

HOUSE PRIMARY AND SECONDARY EDUCATION SUBCOMMITTEE

Randy Leite

Ohio University College of Health and Human Services

March 17, 2009

Good morning Chairman Dyer, ranking member Morgan and members of the Subcommittee. My name is Randy Leite and I am associate dean of the College of Health and Human Services at Ohio University where I am also an associate professor in the child and family studies program. Thank you for the opportunity to testify today.

One focus of our college is to provide non-partisan policy and legislative analysis and research support to legislators, legislative aides, and other state-level policymakers. We develop recommendations and analyses that are grounded in research and that reflect best practices as suggested by that research. My comments today reflect this commitment to passing along input that is well-supported by considerable sound research.

As I come before you today, I believe the most important point I can make is to emphasize the impact of high quality early care and education on the development of a child. Very simply, high-quality child care, preschool, and kindergarten programs have a direct correlation to numerous positive outcomes for children. The research on this point is clear, consistent, and instructive.

Ohio has a solid history of investments in Early Care and Education. This is, in large part, because many, many years of research shows that experiences in early childhood impact a child's entire life. Outcomes we monitor, such as grade retention, need for special education, high school graduation rates, college graduation, participation in the workforce and involvement with the juvenile or adult corrections system can be improved with access to quality early care and education experiences, quality being the key component.

The human brain develops more rapidly during the first five years of life than during any subsequent period. While there is no doubt that primary, secondary, and post-secondary education are important to a child's development and subsequent achievements, substantial research suggests quality education and care during the early years are necessary conditions for creating a strong foundation on which later education may build. There is also evidence that state support for early childhood programs is a wise investment. The Federal Reserve Bank of Cleveland found that for every \$1 invested in high-quality preschool programs in Ohio, \$1.62 would be returned to the public as the child grows into adulthood.

According to the Ohio Department of Education, nearly one-third of the 130,000 children entering kindergarten each year are not prepared to succeed. As students, these children are retained in grade, fail proficiency tests and drop out of school at much higher rates than their peers who enter school ready to learn. Of the nearly 8,000 Ohio children in grades K through 3 who were held back last year, the large majority entered school with significant deficits.

Beyond the child, it is also clear that the quality of young children's early development holds considerable implications for school districts. Those 8,000 children I just mentioned who were

held back a grade in 2006 cost Ohio nearly \$43 million in basic aid funds alone. When children enter school not ready to learn, schools must spend considerable financial resources on programs to try to offset children's deficits.

This issue of school readiness is far from a partisan issue. Republicans and Democrats both agree that facilitating the development of a young child is a positive thing. The \$270 million increase in funding for early care and education and children's health in the 2008-2009 budget was a huge step forward, but there are still many children who do not have access to the early care and education and health care that they need- and many children entering school who are held back by educational, health, and behavioral health problems. This has been a true bi-partisan issue, with legislators on both sides of the aisle realizing that early care and education is one of the best investments Ohio can make. It is also a priority among the public with nearly 70% of both Republicans and Democrats in the State believing early childhood education should be a priority.

Considerable research suggests one particularly effective way to enhance learning and development throughout childhood is full-day kindergarten programs, especially for at-risk youth. Over the last 30 years, the number of children in full-day kindergarten has more than doubled with over two-thirds of kindergarteners now enrolled in full-day programs.

According to Child Trends, a leading non-partisan databank, children who spend time in full-day kindergarten programs are more likely than their peers who attend half-day programs to devote time to reading, mathematics, and social studies. Children who attend full-day kindergarten perform better through the elementary school years and show considerably stronger academic gains through kindergarten. The research suggests full-day kindergarten programs are especially beneficial for children from low-income families. Because these children are often less-prepared for school and lack various forms of social capital compared to children in families at higher income levels, it has been argued with some research support that half-day kindergarten programs do not provide enough time to achieve kindergarten outcome goals and prepare a child for first-grade.

In summary, research suggests the following key findings regarding full-day kindergarten programs:

- Students participating in full-day kindergarten consistently progress further academically during the kindergarten year than students in half-day or alternate day programs.
- There is evidence that full-day kindergarten programs have stronger, longer-lasting academic benefits for children from low-income families or others with fewer educational resources prior to kindergarten.
- Kindergarten teachers and parents report strongly valuing the increased flexibility and opportunities to communicate and individualize instruction for children offered by the full-day schedule.
- There is no evidence for detrimental effects of full-day kindergarten on children. Developmentally-appropriate full-day curricula do not appear to overly-stress or pressure kindergarten children. (Elicker, 2002).

