



## EXPANDING EARLY LEARNING TIME

### Accessing Full-Day Preschool and Kindergarten in California

#### EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Compelling research shows that attending high-quality, full-day preschool and kindergarten is associated with improved outcomes for students. These outcomes include greater school readiness in a number of areas including language development, higher academic performance in math and reading, and less likelihood of being retained in later elementary grades.<sup>1</sup>

This EdSource report looks at the status of recent efforts in California to provide more children with access to full-day preschool and kindergarten. The report documents the following:

- Even though full-day kindergarten is not mandatory in California, school districts have made significant progress during the past two decades in offering full-day classes. Yet today only 70.5 percent of schools serving kindergarten-age children are offering full-day programs. California [lags behind many other states](#) that offer full-day programs to a larger proportion of their kindergarten students.<sup>2</sup>
- Full-day kindergarten has emerged as a priority in the California Legislature. The 2016-17 budget requires State Superintendent of Public Instruction Tom Torlakson to report to the Legislature by July 1, 2017, on the average costs of full-day and part-day kindergarten and “options for incentivizing full-day kindergarten, including providing differentiated funding rates for full-day and part-day programs.”<sup>3</sup> The December 2016 [Assembly Blueprint for Responsible Budget Priorities](#) also calls for requiring full-day kindergarten across the state.<sup>4</sup> But it is still state policy to require districts to provide only half-day kindergarten programs and to fund them accordingly.

#### Authors

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#### Acknowledgments

We gratefully acknowledge the **Heising-Simons Foundation** for underwriting this report.

- Since 2014, the California Legislature has also made a push to increase full-day programs in state-subsidized preschool for low-income children. [Senate Bill 858](#),<sup>5</sup> which Gov. Jerry Brown signed in June 2014, stated clearly that “it is the intent of the state to provide all low-income 4-year-old children from working families with full-day, full-year early education and care.” But the majority of children supported by the California State Preschool Program, the largest state-funded preschool program, still attend part-day programs.
- The addition of transitional kindergarten in California, which was phased in beginning in fall 2012, has provided some children who may not have been able to attend full-day preschool the opportunity to attend a full-day transitional kindergarten class. During the current school year (2016-17), 66 percent of schools are offering full-day transitional kindergarten classes, according to California Department of Education figures. But these classes only serve a fraction of 4-year-olds in California, and do not make up for the shortage of full-day preschool slots.
- A key obstacle to expanding full-day programs is that, historically, preschool and kindergarten funding has favored half- or part-day programs. School districts receive the same amount in average daily attendance funds whether they offer a half-day or a full-day kindergarten. Reimbursement rates for programs funded through the California State Preschool Program are also more generous for part-day rather than full-day programs.
- Current data on exactly how many children are in part-day or half-day programs compared with full-day classes are hard to come by, making it difficult to assess just how much progress California is making in offering full-day programs to a greater number of children.
- Definitions of what constitutes half-day, part-day and full-day programs vary considerably, which also makes assessing the field difficult. More uniformity is needed when the terms half-day, part-day or full-day are used to discuss policy and programs for children.

In order to move the state toward its expressed goal of encouraging full-day attendance at both preschool and kindergarten, this report highlights the importance of several key strategies:

1. *The Legislature should maintain its focus on expanding access to full-day early learning programs for children whose parents seek expanded learning opportunities for them.*
2. *In addition to the length of time children spend in a program, an equal emphasis should be placed on ensuring program quality, both in terms of state policies and local implementation practices.*
3. *It should be a state priority to improve data collection and reporting on annual enrollments in state-subsidized full-day vs. part-day programs, and funds need to be allocated for this purpose.*

4. *State and local agencies should consider all opportunities afforded by the Every Student Succeeds Act and the Local Control Funding Formula to expand access to full-day programs.*
5. *Local, regional and state agencies should explore ways to more effectively share best practices to fully utilize expanded learning time, and to adapt pedagogical styles and strategies to take full advantage of the additional time children spend in a program.*
6. *The state should examine its funding mechanisms and explore ways to reform them so that they encourage early learning providers to offer full-day programs.*



## The Focus of This Report

This report focuses on schools and programs that receive funds from the California State Preschool Program to subsidize or fully cover tuition costs of low-income children. It does not include children in federal programs, other state programs, or private programs where parents pay all or most of the tuition.

