

Canyons School District has been grateful for the state prioritizing full-day kindergarten to our economically disadvantage students and we too would like to expand the opportunity for all of our students regardless of geographic location or school. By offering kindergarten as a stable funding source, such as a full WPU, we could provide equitable access to full day kindergarten to all kindergarten age students, with a licensed classroom teacher.

Currently in Canyons School District we are offering Supplemental Hours of Instruction, which is a tuition based full-day kindergarten program. The tuition is to cover the licensed classroom teacher as a FTE.

As an LEA we offer this program as an option to our community, as well as our ½ day program. As a district we have been offering these two options for 6 years, and while both offer the same content and standards, our supplemental hours of instruction allows for extension, depth and more practice with content and standards.

We have seen the benefits of offering this program, such as the time for deep learning and then more practice of the kindergarten standards. Our data shows that kindergarten students who received supplemental hours of instruction had significantly higher mean scores on PSF, as well as a higher percentage at or above benchmark for reading measures. In Math Acadience Measures, kindergarten students who received supplemental hours of Instruction also had significantly higher mean scores on BQD and NNF. And overall, a higher percentage at or above benchmark for math measures. Furthermore, an analyses of at-risk student subgroups suggests that these students may experience benefits from Supplemental Hours of Kindergarten Instruction that maintain into 1st Grade when compared to their peers attending traditional Kindergarten, particularly for Multilingual Learners.

As a district we have watched kindergarten supplemental hours of instruction participation grow from 76 students to 433 students, and from 4 schools offering the supplemental hours of instruction to 18 schools. This evidence shows that there is community interest, support and need for a full day model option. As a district we see the need for full day kindergarten to be a funded source, so that all students can be impacted with higher percentages on end of year benchmarking. Additionally, the full day model will also support the state's Early Learning initiative with LETRS, as students will reap the benefits of teachers teaching the foundation skills in a recommended allocation of time.

Leigh Ann A. Fisher  
Instructional Supports Department  
Canyons School District  
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[Schedule a coaching check-in with Leigh Ann](#)



September 2, 2021

Dear Sir or Madame,

Cache County School District has been able to participate in the all-day kindergarten (ADK) program due to state grant funding since Fall of 2017. We have implemented some full-day classes with great success! Even in our first year, we were able to see a significant improvement with our most at-risk students. For example, on the state Kindergarten assessment (KEEP), our ADK students moved from 71% at Level 1 (high risk) to just 6% from beginning to end of year. Seeing our most at-risk students make such significant gains has been exciting, and we have been grateful to be able to participate in subsequent years with equally successful gains. Our only heartache comes in seeing students who do not have the opportunity to participate in this program.

Students who are able to participate in our ADK program are able to participate in two small reading groups; doubling their intervention time! The students in ADK not only receive strong Tier I instruction, but are able to have additional time and practice to master new concepts in both language arts and math. One of the greatest benefits has been with our second language learners; being immersed in rich language all day has greatly improved their communication and comprehension skills.

As a former half-day kindergarten teacher, it sometimes felt like I was required to feed students information as fast as I could without giving them sufficient time to chew. I relied on parent support to help meet the demands of the Core standards since a half-day does not provide sufficient time to do so. With varying levels of parental capacity and support throughout our district, we see an even greater need to provide students more instructional time. ADK provides students additional time to process new information and practice skills. This leads to greater mastery!

Although funding has increased due to recent legislation, we have only been able to add an ADK session to half of our elementary schools (and only one ADK session per school). It has become well-known through participating schools that only the lowest scoring students qualify for all-day. Unfortunately, we have heard of some parents who neglect practicing kindergarten preparation skills with their children so they will score lower on testing to qualify. Although we know the purpose of ADK is not babysitting, the majority of parents desire their

child to participate in our program, and we agree that we can provide a richer and better educational experience than a babysitter or daycare can provide.

My dream for our district is to increase the number of students participating in ADK. Providing students with a strong kindergarten experience will lay the foundation for future success. Thank you for considering an investment in Utah students. Please feel free to contact me for further information or for a school visit to see our ADK program in action.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "M. LaMont". The letters are cursive and fluid, with a large, stylized 'M' and 'L'.

Melinda LaMont  
melinda.lamont@ccsdut.org  
Cache County School District  
Kindergarten Specialist (OEK/ADK)  
(435)752-3925 ext. 2774



September 21, 2021

Utah State Board of Education  
250 East 500 South  
Salt Lake City, UT 84111

Dear Utah State Board Members,

Thank you for your leadership and support of schools and students throughout our state. I appreciate the prioritization of early learning as one of the four goals found within the Board's Strategic Plan. As such, I am writing to endorse a funding request for the expansion of full-day kindergarten opportunities throughout the state.