While full-day kindergarten represents a greater cost to school districts than half-day programs, a true assessment of cost must account for:

- Increased costs associated with instruction of less-prepared children in later grades.
- Increased costs associated with higher rates of retaining children in grade.
- The cost of mid-day bus routes to support half-day programs.
- Lost instructional time by teachers who must modify instruction for children who are less academically and socially prepared for elementary school.

Around the nation, states have developed a variety of strategies to fund full-day kindergarten programs. These are summarized in the table developed by the Education Commission of the States attached to my written testimony.

As included in the Governor's proposed budget, school districts would have the option to opt out of full-day kindergarten programs when they may not have sufficient facilities to accommodate the increased class time. In some areas, this issue has been addressed by placing them in community settings as is the case with early childhood programs when sufficient classroom space may not be available.

I thank you for your time and for your commitment to serving Ohio's children and families. I'll be happy to respond to any questions you may have.



StateNotes

Kindergarten

Education Commission of the States • 700 Broadway, Suite 1200 • Denver, CO 80203-3460 • 303.299.3600 • Fax: 303.296.8332 • www.ecs.org

How States Fund Full-day Kindergarten

Updated August 2005

State funding levels, established in state policy, create incentives or disincentives for district provision of full-day kindergarten. This *ECS StateNote* shows how each state's funding formula addresses kindergarten. It does *not* show the relative dollar amount that each state invests in kindergarten nor does it analyze whether states are adequately funding kindergarten. Specifically, this *StateNote* addresses two key questions:

- (1) How do states' funding formulas for half-day kindergarten and full-day kindergarten compare?
- (2) How do states' funding formulas for full-day kindergarten and 1st grade compare?

Looking strictly at the relationship between states' funding for half- and full-day kindergarten, the following is true¹:

- Ten states (Alaska, Georgia, Illinois, Massachusetts, Nebraska, New Mexico, New York, Oklahoma, Pennsylvania and Wisconsin) provide more funding for full-day kindergarten than is provided for half-day programs.
- Thirty-eight states and the District of Columbia fund both full- and half-day kindergarten at the same level.

Giving districts the same amount of funding regardless of whether they provide full- or half-day kindergarten in effect creates a disincentive to offer full-day programs. After all, why should a district choose to offer a more expensive, full-day program, when it can offer a half-day program for the same amount of money?

The relationship between funding for half- and full-day kindergarten programs does not, however, fully describe whether the state provides an incentive or disincentive to provide full-day kindergarten. To get a clearer picture of state incentives and disincentives, the relationship between a state's funding level for kindergarten and 1st grade also should be examined. In fact, offering funding for full-day kindergarten that is equal to or

¹ Two states (Hawaii and Rhode Island) do not have funding formulas that lend themselves to this kind of analysis. See notes for each state below.

greater than that provided for 1st grade provides an incentive for districts to offer full-day kindergarten programs. Based on this more complete analysis:

