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# SYSTEMATIC IMPLEMENTATION OF FULL-DAY KINDERGARTEN IN A LARGE SUBURBAN SCHOOL DISTRICT: A CHANGE LEADERSHIP PLAN

BRAD EDWARD CARTER MR  
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SYSTEMIC IMPLEMENTATION OF FULL-DAY KINDERGARTEN IN A  
LARGE SUBURBAN SCHOOL SYSTEM: A CHANGE LEADERSHIP PLAN

Brad Carter and Erin Knoll  
Educational Leadership Doctoral Program

Submitted in partial fulfillment  
of the requirements of  
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in the Foster G. McGaw Graduate School

National College of Education

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## **Abstract**

The purpose of this change plan document is to provide a rationale and structure for shifting from half- to full-day kindergarten. Patricia Clark's (2009) synthesis of multiple research studies on full-day kindergarten outlines the reoccurring findings that implementation of full-day kindergarten prevents long term academic struggles for students. Closing the achievement gaps when at its smallest, which is early in the educational career of a student, ensures long term academic, social, and emotional success.

## **Preface: Leadership Lessons Learned**

Change is a word often tossed around in education. The simple nature of the work—having a *new* class of students each year, hiring staff with consistent start and end dates—represents a setup for change, in a very rigid and often very structured reoccurring way. While educators embrace change as a part of what they do, this project forced the researchers to examine change as it related to the bigger picture and more global impact.

Writing this change plan forced us to not change for the sake of changing or because of the start of a new school year. Instead, it required us, as researchers, to do something different as part of the change process. The change plan made us think of how the *ideal* would be and examine our reality in order to get to it. This was new to us. While we are always planning and determining next steps, actually taking the time to examine what the ideal change would look like forced us to think bigger picture and determine the final goal and miniscule steps that it would take to get there.

This change plan became a live document in our work within our district so we were able to examine the ideal becoming the reality. How fortunate are we to not only have these leadership lessons with determining the ideal, but bringing it to fruition? What a powerful leadership opportunity.

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## SECTION ONE: INTRODUCTION

### Background

The purpose of this change plan involves exploring systemic implementation of full-day kindergarten programming in a large suburban school district. It explores the community and staff interest, as well as feasibility of expanding the current half-day kindergarten model to a free, full-day kindergarten program housed at each of the incoming kindergarten student's base school. This change plan provides:

- A summary of the research literature related to full-day kindergarten programming;
- A rationale supporting full-day kindergarten in a large suburban district;
- An overview of potential scheduling formats for full-day kindergarten programming;
- A cost analysis associated with shifting from a half- to a full-day kindergarten offering;
- A facility analysis associated with adding a free, full-day kindergarten program housed at each incoming kindergarten student's base school;
- A summary of common questions and answers related to full-day kindergarten programs; and
- Survey data from parents of current and incoming kindergarten parents and guardians.

In Spring 2014, the largest kindergarten through eight grade district in the state of Illinois adopted three new rigorous goals for student performance. These goals drive all work taking place in the system and are aligned to the new levels of expectation

and rigor articulated in the Common Core State Standards. The goals state:

1. Students attending any school in the district for at least one year will be at grade level in reading and math upon entering the third grade.
2. Each school will close the achievement gap for all students in reading and math, as measured by both district and state assessments.
3. Each school will perform at or above the 90<sup>th</sup> percentile (top 10% nationally) in meeting individual student growth targets in reading and math, as measured by the Measures of Academic Progress (MAP) assessment.

Specifically, the first goal relates to early academic success and highlights the importance of providing the most robust educational opportunities for students before entering the third grade. This goal was developed based on the resounding research on early academic achievement and long term academic success. Providing an instructionally sound, full-day kindergarten program to all students best positions schools to meet the district's rigorous goals for student performance.

Lastly and most importantly, Illinois' recent adoption of the Common Core State Standards has raised the bar of expectation higher than ever before. The Common Core effectively established a new minimum. District A has been working diligently over the past twenty months to realign the curriculum and structures of support to ensure that students are equipped to meet these new demands.

Representative task forces in literacy and mathematics were formed during the 2012 school year to engage in this important work. Analysis of the Common Core State Standards for English language arts and mathematics indicate that both sets of

standards, by virtue of their considerable depth and scope, were intentionally designed to be implemented in a full day kindergarten setting. District A's current half-day kindergarten format simply does not provide teachers and students with adequate time to teach these new standards to the level of mastery.

### **Statement of the Problem**

Current half-day programming cannot provide the adequate time for instruction of the new Illinois learning standards. Knowing how vital the first few years of education are to long term academic success, full-day programming would be not only essential but dictated by the change in standards.

