

LESSONS LEARNED FROM IMPLEMENTING FULL-DAY KINDERGARTEN

Over the last 10 years the Ohio General Assembly has steadily increased the amount of funding dedicated to Disadvantaged Pupil Impact Aid (DPIA), a supplemental payment to school districts with substantial portions of families living in poverty, while simultaneously shifting the focus of the program to school districts with the highest concentrations of poverty.

Since 1998-99, the focus has been on three initiatives: all-day kindergarten; reduction of class size; and safety, security and remediation programs. The general purpose of these three initiatives is to increase the amount of instructional attention students receive in grades kindergarten through three, and to provide a safe learning environment.

The 106 school districts with the highest concentrations of poverty were eligible for the greatest amount of DPIA funding. They received approximately \$326 million in fiscal year 1999. However, these districts are also subject to the most restrictive spending requirements. Districts must spend their entire all-day kindergarten allocation on all-day kindergarten. If more resources are needed to pay for all-day kindergarten, districts may draw from their allocations for class size reduction and safety, security and remediation.

In Am. Sub. H.B. 650, the 122nd General Assembly required the Legislative Office of Education Oversight (LOEO) to study both the implementation and impact of the all-day kindergarten and class size reduction initiatives. The results of that analysis are summarized here.

LOEO's *All-day Kindergarten and Class Size Reduction: Implementation Report (2000)* describes the extent to which districts were successful in implementing these programs and the challenges districts faced during the first school year, 1998-99; identifies the conditions that helped and hindered school districts' implementation of the all-day kindergarten and class size reduction initiatives during the first year; and provides issues to examine when considering future policy decisions. Subsequent reports will examine the impact of these initiatives on educational practices and student achievement.

The Rationale for All-day Kindergarten and Class Size Reduction Efforts

National research has found a positive relationship between participation in all-day kindergarten and later school performance. For example, studies have found that children in all-day programs, particularly those identified as at-risk, tend to test higher and maintain better scores through the second grade, at which time any effects begin to diminish.

Furthermore, children coming from all-day, every-day programs have less need for remedial services and lower retention rates (i.e., less likely to be held back). They also exhibit more positive behaviors and are rated higher on originality, participation and productive peer interaction.

Studies in both Ohio and Indiana have found, however, that students are less likely to benefit if teachers engage in only whole-group instructions. Studies have found that effective all-day kindergarten programs must do the following:

- offer a balance of small group, large group and individual activities
- emphasize language development and appropriate pre-literacy experiences
- develop children's social skills
- involve children in hands-on activities and informal interactions with children and adults

A complete list of the literature reviewed for the LOEO report can be found in Appendix A.

Study Scope and Methods

The implementation analysis focuses primarily on the 106 school districts with the greatest concentrations of poverty that received Disadvantaged Pupil Impact Aid funding in fiscal year 1999 for both the all-day kindergarten and class size reduction initiatives. An additional 80 school districts received a class size reduction allocation, and some of their successes and challenges are also included in the LOEO report.

The following research methods were used to complete the LOEO implementation analysis:

1. Reviewed over 75 documents, including journal articles, web sites, reports of major studies, and newspaper articles regarding all-day kindergarten and class size reduction initiatives.
2. Interviewed state-level representatives from the Ohio School Facilities Commission, the Ohio Department of Education, and the Auditor of State, in addition to legislators and legislative staff.
3. Visited five school districts located in urban, suburban and rural areas of Ohio that received DPIA funding in fiscal year 1999, and also observed over 175 classrooms in grades K - 3. Classroom visits included counting the actual number of students in each classroom. In many cases this was compared with classroom rosters. Other classroom visits included more in-depth conversations with teachers and administrators.
4. Conducted 12 telephone interviews with district superintendents to inform the design of the mail survey. These districts were not included in the mail survey.
5. Surveyed by mail a total of 174 school districts that received DPIA funding in fiscal year 1999 for the all-day kindergarten and class size reduction initiatives. The response rate was 80%.
6. Analyzed the data collected through LOEO's involvement in the DPIA monitoring process to examine how eligible school districts spent their all-day kindergarten, class size reduction, and safety, security and remediation allocations during the 1998-99 school year.

Administration of Funds

DPIA allocations and spending. Of the \$326 million in DPIA funding received by the 106 school districts, the largest allocation was for class size reduction. The majority of DPIA spending, however, was on all-day kindergarten.

Because spending on all-day kindergarten exceeded the allocation, school districts used portions of their allocations for class size reduction, DPIA guarantees, and safety, security and remediation; class size reduction; and DPIA guarantee allocations to supplement the cost of providing all-day kindergarten.

The General Assembly's spending restrictions and the amount districts actually spend on all-day kindergarten make it a priority over the other two initiatives. In fact, DPIA is more accurately characterized as primarily an all-day kindergarten program for districts with the highest concentrations of poverty.

Eligibility. The DPIA all-day formula provides funding for the "second half" of the base cost per-pupil amount. Through the regular school funding formula, all school districts currently receive half of the per-pupil base cost amount for kindergartners, assuming that these students are coming to school only half the day or half the week. This DPIA program pays the other half of the base cost amount to provide all-day kindergarten.