- **Eight states provide an incentive to districts to offer full-day kindergarten.** These include Alaska, Georgia, Illinois, Nebraska, New Mexico, New York, Oklahoma, and Wisconsin. These are states that: (1) provide a higher level of funding for full-day kindergarten than is provided for half-day kindergarten; and (2) provide funding for full-day kindergarten that is equal to or greater than the amount funded for 1st grade. In five of these states, the level provided for full-day kindergarten is the same as that provided for 1st grade. Three states (Georgia, New Mexico and Oklahoma) provide higher levels of funding for full-day kindergarten than are provided for 1st grade.
 - Technically, Pennsylvania state statute provides a similar incentive to districts to offer full-day kindergarten. In practice, however, the funding formula is not actually used to distribute education funding. Since the 1992 school year, the Pennsylvania General Assembly has allocated education funds to districts based on the amount received in fiscal year 1990-91, with state-mandated adjustments each year. Within this ad hoc distribution of funds, there is no standard formula that clearly provides an incentive to districts to offer full-day kindergarten.
- **Eighteen states provide a disincentive to districts to offer full-day kindergarten.** These include Arizona, Colorado, Delaware, Idaho, Indiana, Kansas, Kentucky, Maryland, Minnesota, Montana, Nevada, New Hampshire, New Jersey, North Dakota, Ohio, Oregon, Utah and Wyoming). These are states that: (1) provide no difference in funding for full- and half-day kindergarten; and (2) provide kindergarten funding at a lower level than that provided for 1st grade. Three of these states (Colorado, New Hampshire and New Jersey) do offer additional categorical funding for full-day kindergarten programs in some districts or for some children.
- **Twenty-one states and the District of Columbia provide no clear incentive or disincentive for districts to offer full-day kindergarten.** Of these:
 - Two states (North Carolina and South Carolina) and the District of Columbia fund all kindergarten programs at a higher level than 1st grade. No funding distinction, however, is made between full- and half-day kindergarten programs. This policy provides an incentive for districts to offer both half-day and full-day kindergarten programs, but does not explicitly prioritize full-day kindergarten.
 - One state (Massachusetts) provides more funding for full-day kindergarten than for half-day kindergarten, but the amount is still less than that provided for 1st grade. This funding policy prioritizes full-day kindergarten over half-day kindergarten, but does not provide equitable funding between full-day kindergarten and 1st grade.
 - Eighteen states fund all kindergarten programs at the same level as 1st grade but make no distinction between full- and half-day kindergarten programs. This policy provides funding equity between kindergarten and 1st grade, but does not provide an explicit incentive for full-day kindergarten. These states include Alabama, Arkansas, California, Connecticut, Florida, Iowa, Louisiana, Maine, Michigan, Mississippi, Missouri, South Dakota, Tennessee, Texas, Vermont, Virginia, Washington and West Virginia.

Helpful Definitions: Funding Formulas:

- **Foundation programs.** Most states use what is known as a foundation (or base) program to provide funding to school districts. Under these programs, states set a base amount of funding for students – or a foundation level – that is paid to districts with state and local funding. The amount that the state contributes to each district's foundation amount is based on the district's relative wealth. Thus, the state provides more funding to poorer districts and less funding to wealthier districts. Within foundation programs, states often provide additional funding to groups of students (e.g., at risk, special education, English language learners) or to different grade levels. This *ECS StateNote* describes how the funding levels for half-day kindergarten, full-day kindergarten and 1st grade differ for each state.

- Categorical programs** are designed by states to provide funding to districts for a specific program or service. Categorical funding is intended to supplement monies supplied to districts in the state's funding formula. This *ECS StateNote* shows which states provide additional funds to qualifying districts for full-day kindergarten programs. The qualifying districts are almost always those districts with a large proportion of low-income students.

KEY:

M = Mandatory

P = Permissive

NA = Not Applicable

State	District offering of kindergarten	District offering of full-day kindergarten	Is half-day kindergarten funded at the same level as full-day kindergarten?	Is full-day kindergarten funded at an equal or higher level than 1 st grade?	Difference between funding for half-day kindergarten, full-day kindergarten and 1 st grade	State categorical programs that provide additional funding for full-day kindergarten
Alabama	M	M	Yes	Yes	NA	None
Alaska	P	P	No	Yes	Full-day kindergarten students are funded at the same level as 1st-grade students. Part-time kindergarteners are funded between 25% and 75% of full funding, based on student attendance.	None
Arizona	M	P	Yes	No	All kindergarten students are funded at half the level of 1st-grade students.	None
Arkansas	M	M	Yes	Yes	NA	None
California	M	P	Yes	Yes	NA	None

State	District offering of kindergarten	District offering of full-day kindergarten	Is half-day kindergarten funded at the same level as full-day kindergarten?	Is full-day kindergarten funded at an equal or higher level than 1 st grade?	Difference between funding for half-day kindergarten, full-day kindergarten and 1 st grade	State categorical programs that provide additional funding for full-day kindergarten
Colorado	M	P	Yes	No	A limited number of at-risk students receive twice as much funding for enrollment in a full-day kindergarten program (see categorical program). All other kindergarten students are funded at half the level of 1st-grade students.	"Colorado Pre-School Program" funds full-day kindergarten for up to 1,000 at-risk students.
Connecticut	M	P	Yes	Yes	NA	"Priority School District Grants Program" funds are distributed to the state's poorest districts and can be used for several different education programs, including full-day kindergarten.
Delaware	M	P	Yes	No	All kindergarten students are funded at half the level of 1st-grade students.	None
District of Columbia	M	P	Yes	Yes	All kindergarten students are funded at a level that is 13.6%, or \$917, higher than 1st-grade students.	None
Florida	M	P	Yes	Yes	NA	None
Georgia	M	M	No	Yes	Full-day kindergarten students are funded at twice the level of half-day kindergarten students and at a level that is 28% higher than that for 1st grade.	None
Hawaii	M	P	The state operates as a single school district, thus there is no state formula for distribution of funds in the traditional sense.			None
Idaho	P	P	Yes	No	All kindergarten programs are provided with one teacher for	None

