paro, 2003)

**Teacher-Directed:** Teacher utilizes large/small group and individualized instructional activities (Elicker & Mathur, 1997).

#### Limitations of the Study

1. While it will be assumed that participants give honest and accurate responses, the bias of the respondents could impact the data.
2. The study is limited to select suburban districts in New Jersey.
3. The study is limited to two small focus groups, and thus, other contributions might be revealed from a broader audience to enhance the findings.
4. The study is limited to only teacher perceptions.

#### Organization of the Study

Chapter I consists of a brief introduction and historical background, theoretical framework, statement of the problem, need for the study, purpose of the study, significance of the study, questions addressed by the study, definition of terms used in the study and limitations of the study.

Chapter II presents a review of the literature related to teachers' perceptions of FD versus HD kindergarten, instructional methodologies, developmentally appropriate practices, classroom processes and structures, effects of FD kindergarten on academic achievement, social and behavioral effects of FD kindergarten and national studies on FD kindergarten.

Chapter III describes the design of the study, the methodology, and the procedures used in the study. It discusses the demographics of the focus groups, instruments, data collection procedures, and data analysis utilized in this study.

Chapter IV presents the data and results of the analyses of these data.

Chapter V presents a summary of the findings of the study, recommendations derived from the findings, recommendations for practice, policy and future research along with conclusions of the study.

## CHAPTER II

### REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

This chapter provides a review of the literature related to the research findings documenting the advantages and disadvantages, if any, of FD versus HD kindergarten programs.

#### Teacher Perceptions of Full-Day versus Half-Day Kindergarten

Elicker and Mathur (1997) in their pilot study utilized open ended questions to obtain teacher perceptions of the advantages and disadvantages of FD versus HD kindergarten. Teachers were also asked for suggestions regarding ways to improve the FD and HD programs (Elicker & Mathur, 1997, p. 468). Teachers interviewed stated that FD kindergarten provides opportunities to be more flexible, to devote more time for child-initiated activities, more time for individual instruction, and more time to address concepts in more depth and in a more creative manner. The teachers indicated feeling less stress and frustration being able to work with children and their parents on a one-to-one basis (Elicker & Mathur, 1997). The teachers reported that they believed that the transition to first grade was easier for students who had participated in the FD program. When looking at the data in this study it is important to note that it was a pilot study.

Full-day kindergarten also enabled teachers to identify learning issues better (Housden and Kam, 1992; Rothenberg, 1995; Hough and Bryde, 1996; Plucker, 2005).

Teachers, whether they teach HD or FD kindergarten programs, see FD programs as more beneficial in helping children transition to first grade, and as affording more flexibility in the types of learning activities that can be offered (Elicker & Mathur, 1997). Ninety-eight percent of parents and teachers surveyed favored FD kindergarten programs over HD or extended-day kindergarten programs (Hough & Bryde, 1996). Additional research is needed to assess teacher perceptions of how FD kindergarten programs help children transition to first grade and alternative kindergarten programs.

#### Instructional Methodologies

There has been growing consensus among educators that effective interventions in preschool and kindergarten will pay off in later achievement and reduce the need for remedial and special education (Slavin, 2004). One such intervention is offering a FD kindergarten program. While an expensive intervention, the reduced number of students that a teacher is responsible for in a FD kindergarten program will theoretically enable the teacher to be more diagnostic in assessing student needs and implementing the support and instruction necessary to address cognitive, social and behavioral delays (Elicker, 2000).

Advocates of FD kindergarten state that FD kindergarten allows children and teachers time to explore topics in depth; reduces the ration of transition time to class time; provides for greater continuity of day-to-day activities, and provides an environment that favors a child-centered, developmentally appropriate approach



(Rothenberg, 1995). Researchers have found that the instructional methodologies that a teacher uses and the types of interactions that occur between the child and the adults in the classroom setting exert a measurable impact on student achievement and social competence (Meyer, Wardrop, Hastings, & Linn, 1993). Of paramount importance to educators is the long-term impact, both negative and positive, that a child's early educational experiences can exert on his/her academic achievement, social development, and behavioral competencies (LaParo, Pianta, & Stuhlman, 2003).

While research has documented the impact of children's experiences in early childhood settings on academic and social development; further research is needed to document the type(s) of experiences that positively impact social and academic growth in kindergarten settings. To address this need, Pianta, LaParo, Payne, Cox, & Bradley (2002) designed a study to identify the factors associated with observed variations in classroom quality. In this basic research study, the researchers sought to contribute to the knowledge base by identifying the correlates and consequence of "quality" so that policies and practices can be developed that enhance children's experience in kindergarten. Two hundred and twenty-three students from Arkansas, North Carolina, and Virginia participated in the study. Each of the students attended a different kindergarten classroom. The 223 classrooms were in more than 120 schools and numerous school districts located in small urban, suburban, and rural areas with the majority of classrooms located in suburban areas (Pianta et al., 2002).

Pianta et al. (2002) relied heavily on parallel research conducted in early childhood settings to operationalize the concept of "quality" and to identify instruments for measurement and observation. The researchers observed, in time-sampled format, discrete activities and behaviors of teachers with a target child in order to describe what takes place in kindergarten classrooms (Pianta et al., 2002, p. 228). The researchers observed teacher interactions with a target child (sensitivity, intrusiveness), teacher initiated efforts to improve student achievement outcomes (literacy instruction, evaluative feedback, etc.) and classroom-level teacher initiated efforts at promoting a child-centered emotional environment (positive emotional climate, classroom management).

Classroom observation data indicates that in the "average" classroom, the child was involved in structured teacher-direct activities for 44% of the observed intervals, in center activities for 18% of the intervals, in seatwork 17% of the observed intervals, in transition for 11% of the intervals, and in free time for 8% of the intervals (Pianta et al., 2002, p. 232). Data indicate that the percentage of intervals in which the target child was engaged in each type of activity varied across classrooms, with some children spending almost no time in a particular activity and other children spending the majority of their time in that same activity. In regard to teacher-child interactions, the children interacted with teachers during large-group (44%) instruction more often than in small-group (10%), or one-to-one contexts (8%). Across the 223 classrooms the average child was exposed to academic teaching 21% of the observed time and to teaching of social rules 1% of the time (Pianta et al., 2002). Eight children were never exposed to any academic teaching

during the observed intervals. The researchers concluded that “kindergarten classrooms vary widely in the nature and form of experiences offered to children...there was no typical kindergarten classroom” (Pianta et al., 2002, p. 235). These findings confirm those of Meyer et al. (1993) in demonstrating the “incredible variability in children’s experiences as a function of the classroom they attend” (as cited in Pianta et al., 2002, p. 235). In that every kindergarten varies from classroom to classroom, the types of activities children are engaged in also differ; more research involving direct observation of classroom activities needs to be completed.

#### Developmentally Appropriate Practices

The use of the additional time in a FD program is also an issue with those individuals concerned that a longer school day will result in curriculum pushdown and the use of developmentally inappropriate practices. In response to concerns regarding inappropriate academic curricula for kindergarten students, the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) issued a revised set of guidelines referred to as developmentally appropriate practices (DAP) regarding children’s learning and development. These guidelines state that since children learn through active exploration and interaction with adults, peers and materials, activities should challenge students mentally and physically; materials should provide concrete examples and be relevant to the child’s world (Bredenkamp & Copple, 2002).

These guidelines provided a framework specifying what an early childhood

classroom should look like and how it should operate. According to these guidelines, children should not be expected to sit for long periods of time or to engage in extensive paperwork. Periods of active play should be combined with periods of quiet activity and opportunities should be provided for students to construct their own knowledge through interactions with individuals and materials in the environment (Bredekamp & Copple, 2002). Periods should be set aside for play because play provides opportunities for students to explore, experiment, and manipulate objects and materials in their environment. Active involvement with materials and objects enables students to build on their prior experiences and knowledge base to construct new knowledge, and enhances the development of representational thought (Bredekamp & Copple, 2002). Every child has an individual style of learning and timing of personal growth and development; therefore, a curriculum must be designed to accommodate individual differences among children (Bredekamp & Copple, 2002).

No significant differences were found between end of the year standardized test scores of children in developmentally appropriate kindergartens as compared to children in developmentally inappropriate classrooms. The researchers concluded that the didactic teaching methods in developmentally inappropriate classrooms were no more effective in promoting achievement in kindergarten students than were the child-centered approaches used in developmentally appropriate classrooms (Burts, et. al., 1990). As a result of these studies, the importance of “differentiated instruction” needs to continue to be a strategy that is researched and explored for children of all age levels.

### Classroom Processes and Structures

Researchers examined 10 kindergarten teachers' use of instructional time to determine its relationship to student learning in a study conducted in Northeast Arkansas. Data were collected through classroom observations of student time-on-task and teacher-student interactions at 3-minute intervals over the course of 2 half-hour sessions with each teacher. Results found that out of 200 observational intervals, large-group activities occurred 157 times and small-group activities occurred 34 times. Researchers recorded 46 instances of unoccupied (off-task) children and 71 instances of time spent making transitions. The researchers found that instances of being unoccupied (off-task) were more than twice as likely during small-group instruction than during large-group instruction. While all teachers utilized large-group instruction, two teachers in this study did not engage in small-group activities during the observation sessions. The researchers concluded that developmentally appropriate practices were not commonplace in kindergarten programs. Additionally, small-group instruction, which is believed to be conducive to the needs of young children, was observed only 20% of the time (Hardy et al., 1993). Generalizations of research results to larger populations are difficult due to the limited sixty minutes each teacher was observed and the restricted geographical area.

While kindergarten curricula are similar across classrooms, instructional practices vary in significant and important ways (Hough and Bryde, 1996, p.3). Students enrolled in FD programs received more small-group and individual instruction than did students enrolled in HD programs and engaged in a greater variety of activities, including outside

activities. Attendance was more regular and parental satisfaction was higher for students enrolled in FD kindergarten. The researchers found that fatigue was not a significant factor in FD kindergarten and that students in FD kindergarten engaged in a significantly greater number of child-to-child social interactions (Hough & Bryde, 1996). Further research should be conducted to determine the quality of these social interactions in that only the quantity of these social interactions was studied.

Classroom processes in the FD kindergarten program were compared to classroom processes in the traditional HD kindergarten program by Elicker and Mathur (1997). Over a two-year period, between 4 and 5 days of classroom observations were conducted both in the morning and afternoon and at various times during the school year using the Early Childhood Classroom Observation System (ECCOS). Children's participation in teacher-directed or child-initiated learning activities, level of engagement in activities, and children's affect were documented. Participating children were observed for one-minute intervals, on a random rotating schedule (p. 466). Because extensive observation of each student was not feasible, the unit of analysis was the observation interval (p. 466). The researchers used this data to "construct a profile of typical child activity throughout the kindergarten day for each classroom, using data generated by all children" (p. 466).

Elicker & Mathur found that teacher-directed, large-group active and large-group listening activities consumed the greatest amount of time in both types of classrooms. They also found that teacher-directed small-group activities comprised a small amount of the typical kindergarten day and that child-initiated activities accounted for more time in

FD classrooms than in other program arrangements in both absolute and proportional terms.

A comparison of classroom activities in Year 1 and Year 2 of the study indicated stronger differences between FD and HD programs during Year 2. Systematic observations of children's classroom activities revealed that the FD program included more child-initiated learning activity, more teacher-directed individual activity, higher levels of active engagement, and higher levels of positive affect, in both absolute and proportional terms. Students in second-year implemented classrooms were initiating more learning activities and receiving more 1:1 instruction than students in first year implemented programs.

Martinez & Snider (2001) evaluated a FD suburban Kansas City school district in which children were selected for inclusion in the study by virtue of being enrolled in the school targeted for study. Kindergarten readiness screening was administered to all students enrolled in four full-day and eight half-day programs prior to the start of the kindergarten year. No significant difference was found in readiness levels of students enrolled in FD versus HD programs. Results of the study indicated that children in the FD program spent more time engaged in student-initiated activities, received more one-to-one instruction, and spent less time in teacher-directed group activities than did students in the HD program. Additionally, the researchers found that FD teachers spent more time helping children complete challenging tasks, develop friendships, resolve conflicts, and understand other points of view as compared to teachers in HD programs (Martinez &

Snider, 2001). These results validated other researchers' findings comparing the results of FD and HD kindergarten (Elicker & Mathur, 1997; Hough & Bryde, 1996). Non-random sampling for kindergarten readiness, which was not part of these studies, may be an area for further research.

Researchers reviewed and analyzed data from Indiana and national studies (Plucker et al., 2004) in looking at the effects of FD versus HD kindergarten. Data obtained from eight Indiana school districts, as well as the national data bank, found that there are no negative outcomes associated with FD kindergarten. The research also found that time use in FD kindergarten programs is different both quantitatively and qualitatively from how time is used in HD programs (Plucker et al., 2004, p. vii). Enrollment in FD kindergarten was related to gains in academic achievement, improved social interactions, improved behavior, and decreases in grade retention and special education referrals. The researchers also found that disadvantaged students in FD programs experience greater academic benefit than students from other socio-economic status levels (Plucker et al., 2004).

In this study, the researchers also found that the additional instructional time in FD programs resulted in greater use of child-initiated activities and certain types of reading skills and grouping strategies were more prevalent in FD programs than in HD programs. These strategies included achievement-level groupings, peer tutoring, and mixed ability groupings. The researchers found that students in FD programs were more likely than students in HD programs to spend time on literacy skills each day. Studies on the



differences in absolute and proportional time in FD versus HD kindergarten may provide additional insight to the advantage(s) and/or disadvantages of FD and HD kindergarten.

#### Effects of Full-Day Kindergarten on Academic Achievement

There is some support for the claim that FD programs allow for more instructional time, although such increased time does not add up to a “double dosage.” Nationally representative survey data and an early childhood longitudinal study show that FD kindergarten programs are more likely than HD programs to offer more than 60 minutes of reading instruction and more than 30 minutes of math instruction daily, and to include reading aloud every day (Walston and West, 2004). This translates to FD students receiving 30 percent more instructional time in reading and 46 percent more instructional time in math than HD students. In total, FD children spend approximately 15 minutes of additional daily instruction in each subject (Lee et al., 2006).

Academic differences between 326 students enrolled in FD kindergarten and 311 students enrolled in HD kindergarten in a large metropolitan school system were examined by Holmes and Mc Connell (1990). Ten schools were randomly selected from among the list of schools that had been chosen to go FD and 10 schools were randomly selected from among the list of schools designated to remain HD. The schools were evenly distributed between Title I and affluent areas. Students were included in the study by virtue of enrollment in the designated schools.

Using six measures from the California Achievement Test (CAT), no significant differences were found in visual recognition, sound recognition, vocabulary, and language expression between students enrolled in the FD program compared to students enrolled in the HD program. A significant difference was found in comprehension and mathematical concepts/applications between students enrolled in FD programs compared to students enrolled in HD programs. Students in the HD programs performed significantly better on the comprehension measure than students in FD kindergarten. According to researchers, data analyses suggested that this apparent gain in favor of HD kindergarten was a result of girls in the HD program scoring significantly better than the boys in the FD program rather than to kindergarten schedule. Data analyses also indicated that boys in FD kindergarten scored significantly better on measures of mathematical concepts/applications than boys in the HD program. This result was attributed to the extra time provided in the FD program to the study of mathematics (Holmes & Mc Connell, 1990). As neither the context of the study nor classroom instructional methodologies was described, it is difficult to speculate why differences were not found in literacy measures despite the additional time provided in a full-day program.

Researchers have suggested that the benefits derived by students in the second year of FD kindergarten program implementation are a result of teachers becoming more comfortable with the curriculum and program, which enabled them to initiate more learning activities and provide more one-to-one instruction to students (Elicker &

Mathur, 1997, p. 477). Basing decisions on data collected during the second year of program implementation provides a firmer foundation for making district policy decisions, as researchers have found that gains are more pronounced during the second year of program implementation (Elicker & Mathur, 1997; Koopmans, 1991). While the use of cohort groups in a study is not as strong as random assignment of subjects, Koopman's findings are consistent with the growing body of research results which have documented the positive impact of FD kindergarten on academic achievement, particularly for students from disadvantaged backgrounds.

Ohio initiated a statewide longitudinal study to investigate the effects of kindergarten schedule (full-day, half-day, and alternate-day) and prior preschool attendance on students' academic and behavioral successes in kindergarten and later grades (Cryan et al., 1992). This study was in response to the significant expense of funding public preschool and FD kindergarten, coupled with a lack of definitive data to support these initiatives. Outcome data were gathered from the Metropolitan Readiness Test administered in kindergarten and the Metropolitan Achievement Test administered in first grade. To determine the similarities between classrooms, the researchers reviewed the courses of study, lesson plans, and posted schedules (Cryan et al., 1992). Data results for both the retrospective and longitudinal studies provided evidence relating participation in FD kindergarten to higher standardized test scores, at least through first grade and well into second grade (Cryan et al. 1992).

Hough and Bryde (1996) found several advantages of enrollment in FD kindergarten as compared to enrollment in HD and/or extended-day programs in a quasi-experimental study. In a matched-pairs design, classes in six Springfield, Missouri schools that offered a FD program were compared to classes in seven Springfield, Missouri schools and one alternate school that offered HD or extended day programs. Classes were matched by geographic location, school size, student norm-referenced test data, and socioeconomic status. In total, 25 classes and 511 students were subjects of this study. Data were collected by means of classroom observations; video and audio-taped interviews of students, teachers, and parents; report cards of all students included in the sample; survey questionnaires administered to parents and teachers; and a norm-referenced achievement test. Hough and Bryde found that students in FD kindergarten programs outperformed HD students on 8 of 9 measures of Language Arts (reading). The researchers concluded that students attending a FD kindergarten experience a wider range of benefits than their HD or extended-day counterparts and that "the scientific evidence favors FD on virtually every dimension" (Hough & Bryde, 1996, p. 16).

