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A comparison of all-day every day kindergarten to half-day every day kindergarten

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A comparison of all-day every day kindergarten to half-day every day kindergarten

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The foundation for a child's formal education is greatly influenced during kindergarten (Humphrey, 1980). Kindergarten is a very influential and important year, therefore, its' program must meet the needs of today's children and families. Educators have been expanding the kindergarten curriculum to include both formal and informal approaches. In order to learn the most appropriate amount of time for kindergarten instruction, time studies have been conducted. These studies have provided needed information.

**A Comparison of All-Day Every Day Kindergarten to Half-Day
Every Day Kindergarten**

**A Research Paper Submitted to:
Department of Curriculum and Instruction In Partial Fulfillment
for the Degree Master of Arts in Education
University of Northern Iowa**

by

Sue Ellen Richardson

July, 1993

This Research Paper by: Sue Ellen Richardson

**Entitled: A Comparison of All-Day Every Day Kindergarten
to Half-Day Every Day Kindergarten**

**has been approved as meeting the research paper requirement
for the Degree of Master of Arts in Education.**

Charles R. May

July 30, 1993

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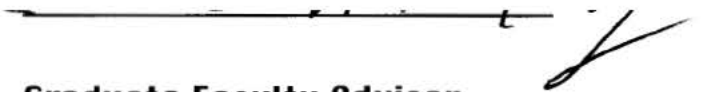


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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

The foundation for a child's formal education is greatly influenced during kindergarten (Humphrey, 1980). Kindergarten is a very influential and important year, therefore, its' program must meet the needs of today's children and families.

Educators have been expanding the kindergarten curriculum to include both formal and informal approaches. In order to learn the most appropriate amount of time for kindergarten instruction, time studies have been conducted. These studies have provided needed information.

The goals of the kindergarten have changed from preparing young children for school experiences to focusing on social, affective, physical, and cognitive areas (Humphrey, 1983). Educational decision-makers have been asking what research has to say about the achievement of pupils in half-day and full-day kindergarten programs. Is the additional expenditure of money educationally cost

effective? Does the lengthened day contribute significantly to the child's total development (Stinard, 1982)?

Children now enrolled in kindergarten will graduate from high school in the twenty-first century. They will need to have attained essential skills necessary for success in a world considerably more complex than that encountered by previous generations (Humphrey, 1990). Children of the 1990's are in need of a more intellectually challenging curriculum (Herman, 1984; Naron, 1981). The focus has shifted from social to social and academics, with the kindergarten as an integral part of the elementary school's curriculum (Humphrey, 1980).

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to present findings relative to the benefits and effectiveness of total learning in the full-day kindergarten program as compared to the traditional half-day kindergarten program. This study will review and summarize the effects of different kinds of scheduling on kindergarten children. In order to meet the purposes of this paper, the writer will:

1. Give an overview of the history of kindergarten to understand better the programs of today.

2. Review how recent research defines and evaluates all-day every day kindergarten and half-day every day kindergarten.

3. Discuss the similarities and differences of all-day every day kindergarten and half-day every day kindergarten on academic performance.

Need for the Study

In educational history, the kindergarten began as a full day program. In the 1950's a space and money crisis caused most school districts to favor half day programs.

This worked well with the premise that most kindergarten age pupils were not mature enough to handle a full day program (May, 1989). The effective schools movement has urged that more time be given to the basics and that more attention be given to individualized instruction.

There has been much written about the advantages and disadvantages of full-day and half-day programs. This paper will analyze that information and will assist school districts in decisions concerning a kindergarten program

which is suitable for all persons associated with the kindergarten.

Limitations of the Study

There were limited studies about some topics concerning kindergarten programs. Little research has been done to draw conclusions about socioemotional development relating to kindergarten scheduling. No studies were located in which the two schedules were directly compared. This investigator's efforts in researching this topic were also limited by not having easy access to a university library for an extensive search of literature.

Definitions

The terms listed below will be defined in the following way:

All-day every day kindergarten: (ADED)

A kindergarten class that meets for a full school day from approximately 8:30 a.m. to 2:30 p.m. Monday through Friday (Humphrey, 1980).