DPIA pays for one-half of the cost of all-day kindergarten, but does not include the "cost-of-doing-business" factor. Eligible school districts only receive all-day kindergarten funding for the percent of students that they report will actually receive all-day kindergarten in that school year.

All-day kindergarten. The Ohio Revised Code defines all-day kindergarten as "a kindergarten class that is in session five days per week for not less than the same number of clock hours each day as for pupils in grades one through six." For the purpose of this report all-day kindergarten has the same meaning as all-day, every-day kindergarten.

Program Implementation Issues

In fiscal year 1999, 87% of the 106 school districts that were eligible to receive all-day kindergarten funding provided this program, according to data submitted to the Education Management Information System (EMIS). In contrast, during the previous fiscal year and prior to AM. Sub. H.B. 650 and Am. Sub. H.B. 770, only about half of these same districts provided all-day kindergarten.

In addition to the overall increase in the number of districts providing all-day kindergarten, there was also an increase in the districts serving 100% of their kindergarten population in an all-day program. In fiscal year 1999, approximately 66% of the 106 eligible school districts provided all-day programs to 100% of their kindergarten population. In contrast only 19% of the same districts provided all-day programs to 100% in fiscal year 1998.

Table 4 summarizes the increase in all-day kindergarten as a result of the new DPIA spending requirements on the 106 school districts with the highest concentrations of poverty.

Table 4
Provision of All-day Kindergarten
Fiscal Years 1998 and 1999
 106 School Districts with DPIA Index Greater Than or Equal to 1.0

	Fiscal Year 1998		Fiscal Year 1999	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Districts providing all-day kindergarten	50	47%	92	87%
Districts providing all-day kindergarten to 100% of their students	19	18%	70	66%

Reasons for not providing all-day kindergarten. While districts are eligible to receive DPIA funding for the number of students to whom they actually provide all-day kindergarten, some districts chose not to serve 100% of their kindergarten population. In districts where fewer than 100% were served, the most cited reason was lack of parental interest. Although most parents are in favor of all-day kindergarten, some prefer half-day kindergarten or all-day/every other day kindergarten programs for their children.

The superintendent of one school district explained that roughly 70% of their students attended all-day kindergarten. The district had surveyed parents to determine the type of program they wanted and found that not all parents wanted their children enrolled in all-day kindergarten. As a result, the district provides a combination of all- and half-day kindergarten programs.

The increase from fiscal year 1998 to fiscal year 1999 in the number of all-day kindergarten programs in the state and the percent of students who attend them demonstrate the importance of DPIA funding in increasing the number of all-day programs. In fact, most of the districts surveyed indicated that they would not continue to provide all-day kindergarten if DPIA funding were no longer available.

Implementation Barriers

Classroom space and funding issues were the greatest challenges in implementing the all-day kindergarten and class size reduction initiatives.

Lack of classroom space. School districts surveyed and visited cited a lack of adequate classroom space as a barrier to implementing both all-day kindergarten and increased instructional attention initiatives.

In some cases, districts claimed they could not spend all of their class size reduction funding because they did not have the classroom space necessary to accommodate additional teachers. Therefore, they were saving their class size reduction funding for the following school year when they would be permitted to spend a portion of their funding on facilities. To address this issue, the 123rd General Assembly in Am. Sub. H.B. 282 allowed school districts to use portions of their all-day kindergarten and class size reduction allocations for facilities.

For many districts, adequate classroom space is most problematic in providing all-day kindergarten. For districts choosing to provide all-day kindergarten, the number of kindergarten classes often doubled. The districts visited explained that most school buildings typically have one or two classrooms specifically designed for kindergarten use. The room is usually larger than a regular classroom to accommodate the variety of hands-on activities inherent in the early childhood curriculum.

Therefore, when districts choose to provide all-day kindergarten, they often experience a shortage of kindergarten-designed classroom space. In most cases districts chose to handle this shortage by placing kindergarten classes in "regular-sized" rooms that are smaller and less accommodating to the material needed to provide kindergarten.

However, given the limited number of "extra" classrooms, this approach often precluded school districts from also reducing the actual number of kindergarten students in each classroom.

Creating space. School districts were surveyed to learn what strategies, if any, were being used to address facilities needs. For both the all-day kindergarten and increased instructional attention initiatives a slight majority of districts (53%) chose to create additional classroom space by converting non-classroom space (e.g., libraries, office workspace, etc.). Other approaches included using modular units, moving grades to other buildings, and sharing classroom space with other classes or grades.

Of the school districts reporting facility needs for both initiatives, slightly more than half are working with the Ohio School Facilities commission to resolve their facilities problems. It is important to note that the districts reporting facilities as a problem for all-day kindergarten are not necessarily all of the same districts identifying facilities as a problem for increased instructional attention. For example, some of those districts may have a greater need for larger classrooms designed specifically for kindergarten.