As a superintendent, I have experienced first-hand the benefits associated with previous investments in the expansion of full-day kindergarten. Where funding allocations haven't covered the demand for full day kindergarten, schools have prioritized staffing to provide the teachers necessary to meet the request of parents for full-day kindergarten. Such staffing adjustments have been difficult as they represent trade-offs including the reduction of other programs and in some instances the necessity of having split-grade classrooms for older grades.

The outcomes associated with full-day kindergarten are well documented and I have personally witnessed greater growth (statistically significant) of our students who participate in full-day kindergarten versus the growth of students in half-day kindergarten. Students who start full-day kindergarten are typically "behind" academically and end the year higher as compared to their half-day peers. Expanding the full-day kindergarten option will benefit the entire public educational system for generations to come.

Thanks again for your ongoing commitment to the students of our state. I fully appreciate your role as state board members and express my personal gratitude for your leadership, advocacy, and support of local education agencies in accomplishing the vision we collectively share for the children of Utah.

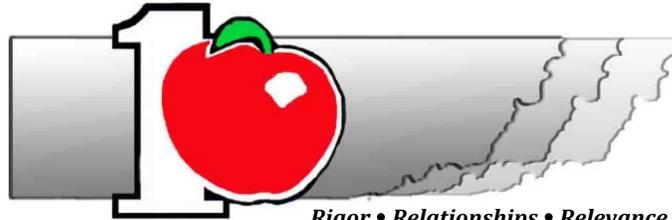
Sincerely,

Rich K. Nye, PhD  
Superintendent  
rknye@graniteschools.org

# Kane School District

## BOARD OF EDUCATION

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**BEN DALTON**  
Superintendent

**CARY A. REESE, CPA**  
Business Manager

September 1, 2021

To Whom It May Concern:

The purpose of this letter is to express support for full-day kindergarten in the state of Utah. We appreciate the current financial support for half-day and Optional Extended-day Kindergarten (OEK) provided by the Utah Legislature, as these programs have given equity to students. As we have tracked students in our district who have participated in OEK, we have found that once they are academically caught up with their peers, they remain on grade level and even outpace their classmates on the end-of-year reading assessments.

We fully support full-day kindergarten for the following reasons:

- Data from the KEEP for full-day kindergarten students show a higher number of students reading on grade level
- Early interventions are four times more cost-effective
- We are seeing the largest kindergarten classes across the state because of the pandemic; timing is perfect
- Provides a coherent continuum for early education as they transition from kindergarten to first grade
- Full-day kindergarten allows for additional instructional time for differentiated target student interventions

Kane School District is unique as we currently have one school offering full-day kindergarten and one school offering half-day classes.

In a typical year, 98 % of our students in the full-day class meet or exceed the end-of-level reading assessments compared to 80% in the half-day courses. Early intervention is the single best use of educational funding provides an “upstream” approach to prevent problems down the road.

Sincerely,

Ben Dalton  
Superintendent, Kane School District

September 14, 2021

To Whom It May Concern:

Please consider this a letter of support for continued and stable funding for full day Kindergarten for all students regardless of socio-economic status, geographic location, district or school. Compulsory attendance for students who turn 5 by September 5 would pay dividends in an effort to ensure our school aged students are gaining access to a core curriculum that they are, without a doubt, developmentally and socially prepared to tackle. The Core Standards for Kindergarten are appropriate to bridge preschool, address Kindergarten readiness skills and preparation for first grade, but it takes an all day, concerted effort; for the Core Standards are written with a full day kindergarten in mind.

While Utah prides itself on a family and children first initiative, not all of our students and families are able to thrive in such an environment. In fact, even families who hold the child and the family at the center of their focus are not always prioritizing the hard skills of academic mastery in that initiative. However, both can be accomplished with full day kindergarten. In Utah education, parents play a vital role in the overall development and stakeholder piece of their child's education and full day kindergarten would not sacrifice that voice or input. Rather, full day kindergarten would allow students to receive access to a full curriculum along with rich parent involvement.

Currently, full day kindergarten is only provided to students at Title I schools who score poorly on beginning of year assessments. While students who need that additional intervention would benefit from more time, all students need full day kindergarten as there is not sufficient time in a half day kindergarten setting to sufficiently address the kindergarten standards with deep learning and transfer. Certainly, if there is no time to adequately address the standards, there is not time to deeply learn and practice those kindergarten skills to mastery thus setting the kindergarten students up for success for learning in future grades.

Our LEA fully endorses full day kindergarten for all students with consistent and reliable funding for all students. With that consideration is the full realization that LEAs need to consider space issues in their LEAs to house all students for all day kindergarten. A challenge we gladly embrace in exchange for full day kindergarten for all students.

Best,

M.B. Hamilton

Melissa B. Hamilton  
Director of Elementary Teaching & Learning



# PROVIDENCE HALL

## CHARTER SCHOOL

Sep 3, 2021

### Letter Requesting Consideration for Funding Full Day Kindergarten

To whom it may concern:

Providence Hall is a K-12 charter school in Herriman, UT. Our school currently services close to 2100 students including 125 kindergarten students each year. Currently our school provides both half day and a full day options for our kindergarten students. Each year we have a huge demand for full day kindergarten. Unfortunately, due to the cost our school can only provide one section. The school, because of this demand and knowing the benefits of a full day program, provides this full day kindergarten option at no charge to our student's families and incurs the cost. This equates to a full .5 FTE for the school.