Half-day every day kindergarten: (HDED)

A kindergarten class that meets for 2 1/2 hours in the morning or in the afternoon Monday through Friday. Approximate meeting times would be from 8:30 a.m. to 11:00 a.m. or from 12:00 p.m. to 2:30 p.m. (Humphrey, 1980).

National Association for the Education of Young Children:

(NAEYC). The National Association for the Education of Young Children is a membership supported organization of people committed to fostering the growth and development of children from birth through age eight. Membership is open to all who share a desire to serve and act on behalf of the needs and rights of young children.

Developmental appropriateness:

The concept has two dimensions: age appropriateness and individual appropriateness. When defining age appropriateness, human development research indicates that there are universal, predictable sequences of growth and change that occur in children during the first 9 years of life. These predictable changes occur in all domains of development—physical, emotional, social, and cognitive. Knowledge of typical development of children within the age span served by the program provides a framework

from which teachers prepare the learning environment and plan appropriate experiences. When defining individual appropriateness each child is a unique person with an individual pattern and timing of growth, as well as individual personality, learning style, and family background. Both the curriculum and adult's interactions with children should be responsive to individual differences. Learning in young children is the result of interaction between the child's thoughts and experiences with materials, ideas, and people. These experiences should match the child's developing abilities, while also challenging the child's understanding and interest (Bredekamp, 1987).

CHAPTER II
REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE
History

The beginning of today's American kindergarten can be traced to the European reform movement in the nineteenth century. Johann Heinrich Pestalozzi (1746-1827) was a Swiss educator who believed education should develop a child morally, physically, and intellectually. He felt that children learned best by using their own senses and by discovering things for themselves. His methods and theories were so successful that educators from all parts of the world came to study with him (Saylor, 1980).

Friedrich Froebel (1782-1852), a German educator and philosopher, was likewise influenced by the thinking of Pestalozzi. Froebel was credited with developing the kindergarten. He called the kindergarten, or children's garden, by that name because he believed that children should be nurtured, as plants in a garden are nurtured. He saw this age child as being different, needing someone to cater to their individual needs (McEachern, 1989).

Mrs. Carl Schurz, a pupil of Froebel, started the first kindergarten in the United States in 1856 at Watertown,

Wisconsin (Brodinsky, 1979). Mrs. Schurz, with strong feelings about the importance of a kindergarten experience for young children, conducted this private German-speaking kindergarten in her own home. The first private English-speaking kindergarten was founded in Boston, Massachusetts by Miss Elizabeth Peabody in 1860. As the kindergarten movement began to develop and expand, St. Louis, Missouri became the first American city to offer public kindergarten to young children (Saylor, 1980). After this, the momentum continued in establishing public kindergartens. Kindergartens began as all-day programs of education for five-year olds (Gorton, 1969).

More attention to the needs of young children began after the depression of the 1930's and the second world war. During the war, federal programs were set up for the care of children whose mothers were employed in war-production plants. It was in those years that the public, in general and parents in particular, gained new insights into the needs of young children and more adults became actively aware of the importance of early childhood education (Shapiro, 1983).

The half day program developed in response to the need to accommodate larger numbers of children and to reduce costs (Gorton, 1969). It appears that World War II

influenced a cut-back from the total birth rate, but there was also a shortage of classroom space. Men and women were serving their country, which resulted in a shortage of teachers.

In the 1960's and 1970's the all day kindergarten reappeared. The U.S. Department of Health, Education, and Welfare reported that in the 1969-70 school year 13.8 % of children enrolled in kindergarten were attending full-day.

Research in the early development of young children has increased. The number of children enrolled in day care centers and kindergartens has tripled since the 1960's (Fromberg, 1992). These changes in society and the desire to include formal and informal learning experiences for young children stimulated the growth of All-Day Every Day (ADED) Kindergarten as an alternative to the traditional Half-Day Every Day (HDDED) Kindergarten. Factors that caused this interest included: In more families, both parents were working full time; Head Start students were already acclimated to a full-day format; a national trend evolved toward full-day kindergarten sessions in public and private schools; five-year-olds entering school were better prepared as a result of many hours of television exposure; additional classroom space was made available by added enrollment, and most important, there was a

desire to prepare better children for post kindergarten school experiences (Humphrey, 1980).