Nunnelley (1996) studied the developmental and academic achievement levels of 9 at-risk students attending a FD kindergarten program compared to 10 at-risk children attending a HD kindergarten program to determine if the outcomes justified the cost. This study was designed to be a pilot study for a "possible broader and more comprehensive longitudinal study following the children in both groups as they transitioned into the elementary grades and later schooling" (Nunnelley, 1996, p.5). Both

the FD and the HD program were located in a low-income area in Indiana and received funding through Title I. The Early Childhood Environment Rating Scale (ECERS) was used to determine similarity of programs and curriculum. The Developmental Checklist of the Work Sampling System was administered to measure student achievement in seven domains; personal and social development, language and literacy, mathematical thinking, scientific thinking, social studies, the arts, and physical development. Analyses of data did not indicate any significant differences in assessment measures or in scores on the Work Sampling System as a result of enrollment in FD compared to HD kindergarten. The researcher concluded that "when all else is essentially equal" there is no difference in measured outcomes for children participating in FD versus HD kindergarten (Nunnelley, 1996).

A 2-year study of a pilot FD kindergarten program in a middle-class suburb of Wisconsin was conducted by Elicker and Mathur (1997). The researchers in designing this study attempted to address many of the design flaws of previous kindergarten studies. Full-day enrollment lists were obtained by random drawing from a pool of all incoming kindergarten students and children were randomly selected and assigned to the FD program. Teachers were matched for professional training, experience, and teaching philosophy; however, they were not randomly assigned to program types.

Elicker and Mathur compared the FD program to the traditional HD program. Both programs offered an activity-based, child-centered program that followed the guidelines

for developmental appropriate practices recommended by the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC). Four full-day and eight half-day programs were observed over a 2-year period. Family demographics and background information were obtained through parental survey prior to the start of the study to ascertain similarities between cohorts.

Kindergarten report cards were analyzed to determine differences in achievement between FD as compared to HD kindergarten and kindergarten teachers were asked to rate each child's readiness for first grade (Elicker & Mathur, 1997). Academic outcomes at the end of the kindergarten year indicated slightly greater progress in kindergarten and higher levels of first grade readiness among children in the FD program (Elicker & Mathur, 1997). The use of report cards to document differences in academic achievement is a weakness in this research design in that grades on kindergarten report cards are subjective. The marks are generally not reflective of test grades; rather they are a teacher's judgment regarding how the student is doing. The accuracy of teachers' perceptions regarding first grade readiness has been validated by Gullo (2000); therefore, the results in this area have more validity.

Fusaro (1997) examined 23 studies published between 1974 and 1991 to determine any significant overall effects favoring FD programs. Twenty-one studies used achievement test results, and two studies used teacher ratings. Results indicated that children who attended a FD kindergarten achieved at a higher level than did children who attended at HD kindergarten program (Fusaro, 1997). The effect size for FD programs

was substantial, with participation in FD program accounting for 59% to 62% of the difference in academic achievement between the two groups (Fusaro, 1997). Fusaro concluded that children who attended an all-day every-day kindergarten achieved at higher levels than children who attended half-day kindergarten; therefore, full-day kindergarten appears to facilitate the achievement of children. Fusaro (1997) cautioned that few FD kindergarten studies have employed true experimental designs. Classes and students were not randomly selected nor were variables controlled (teacher qualifications, curriculum, learning activities.) Consequently, Fusaro (1997) cautioned against concluding cause and effect relationships.

Studies since 1990 have striven to use stronger experimental designs in an attempt to determine if enrollment in FD kindergarten results in statistically significant academic, social, and behavioral gains compared to enrollment in HD kindergarten. Gullo (2000) examined the effects of full-day and half-day kindergarten enrollment on 974 second graders' academic outcomes. Gullo found that students who had attended FD programs scored significantly higher in math and reading than students who attended HD programs in using data from the Iowa Test of Basic Skills.

According to Clark (2001), much of the research comparing FD and HD programs during the 1970s and 1980s provided conflicting results. However, by the 1990s research began to show consistent trends, which indicated students enrolled in FD kindergarten were making greater academic gains. School district leaders in Montgomery County, Maryland, implemented a number of initiatives in 34 of the 125 elementary classrooms in

the County to improve student outcomes. Those initiatives included increasing the number of classes of FD kindergarten programs and decreasing the number of students in each class to a maximum of 15 students (Bridges-Cline, Hoffer-Riddick, & Gross, 2002). The schools selected for participation in the study included the neediest schools in the County in terms of percentage of enrollment of minority students, students of low socioeconomic status, and/or students learning English as a second language. The researchers also compared literacy development in FD classrooms with reduced class size and FD classrooms that did not have reduced class size.

Controlling for differences in entry skills of students, kindergarten students in FD programs made significantly greater gains in the acquisition of fundamental literacy skills than students in HD programs (Bridges-Cline et al., 2002, p. 23). Results also indicated that participation in a FD program is essential for students who transitioned from Head Start programs in order to maintain and develop the literacy gains made in Head Start (Bridges-Cline et al., 2002, p. 18). The researchers concluded that a FD, reduced class-size program was essential for students judged to be at-risk academically to begin to close the gap in early literacy skills (Bridges-Cline et al., 2002, p. 24). The benefits of FD and reduced class size were greatest for students from lower socioeconomic status and/or students who are learning English as a second language (Bridges-Cline et al., 2002).

It is difficult to determine which initiative, FD kindergarten or reduced class size, had the greatest impact on student literacy achievement in that both initiatives were implemented at the same time. Previous studies have demonstrated the benefits of both



FD kindergarten and small class size when implemented as the sole initiative.

Consequently, educational leaders in Montgomery County may require further study to determine which initiative had a greater impact, particularly when they are faced with financial constraints.

Viadero (2002) indicated in a study of 17,600 Philadelphia schoolchildren that students who attended FD kindergarten programs were more than twice as likely as children without any kindergarten experience and 26% more likely than graduates of HD programs, to make it to third and fourth grade without being retained. Students enrolled in FD kindergarten also scored higher on standardized reading and math tests, received better grades, and had better attendance than students enrolled in HD kindergarten. This study did not examine how the teachers utilized the additional time provided within a FD program.

Many research studies indicate that students who attend FD programs do make greater gains during the kindergarten year than students attending half-day programs (Brewster & Railsback, 2002; Clark, 2001; da Costa & Bell, 2001; Plucker, et al., 2004; Walston & West, 2004). However, some researchers suggest that any gains in academic achievement may only have short-term effect (Brewster & Railsback, 2002; Walston, West, & Rathbun, 2005). Denton, West, and Walston (2003) provided findings that indicated children who attend FD kindergarten made greater gains in reading during the kindergarten year than students attending HD programs. Walston and West (2004) also

found that students attending FD kindergarten made greater gains in mathematics and reading test scores from fall to spring compared to those in HD classes.

In addition to reading and math gains, students in FD kindergarten have achieved higher test scores in general knowledge areas than those attending HD programs (Viadero, 2002). Other research indicated that kindergarten children attending FD programs perform statistically higher on nationally standardized achievement tests at the completion of kindergarten than students enrolled in HD programs (Brewster & Railsback, 2002; Plucker, et al., 2004). In a study of 974 second graders from a large Midwestern school district, students enrolled in FD programs not only scored significantly higher on standardized reading and math achievement tests than children in HD kindergarten, but they were also “more independent in their learning, were more creative thinkers, and had a more positive approach to the teacher” (Gullo, 2000, p. 22).

Although most research shows greater academic gains during the kindergarten year for students attending FD programs, there has been a significant lack of empirical evidence on the long-term benefits of FD vs. HD kindergarten (Gullo, 2000). The research available on the longitudinal benefits of FD kindergarten provides conflicting results. In the Evansville-Vanderburgh [Indiana] study, the Comprehensive Test of Basic Skills (CTBS) was administered when the former kindergarten students reached the third grade. The results showed that students who attended FD kindergarten scored significantly higher than the HD participants in 10 of the 14 areas. When the CTBS was administered to the same students in fifth and seventh grades, the FD kindergarten

students scored higher in all 14 areas. However, in the Muncie Community Schools [Indiana] study comparing FD and HD programs, the data indicated that after an initial jump in test scores between kindergarten and first grade, the difference in Terra Nova and ISTEP+ test scores between students who attended FD and HD kindergarten tended to decline (Plucker, et al., 2004). Brewster and Railsback (2002, p. 33) could not find strong evidence to support the assertion that academic gains from attending FD kindergarten persist after first grade. Based on data from the Early Childhood Longitudinal Study, Kindergarten Class (ECLS-K) of 1998-99, Walston, West, and Rathburn (2005) concluded that the research “did not detect any substantive differences in children’s third-grade achievement relative to the type of kindergarten program (FD vs. HD) they attended.

Many variables exist that can have a greater impact on a student’s academic success than attendance in FD kindergarten. Over the course of time, issues such as family income level, parental education, individual ability and study habits of students, school programs, or type of curriculum often outweigh the type of kindergarten attended (Brewster & Railsback, 2002). Still, the reading and knowledge skills a student possesses when entering kindergarten is a relatively dependable predictor of academic success. Children that come from “literacy-rich” home environments consistently demonstrate higher reading knowledge and skills than other students. Denton, West, and Walston (2003) found that a relationship existed between home literacy environment and academic success in both kindergarten and first grade, even after controlling variables in

their study such as the children's poverty status and race/ethnicity. It is evident that more research needs to be conducted to determine the longitudinal effects of FD kindergarten programs on academic achievement in addressing these factors and the mixed results of research available on the long-term effects of FD versus HD kindergarten experiences.

#### Social and Behavioral Effects of Full-day Kindergarten

Cryan et al. (1992) administered the Hanemann Elementary School Behavior Rating Scale in the Ohio Longitudinal Study to all kindergarten students. Data analyses indicate that behaviorally, there was a clear relationship between kindergarten schedule and children's classroom behavior. Analysis of variance for each cohort (Cohort 1 and Cohort 2) showed significant differences related to schedule for originality, independent learning, involvement in classroom activities, productivity with peers, intellectual dependency, failure/anxiety, and approach to teacher with improved student performance noted for students enrolled in FD programs (Cryan et al., 1992, p. 193). The results also indicated that students attending the FD kindergarten program "exhibited more positive behavior than did the pupils in the HD programs (p. 199). The researchers found that all positive behaviors of FD kindergarten students increased while all negative behaviors either had no change or decreased. Full-day kindergarten students were rated as exhibiting more positive behavior than the students in the half-day kindergarten programs (Cryan et al., 1992). Data from this study would support the additional time to engage children in social behaviors as a result of enrollment in FD kindergarten.

Hildebrand's 2001 study of the relative effects of three different kindergarten schedules (FD, alternate-day, and HD), utilized the Hahnemann Elementary School Behavior Rating Scale (HESB) to obtain teachers' perceptions of children's social competence. Analyses of HESB results indicated that children attending the HD program scored significantly higher on four factors considered to facilitate learning (originality, independent learning, involvement, and productive interaction with peers) while alternate-day students scored significantly lower on all four of these factors. Significant differences were found between groups on four factors considered to show a student's ability to cope with academic expectations (blaming, approach to teacher, inattention, and academic expectation). Students attending the HD program had higher positive scores on approach to teacher and also were rated by teachers as demonstrating the least amount of inattentive classroom behavior. Teachers also rated students in the HD program higher on academic achievement. These results contradict findings from other kindergarten research which demonstrated improved social interactions and behavior in FD kindergarten classes (Cryan et al., 1992; Wang & Johnstone, 1999).

Using data from the Early Childhood Longitudinal Study (ECLS-K), Finn and Pannozzo (2004), compared student behavior in FD as compared to HD kindergarten. Teachers rated HD classes as better behaved than FD classes. Afternoon (HD) classes were rated as better behaved than morning (HD) classes (Finn & Pannozzo, 2004). The researchers pointed out "The common aspect of these findings is that morning classes, in FD and morning-only kindergartens, were rated the poorest. The time of the day

undoubtedly affects students' behavior as young children might be expected to be more active in the morning and to exhibit more misbehavior" (Finn & Panno, 2004, p. 85). Additionally, teachers' ratings of classes that start in the morning and continue to the afternoon may be negatively impacted by teacher fatigue (Finn & Panno, 2004).

Other studies found no difference in social skills and positive behavior with FD kindergarten as compared to HD programs (Stofflet, 1998) (a follow-up study) or found a decrease in positive behaviors, with the suggestion that this may be due to the effect of increased academic expectations on FD kindergarten children (Hildebrand, 2000). Hough and Bryde (1996) compared teacher ratings of over 500 kindergartners and found little difference between FD and HD attendees in terms of focus on tasks, cooperative work and play, or showing respect for rules. Similar results were reported by West, Denton, and Reaney (2001), (a statistical analysis report), who used ECLS-K data to examine skills such as accepting peer ideas, making friends, and comforting others.

#### National Studies on Full-Day Kindergarten

Triggered in part by the Department of Education's 1983 report, *A Nation at Risk*, a trend developed in the United States to improve the kindergarten curriculum, calling for a back-to-basics approach as a way to ensure the nation's continued dominance in world markets. Increased attention was directed toward the kindergarten year to ensure that students acquired the prerequisite skills needed for school success. Educators looked to

research to determine the benefits of a FD kindergarten program as compared to a HD kindergarten program on students' academic, social, and behavioral outcomes.

The Early Childhood Longitudinal Study-Kindergarten Class of 1998-1999 (ECLS-K) was initiated to improve the quality of the data available regarding early childhood education. According to the NCES, the ongoing nature of the study, as well as its national scope and large sample size, were identified as differentiating it from previous kindergarten studies (Walston & West, 2004). The focus of this study was to compare differences in instructional practices and curriculum focus in FD versus HD kindergarten at the national level using data from schools, teachers, parents, and kindergarten children. The researchers caution against drawing causal relationships from the results of this longitudinal survey in that students were not randomly assigned to classes.

As a longitudinal study, a nationally representative sample of 22,000 kindergartners (95% first time kindergartners) representing diverse racial, ethnic, and socio-economic status was followed through fifth grade. All kindergarten teachers in the sampled schools were selected to participate (3000 teachers). Approximately 1,200 public (85%) and private schools (15%) offering kindergarten programs (full-day 55%, half-day 45%) were selected to participate in the ECLS-K. Early childhood programs that offer kindergarten in addition to programs for preschoolers were also selected to participate.

Results of this national study indicate:

1. Teachers in FD kindergarten classes organize FD instruction in much the same as teachers in HD kindergarten. On the average, FD classes spend more time each day than HD classes on teacher-directed whole class, small-group, individual activities and child-initiated activities. When the total amount of time is taken into account, the percent of total class time spent in each activity is the same (Walston & West, 2004, p. xviii).
2. Mixed level groupings are the most common grouping type used in both FD and HD kindergarten classes. Full-day classes are more likely than HD classes to use achievement groups at least once a week for reading instruction and math instruction (Walston & West, 2004, p. xviii).
3. Both FD and HD classes have reading and language arts activities every day. Full-day classes are more likely to spend time each day on other subjects such as math, social studies, and science than HD classes (Walston & West, 2004, p. xviii).
4. All children enrolled in kindergarten made gains in reading and math. The children enrolled in FD kindergarten made greater gains in reading, language arts, and math over the course of the kindergarten year compared to students enrolled in HD kindergarten.
5. Children in FD classes made greater gains in both reading and mathematics when compared to children in HD classes even after adjusting for gain score differences associated with race and poverty status (Walston & West, 2004, p.xxi).



6. All groups made gains during the year. White and Asian children on average scored higher than Black and Hispanic children both in the Fall and Spring of kindergarten.
7. Children from economically disadvantaged households made gains during their kindergarten year but tended to both start and end the year behind children from more economically advantaged households (Walston & West, 2004, p.45). Children from households with incomes below the poverty threshold made slightly smaller gains compared to those with incomes at or above this threshold (Walston & West, 2004, p. 58).
8. Reading and math knowledge of incoming kindergarten students differed by level of mother's education. Children whose mothers had higher levels of education performed better on reading and math pretests (Walston & West, 2004).
9. Children in FD programs demonstrated slightly higher cognitive knowledge and skills, but they were also more likely to exhibit problem behaviors (as measured by how often they argue and fight with each other) (Walston & West, 2004).
10. Class size was a small but significant main effect, indicating that children in large classes made smaller gains in reading compared to those in medium size classes. Children in classes with between 18 and 24 students made gain scores on the average .54 score points larger than those in classes with 25 or more children (Walston & West, 2004, p.56).

11. Small class size did not mitigate the difference in gains found between children in HD and FD kindergarten programs (Walston & West, 2004, p. xxi).

12. Presence of an aide in a program was not associated with gains in reading for white children enrolled in either HD or FD programs. Black children in FD classes with an aide made greater reading gains compared to black children in FD classes without an aide (Walston & West, 2004, p.xxi.).

### Summary

The research indicates that FD kindergarten programs that are appropriate for kindergarten age children have been found to provide cognitive, social, physical, and emotional benefits for children. All students derive benefit from enrollment in a FD kindergarten program; however, regardless of the curriculum, low-SES students and/or students judged to be at-risk evidenced greater gains than middle-or high SES students in literacy, math general learning skills, and social skills (Finn, 2000). The long-term benefits of FD kindergarten are mixed (Finn & Pannozzo, 2004). Researchers have found that FD programs provide opportunities for students to be more actively engaged (Elicker & Mathur, 1997) and enable students to extend learning experiences, develop more positive and nurturing relationships with students, and maintain better communication with parents (Elicker & Mathur, 1997; Hough & Bryde, 1996).

