

Rowan University

Rowan Digital Works

Theses and Dissertations

5-11-2006

Full-day kindergarten versus half-day kindergarten: which has more advantages for children with disabilities?

Kathy V. Priest
Rowan University

Follow this and additional works at: <https://rdw.rowan.edu/etd>



Part of the [Special Education and Teaching Commons](#)

Let us know how access to this document benefits you - share your thoughts on our feedback form.

Recommended Citation

Priest, Kathy V., "Full-day kindergarten versus half-day kindergarten: which has more advantages for children with disabilities?" (2006). *Theses and Dissertations*. 926.

<https://rdw.rowan.edu/etd/926>

This Thesis is brought to you for free and open access by Rowan Digital Works. It has been accepted for inclusion in Theses and Dissertations by an authorized administrator of Rowan Digital Works. For more information, please contact LibraryTheses@rowan.edu.

FULL-DAY KINDERGARTEN VERSUS HALF-DAY KINDERGARTEN:
WHICH HAS MORE ADVANTAGES FOR
CHILDREN WITH DISABILITIES?

by
Kathy V. Priest

A Thesis

Submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements of the
Masters of Arts Degree
of
The Graduate School
at
Rowan University
May 11, 2006

Approved by _____
Professor

Date Approved 5/11/06

© 2006

ABSTRACT

Kathy V. Priest

FULL-DAY KINDERGARTEN VERSUS HALF-DAY KINDERGARTEN: WHICH HAS MORE ADVANTAGES FOR CHILDREN WITH DISABILITIES?

2005/06

Dr. Joy Xin

Master of Arts in Special Education

The purpose of this study was to compare academic and social skills of children with disabilities enrolled in both half-day and full-day kindergarten programs. Four boys, between the ages of 5 and 6, participated in the study. Of those, two were enrolled in a half-day program, and the other two were in a full-day program. Over a 4.5 month period, the children's academic skills were measured by the Kindergarten Readiness Test, and their behaviors were observed. A single subject research design with AB phases was used. Their scores were collected in three weeks as baseline data and their progress was recorded in six weeks as intervention data. All children made progress in identifying alphabetic letters, numerical numbers, geometric shapes, sight words, individual name, address, phone number and birthday, but the trend of progress was slightly accelerated by the full-day students. Meanwhile, a teacher/parent survey pertaining to their perceptions on both programs was provided respectively. All four participating teachers preferred teaching in the full-day kindergarten because they had more time to teach and reinforce their lessons throughout the day. All four participating parents reported that children had an academic advantage by being enrolled in a full-day kindergarten program, however two parents also indicated that a full-day was too long for young children. The results showed that full-day

students have a slight advantage academically over the half-day students, however, there was no difference between the two groups in learning social skills.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to take this time to thank the people in my life for making this thesis possible.

To my professor, Dr. Joy Xin, who always made it seem so easy. Thank you for your support and patience throughout the year. You really made the class a great learning experience. I truly enjoyed Thursday nights in class.

To my class, thank you for a year filled with many, many laughs. I am going to miss seeing everyone on a weekly basis. It was a long year, but we made it!!

To my parents, Bud and Kathy for not only being the best parents in the world, but for all of your help and support through the years. I love you both!!

To my children, Jarret and Kalin for understanding why mommy was always on the computer. Thank you for being such awesome kids. I love you sooooo much!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!

To my husband Mike, for all of your help with this project. I greatly appreciate everything that you do for me. I love you !!!!

Table of Contents

| | |
|---|-------|
| Acknowledgements..... | iii |
| CHAPTER I-Introduction..... | 1-9 |
| Statement of Problems..... | 3-6 |
| Significance of the Study..... | 6-7 |
| Purpose of the Study..... | 7-8 |
| Research Questions..... | 8 |
| Terms and Definitions..... | 8-9 |
| CHAPTER II- Literature Review..... | 10-22 |
| Full-Day Kindergarten Programs..... | 10-13 |
| Effects of Full-day Kindergarten Programs..... | 13-15 |
| Parents' and Teachers' perceptions of Full-day Kindergarten Programs..... | 15-17 |
| Half-Day Kindergarten Programs..... | 17-19 |
| Parents' and Teachers' perceptions of Half-day Kindergarten Programs..... | 19-20 |
| Summary..... | 20-21 |
| CHAPTER III-Method..... | 22-30 |
| Participants..... | 22-25 |
| Setting..... | 26-27 |
| Research Design..... | 27 |
| Materials..... | 27-28 |

| | |
|---|-------|
| Procedures..... | 28-30 |
| Chapter IV-Results..... | 31-40 |
| Student Performance..... | 31-38 |
| Teacher Survey..... | 39 |
| Parent Survey..... | 39-40 |
| Chapter V-Discussion..... | 41-45 |
| References..... | 46-50 |
| Appendices..... | 51-56 |
| Appendix A-Observation Form..... | 51 |
| Appendix B-Parent Survey..... | 52-53 |
| Appendix C-Teacher Survey..... | 54-55 |
| Appendix D-Parent/Child Consent Form..... | 56 |

List of Figures

| | |
|--|----|
| Figure 1- Kindergarten Readiness Test: Alphabet Identification..... | 31 |
| Figure 2- Kindergarten Readiness Test: Number (1-10) Identification..... | 32 |
| Figure 3- Kindergarten Readiness Test: Shape (5) Identification..... | 32 |
| Figure 4- Kindergarten Readiness Test: Sight Word (10) Identification..... | 33 |
| Figure 5- Readiness Test: Name Identification..... | 33 |
| Figure 5- Readiness Test: Name Identification..... | 34 |
| Figure 6- Readiness Test: Address Identification..... | 34 |
| Figure 6- Readiness Test: Address Identification..... | 35 |
| Figure 7- Readiness Test: Phone # Identification..... | 35 |
| Figure 7- Readiness Test: Phone # Identification..... | 36 |
| Figure 8- Readiness Test: Birthday Identification..... | 36 |
| Figure 8- Readiness Test: Birthday Identification..... | 37 |
| Figure 9- Social Skills: Appropriate Behavior..... | 37 |
| Figure 10- Social Skills: Turn Taking..... | 38 |
| Figure 11- Social Skills: Manners..... | 38 |

CHAPTER 1

Introduction

Kindergarten provides educational services to children ages four to seven. A kindergarten program usually ranges from a half day to a full day depending on the availability of the school system (Polito, 1995). For many children, kindergarten is the first step towards developing social skills in a group setting. This is also the first time many children are away from their parents to learn self-esteem, social and academic skills.

In the 1830's, German educator, Friedrich Froebel, also known as "Father of Kindergarten," founded kindergarten (Polito, 1995). Froebel's kindergarten developed theories and practices that are still being used today in kindergarten classrooms. He believed that children needed time to explore and play. Kindergarten should be a place for children to learn and grow from their social interaction with other children.

The first kindergarten was established to help children of poverty and children with special needs (Polito, 1995). Many nurseries at that time would coincide with the kindergarten to serve the poor. These nurseries/kindergartens would stress the systematic play following Froebel's philosophy. Through the systematic play, children are able to learn social skills of sharing, problem solving, and academic skills of concept

Inspired by Friedrich Froebel's idea of children's socialization through play, "Kindergarten" as a new institution was promoted. The kindergarten idea was first introduced into the United States in the late 1840s, but it was not until 1876, when kindergarten advocates had presented an exhibition of their methods, that Froebel's ideas became popular (Polito, 1995). Froebel's major contribution was to divide the process of early education between birth and the age of six into distinct stages of physical and mental development, i.e., infancy, early childhood, and childhood. For each of these stages, he developed distinct educational tasks. Froebel declared the child to be essentially good by nature, a bundle of possibilities at the beginning of life. As a result of these ideas, Froebel and his followers developed a new theory of childhood education, i.e. symbolic education, which advanced the idea that children's thoughts pre-existed as feelings and emotions, and these feelings allowed them to form ideas (Polito, 1995). Having formed their own ideas through symbolic training and direct play, children learned to adapt these ideals to others before leaving kindergarten.

Kindergarten was not always welcomed by the middle-class families because it stressed the importance of kindergarten teachers rather than parents. These parents viewed a kindergarten as a means of training the immigrant and slum children (Polito, 1995). With the establishment of free kindergarten in working-class neighborhoods in the 1870s, the advocates indicated that the proper early childhood education might eventually lead to eliminating urban poverty (Polito, 1995). They believed that kindergarten programs could train the slum children in the habits of cleanliness and discipline. Through evening classes, working mothers could learn the principles of Froebelian child nurture. Through the child, and his/her now educated mother, the family

could be taught “proper,” that is the middle-class idea of family life. It was further believed that by recovering the child before the stamp of the slum was irrevocably placed upon him, and he could be taught habits of virtue, and thus, prevents the creation of future generations of criminals (Puleo, 1998).

Kindergarten is the beginning of a new chapter for children. Every town in the United States offers kindergarten education. The big decision for parents is which kindergarten program is best for their child.

Statement of Problems

Changes in society over the past 20 years have contributed to the popularity of full day kindergarten programs in many communities (Rothenberg, 1995). Because of the increase of single parent families and dual income households, children spend a significant portion of their day in kindergarten or day care. This indicates significant changes in American family life compared to the previous generations. Studies (Cryan, Sheehan, Weichel, Bandy-Hedden., 1992; & Karweit, 1992) have shown that parents favor a full-day program, because it would reduce the number of transitions for kindergartners in a typical day (Rothenberg, 1995). A full-day kindergarten program benefits children academically and socially during their primary years (Cryan et al.; 1992; Karweit, 1992).