Comparative Literature Studies

Extensive literature can be found relating to the benefits and merits of lengthening the school day for the kindergarten child. Actual research comparing the achievement of ADED kindergarten students to HDED kindergarten students is also available, but not in abundance. Literature discussing the reasons for, justification of, and similarities and differences in the kindergarten day have been explored. Therefore, for the purpose of this study the literature and research will be reviewed under four headings: (a) reports on all-day everyday kindergarten, (b) reports on half-day every day kindergarten, (c) current aspects of the length of the school day on academic performance, and (d) current findings, their similarities and differences concerning all-day or half-day kindergarten programs.

Reports on All-Day Every Day Kindergarten

The kindergarten year should be a happy experience during which a child develops a positive self-image and a respect for others. The all-day kindergarten provides time for the variety of educational activities necessary to meet the different academic, social, emotional, and physical needs of each child. The pace of an all-day kindergarten program is a more comfortable and productive one for children and teachers.

Kindergarten teachers have cited the following advantages for all-day kindergarten classes:

- 1. More time to develop stronger social relationships with other children.**
- 2. Longer blocks of uninterrupted time for learning experiences.**
- 3. More time to diagnose children's interests and needs.**
- 4. More time for teaching readiness skills in language arts, reading, and mathematics.**
- 5. More time for individualization and small group instruction.**
- 6. More time for students who need additional help.**

Kindergarten teachers appear overwhelmingly to prefer an all-day program because it becomes physically and mentally exhausting to meet the needs and interests of two groups of children in one day. To a school board and superintendent, cost is a critical consideration.

Transportation costs are reduced since children are not transported mid-day and can ride regularly scheduled school buses (Helmich, 1985).

Administrators have cited these advantages:

1. Principals have stated that the all-day kindergarten allows teachers time to undertake more creative and enriching experiences such as science, cooking, art, music, physical education, dramatics, and field trips.

2. Kindergarten teachers use lunch periods to stress nutrition, manners, and good eating habits and to involve children in a social family setting.

3. With all day kindergarten, children can participate in assemblies and other cultural programs scheduled for the school.

4. Administrators also cite some financial advantages: savings in bus transportation, less hiring of crossing guards, and a school system would receive more state aid with all-day students.

5. With declining enrollments and empty classrooms, an all-day kindergarten can raise a school's enrollment, can occupy empty classrooms, and possibly keep a popular neighborhood school open after it has been scheduled to be closed.

Parents think the ADED class does provide a more structured and well-balanced day program for children according to Herman (1984), other early childhood experts, school social workers, and psychologists now think that most five-year-olds are ready for an all-day kindergarten program.

A three-year study involving children assigned randomly to either ADED or a HDED program, (Mouw, 1976), found no academic differences in the two groups at the end of the first grade. Mouw further concluded that all-day kindergartens could not be recommended solely on the basis of academic considerations.

A study conducted by the Cincinnati Public Schools (1971) comparing children in all-day and half-day kindergarten found that children in all-day kindergartens had significantly higher reading scores by the end of their kindergarten year. This study concluded that all day kindergarten does produce substantial academic benefits.

A similar finding was reported by Barbato (1980); In an article, Barbato reported that the flow of the kindergarten curriculum benefited from the lengthened school day.

In a pilot study conducted in Evansville, Indiana, entitled A Study of the Effectiveness of Full-Day Kindergarten (Humphrey, 1980), results showed full-day kindergarten children received higher scores on the California Achievement Tests and on the Boehm Tests of Basic Concepts. In addition, when full-day kindergarten students were tested in first grade, they scored significantly higher on the Gates-MacGinite Reading Tests than children who attended half-day kindergarten.