Children in FD programs demonstrate more positive behavior in the areas of originality, independent learning, and involvement in classroom activities (Cryan et al. 1992) and have fewer grade retentions (Cryan et al., 1992; Gullo, 2000; Viadero, 2002). Research also indicated that children who had attended FD programs had fewer absences in grade one than students who attended HD programs (Gullo, 2000). Teachers need to be aware of the issues that envelop full- and half-day kindergarten while it is essential for district leaders and policy makers to ensure that no detrimental effects of developmentally appropriate FD kindergarten were found when compared to HD kindergarten (Elicker & Mathur, 1997; Martinez & Snider, 2001).

Chapter III will describe the design of the study, the methodology, and the procedures used in the study. It will also discuss the demographics of the focus groups, instruments, data collection procedures, and data analysis utilized in this study.

## CHAPTER 3

### METHODOLOGY

#### Subjects

The participants selected for this study were teachers currently working in two separate middle-class suburban New Jersey public school districts who have taught both FD/HD kindergarten. The participants were recruited through a flyer posted in every elementary school throughout both districts. The flyer was distributed by office staff to the teachers currently teaching kindergarten. In a focus group setting, participants provided demographic data such as the length of time teaching half-day and full-day kindergarten, other grade level experiences/length of time teaching at various grade levels, and total amount of time in the teaching profession.

The first school district is located in a township encompassing approximately 14 square miles, with a population of 27,000 people and 4255 students. The district has received a District Factor Group (DFG) of "F" which indicates the middle of the socio-economic status (SES) in the state of New Jersey, with an "A" at the lowest end of the (DFG) scale and "J" being the highest DFG. There are 5 elementary schools, 1 middle school, and 1 high school in this district. Each of the K-6 schools has a HD kindergarten program with a range from 360-500 students in each school. Class size average is approximately 18-20 students, with less than 6% of any elementary school's total population identified as English Language Learners.

The second school district is located in a township encompassing 3 square miles, with a population of approximately 15,000 people and 2400 Pre-K-12 students. The district has received a District Factor Group (DFG) of "DE" which also indicates the middle of the socio-economic status (SES) in the state of New Jersey, with an "A" at the lowest end of the (DFG) scale and "J" being the highest DFG. There are 3 elementary schools, 1 middle school, and 1 high school in this district. Each of the Pre-K-5 schools has a FD kindergarten program with a range from 160-320 students in each school. Class size average is approximately 19-24 students, with less than 12% of any elementary school's total population identified as English Language Learners. Student enrollment has been steadily increasing in both communities and the enrollment is predicted to continue to rise.

### Procedures

From a theoretical perspective this researcher conducted focus groups with teachers to gather information to determine factors that affect a child's development in a FD versus HD kindergarten. The focus groups were designed to learn the educators' perceptions related to instructional methodologies, program effects on academic achievement and the social and behavioral growth and development of students in FD versus HD kindergarten settings. The discussions took place in a comfortable environment, the faculty room, intended to encourage participants to speak freely as they shared their perspectives, insights, and opinions on FD/HD kindergarten. Demographic

information such as length of teacher's FD/HD teaching experience, total length of experience, other grade levels/districts taught was also collected before the discussion began. The sessions were audio recorded. The data was obtained through notes taken during the recordings and transcripts of the focus group sessions. Each focus group session was expected to last one and a half hours and was conducted in January, 2008. The participants were informed through a letter mailed directly to each subject and notified of a neutral location, date, length, and time of arrival established for the session. Participants also signed an Informed Consent Form which explained confidentiality.

During the focus group sessions the researcher served as the moderator. The researcher met and welcomed the participants using a script (see Appendix A), and created an atmosphere conducive to conversation. An assistant was available to take notes, make sure the recording was working properly, and provide refreshments. If any participants were unable to attend the focus group session, they had the opportunity to respond in written format to the research questions and return them to the researcher in a self-addressed, stamped envelope.

#### Instrumentation

The instrument utilized nine questions (see Appendix B) designed by the researcher. The questions were developed from the literature findings of this researcher and had been created to be open-ended in an attempt to encourage discussion by the respondents. The questions were classified into four categories and were driven by the

information obtained in the literature review. Examples supported by research are provided. The first two questions, (#1 and #2) belonged to Category 1, Advantages and/or Disadvantages of Full-Day versus Half-Day Kindergarten. Elicker and Mathur (1997) indicated that teachers, whether they teach full-day or half-day kindergarten programs, see full-day programs as more beneficial in helping children transition to first grade, and affording more flexibility in the types of learning activities that can be offered. Questions #3, #4, and #5 are included in Category 2, Instructional Methodologies in a Full-Day versus Half-Day Kindergarten. Martinez and Snider (2001), found that children in the FD kindergarten program spent more time engaged in student-initiated activities, received more one-to-one instruction, and spent less time in teacher-directed group activities than did students in HD kindergarten programs.

In Category 3, The Impact on Academic Achievement of a Full-Day versus Half-day Kindergarten, Questions #6 and #7 were posed. Gullo (2000, p. 22) indicated in a study of second graders that students enrolled in FD programs not only scored significantly higher on standardized reading and math achievement tests than children in HD kindergarten, but they were “more independent in their learning, were more creative thinkers, and had a more positive approach to the teacher.” Questions #8 and #9 were placed in Category 4, Social and Behavioral Aspects of Full-Day versus Half-Day Kindergarten. Finn and Panno (2004) utilizing data from the Early Childhood Longitudinal Study 1998-1999 (ECLS-K), found that when student behavior was

compared in FD as to HD kindergarten, teachers rated HD classes as better behaved than FD classes.

To establish face and content validity, the questions were sent to a jury of experts for their input, comments, and revisions. A jury of carefully selected professionals familiar with and experienced in primary and preprimary education consisted of five members whose total service consists of over 110 years in the field. The jury suggested no substantive revisions.

### Data Analysis

Qualitative interviewing, which was utilized to answer the research questions, begins with the assumption that the perspective of others is meaningful, knowable, and able to be made explicit (Patton, 2002, p.341). Transcription of the taped focus sessions was conducted and each transcript was typed verbatim from the focus group session tapes. Handwritten notes from the interview were also typed.

According to Gall, Borg, & Gall (1996 pp. 563-564), one of the most critical steps of interpretational analysis is developing a set of categories that adequately encompasses and summarizes the data. The researcher must decide what is worth taking note of in each segment of the database. Researchers need to develop a category label for each type of phenomenon in the database and establish a list of categories for coding the segments. In developing categories, one needs to study the data carefully in order to identify significant phenomena, and then determine which phenomena share sufficient similarities



that they can be considered instances of the same concept. This concept becomes a category in the category system. The category needs to be defined, labeled, and provided with guidelines that can be used to determine whether each segment in the database is or is not an instance of the category. This process of category development is consistent with the principles of grounded theory (Strauss & Corbin, 1990). The principles derive their categories directly from the data rather than from theories developed by other researchers. The categories are “grounded” in the particular set of data that is collected.

Thematic content analysis was generated from the responses to each focus interview question, which provided rich information. The information was analyzed to detect patterns and perceptions from the teacher perspective to illuminate trends and reveal teachers’ thoughts, feelings, opinions, and ideas to provide a better understanding of FD versus HD kindergarten programs. Patton (2002) indicates pattern codes illustrate recurring themes that become discernable after gaining familiarity with local events and relationships. Pattern codes were used to create a visual format, or a model to understand the interconnection between the codes.

Themes were supported by direct quotes from responses. Grouping of characteristics were completed to create themes to gain insight and understanding of teachers’ perceptions of HD/FD kindergarten. This coding process provided an understanding of teachers’ perceptions and indicated any differences in HD/FD kindergarten. This data was organized into categories while searching for patterns to

provide purposeful information regarding all participants' perceptions of HD/FD kindergarten.

Chapter IV presents the data and results of the analyses of these data.

## CHAPTER IV

### PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS OF THE DATA

This chapter reviews the purpose of the study, describes organization of the analysis, methods used, demographic data to describe the participants, analysis of data collected in the study relative to each of the four research questions and a summary of the analysis.

#### Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to investigate teachers' perceptions of the impact of FD kindergarten versus HD kindergarten in suburban New Jersey public schools and determine how FD and HD kindergartens benefit or detract from a child's educational experience. The educators are teachers in school districts who have had the experience of teaching both FD and HD kindergarten and are currently teaching in a suburban New Jersey public school district.

The purpose of this chapter was to present the findings of the study. Two separate focus groups, one group consisting of four teachers and the other group of five, were held, representing kindergarten teachers from two different suburban New Jersey public school districts. The research questions were directly derived from the literature review information indicating the advantages and disadvantages of the effects of FD versus HD kindergarten in suburban New Jersey public schools. Qualitative measures were used to

elicit the impressions and interpretations of teachers toward FD versus HD kindergarten programs, based on the four subsidiary questions:

1. What are teachers' perceptions of the advantages and/or disadvantages of FD versus HD kindergarten?
2. What are the instructional methodologies in a FD versus HD kindergarten?
3. How does academic achievement differ in a FD versus HD kindergarten?
4. How does FD versus HD kindergarten impact student's social and behavioral interactions?

#### Organization of the Analysis

The following questions were posed to the nine teachers participating in the study during the two focus group sessions:

1. What are the benefits for a child in a FD/HD kindergarten program?
2. What are the drawbacks for a child in a FD/HD kindergarten program?
3. What are the differences in instructional methodologies (teacher-directed versus child-initiated) in FD versus HD kindergarten?
4. What strategies promote self-directed learning in a FD/HD kindergarten?
5. How are students engaged in child-initiated (free-play, learning centers, cooperative learning) activities in a FD/HD kindergarten?
6. How does FD/HD kindergarten impact students academically?

7. How would the additional time in a FD kindergarten be utilized to increase student achievement?
8. What differences, if any, would there be on children's behavioral outcomes in areas such as independent learning and playing with others between a FD/HD kindergarten?
9. What are the social benefits/drawbacks for a child in a FD/HD kindergarten?

### Analysis of the Data for the Focus Group Discussions

#### Demographic Information

The nine participants' experiences represented a total of over 140 years of kindergarten teaching with approximately 120 years representing HD kindergarten experiences. The participants' personal teaching experiences ranged from teaching HD for 2 years or less to teaching HD kindergarten for 38 years. Table 1 indicates that all participants have taught FD for 2 years or less. All participants have also had teaching experiences at other grade levels, predominantly Pre-K through grade two. Six out of these 9 teachers also taught first grade. One teacher taught basic skills, another taught special education, and only one teacher had experience teaching third and fourth grade.

The researcher addressed two focus groups from two different school districts that consisted of teachers that taught both FD and HD kindergarten and are currently teaching in a suburban New Jersey public school district. The following responses and comments

pertaining to the research questions were obtained during the focus group sessions. The responses from the first two questions 1 and 2 from the study instrument (see Appendix B) pertain to research question 1. What are teachers' perceptions of the advantages and/or disadvantages of FD versus HD kindergarten? Questions 3, 4, and 5 from the study instrument (see Appendix B) relate to research question 2. What are the instructional methods utilized in a FD versus HD kindergarten? Research question 3. How does academic achievement differ in a FD versus HD kindergarten? was answered through the responses of questions 6 and 7 (see Appendix B) from the study instrument. Questions 8 and 9 from the study instrument (see Appendix B) are relevant to research question 4. How does FD versus HD kindergarten impact students' social and behavioral interactions?

#### Summary of Tables 2 to 10

As a result of the two focus group discussions with a total of nine respondents, Tables 2 to 10 were created to record the responses in table format. These tables represent a compilation of the researcher's analysis of the perceptions, opinions, and experiences of the focus group respondents regarding teachers' perceptions of the advantages and disadvantages of the effects of FD versus HD kindergarten. According to the researcher's analysis the tables were created in alignment with the research questions and are intended as a representation of the responses given by the teachers in the focus groups.

Table 2 is a summation of the benefits for a child in a FD/HD kindergarten program as discussed by the teachers in this research. The two major benefits according to four out of nine respondents were to have the time to go in depth with content and the additional time for play and social skills development in a FD kindergarten. Three out of nine teachers stated that the additional center/station time was a benefit and that students were more relaxed in a FD program. Benefits such as additional time for hands-on learning, small group instruction, and remediation in a FD kindergarten were indicated by two out of the nine respondents. The additional time, more exploration learning, more self-directed activities, additional time for writing conferences, less transition to before/after care, and more creativity were all indicated as benefits in the FD program, although none was mentioned by more than one teacher.

Table 3 summarizes the drawbacks for a child in a FD/HD kindergarten program. Out of the nine respondents, four indicated drawbacks of the FD kindergarten; two out of four teachers cited drawbacks as children were not chronologically ready for a FD, too long a day, and children need more sleep in a full-day kindergarten. One teacher stated that a drawback was that some of the students are not developmentally ready for FD kindergarten. In looking at the drawbacks for HD programs, two teachers out of nine indicated that there were too many academic demands and indicated there was not enough time for play/social development in a HD kindergarten. As a drawback, three teachers indicated that children had a more difficult transition from HD to first grade.

Table 4 indicates responses to the question regarding the differences in instructional methodologies in FD versus HD kindergarten. Seven out of the nine

respondents suggested that there was more time for centers in a FD program. Five teachers acknowledged that there was less whole-group instruction and more individualized instruction in a FD. Five respondents also agreed that there was no need to rush learning in a FD program. Three out of nine of the teachers indicated there was more time for in-depth play activities in FD and three claimed there were more student-directed/initiated activities in FD programs. Two out of nine teachers agreed that there was more flexibility in selection of instructional methods in a FD program and two also agreed that there were more opportunities for selection in a FD kindergarten. One respondent declared there was more time for “teachable moments,” one acknowledged there were more small group activities in a FD program, and one out of nine responded avowed there was more use of technology in FD kindergarten programs.

The strategies that promote self-directed learning in a FD/HD kindergarten are reflected in Table 5. The nine respondents provided a total of six strategies. Six out nine respondents affirmed that a FD kindergarten allows for more time for independent, age-appropriate, and self-directed learning activities. Four respondents out of nine indicated that setting up classroom management rules, routines, and expectations early in the year and having the additional time in a FD as a strategy that promotes self-directed learning. Three of the nine teachers declared that there is more time for freedom and use of conflict resolution strategies in a FD program. Two respondents agreed that providing a secure and successful foundation/environment promotes self-directed learning whether in a FD or HD program. Being consistent and running anecdotal records were also single responses as strategies to promote self-directed learning in FD and/or HD programs.



Student engagement in child-initiated activities are summarized in Table 6. Six out of nine teachers recognize that students are engaged in child-initiated activities by assigned and choice of centers in FD and HD kindergarten. Five of the nine respondents assert that having students work in teams and with others motivates students to be self-engaged in both types of programs. "Modeling" activities was also cited by three out of the nine respondents as attracting other students to child-initiated activities in both FD and HD sessions. Two respondents claimed that there was more time for free play in FD programs. Teachers also indicated other child-initiated activities, each recognized once, as having clear expectations, monitoring student progress/checklists, managing time, rotation of learning centers, and having students more involved in science experiments and social studies activities in a FD program.

The academic impact on students in a full-day and half-day program was collated on Table 7. Six of the nine teachers asserted that students need more time for language development, play, and exploratory activities whether in a FD or HD program. Five of the nine respondents confirmed that the students need to be ready to learn whether in a FD or HD kindergarten. While three out of the nine teachers declared that the academic gains did not matter whether in a FD or HD program, three indicated that the academic gains depend on support from the home environment, and three affirmed that whether in a FD or HD kindergarten, children need more time to be five-year olds, not more time on task. The same two respondents indicated that they did see more academic growth in FD at the end of kindergarten, but that different groups each year perform differently, and academic growth depends on the amount of sleep and nutrition of the child. Two of the

nine teachers stated that they did not see as much academic progress at the end of kindergarten as they had thought they would with a full-day kindergarten.

In Table 8, utilization of the additional time in a FD kindergarten to increase student achievement is summarized. Four of the nine teachers acknowledged that there is more time to re-teach/finish concepts in a full-day and four maintained that more curriculum can be covered and there are more opportunities to develop background knowledge, develop vocabulary, and for language development in a FD program. Three out of nine respondents stated that there is more time to elaborate on concepts and for creative thinking in a FD program and three indicated the FD allows for further develop the love of reading. Three out of the nine teachers asserted that FD kindergarten teachers take over first grade teachers' roles of responsibilities. Three teachers from this group of nine alleged that full-day kindergarten provides more "experiential activities" not occurring at home and three also asserted that increasing student achievement depends on Pre-K and pre-school experiences. One teacher stated that the additional time in a FD allows for increased student achievement by providing more time for students to work in small groups and through individualized instruction. One respondent declared that the additional time in a FD provides a better foundation for the rest of a child's school years.

Table 9 indicates differences in children's behavioral outcomes between FD and HD kindergarten. Five out of nine teachers asserted that there are more socialization skills in a full-day program. Four of the nine respondents agreed that there is more vocabulary and language development and the same four respondents added that there is more conversation amongst students in a FD kindergarten. Two of the nine teachers

alleged that lunch brings more behavioral problems to the FD classroom. Two of the nine respondents also stated that there is more structure in FD kindergartens. Single responses included: more choice for free play in FD kindergarten, there are the same rules in a FD and HD kindergarten, there is not much behavioral differences in FD versus HD, there is more time to devote to students solving their own problems, peer mediation, and problem solving, there is better behavior in HD kindergarten, there is a more structured environment in a HD program, less time for free play/interaction in a HD program, more reminders of rules in a FD program, easier to set rules in the beginning of the year in a FD kindergarten, students learn to get along a little more with each other due to lunch, and FD kindergarten students are not as self-directed due to lunch.

Social benefits and drawbacks for a child in FD versus HD kindergarten in Table 10 indicate that seven out of the nine respondents affirmed that there is extra time for students to get to know each other in FD programs. Five of the nine respondents confirmed there is more play time in a FD kindergarten. Three of the nine respondents believed that children learn more socialization skills in a FD program versus being home and three teachers asserted that FD kindergarten programs make students more independent, organized and responsible. Two of the nine educators recognized there is more discussion about bullying and teasing in FD sessions. Seven out of the thirteen responses regarding kindergarten children's social behavior were mentioned once and were as follows: students get too familiar with each other in FD kindergarten, there are more choices as to who to interact with in FD, lunch assists with more socialization in the FD program, students pick-up negative habits from lunch with FD, FD programs lay the

foundation for the rest of students' future experiences, there is more interaction with the entire school population in a FD program, and there is more opportunity for listening to stories and books in a FD program.

