

FULL-DAY KINDERGARTEN OUTCOMES



WHY FDK MATTERS



Full-day kindergarten (FDK) is beneficial for children, parents, and teachers. Last year, less than half (41.3%) of Colorado children met all kindergarten entry expectations. At later grades, academic gaps become increasingly harder to close, making access to early learning through full-day kindergarten and preschool a more affordable and effective approach to ensuring Colorado children are prepared to succeed in school and in life.

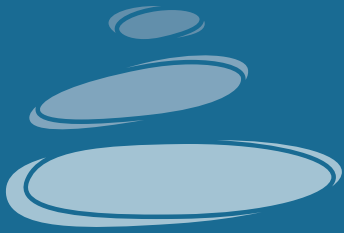
ABOUT EARLY MILESTONES COLORADO.

We are an independent organization helping to advance innovative solutions that improve policies and practices in early childhood development. We work with state and local partners to exchange ideas, share resources, and create lasting, positive change for children.



EARLY MILESTONES
COLORADO

ADVANCING OPPORTUNITIES FOR CHILDREN'S SUCCESS



...so every Colorado community can provide an environment where children will flourish.

FOUNDATIONS OF LEARNING. The foundations of learning include four core mutually-reinforcing skills – social-emotional, self-regulation, oral language & early literacy, and early math. Reducing instruction in one or more will result in a wobbly foundation. There is evidence that students who receive extra support in the *non-academic* skills (e.g., self-regulation) perform better in core academics and vice versa.

TEACHERS MAKE THE DIFFERENCE. Additional hours for kindergarten will be most impactful if classroom teachers have the knowledge and skills to appropriately guide young learners. Especially at this age, knowledge of child development, teaching practices for all types of learners, and strong family engagement is critical to creating an optimal learning environment.

PARENTS PREFER FDK. In a 2005 study of full-day kindergarten programs in Delaware, 98% of parents whose children are enrolled in FDK said they would choose it again, and 72% of half-day kindergarten parents wish they had chosen FDK, in retrospect. FDK gives teachers time to get to know their students and identify and address their learning challenges early.

READY SCHOOLS. Thoughtful efforts to ready schools for young learners and their families are the key to protecting the gains realized by implementing FDK. Colorado requires individualized school readiness plans for every child. Transition practices for students entering and exiting kindergarten can ensure that families continue to engage in their child’s learning – a critical factor in academic achievement – as well as build upon the child’s prior gains and proactively and appropriately address ongoing needs.



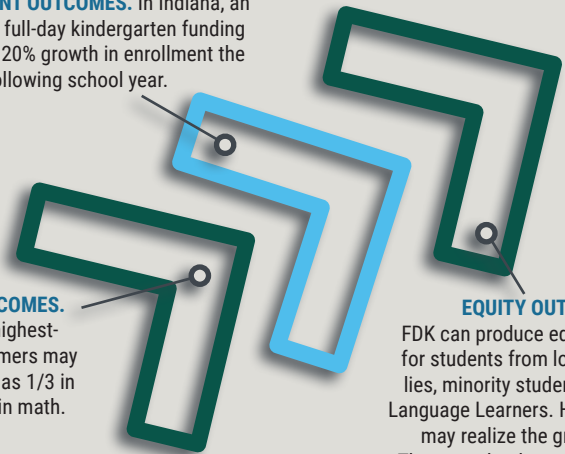
POSITIVE OUTCOMES

Quality full-day kindergarten has shown to have a significant positive effect on academic achievement, college attendance rates, and higher earnings in adulthood.

ENROLLMENT OUTCOMES. In Indiana, an increase in full-day kindergarten funding resulted in 20% growth in enrollment the following school year.

ACADEMIC OUTCOMES. Gaps between highest- and lowest-performers may close by as much as 1/3 in reading and 1/4 in math.

EQUITY OUTCOMES. FDK can produce educational gains for students from low-income families, minority students, and English Language Learners. Hispanic students may realize the greatest gains. Those randomly assigned to full-day programs through a lottery system showed extremely large gains (.7 standard deviation).



COMMON MISREPRESENTATIONS

FADE OUT FALLACY. Some studies indicate kindergarten outcomes can be short-lived, while others show increased scores in third grade, among other, longer-term benefits, such as higher graduation rates. Important non-cognitive skills tend to persist, which may explain long-term impacts (e.g., higher earnings). Fade-out isn’t inevitable if leaders approach all early grades with intentional efforts to align and bring continuity to preschool through third grade.

ACADEMICS VS. PLAY. Some label kindergarten the *new first grade* as a result of down-grade pressure to infuse a more academic focus. Kindergarten teachers often report feeling pressured by high expectations concerning children’s abilities exiting kindergarten. Studies do show that academic content in kindergarten is linked to strong performance in later grades. However, experts agree that content delivered without attention to how children learn best – through play, collaborative inquiry, and differentiated instruction – is a mistake. Kindergarten education is not an *either/or* experience. An effective classroom includes *both* developmentally appropriate learning opportunities and content.

Visit www.earlymilestones.org/fdk for additional information and reference materials.