Relative definition of need for space. Although districts reported inadequate classroom space as the greatest barrier to providing all-day kindergarten and increased instructional attention, visits to districts revealed a "relative" perception of what constitutes "adequate" classroom space. These perceptions, in turn, influenced the extent to which districts implemented the initiatives.

One district went to great lengths to create additional classroom space in an effort to increase instructional attention. For example, classrooms were divided, non-classroom space was converted for classroom use, partitions were constructed in a school's lobby to create classrooms, and one class was taught in a basement hallway.

While some of the approaches are less than desirable, the district believes that reducing class size and increasing instructional attention is more important than where a class is convened.

In contrast, other districts claiming to have "space problems" demonstrated an unwillingness to explore strategies for creating additional space. For example, several empty classrooms were observed and little evidence of converted offices or other non-classroom space was found in some locations.

Use of personnel. Focusing on reducing the number of students in a classroom taught by a single certified teacher rather than on alternative approaches for increasing instructional attention quickly exhausted available classroom space in some districts. For example, some districts were resistant to hiring aides and paraprofessionals or implementing a team-teaching approach, which could be accommodated in the available space. As a result, a lack of space quickly became an issue for these districts.

Despite reporting difficulty in finding certified teachers, districts chose not to explore alternative approaches to using personnel. In general, "class size reduction" was not being considered in terms of "increasing instructional attention" by adding aides, team teaching or extending the school day or year. Of the districts surveyed, about one-third (35%) chose to hire aides or paraprofessionals, whereas 78% chose to increase instructional attention by hiring certified teachers. This "mindset" is of particular concern for school districts located in urban and rural areas where there are existing shortages of certified teachers.

Funding Challenges

Beyond facilities, the barrier most frequently identified by districts implementing the all-day kindergarten and increased instructional attention initiatives was "insufficient funding."

Insufficient funding. The majority of districts surveyed reported that DPIA funding did not cover the full costs of providing all-day kindergarten and increased instructional attention. As a result, district funds were used to supplement the cost of providing these programs.

Although school districts received funding to provide all-day kindergarten to 100% of their eligible students, it actually cost the majority of districts more to provide all-day kindergarten than the amount they received.

As noted, through DPIA the state provides the "second half" of the base cost per-pupil amount for pupils who stay all day. For fiscal year 1999, the state ensured that every district had a base cost amount of \$3,851 per pupil, which is typically less than what school districts spend per pupil.

As a result, the DPIA amount provided for the second half of the school day did not cover the full cost of what district had to spend for the salaries of experienced teachers, supplies and the other costs of full-day kindergarten. Therefore, most districts used their allocations for DPIA guarantees, class size reductions, and safety, security, and remediation to supplement the cost of providing all-day kindergarten.

Determining the legitimacy of the claim of "insufficient funding" for the increased instructional attention initiative is slightly more complicated due to the "phase-in" provision included in Am. Sub. H.B. 770, which provided a timeline by which school districts were permitted to "phase in" the amount of DPIA funding spent from their class size reduction and safety, security and remediation allocations.

In the first year of implementation, school districts were only required to spend 25% of these allocations on DPIA programs. Any remaining funding could go into their general revenue fund. The law noted that this spending requirement would increase to 50% in fiscal year 2000, 75% in fiscal year 2001, and 100% in fiscal year 2002.

Because so many districts did not spend their entire DPIA allocation on these initiatives, it is hard to say whether they have a legitimate claim that DPIA funding does not cover the "full cost" of providing increased instructional attention. In fact, there were only two districts with a DPIA index greater than 1.0 that spent their entire DPIA allocation on DPIA programs. These two districts may have the only legitimate claim that DPIA does not cover the full costs of these initiatives.

Until school districts are required to spend 100% of their DPIA funds on DPIA programs in fiscal year 2002, it is difficult to determine how much local funds are used to supplement these programs.

However, it is also important to note that DPIA funding is a supplemental payment to districts. The General Assembly's all-day kindergarten, class size reduction, and safety, security and remediation allocations are "estimates" of what it would cost districts to provide these programs. These allocations were not designed to fund all of the costs associated with implementing the programs.

Predictability of funding. Another dilemma regarding DPIA funding for school districts is its predictability. To make the necessary commitments for the all-day kindergarten and increased instructional attention initiatives, such as hiring additional teachers and acquiring additional classrooms, it is essential to know that the state's supplemental payments will continue. Similar to the concern over federal funding, without knowing that a particular amount will be dedicated to these initiatives, school districts are understandably reluctant to begin implementation.

Summary and Conclusions

- State policy was very effective in encouraging school districts to offer full-day kindergarten.
- In districts where fewer than 100% of the kindergarten population was served, the main reason cited was lack of parental interest. Most parents, however, favor full-day kindergarten.
- Barriers to implementation included lack of classroom space, reluctance to rely on aides and paraprofessionals, and insufficient funding.

The preceding report was prepared using:

A Longitudinal Research Study of the Effects of Preschool Attendance and Kindergarten Schedule (1992)

All-day Kindergarten and Class Size Reduction: Implementation Report (2000)

Appendix A

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