According to Puleo (1998), over 3.3 million children attend kindergarten in the United States, nearly as many children as those attend the first grade. In 1993, about 54% of kindergarten teachers taught in full-day kindergarten, and approximately half of the kindergartens offer full-day programs. Two-thirds of full-day kindergarten teachers taught in high-poverty areas, while fewer than one third (29%) taught in schools with a

low incidence of poverty (Fuscaro, 1997). Teachers who have more children from minority ethnic groups are more likely to teach full-day classes than those with low minority enrollment (67% versus 43%). One major reason for the high ratio of full-day to half-day kindergarten programs in high poverty and high minority communities is that the state and federal funding is available to support full-day kindergarten programs for extra classroom space, increased services, and additional teachers and related staff (Fromberg, 1992; Housden & Kam, 1992).

Many parents of children with disabilities prefer full-day kindergarten programs because the public schools offer many resources to special education programs (Polito, 1995). This way, teachers can deliver necessary and appropriate services to children with special needs, even in regular settings. The full-day kindergarten has a greater positive impact on children with disabilities. These children receive services needed on a daily basis. They become more confident with themselves when they are in a constant routine of such an environment (Polito, 1995).

The Full-day kindergarten program is also popular because it eliminates the need for extra buses and crossing guards at the mid-day. Studies confirm that attendance of the full-day kindergarten results in academic and social benefits to the children, at least in their primary grades (Cryan et al., 1992; Karweit, 1992).

The Full-day kindergarten program also benefits teachers. It allows teachers more time to explore topics in depth, reducing the ratio of transition time to class. Therefore, teachers can provide a greater continuity of day-to-day activities, and provide an environment that favors a child-centered, developmentally appropriate approach (Cryan et al., 1992).

According to Karwait (1992), there is a positive relationship between children's participation in the full-day kindergarten and their performance in the future. After comparing children in the full-day program to those in the half-day in a statewide longitudinal study, researchers found that full-day kindergartners displayed more independent learning, better classroom involvement, and more reflective and productive social interaction than children who attended the kindergarten only a half-day. In addition, the full-day kindergartners were more outgoing, confident, and appeared happier. In general, children in a full-day kindergarten program showed more positive behaviors than did children in a half-day kindergarten program.

Full-day programs provide more time for field trips, activity centers, and free play. Children at-risk, or children with developmental delays or disabilities attending rigorous and nurturing full-day programs, are more likely to have a stronger achievement in basic skill areas and generally better prepared for their first grade (Kemp & Carter, 2000). Full-day kindergarten programs increase children's academic achievement while reducing the probability of retention in their early school grades.

Many parents feel that sending their children to the full-day kindergarten will boost their self-esteem, and benefit their children in socialization with peers. Also the transition from the kindergarten to the first grade will be much smoother (Brannon, 2005).

A major problem that arises with the full-day kindergarten is the fact that more money will be spent to house the children in full-day kindergarten programs (Lofthouse, 1994). Another problem is that the full-day kindergarten program is too long for children of five and six. Many young children are not emotionally ready to be away from their parents for 6 or 7 hours (Lofthouse, 1994).

Although a full-day kindergarten is offered, a half-day kindergarten is still quite common. Some educators, policymakers, and parents prefer a half-day kindergarten because it is less expensive, but provides an adequate education and social experience for young children. On the other hand, parents feel that a half-day kindergarten allows them to spend some quality academic time alone with their children (Brannon, 2005). If their child is only in school for a half of a day that leaves several hours of leisure. This may give the child the best of both environments: kindergarten and home.

However, some parents are concerned that their child will not learn and retain as much as a child who attends a full-day kindergarten because the hours of learning are cut in half. Children who attend a half-day kindergarten only have about one and a half hours of learning (Jacobson, 2004). Once art class or physical education is scheduled on a particular day, there is not much time left for learning. In addition, parents find it difficult to schedule childcare before and after their child's half-day kindergarten.

When deciding which kindergarten program is appropriate to a child, some will argue that a full-day kindergarten is academically and socially better, especially a child with disabilities, others will insist that a half-day kindergarten is the route to take. A child that starts his/her early years with a positive outlook will continue to succeed during his/her school days, and will become confident academically, socially, and emotionally. It is the parents' decision to select their child's kindergarten, and to consider what is the best.

Significance of the Study

A child's first year of school is a very exciting and wonderful time in a

child's life. For many children, this is the first time away from their parents in a school setting. Naturally, a child feels many different emotions. Some children are anxious to go to school, while others are petrified. Many children find comfort when they enter their classroom, and see a smiling, happy teacher greeting them. The children will soon realize that they have many classmates in the classroom. Once children feel a sense of security in the environment, they will learn to relax, learn, and have fun.

Children with disabilities attend both full-day and half-day kindergartens. Various services are available for these children including physical therapy, occupational therapy, one-on-one assistance, resource programs, and speech pathology.

To date, many studies (e.g. Jacobson, 2005; Karweit, 1992) examined full-day versus half-day kindergarten programs and how they are related to a child's academic and social learning. There are also studies (e.g., Finn & Pannozzo, 2004) that examined kindergarten programs for children with disabilities. Services are provided to children with disabilities in kindergarten settings. However, limited studies are found to evaluate these programs and to identify which program would be better for children with disabilities. Comparing children with disabilities enrolled in a full-day kindergarten to those enrolled in a half-day program would be the focus of this present study.

Purpose of the Study

Kindergarten is a major transition in a child's life from home to school. In kindergarten, children start to learn social and academic skills and to form their expressions about themselves as learners, friends and society members (Brannon, 2005).

Some teachers and parents believe that a full-day kindergarten is better for children academically and socially, however, many also believe that a half-day program

will also provide children appropriate learning experiences and be preferable for families economically.

The purpose of the present study is to determine whether a full-day or a half-day kindergarten program is a better option for children with disabilities.

Academic skills and appropriate behaviors of children with disabilities in both programs are examined through: a) Learning readiness tests, and b) direct observations to evaluate their progress.

Meanwhile, surveys are given to each participating child's parent and his/her kindergarten teacher. Their perceptions regarding full and half-day kindergarten programs are explored.

Research Questions

The following questions will be explored in the present study:

1. Do children with disabilities who attend a full-day kindergarten have an academic advantage over those who attend a half-day kindergarten?
2. Do children with disabilities in a full-day kindergarten classroom have an advantage socially over those who attend a half-day kindergarten?
3. What are the parents' perspectives of their children's academic and social growth in a full-day versus a half-day kindergarten program?
4. What are the teachers' perspectives of their children's academics and social growth in a full-day versus a half-day kindergarten program?

Terms and Definitions

In the present study, the following terms are used:

Learning Readiness. being able to identify the basic academic skills at the kindergarten level, e.g., letters, numbers, shapes, basic sight words, telling a child's own name, birthday, address, and home phone number.

Table manner. being able to use proper manners when needed during snack time or activities at the table, e.g. say "please" and "thank you," for a request or being helped.

Turn Taking. being able to share with classmates, and wait patiently for the turn.

Appropriate behaviors. being a productive member of the class without having any issues that would exclude a child from activities in class, e.g., raising hand without calling out for asking a question or a request, listening to the teacher or classmates without interrupting others, and following the teacher's directions.

CHAPTER II

Literature Review

In this chapter, research articles on full and half-day kindergarten programs and their academic and social effect on children with and without disabilities are reviewed.

Full-Day Kindergarten Programs

In the 1980s, only 30 % of kindergarteners were enrolled in full-day kindergarten programs, while the number has increased to more than 45% today (Giles, 1998).

Educators advocate for longer hours of kindergarten education, because the programs allow more time for teachers and children participating in hands-on activities, without squeezing everything into two and a half hours (Giles, 1998). This longer period of kindergarten may benefit children with disabilities to learn skills with their peers in activities (Giles, 1998).

According to Finn and Panozzo (2004), engagement in a full-day kindergarten classroom consists of children's appropriate learning behaviors (e.g., attending to instruction, completing seatwork and assignments, generally expending effort needed to understand instructional material) and social skills (e.g., following classroom rules, working cooperatively with other children). The phrase of academic engagement refers to learning behaviors, and social engagement refers to pro- and antisocial behavior. Both types of behaviors have consistent and strong correlations with a child's academic performance (Elicker & Mathur, 1997).

A full-day kindergarten program allows teachers to teach a concept and provide reinforcement on the same day. Field trips were also easier to schedule and the day was more relaxed because the class didn't have to clear away a morning activity for transition to the afternoon class. Thus, the children felt more confident with themselves academically and socially, and parents appreciated having a younger sibling accompanied by older siblings on the bus (Karweit, 1992; Katz, 1995). It also allows children and teachers to have time to explore topics in depth, reduce transition, and provide a continuity of day-to-day activities. This environment may favor a child-centered, developmentally appropriate approach.

Recent research (Karweit, 1992; Katz, 1995) indicated that compared to children in different instructive programs, children in child-centered full-day kindergarten programs presented their abilities significantly higher, had higher expectation for success on academic tasks, and were less dependent on adults for permission and approval (Drew & Law, 1990; Katz, 1995). It is found that children enrolled in a full-day kindergarten program tend to behave better in the classroom, pay closer attention to the teacher, and have more advanced social skills (Finn & Panozzo, 2004). It is also found in a large study (Cryan et al., Sheehan, Wirchel, & Bandy-Hedden, 1992), children's learning behavior, for example, independent learning, involvement, as well as their social behaviors, social involvement and class participation favored full-day kindergarten programs. This is evidenced in Elicker and Mathur's study (1997). A total of 350 kindergarten children were examined over a two year period. It is noted that children with disabilities in a full-day kindergarten program in the second year of implementation were "initiating more learning activity and receiving more one-to-one instruction from their teachers." (p. 477).

It appears the greater progress of children in a full-day kindergarten, the higher levels of their first grade readiness in elementary school. Children in full-day kindergarten programs make greater progress in learning literacy, math, and general social skills (Elicker & Mathur, 1997).