Table 1: Participant's Demographic Information

Respondent	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
Taught HD 2 years or less	X								X
Taught HD 3-10 years					X			X	
Taught HD 11-18 years			X	X					
Taught HD 19-26 years		X							
Taught HD 27 or more years						X	X		
Taught FD 2 years or less	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Other grade levels taught:									
Pre-K	X	X							
1		X	X	X		X	X	X	
2		X	X		X				
3			X						
4			X						
Special Ed.				X					
Basic Skills									X
Total years teaching:									
3-10					X				X
11-18	X							X	
19-26		X		X					
27-34			X						
35 or more						X	X		

Table 2: Benefits of Full-Day/Half-Day Kindergarten Program

Respondent	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
Additional time in FD	X								
More hands-on learning in FD	X							X	
Additional time for small group instruction/remediation in FD	X	X							
More exploration learning in FD	X								
Depth of content in FD		X				X	X		X
Additional center/station time in FD		X		X				X	
More self-directed activities in FD		X							
Additional time for play/social skills development in FD		X	X					X	X
Additional time for writing conferences in FD				X					
Students more relaxed in FD				X	X			X	
Less transition to before/aftercare in FD						X			
Can be more creative in FD							X		

Table 3: Drawbacks of Full-day/Half-day Kindergarten Programs

Respondent	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
Developmentally not ready for full-day kindergarten				X					
Chronologically not ready for full-day	X		X						
Too long a day in full-day		X		X					
Children need more sleep in full-day		X		X					
Different learning preferences		X							
Too many academic demands in HD							X		X
Not enough time for play/social development in HD							X		X
More difficult transition from HD to 1 <sup>st</sup> grade					X	X		X	

Table 4: Differences in Instructional Methods in Full-day/ Half-Day Kindergarten

Respondent	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
More time for centers in FD	X	X	X			X	X	X	X
No need to rush learning in FD	X				X	X	X	X	
More flexibility in selection in FD	X		X						
More opportunities for selection in FD			X	X					
Less whole-group instruction & more individualized instruction in FD		X	X	X			X		X
More time for "teachable moments"		X							
More time for in-depth play activities in FD		X					X	X	
More student directed/initiated activities in FD		X					X		X
More small group activities in FD		X							
More use of technology in FD			X						



Table 5: Strategies That Promote Self-directed Learning in Full-day/Half-day Kindergarten

Respondent	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
Setting up classroom management rules/routines/expectations early in the year and with additional time in FD	X	X	X	X					
More time for freedom and use of conflict resolution strategies in FD		X			X				X
Being consistent		X							
Providing a secure/successful foundation/environment		X	X						
FD allows for more time for independent, age-appropriate, self-directed learning activities			X		X	X	X	X	X
Running anecdotal records				X					

Table 6: Student Engagement of Child-initiated Activities in Full-day/Half-day Kindergarten

Respondent	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
Having students work in teams and with others motivates students to be self-engaged	X					X	X	X	X
"Modeling" activities attract other students	X						X	X	
Clear expectations		X							
Assigned and choice of centers		X	X		X	X		X	X
Monitoring/ Checklists		X							
Time management		X							
Rotation of learning centers			X						
More time for free play in FD			X	X					
More involved in science experiments and social studies activities in FD				X					

Table 7: Academic Impact of Full-day/ Half-day Kindergarten

Respondent	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
Not as much academic progress at the end of kindergarten	X		X						
Does not matter FD/HD	X		X	X					
Need to be ready to learn whether FD/HD	X	X	X	X				X	
More academic growth at the end of FD kindergarten	X	X							
Each year groups perform differently	X	X							
Depends on support from home environment	X	X		X					
Depends on amount of sleep and nutrition	X	X							
Need more time to be 5-year olds not more time on task in FD/HD	X	X		X					
Need more time for language development, play, exploratory activities in FD/HD	X	X			X	X	X		X

**Table 8: Utilization of Additional Time in Full-day Kindergarten to Increase Student Achievement**

Respondent	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
More time to work in small groups/provide individual instruction in FD	X								
More time to re-teach/finish concepts in PM in FD	X			X			X	X	
More time to elaborate on concepts/creative thinking in FD	X						X	X	
More time for teachable moments in FD	X								
Cover more curriculum in FD		X				X	X	X	
Can further develop the love of reading in FD		X				X	X		
More opportunities to develop background knowledge/vocabulary/language development in FD		X		X		X	X		
Take over 1st grade teachers role/responsibilities in FD			X		X				X
Provides more foundation for the rest of the school years in FD			X						
Provides more "experiential activities" not occurring at home in FD				X	X		X		
Depends on Pre-K/Preschool experiences					X		X	X	

Table 9: Behavioral Outcomes in Full-day/Half-day Kindergarten

Respondent	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
More choice for free play in FD	X								
More socialization in FD	X		X		X		X		X
More vocabulary /language development in FD	X				X		X		X
More conversation with each other in FD	X				X		X		X
Same rules in HD/FD				X					
Not much behavioral differences in HD versus FD				X					
More time to devote to students solving own problems/peer mediation/problem solving in FD				X					
Lunch brings more behavioral problems to FD classroom		X		X					
Better behavior in HD			X						
More structured environment in HD			X						
Less time for free play/interaction in HD			X						
More reminders of rules in FD			X						
Easier to set rules in FD from beginning		X							
Learn to get along a little more with each other with lunch		X							
FD students not as self-directed due to lunch		X							
More structure in FD						X		X	

Table 10: Social Benefits and Drawbacks in Full-day/Half-day Kindergarten

Respondent	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
Extra time to get to know each other in FD	X	X		X	X	X		X	X
Students get too familiar with each other in FD		X							
More conversational opportunities in FD		X					X		
More playtime in FD	X			X	X	X			X
More choices as to who to interact with in FD	X								
Lunch assists with more socialization in FD	X								
Pick up negative habits from lunch in FD	X								
Learn more socialization skills in FD versus being at home	X		X	X					
FD makes students more independent/ organized/ responsible			X	X	X				
FD lays foundation for rest of future school experiences			X						
More discussion about bullying/ teasing in FD			X				X		
More interaction with entire school population in FD			X						
More opportunity for listening to stories/ books in FD				X					

## Analysis and Responses of the Focus Group Discussions

As part of the study, the researcher addressed two focus groups from different school districts. The following responses and comments pertaining to the research questions were obtained during the focus group sessions.

### Research Question 1

What are teachers' perception of the advantages and/or disadvantages of FD versus HD kindergarten?

The responses from 1 and 2 from the question route (see Appendix B) pertain to research question 1 (see Table 11). Teachers easily recognized the advantages of FD kindergarten and in both focus groups the benefits outnumbered the drawbacks. All of the benefits provided pertained to the FD kindergarten program.

I think we are able to take our time to do things. That's the benefit. We don't have to rush through a lesson. We can do a lot more hands-on activities. We can do longer discussions.

We can delve into things a little more and I can sit with children in the afternoon who didn't understand the morning lesson. I think this gives us extra time to remediate the problems. It also allows me to have more center time. More self-directed time for the children and to

be able to do hands-on activities. More social skills are developed.

What I love about the full day kindergarten is the social interaction. We never had time for that in the half. It's a big part of a five-year old's needs. Full day is a pleasure watching five-year olds be five-year olds.

I also feel that in a whole day kindergarten you can do more with stations. You can do more with the learning and experiencing of hands-on, more than just instruction. We felt rushed with time frame of a half-day kindergarten.

I feel that the students themselves saw us rushing through lessons just to try to get everything in. They were also not getting that free play time (in HD) where they are able to develop their social skills. You had to fit so much in in such little time.

Teachers commented on the disadvantages of both the FD and HD kindergarten programs.

Ok. I think that some children physiologically, maturity, mentally can't do the whole day and that group of children can make your afternoon like hell. Not everybody is ready for full day.



I have a group this year that I am finding so many children almost the opposite that are coming in that aren't getting enough sleep. They are tired in the morning and are kind of brightening up by the after the rest time. But there are some kids that seem to be...that are not morning people. And they are coming in very tired.

My only drawback (in FD) is that I need to rearrange my curriculum because I find that I am moving ahead in certain areas in my academic areas and chronologically some of these kids are just not ready at the time I am ready to present.

There's too much academic work in a HD and no playtime and kids need playtime for social skills.

The transition from kindergarten to first grade, half-day to full-day.

In a HD kindergarten, the kids did not have enough time for play and had too much emphasis on academics.

## Research Question 2

What are the instructional methodologies in a FD versus HD kindergarten?

The responses from 3, 4, and 5 from the question route (see Appendix B) pertain to research question 2 (see Table 12).

In an effort to expand on the instructional strategies the researcher focused on the differences of teaching strategies in the FD versus HD kindergarten. During this portion of the discussion teachers emphasized the additional time for centers in a FD program, less whole-group instruction and more individualized instruction in a FD kindergarten.

I think in a full-day, there is more time for centers. Like somebody had mentioned earlier and again there's no reason to rush. So they can play teacher or they can decide what they want to do as opposed to in a half-day where I was always the one to say, "Okay, we have to hurry up and do this. Okay, we can't talk about that right now. And we can explore things that we weren't able to explore before whether it be in centers or be an extra long discussion. It's more flexibility in the full day.

In my whole day I am allowed to do whole group instruction, small group instruction, and I am allowed to

have children work in centers and work at their own pace.

In my half day I was restricted to whole group instruction.

It was pretty much whole group (in HD) which can get a little crazy when the numbers are big.

I also agree that children now that children now (in FD) can do more spontaneous ton of teachable moment activities.

You know if we look out the window and they are coming as they often do, in our field they are laying woodchips or you know you have a big dump truck there, you know we might actually stop and go out and look whereas before I'd have to pull the shades down and say sorry, we have to keep going. I can have the centers and I still have a kitchen in my room. Now they can create a whole restaurant and they have a chef hat and they're making menus. And maybe I'll stop and go to the computer and print something up for the menus and before I couldn't have helped them expand that play. I just had to stop is so you know they can direct it much more now.

We didn't get to do centers. There wasn't enough time during the week (in a HD.) That's why I think there is

more teacher-directed instruction as opposed to child-initiated in half-day kindergarten.

I did do center three days out of the five. But I only did 1 or 2 each day and what I put out at the centers had to be something where they knew what they are doing right away. They could get it done. I could clean it up and we could go on to something else. So again that time factor was very important.

I tried many different ways to incorporate centers. I tried 2 days a week, then I tried it where I assigned 5 stations but they had to do one each day. And by the end of the week, they had done all of them. Again, because of the time frame, we found it hard. All of the centers had to be something they could do on their own because you can't be at all 5 station at the same time. Now we have the timeframe and the whole day.

We were directing them toward every single thing that they did because we knew we had to go somewhere at a certain time and they had to be there.

Strategies to promote self-directed learning were elaborated by teachers, explaining how FD kindergarten allows for more time for independent, age-appropriate,

self-directed learning activities. Teachers also underscored the importance of setting up classroom management rules, routines, and expectations early in the year and with the additional time provided in FD.

I think setting up an early routine right from the get go, having classroom rules, setting up the management of your centers so children know what's expected, and how to move from one place to another and how to treat one another.

Well I really think it's routines. Being consistent and doing what so they feel secure and they know what is expected every day. They know exactly what to come in and do and I think that allows them to be self-directed.

I think what \_\_\_\_ said about the rules. They need to know about the rules. I try to make it clear to them what's expected of them and what's not acceptable from them.

I think with the foundation and giving them things to do on their own that are age appropriate and make them feel successful will develop them on the line of self-directed activities.

All day allows you the time for children which we didn't have in the HD kindergarten to do self-directed learning. So time again is on our side with FD kindergarten.

I think it was very hard in a HD to make the work fit each child because of the timeframe. I think it all goes back to time. I really feel like each child is pushed to their maximum ability at the different levels because you have the time to focus more.

I just feel like I didn't give them as much freedom in a half-day as I should because there was no time for them to experiment with it. We didn't have the whole week for you to experiment and learn this way and then that way and deal with it in a small group. It's almost embarrassing to say we didn't have the time to learn.

There was agreement amongst participants that students are engaged in child-initiated activities in both FD/HD kindergarten through assigned and choice of centers. The participants also agreed that having students work in teams and with others motivates students to be engaged in child-initiated activities.

I like to set up when I do centers, for example, a puzzle center they learn about teamwork because a puzzle is not something you can take a few pieces and do yourself and

work on. Sometimes they won't actually be interested in something until they see the other kids doing it.

I usually also set up 5 or 6 different centers about 3 days a week we do center time. And I explain each one of them.

Some are ongoing if it's an individual math activity.

Others are new everyday like an art project. And then I generally let the children choose if it's a free art but if it's something like a listening center where I want everyone to come, then I assign the groups to start. And then I have a checklist and I will check off so certain centers I can keep track of and I can go in and monitor what they have done.

My learning centers...everybody goes to a learning center and we rotate around. I, of course, sit with the guided reading. And the other centers, the children will do on their own in cooperative learning groups. My free play children will go and play. It's free play and they decide where to go. In HD kindergarten of course the restrictions are there because of the time. Full-day, I can get to the learning centers more frequently than I did with HD.

I agree that before \_\_\_\_ said about not having to stop the children so they really are engaged in their free play and

learning centers and whatever kind of cooperative activities are set up. I think that's the most important part. The learning centers are set up. Now I can leave it (science or social studies) as a center and the experiment can be a center and they can visit that. Or I even find, that I can use it if someone asks a question about...for instance for Martin Luther King's birthday, I read them a story and they saw the illustrations in the book, the pictures that were drawn at the march in Washington, so they could get a vision for people. So when I did the centers I had a 17-minute video clip right there and they could watch...and it's not just the man in the book. You have the time for that kind of thing. Time, it all comes down to more time. I think in a half-day you direct them. I think you are promoting modeling.

I agree. Like you said they get to choose centers.

The brighter students do enjoy being grouped together because there is that competition even at 5 years old.



### Research Question 3

How does academic achievement differ in a FD versus HD kindergarten?

The responses from 6 and 7 from the question route (see Appendix B) pertain to research question 3 (see Table 13). Responding teachers appeared keenly aware of the academic impact of students in FD/HD kindergarten.

I feel that the full day gives them more opportunities to develop language skills and to learn more things at their own pace. The half-day, as we were saying before, they were just rushed.

It (HD) was too rushed and that affects them. There was not enough time for handwriting. There was not enough time for math and language arts. It was just rushed. It was throwing it at them and they didn't have enough time to actually digest it. Full-day gives them more time to explore and play.

As five year olds, they need to be ready to learn. We cannot forget that.

This is our second year in full day kindergarten. I have to say last year being my first year with full day kindergarten, I did make more progress but not the progress I thought I

was going to see as opposed to my half-day kindergarten speaking in terms of reading. I expected more of my children leaving the room reading than I did in my half day program. That was a little surprising to me.

They absolutely did better than the years that they had half day. This year, I don't think I am going to see that same growth because I have a different group and they are not getting the support at home. So I think that no matter how long you have them, if they have the support at home and if they come with the right amount of sleep and the proper nutrition and all of those things that they need, and then we can see that jump.

My kids that were going to leave reading are going to leave reading whether HD kindergarten or FD kindergarten. My target group is the kids who are having difficulties in reading. I feel like I see a little bit more progress in that area than in the HD program. That's where I was a little surprised that the gap was not as wide as I thought it would be.

Before we went to a full-day, I did have some preconceived opinions about a full day and a half day. I felt that the day

would be too long for a majority of them. I was of the opinion that everyone could pretty much succeed to a certain extent in a half-day. But then a FD kind of separates the men from the boys. As \_\_\_ said, the kids who were going to leave reading are going to leave reading no matter what you did... Not everyone, not everyone should be reading.

Which only shows us that you can't forget the chronological age of these children that we are teaching. That when they are ready to learn, they are ready to learn and whether we teach them in FD environment or HD, yes the environment changes, we can read to them more, do more thing with them, and we can give them more opportunities with time that is on our side. But I think that unless they are ready, we are not going to see the achievement that we want to see.

And what they do need is the more self-directed, more play, exploration, language development, and we're going the opposite way. I don't care how many computers we have in the room, and how many wonderful, new things there are

in 2008, the children are still 5 years-old and they can only do what they can do.

Just because they come to school all day, doesn't make them big children and you still have the same issues that you have with any group of 5-year olds. While the time is a plus in so many respects, it doesn't make them big children so we need to remember that. They don't need more time on task. They need more time to be 5-year-old children.

Teachers made an effort to expand on how the additional time in a full-day kindergarten is utilized to increase student achievement focused on various areas. During this portion of the discussion more opportunities to develop background knowledge, vocabulary, and language development were addressed. Teachers focused on the ability to be able to cover more curriculum and how the additional time assists to re-teach and finish teaching concepts in the afternoon. Other responses included being able to elaborate on concepts and further develop the love of reading. Many teachers supported the idea that the additional time provides more "experiential activities" not occurring at home and addressed the issue of utilizing the time depending on the type of Pre-K and/or pre-school program children experienced.

There is more time to work in small groups, more time to obviously help the kids who are struggling. Before it was hurry up, hurry up. We got to rush.

Often times, when it starts to snow, they are amazed by snow. They all want to stop and run to the windows. It's snowing. They have their visions of snowmen and frolicking in the snow. In a HD I feel like we can't look at the snow right now. Sit back down. It will be there when you get out. But now we can say, "Wow! We haven't seen the snow yet!" Now this year it snowed and it wasn't winter yet so we got a chance to talk about that. But in the HD we would have shut the shades. Sit down. Don't look out that window. It's a different kind of mindset. It's a lot more relaxing and you can elaborate on a lot more things like that.