The report also limits its discussion to publicly supported preschool programs and kindergarten in public schools. It is worth noting, however, that by far the majority of 5-year-olds are enrolled in kindergarten, in both full-day and half-day programs. But many 4-year-olds, and an even larger number of eligible low-income 3-year-olds, are not in quality, state-subsidized preschool programs, regardless of whether they are full- or part-day. A 2016 American Institutes of Research report calculated that “more than 33,000 4-year-old children still have no access to a preschool program, and the unmet need for state preschool for 3-year-olds also remains high.”<sup>6</sup> Thus, arguably the need is greatest for expansion of preschool programs.

Table 1

**CALIFORNIA STATE PRESCHOOL PROGRAM AND KINDERGARTEN PROGRAMS IN CALIFORNIA**

Program	Population Served	Funded by	Length of Program
California State Preschool Program	3- to 5-year olds from low-income families	State child development program and Prop. 98 funds	Both part-day (at least 3 hours per day, 175 days per year) and full-day (at least 6.5 hours per day, 250 days per year).
Transitional Kindergarten	4-year-olds with 5th birthday between Sept. 2 and Dec. 2	Prop. 98 funds based on average daily attendance (ADA)	Half-day and full-day. Must be of equal length to kindergarten program offered in the same district. Must operate no fewer than 180 days per year. Hours vary by district. Most are full-day (more than 4 hours of instruction per day). <sup>7</sup>
Kindergarten	5-year-olds who turn 5 before Sept. 2	Prop. 98 based on ADA	Half-day and full-day programs offered. Must operate no fewer than 180 days per year. Full-day is any program exceeding 4 hours of instruction. Half-day is 4 hours or less.

Notes to Table 1

1. These are not the only subsidized programs in the state. The federal Head Start program and other state programs such as CalWORKS or programs for students with special needs also subsidize some preschool attendance and costs. However, the California State Preschool Program is the largest state-funded early education program and funds a range of services run by nonprofit organizations, school districts and others. Altogether, CSPP serves about 4 percent of 3-year-olds and 30 percent of 4-year-olds in the state.
2. Proposition 98 is the state initiative approved by voters in 1988 that determines minimum funding guarantees for K-12 schools and community colleges.

**From a Parent’s Perspective, Is Full-Day Really a Full Day?**

As many working parents quickly discover, the term “full-day” is often a misnomer in both preschool and kindergarten.

California defines “full-day” kindergarten as one offering a minimum of four hours of instruction, excluding recess and lunch. Thus, a “full-day” kindergarten program may run Monday through Friday from 8:30 a.m. until 1:30 p.m., or from 9:30 a.m. to 2 p.m. That means parents must still find additional care for their children to cover the time when the official school day ends until the late afternoon or early evening hours when they get off work.

The California State Preschool Program defines a full-day program as one that lasts at least 6.5 hours. Program lengths vary, but are often not long enough to cover the hours that working parents need care for their children. That is especially the case if a parent works a regular eight-hour day. It is even more true for parents who work full-time jobs during nontraditional hours, or who work more than one job. To cover that period, parents also need time to take a child to the preschool and to commute to and from work.

There is a lack of clarity about what constitutes full- or part-day preschool programs. Programs need to operate between 6.5 and 10.5 hours a day to get the full-day rate. If programs operate between four and 6.5 hours per day, they get 75 percent of the full-day rate. If programs operate more than 10.5 hours per day, they get a rate that is 18 percent higher than the full-day rate.