To compare the academic performance of children enrolled in a full-day kindergarten program to those enrolled in a half-day program, some studies (e.g. Karweit, 1987, 1989, Puleo, 1998, Housden & Kam, 1992, Rothenberg, 1995, and Fusaro, 1997) found full-day programs are superior in the short run but produce mixed results with respect to long term benefits. Second, the benefits of a full-day kindergarten program are consistently greater for children from low-socioeconomic families and children with disabilities. Third, the superiority of a full-day kindergarten program depends on the academic orientation which refers to how much children will learn about specific topics. However, some full-day programs have the exact same curricular as the half-day. The only difference is to simply stretch the program to fill the day, and “much of the time in a full-day program was similar to a babysitting service.”(Fuscaro, 1997, Page 227).

Many school districts favor a full-day kindergarten program simply because it gave them the equivalent of an extra half day of teaching (McConnell & Tesch, 1986). Although a full-day kindergarten program provides more opportunities for learning, the actual use of time is a critical issue. Giles (1998) found that some half-day kindergarten programs provided more high-quality time than did full-day programs.

Another concern is that full-day programs seem long for young children. In McConnell and Tesch’s study (1986), a team of 14 observers recorded actual behavior throughout the day in classrooms following the full-day or half-day schedule. Each

observer was assigned to observe one or more full-day classrooms and two or more of the half-day classrooms including both morning and afternoon sessions. The observations were compared based on actual observed behaviors in these classrooms on a number of different issues, such as, whether children showed superior social skills in one schedule than another and whether any parts of the day appeared to be less productive for learning. None of the observers found evidence of enhanced social skills experienced by children in a full-day program than in a half-day program. The observers also unanimously found that the half-day schedule did not appear to result in less productive learning time than the full-day schedule.

Effects of Full-day Kindergarten Programs

The academic and social effects of full-day kindergarten programs have been ambiguous. Comparing the achievement of children with disabilities in full-day kindergarten to that of those in half-day kindergarten, studies found greater achievement of full-day kindergarten (e.g. Adock, Hess, & Mitchell, 1980; Board of School Trustees, 1988; Brierley, 1987; Goodwin, 1989; Gullo, Bersani, Clements, & Bayless, 1986). Others (e.g. Sergesketter & Gilman, 1998) reported no difference on Gates-MacGinitie Reading Test between children who attended a full-day kindergarten compared to those who were enrolled in a half-day kindergarten program (Fuscaro 1997).

Studies failed to find an unequivocal difference between the two groups (Towers, 1991, 1983; Gullo, Bersani, Clemens, & Bayless, 1986, McConnell & Tesch, 1986, Johnson, 1974; Addock, Hess, & Mitchell, 1980; Uguroglu, M., & Nieminen, 1986, & Winter & Klein, 1970). Although full-day kindergarteners scored significantly higher on the Metropolitan Readiness Test than those enrolled in a half-day program on five of the

subtests, the overall result indicated no significant differences (Uguroglu & Nieman, 1986).

A small number of studies examined the effects of a full-day kindergarten program versus a half-day program (Karweit, 1989). Four studies (e.g. Johnson, 1974; Katz, 1995, McConnell & Tesch 1986; Fuscaro, 1987), found modest and sometimes inconsistent short-term effects for full-day programs, and 12 other studies found modest positive effects for full-day attendance. These studies were primarily based on children with disabilities and financial disadvantages.

During the 1970s and 1980s, research on the effects of full-day kindergarten programs yielded mixed results. In a review of research on the full-day kindergarten, Puleo (1998) indicated that much of the early research employed inadequate methodological standards that resulted in serious problems with internal and external validity. Consequently, the results were conflicting and inconclusive. Studies conducted in the 1990s also produced mixed results, however, some important trends appeared based on the academic, social, and behavioral effects of the full-day kindergarten, as well as parents' and teachers' perceptions.

Despite the generally mixed results concerning the effect of full-day kindergarten on academic achievement in the 1970s and 1980s, consistent findings appeared concerning the positive effect on academic achievement of children at risk (Housden & Kam, 1992; Karweit, 1992; Puleo, 1988). Research reported in 1990s showed more consistent positive academic outcomes for all children enrolled in full-day kindergarten programs (Cryan, Sheehan, Wiechel, & Bandy-Hedden, 1992; Elicker & Mathur, 1997; Fusaro, 1997; Hough & Bryde, 1996; Koopmans, 1991). For example, Cryan et al., (1992)

conducted a two-phase study to examine the effects of half-day and full-day kindergarten programs on children's academic and behavioral success in school. In the first phase of the study, data were collected on 8,290 children with disabilities from 27 school districts, and the second phase included nearly 6,000 children. The researchers found that participation in the full-day kindergarten was related positively to subsequent school performance. Children who attended all-day kindergarten scored higher on standardized tests, had fewer grade retentions and Chapter 1 placement. In addition, data of 511 children enrolled in half-day and full-day kindergarten programs in 25 classrooms were reviewed, and children in the full-day programs scored higher on the achievement test than those in the half day programs (Hough & Byrde, 1996).

The effectiveness of full-day kindergarten programs was also evaluated in Koopman's study (1991). Two cohorts of children: one in its third year of elementary school and the other in its second year were examined. It is found that there were no differences in reading comprehension and math scores on the California Test of Basic Skills (CTBS) for the first cohort, however, both reading comprehension and math scores were higher for children in the second cohort, who had attended full-day kindergarten.

Parents' and Teachers' Perceptions of Full-day Kindergarten Programs

Parents' and teachers' attitudes towards full-day kindergarten, as well as its academic, social, and behavioral effects were examined. Both parents and teachers whose children were enrolled in full-day kindergarten programs were generally satisfied with the programs and believed that the full-day kindergarten program better prepared their children with disabilities for the first grade (Hough & Bryde, 1996; Elicker & Mathur, 1997; Housden & Kam, 1992; Towers, 1991).

Teachers and parents also indicated a preference for full-day kindergarten because of the more relaxed atmosphere, more time for creative activities, and more opportunity for children to develop their own interests (Elicker & Mathur, 1997).

The Full-day kindergarten teachers noted that their children tend to be more social, not only with classmates, but with their family members. Parents have stated that their children are extremely anxious to discuss their day at school. The full-day kindergarteners appear to have more to discuss (Towers, 1991).

Towers (1991) studied 12 kindergarten classes over a two-year period. Six of the classes were full-day programs, and six were half-day programs. It is found that the majority of the full-time children expressed themselves more vocally in the first grade, had more confidence, and better social skills than the half-day children. The parents of these children agreed with the results. The full-day kindergarten teachers felt that their children did better than the half-day children.

Parents reported that their full-day kindergarten teachers provided suggestions for home activities more frequently (Hough & Bryde, 1996). They also felt that the all-day kindergarten schedule benefited their children socially (Towers, 1991).

The full-day kindergarten teachers felt more confident with their children when assigning at-home projects and assignments. One study (Hough & Bryde, 1996), for example, examined 434 full and half-day kindergarten children's assignment of a mini-book report to their classes. The full-day kindergarten teachers felt that the full-day students performed better on the assignment, comparing to the children in the half-day program. Their work was neater and more thorough than that of the half-day children (Hough & Bryde, 1996). In addition, in Smith's study (1994), 90% of the

teachers felt that the full-day kindergarten program provided more time for individual instruction. They had more time to get to know their children and families, thus, enabling them to better meet children's needs (Towers, 1991). They believed that they knew their class much better, because they spent all day together with children and sometimes with parents. As a result, a close bond was established between teachers and parents.

Parents felt that their children were learning more compared to the children in a half-day program. The parents loved the bond that they shared with their child's teacher, and they felt extremely comfortable when calling the teacher on the phone. When teachers spend all day with their children, it's only natural to feel a special bond. Teachers agree that they feel more in control and more confident when teaching children all day (Elicker & Mathur, 1991).

Half-Day Kindergarten Programs

According to Giles (1998), half-day kindergarten programs are still quite common. For example, 58% of children are enrolled in half-day programs. Although it is controversial to discuss the benefits of attending school for only a half of a day (Viadero, 2004), it is believed that half-day programs can provide high quality education and social experiences (Giles, 1998), and the amount of time spent in a classroom isn't as important as the quality of the program (Polito, 1995).

Finn and Panozzo (2004) believe that having a child with a disability in a half-day kindergarten program is a benefit for the child and the parent. Children with disabilities need the balance of both the teacher and parent. They have the luxury of spending half of the day with their kindergarten teacher, and the other half with a parent or caregiver. Finn and Panozzo (2004) indicated that children are stimulated more when their day is divided.

Giles (1998) agreed that children, in general, enjoy the environment better when it is changing. A full-day of kindergarten is much too long for children, and a half-day is extremely more rewarding academically and socially.

Many parents, especially stay-at home parents, have the opportunity to spend quality time teaching and reinforcing what their child learned in school. One-on-one time is enjoyed by the parent and child. When a child is in kindergarten all day, the child may feel tired and unmotivated by the end of the day (Chmelynski, 1998). When a child is enrolled in a half-day kindergarten program, he or she still has energy after school. In Gile's study (1998), 212 full and half-day kindergarteners were followed throughout the year to examine their academic ability and social skills. It is found that the half-day children were socially more mature, and academically at an advantage.

Educators favor a half-day kindergarten program because it is less expensive. School districts like the idea of a half-day because they do not have to hire extra teachers, and find extra space to house the extra children (Viadero, 2002). Overall, comparatively, half-day kindergarten programs are more economic for schools and their families.

Researchers (Viadero, 2002, Rothenberg, 1995) found a half-day kindergarten program a stepping stone socially for children. It is found that approximately 74% of the children excelled in their social skills. It is also found that less excessive off-task behaviors occurred amongst half-day students because there was very little down time in class.

Rothenberg (1995) followed 11 full and half day kindergarten programs throughout the year. He observed the children in their natural state in the classroom. He found that children in both programs showed positive self-esteem, confidence, and a positive feeling

about school. He did not note a major difference in a child's social skills, or confidence level. Rothenberg (1995) concluded that the most important aspect of kindergarten is to emotionally prepare children for their future years of school.