I think in the full day that's one of the most positive things that I can read 2 or 3 stories a day which we were only doing the one before in the HD. For children who don't get any reading at home, I think that can make a huge difference, but also the love of reading. To really develop

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that love of reading, I think, is one of the biggest benefits I have seen.

We are now taking over the opportunities of getting children ready for the whole day whereas in first grade that used to be their job. A FD kindergarten provides the setting for the rest of the school years.

I think that ideally, it will increase achievement because you can devote more time to their language and their experiences.

I think having them a longer time just gives more language stimulation in general. There's a lot of vocabulary. I play a vocabulary game that I just made up common household words. Wallet and lawnmower and they don't know them because people are just not having conversations with their children.

I think that now that we have a FD, it has expanded their free thinking. I love to do science and I do that in my class. And when I did it, I had to give up something else. Full-day was the answer for it.

As far as the arts go, I am reading stories and literature and poetry with a FD.

I felt like the story of the day (in a HD) was while they were eating their snack because that was 10 minutes of downtime. I told a story. You didn't have enough time to enjoy the book and discuss it and the setting and the characters.

#### Research Question 4

How does FD versus HD kindergarten impact students' behavioral and social interactions?

The responses from 8 and 9 from the question route (see Appendix B) pertain to question 4. Table 14 depicts the total number responses in relation to research question 4. Teachers' responses supported that there is more socialization and increased vocabulary and language development in FD kindergarten. Several teachers commented on how FD programs provide the opportunities for children to engage in more conversation with each other. There were conflicting responses, which included both that there was more structure in a HD/FD, responses that indicated that there not much behavioral differences between both programs and that the rules were the same in HD/FD. One teacher commented that the FD program allows more time to devote to students solving their own problems, for peer mediation, and for problem solving.

Now in a FD kindergarten they are together all day. They have become more familiar with each other. They eat lunch together. They socialize together.

I also feel sometimes like they become very clique-y but FD does provide more socialization time and allows them to talk more with each other and with me.

I think a lot has to do with socialization. In a FD they learn about each other, talk more to each other and learn how to get along.

There was agreement amongst the participants that social benefits in a FD program include the extra time for the children to get know each other better and provides for additional play time.

Socially again we are able to give them the playtime that they really didn't get in the HD. And they can make choices about who they can talk to and interact with.

In a FD kindergarten, they are able to spend more time learning about appropriate play and appropriate social behaviors.

In a FD kindergarten there is more time for play and children learn more socialization skills.



In a HD you have all the problems in the morning if you have the aftercare late in the afternoon because they are there all day long until 5 or 6 o'clock. In a FD kindergarten, you can also take more time to discuss behavior problems and try to resolve issues with the kids.

Table 11: Research Question #1:  
What are teachers' perceptions of the advantages and/or disadvantages of  
FD versus HD kindergarten?

Advantages	# of Responses	Disadvantages	# of Responses
Depth of content in FD	4	More difficult transition from HD to 1 <sup>st</sup> grade	3
Additional time for play/social skills development in FD	4	Chronologically not ready for FD	2
Additional center/station time in FD	3	Too long a day in FD	2
Students more relaxed in FD	3	Children need more sleep in FD	2
More hands-on learning in FD	3	Too many academic demands in HD	2
Additional small group instruction/remediation in FD	2	Not enough time for play/social development in HD	2
Additional time in FD	1	Developmentally not ready for FD kindergarten	1
More exploration learning in FD	1	Different learning preferences	1
More self-directed activities in FD	1		
Additional time for writing conferences in FD	1		
Less transition to before/aftercare in FD	1		
Can be more creative in FD	1		

Table 12: Research Question #2  
 What are the instructional methodologies in a FD versus HD kindergarten?

Instructional Methods	# of Responses	Strategies to Promote Self-directed Learning	# of Responses	Child- initiated Activities	# of Responses
More time for centers in FD	7	FD allows for more time for independent, age-appropriate, self-directed learning activities	6	Assigned and choice of centers	6
Less whole-group instruction & more individualized instruction in FD	5	Setting up classroom management rules/routines/expectations early in the year and with additional time in FD	4	Having students work in teams and with others motivates students to be self-engaged	5
No need to rush learning in FD	4	More time for freedom and use of conflict resolution strategies in FD	3	"Modeling" activities attract other students	3
More time for in-depth play activities in FD	3	Providing a secure/successful foundation/environment	2	Clear expectations	2
More student-directed/initiated activities in FD	3	Running anecdotal records	1	More time for free play in FD	1
More flexibility in selection in FD	2			Monitoring/Checklists	1
More opportunities for selection in FD	2			Time management	1
More time for "teachable moments" in FD	1			Rotation of learning centers	1
More small group activities in FD	1			More involved in science experiments and social studies activities in FD	1
More use of technology in FD	1				

Table 13: Research Question #3  
How does academic achievement differ in a FD versus HD kindergarten?

Academic Impact	# of Responses	Use of additional time to increase student achievement	# of Responses
Need more time for language development, play, exploratory activities in FD/HD	6	More time to re-teach/finish concepts in PM in FD	4
Need to be ready to learn whether FD/HD	5	Cover more curriculum in FD	4
Does not matter FD/HD	3	More opportunities to develop background knowledge/vocabulary/language development in FD	4
Depends on support from home environment	3	More time to elaborate on concepts/creative thinking in FD	3
Need more time to be 5-years olds not more time on task in FD/HD	3	Can further develop the love of reading in FD	3
Not as much academic progress at the end of FD kindergarten	2	Take over 1 <sup>st</sup> grade teachers' role/responsibilities in FD	3
More academic growth at the end of FD kindergarten	2	Provides more "experiential activities" not occurring at home in FD	3
Each year groups perform differently	2	Depends on Pre-K/Pre-school experiences	3
Depends on amount of sleep and nutrition	2	More time to work in small groups/provide individual instruction in FD	1
		More time for teachable moments in FD	1
		Provides more foundation for the rest of the school years in FD	1

Table 14: Research Question #4  
How does FD versus HD kindergarten impact students' behavioral and social interactions?

Behavioral Outcomes	# of Responses	Social Benefits/Drawbacks	# of Responses
More socialization in FD	5	Extra time to get to know each other in FD	7
More vocabulary/ Language development in FD	4	More playtime in FD	5
More conversation with each other in FD	4	Learn more socialization skills in FD versus being home	3
Lunch brings more behavioral problems to FD classroom	2	FD makes students more independent/organized/responsible	3
More structure in FD	2	More conversational opportunities in FD	2
More choice for free play in FD	1	More discussion about bullying/teasing in FD	2
Same rules in FD/HD	1	Students get too familiar with each in FD	1
Not much behavioral differences in FD/HD	1	More choices as to who to interact with in FD	1
More time to devote to students solving own problems/peer mediation/problem solving in FD	1	Lunch assists with more socialization in FD	1
Better behavior in HD	1	Pick up negative habits from lunch with FD	1
More structured environment in HD	1	FD lays foundation for rest of future school experiences	1
Less time for free play/ interaction in HD	1	More interaction with entire school population	1
More reminders of rules in FD	1	More opportunity for listening to stories/books in FD	1
Easier to set rules in FD from beginning	1		
Learn to get along a little better with each other with lunch	1		
FD students not as self-directed due to lunch	1		

### Summary of Chapter IV

In this chapter a presentation of the data and a summary of the findings were presented. The total responses of each group have been combined or clustered in order to produce evidence of common perceptions, strands and themes that assist in better understanding of the research questions. The overarching theme that connected teachers' comments for all four research questions was "time." Teachers referenced "time" either in the context of "not enough time" or "additional/more time." The importance of play, and opportunities for vocabulary, language development, and conversation were also common themes which overlapped all of the research questions.

The advantages appear to outweigh the disadvantages of full-day kindergarten versus half-day kindergarten substantially and there is strong agreement about the benefits of having the opportunities to provide depth of content, additional time for centers and play/social skills development in a full-day kindergarten. Benefits also include students being more relaxed and that there is more hands-on learning in FD.

Teachers perceive more advantages than disadvantages of the FD versus HD program but expressed concern about children not being ready chronologically and developmentally for FD, and for some children a FD was too long. Academic demands and the need for additional play/social development were cited as drawbacks of the HD programs. In addressing the instructional methods in a FD versus HD kindergarten, teachers applauded the additional time for center activities, less whole-group instruction and

more individualized instruction in FD. Teachers indicate that FD allows for more time for independent, age-appropriate, self-directed learning activities and that FD allows for additional time in setting up classroom management strategies which promote self-directed learning. They agree that child-initiated activities include assigning and choosing centers. Teachers see the need for more time for language development, play, and exploratory activities in both FD/HD and feel the importance of being ready to learn whether in FD/HD. Additional time to increase student achievement is utilized for re-teaching skills, addressing concepts in further depth, to cover more curriculum, and to have more opportunities to develop background knowledge, vocabulary and language development. Behavioral outcomes included more socialization, more vocabulary/language development, and more conversation with other children in FD programs. Teachers agreed that students have extra time to get to know each other and more play time in FD programs.

Chapter V presents a summary of the research, a summary of the findings contained in Chapter IV, discussion of the findings, conclusions drawn from these findings, and recommendations based on the findings from the research.

## CHAPTER V

### SUMMARY, RECOMMENDATIONS AND CONCLUSIONS

The purpose of this study was to investigate teachers' perceptions of the impact of FD kindergarten versus HD kindergarten in suburban New Jersey public schools and determine how the aspects of these FD and HD kindergarten benefit or detract from a child's educational experience. This was a qualitative assessment of the perceptions of teachers of the advantages and disadvantages of FD versus HD kindergarten.

The purpose of this chapter is to summarize the information gathered during the research and to make recommendations for future research. Data was collected from teacher focus group discussions. The results provide an opportunity to discover, review and consider common themes and patterns that emerge in the information shared by the participants.

In Chapter I of this study the researcher presented a brief introduction and historical background, theoretical framework, statement of the problem, need for the study, variables, purpose of the study, significance of the study, questions addressed by the study, definitions of terms used in the study and limitations of the study. Chapter II contained a review of the literature related to teachers' perceptions of FD versus HD kindergarten, instructional methodologies, developmentally appropriate practices, classroom processes and structures, effects of FD/HD kindergarten on academic achievement, social and behavioral effects of FD/HD and national studies on FD



kindergarten. The design, methodology, and the procedures used in the study were explained in Chapter III. Chapter IV presented the data and results of the analyses of the data. Data was presented as an analysis of the participants' comments and responses and in the form of a matrix intended to identify common ideas and themes among educators. Chapter V includes a summary of the findings, recommendations derived from the findings, recommendations for practice, policy, and future research along with conclusions of the study.

### Summary of the Findings

Public school districts across the nation are actively debating whether to increase kindergarten from a HD to a FD program, whether access to FD programs should be restricted to low-income children, and how to finance this change. Embedded in this debate are questions about what the nature of the program should be, whether there are better ways to use a school's or district's scarce educational resources, and the relative emphasis kindergarten should place on children's cognitive and social development.

This topic has been subjected to considerable empirical scrutiny, with the majority of studies conducted at least two decades ago. Studies from the 1990s reveal that the topic continues to be an important focus of early childhood education. In general, research findings favor FD kindergarten over HD programs. Some studies document long-term benefits from FD kindergarten, whereas others report no long-term positive effects. There are several studies that report no differences between full- and half-day

kindergarten. However, no study demonstrates academic advantages for children in half-day kindergarten.

Research also shows that most FD kindergarten students demonstrate somewhat higher academic and social achievement than HD students; however, the higher academic achievement seems to diminish somewhat over time. Full-day kindergarten programs that are appropriate for kindergarten age children have been found to provide cognitive, social, physical, and emotional benefits for children.

Full-day kindergarten programs are not developmentally-appropriate, according to the experts, when the purpose is to cram more curriculum into the day to teach 5-year olds material that should wait until first grade. According to Karweit (1992), the major challenge facing kindergarten teachers is to provide developmentally- and individually-appropriate learning environments for all kindergarten children in an era of high-stakes accountability. In order to face this challenge, teachers need to recognize the issues surrounding full- and half-day kindergarten. Issues include teacher perceptions regarding the advantages and/or disadvantages of FD/HD kindergarten, instructional methodologies, academic achievement, and the impact of FD/HD of student's behavioral and social interactions.

#### Research Question 1

Research question 1 addresses the advantages and disadvantages of the effects of FD versus HD kindergarten. Teachers agreed that they could provide more in-depth

development of the content in FD. This concept was confirmed by Pianta (2000) and Elicker and Mathur (1997) who found that by switching to a FD program, teachers had more time for curriculum planning, incorporated a greater number of thematic units in the school year, and were able to offer more in-depth coverage of curriculum. Four teachers also indicated that the additional time for play and social skills development is an advantage in FD which is consistent with (Cryan et al. 1992; Wang & Johnstone, 1999) who found that students enrolled in FD programs exhibited more positive behavior than did pupils in HD programs. Results from this study, indicated by three teachers, that students are more relaxed in FD is validated by Kaufman (1997) which states children and teachers are less hurried and stressed because more time is devoted to each learning objective. The major disadvantage found in this study mentioned by three teachers was the difficult transition from HD to first grade which is in concurrence with Elicker and Mathur (1997), who found that children's participation in FD kindergarten eased the transition to first grade, helping children adapt to the demands of a six-hour school day.

Focus group responses to Research Question 1 confirmed that advantages of full-day kindergarten provide students with additional time for play and social skills development and for teachers to explore topics and curriculum in depth. Disadvantages of full-day included children not being chronologically or developmentally ready for kindergarten and that the day is too long for 5-year olds.

## Research Question 2

Research Question 2 asks about instructional methodologies in FD/HD kindergarten. The response to this question produced the finding that there is less whole-group instruction and more small-group and individualized instruction in FD. This finding supports and strengthens previous findings by Plucker et al. (2004) that additional instructional time in FD programs resulted in greater use of grouping strategies including ability-level and mixed ability-level grouping. Hough and Bryde (1996) strengthen this study in that they found FD programs had more small-group and individualized activities as teachers felt less pressured to save time by conveying information to the entire group at once. The content of individual instruction in the FD program adheres to guidelines established by the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC). These guidelines state that assessment of individual children's development and learning is essential for planning and implementing appropriate curriculum and instructional strategies that meet the needs of each child (Bredekamp & Copple, 2002, p. 21). Six teachers in this study responded that FD kindergarten allows for more time for independent, age-appropriate, self-directed learning activities, which supports Cryan et al. (1992), who found that children who attended a FD program were more engaged in independent learning and self-initiated activities than children from HD programs. Teachers in FD programs seem to use learning centers and cooperative learning more than teachers in HD programs. These strategies foster cognitive, social, and emotional development and provide children the opportunity to form hypotheses about the world

around them and to test these hypotheses through social interactions and physical manipulation (Bredekamp & Copple, 2002, p. 13). These structures also provide students with opportunities to interact with peers, thereby developing and enhancing social skills. Students who fail to develop a minimal level of social competence are at-risk for dropping out of school (Bredekamp & Copple, 2002).

Teachers commented on the instructional methodologies in a FD versus HD kindergarten in Question 2 which emphasizes the importance of having more time for learning centers and independent, age-appropriate, self-directed learning activities. The use of more small-group and individualized instruction in FD also allows for more child-initiated activities.

### Research Question 3

Academic achievement in FD/HD kindergarten was discussed in Research Question 3. Teachers recognized that in FD programs there was additional time to cover curriculum and more opportunities to develop vocabulary and language development and for experiential activities. Rothenburg (1995) found that there is an emphasis on language development and appropriate pre-literacy experiences along with a focus on experiential and higher order thinking in developmentally-appropriate environments.

Teacher responses in Research Question 3 had mixed results with regard to academic achievement in FD/HD kindergarten and indicated that a FD/HD program did not matter with regard to academic achievement. The teachers placed greater emphasis

on the need of a child to be ready to learn whether in FD/HD and the need for more time to be a 5-year old.

#### Research Question 4

In Research Question 4 teachers agreed that there was more socialization development from students in FD than in HD kindergarten and that a benefit of FD is that the additional time allows the children to get to know each other better, which concurs with previous research that found students enrolled in FD programs exhibited more positive behavior than did pupils enrolled in HD programs (Cryan et. al., 1992; Wang & Johnston, 1999). Teachers differed in opinion as to whether FD/HD had a more structured environment. Additional conversational opportunities in FD were indicated as both a positive behavioral and social benefit.

#### Recommendations for Practice

1. School districts through district leadership must provide kindergarten teachers with the support that they need to continue to offer a developmentally appropriate program that addresses a child's cognitive, social, and emotional development in the face of parental demands that kindergarten programs become more academic.

2. School districts should survey the community as to whether there is a need or desire for FD kindergarten. Community input would further establish continuing with the process of implementing a FD program.

3. School districts that want to move toward a FD program should formulate a committee that involves all stakeholders: teachers, parents, administrators, business administrators, board members, and community members. Subcommittees should research and investigate areas such as facilities, personnel, and curriculum. Successful full-day programs should be visited.

4. Personnel in school districts should provide community awareness through workshops and meetings to inform them about FD kindergarten. To pass a school budget that funds a FD program, parents must actively support this option.

5. Parents and community members should be welcomed into the classroom to ensure community support. Administrators and kindergarten teachers should "showcase" the programs and activities that would be welcomed such as parent volunteer involvement.

#### Recommendations for Policy

1. School districts provide FD kindergarten as a program of the early childhood experience.

2. The districts make FD available as an alternative component of their educational program in its beginning stages. The FD becomes an option as a pilot

program at a limited number of schools before being fully implemented throughout a district.