**How do parents manage?**

In California, some state preschool providers blend preschool funds with other public and private funding in order to stay open longer hours, with some providers operating into the evening and even during the night. Parents of kindergartners who need a program that covers the entire workday have to seek alternatives, such as having the child stay with relatives after school or finding an after-school program.

## WHAT THE RESEARCH SAYS

Research strongly suggests that full-day preschool and kindergarten are more beneficial than part-day programs. A common admonition in much of the research, however, is that the quality of the program is crucial to generating the positive outcomes that were reported.

Chloe R. Gibbs at the University of Virginia conducted one of the [most rigorously designed studies](#). The study of five school districts in Indiana looked at children randomly assigned to full-day and half-day programs in the 2007-08 school year. It found that by the end of the first year, reading skills — especially among Hispanic students — had improved significantly among those attending full-day classes compared with those in half-day programs in the same schools. Gibbs concluded that “disadvantaged students benefit greatly from full-day kindergarten, as measured by end-of-year literacy skills.”<sup>8</sup>



*“Even students who are far behind at entry to preschool can develop vocabulary, math and literacy skills that approach national norms if provided with extended-duration preschool that maintains reasonable quality standards.”*

— KENNETH B. ROBIN,  
NATIONAL INSTITUTE FOR EARLY EDUCATION RESEARCH

The findings reinforced the conclusions of a [2005 WestEd summary of research](#). A variety of studies found that children in full-day programs compared with those in half-day programs showed greater school readiness by the time they entered 1st grade, as measured by appropriate behavior and learning skills. Other outcomes linked to full-day kindergarten were improved school attendance, not only in kindergarten but throughout the elementary grades, and faster gains on literacy and language measures. Full-day kindergarten also had the potential to decrease costs to districts later on by making it less likely that children would be kept behind in later grades or need remediation.<sup>9</sup>

Full-day preschool also appears more beneficial than part-day preschool. [A study published in the Journal of the American Medical Association](#) found stronger effects for full-day preschool (7 hours) than for part-day preschool (2.5 to 3 hours) in the Chicago Child-Parent Centers (CPC), which are generally recognized for offering a very high-quality preschool program. Specifically, it found that full-day attendance contributed to greater school readiness on four measures: social-emotional development, language development, math performance and physical health. It also contributed to increased attendance and parent involvement.<sup>10</sup>

Likewise, [Rutgers University researchers](#), after randomly assigning students through a lottery to full-day or half-day preschool programs in New Jersey, found that full-day programs had greater benefits for students, including greater cognitive and social-emotional

outcomes than did half-day programs. Children in the extended program improved their math and vocabulary skills almost twice as much as students in half-day programs. As in some other studies, researchers emphasized that to get results like these, the programs have to be of high quality.<sup>11</sup>

The study's compelling conclusion was that “even students who are far behind at entry to preschool can develop vocabulary, math and literacy skills that approach national norms if provided with extended-duration preschool that maintains reasonable quality standards.” The added hours, they contended, “were substantially effective at closing the achievement gap between these urban children and their more advantaged peers.” The advantages persisted through at least the spring of 1st grade, the time span covered by the study.

Studies also show that [full-day Head Start programs boosted cognitive achievement](#) somewhat more than half-day programs.<sup>12</sup> That is one reason the federal Head Start program is [moving to increase the length of time](#) children attend their programs during the next five years, according to program regulations released this fall.<sup>13</sup>

Erika Christakis from the Yale Child Study Center points out that full-day programs leave more time for teachers to build relationships with students, enable their students to practice social-emotional skills and generally to create more opportunities for play, exploration and experimentation.<sup>14</sup>



*“With a less pressured schedule, the teacher was able to be more responsive to the children in her care. In contrast, the half-day program was more squeezed for time and focused on passive teacher-directed activities aimed at the entire group.”*

— ERIKA CHRISTAKIS, YALE CHILD STUDY CENTER

## UNEVEN PROGRESS TOWARD FULL-DAY PRESCHOOL

### A Long-Term Goal

California in recent years has made a push to increase full-day programs in state-subsidized preschool for low-income children. In fact, the state is officially on record as being committed to this path.