The major problem with a half-day kindergarten program is childcare after school. If two parents are working full-time, and a child is enrolled in a half-day kindergarten program, extra childcare needs to be arranged for the rest of the day. Children with disabilities need structured environments (Holloway, 2003). If they are pulled from one place to the other, it may disturb their confidence level so that their interest in school may diminish in the future. It seems that children with disabilities prefer the stability of one teacher at one place all day.

Parents and Teachers' Perceptions of Half-day Kindergarten Programs

Parents of children in a half-day kindergarten program are worried that their child will not succeed in their future years of school, because of the shortness of their day in kindergarten (Jacobson, 2004). Parents feel that the full-day kindergarten will always have an academic and social advantage.

In Brannon's study (2005), the results of a survey from parents of children with and without disabilities in a first grade class showed that 86% of half-day kindergartners had a difficult transition into the first grade, and 50% of the children struggled with their literacy. Approximately 72% of participating parents stated that their child is struggling socially. When the same survey was given to the parents of children who were enrolled in a full-day kindergarten program, the results improved drastically. Only 38% of the children had a difficult transition into the first grade, approximately 21% struggled with literacy, and only 30% struggled socially (Giles, 1998).

To investigate teachers' perceptions, 726 teachers in the states of California and Washington were surveyed (Moore, 2002). The results showed that 94% of teachers do not prefer a half-day of kindergarten. Teachers feel that with a half-day of kindergarten, they do not have the time to thoroughly teach and reinforce materials learned that day. Many teachers indicated that they do not finish what they expected in class, and often send home materials. It is, then, the parent's responsibility to reinforce what was taught that day. Teachers believe that in a half-day kindergarten program, they are constantly trying to beat the clock. In addition, teachers have also reported that it is difficult to bond with the families and the students when they are in school for such a short time. Teachers feel that they have double students, and double parents, that makes difficult to create a relationship with parents (Elicker & Mathur, 1997).

Summary

Over the past years, research tends to favor a full-day kindergarten program; however, there has been great debate whether a half-day of kindergarten is actually academically and socially better for a child. Research has shown that longer kindergarten programs have lasting benefits for children with disabilities, however, there is no evidence showing children who go to a full-day kindergarten gain a long-term edge over those who don't (Giles, 1998).

Research indicates that the quantity of the work is not the major issue when it comes to academics, but the quality. A full-day's program does not mean that children are learning more than those in a half-day program. Statistics have proven that many half-day kindergarten programs have superior curricular, and children learn just as much as full-day kindergarteners (Sergesketter, & Gilman, 1998).

Social skills tend to be an issue for half-day kindergarteners, however, research has proven that children who are enrolled in a half-day program do not lack social skills compared to the full-day kindergarten children. It depends upon the individual child and the program enrolled. Every child is unique, and every child reacts differently to different situations.

Teachers tend to dislike half-day kindergarten mostly because the day is too short. During such a short time, it is hard for them to accomplish their objectives for the day. They also believe their bond is not strong with the children because they are always working to finish their tasks, which leaves little time to interact with children and their parents.

Stay-at-home parents tend to favor a half-day of kindergarten. However, the vast majority of parents both work today, which leaves many parents against a half-day of kindergarten. The issue of childcare is one of the main problems that parents of half-day kindergarteners deal with. These parents are afraid that their half-day child will struggle with their school years because of the shortness of the kindergarten days. The findings were mixed.

The present study continued the research on full-day vs. half-day kindergarten. It focused on a comparison of children with disabilities in both full-day and half-day kindergarten programs by evaluating their academic and social performance. It attempts to add more information to the research on kindergarten education for children with disabilities.

CHAPTER III

Method

This study examined four kindergarten children with disabilities. Of those, two are enrolled in a half-day kindergarten program, and the other two are enrolled in a full-day kindergarten program. The Kindergarten Readiness Test and direct observations were used in the classroom to evaluate individual child's learning curves in different programs and to compare their academic and social skills.

Participants

A total of four children participated in this study.

Child 1

A five year old boy, who has been classified as having Autism, is enrolled in a half-day kindergarten program in a large suburban school district. He has been in this program for 7 months. A full-time aide is following him to provide assistance whenever it is needed. The Kindergarten Readiness Test was provided. His performance during the baseline presents as follows:

Literacy. When showing flashcards and asked "what is this word?" he identified 1 out of 10 sight words correctly. When showing flashcards and asked "what is this letter?" he recognized 3 out of 26 alphabet letters correctly.

Arithmetic. When showing flashcards and asked “what is this number?” he identified 1 out of 10 numerical numbers. When showing flashcards and asked “what is this shape?” he recognized 1 out of 5 shapes correctly.

Personal information. When asked “what is your name?” he could respond to his first and last name, however, he could only write his first name correctly;

When the same question was asked regarding his home address, birth date and home phone number, he did not respond.

He is extremely quiet and withdrawn. He did say “thank you” when I handed him a pencil, but he is quiet, and rarely participates in classroom activities.

Child 2

A five year old boy, who has been classified as being learning disabled, is enrolled in a half-day kindergarten program in a large suburban school district. He has been in this program for seven months. A part-time aide is provided to assist him whenever it is needed. The Kindergarten Readiness Test was provided. His performance during the baseline presents as follows:

Literacy. When showing flashcards and asked “what is this word?” he recognized 0 out of 10 sight words. When showing flashcards and asked “what is this letter?” he recognized 7 out of 26 alphabet letters correctly.

Arithmetic. When showing flashcards and asked “what is this number?” he recognized 2 out of 10 numerical numbers correctly. When showing flashcards and asked “what is this shape?” he could recognize 0 out of 5 shapes correctly.

Personal information. When asked “what is your name?” he could respond to his first and last name, however, he wrote them backwards. When the same question was asked regarding his home address, birth date, and home phone number, he did not respond.

He is very outgoing, and sometimes disruptive. His teacher had to stop 5 times during my first visit and speak to him. He has been hitting his other siblings at home and often cries.

Child 3.

A five year old boy who has been classified as having Autism is enrolled in a full-day kindergarten program in large urban school district. He has been in this program for seven months. He has a full-time aid to assist him whenever it is needed. The Kindergarten Readiness Test was provided. His performance during the baseline presents as follows:

Literacy. When showing flashcards and asked “what is this word?” he could recognize 1 out of 10 sight words correctly. When showing flashcards and asked “what is this letter?” he could recognize 10 out of 26 alphabet letters correctly.

Arithmetic. When showing flashcards and asked “what is this number?” he could recognize 5 out of 10 numerical numbers correctly. When showing flashcards and asked “what is this shape?” he could recognize 2 out of 5 shapes correctly.

Personal Information. When asked “what is your name?” he could respond to his first and last name correctly. When the same question was asked regarding his home address, birth date, and home phone number, he did not respond.

He is an extremely outgoing child and tends to be aggressive towards the other children. He likes to grab the other children. He has good table manners. He always says

“please” and “thank you.” He is extremely affectionate towards the other children, and likes to help his classmates, sometimes too much. His teacher had to correct his behavior several times during my first visit.

Child 4.

A five year old boy, who has Downs Syndrome, is enrolled in a full-day kindergarten program in a large urban school district. He has been enrolled in this program for seven months. A part-time aide is provided for assistance whenever it is needed. The Kindergarten Readiness Test was provided. His performance during baseline during the baseline presents as follows:

Literacy. When showing flashcards and asked “what is this word?” he could recognize 4 out of 10 sight words correctly. When showing flashcards and asked “what is this letter?” he could recognize 12 out of 26 alphabet letters correctly.

Arithmetic. When showing flashcards and asked “what is this number?” he could recognize 6 out of 10 numerical numbers correctly. When showing flashcards and asked “what is this shape?” he could recognize 1 out of 5 shapes correctly.

Personal Information. When asked “what is your name?” he could respond to his first and last name, but had difficulty writing them properly. When the same question was asked regarding his home address, birth date, and home phone number, he did not respond.

This child is extremely affectionate. The other children were often asking him to leave them alone. He likes to hug other children. He is well mannered, and likes to share. During my baseline observation, he was paying absolutely no attention to his teacher.

Setting

Full-day Kindergarten

The kindergarten is located in a school that consists of grades P-5 in a large urban school district. There are 22 children in the kindergarten classroom. The program is scheduled from 9:00 in the morning to 3:15 in the afternoon. Of the 22 students, 15 are girls, and 7 are boys. There are four children with disabilities, and two of those participated in the study. There are two full-time kindergarten teachers in the classroom. The class is well organized with bulletin boards and crafts on the walls. A computer station is at the corner, a reading workshop area is at the back, a math manipulative area sits to the side, and a writing area with two tables is located in another corner.

The kindergarten curricular include language arts, mathematics, science, social studies, art, music, physical education and computer literacy for fine motor skills, gross motor skills, social and work habits, and home skills.

Half-day Kindergarten

The kindergarten is located in a school that consists of grades P-5 in a large suburban school district. There are 25 children in the kindergarten classroom. The program is scheduled from 9:00 to 11:45 in the morning. Of the 25 students, 14 are girls and 11 are boys. There are three children with disabilities, and two of those participated in the study. These participating children attend the morning sessions. There are two full-time kindergarten teachers in the classroom, teaching both morning and afternoon sessions. This class is well structured and equipped with educational activity stations. There is a computer station at the back corner, a reading workshop at the center, a writing

area at the side, a math manipulative area at the front, and a free play area at another back corner.

The curricular are consistent with that of the full-day, including phonics, language arts, mathematics, life skills, science, social studies, art, music, physical education and computer literacy for fine motor skills, social and work habits, and home skills.

Research Design

A Single subject design with AB phases was used in this study. The participating children's behaviors were observed once each week, and at the same time, the Kindergarten Readiness Test was given every two weeks to measure their learning progress. The results are presented in both baseline and intervention phases.