### Recommendations for Future Research

1. A research study of the academic component of FD versus HD kindergarten;
2. Parents of children participate in focus group discussions to give their perceptions of the advantages/disadvantages of FD/HD kindergarten;
3. A study to gather data over a period of time from a low-socioeconomic district with the disadvantaged child;
4. A comparison of the perceptions and experiences of parents and teachers who have been utilizing FD for a period of years versus HD kindergarten; and
5. Replicate and expand this same study in five years.

### Conclusions

The efficacy of full-day kindergarten cannot be evaluated based on a single domain in that kindergarten clearly benefits children's development in many domains. Expanding half-day kindergarten programs to full-day programs seems straightforward reform not only to make schools more effective for young children, but also to give them a strong start on the trajectory of their schooling experience.



Although full-day kindergarten occurs in over half the nation's public schools that offer kindergarten as school-wide programs, many districts in New Jersey are having difficulty implementing FD kindergarten because of financial constraints and space issues. Although many districts assert they cannot afford to offer full-day programs, others contend that they cannot afford to offer *half*-day kindergarten. This reform may save money long-term by helping reduce the need for retaining students and help close the achievement gap. This research was intended to address the issues surrounding the effects of FD versus HD kindergarten. The many positive responses to FD kindergarten elicited during the research continue to make parents and educators marvel about districts that continue to try to implement FD kindergarten. Participants in this study not only articulated the importance of FD kindergarten but asked about the impact of New Jersey's latest legislation for mandatory Pre-K programs.

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Appendix A

Verbal Script

### **Script for Focus Group Meeting**

Researcher: "Good afternoon. My name is Gina Rosamilia, and I am a doctoral student at Seton Hall University. I will be the facilitator of our focus group discussion today. First, I would like to thank you for taking the time to participate in a discussion concerning your perception of the advantages and/or disadvantages of full-day versus half-day kindergarten. My assistant, Amy, will be available to provide some refreshments and help with the group needs.

I appreciate your time and input so I will be very conscious of keeping to the one and a half-hour time frame for the discussion. Before we begin the discussion, please take a few minutes to complete the form requesting demographic information. Please feel free to move about the room as you need. If at any time you need to leave the room or the discussion please let me know. We will keep to a few ground rules to keep the conversation on track.

One person should speak at a time so everyone may hear the comment and have the opportunity to respond. We should answer one question to the satisfaction of all before moving on to the next question if possible. However, we can return to a question upon the request of any member of the group.

There is no right or wrong answer. Please answer the questions to the best of your ability. Keep in mind that I am interested in negative comments as well as positive comments, being mindful that negative comments, at times, can be most helpful.

All members are aware the conversation is being tape-recorded as I do not want to miss any of your comments. Your comments will held in the strictest of confidence. No names will be included in my report. To ensure confidentiality, please refer to each member of the group by the member number assigned to them on the placards.

If everyone is ready I would like to begin with the first question..."

After questions are completed:

"Thank you for participating in this discussion. If you have any questions, concerns, or other input that you remember once you leave here, please write them down and send them to me in the enclosed prepaid envelope. Have a great evening."

**Appendix B**

**Teacher Focus Groups Questions**



### Focus Group Questions

1. What are the benefits for a child in a FD/HD kindergarten program?
2. What are the drawbacks for a child in a FD/HD kindergarten program?
3. What are the differences in instructional methodologies (teacher-directed versus child-initiated) in FD versus HD kindergarten?
4. What strategies promote self-directed learning in a FD/HD kindergarten?
5. How are students engaged in child-initiated (free-play, learning centers, cooperative learning) activities in a FD/HD kindergarten?
6. How does FD/HD kindergarten impact students academically?
7. How would the additional time in a FD kindergarten be utilized to increase student achievement?
8. What differences, if any, would there be on children's behavioral outcomes in areas such as independent learning and playing with others between a FD/HD kindergarten?
9. What are the social benefits/drawbacks for a child in a FD/HD kindergarten?

Appendix C

Transcriptions

## Focus group questions and responses

Question # 1-What are the benefits for a child in a FD/HD kindergarten program?

Respondent #1

I think we are able to take our time to do things. That's the benefit. We don't have to rush through a lesson. We can do a lot more hands-on activities. We can do longer discussions. You know whereas I used to really have to try to rush through math especially. And with math we have a lot of manipulatives such as age, teddy bears and counters and this that and the other thing. I had to do it as a whole group because I needed to get through the lesson because we were you know constricted to a time frame. Now I can do small group lessons a few at a time. My aide can take some. We can take the kids who don't understand and redo it with them so I think that is very helpful. We are also able to explore a little... excuse me... a little more science or social studies hands-on activities. Not as much as we would ... as we had originally had thought but because for me I tend to prioritize reading and math so if I have kids that I need to work with in reading or math I would do that before I would do the science activity that I had planned. But it does give us the opportunity that if there was a really good science activity we could do it. For example, this week I'm doing water running downstream. So we're going to make a clay model and we going to actually watch the water run down whereas in the half-day program, I basically turned on the water faucet, held something under the water faucet and said, "You see how the water runs down? It doesn't run up. It runs down." So you know, in that respect, I think it has a lot of benefits.

Respondent #2

I also feel the same way that we can delve into things a little more and I can sit with children in the afternoon who didn't understand the morning lesson which I guess in a half day program, you were hoping their parents would do that. When you sent home homework that they didn't get, but many children aren't getting that support at home. So I think this gives us the extra time to remediate the problems. It also allows me to have more center time. More self directed time for the children to be able to do hands-on activities and move around the room. More social skills are developed I think in the afternoon and it gives me more time to get to know them, not to rush them if they are telling me a story like "No, no, no hurry up we have to go." I mean I felt like I learned to speed talk when we did the half day, we were always rushing through everything all day long I would find myself saying, "Hurry up we don't have time we have to go." Now I

can leave it. We can come back later and you can leave for lunch and leave a project out on the table and say we'll be back. Whereas when we had the half day you had another class coming so you always had to clean everything up. So that is really nice to have one class own the room. They can have their messes left and if they build a block castle, we can leave it overnight. The custodian doesn't love it but you know we can do that and come back the next day so that's been really nice.

#### Respondent # 3

My biggest which I love about the full day kindergarten is the social interaction. We never had time for that in the half day. It's a big part of a five-year-old's needs. We tend to go academic in kindergarten and we seemed to have left out that social part for the needs of a five-year old. Half day did not provide that time for us and full day is a pleasure watching five-year olds be five-year olds as well as learning and we have the continuum. We are able to continue in the morning. I know my program morning is academically centered for the most part and very productive. Time-wise and structure-wise and in the afternoon I can give them the social interaction and they become full-rounded individuals.

#### Respondent # 4

I agree with \_\_\_ (referring to respondent number 3). That I tend to see my mornings. I think they are able to think clearer in the mornings and I have their attention like I said with this group all bets are off. I have always found that the mornings are much more productive. Everybody is with me. In the afternoon, it's a little bit more free and easy. There's centers or an art project or a writing activity. I have a lot more time to conference with them about their writing which I would always kind of fly around the room. Now they can come to me and sit with me and we can discuss their writing and I can help them with their writing. I never really had that time for that in a half day. And that's one of things I think especially their writing. The afternoon is a little bit more relaxed and a little bit more social, a little bit more relaxed than the morning. In the morning, I need them to be with me and think. And I'll get into that in question # 2 because I think that is the problem sometimes with the full day kindergarten. Want me to go right into question # 2?

#### Respondent #7

Well, I feel that in a full day kindergarten you can do more academic things, they can be more creative. More experiences can be given to a child. In a half day program, I think it puts too much on a child in such a short time. You want to do everything plus your preps in between. There is just not enough time to do what you want.

#### Respondent #8

I agree with her. I also feel that in a whole day kindergarten you can do more with stations. You can do more with the learning and experiencing of hands-on, more than just instruction. Like you said, we felt rushed with the time frame of a half day kindergarten. I know kids want snack time. They got maybe 10 minutes to play in half day. There were things you had to limit when they played in half-day with whereas in a full day you can have that whole dramatic play brought back into your classroom. You can have clay and easels and paint and all those things because you have the time.

Respondent #5

I completely agree. You all teach kindergarten, you know, just unpacking and packing that was half of my day, I felt like that took enough time right there, plus your snacks, plus your specials that you need to have everyday. Now you have to have computer time every day so that's an hour and half of your day gone and that's not even instructional time. You had to fit in math and language arts and they didn't get the downtime that they needed to focus for the rest of the day for the things you needed them to focus on because we just didn't have time in the day.

Respondent #6

Also, away from the academics, I feel that in a full day a child doesn't have to shift from a kindergarten to a before or after care program which maybe more than half our students had to go to and that transition was very difficult for them.

Respondent #9

I feel that the students themselves saw us rushing through lessons just to try to get everything in for that hour and half that you are seeing them because they had art to go to or computer class. They were also not getting that free play time where they are able to develop their social skills. You had to fit so much in in such little time.

Question # 2 -What are the drawbacks for a child in a FD/HD kindergarten program?

Respondent # 4

Ok. I think that some children physiologically, maturity,

Respondent # 3

Developmentally

Respondent # 4

Mentally can't do the whole day and that group of children can make your afternoon like hell because they're just, they're shot. They don't want to do anything. They don't want to. And it's not always in an aggressive way. It can just be in a passive way. They are just done. They don't want to think about it. That's one of the reasons that I do the reading and the math in the morning. Like #1, I think that's the most important and I see that that's the drawback. Not everybody is ready for the full day. So that's probably my biggest problem I think.

#### Respondent # 2

I have to jump in. I have a group this year that I am finding so many children almost the opposite that are coming in that aren't getting enough sleep. They are tired in the morning and are kind of brightening up by the after the rest time. Some of them sleep a few minutes. Ten minutes or so... a cat nap. And they are more awake and more with me in the afternoon. I'm still doing what we are all saying. I'm still doing my academics in the morning. It works out better that way because most kids are with you. But there are some kids that seem to be... That are not morning people. And they are coming in very tired and really almost in a fog in the morning and they are not with me. That "Do Now" activity they get wrong everyday because they don't even really hear my directions. They are not able to key in and all of a sudden, in the afternoon, they are a like a different child. They're raising their hand. They're interacting giving me answers so it's only few of them but it's been a phenomenon only this year. So... but I agree doing that morning situation with the academics works better.

#### Respondent # 3

My only drawback is that I need to rearrange my curriculum because I find that I am moving ahead in certain areas in my academic areas and chronologically some of these kids are just not ready at the time that I am ready to present so I have to realize my curriculum that I did in a half day kindergarten. I have to adjust it for a full day because I do have that extra time to look at and sometimes they are just not ready for the next thing that I would normally go ahead in a half day kindergarten with. I have to switch a lot of things around.

#### Respondent #1

Ok. I agree with everything #4 said and I do give them rest time right after lunch. They come in and we listen to quiet music. Sometimes I let them listen to a story, but I have kids who fall asleep a good half hour to an hour sometimes. They are just wiped out so it's a long day for them. But then I have kids who just can't sit still. They're ready. Those kids are ready. But I probably have a good 4 or 5 that are wiped out by the afternoon. And on some days when I skip the rest time because on Thursdays, in particular, we have a lot more going on in the afternoon we actually come up to the library and there just is

no time. Those kids are done. By the time we get back to the classroom, those kids are just asking me to rest so it's a long day for some of them.

Respondent #2

They also go to SAC. Sorry. Some of the children also go to the aftercare program so they could be in school until 6:00. You know often times I find that they are just not going to bed until 10 or 11 o'clock at night. Many children are just left to their own devices to fall asleep in their bedroom with their TV on. I know its not the routine that most of us would think of having their story and getting to bed by 8:30. That's not happening so they are wiped out because they are not getting enough sleep at home. Not because maybe developmentally they wouldn't be ready. I think they could be if they had a better structure at home.

Respondent #1

And on that level also, some of them go to "Before the bell" and I had a little guy last year who was dropped off at 7:00. So as the bell opens he was out cold everyday right after lunch and didn't wake up for at least an hour. So it's both. You got before the bell and you got after.

Respondent #4

And I have seen that even when we had the half-day Pre-K, that my afternoon is a little less structured. You know what if you need to sleep, if you need to do that, then by all means, I'll get you to do this center. I'll get you this information somewhere else along the way.

Respondent #2

I agree they need to and sometimes with some children, it shows they are coming down with something. Sometimes the child who falls asleep one day, the next day, they're out for a week. I had a lot of them this year. A lot of illnesses so I can let the parent know that if it's an unusual thing for that child, it's a heads up that they are not feeling well so it does give them a nice relaxation time.

Respondent #4

A little downtime it just right for me to get my act straight for the afternoon. If you're doing that, I can get everything all set up for the afternoon without yes and this one's tapping me and you know.

Respondent #2

It's not like an upper grade where you can give them work and say go and do that while I set up the centers while they are listening to a story.

Respondent #7

I think we already covered that. There's too much academic work in a half day and no playtime and kids need playtime for social skills.

Respondent #5

The transition from kindergarten to first grade, half day to full day. First grade is so academically straining to them and then you're adding lunch. They are taking standardized testing which they don't do in kindergarten anymore. So there were all these transitions plus it was just a longer school day.

Respondent #8

They even just have to take regular tests. They have to sit down and not have anyone looking at their paper. It is a big change whereas now that they have they full day, you can start introducing some of those aspects in kindergarten.

Respondent #6

I agree.

Respondent #9

In a half-day kindergarten, the kids did not have enough time for play and had too much emphasis on academics.

Question #3-What are the differences in instructional methodologies (teacher-directed versus child-initiated) in FD versus HD kindergarten?

Respondent #1

Again I think in a full day, there is more time for centers. Like somebody, I think #4 had mentioned earlier and again there's no reason to rush. So they can play teacher or they can decide what they want to do as opposed to in a half day where I was always the one to say, "Okay, we have to hurry up and do this. or Okay, we can't talk about that right



now. I can't listen to your story about what happened to your Uncle Joe last night." You know so again I think there is no need to rush... Absolutely no need to rush. And we can explore things that we weren't able to explore before whether it be in centers or be an extra long discussion which is teacher directed or they can decide to do whatever they want. It's more flexibility in the full day.

Respondent #3

In my whole day I am allowed to do whole group instruction, small group instruction, and I am allowed to have children work in centers and work at their own pace. In my half day I was restricted to whole group instruction.

Respondent #4

Yeah I agree with 3 and 1. It was very go, go, go. Once in a while you could get a break if you had a good group that could work well on their own and you could do some small group. Otherwise, it was pretty much whole group which can get a little crazy when the numbers are big. But it is true. You do have a little bit more leeway and the children can choose to move around the room as they see fit... Like I said mostly in the afternoon for me.

Respondent #2

I also agree that children now that can do more spontaneous ton of teachable moment activities. You know if we look out the window and they are coming as they often do, in our field they are laying woodchips or you know have a big dump truck there, you know we might actually stop and go out and look whereas before I'd have to pull the shades down and sorry, we have to keep going. And I find that their play can change because they can have the time. I can have the centers and I still have a kitchen in my room because my room was the Pre-K room, I still have all of that from the Pre-K which is fabulous. I think if they probably outfitted my room today for the full day kindergarten, they wouldn't give me that. They wouldn't let me purchase that, but since I already had it, and they wanted to give it to the Pre-K and I said, "No." But it's very nice because they can really get into some complex ideas in their play. And now we have a length of time. Before, we would have centers but it would be you know if it was a half an hour, it was lot. So that we would just get in there and get started with something and I would be telling them to clean up. Now they can create a whole restaurant and they have a chef hat and they're making menus and I can let that go. And maybe I'll stop and go to the computer and print something up for the menu and before I couldn't have helped them expand that play. I just had to stop it so you know they can direct it much more now.

Respondent #3

One other thing, we have no support staff in our kindergarten situation meaning basic skills in any areas. We do have ESL so it allows us also in full day kindergarten to give that individual extra help and use technological equipment. Things that we were very restricted in the half day.

Respondent #4

#4 agreeing with #3. Other than ESL, it is all, the achievement of that class is all based on the classroom teacher and ... no BSI and it allows you ... #3 is correct. It does allow you the time to sit with that child who might be having trouble. That might be the only individual attention they might get here. They might not get it at home either so.

Respondent #2

I agree but I still I don't want to downplay that I still think we need that BSI because even if I am sitting with one or two or three of them, you are constantly interrupted even with an aide. I always have centers going that I need to facilitate. So I may be sitting with two children, working with them. Then inevitably every minute there is someone coming over to me and interrupting that flow that you are getting going. And the noise level in the classroom is not conducive for kids who can't pay attention. I just really feel so strongly that we need somebody to remove them from that large group and really be able to work in a quiet atmosphere. It is unfortunate to me that only children who don't speak English get extra help. It should be ... and we talk about early intervention and having the Pre-K and having the full day and let's make strides. Well, we are not going to make the strides without the some a little bit of extra help. I think for all children who need it and the gifted and talented children as well. You know for the whole spectrum of children because it is hard to differentiate and get to everyone when you have twenty-five, twenty-six without some support from another teacher not a parent aide. You know they're great at what they do but it's not like having another teacher in the room.

Respondent #4

I think that if this is about teachers' opinions I think that our numbers cloud my opinion and our situation clouds my opinion. Maybe if I was in a classroom that had fifteen or seventeen, and support, you know, I might have a different opinion than I do. Or the way I am feeling, this year at least. Who knows what next year might bring? I could have fifteen kids and they'll all be wonderful reading well ahead of their age group so I don't know. I have to try and separate the two.

Respondent #9

Like we said before, we didn't get to do centers. There wasn't enough time during the week. At least for me, I could only do them twice a week. I would have loved to do them

everyday. That's why I think there is more teacher-directed instruction as opposed to child initiated in half-day kindergarten.

Respondent #6

I did do centers three days out of the five. But I only did 1 or 2 each day and what I put out at the centers had to be something where they knew what they are doing right away. They could get it done. I could clean it up and we could get onto something else. So again that time factor was very important.