Beginning with the 2014-15 fiscal year, the Legislature has put far more money into increasing full-day preschool than part-day programs. Rather than expanding transitional kindergarten to all 4-year-olds, the Legislature decided to fund an additional 11,500 full-day preschool slots.

The 2016-17 budget called for [8,877 new full-day slots](#) beginning in April 2017 and phased in over four years.

Over the past three years, the majority of new slots for the California State Preschool Program funded by the Legislature have been full-time slots. The number of full-day slots has increased by nearly 12,000 during the past three years, while the number of part-day slots has increased by about 2,500.

To underwrite these increases, state funding has gone up substantially — from \$453 million in 2014-15 to \$627 million in 2016-17 for full-day slots, compared with an increase from \$409 million to \$447 million during the same period for part-day slots.<sup>15</sup>

But, as the chart below shows, the majority of children in centers and programs funded by the California State Preschool Program, which serves about 30 percent of all 4-year-olds in the state, are still in part-day programs, a consequence of how they have been funded historically.

**Table 2**  
**FULL-DAY AND HALF-DAY SLOTS IN THE CALIFORNIA STATE PRESCHOOL PROGRAM**

California State Preschool Program	Total Slots 2013-14 Budget Act	Total Slots 2014-15 Budget Act	Total Slots 2015-16 Budget Act	Total Slots 2016-17 Budget Act
Part-Day	91,170	98,061	101,469	101,598
Full-Day	44,889	50,144	57,568	62,005

SOURCE: LEGISLATIVE ANALYST'S OFFICE, 2016.

The state had planned to increase funding for full-day slots for the next two fiscal years, adding 2,959 additional full-day preschool slots in 2017-18 and 2018-19. However, Gov. Jerry Brown in his proposed budget for 2017-18 wants to slow down implementation of this increase. He is calling for adding no new slots in 2018-19, but rather to begin adding the full-time slots the following year. That would postpone full implementation until the 2019-20 fiscal year.

The way California structures the financing of preschool programs is another ongoing issue, with the daily reimbursement rate higher for part-day programs, which under state law must run at least 175 days, than full-day programs, which must run at least 250 days. Thus, providers have an incentive to enroll more children in part-day programs, including offering a morning and afternoon part-day program rather than one full-day program, as the chart on page 8 illustrates. This is particularly true for some school districts that do not want or do not have the capacity to support a preschool program for 250 days when their K-12 program is only for 180 days.

**Table 3**  
**2016-17 STATE PRESCHOOL RATES**

	Daily Rate per Child	Yearly Rate per Child
Part-Day Program (under 4 hours)	\$25.06	\$4,386.11
Two Part-Day Programs (under 4 hours each, under 8 hours in total)	\$50.13	\$8,772.23
Full-Day Program (6.5 to 10.5 hours)	\$40.46	\$10,114.13
Full-Day Plus Program (over 10.5 hours)	\$47.74	\$11,934.67

SOURCE: LEGISLATIVE ANALYST’S OFFICE

NOTE: These rates are the same as what Gov. Jerry Brown is proposing for 2017-18.



### How Many Children Are in Full-Day vs. Part-Day Preschool?

Identifying exactly how many children are even in full-day versus part-day programs subsidized by California taxpayers is difficult. Based on differences in enrollments reported by the California Department of Education, and the number of slots underwritten by the state as reported by the Legislative Analyst’s Office, there appears to be a gap between actual enrollment in the California State Preschool Program and the number of students the Legislature appropriated funds to serve.