Our school sees the tremendous benefits the full day kindergarten program provides to our students and their families. Unfortunately, due to the cost limitations, this option can only be available to a small portion of our students.

In looking at those students who are able to participate, the school sees that these students are better adjusted as they enter into 1st grade. Additionally, they are more academically and socially prepared. Half day kindergarten doesn't provide the necessary amount of time needed to work with students in achieving and mastering the necessary skills and standards.

Our school would like to offer the full day option to all our families and students but would not have sufficient funds to do so. Additionally, passing the cost onto families would limit the access and would be inequitable as many students who really need these educational services would not be able to afford them.

Consequently, we are requesting your consideration for fully funding full day kindergarten for all students. We have seen the benefits first hand of those who are able to participate. These educational services will help students tremendously not only in kindergarten but throughout their K-12 educational experience. If you would like more information or have questions please feel free to contact me at [nmarshall@providencehall.com](mailto:nmarshall@providencehall.com) or 801-727-8260 ext 4000

Sincerely,

Nathan Marshall  
Executive Director  
Providence Hall



# SEVIER

## SCHOOL DISTRICT

CADE J. DOUGLAS, PH.D.  
SUPERINTENDENT

MICHAEL P. WILLES  
ASST. SUPERINTENDENT

CHAD W. LLOYD  
BUSINESS ADMINISTRATOR

*"Excellence in teaching and learning"*

September 14, 2021

To Whom It May Concern:

Please accept this letter of support for the Full-Day Kindergarten Business Case. The proposed funding is a critical piece to supporting the academic and social growth of our students. Sevier School District has always been an advocate for early learning interventions. Offering all-day kindergarten to all students will provide the much-needed jump-start for our students as they continue in their education.

Currently, Sevier School District is only able to offer the full-day kindergarten option to a limited number of students identified as at risk based off of low performance on the entry KEEP assessment. We have seen much success and growth from students who qualify to attend all-day kindergarten. Students who qualify for this opportunity are given more time to gain a deeper understanding of the kindergarten state standards. Expanding this opportunity statewide will have a valuable impact on students as they progress in our school systems.

Sevier School District gives full support to the Full-Day Kindergarten Business Case. The funding is a necessary resource in our rural area, as we keep moving toward improving student outcomes and standards mastery.

Respectfully,

Cade Douglas, Ph.D.  
Superintendent

September 15, 2021

To the Utah State Board of Education:

Over the past two years, the Salt Lake City School District has seen an increase in the demand for full-day kindergarten. More of our parents have requested full-day opportunities than we are currently able to provide; we have schools with waiting lists to enroll in full-day kinder programs.

Full-day kindergarten boosts children's cognitive learning, social and emotional development, and creative problem solving. We believe that children must be guaranteed access to high-quality full-day kindergarten in order to meet the learning and career challenges of the 21st century.

A [joint study by CCSSO and ChildTrends](#) found that cognitive, social, behavioral, and health disparities between low-income and higher-income children are evident at nine months and continue to grow throughout early childhood. By the time children reach kindergarten, fewer than 48 percent of low-income children are considered school ready; in comparison, 75 percent of students from non-low-income families begin ready for school.

Full-day kindergarten plays a crucial role in maintaining the gains made in the earliest years of a child's life and ensuring a smooth transition to first grade.

The Salt Lake City School District supports full-day kindergarten programs for all schools and students. We appreciate the efforts of the Utah State Board of Education to move this important conversation forward.

Sincerely,

*Timothy Gadson III*

**Timothy Gadson III, Ph.D.**  
CEO/Superintendent of Schools



September 22, 2021

To Whom It May Concern:

Hello! My name is Lisa Flinders. I am the principal at South Summit Elementary School in Kamas, Utah. We are a small rural district in Summit County. When I became principal, our school had half day Kindergarten classes. The growth and progress of kinder age students, especially those students with yellow and red indicators was not readily apparent. My second year as principal, we piloted a program of having one of the four teachers teach kindergarten all day. The difference in the progress and growth of those students who had access to a full day of instruction compared to those students attending half day was significant. Armed with this data and the research supporting early intervention, I proposed to our local school board that we implement all day kindergarten for every kinder aged student. I visited board members in their homes, reached out to parents, consulted with our Community Site Council, shared teacher testimonials and finally received approval for the upcoming year.

We started full day kindergarten in the fall of 2018. When our Kindergarten students started that fall, their assessments indicated that approximately 65% were on benchmark. By January of 2019, approximately 85% of our kindergarten students were on benchmark.