Respondent #8

I agree. I tried many different ways to incorporate centers. I tried 2 days a week, then I tried it where I assigned 5 stations but they had to do one each day. And by the end of the week, they had done all of them. Again, because of the time frame, we found it hard. All of centers had to be something they could do on their own because you can't be at all 5 stations at the same time. Now we have the timeframe and the whole day. We can do all instruction all morning and in the afternoon stations and dramatic play, reinforcing everything they learned in the morning.

Respondent #5

I used the timer. They rushed because they knew that we were rushed and it affects them. They weren't getting everything out of it that they could have because they knew that they had to rush.

Respondent #7

I agree with everyone here. As the teacher, we showed our anxiety to the children during a half day. We were directing them towards every single thing that they did because we knew we had to go somewhere at a certain time and they had to be there.

Question #4-What strategies promote self-directed learning in a FD/HD kindergarten?

Respondent #2

I think setting up an early routine right from the get go, having classroom rules, setting up the management of your centers so children know what's expected, and how to move from one place to another and how to treat one another. If you do some conflict resolution activities so that you're not stopping battles every half- hour that they

can... Sometimes I love to just sit back in the afternoon which is a rare thing and say wow! They are all working, doing something productively, working together and I can actually sit back there and observe. It's wonderful!

Respondent #4

You're running anecdotal records... like you're supposed to.

Respondent #2

Well I really think it's routines. Being consistent and doing what so they feel secure and they know what is expected everyday. They come in and do the "Do Now" and they don't have to say one word to me. They know exactly what to come in and do and I think that allows them to be self directed.

Respondent #1

I think what #2 said about the rules. They need to know about the rules because if they are stopping and constantly asking you how to do this and how to do that? What happens with this? And that takes away from their time. I try to make it clear to them what's expected of them and what's not acceptable from them. And it usually does help to run things a little more smoothly.

Respondent #3

Curiosity is a big part of kindergarten class room and wanting to learn. The big thing is they want to learn how to read. They want to learn how to be like older children in the school. I think with the foundation and giving them things to do on their own that are age appropriate and make them feel successful will develop them on the line of self-directed activities. They'll want to learn. They'll ask you for different ways to learn. They'll be anxious. They'll be picking up books quicker and having the supplies around and the tools for them to be able to do things on their own which is what my classroom is like.

Respondent #4

With #1 and 2, about the routines and setting that, we were fortunate enough that we kind of looped. We had them in Pre-K and kindergarten. Last year, it was fabulous because these were your children that you had in Pre-K so they came in, they knew the rules, they knew where to hang their coat, they knew where the bathroom was, they knew... You may have had 3,4,5,6 children that you didn't have in preschool but they kind of fell into line because the majority would kind of show them what was expected of them. Now it's

different. Now not only are they not my children that I had in Pre-K, they may have come from 3 preschools that are on the other side of town because I don't have one at my school. We don't have another room. They may have come from preschools from other towns or haven't been to school at all. I have four children that had never set foot in a classroom so that is varying ability. I think I have spent the first month of school doing it, explaining those basic, basic rules and expectations from the beginning of school. I don't know if I am longing for that looping where everyone came in and fell into line or if the makeup is changing, the classes are changing but I kind of long for that where they walked in and nobody cried because they all knew me already and so...

#### Respondent #2

#2 agrees. It's hard because you didn't have to be the one to do all that routine work in the beginning of kindergarten because they already knew it. And now you are spending I don't want to say wasting but it feels like it because you want to get started but you have to set all that groundwork that you didn't have to do before and that is difficult. I miss those days too.

#### Respondent #3

All day allows you the time for children which we didn't have in the half day kindergarten to do self-directed learning. Whether it be an art project or reading, or being social or anything in the academic area, social studies, science we are bombarded in the academic area. So time again is on our side with full day kindergarten.

Question # 5- How are students engaged in child-initiated (free-play, learning centers, and cooperative learning) activities in a FD/HD kindergarten?

#### Respondent #1

I like to set up when I do their centers, for example, a puzzle center they learn about teamwork because a puzzle is not something you can take a few pieces and do yourself and work on. It's something you have to work together with other children. In the beginning I find that they always try and split up all the puzzle pieces and they each have 4 or 5 pieces and they are trying to put them together and I have to explain to them that "you know, what you guys have to try to work as a team because that's not how a puzzle gets put together." You may have a piece that Johnny has. Johnny may have a piece that Mary needs. You all need to work together. Some other activities like writing activities, little Mary may be looking at the word wall and using some of those words and then

Janie will come and sit next to her and say, "Oh I want to do that too!" Now I have a whole group of them sitting there and writing words and they make books and these are just some of the things that they do in their activities. Sometimes they won't actually be interested in something until they see the other kids doing it so that's what I was saying in the writing example. They may see pencils and say who wants to go there? Pencils and paper are not exciting. It's not as exciting as the block center. But once they see that little Mary will be writing her words and then go get her crayons. Now there are crayons involved and sometimes I will let them get their markers. Now there are markers involved. I staple their stuff and now its gaining popularity and now there are more kids coming towards it. I think that just having kids model it. I always try to assign a couple of kids to it and at least give them a starting point so everyone just has somewhere to go because some times a center just doesn't look attractive until you see somebody else doing it and then I think that just draws them and then something that looks like it really could be fun, doesn't end up getting a lot of people because it looked good, but when we got there, it wasn't that great. I hope that answers your question.

#### Respondent #2

I usually also set up 5 or 6 different centers about 3 days a week we do center time. And I explain each one of them. Some are ongoing if it's an individual math activity. Others are new everyday like an art project. And then I generally let the children choose if it's a free art but if it's something like a listening center where I want everyone to come, then I assign the groups to start. And then I have a checklist and I will check off so certain centers I can keep careful track of and I can go in and monitor what they have done there as far as the math or reading center. But the others are the free play type of activity like the kitchen or on the computer. My aide usually plays a learning game with one group of children so it seems to flow pretty well. I know there are people who use a whole checklist and have nametags and make sure how many people. We have limits of numbers in the centers but I don't monitor and rotate them on a really strict basis. It's always been against the way I felt. Johnny may not want to be in the kitchen today because he's assigned to there. I just don't feel it is as productive as when I let the children just decide where they feel like being that day. And if I see that there's a child that everyday, he spends his whole day in the kitchen of course, I will move them. I have switching time where I just mix everybody up and you all have to go somewhere new when I feel like it's getting stagnant or if there becomes an issue with one center, we will just mix everyone up. And then there are centers where you have to go and you have to get to that by the end of the day. So that allows them to manage their time a little bit. It does help them to remember because sometimes kids who want to paint and I'll give a warning time that it's time to close that center and sure enough there's always one child who comes when it's 5 (minutes) to 3:00, I wanted to paint now. That allows them to get used to that. To know you have to listen when I am ringing the bell and saying it's going to be time to clean up and you know you have to come now or time's over.

## Respondent #3

My learning centers...everybody goes to a learning center and we rotate around and we are not done until everybody gets to all the centers. I, of course, sit with the guided reading. My aide will do a center. And the other centers, the children will do on their own in cooperative groups. My free play children will go and play. It's free play and they decide where to go. I watch and make sure there is no swarming. I watch to make sure that children get along and solve problems and my ESL children which there are quite a few can get that verbal interaction and speak and get along with everyone just as everyone else does. So that's an important part of my curriculum, the free play. In half day kindergarten of course the restrictions are there because of the time. Full Day, I can get to the learning centers more frequently than I did with half day. Free play was limited to maybe once a week if that.

## Respondent #4

I agree that before #2 said about not having to stop the children so they really are engaged in their free play and learning centers and whatever kind of cooperative activities are set up. I think that's the most important part. I forget how long they have to play before they get engaged. I think it is 45 minutes. When I would put that in my plan book when I first started teaching Pre-K, they would say, "What are you doing?" They thought we were doing nothing while the children are playing until they really get going. The learning centers too, they are set up. The ones that are related to a theme or are science and social studies, I often feel that that is the place that I want them to go to that day. I don't need to devote the whole group like I did in science or social studies when I would get to it in a half day. Now I can leave it as a center and the experiment can be a center and they can go visit that. Or I even find, that I can use it if someone asks a question about ... for instance for Martin Luther King's birthday, I read them a story and they saw the illustrations in the book, the pictures that were drawn at the march in Washington so they could get a vision for people. So when I did the centers I had a 17-minute video clip right there and they could watch...and it's not just the man in the book. You have the time for that kind of thing. Time, it all comes down to more time.

## Respondent #7

I think in a half day, you direct them. You put the motivation in. They start off and you hope the bright ones already know the set up so they move right along and those who can't, will just follow them. I think you are promoting modeling. They are also copying what I do. In a half-day, you are promoting it's okay to copy because sometimes it is the only way you can get through to get to the next thing you want them to do. And you let it go because you don't have the time to take that child aside and say okay now I'll help you because so and so has to move onto the next center or to do another activity that they like to do.

Respondent #8

I agree and it's funny because now with getting ready to give out report cards and you are testing them one on one and assessing them. It's like wow you discover they need more help one on one. Don't you agree?

Respondent #5

I feel like all of a sudden I'm like, "Oh my God! You really didn't know what you were doing." We don't have test scores and when you have 23 kids, the ones that slip between the cracks. They know nothing one on one but when they work in center activities you can see them work independently.

Respondent #8

I agree. Like you said they get to choose centers.

Respondent #6

I try at this time of year to break them up and assign them into ability groups at the activity centers. The brighter children can do whatever I put at the center and the lower students are just sitting there. They'll sit for ten minutes. It's hard. I have to get up and just walk around from center to center with them.

Respondent #5

I decided to do that this year. I broke my centers into abilities. I just wanted to be sure they were not copying. It's an advantage because when you don't have a student teacher and you are the only one in the room, at least you are not running from one side of the room to the other. They are all together and it worked out because I did have a few kids that were really falling behind and really couldn't do anything on their own so it was easier in the fact that they were all at one table. So it did work out in that way, but it was funny that they ... you know your tips may affect the next table.

Respondent #7

I have some kids that are going for INR&S, getting evaluated. You have to put them with kids who can do something because they are just sitting there. It helps if they are working in a group. Some don't know what to do. Somebody pulls them out and does some testing on them, sends them back to you, they're lost already. They missed out on a whole lesson and everybody tries to help them. All the kids are sympathetic to them. They know they



are going to help them, but they are completely lost. And you know when the day is over, now you have to send them home. They are upset because they were out of the room for maybe an hour and getting tested. They come back and they are sitting there and they are trying to catch up and they know none of their work is going to be ready and what's going to happen to me tomorrow? That's the first question. Am I going to be sitting here doing all the work that I missed? It's like Oh my God and it's too traumatic.

Respondent #6

Just getting back to that, the brighter students do enjoy being grouped together because there is that competition even at 5 years old and you can get something out at a table and they will go that extra mile. They'll come to you and say, "Look what I did!" or something I didn't think about it. It goes both ways. You feel sorry for the low ones because they are lost, but the brighter ones really do enjoy that self discovery where they come up with different things so ...

Respondent #8

Sometimes the children with the higher abilities feel like they are being pulled down and having to help the children who are struggling so I think if you're grouping, do it now, half way through the year is a good idea.

Respondent #9

I also feel that it is unfair for the higher achieving student because I feel like I am spending most of my time with the lower achieving students. I am trying to boost them to get them to where they should be or as I am letting the higher ones finish their own work together without me helping them.

Question #6- How does FD/HD kindergarten impact students academically?

Respondent #3

This is our second year in full day kindergarten. I have to say last year being my first year with full day kindergarten, I did make more progress but not the progress I thought I was going to see as opposed to my half day kindergarten speaking in terms of reading. The amount of children leaving my room reading... The numbers weren't as... I expected more of my children leaving the room reading than did in my half day program. That was a little surprising to me.

**Respondent #2**

Last year, I have to say I was pleasantly surprised when I had a good group. I happen to do my assessment a little earlier than #4. We met up and she was not happy with the year I said wait until you see your assessment. Sure enough, I was pleasantly surprised. I think they did if not a huge jump in numbers, but they absolutely did better than the years that they had half day. This year, I don't think I am going to see that same growth because I have a different group and they are not getting the support at home and I am hoping that they can come close to where my half day kids came. So I think that no matter how long you have them, if they have the support at home and if they come with the right amount of sleep and the proper nutrition and all of those things that they need, and then we can see that jump. But, without that, it's just so hard to really see a huge growth in a full day. I think they'll do better. It's got to be better than if I see them for just the half day, but it's not going to be like the children last year. I told the first grade teacher already... She got many children this year that were already reading, but that won't happen again this, I don't think that this year.

**Respondent #3**

My target group this year though... My kids that were going to leave reading, are going to leave reading whether half-day kindergarten or full-day kindergarten. My target group is the kids who are having difficulties in reading. I feel like I see a little bit more progress in that area than in the half day program. That's where I was little surprised that the gap was not as wide as I thought it would be. And the retention in September when I was pre-testing in the first grade... What the retention was, I was surprised again as opposed to the previous in first grade.

**Respondent #4**

Before we went to a full day, I did have some preconceived opinions about a full day and a half day. I felt that the day would be too long for a majority of them. I was of the opinion that everyone could pretty much succeed to a certain extent in a half day. But then a full day kind of separates the men from the boys. As #3 said, the kids who were going to leave reading are going to leave reading no matter what you did. And you would think that the lower group should bump up a little bit and that would be... for a lot of reasons that #2 said. They are not getting the support at home; there is only so much you can do. I did think that the gap would close a little bit, but it still is a pretty wide gap between those who could and those who couldn't. But, as I tried to say before, standards don't say anything about reading at the end of kindergarten. They say recognizes letters but it doesn't say anything about words. Then sometimes I think that maybe, we are feeling a lot of pressure from upper grades to have them reading by the end of the year when they are not supposed to be reading. Not everyone, not everyone should be reading. I have yet to push that point to the upper grade teachers.

**Respondent #3**

Which only shows us that you can't forget the chronological age of these children that we are teaching. That when they are ready to learn, they are ready to learn and whether we teach them in full day environment or half day, yes the environment changes, we can read to them more, do more things with them and we can give them more opportunities with time that is on our side. But I think that unless they are ready, we are not going to see the achievement that we want to see.

**Respondent #2**

I had an article to bring and I forgot to bring it with me. But it was all about that. I just happen to come across it online. But she was saying... Dr. Vivian Pullsey she's very well known and it's a whole article about how we keep pushing things on children and the very children who don't have the time to play and don't have the skills that they need, we feel like they need more academics. And what they do need is the more self-directed, more play, exploration, language development, and we're going the opposite way. We keep drumming on them the things that they aren't ready for because so many of the administrators aren't really early childhood trained. I feel they don't really understand what we should be doing. And the people who develop the test and all those people who keep looking down on us and telling us what we are supposed to be doing don't really understand that they are still 5. I don't care how many computers we have in the room, and how many wonderful, new things there are in 2008, the children are still 5 years-old and they can only do what they can do.

**Respondent #4**

I agree whole heartedly. Just because they come to school all day, doesn't make them big children and you still have the same issues that you have with any group of 5-year-olds. Some are immature, some are mature. Some are ready to work, I think that's every grade level. I haven't taught anything above first grade but it is true. I agree whole-heartedly. You can't... While the time is a plus in so many other respects, it doesn't make them big children so we need to remember that. They don't need more time on task. They need more time to be 5-year-old children.

**Respondent #1**

I agree with everything 2, 3, and 4 have said.

**Respondent #6**

I feel that the full day gives them more opportunity to develop language skills and to learn more things at their own pace. If we do a teacher-directed lesson, we can really go

into it. The half day, as we were saying before, they were just rushed. There is not enough time.

Respondent #7

I agree.

Respondent #5

I feel like we jumped from one thing to the next and there should have been more of a transition for their own sake. It was too rushed and that affects them. There was not enough time for handwriting. There was not enough time for math and language arts was the big push. It was just rushed. It was throwing it at them and they didn't have enough time to actually digest it. Full-day gives them more time to explore and play.

Respondent #8

As five-year olds, they need to be ready to learn. We cannot forget that.

Respondent #9

I agree.

Question #7-How would the additional time in a FD kindergarten be utilized to increase student achievement?

Respondent #1

Again, we discussed this earlier. There is more time to work in small groups; more time obviously to help the kids who are struggling. More time to elaborate on lessons done in the morning that you think they just didn't get. You can reteach again in the afternoon. Before it was hurry up, hurry up. We got to rush. It's ten minutes to 11:00. We only have 40 minutes left. I wanted to say earlier and I didn't get a chance. Often times, when it starts to snow, they are amazed by snow. They all want to stop and run to the windows. "It's snowing!" They have their visions of snowmen and frolicking in the snow. In a half day I feel like we can't look at the snow right now. Sit back down. It will be there when you get out. But now we can say, "Wow! We haven't seen snow yet!" Now this year it snowed and it wasn't winter yet so we got a chance to talk about that. Even though it was still fall, it was snowing and sometimes that happens. But in the half day we would have shut the shades. Sit down. Don't look out that window and even by saying that, they would still be distracted by it. It would take time away and my stomach would be in knots

because I think they're distracted by this snow now. It's a different kind of mindset. It's a lot more relaxing and you can elaborate on a lot more things like that. Also, in addition to the basics, if they are not getting the vowels, I know they have a little bit more of a difficult time with that especially the "e" which is what we were working on last week. They're calling the "e" sound like "aaaa." Its not "aaaa," its "eeee" and there is time now to differentiate between "aaaa" and "eeee." You don't just say it "aaaa" not "eeee" that's it end of story. Done. You can get into that. We can talk about the eeelephant and the eeeegg. Listen to the difference between that word and aaacrobat and aaacademic. It just gives you a lot more time to elaborate.