Materials

Observation Form

This form was used to record each participating child's behavior. On the top of the form, it states the child's name, program enrolled, and time. On the side of the form, it states the target behavior, including "turn taking" which is symbolized by a "T", "appropriate behavior", which is symbolized by an "A", and "manners", e.g. saying "please" and "thank you," which is symbolized by an "M". The observation time of 50 minutes is divided into 10 intervals, with each representing five minutes. Figure 1 presents the form (Appendix A: Figure 1).

Readiness Test

This test is used to measure each child's academic learning progress. It was taken from a Kindergarten website entitled *Kindergarten Readiness Testing*. Literacy and arithmetic are two subjects adopted and used in the research, including 10 sight words, the alphabet of A-Z, numerical numbers from 1-10, and 5 types of geometrical shapes.

Parent Survey

This is a questionnaire including 10 questions. The survey was developed based on Gile's study (1998). I modified the survey in the study to compile 10 questions. They are all multiple choice questions. Figure 2 presents the survey (see Appendix B: Figure 2).

Teacher survey

This is a questionnaire including 12 questions. The survey was developed based on the studies by Giles (1998) and Rothenberg (1995). I modified their survey to compile 12 questions. Each question is open-ended. Figure 3 presents the survey (see Appendix C: Figure 3).

Procedures

Testing procedure

The study was conducted in 4.5 months. As a researcher, I individually tested each participating child's academic skills using the Kindergarten Readiness Test, and recorded as baseline data in October. Subsequently, the test was administered every 2 weeks for each child individually, and results were recorded as intervention data. During the testing, I asked the child's first and last name, then, requested writing his/her name on a

piece of paper. After that, I asked his home address, home phone number and birth date. These questions were asked each time to start with the test. All responses were recorded as “correct” or “incorrect.”

Flashcards were also developed to test each child. Each flashcard had a letter of the alphabet on it. When showing each flashcard, the question “What is this letter?” was asked. If the child responded correctly, a check was marked; otherwise, the card would be placed back in the pile. The same procedure was used to assess arithmetic skills of numbers 1-10, the sight words, and five geometric shapes.

Observation procedure

Each child’s behavior in the classroom was observed using the observation form to record the behavior occurrences. I observed each child once a week for 3.5 months. If a child’s specific behavior was observed, I marked “T”, for turn taking, “A”, for appropriate manners, and “M”, for manners. Each observation interval was 5 minutes, for a total of 50 minutes each session. Each child’s behavior was recorded using the interval recording technique.

Survey procedure

Each participating child’s parent was given the survey. I personally handed the survey to them in the Kindergarten when they came to pick up their children. I told them the purpose of the survey and requested their completion. They mailed the completed survey back to me, or handed to me personally. There were a total of four parents who took the survey and returned.

Four kindergarten teachers participated in the survey. Two of them were full-day, and the other two were half-day kindergarten teachers. Of those four teachers, two were

teachers of the participating children, and the other two were teachers at other schools. The purpose of these two additional teachers involved in the survey was to attempt to expand the sample size for the survey.

CHAPTER IV

Results

This chapter presents the results of participating children's performance in learning academics and social skills in both half-day kindergarten and full-day kindergarten programs.

Student Performance

Academic Skills. The academic performance of children in both half-day and full-day kindergarten programs was evaluated by the Kindergarten Readiness Test including identification of alphabetic letters, numerical numbers, geometric shapes, sight words, individual child's name, address, phone number and birthday.

Figure 1 presents the results of children's performance scores in learning alphabets. Their correct responses are demonstrated in both baseline and intervention phases.

Figure 1.

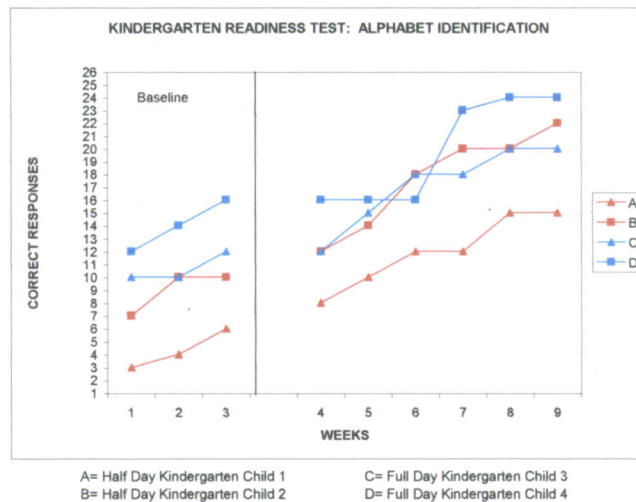


Figure 2 presents the children's performance scores in learning numbers. Their correct responses are demonstrated in both baseline and intervention phases.

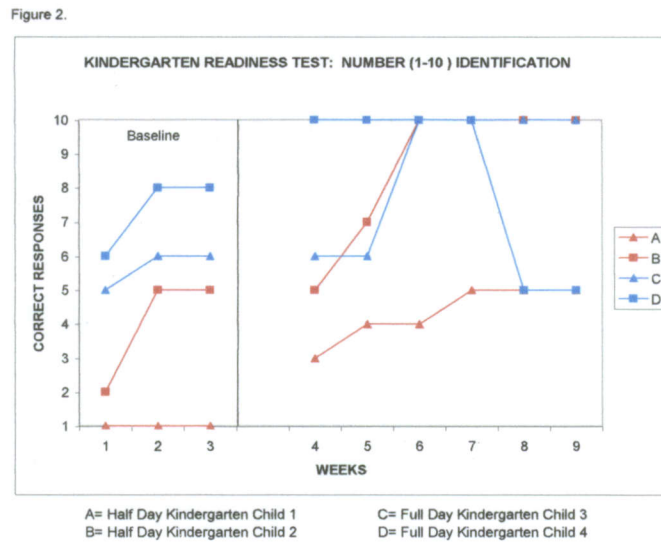


Figure 3 presents the children's performance scores in learning geometric shapes. Their correct responses are demonstrated in both baseline and intervention phases.

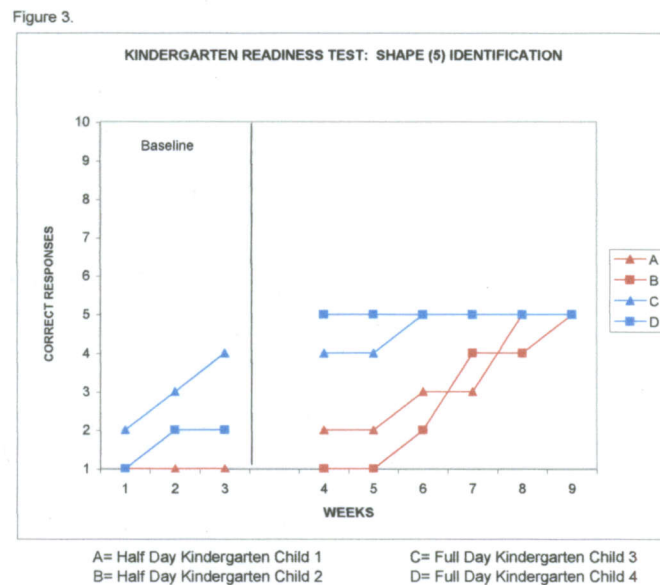


Figure 4 presents the children's performance scores in learning site words. Their correct responses are demonstrated in both baseline and intervention phases.

Figure 4.

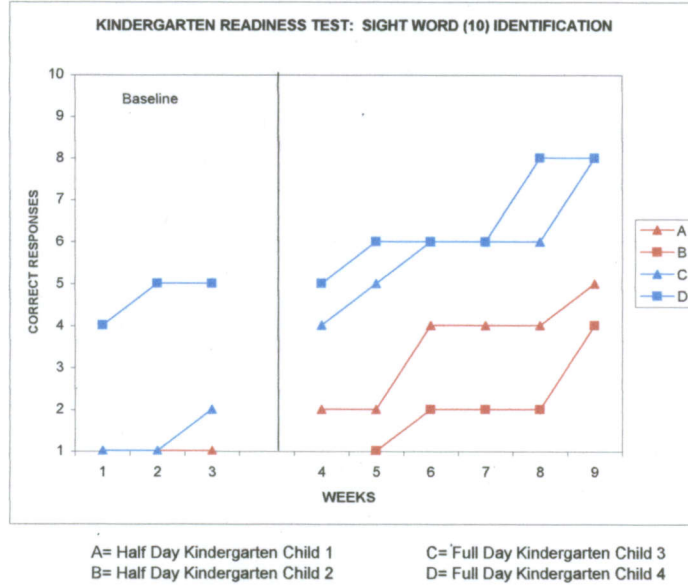
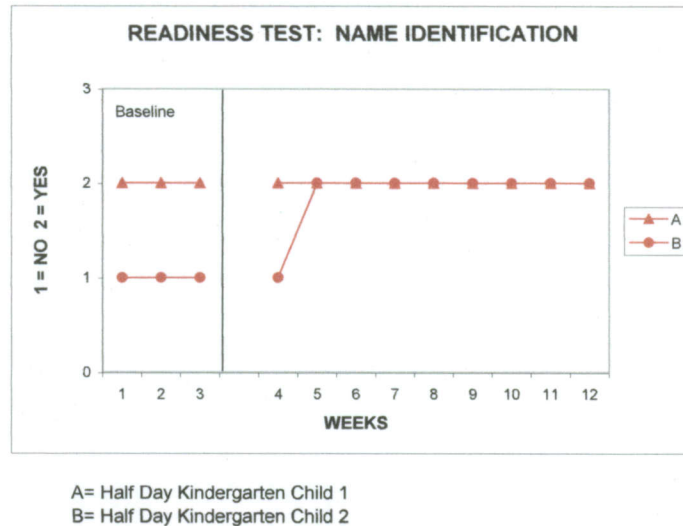
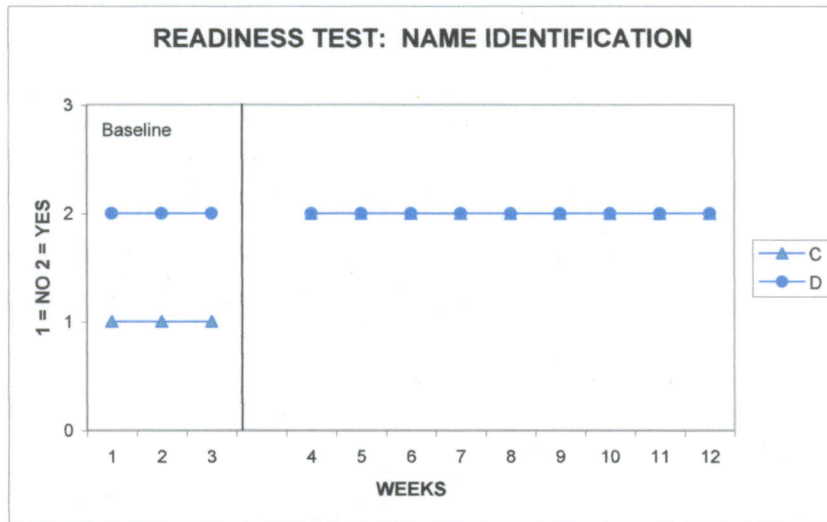


Figure 5 presents the children's performance scores in learning their name. Their correct responses are demonstrated in both baseline and intervention phases.