State	District offering of kindergarten	District offering of full-day kindergarten	Is half-day kindergarten funded at the same level as full-day kindergarten?	Is full-day kindergarten funded at an equal or higher level than 1 st grade?	Difference between funding for half-day kindergarten, full-day kindergarten and 1 st grade	State categorical programs that provide additional funding for full-day kindergarten
					every 16-40 students. 1st grade programs are provided with one teacher for every 12-20 students.	
Illinois	M	P	No	Yes	Full-day kindergarten students are funded at twice the level of half-day kindergarten students.	None
Indiana	M	P	Yes	No	All kindergarten students are funded at half the level of 1st-grade students.	None
Iowa	M	P	Yes	Yes	NA	None
Kansas	M	P	Yes	No	All kindergarten students are funded at half the level of 1st-grade students.	None
Kentucky	M	P	Yes	No	All kindergarten students are funded at half the level of 1st-grade students.	None
Louisiana	M	M	Yes	Yes	Full-day kindergarten is mandatory, therefore all kindergarten students receive full funding compared to other grades.	None
Maine	M	P	Yes	Yes	NA	None
Maryland	M	M	Yes	No	All kindergarten students are funded at half the level of 1st-grade students.	None
Massachusetts	M	P	No	No	Full-day kindergarten students are funded at twice the level of half-day kindergarten students and at a level that is \$31 per	"Kindergarten Development Grants" provide \$15,000 to districts to transition to full-day kindergarten. After the

State	District offering of kindergarten	District offering of full-day kindergarten	Is half-day kindergarten funded at the same level as full-day kindergarten?	Is full-day kindergarten funded at an equal or higher level than 1 st grade?	Difference between funding for half-day kindergarten, full-day kindergarten and 1 st grade	State categorical programs that provide additional funding for full-day kindergarten
					year less than that for 1st-grade students.	transition, districts receive up to \$18,000 per classroom to help cover ongoing costs. Priority is given to low-performing districts.
Michigan	M	P	Yes	Yes	NA	None
Minnesota	M	P	Yes	No	All kindergarten students are funded at half the level of 1st-grade students.	None
Mississippi	M	M	Yes	Yes	Full-day kindergarten is mandatory, therefore all kindergarten students receive full funding compared to other grades.	None
Missouri	M	P	Yes	Yes	NA	None
Montana	M	P	Yes	No	All kindergarten students are funded at half the level of 1st-grade students.	None
Nebraska	M	P	No	Yes	Full-day kindergarten students are funded at twice the level of half-day kindergarten students.	None
Nevada	M	P	Yes	No	All kindergarten students are funded at 60% of the level of 1st-grade students.	None
New Hampshire	P	P	Yes	No	All kindergarten students are funded at half the level of 1st-grade students.	"Alternative Kindergarten Program" provides an additional \$1,200 per student for districts who offer full-day kindergarten programs for the first time.