#### Respondent #2

I think we also get further as #3 said that we get to get further with our curriculum. We actually get through the math book now which most of the times I did not get to the end of it. Reading, I am about the same I would say, but I can interject more stories. I think in the full day that's one of the most positive things that I can read 2 or 3 stories a day which we were only doing the one before in the half day. For children who don't get any reading at home, I think that can make a huge difference, not only in the academic learning concepts of print and positive things that way, but also the love of reading. To really develop that love of reading, I think, is one of the biggest benefits I have seen.

#### Respondent #3

I don't think I know that student achievement trickles into the first grade. We are now taking over the opportunities of getting children ready for the whole day whereas in first grade, that used to be their job. When our children go into the first grade, they are set into the full day. They can get ready for that curriculum. And I think the teachers can move ahead and I think in that way, a full day kindergarten provides the setting for the rest of the school years. We don't necessarily have to see the end achievement at the end of our kindergarten year. We know what we have done to get them ready for next year and it's our goal to get them ready by the end of this year. Now that we have gotten ready for the whole day, first grade teachers can move ahead with their curriculum.

#### Respondent #4

I'm thinking you can't go by me because I am having a rough year. Preface my number with an asterisk next to my name. It happens. It happens. And there's only 94 days to go. In a perfect world, you can work in small groups, you don't always have to do whole group and you don't have to go, go, go. You can leave things out as we said before. You can come back to them after lunch. If you didn't finish them in the morning, you can finish them in the afternoon, not the next day. And hopefully the children in the afternoon didn't mess it up. I think that ideally, it will increase achievement because you can devote more time to their language and their experiences. For instance, and something I would

have only done in Pre-K, a lot more cooking and stuff like that. This class has never made cookies or muffins. Maybe 3 out of 26 bake with their mom or dad. A box of Jiffy Mix is 33 cents and an egg. I'll bring in the tin from home. For whatever reason, they are not doing it home. I don't know why it's not happening at home. Even in that aspect, they can have more experiences. I can see their vocabulary increasing a little but in the beginning was a little dismal. But it seems to be increasing a little bit more.

**Respondent #2**

I think having them a longer time just gives more language stimulation in general. There's a lot of vocabulary. I think that is the biggest change I have seen in children from when I first started teaching until now is that they don't come with the background knowledge of words. They don't know the simplest words that you talk about. I play a vocabulary game that I just made up of common household words. Wallet and lawnmower and they don't know them because people are not having conversations with their children. I think this gives us the opportunity to just bombard them with language all day long.

**Respondent # 4**

I just got as far as an easy picture dictionary. I'll close my eyes, pick a picture, put my finger on it and ask them the word. We talk about the reindeer have hooves and they didn't know what hooves were.

**Respondent #2**

No one knew tail. I was working on mane and when they couldn't get mane, I moved on to tail. And it took a while. I have some bright children who I guess were not keyed in but it really is scary.

**Respondent #4**

Mine didn't know broccoli when I asked them the word for broccoli.

**Respondent #7**

I think that now we have a full day, it has expanded their free thinking. We have children that would be able to do creative thinking. They come up with more ideas for things. We offer that more than you did before because we were really stuck. You know you have to finish your workbooks. You know you have to do your math. You know you had certain things you had to cover to get them ready for first grade. In a full day, you have the whole day to. I love to do science and I do that in my class. And when I did it, I had to

give up something else. Math had to be gone or something had to be gone for that period of time. Like when you wanted to do science with them. If they liked it and they enjoyed it and they wanted to continue it, it had to wait until the next day. There again, you were losing that time so anything that you wanted to bring in that's new that gave them a new aspect on things, full day was the answer for it.

**Respondent #8**

I just think even more hands on and experience and really just expanding the curriculum. We tease. January is penguin month and what could you do ten minutes a day? You felt like you were throwing it at them for a whole month because you couldn't take that whole period and really spend it doing fun things and exposing them to ideas. You couldn't do that in a half-day. It's just with the time, we were rushed.

**Respondent #6**

As far as the arts go, I am reading stories and literature and poetry with a full-day. It was what is the quickest story I can read in 5 minutes? And we didn't discuss it. We read it and they said can we read that book again? We had to move on to something else. Art activities; what would take the least time to clean up and put out? Paint? Forget it, you do that in the art room. In a full-day you have time for at least the arts part of it.

**Respondent #7**

I felt like the story of the day was while they were eating their snack because that was 10 minutes of downtime while they were eating, I told a story. Like you said, it was so hard. You didn't have enough time to enjoy the book and discuss it and the setting and the characters and just to get into all of that.

**Respondent #9**

I was reading an article of how the kindergarten is now the new first grade. When I was younger, kindergarten was not like that at all. It was all play. I feel like they were expected to do so much in so little time. It was just not fair.

**Respondent #5**

Standards keep changing. They just keep expecting more, so if you are going to expect more, they had to increase the time. It just wasn't fair. We are expected to do what first grade was doing but it was in half the time. It was unrealistic. I don't know about you, but the first grade teachers feel like they were not prepared. I think a lot of it had to do with Pre-K, too. They are coming from 20 different places. I spend the first half of the year getting them on level ground so to speak where they can all do the same thing. In the

beginning of the year, I have kids who can't even empty their book bags. And then, I have some kids who come in reading. Some kids are just readers. So you have the child who can't unpack their book bag and the child who is reading on a 2<sup>nd</sup> grade level and you are trying to get them somewhere in the middle so you can get through something and it just didn't work in three hours.

**Respondent #8**

I feel like part of the problem could also be, like you said, could be with the preschools. Just the preschools in our town are so different to the point where one is mainly social with no academics to one that these kids feel like they are at kindergarten and they are using sight words and the letter people and all of that. I almost feel like there should be standards or curriculum that these preschools have to cover in order to prepare them to come into the public schools for kindergarten. They have their philosophy which is fine. Every teacher has their own philosophy, but they should almost be given a curriculum to some degree that they should cover. Whereas in some districts that might have a Pre-K in their public school, they have a curriculum. Then you go to districts that do not and these kids come in and some of them want to just play all day because that's what they did in preschool. Then you get the ones who can sit down and write their name on a paper and say okay, what are doing today because they did that in preschool. There should be a happy medium that the preschools should be given to prepare them for kindergarten.

**Respondent #5**

I feel like the parents just don't understand either and are not helping their children at home with anything. I have so many parents that say it's only kindergarten. Well, it's only kindergarten. If the kids don't understand something and parents are not portraying the importance of kindergarten how do you expect these kids to come in and know that it isn't playtime anymore.

**Respondent #7**

I think that when the parents come into register their child for kindergarten, they should be required to attend a workshop. So they know what's going to happen in kindergarten because they don't. They have no idea. They come in for orientation. I have children who have never been to a preschool at all. Then the parent says, "I didn't know that they are expected to write their name." I say, "Ooh. You couldn't make orientation." They have no idea that there's going to be a list of items that they are going to have to cover. Then when they finally come to a conference and you meet with and you give them this information, they look at you like they have to be able to do all of this and I am like yes. Report cards are going out this week and I am going to get all calls saying how come my child doesn't know their high frequency words? Well, the lists have been going home since September when I gave you the first one at conferences with just 5 words on it.



Don't you read your child's things? And then they say to me, Don't talk to me that way because you are only a teacher. I have no idea what to say except to require them to do something else. If you are a parent and you gave birth to this child, could you just do something with them at night like spend 10 minutes with them. That would be very nice. Then you have parents who do and you can tell those kids right away. Those are the kids that come in and write their name even with some trouble, within a month or two those kids are doing great and the parents are working with them. So I think it has to be cooperation between the both of us.

Respondent #5

You have to make them accountable too. I give them stuff now at spring orientation that they need to work on over the summer and I have seen over the past 2 years that they come in writing their name better and come in doing a lot more. But the ones that aren't at orientation you know right away. Nobody even comes to pick it up. They don't even care what they missed.

Question # 8- What differences, if any, would there be on children's behavioral outcomes in areas such as independent learning and playing with others between a FD/HD kindergarten?

Respondent #1

I think as mentioned earlier in our half day, I never had time for playtime. Centers were the best I could do and let them be free to choose the centers. That was the only kind free play and it was just plain old dramatic play, it was some kind of learning play like a phonics center or a math center. On occasion, I would let them go into the kitchen and let them do dramatic play. It was few and far between and I don't think I ever had a day when every single child was able to go to that dramatic play center so if we got it once every 2 or 3 weeks. Maybe 15 out of 25 children got to play in that kitchen and I don't think they were able to socialize as much because there just wasn't enough time. I don't think they were able to talk to each other like we were saying. They weren't able to use that vocabulary; to gain that language because there just wasn't time to talk. There just wasn't time for it. I think the full day has helped because they can talk to each other. They can have conversations and if Jimmy doesn't want to play with Joey anymore, he can move onto Johnny and we weren't able to do that in a half day. We were lucky to even get one person to talk to for a very short period of time so I think it has helped in that respect.

## Respondent # 4

Behavioral outcomes: I have the same rules now as I did in Full day as far as difference in their behavior as a whole; I don't really think that has changed too much although I do have more time to devote to solving problems on their own and peer mediation and problem solving. More time to address those things instead of saying, "come on guys, chop, chop. Let's solve the problem" It was usually me solving the problem. I think that the rules are the rules be it a half day or a full day. Things are acceptable and things aren't acceptable. There is more time to devote to kind of problem solving skills.

## Respondent # 3

I would say my children's behavior was better in the half day kindergarten. I had a more structured program and there was less time for free play. Now in a full day kindergarten, they are together all day. They have become more familiar with each other. They eat lunch together. They socialize together even though I rotate tables around so groups don't form. They've become very familiar with each other and by now in a half day my kids were following the rules. I wouldn't have to remind them. If I did, it was very limited. In a full day, I am constantly reminding them about the rules. Almost daily. So I have to say, in a half day because I had them for a half day, there was less time for interaction with the children.

## Respondent # 4

Now that #3 mentioned that, it's true. There's going to be a behavior issue if you factor in the afternoon be that that their tired or they are just saturated. They don't want to listen to me. They don't want to listen to anybody anymore. That could be part of it too and it could be less structured. In that respect, yes.

## Respondent # 2

I agree but I also think that it is an impact that we don't have them in Pre-K as we did before. So we're not setting up their background rules. I know that I had a lot of children that came with behaviors that were totally unacceptable to me that were permitted in the Pre-K next door. So it took a long time because they had a whole year of thinking they could pick each other up and laugh at each other. They are just little things, but things that I find unacceptable. So, I had to work through that and change that behavior whereas when I had them for the 2 years, I didn't need to do that because you are getting them right from home in many cases and you could set them on that path from the beginning, so I think that's one change. Also, I think that lunch sets in a lot of behavioral issues that didn't happen before. They do learn to get along with each other a little more because they have to deal with being outside at recess. Children that are physically aggressive or have other behavioral issues, that free time when there is not a teacher per say there, there

is a lunch aide let's them get out of control so there are more issues. And I'm not there so that is hard for a little 5-year-old to know how to behave if someone is not there looking at them. They are not as self-directed and have self control, some children, so that is an issue between the half day and the full day.

Respondent # 4

Just when I am on my way back to lunch, I think that is an issue with any grade level. They are out of control and when they come in they are out of control. That's one of the reasons why I have quiet time to get under control. Get yourselves under control.

Respondent # 2

Deep breathing. I do a lot of yoga breathing in my class. I tell them I do it for myself too.

Respondent #6

They can't differentiate between the classroom and before and aftercare. They think it's all one big party. They do a lot of art activities and they take them outside and movies and things like that, but when they come into my room, they think it is still that atmosphere. They make some many transitions from this room to that room. In a full day kindergarten, there is one room, one setting, one routine and I think they are a lot better.

Respondent #8

In a whole day it is structured where you incorporate that free play but it is still structured and they are yours all day. Just to go outside and do a lap around the field or just to get them outside and do all of that exercise is great.

Respondent #5

I also feel sometimes like they become very clique-y but full-day does provide more socialization time and allows them to talk more with each other and with me.

Respondent #7

I think a lot has to do with socialization. In a full day they learn about each other, talk more to each other and learn how to get along. You can direct that. A lot of our society has too many kids with parents who are always working; there is no social direction for them. They don't know how to make friends and they don't know how to keep friends. Then they pick on each other. I see social conditions as the hardest part.

Respondent #9

I agree with her. (Respondent #7). The socialization is so important.

Question #9- What are the social benefits/drawbacks for a child in a FD/HD kindergarten?

Respondent # 2

I think like #3 said, it does give them a lot extra time to get to know one another. That can be a drawback. It can be that they get too familiar and will maybe do things with one another as if they are brother and sister when they spend a lot of time and they go to aftercare together. I know from my own daughter who has the same experience. She's with somebody all day, she's with a neighbor or they are in class together or they are after school together, that can become too much time with one person and I try to split those children up and give them experience with other friends. Their parents realize that and they will do the same, but I think that, all in all, more so for kids that don't have any social experiences. There are children that come from different language backgrounds that I know never go out to play with anyone at home. It's the only chance they get. The more time they get to be involved, I think outweighs the drawbacks. I think the benefits are greater.

Respondent #1

I think what I said for #8 was a little more apropos for this question. Socially again because we are able to give them the playtime that they didn't really get in the half day, that they are able to go play with this one as opposed to that one. And they can make choices about who they can talk to and interact with whereas in a half day, they really only had the option of talking to whoever was seated next to them. Now they can get up and talk to the child who is across the room from them that they might be interested in getting to know a new friend. Lunchtime allows for this in addition to the playtime that we're giving them now, whereas in the half day, there was no lunchtime. There was no playtime, you were just a victim of who you were surrounded by. See, now you can get up and pursue other friends and if you are not getting along with your friends today, you can move on to somebody else. There are 24 or 25 other choices as opposed to the ones you are stuck with. There are 2 people next to you and that's it. Those are your options for the day. Day in and day out. And I only change their seats once a month so for 30 days or so, these are the people you interact with. Now, they have different people they sit with at lunch. Then they go outside and they play with whoever they choose to. They can play with first graders if they choose to. They are all lumped in together at lunch so they socialize with others. Don't get me wrong. They pick up some bad habits from the older kids that they bring into the kindergarten and some of the ones that are a little more savvy hook up with the first or second graders and bring back words that they shouldn't

be. They shouldn't be saying them in first or second grade, but they are a little more worldly those older kids. So they are bringing that back to their class. I think that's a benefit and a drawback. They are getting the exposure. But they may be getting exposure to some things that they don't need to be.

Respondent #3

I feel as if when they weren't with us the whole day, they would be at home or whatever other activities they were going to be in. I think that while they are being with us, we can still create the possibility. We can make them more independent. We can give them organizational skills. We lay the foundation in kindergarten for the rest of their school years and having them the whole day hopefully, being with us for the full day they would get the opportunities that wouldn't get at home. Talking about bullying, talking about socially what to do right and wrong, socially getting along with others. At lunchtime, they wouldn't normally see the other kindergarten class. Now they interact with others, as well as the rest of the school so in that respect, I think it is a big asset having them all day, whereas the half day never would have afforded us all those opportunities.

Respondent #4

I agree with #3. I think the benefits far outweigh the drawbacks. There are so many children that they would go home and for whatever reason, stay with grandma or grandpa. Mom and dad are working. They never have a play date. They never go to the library so at least here maybe they're hearing 2 more stories or books on tape and some other things learning how to take charge. They might be the only child in the house. I think the benefits far outweigh the drawbacks.

Respondent #1

Just real quick a lot of them are just going home and plopping in front of the TV or their computer or a video game. And we all know that's not socialization. And they can't. They come back and they don't know how to take turns and they don't know how to share and we are affording that to them.

Respondent #2

And they don't have the conversational skills.

Respondent #3

At home, parents don't want to get into conflict. Parents do not want to get into conflicts with their children. When it's time to get ready, they're zipping their coats, they're putting straws in the juice boxes, they are sitting next to them making sure they eat lunch or

doing things that we need to undo when they come to school. We need to teach them how to zip their coat. We need to teach them how to open their snacks. All of these things the parents do, it's easier for parents just to do these things for the kids. I think having them full day affords the opportunity to move on in the classroom with this

Respondent #5

In a full day kindergarten, they are able to spend more time learning about appropriate play and appropriate social behaviors. It is more structured and they crave that structure. They did not get it in a half day. It is supposed to be more free play and there's nothing wrong with that. If it's not structured, then it is chaos. They need more time and social development. It is so important thing at this age. They just didn't have it in a half day program.

Respondent #6

In a full-day kindergarten there is more time for play and children learn more socialization skills. Some children don't even have play dates.

Respondent #8

A lot of parents will say oh my child is not ready for a full day kindergarten because it is such a long day but they do get to know each other better. We need screening back. They come in September and you don't know these kids and you don't know how to group them. I think that screening can come back to help us group them correctly. If there is screening in the spring, you can give things to the parents to work on with their kids over the summer to try to give them the same advantage as writing their name and knowing their letters. It is very difficult. If you make it a mandatory screening, then you have to meet all the parents.

Respondent #5

In a half day program, every single parent that works wants to get their kids in the morning class so you have overload in the morning to begin with. You tend to have more behavior problems because those are the kids who are not with their parents at all because from 8-8:30 they are in before care and from 11:30-6:00 they are in aftercare. They are much less structured. You can also have a very uneven balance between the classes. You can have a larger class in the morning and with a larger class more social and behavioral issues. Your two classes now are totally different and you are getting more done in the afternoon. Full day helps kids become more organized and independent.

Respondent #7

In a half-day you have all the problems in the morning if you have the aftercare late in the afternoon because they are there all day long until 5 or 6 o'clock if you're lucky. Some kids are just tired, too. Some are ready to learn better by the afternoon and you can handle them better. In a full-day kindergarten, you can also take more time to discuss behavior problems and try to resolve issues with the kids.

Respondent #9

Students really have more time in a full-day program to socialize and play.