I am committed to all day kindergarten. I appreciate that even though each year we are scrambling to find funding for our extra teacher that is required for us to offer full day kindergarten, our business administrator works with our school to fund that teacher.

Full day kindergarten is essential. Teachers are able to develop relationships with each student because they have more time with the student. Teachers have more time to teach essential skills and standards. Less time is spent hurrying to the next concept and more time is spent savoring the moment. Students have time to master skills and standards. The social benefits of students having the opportunity to interact with other peers and learn how to regulate their actions and emotions cannot be understated. Our first grade teachers have been so grateful for the change in the kindergarten experience. Because of all day kindergarten, new first graders demonstrate greater retention of skills and concepts taught in kindergarten.

When I make any decision in my school, I ask the question...What is best for students? All day kindergarten definitely has benefited the students in our school family. If you have questions or would like more information, please feel free to contact me.

With kind regard,

Lisa Flinders, Principal  
South Summit Elementary School  
lf@ssummit.org



Utah Association for the Education of Young Children

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# Letter of Support: Expanded access to optional full-day kindergarten

September 2021

## TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN:

This letter is to support the proposal to expand access to optional full-day kindergarten in Utah.

The Utah Association for the Education of Young Children (UAEYC) recognizes that the kindergarten year is a critical time for children's learning. Cognitive shifts that occur between the ages of 5 and 6 allow children to increase personal responsibility and self-directed learning while developing logical thinking. These cognitive developments help kindergarten-aged children engage in learning at a deeper level.

Unfortunately, the half-day kindergarten model often results in practices that are antithetical to optimal learning in the kindergarten year. We have heard from kindergarten teachers who feel like they are unable to implement research-supported Developmentally Appropriate Practices because they feel pressure to use direct instruction strategies to train children to provide the "right answer" on skill-based assessments because they have very limited time with students each day. Unfortunately, direct instruction models tend to reduce the ability of teachers to differentiate learning for children of differing skill and developmental levels, resulting in teaching practices that tend to reinforce and expand achievement gaps rather than engaging with children by using more appropriate, play-based, and individualized learning practices. Having time for children to engage in intentional, [play-based learning in kindergarten](#) increases engagement while helping children meet learning standards. With more time available to provide engaging, exploration-based learning that children can engage in on a more individualized level, teachers will feel less pressure to "just get through the material" and can, instead, implement more appropriate instructional practices for kindergarten-age children.

Another benefit of moving to full-day kindergarten is increased opportunities for outdoor play and gross-motor experiences. Early learning research supports the importance of outdoor play and gross motor learning, not only for physical development but also to help support children's ability to process and connect information across the curriculum. Some part-day kindergarten teachers express frustration that children do not get adequate opportunities to engage in the physical and social learning that occurs with unstructured gross motor play due to perceived

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254 S 600 E • Salt Lake City, UT 84102

An Affiliate of **naeyc**



Utah Association for the Education of Young Children

need to concentrate more traditional academic instruction in the relatively short time available to work with children in part day programs. Full-day kindergarten will provide time for children to engage in more unstructured outdoor play and gross motor learning which are essential to kindergarten children's optimal development.

Finally, we support the benefits that full-day kindergarten will provide to working families. Full-day kindergarten would increase the continuity of care for children who have all available parents in the workforce. Part-day kindergarten is often used as a component of a broader care system for children while parents are at work. The need to arrange multiple care options and transportation between care settings often adds to parents' stress as they navigate multiple care arrangements. Additionally, multiple care transitions across the day often add to children's stress as they navigate different experiences and expectations across environments. Increasing the length of the kindergarten day can help alleviate the strain of multiple care arrangements and transitions for both parents and children.

We recognize that there are potential problems that could arise from extending the kindergarten day. Well-meaning administrators and educators may see the full-day kindergarten model as an opportunity to "push down" curriculum intended for older and more developed students into the kindergarten space. We hope that the opportunity to extend the kindergarten day will also lead to a return to requiring a K-3 teacher certification to ensure that kindergarten teachers have the appropriate training in child development and developmentally appropriate instruction to meet the learning needs of kindergarten children.

In conclusion, we feel that the opportunity to expand access to optional full-day kindergarten offers an important opportunity to strengthen kindergarten teaching and learning while supporting the needs of working families. We, as the UAEYC Governing Board, recognize the need for expanding access to full- day kindergarten in our state and the importance of developmentally appropriate instruction throughout the early childhood years.

