

**As Easy as ABC?
Comparing Reading Results in Kindergarten Programs**

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Electronic copies of a short article on the study and of the complete graduate paper are available from any of the authors.

Abstract

This study examined the effects of early intervention on students' reading results in kindergarten. Pressure for academic achievement in elementary schools is growing and has resulted in greater demands being placed on kindergarten students and teachers. In order to maintain developmentally appropriate, child-centered programming in kindergarten, districts are considering two initiatives: the implementation of full-day kindergarten and the implementation of literacy outreach programs.

Both the extension of half-day kindergarten to full-day kindergarten and literacy outreach programs carry financial costs. Currently, it appears that districts are proceeding with kindergarten reform on a trial-and-error basis. After reviewing historical trends, debates over content and delivery, potential effects of both programs, and additional costs of programming, we determined that current literature is divided or inconclusive. Our study of early intervention programs is warranted and, indeed, timely.

Our study was comprised of a mixed methods approach comparing different kindergarten programs. This comparison included the determination of developmental appropriateness, costs, and effectiveness in regards to reading results. Our research instruments consisted of a parent questionnaire, a teacher questionnaire, and in-depth interviews with teachers and an administrator. We also included demographic data, financial data, and summative kindergarten reading scores from various school districts.

Our literature review and findings revealed that socio-economically at-risk students are the best candidates for early intervention programs. These students achieved impressive reading results when enrolled in full-day kindergarten and literacy outreach. Additionally, our inquiry confirmed the benefits of literacy outreach programs for all students. In our study, regardless of demographics, half-day kindergarten students, participating in the parent outreach program "Parents as Literacy Supporters," attained reading results consistently above district averages. Furthermore, through this process we determined that the financial cost of full-day kindergarten, while substantial, is justified for students at-risk of low literacy achievement. We also concluded that the cost of literacy outreach programs for all kindergarten children is reasonable.

As a result of these conclusions, we recommend that the districts provide funding for full-day kindergarten programs at all schools with an inner-city designation and that additional full-day kindergarten programs be offered at satellite schools where all identified at-risk district students may participate. Additionally, from our readings and teacher interviews, we encourage school districts to provide resources and professional development opportunities for teachers to learn how to extend their developmentally appropriate half-day kindergarten programs to full-day programs. We also recommend that schools continue to support consistent long-term literacy outreach programs. Districts are encouraged further to work together to improve kindergarten practice, programming, and intervention measures.