

ASSEMBLY MEMBER KEVIN MCCARTY
7TH ASSEMBLY DISTRICT
STATE CAPITOL, ROOM 2136 ★ SACRAMENTO, CA 95814
915 L STREET, SUITE 110 ★ SACRAMENTO, CA 95814
WWW.ASSEMBLY.CA.GOV/MCCARTY ★ @ASMKEVINMCCARTY

AB 1973 (McCarty) Full-Day Kindergarten
FACT SHEET

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Contact: Sierra Cook, (916) 319-2007

SUMMARY

Full-day kindergarten gives students the time they need to engage in meaningful learning and play, resulting in greater school readiness, self-confidence, and academic achievement compared to part-day programs. However, some school districts only offer part-day programs, leaving students without access to the benefits of full-day kindergarten.

AB 1973 would require school districts and charter schools to offer full-day kindergarten programs starting in 2025-26, giving *all* students the opportunity to participate in a full-day program, which will prepare them with the skills they need to thrive in school and beyond.

BACKGROUND

A large body of research shows that full-day kindergarten improves children's academic achievement and school readiness compared to part-day programs. Specifically, full-day programs are associated with greater growth in cognitive, reading, and math skills – crucial academic building blocks that prepare children for first grade. In fact, a meta-analysis of forty research studies found long-lasting academic benefits that persist through second grade.

Full-day kindergarten programs also improve school-readiness by giving children more opportunities for social-emotional and behavioral development, and have been linked to greater self-confidence and ability to work and play with others.

Research shows that the academic boost from full-day programs is greatest for children from low-income families. These findings demonstrate that high-quality, full-day kindergarten can be a powerful tool for narrowing opportunity and achievement gaps.

Full-day kindergarten also has benefits for teachers. In a 2017 survey of 471 kindergarten teachers, 39%

of part-day teachers reported that their greatest challenge to successful teaching was not having enough time in the classroom. Furthermore, according to 2017 survey data, lack of classroom space has been a primary barrier preventing school districts from offering full-day kindergarten. To address this barrier, the state has invested \$890 million in grant funding for facilities to support full-day kindergarten programs over the last three years.

School districts and charter schools are required to offer kindergarten to all students, but can choose whether to offer full-day or part-day programs. While the number of districts providing full-day programs has increased in recent decades, many students are still left out of this opportunity because they attend school districts that only offer part-day programs. In 2017-18, approximately 160,000 children (30% of all kindergarteners) attended part-day programs.

Additionally, each school receives the full kindergarten funding allocation from the state (\$8,935 per student in 2021-22) even if they choose to offer part-day programs, which cost less to operate. In a 2017 survey, the estimated average per-student cost of providing a part-day program was 54% of the cost for a full-day program. While most school districts and charter schools use their kindergarten funding to provide full-day programs, 2021-22 data from the California Department of Education (CDE) indicate that approximately 22% of school sites only offer part-day programs.

SOLUTION

As of 2020, 17 states and the District of Columbia require full-day kindergarten – it is time for California to follow suit. AB 1973 would require school districts and charter schools to offer full-day kindergarten programs starting in the 2025-26 school year. This bill will set California's youngest learners up for success in school and beyond by ensuring *all* children have access to full-day kindergarten programs.