Sincerely,

The UAEYC Governing Board

*Katie Ricord, UAEYC Executive Director  
Kathie MacKay, Vice President  
Crystal Knippers, Secretary  
Sharlie Barber, TEACH Advisory Chair  
Cheryl Hone, Accreditation Chair  
Ana Cuenca, Hospitality Chair  
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Melissa Mendez, NAEYC Liaison*

UAEYC.org • assist@uaeyc.org  
254 S 600 E • Salt Lake City, UT 84102

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## FULL-DAY KINDERGARTEN

- WHEREAS, Research shows that full-day kindergarten contributes to school readiness, leads to higher academic achievement, improves student attendance, supports literacy and language development, benefits children socially and emotionally and decreases costs by reducing retention and remediation rates<sup>1</sup>; and
- WHEREAS, In closing the achievement gap between socioeconomic and ethnic groups, research points to early childhood as the effective time for preventing the gap before it gets started<sup>2</sup>; and
- WHEREAS, The costs of funding full-day kindergarten classes are roughly the same as funding full-time instruction in any other class, and anything less than full funding puts the program at risk<sup>3</sup>; and
- WHEREAS, Current use of full-day kindergarten in a limited number of Utah classrooms is showing positive results for students performing below grade level by accelerating learning<sup>4</sup>; now, therefore, be it
- Resolved, That Utah PTA supports the expansion of optional full-day kindergarten programs for students in need of support to achieve minimal learning standards and requests increased funding to support such expansion.

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<sup>1</sup> *Full-Day Kindergarten Expanding learning opportunities*, WestED Policy Brief (April 2005)

<sup>2</sup> *Full-Day Kindergarten Expanding learning opportunities*, WestED Policy Brief (April 2005)

<sup>3</sup> *Full-Day Kindergarten and State Funding 2005*, Journal of the National Association for the Education of Young Children

<sup>4</sup> Full-Day Kindergarten in Salt Lake School Districts, Legislative Session 2006-2007

September 15, 2021

Utah State Board of Education  
PO Box 144200  
Salt Lake City, UT 84114-4200

Dear State Board of Education Members:

As members of United Way of Salt Lake's (UWSL) Board of Directors, we the undersigned are writing to express our support for expanding optional full-day kindergarten to every child. This proposal will provide opportunity, parental choice, and local control. As business and community leaders we are committed to ensuring every child has the best start in school to contribute to their long-term academic success.

The importance of high-quality early learning experiences is well documented and is a critical component of Utah's efforts to improve 3rd grade reading and math proficiency. USBE's own data shows a positive impact on student success for those who attend full-day kindergarten. With low reading and math proficiency rates and extensive disrupted learning over the past year and a half, now is the time to make increased investments in our youngest learners. Providing equitable access to full-day kindergarten will allow parents to choose what is best for their child and family.

We have heard from kindergarten teachers that they often lack the necessary time to ensure quality, deep learning of the state kindergarten standards. By increasing access to full-day kindergarten, teachers will have sufficient time to teach, and students will be able to both learn and practice essential skills. When children leave kindergarten mastering the skills they need to be successful in 1<sup>st</sup> grade, it benefits them, their classmates, and 1<sup>st</sup> grade teachers who can concentrate on teaching students the skills that prepare them for 2<sup>nd</sup> grade and beyond.

Moving optional full-day kindergarten into the weighted pupil unit (WPU) will also provide stable funding for schools and districts so they can better plan and meet the needs of their communities. Scaling up the program over three years will allow time for these Local Education Agencies (LEAs) to work with their communities to assess need and parental choice, find space, and hire high-quality teachers.

Skills build upon skills. By providing equitable access to full-day kindergarten for all students, Utah can better support parents in choosing what is best for their child and LEAs in planning for and addressing the needs of their students, families, and communities.

Sincerely,

Mikelle Moore  
Senior VP, Chief Community Health Officer  
Intermountain Healthcare  
United Way of Salt Lake Board Chair

Bill Crim  
President and CEO  
United Way of Salt Lake

Michael Anglin

Kirk Aubry  
President & Chief Executive Officer  
Savage

Barbara Bagnasacco  
Shareholder  
Parsons Behle & Latimer

Matt Bartol  
General Manager Operations  
Dominion Energy

Mark H. Bouchard  
Community/Education Advocate

Nate Boyer  
President  
The Boyer Company

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Founder/CEO of Packd  
FJM Impact Fund  
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Director, Technical Services  
Williams

Zeke Dumke III  
President  
Western States Management

Nic Dunn  
Director  
Utah Community Builders Foundation

Jorge Fierro  
President & CEO  
The Fierro Group, Inc.

Jay K. Francis  
President & CEO  
South Valley Chamber

Deneiva Knight  
Community Leader

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Vice President/General Manager  
Enterprise Holdings

Scott Ulbrich  
Community Volunteer

Tanya Vea  
Senior Vice President  
Bonneville SLC

Tricia Warnken  
VP  
CHG Healthcare

Wendy Williams  
Vice President Propulsion Systems  
Northrop Grumman

Jenny Wilson  
Mayor  
Salt Lake County



# A Trusted Voice For Kids.



September 14, 2021

To the members of our State Board of Education:

I am proud to submit this letter in support of a three-year expansion plan to ensure sufficient state funding for enough full-day kindergarten programming to meet the needs and desires of Utah families.