A study by Winter and Klein (1970) found that signs of fatigue, frustration, or waning interest in school simply did not appear in pupils attending an all-day program. In fact, no research studies were found that reported the half-day programs were more beneficial than full-day programs (Helmich, 1985). This finding challenges the position that children cannot adapt to a program longer than a half-day, that they will become so fatigued that achievement will decline. An evaluation of a full-day kindergarten program in New York City found inconclusive results concerning the

advantages of the lengthened day for pupils, except for the increased degree of parent participation.

A review of ADED research does reveal a lack of consensus about the advantages of the full-day kindergarten for pupils (Hatcher and Schmidt, 1980). An argument often used to oppose all-day kindergarten is the parent's alleged fear that the school will replace the home.

Two studies by Winter and Klein (1970) and Alper and Wright (1979) also found that parents prefer all-day over half-day kindergarten for reasons of convenience; these reasons include: easier arrangements for children's transportation, baby-sitting, and parents' daily routine being consistent.

In reports of studies by Stinard (1982), results favored all-day, everyday kindergarten. Stinard found that in no instance did the half-day, everyday students score significantly higher than the full-day, everyday students. In fact, in eighty-five per cent of the thirty-three cases studied, the full-day, everyday students performed significantly higher in achievement than children in the half-day schedule (Stinard, 1982).

Peskin (1987) pointed out that although research supports a full-day kindergarten program, such programs have not been in existence long enough to provide

sufficient empirical or longitudinal results. Overall those who implement extended-day programs appear to share the overriding belief that more intensive diagnostic procedures, longer periods of instructional time, and a more diverse academic curriculum are essential to ensuring future school achievement (Herman,1984; Naron,1981; Oelerich, 1979). The research appears to indicate that more all-day kindergartens may help to maximize the growth and development of each child and give them a head-start for first grade.

Reports on Half-Day Every Day Kindergarten

Many educators still prefer half-day, every day kindergarten. They argue that a half-day program can provide high quality educational and social experience for young children while orienting them adequately to school. (Eric/EECE Newsletter, 1985). Committee members in a New Jersey school argued "more is not necessarily better" (Small,1989).

Specifically, half-day programs are viewed as providing continuity and systematic experience with less probability of stress than full-day programs. Proponents

of the half-day approach believe that, given the 5-year-olds' attention span, level of interest, and home ties, a half day offers ample time in school and allows more time for the young child to play and interact with adults and other children in less-structured home or child care settings (Finkelstein, 1983).

Peskin (1987) has reported that the majority of the half-day teachers are concerned with academic pressure of a full-day program. Some students leave school tired. At an early age, too much school too soon can have a negative effect. Students need a half-day as a transition time from home to school. There also is more pressure for the students to learn above their abilities. Teachers agree that half-day programs offer students the quality time that can be the foundation of positive attitudes toward education (Smith,1990). Children are being asked to cope with longer periods of formal academic instruction with which they may not be developmentally equipped to handle (Olson and Zigler, 1989).

Parents who are home during the day often resent the long, daily separations from their child. Studies have shown that children at this age gain marked intellectual and social advantages from the home environment and

interactions with their parents, so that more hours spent at home clearly do not leave children at a disadvantage.

Evidence indicates, that the full-day curriculum tends to resemble the half-day curriculum, simply extending the same activities and instructions over longer periods of time (Winter and Klein, 1970). One fairly comprehensive study did find a slightly broader range of academic subject matter but it also found that a large amount of time was spent on recess (Finkelstein, 1983). Of the many school districts that adopted all-day schedules, only two report minimal parent involvement (Alper and Wright, 1979; Winter and Klein, 1970). Given the number of families with two working parents, the practicality of involving parents in the ongoing activities of the school is formidable. It was suggested that all-day kindergarten might actually aggravate the problem of latchkey children. Working parents are forced into making other arrangements when their small children are in a half-day program, but if they are in school until almost three o'clock, parents sometimes encourage older sibling's to take over after school (Small, 1985). Finally, although 78% of the children in full-day programs reported that they liked to come to school, this represented fewer children than the 85% of children in half-day programs who reported that they liked to come to

school. This difference was statistically significant (Helmich, 1985).