State	District offering of kindergarten	District offering of full-day kindergarten	Is half-day kindergarten funded at the same level as full-day kindergarten?	Is full-day kindergarten funded at an equal or higher level than 1 st grade?	Difference between funding for half-day kindergarten, full-day kindergarten and 1 st grade	State categorical programs that provide additional funding for full-day kindergarten
New Jersey	P	P	Yes	No	All kindergarten students are funded at half the level of 1st-grade students.	“Early Childhood Program Aid” provides an additional \$465 or \$750 per student based on the district’s percentage of at-risk students.
New Mexico	M	P	No	Yes	Full-day kindergarten students are funded at twice the level of half-day kindergarten students and at a level that is 20% higher than that for 1st-grade students.	For full-day kindergarten students who qualify, a “Full-Day Kindergarten Program” provides twice the funding level of half-day kindergarten students.
New York	P	P	No	Yes	Full-day kindergarten students are funded at twice the level of half-day kindergarten students.	“Full-Day Kindergarten Incentive Aid” provides an additional \$4.88 million for full-day kindergarten programs.
North Carolina	M	M	Yes	Yes	All kindergarten programs are provided with one teacher for every 19 students. First grade programs are provided with one teacher for every 20 students.	None
North Dakota	P	P	Yes	No	All kindergarten students are funded at a level that is 63%-85% less than that for 1st-grade students, based on district size.	None
Ohio	M	P	Yes	No	All kindergarten students are funded at half the level of 1st-grade students.	None
Oklahoma	M	P	No	Yes	Full-day kindergarten students are funded at a level that is 13% more than that for half-day kindergarten students and 10% more than that for 1st-grade students.	None

State	District offering of kindergarten	District offering of full-day kindergarten	Is half-day kindergarten funded at the same level as full-day kindergarten?	Is full-day kindergarten funded at an equal or higher level than 1 st grade?	Difference between funding for half-day kindergarten, full-day kindergarten and 1 st grade	State categorical programs that provide additional funding for full-day kindergarten
Oregon	M	P	Yes	No	All kindergarten students are funded at half the level of 1st-grade students.	None
Pennsylvania	P	P	No **	Yes **	Full-day kindergarten students are funded at twice the level of half-day kindergarten students. **	None
			** Pennsylvania state statute contains an education funding formula that has not actually been used for over a decade. Since the 1992 school year, the state's General Assembly has allocated education funds to districts based on the amount received in fiscal year 1990-91, with state-mandated adjustments each year. Within this ad hoc distribution of funds, there is no standard formula that clearly provides an incentive to districts to offer full-day kindergarten.			
Rhode Island	M	P	Districts receive state funding based on the amount received in FY 1997-98 with state mandated increases each year and adjustments for categorical funds. Because there is no "foundation formula," there are no weights for various grade levels.			The state has three categorical programs, all offering additional funding for full-day kindergarten programs.
South Carolina	M	M	Yes	Yes	All kindergarten students are funded at a level that is 5% more than that for 1st-grade students.	"Early Childhood Assistance Program" provides 26% additional funding for at-risk students in grades K-3. The money can be used for full-day kindergarten programs.
South Dakota	M	P	Yes	Yes	NA	None
Tennessee	M	P	Yes	Yes	NA	None
Texas	M	P	Yes	Yes	NA	"Kindergarten & Pre-Kindergarten Grants" provide funds that can be used for full-day kindergarten programs.
Utah	M	P	Yes	No	All kindergarten students are funded at a level that is 55% of the funding level for 1st-grade	None

State	District offering of kindergarten	District offering of full-day kindergarten	Is half-day kindergarten funded at the same level as full-day kindergarten?	Is full-day kindergarten funded at an equal or higher level than 1 st grade?	Difference between funding for half-day kindergarten, full-day kindergarten and 1 st grade	State categorical programs that provide additional funding for full-day kindergarten
					students.	
Vermont	M	P	Yes	Yes	NA	None
Virginia	M	P	Yes	Yes	NA	None
Washington	P	P	Yes	Yes	NA	None
West Virginia	M	M	Yes	Yes	Full-day kindergarten is mandatory, therefore all kindergarten students receive full funding compared to other grades.	None
Wisconsin	M	P	No	Yes	Full-day kindergarten students are funded at twice the level of half-day kindergarten students.	"Five Year Old Kindergarten Program" provides \$5 million to Milwaukee schools for full-day kindergarten programs.
Wyoming	M	P	Yes	No	All kindergarten students are funded at half the level of 1st-grade students.	None

This *ECS StateNote* was originally completed in June 2003 by Michael Griffith, policy analyst; Kristie Kauerz, program director; and Jessica McMaken, researcher, as part of ECS' study, *Full-Day Kindergarten: An Exploratory Study of Finance and Access in the United States*, which is funded by a grant from the Foundation for Child Development.

For full details on each category in this *ECS StateNote*, visit ECS' online searchable database of kindergarten policies in all 50 states at www.ecs.org/childergarten.