Figure 5.

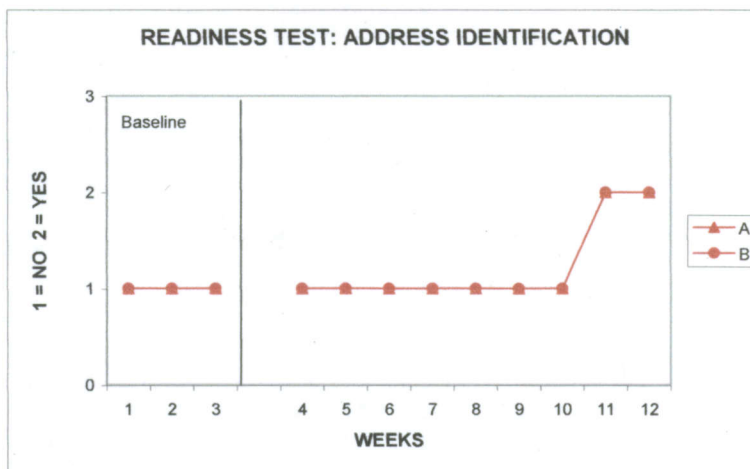




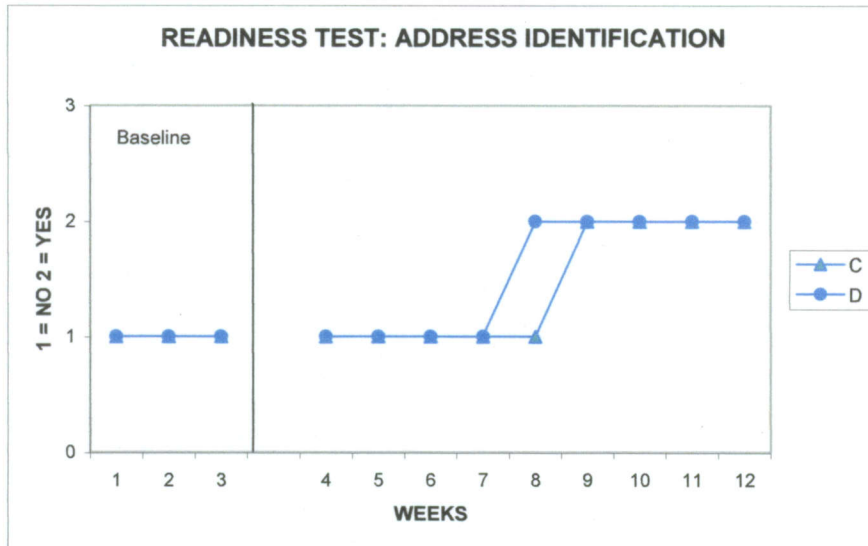
C= Full Day Kindergarten Child 3
 D= Full Day Kindergarten Child 4

Figure 6 presents the children’s performance scores in learning their address. Their correct responses are demonstrated in both baseline and intervention phases.

Figure 6



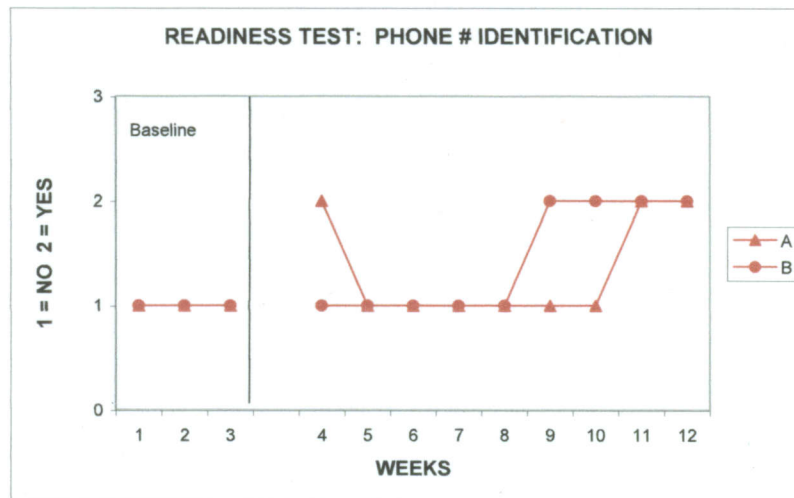
A= Half Day Kindergarten Child 1
 B= Half Day Kindergarten Child 2



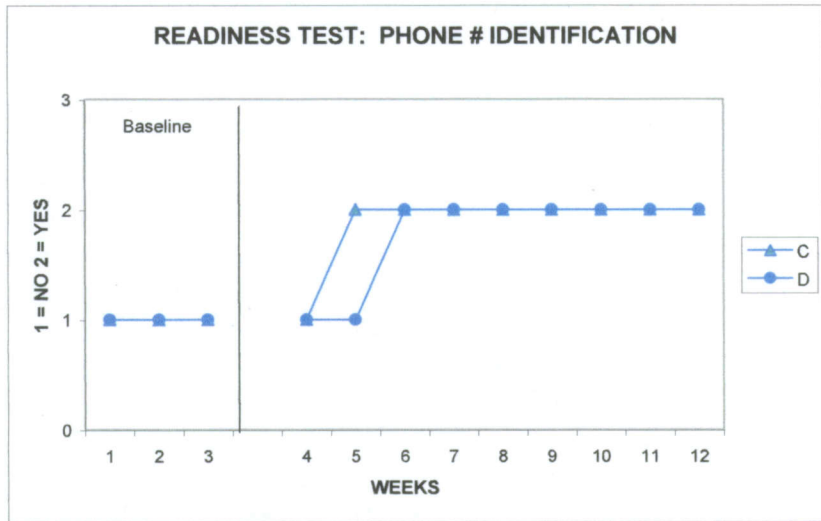
C= Full Day Kindergarten Child 3
 D= Full Day Kindergarten Child 4

Figure 7 presents the children's performance scores in learning their phone number. Their correct responses are demonstrated in both baseline and intervention phases.

Figure 7.



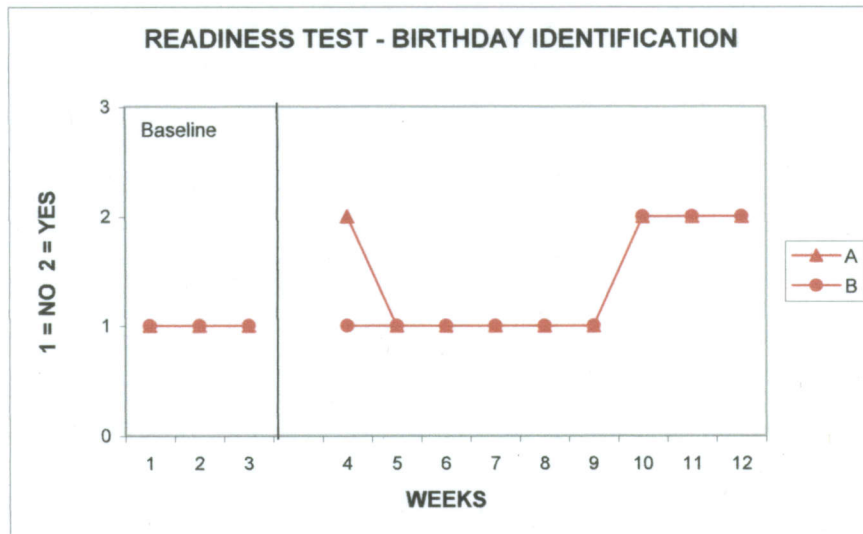
A= Half Day Kindergarten Child 1
 B= Half Day Kindergarten Child 2



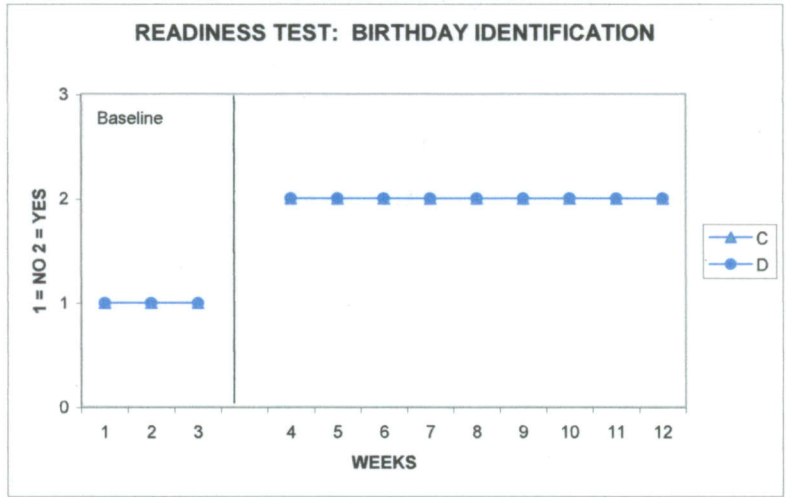
C= Full Day Kindergarten Child 3
 D= Full Day Kindergarten Child 4

Figure 8 presents the children’s performance scores in learning their birthday. Their correct responses are demonstrated in both baseline and intervention phases.