Three of eight studies showed no differences between full-day and half-day groups on measures of non-cognitive skills. One study suggests that at least in one regard a half-day schedule may prove more beneficial than full-day. Students who had attended kindergarten half-days exhibited a better attitude toward reading in grades one through three than did those who had attended full days.

Length of the School Day on Academic Performance

Historically, kindergarten was a full-day program operating in cities and rural areas. The changes to a shortened day occurred because of World War II, larger numbers of children, and because of the popularity of the kindergarten (Oelerich, 1984). Empirical studies have evaluated the effects of time on kindergarten achievement. In order to make informed decisions about increased length of day for kindergarten students, its relationship to academic achievement must be considered.

A study by Sergesketter and Gilman (1989) tested students at the end of first grade on a standardized

reading test. They were comparing students who attended all-day kindergarten with those who attended half-day. The results showed no statistically significant difference in reading scores between ADED and HDED students. Even the National Association for the Education of Young Children, which originally endorsed the concept of an all-day kindergarten, has recently made the point that "quality is not determined by the length of the program day" (NAEYC, 1987, p. 47). In other words, children's school performance, intellectual development, and quality of life will not improve simply because they spend longer hours every day in a classroom.

According to a study by Gorton, (1969) full-day kindergarten is needed to provide time for more well-developed programs in language development, science, mathematics, social science, music and creative physical movement. Many of these are included in the half-day programs, but time limitations make them ineffective.

This literature review suggests that length of day may prove to be an imperfect estimate of kindergarten practices. Overall, much remains to be done to demonstrate the long-term effectiveness of a longer school day. No assessment, for example, has been made of

the effect of the longer school day on the child's underlying intellectual competence (e.g., IQ). (Olsen and Zigler,1989).

A major finding of a study by Barbara McConnell (1989) compared achievement differences between children in full and half-day kindergarten programs. The results showed that children enrolled in full time programs, scored statistically higher than those in half-day programs on the Math Concepts Application Test portion of the California Achievement Tests. Half-day students scored higher on the Comprehension Test. There were no significant differences on the other four measures.

According to Smith,1990, while both full-day and half-day kindergarten schedules have advantages and disadvantages, either schedule can be a positive one for young children as long as the curriculum is developmentally appropriate. There is no guarantee that the longer day would be a better learning experience for the students.

Gullo (1984) compared ADED and HDED schedules. His findings indicated that there was no difference in the student performance between the two schedules. An evaluation update by the Wichita Public Schools found that time alone does not make the difference in a successful extended day program. The difference appears to be time plus a "quality" program (May,1989).

A research study by Donofrio (1989) investigated the effects of the all-day, every day kindergarten program on student developmental gains in language, auditory, and visual skills. Conclusions drawn indicate that the all-day experimental kindergarten program did make a significant difference in students' developmental gains in expressive language and auditory skill acquisition. However, there are many objectives of kindergarten programs that need to be studied before a determination can be made if the length of the kindergarten day has an effect on pupil achievement. It appears that all-day kindergarten attendance only has a lasting effect if elementary schools provide the opportunity for children to build on their acquired strengths (Koopmans,1991).

Similarities and Differences of All-Day Every Day Kindergarten and Half-Day Every Day Kindergarten

Similarities of young children regardless of the length of the school day, are students who are eager to know and to learn. Children are ready for school, but not for academic pressure. Programs must be based on the

children's need for mental, physical, and social activity (Seefeldt,1985).

If kindergarten is to be a valuable experience, full-day or half-day, the curriculum must accommodate different rates of growth and development. The central element of a good program for kindergarten whether ADED or HDED is the teacher, and what he or she believes (Balaban,1990).

A similarity for schools is that they need to change with the needs of the people, and even without changing the hours there is some dissatisfaction with the current programs. Many parents of both programs felt that two and a half hours in half-day kindergarten was a step back for children. Teachers were also giving no support to shortened programs because it left little time in the curriculum to be creative (Small,1985).