According to California Department of Education figures, the number of children enrolled in full-time and part-time programs funded by the California State Preschool Program is lower than those for whom funds were appropriated by the Legislature. For example, in October 2015, CDE figures indicate that 94,613 children were in the part-day state preschool program, and 39,371 were in the full-day program. In contrast, the number of slots authorized in the state budget for that year were 101,469 children in part-day programs and 57,568 in full-day programs.

Some of this discrepancy can be attributed to the CDE data being based on enrollments in one month — October — during the year. That does not reflect the continuous enrollment of preschool children throughout the fiscal year. There can also be a lag time of as much as six months between when the Legislature approves the slots and when CDE releases the funding.

Because of the differing figures, it is hard to be definitive about current enrollments and compare them with pre-recession numbers. But many advocates say that the state has yet to catch up to the number of slots that were available for parents and children before the reductions brought about by the Great Recession.



## UNIVERSAL FULL-DAY KINDERGARTEN: GOAL, NOT REALITY

California school districts have made substantial progress in increasing access to full-day kindergarten programs, but large numbers of students still attend half-day classes.

According to a Public Policy Institute of California report, only 11 percent of students were enrolled in full-day kindergarten in 2001.<sup>16</sup> In 2005, the state loosened requirements to make it easier for districts to offer full-day kindergarten programs (four hours or more of instructional time). This occurred principally as a result of the passage of [Assembly Bill 2407](#), a two-paragraph law that has had an outsized impact on kindergarten programs in the state. The bill, authored by Assemblyman Rudy Bermudez, D-Norwalk, removed a requirement that districts apply to the State Board of Education for a waiver to offer a full-day kindergarten program.

A survey by PPIC in 2009 of three-quarters of California's school districts found that 80 percent of schools with full-day programs offered at least five hours of instruction per day. It found that the full-day classes were more likely to be offered in "economically disadvantaged schools."<sup>17</sup>

By 2013, according to *Education Week's* "[Quality Counts](#)," 57 percent of students in California were attending full-day kindergarten.<sup>18</sup> No recent figures on the number of students in full-day kindergarten are available, but data on how many schools offer those classes are. In 2015-16, 66 percent of California schools offered full-day classes, and in the current school year 70.5 percent of schools are offering those classes, according to California Department of Education data.

Expanding full-day kindergarten has become a state priority in recent years. The 2016-17 budget, for example, requires the state superintendent of public instruction to report to the Legislature by July 1, 2017, on the average costs of full-day and part-day kindergarten and "options for incentivizing full-day kindergarten, including providing differentiated funding rates for full-day and part-day programs."<sup>19</sup> The December 2016 [Assembly Blueprint for Responsible Budget Priorities](#), produced by Assemblymember Phil Ting (D-San Francisco), chair of the Assembly Budget Committee, also calls for requiring full-day kindergarten across the state.

However, despite major progress, large numbers of children still attend half-day kindergarten classes in California.

California also [lags behind many other states](#) that offer full-day programs, including the majority that enroll a larger proportion of their kindergarten students in them.<sup>20</sup> A [recent report](#) by the Education Commission of the States shows that 13 states plus the District of Columbia require schools to offer full-day kindergarten. California is not one of them.<sup>21</sup>

One reason more children are not in full-day programs in California may be related to the way these programs have been funded historically. Districts are reimbursed by the state based on how many students are in attendance, regardless of whether students are attending a half-day or full-day program. Thus, districts get no additional state funds if they choose to offer a full-day program.



*“Unequal access to publicly funded full-day...high-quality kindergarten means too many young children lose a critical opportunity to develop and strengthen foundational skills necessary for success in school and lifelong learning.”*

— [CHILDREN'S DEFENSE FUND](#)<sup>22</sup>

## TRANSITIONAL KINDERGARTEN: PROVIDES FULL-DAY PROGRAM FOR SOME CHILDREN

More preschool-age children are also attending full-day school programs as a result of the establishment of transitional kindergarten.