Figure 8



A= Half Day Kindergarten Child 1
 B= Half Day Kindergarten Child 2

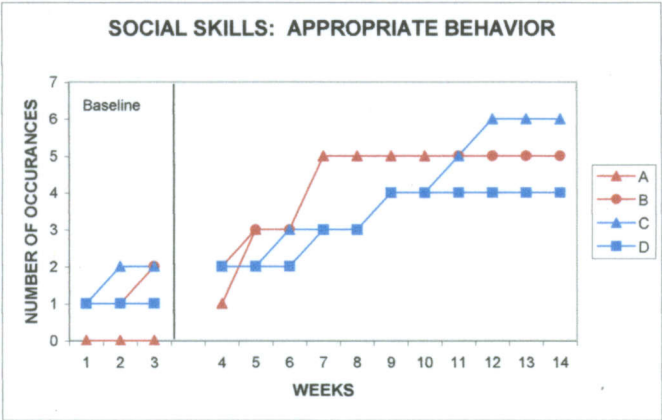


C= Full Day Kindergarten Child 3
 D= Full Day Kindergarten Child 4

Social Skills. The children’s behaviors were observed in their classrooms. The behavior occurrences were recorded and presented in both baseline and intervention phases.

Figure 9 presents the appropriate behaviors of children in both half-day and full-day kindergarten programs.

Figure 9.



A= Half Day Kindergarten Child 1 C= Full Day Kindergarten Child 3
 B= Half Day Kindergarten Child 2 D= Full Day Kindergarten Child 4

Figure 10 presents the turn taking behaviors of children in both half-day kindergarten and full-day kindergarten programs.

Figure 10.



A= Half Day Kindergarten Child 1 C= Full Day Kindergarten Child 3
 B= Half Day Kindergarten Child 2 D= Full Day Kindergarten Child 4

Figure 11 presents the children's manners in both half-day and full-day kindergarten programs.

Figure 11.



A= Half Day Kindergarten Child 1 C= Full Day Kindergarten Child 3
 B= Half Day Kindergarten Child 2 D= Full Day Kindergarten Child 4

Teacher Survey

All four participating teachers have been teaching kindergarteners for 18-22 years. Two of them are teaching the half-day program, and the other two are teaching the full-day program. All teachers have taught both programs. When asked in which environment they would like to teach, all teachers preferred teaching in a full-day setting. All of them felt that children enrolled in a full-day program have an academic advantage compared to the half-day students. Three of the four teachers felt that there was not a difference socially between the full-day and half-day students. Only one teacher felt that full-day students had a social advantage. All teachers also felt that a half-day kindergarten program was too short, and they were constantly rushing for completing their lesson plans. When asked if the teachers felt that there was too much downtime in a full-day kindergarten, all of them disagreed.

Parent Survey

Of the four participating parents, three were working mothers, and one was a stay at home mom. Two had children enrolled in a half-day kindergarten program, and the other two had their children in a full-day kindergarten program. Two parents of full-day children preferred the full-day program, and two parents of half-day children preferred the half-day program. All four parents believed that a full-day kindergarten program was an academic benefit, however, two parents reported that a full-day was too long for children at such a young age. All four parents believed that there was not a social advantage for the full-day students. The parents who have children in the half-day program reported that their children were being rushed in the classroom, and often had

class work sent home as homework. The other two who have full-day students indicated that their children had ample time for learning in the classroom with very little downtime.

Chapter V

Discussion

The purpose of the present study was to examine the academic and social skills of children with disabilities enrolled in both half-day and full-day kindergarten programs. The academic skills were measured by the Kindergarten Readiness test, which was issued to both groups of children over a 4.5 month period. The social skills were observed directly in the classroom once a week for a period of 3.5 months. In addition, parent and teacher surveys were issued and evaluated to determine their perspectives on the two kindergarten programs. The results indicate that the full-day kindergarten students tend to have a slight advantage academically over the half-day students, however, socially, both groups appear to have little difference.

The first research question was to examine academic skills of children with disabilities enrolled in a full-day versus a half-day kindergarten program. The results showed that the full-day children had an advantage over the children enrolled in a half-day program. During the baseline, one full-day student could identify 12 out of 26 alphabetic letters and the other full-day student could identify 16; one half-day student could identify 6 and the other could identify 10. Over the 4.5 months of learning, during the intervention phase, their test scores showed that all four students could identify at least 20 out of the 26 letters, however, the trend of progress was accelerated by the full-day students. The results of the number identification showed that the full-day students had an advantage over the half-day students. During the baseline, one full-day student could identify 8 out

of the 10 numbers, and the other could identify 6; one half-day student could identify 5, and the other half-day student could only identify 1. Over the 4.5 months of learning, all full-day students and one half-day student could identify all 10 numbers. The other half-day student could only identify 5 out of the 10 numbers. Even though one half-day student could identify all ten numbers, the trend of progress was accelerated by the full-day students. During the baseline, one full-day student could identify 4 out of the 5 geometric shapes, and the other could identify 2; one half-day student could identify 1, and the other student could not identify any shapes. At the end of the 4.5 months of learning, all students could identify the 5 geometric shapes, however the trend of progress was accelerated by the full-day students. During baseline, one full-day student could identify 5 out of 10 sight words, and the other full-day student could identify 2; one half-day student could identify 1, and the other could not identify any of the words. At the end of 4.5 months, the two full-day students could identify 8, whereas one half-day student could only identify 4, and the other could identify 5. The trend of progress was accelerated by the full-day students. It appears that students enrolled in a full-day kindergarten program have more time in the classroom to learn and practice academic skills during the day. The children learn in the morning and re-learn or practice on the same lesson in the afternoon. The teacher has time to test students' academic skills on the lesson that was taught on the same day.

The second research question was to compare social skills of the half-day children to those of the full-day. During the baseline, both groups of kindergarteners had displayed the similar frequency of appropriate manners during the 50 minute observation period.

During the intervention phase, each student had displayed 5 appropriate manners. During the baseline, all four students displayed the similar frequency of the target behavior of turn taking. By the end of the intervention phase, each child displayed the turn taking behavior 3 or 4 times. During baseline, all four students displayed the similar frequency of appropriate behavior. By the end of the intervention phase, each child displayed the appropriate behavior between 4-6 times. Results showed little difference between the two groups.

The third research question was to compare parental perspectives of their child's academic and social growth in a full-day versus a half-day program. Two parents had their children enrolled in a half-day program, and the other two parents had their children in a full-day program. All four parents believed that children enrolled in a full-day kindergarten program had an academic advantage over children enrolled in a half-day kindergarten program, however, none of the parents felt that children enrolled in a full-day kindergarten program had a social advantage.

The fourth research question was to compare the teachers' perspectives of children's academic and social growth in a full-day program versus a half-day program. Two of the teachers taught in a half-day kindergarten program, and the other two taught in a full-day kindergarten program. Results showed that all teachers believed that children in full-day kindergarten had an academic advantage over children enrolled in a half-day kindergarten program. All teachers believed that full-day kindergarten not only allowed teachers to teach more, but also to reinforce what they taught that morning, and to re-teach in the afternoon. It appears that their response regarding the full-day and half-day program is

consistent with that of the parents. However, results indicate that none of the teachers feel that children enrolled in a full-day kindergarten program have a social advantage over the half-day students. One teacher reported that 3 hours a day for half-day students may not impact a social deprivation. The amount of hours classmates spend together each day isn't as important as the consistency of spending 5 days a week within the class. The teacher indicated that it didn't matter socially if the students were together for 6 hours or for 3 hours, but it was important to be in class everyday to meet classmates. Children become comfortable seeing the same people everyday, the amount of hours of each day is irrelevant.

The findings of the present study seem consistent with Brannon's research (2005) in which it was found that children with disabilities enrolled in a half-day program have a slight disadvantage in academic learning. It is, perhaps, that children in full-day kindergarten spend more time in learning and practicing academic skills in the classroom under the teacher's guidance and supervision, while half-day kindergarteners have only half of the time for learning.

There are some limitations in this study. The first was the length of time involved in testing the students. For more accurate test scores, longer testing time may be needed, especially for young children with disabilities. A longer period of learning may provide more accurate scores of children's performance. Second, the sample size was small. A total of two full-day and two half-day children participated in the study. This small sample might only provide limited results, thus, it would be difficult to generalize the

findings. Third, the observation time could be different in various days and periods, so that data of children's behavior could be more consistent.

Future research on kindergarten programs may consider obtaining a larger sample of participating children, keeping a longer period of study time to record children's academic and social skills and using various measurement and instruments.

In conclusion, full-day kindergarten appears to offer a more relaxed atmosphere for children with disabilities, where the teachers have time for teaching, reinforcing, and re-teaching particular skills during the day. Half-day kindergarten provides shorter time, where the teachers have tight schedules. This may make it difficult for the teacher to complete the day's objective, so that unfinished class assignments would be sent home as homework. However, socially, both groups of students appear to be similar. In the survey, teachers and parents all agreed that full-day kindergarten had an academic advantage, however, none of the parents or teachers felt that the full-day students had a social advantage over the half-day students.

Every child is different, and each child learns at his or her own pace. Full-day kindergarten may be advantageous academically, while, socially, full-day and half-day kindergarten students tend to be similar. Kindergarten is the first step of a child's education. Parents have their options to choose the program that best suits their child.