**As partners in championing early education, we respectfully request that the State Board endorse the Full-Day Kindergarten Business Case for expanding Optional Extended-Day Kindergarten (OEK) funding in the coming years, toward an eventual transition of kindergarten funding into a full WPU (similar to every other grade in the K-12 system).**

We believe that every Utah family has the right to decide the educational path for their children. Families should be able to enroll their children in full-day kindergarten or half-day kindergarten, depending on their own needs and values. And no child should be compelled by force of law to attend kindergarten.

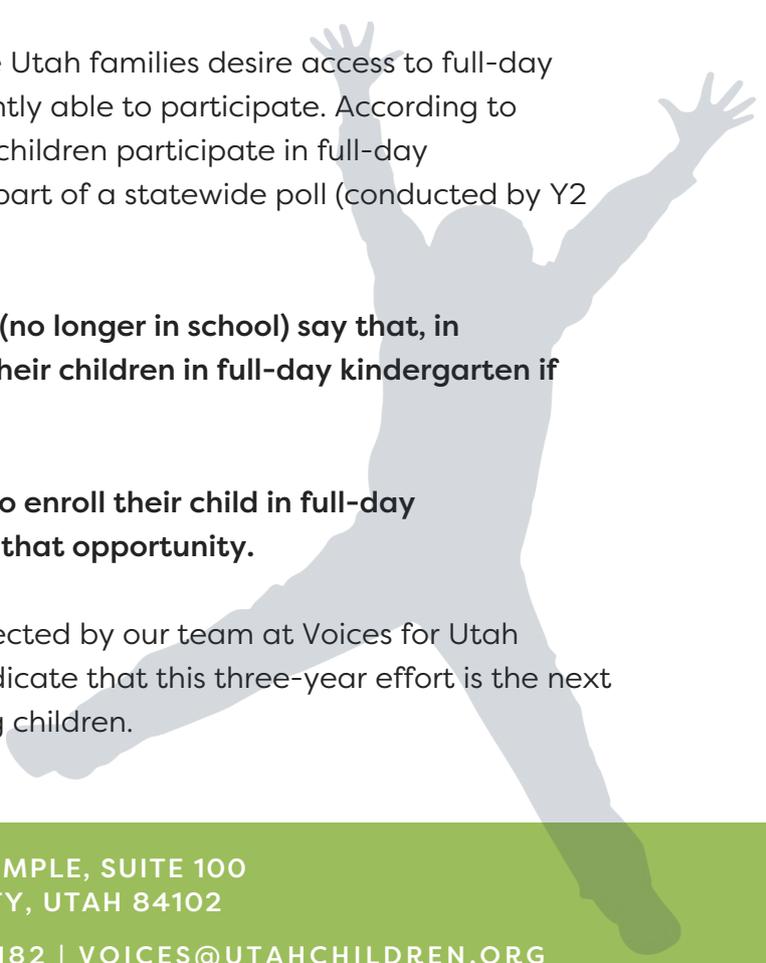
We have discovered, though, that far more Utah families desire access to full-day kindergarten programming than are currently able to participate. According to USBE's own data, only about 29% of Utah children participate in full-day kindergarten. However, when surveyed as part of a statewide poll (conducted by Y2 Analytics this past summer):

- **58% of households with older children (no longer in school) say that, in retrospect, they would have enrolled their children in full-day kindergarten if they had had the opportunity; and**
- **69% say that when given the chance to enroll their child in full-day kindergarten, they take advantage of that opportunity.**

The quantitative and qualitative data collected by our team at Voices for Utah Children, over the past several years, all indicate that this three-year effort is the next right step for Utah families and their young children.

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# A Trusted Voice For Kids.



We have sat with multiple school district leaders in rural, urban and suburban areas of Utah, as they describe the positive results they have observed when children are offered the opportunity to participate in full-day programming. Inspired by their own affirmative data, many districts and charter schools are fighting to expand their full-day kindergarten programs on their own dime, without a reliable source of state funding to do so.

We have talked to parents who have enrolled their kindergartner in a charter school outside their neighborhood, or even moved to a new school district, simply to access a seat in a full-day kindergarten classroom. We have also heard from parents who opted to forgo kindergarten altogether, given the inconvenience of having only one of their children on a half-day schedule.

We have seen the results of the Kindergarten Entry and Exit Profile (KEEP), which shows children in OEK classes making amazing gains in reading and math skills, even though they often start the school year far behind their half-day peers in literacy and numeracy proficiency.

We have listened to excited kindergarten teachers throughout the state describe to us how they became believers in full-day programming, saying things like:

**A child walks into my kindergarten class knowing next to nothing, some can't even hold a pencil. They walk out being able to read. I love that. Once parents start to see how much their kids are learning, they get excited, too. Once they see what their kids are capable of, they get it."**

*- 11-year veteran teacher in Ogden City School District*

**"I have loved the adjustment to full-day kindergarten. The students are a little tired at the beginning of the year, but that is to be expected. The academic growth, the confidence that they then have in first grade, that makes it worth it. I love being able to spend the school day with one group of children, helping them to get used to the "lunchroom scene" with the older kids, watching them become more fluid and confident in their reading."**

*- 15-year veteran teacher in Washington County School District*

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# A Trusted Voice For Kids.