The program began in the fall of 2012, after passage of [Senate Bill 1381](#) in 2010, called the Kindergarten Readiness Act. The act established what is essentially a new grade level in public schools — transitional kindergarten for 4-year-olds who turn 5 between September and December. Those students then can enter regular kindergarten the following year.

The Department of Finance calculates that approximately 85,500 students are enrolled in transitional kindergarten classes in 2016-17, or 18 percent of 4-year-olds in the state.

An [American Institutes for Research evaluation](#) of the program shows that 63 percent of transitional classrooms in the spring of 2015 were full-day classrooms, offering an average of six hours of instruction per day.<sup>23</sup> Indicating further progress, figures provided by the California Department of Education for the current school year (2016-17) show that 66 percent of schools with transitional kindergarten offered full-day classes.

According to state law, if districts offer full-day kindergarten, they also have to offer full-day transitional kindergarten. California Education Code 37202 requires that all students at a given grade level in a district receive “an equal length” of instructional time, though kindergarten programs can vary in length at different school sites. The state has interpreted the code to mean that a transitional kindergarten program should be of equal length to the district’s or school’s existing kindergarten programs. However, districts can request a waiver of this requirement from the State Board of Education.

Even though the Legislature rejected expanding transitional kindergarten to all 4-year-olds, it does allow districts to create what are called Expanded Transitional Kindergarten (ETK) classrooms to serve children who turn 5 between Dec. 2 and the end of the school year. However, school districts can’t receive state average daily attendance funds to support these programs until students turn 5. That means districts must come up with their own funding to cover the costs of expanded transitional kindergarten programs until they can receive ADA funding after students turn 5. Because ADA funding is substantially higher than preschool rates, some districts, such as [Los Angeles Unified](#), have found it more feasible financially to take advantage of Expanded Transitional Kindergarten to increase options for 4-year-olds.<sup>24</sup>

No figures are available on how many students are enrolled in Expanded Transitional Kindergarten classrooms. But these classes offer yet another way for students in some districts to get an expanded preschool experience before entering kindergarten proper.

However, a major difference between the California State Preschool Program and transitional kindergarten is that the former serves low-income students, while transitional kindergarten is open to all students, regardless of income levels.

That means that at least some transitional kindergarten students would likely have been in a private, full-day preschool program if the transitional kindergarten option had not been open to them.

## WHAT'S NEXT?

Based on research and interviews conducted for this report, children and their families would benefit if the state of California were to do the following:

### ***1. Maintain legislative emphasis on expanding access to full-day early learning programs for children whose parents seek expanded learning opportunities for them.***

The state should maintain and expand its commitment to investing in full-day preschool in light of research indicating its multiple benefits to children and families. California leaders should also consider making it mandatory to require full-day kindergarten. This should be informed by the results of the report on the relative expense of half-day and full-day kindergarten that the state superintendent of public instruction will submit to the Legislature in July 2017.

In the absence of state support, school districts and other providers could explore targeted ways to increase full-day offerings — particularly for children from very low-income families — by generating support from voters locally, as San Francisco was able to do through its [Children and Youth Fund](#). However, this approach is much less desirable than a statewide solution that all districts can benefit from because it runs the risk of creating unequal opportunities for children based on where they live.

Neither the Legislature nor the governor seem inclined to expand the transitional kindergarten program to all 4-year-olds, beyond the Expanded Transitional Kindergarten program mentioned above. Thus, full-day preschool for all low-income children should remain a Legislative goal, as it was in 2013-14. The Legislature should also examine the implications of postponing adding nearly 3,000 preschool slots for a year, as Brown has proposed in his 2017-18 budget.