References

- Addock, E.P., Hess, J.M. & Mitchell, E.R. (1980). A comparison of half-day and full-day kindergarten classes on academic achievement. Maryland State Department of Education, Baltimore Maryland. (ERIC Document Reproductive Service, No. ED 194 205).
- Board of School Trustees (1988). A longitudinal study of the consequences of full-day kindergarten, kindergarten through grade eight. Evansville-Vanderburgh School Corporation, Eansville, IN. (ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. ED 297 857).
- Brannon, D. (2005). Full-day/half-day kindergarten: What parents pick and why. *Education Digest*, 70 (8), 57.
- Brierley, M. (1987). Writing to read and full-day kindergarten evaluation. Columbus Public Schools, OH. Department of Evaluation Services. (ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. ED 289 626).
- Chmelynski, C. (1998). All-day kindergarten on the rise. *Education Digest*, 64 (1), 43.
- Cryan, J., Sheehan, R., Weichel, J., and Bandy-Hedden, I.G. (1992). Success outcomes of full-day kindergarten: More positive behaviors and increases achievement in the years after. *Early Research Quarterly*, 7 (2), 187-203.
- Drew, M., and C. Law. (1990). Making early childhood education work. *Principal*, 69(5), 10-12.
- Elicker, J., & Mathur, S. (1997). What do they do all day? Comprehensive evaluation of a full-day kindergarten. *Early Childhood Research Quarterly*, 12 (4), 459-480.

- Finn J., Pannozzo, G., (2004). Classroom organization & students behavior in kindergarten. *Journal of Educational Research*, 98 (2), 79-92.
- Fromberg, D.P. (1992). Implementing the full-day kindergarten. *Principal*, 71 (5), 26-28.
- Fuscaro, J., A. (1997). The effect of full-day kindergarten on student achievement: A Metaanalysis. *Child Study Journal*, 27 (4), 27-30.
- Giles, M. (1998). The full-day kindergarten advantage. *Parenting*, 12 (9), 23-25.
- Goodwin, J. (1989). An analysis of attendance and achievement for full-day and half-day kindergarten. 1987-1988. Report No. 8911. Philadelphia School District, PA. Office of Research and Evaluation. (ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. ED 308 939).
- Gullo, D.F, Bersani, C.U., Clemens, D.H., & Bayless, K.M. (1986). A comparative study of "all-day," "alternate-day," and "half-day." kindergarten schedules: Effects on achievement and classroom social behaviors. *Journal of Research in Childhood Education*, 1 (4), 87-94.
- Holloway, J H. (2003). When a children aren't ready for kindergarten. *Educational Leadership*, 60 (7), 45-49.
- Hough, D., Bryde, S. (1996). The effects of full-day kindergarten on student's achievements and affects. *American Education Research Association*, N.Y. ED 395 691.
- Housden T., & Kam, R., (1992). Full-day kindergarten. *A summary of the research. Carmichael*, Ca: San Juan.
- Jacobson, L. (2004). Across the nation. *Education Weekly*, 23 (42), 56-59.

- Jacobson, L. (2005). Teachers of kindergarten adapt to full-day. *Education Weekly*, 24 (20), 29-33
- Johnson, E. (1974). An experimental study of the comparison of pupil achievement in the all-day kindergarten and one half-day control group. (ERIC, ED 115 361).
- Karweit, N. (1987). Full or half day kindergarten: does it matter? (*Technical Report No. 11*). Baltimore: Center for research on elementary and middle schools. The John Hopkins University.
- Karweit, N. (1989). "Effective kindergarten programs and practices for students at risk." *Encyclopedia of Educational Research*, 6 (4), 3944-3959.
- Karweit, N. (1992). The kindergarten experience. *Educational Leadership*, 49(6), 82-86.
- Katz, L.G. (1995). Talks with teachers of young children. Norwood, N.J: Ablex. (ED380 232).
- Kemp, C., & Carter, M. (2000). Demonstration of classroom survival skills in kindergarten: A five-year transition study of children with intellectual disabilities. *Educational Psychology*, 20 (4), 393.
- Koopmans, M. (1991). A study of the longitudinal effects of all-day kindergarten attendance on achievement. Newark, NJ: Newark Board of Education. (ED 436 756).
- Lofthouse, R.W. (1994). Developing a tuition-based, full-day kindergarten. *Principal*, 73 (5), 24- 26.
- McConnell, B., Tesch, S. (1986). Effectiveness of kindergarten scheduling. *Educational Leadership*, 44(3), 48.

- Moore, M. (2002). An American's journey to kindergarten's birthplace. *Childhood Education*, 79 (1), 15-20.
- Polito, T. (1995). Frederick Froebel's illumination on kindergarten children's relatedness to nature. *Education Weekly*, 116(2), 48-49.
- Puleo, V.T. (1998). A review & critique of research on full-day kindergarten. *Elementary School Journal*, 88(4), 427-439.
- Rothenberg, D. (1995). Full-day kindergarten programs. (ERIC Clearinghouse on elementary & early childhood education. Urbana, Illinois ED 382410).
- Sergesketter, K., & Gilman, D. (1998). The effect of length of time in kindergarten on reading achievement. Indiana State University. (ERIC Document Reproduction Service. No. ED 324 664).
- Smith, T., Rogers G., Alsalam N., Perie M., Mahoney R., and Martin V. (1994). The condition of education, 1994. Washington, DC: National Center for Educational Statistics. ED 371 491.
- Towers, J.M. (1991). Attitudes towards the all-day everyday kindergarten. *Children Today*, 20(1), 25-28.
- Uguroglu, M., & Nieminen, G. (1986). Wilmette District # 39 kindergarten study. Final Report. (ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. ED 294 681).
- Viadero, D. (2002). Study: Full-day kindergarten boosts gets academic performance. *Education Weekly*, 21 (31), 12-16.
- Viadero, D. (2004). Full-day kindergarten gets boost in study. *Education Weekly*, 23 (25), 33-37.

Winter, M., & Klein, A.E. (1970). Extending the kindergarten day: Does it make a difference in the achievement of educationally advantaged and disadvantaged pupils? Bureau of Elementary and Secondary Education, Washington, DC. (*ERIC Document Reproduction Service* No. ED 087 534).

Appendix A, Figure 1

OBSERVATION CHART

Child's Name

Date:

Program:

Time:

| Intervals= | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 |
|----------------------|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|----|
| Turn Taking | | | | | | | | | | |
| Manners | | | | | | | | | | |
| Appropriate Behavior | | | | | | | | | | |

KEY CODE

turn taking = "T"

appropriate beh. = "A"

manners = "M"

51

*Each Interval =5 minutes
minutes per observation session*

Appendix B: Figure 2

Parent Survey on Full-day versus Half-day Kindergarten

This survey is being administered as part of a graduate course research project at Rowan University. While your participation is voluntary and you are not required to answer any of the questions herein, your cooperation and participation are important to the success of the project and are greatly appreciated. Please know that all information is confidential and will be destroyed once the semester is over.

1. **Is your child presently enrolled in a Full-day or a Half-day kindergarten program?**
A. full B. half
2. **Do you feel that your child is being challenged academically?**
A. Yes B. No
3. **Do you feel that a full-day of kindergarten is too long for 5 and 6 year old children?**
A. Yes B. No
4. **Do you feel that a half-day program is too short of a day?**
A. Yes B. No
5. **Do you feel that your child is learning everything that he/she should be learning?**
A. Yes B. No
6. **Do you feel that your half-day kindergartner is being rushed in the classroom?**
A. Yes B. No
7. **Do you feel that your full-day kindergartner has too much down time in the class?**
A. Yes B. No

8. Do you think your child is socially adapting?

A. Yes

B. Somewhat

B. No

9. What program do you prefer? A. Full

B. Half

10. Are you a stay at home parent? A. Yes

B. No

Thank you very much for your time!

Appendix C: Figure 3

Teacher survey on Full-day versus Half-day Kindergarten

This survey is being administered as part of a graduate course research project at Rowan University. While your participation is voluntary and you are not required to answer any of the questions herein, your cooperation and participation are important to the success of the project and are greatly appreciated. Please understand that all of the information is confidential, and will be destroyed when the semester is over.

1. Do you teach a full-day of Kindergarten or a half-day?

2. How long have you been teaching? _____
3. Have you taught both programs? _____
4. Which program do you prefer? _____
5. Do you feel that children with disabilities enrolled in a full day kindergarten program have a greater benefit academically?

6. Do you feel that children with disabilities in a full-day kindergarten program have a greater benefit socially? _____
7. Do you believe that a full day of kindergarten is too long of a day for young children? _____
8. Do you believe that children in a half-day of kindergarten have a greater benefit academically? _____
9. Do you believe that children in a half-day of kindergarten have a greater benefit socially? _____
10. Do you believe that a half-day of kindergarten is too short of a day for children? _____

11. (Half day only) Do you find yourself rushing to beat the clock? _____

12. (Full-day only) Do you find yourself with too much down time? _____

Rowan University Graduate School of Education

Dear parents,

I am a graduate student from Rowan University. Presently, I am writing my thesis and researching kindergarten students with learning disabilities in full and half-day programs. With your permission, I would like to observe your child in the classroom, and also perform the Kindergarten Readiness Test, over a course of several months. During the program instruction, I will collect data, such as student scores before and after the instruction. The data will be used for evaluating the effectiveness of my instruction and student's progress. I will interpret my results, which will be included in my thesis project. Your child's name and performance will remain anonymous in my project. All of the information regarding your child's results will be confidential, and data will be destroyed when the semester is over. If you permit your child to participate in the study, please kindly sign the permission form. If you have any questions regarding this matter, please contact me. Thank you very much.

Sincerely,

Kathy V. Priest

Child's name: _____ will participate in my thesis project.

Parent signature _____ Date: _____

Child's name: _____ will not participate in my project.

Parent signature: _____ Date: _____