**“You wouldn’t believe the maturation of the students! The children who have been in all-day kindergarten are ready for first grade. It’s academically and emotionally beneficial, it helps them with the transition to first grade.”**

*- 20-year veteran teacher in Jordan School District*

**“A lot of times in half-day, it was rush, rush, rush, we could hardly get through our activities. Part of the issue with some of my students, is that they are English Language Learners. They don’t have a lot of language skills yet. It’s amazing to be able to take the time to bring in those language lessons throughout the day, talk it through with them as they are making these incredible connections.”**

*- 15-year veteran teacher in Cache County School District*

For so many Utah children, kindergarten is the first step on a long and multi-faceted journey of learning and discovery. A quality kindergarten program has the potential to be the solid foundation on which all other academic skills and knowledge are built. For some children, half-day programming, supplemented with learning and attention at home, is more than sufficient to build that solid foundation. For many others, though, who do not have the same socioeconomic advantages, full-day kindergarten provides a chance for them to start their academic journey on more equal footing with their peers.

I sincerely hope that you will follow the lead of your State School Board colleagues in Idaho, our neighbor to the north, who recently gave their unanimous support to a recommendation that their state provide full funding for full-day kindergarten. As one school board member said, “The state is catching up with what districts have been doing, because of parental expectations.”

We are committed to being your partner in pursuit of the best early education opportunities possible for our children here in Utah. Let's go all in on kindergarten, together, for the kids!

Yours,

Moe Hickey  
Executive Director  
Voices for Utah Children

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## Full-Day Kindergarten Letter of Support

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WALDEN school of liberal arts

September 4, 2021

Dear Superintendent Dickson, Utah State Board of Education, and Utah State Legislators:

It is with great passion that I am writing in support of the initiative to move funding for full-day kindergarten into a stable funding source, such as a full WPU, so that LEAs can provide equitable access to optional full-day kindergarten programs for all kindergarten age students. I would like to address several points in support of this initiative.

Each year, Walden has many more applicants for kindergarten than we have openings. The most common question from families who have their child's name drawn in the lottery, is whether or not full day kindergarten is available. Parents often share heart wrenching and deeply moving explanations as to why full-day kindergarten is essential for their family's well being or for their child's academic, social, emotional or English language development. When we are not able to offer families a full-day spot, many will withdraw in search of a school that can offer this option. At one point, Walden considered the option of having families pay for extended day kindergarten, but quickly realized that this would exclude students whose families could not afford to pay. There are many options available for families who can pay for kindergarten or who have family members available to take care of non-school-age children. However, those who need access to full day programs are typically those who do not have resources for other options. As a school committed to educational equity, charging for extended-day kindergarten clearly was not the right option for us.

Any discussion of full-day vs. part-day kindergarten must include a consideration of the inherent limitations of a half-day program. I have heard people use the alleged short attention span of kindergarten students as a reason to limit the length of the day to 2.5-3 hours. I would like to propose that the opposite is at least partially true. One of the causes of the short attention span is the shortened school day that requires a rapid dissemination of all information. When young children have the chance for long uninterrupted periods of time for concentration on meaningful projects, we find that they willingly engage and concentrate for an amazingly long period of time. This allows not only for a greater depth of learning but also for a level of critical thinking and analysis that is rarely, if ever, possible in a short half-day program. Many of our kindergarten students have already

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been spending a full day in preschool. To spend a year as a half day student between PreK and 1st grade is an unnecessary step backwards. Additionally, many students who move from half day kindergarten to 1st grade have more difficulty adjusting to a full day schedule in first grade, losing important instructional time.

Another limitation is the teacher's capacity. When a teacher is in charge of two half-day programs, they are typically in charge of the growth and development of 40+ young students who are looking to form a nurturing relationship with one of the most pivotal and influential teachers of their lifetime. The teacher, in turn, is seeking to build a relationship with each family (sometimes a single child will have three or more involved households that all require individualized information and updates). There is a great deal of truth in the saying, "everything I needed to know in life, I learned in kindergarten." A good kindergarten teacher realizes the importance of individualized communication and interaction with the families of each of her students. When the teacher has a single full-day class, this relationship-building process is far more possible, leading to greater job satisfaction and teacher retention. When teachers have the time to establish a solid parent-teacher team in kindergarten, it benefits the child in ways that continue throughout the rest of their educational journey

Over the years, our state has developed solid and reasonable learning standards for kindergarten. In conversation with many kindergarten teachers, it is clear that they feel a severe lack of time for students to be introduced to and to sufficiently master those standards. While it is not uncommon for teachers of all grade levels to feel this way, our kindergarten teachers seem to express this need to a heightened extent.