A study by Humphrey (1983) showed that there were no apparent differences in the social abilities of children in the two programs. In a questionnaire sent home to parents, full-day and half-day kindergarten parents responded the same with eighty-two per cent saying their child had learned a great deal (Humphrey, 1980). In the same study by Humphrey, there was no significant difference between the attendance patterns of ADED and

HDED kindergarten students. However, half-day students tended to have more absences than full-day students around the holidays.

Results in Sergesketter and Gilman's study showed there was no significant difference in reading scores between full-day kindergarten students and half-day kindergarten students (1988 p. 3). A major difference found in studies was the amount of time spent on structural learning in half-day programs compared with more time to do things with their hands in an all-day program. In the full-day program there was more time for elaboration as each skill was developed. Another difference was with mothers working full time and also employing full-time sitters; they want their kids home as much as possible. And some who stay at home are delighted to send the child to all-day classes (Leslie and Wingert, 1989 p. 62).

Humphrey (1983) found that children in the full-day kindergarten program were more excited about coming to school than those in a half-day program. Children in an **AD**ED program, compared to children attending **HD**ED in Humphrey's study of 1980, have higher report card (academic and conduct) marks, a lower rate of being

retained in a grade, and higher standardized test achievement scores.

In a parent questionnaire pertaining to a child's cognitive, psychomotor, affective, and linguistic growth, a larger number of parents of full-day students indicated that their child had attained a higher level of achievement than half-day parents did. Ninety-two per cent, an overwhelming majority of the full-day parents, indicated they would prefer the full-day kindergarten experience for their child (Humphrey, 1980). In comparison to half-day kindergarten, the children in the all-day kindergarten have more time for the development of the whole child and will be involved in activities that might increase language and reading development and enhance those skills needed for first grade (McEachern, 1989).

A closer examination of full-day and half-day kindergarten programs in a pilot study in Texas (Hatcher and Schmidt, 1980) compared kindergarten pupils on the Boehm Test of Basic Concepts and the Metropolitan Readiness Test. No significant differences were found between pupils enrolled in half-day or full-day kindergarten programs.

CHAPTER III

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

Summary of Findings

The purposes of this study were to compare full-day kindergarten to the traditional half-day program. A history of the kindergarten was included to compare the changes to the present day programs. Definitions and evaluations of all-day every day and half-day every day kindergarten were reviewed. Similarities and differences of the two programs on academic performance were discussed. The issue of which kindergarten program for young children is the most appropriate is a perplexing one. Research comparing full-and half-day programs generally finds positive effects of full-day programs on end-of-year measures of reading readiness, language, and other objectives. However, the few studies that have examined maintenance of full-day kindergarten effects have failed to find evidence of maintenance even at the end of first grade.

For the half-day everyday, versus full-day everyday research, too little has been done in socioemotional

development to draw conclusions. In academic achievement, a large majority (85 percent) of the children in ADED performed significantly higher than children in a HDED schedule. Most important of all the program chosen needs to fit the child. While both full-day kindergarten and half-day kindergarten schedules have advantages and disadvantages, either schedule can be a positive one as long as there are quality teachers and the curriculum is developmentally appropriate. The length of the school day is only one dimension of the kindergarten experience. A good policy would be an optional full-or-half-day program if there is an initial resistance to change.

It appears from many of the studies that an all-day kindergarten program has benefits. Studies should be done to assess further the long-term effects of an all-day kindergarten program and to determine whether the positive showing of an extended day is attributed to time alone. More research is needed to investigate which kinds of students do best in certain types of schedules. The biggest payoff regardless of the length of day selected will be due to the creative and stimulating nature of the educational environment that is created to serve as a basis for future school success.

Conclusions

The following conclusions were drawn from this study:

1. Changes in society led to all-day every day kindergarten: both parents working full time, five year olds more prepared for school due to students preschool attendance, and many hours of television exposure.

2. There are no academic advantages after first grade in an all-day every day kindergarten compared to a half-day program.

3. More research needs to be done directly comparing the two schedules: half-day every day versus all-day every day.

4. The quality of a program is not determined by the length of the program day.

5. Either schedule can be a positive one for young children as long as the curriculum is developmentally appropriate.

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