### ***2. Emphasize program quality, in addition to the length of time children spend in a program.***

Considerable research shows that a key factor in the ability of early learning programs to contribute to student success is that they must be of high quality. California's Quality Rating Improvement System should differentiate between full-day and part-day programs so parents and other stakeholders can be clear about the length of the services being offered. In addition, the state should do more to support initiatives that enhance program quality, whether in a full-day or half-day program. These include

increasing support for professional development for teachers and continuing to increase reimbursement rates to boost the pay of preschool staff.

### ***3. Improve data collection and transparency on annual enrollments in state-subsidized full-day vs. part-day programs.***

Because of a lack of data, it is hard to assess exactly how far California is progressing in its efforts to expand access to full-day preschool and kindergarten, making planning and advocacy more challenging.

The California Department of Education is now collecting enrollment figures in the California State Preschool Program by part-day and full-day attendance. However, as part of the data collection, efforts should be made to get greater clarity on what constitutes “part-day,” “half-day” and “full-day” preschool and kindergarten, as there is great variation in how those categories are defined.

### ***4. Leverage opportunities offered by the Every Student Succeeds Act and the Local Control Funding Formula to expand access to full-day programs.***

The new federal education law, Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA), which goes into effect in the 2017-18 school year, as well as the state’s 2013 Local Control Funding Formula (LCFF) offer opportunities to expand early learning programs within and outside of the state’s public school systems.

The LCFF gives districts the flexibility to increase funding for preschool through the priorities they develop with their communities under their Local Control and Accountability Plans (LCAPs). In particular, districts that receive extra funding for English learners and low-income, foster and homeless youth could focus some of those funds on early education to help eliminate achievement gaps before children enter kindergarten. Advocates for early education can use the LCAP process to build awareness of the need for more funding for early learning.<sup>25</sup>

The Every Student Succeeds Act makes it clear that federal Title I funding for low-income students can be used for early education, particularly in helping students transition to kindergarten. It requires that states use at least 15 percent of their funds under the



*“We’ve come a long way, but we’ve still got a long way to go.”*

— LISA KAUFMAN, EDUCARE SILICON VALLEY

Comprehensive Literacy State Development Grants for state and local programs aimed at children from birth through entry into kindergarten. ESSA also makes permanent in law the existing competitive grant program, Preschool Development Grants, which can be used to expand access to preschool.<sup>26</sup>

In general, lawmakers and advocates should place a priority on full-day programs that are of high quality when thinking about how best to leverage ESSA to expand current program offerings in the state.

***5. Share best practices for how to fully utilize expanded learning time in full-day programs, and how to adapt pedagogical styles and strategies to take full advantage of the additional time children spend in a program.***

Simply increasing the amount of time a child is in preschool or kindergarten will have much less impact if the additional time is not used effectively. The California Department of Education has an exhaustive [online resource guide](#) where providers can access information on best practices.<sup>27</sup> This guide and others like it would be especially useful to educators wishing to offer full-day programs if they flagged resources and practices that specifically relate to expanded learning time.

***6. Structure financial support of early learning programs to provide incentives for providers to offer high-quality, full-day programs.***

One of the obstacles to expanding full-day programs, at both a preschool and kindergarten level, is the additional cost in staff time, facilities and overhead. State preschool reimbursement rates have been skewed toward providing more support for half-day than full-day programs. That also applies to kindergarten programs, as school districts receive the same level of average daily attendance funding for a half-day classroom as they do for a full-day program. A thorough examination of how state funding mechanisms enhance or detract from efforts to expand full-day programs for both preschool and kindergarten is needed.

The recommendations described above are interrelated, underscoring the need for a comprehensive approach to achieving full-day early learning experiences for more of California's children. California has made significant progress in offering expanded learning opportunities for preschool children. But as the state enters a period of greater economic uncertainty, education leaders, lawmakers and child advocates will need to work together to ensure that momentum in this direction is sustained.



## ENDNOTES

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## Authors

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## About EdSource

*EdSource is an independent, impartial, nonprofit organization established in 1977. EdSource's mission is to engage Californians on key education challenges and to highlight strategies that promote student success.*

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