A half-day program also limits kindergarten students' and families' ability to participate in the full range of school community activities. Throughout the year, there are many events or classes that are limited to mornings or afternoons effectively excluding half of the kindergarten students. We have recently found this can be particularly problematic for kindergarten students with special education services. Closely related to this concern is access to special education services. As a small charter school, our speech pathologist and occupational therapist are only at the school one morning a week. If a kindergarten child with special needs is not able to attend in the morning, they could conceivably miss out on some of those services, or the school could be forced to almost double the cost of those services to benefit only one student. Another special education concern is the reality that some of our students come to kindergarten with an established IEP. We have found that half day kindergarten is not in session for enough

time to provide the required number of service hours in the IEP of some of these students. Even when the IEPs are adjusted to align with their new kindergarten placement, often there is not enough time to provide both the wonderful general education experiences as well as special education support.

As a small charter school, we are not within walking distance for over 95% of our students. Traveling to and from school by car for a program that is just over two and half hours a day cuts into the work day for most parents, prohibiting parents from seeking gainful employment during the year their child is in kindergarten unless they have friends/family members or the resources to pay someone to drive on their behalf. When families have other students who are attending full day, this requires an additional trip to the school adding, for many, a significant expense. Other families share their concern about adding an additional drive when the air quality is bad and families are asked to limit travel by car.

To be fair, we have received funding, on occasion, through the state's OEK program. However, this funding is not guaranteed and we have not had access to these funds reliably. It is hard on our school's families when the program is available one year, but not the next. The timing of the release of information regarding these resources also comes at the time of year when budget, scheduling and enrollment decisions have passed making it very challenging to shift to a full-day option mid year. In addition, if we hire for a half-day model and then shift to full day, we are forced to rework our personnel structure in what could be very undesirable ways.

Another area of concern for us as a charter school is regular and consistent attendance. Our observation is that full day kindergarten students have better attendance rates as compared to their half day peers. As we all know, many patterns of school participation are established in kindergarten and since attendance is a predictor of so many important social and academic outcomes, it makes sense to choose options that support increased attendance for students..

Obviously, full-day kindergarten is not the solution to all social and academic problems for our youngest students. However, it clearly is a significant part of a larger body of solutions that parents, teachers, school administrators and state leaders can utilize to ensure that children reach their full potential. Truly, every child has a different journey to graduation, and every family's needs are uniquely their own. By making full-day kindergarten available to all, each family will have

the opportunity to choose the options and solutions that will best support their kindergarten child's critical first year of public education.

In the end, it is a matter of equitable access to educational opportunities. We, as a public educational system, must recognize our ultimate responsibility to offer equal access to the best programs to all our community's children and families.

***Thank you for your time and consideration,  
Lois Bobo on behalf of Walden Administration***



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SUPERINTENDENT LARRY G. BERGESON, M.ED.

To Whom it May Concern:

We are writing this letter in support of full-day kindergarten. In the Washington County School District, our own experience has shown so many benefits to kindergarten students being at school for the full day. The first benefit being academic growth. The students who are selected for full day are very at-risk for literacy and numeracy failure. At year's end, these students have surpassed their non-full day peers in literacy and numeracy. In addition to the academic benefits, these students learn social skills that are critical to function in classrooms. They learn how to speak in full sentences and listen carefully to their teacher and peers. They also know how to take turns, eat in the lunchroom, and develop other learning habits that will contribute to all future learning. Research tells us that 95% of students achieving high levels of achievement in kindergarten will not need intervention later. Additionally, they are more confident in their abilities and rise to the high expectations of their teachers.

With proficiency standards across the nation being determined based on the fact that over 80% of our country's kindergarten students are in school all day, Utah is limiting the opportunities for our most impressionable and eager young learners by asking our teachers to teach a complete curriculum in half the time. This impact is also felt by our first grade teachers who are being assigned the daunting task of playing catch-up in order to meet expected learning outcomes.

This year, the Washington County School District is using ARP (American Rescue Plan) funding to provide full-day kindergarten in all 11 Title I schools. Parents were given the option to enroll in full day or keep their child in a half-day program. At last count, 95% of parents have opted for full day. We feel this indicates a community need and a readiness to move to full-day kindergarten in all schools. We are fortunate to also offer OEK (optional extended day kindergarten) in 14 of our 17 non-Title I schools. Students are selected based on the KEEP assessment and classroom observation. These sessions fill up fast and schools consistently have a waiting list for student placement.

As a school district, we appreciate the commitment, planning, and communication on the part of USBE. Because of this, we have been in discussions regarding school boundary adjustments, increasing the number of classrooms to current and future buildings, and recruiting additional teachers, all in an effort to move forward to full-day kindergarten. We are confident that we can make necessary changes to support this much needed move.

Sincerely,

  
Superintendent, Larry Bergeson

  
Elementary Executive Director, Amy Mitchell

  
Assistant Superintendent, Dr. Nate Esplin

  
Elementary Executive Director, Steve Gregoire