Approximately five years ago, District A offered full day kindergarten exclusively in Title I schools involving a building base design to the structure of the second half of the school day for kindergarteners. This much autonomy to the structure of the day created inequitable opportunities for students and led to varying academic results—none of which were deemed strong enough to sustain the programming change or to implement system wide. While acknowledging that the previous implementation of full-day kindergarten was not a success, the structure and systemic educational opportunities for students was not aligned to best practice, research, or designed with curricular resources in mind. For example, instructional times were very inconsistent from school to school and there was no consistency concerning a clear, viable instructional scope and sequence for all full-day kindergarten classrooms.

Community feedback for the full day programming was strong, but the lack of increased student achievement data did not warrant District A's continued offering.

With regards to implementing full-day kindergarten again, a vision with clear structure and instructional resources would need to be designed with professional development for staff on the changes and effective best practices within the second half of the school day.

### **Rationale**

Longitudinal studies revealed that a 90% chance existed that a child struggling academically at the end of Grade 1 would remain struggling at the end of Grade 4 (Juel, 1988). Fountas and Pinnell's (2009) research indicates that 90-95% of children with reading problems can overcome their difficulties if they receive appropriate treatment at an early age. In addition, Allington (2011) noted that "It is distressing to think that our schools are so ineffectual with children who begin school with few literacy experiences that we can predict with horrifying accuracy what lifestyles different six-year-olds will attain when they reach adulthood" (p. xi).

Mixed results were evident in the 1970s and 1980s concerning the effect of full-day kindergarten versus half-day kindergarten on academic achievement. At that time, consistent findings appeared concerning the positive effect of full-day kindergarten for children identified as at risk (Housen & Kam, 1992). In the 1990s, research showed more consistent positive academic outcomes for all children enrolled in full-day kindergarten. When examining the research, to the researcher's knowledge, no studies existed indicating that half-day students achieved at a higher level than full-day students.

Patricia Clark's 2001 article, *Recent Research on All-Day Kindergarten*, includes a summary of research on full-day versus half-day kindergarten. The

following excerpt from Clark's article includes research on both the academic and behavioral effects of full-day and half-day kindergarten:

Cryan, Sheehan, Wiechel, and Bandy-Hedden (1992) conducted a two-phase study that examined the effects of half-day and full-day kindergarten programs on children's academic and behavioral success in school. In the first phase of the study, data was collected on 8,290 children from 27 school districts; the second phase included nearly 6,000 children. The researchers found that participation in full-day kindergarten was related positively to subsequent school improvement. Children who attended full-day kindergarten scored higher on standardized tests and had fewer grade retentions. Hough and Bryde (1996) looked at student achievement data for 511 children enrolled in half-day and full-day kindergarten programs in 25 classrooms. Children in full-day kindergarten scored higher on standardized tests than those in half-day programs on every test item. More important than standardized test results, students were able to close the academic achievement gap early leading to long term academic success. (Clark, 2001, pp. 1-2)

Clark's (2001) article examined multiple research studies, all of which found that full-day kindergarten led to increased academic achievement for students in comparison to their half-day peers. Clark's article became a strong foundation that District A used to examine the potential shift from half- to full-day kindergarten.

In addition to the research included in Clark's (2001) article, Koopmans (1991) looked at two cohorts of students: one in its third year of elementary school and the other in its second year. Koopmans found that both reading comprehension



and math achievement for students in full-day kindergarten programming were higher compared to the achievement level of the students in half-day programming.

Finally, in a meta-analysis of 23 studies on full-day kindergarten, Fusaro (1997) concluded that students attending full-day kindergarten performed at a higher academic achievement level than their half-day counterparts that accounted for approximately 60% variance in outcomes.

The literature strongly indicated that students in full-day kindergarten achieve at higher levels than students in half-day kindergarten. Some of the literature suggested that changing the length of the kindergarten day represents one factor that needs to be combined with providing developmentally and individually appropriate learning environments—regardless of whether these programs are full- or half-day. The length of the school day involves only one dimension of the kindergarten experience. Other important factors involved in the achievement of students include the curriculum being taught and the quality of the instruction. In addition, several studies found that regardless of the curriculum, low socioeconomic students benefited greater from full-day kindergarten than middle or high socioeconomic students.

Taking the research findings into account, the addition of free, full-day programming with a set structure based on research could not only increase district-wide student achievement results but better prepare students for long-term academic success and allow for college and career readiness as early as 5- and 6-year-olds. Isn't that truly the job of the education systems?

## Goals

The goals of this change plan involve creating a systemic structure for implementation of full-day kindergarten, including:

1. Developing a clear instructional and structural outline for the second half of the school day;
2. Outlining a plan for instructional and structural changes with implementation of full day kindergarten for the Board of Education;
3. Collaborating with administrative team on structure and instructional changes;
4. Designing a professional development schedule for staff regarding changes;
5. Developing community and parent awareness resources and open houses;
6. Developing a support structure during implementation from District A's senior leadership team to the Director of Kindergarten;
7. Addressing the legal requirements of the state of Illinois to address the half-day offering legal requirement; and
8. Establishing collaborative planning teams among the kindergarten staff.

These goals require input from all stakeholders to ensure effective implementation.

Wagner, Kegan, Lahey, Lemons, Garnier, Helsing, Howell, and Rasmussen (2006)

highlighted the critical nature of engaging the entire community in developing new

commitments and change. Wagner et al. (2006) specifically stated that all

stakeholders need to be involved in answering the question of *why change?* in order

to have success with establishing change. He suggested designing an Immunity

Map—a reflective process of evaluating current behaviors, commitments, hidden assumptions, and competing commitments for change that allow for forward movement with a greater awareness of the impact of change. Having stakeholders be a part of the process not only allows for developing the best design but it also supports implementation as these individuals will be the voices for the change.

Even though some concerns with the past history of full-day kindergarten exist, a large amount of work and research supports the change, and it is time to take what was learned from that implementation to ensure that the new implementation supports student academic achievement.

### **Demographics**

District A is a northwest Illinois suburban district that serves seven cities with a total of 28 schools ranging from early childhood to eighth grade. One Early Learning Center serves early childhood students from across the district. Currently, there are 22 elementary buildings with kindergarten and five junior high schools with seventh and eighth grade students. The racial make-up of District A is approximately 44% White, 7% Black, 24 % Hispanic, .5% Native American, 21% Asian, and the remainder from other races. In addition, currently 30% of the students in the district qualify for free and reduced lunch.

Currently, District A supports approximately 800 kindergarten students. Each year, approximately 300 additional students enter the district for first grade. Most families that opt to enter the district at first grade have chosen a full-day kindergarten program offered at the park district, a private school, or a child care facility. The educational programming varies tremendously depending on each of these facilities.

The additional 300 students entering in first grade come with a wide variety of potential kindergarten experiences. By offering free, full-day programming, District A could provide a consistent educational opportunity for all students, from the first year, when the academic gaps are at their smallest.

## SECTION TWO: ASSESSING THE 4Cs

Using Wagner et al's (2006) *Four Cs Change Leadership Model*, context, culture, conditions, and competencies were assessed in District A. As part of the assessment process, an examination of the current organizational structures of the school district, the culture of the school district and community, and the current implementation of kindergarten offering within the system were evaluated to determine current reality.

### **Context**

External to an organization are the cultural, political, economic, and in the education field, educational factors that provide influence. The context represents the element that often seems beyond one's control but deeply impacts the work of the organization.

The organizational context was established more than 20 years prior in the district when implementation of half-day kindergarten was put into place across all 22 elementary schools. It was designed to promote early academic and social emotional development. While this worked with the educational landscape at the time, with recent changes to the educational standards, the half-day offering isn't conducive to the amount of instructional time needed for mastery of the learning standards.

Since its inception, the structure of the overall half-day kindergarten programming has changed. According to *The School Code of Illinois*, kindergarten programs and attendance actually are optional [105 ILCS 5/26-1] (Illinois General Assembly, 2015). The compulsory attendance age is 7 to 17 but very few schools do not offer at least a half-day option for students when they are age 5. Even if the

district offers all-day kindergarten, a half-day option must be offered to parents as an alternative [105 ILCS 5/10-22.19a] (Illinois General Assembly, 2007).

Many of the schools across the district worked to develop *extended day programming* where afternoon students would come in at the end of the morning session and morning sessions students would stick around for an additional 45 minutes of instruction. This required staff to sacrifice a duty-free lunch. Many staff were willing to do this on their own free will; yet, the rushed nature of timing did not yield the anticipated results.

Deeply rooted in the district's history was the implementation of full-day kindergarten at Title I schools. This program offering was a building-based decision with the instructional decisions being completely left to staff at each site to decide. The academic achievement results of students from this cohort on the third grade state assessment showed no improvement. The Board of Education and senior leadership team found the full-day programming to be noneffective and pulled the offering completely in all elementary buildings in 2009 (see Appendix A).

This half-day instructional structure has not changed since the 2009-2010 school year, and until now has remained. A significant amount of work has been accomplished under this instructional structure with an increased focus on early literacy and numeracy skills. Three times yearly, all kindergarten staff come together from 22 schools to reflect and refine the instructional programming for students. In addition, the full curriculum was overhauled to focus on providing more rigorously academic opportunities for students. Kitchens that were once seen in all kindergarten classrooms were replaced with additional text and math stations.

The instructional structure of the kindergarten day was overhauled to not only provide academically rigorous learning, but also acceleration opportunities for students struggling to grasp key concepts in math and literacy. These structures and flood of instructional support personnel has provided a sound foundation instructionally for students as they enter into full-day programming in first grade.

One of the goals of the increased focus on kindergarten structures involves improving long term academic achievement results. Over the past eight years, student achievement on the Illinois State Assessment Test has risen from 76% to 91%, proving that the focus on early academic achievement translates into long term academic gains ([www.Illinoisreportcard.com](http://www.Illinoisreportcard.com)). While it can be safely assumed that the Board of Education and the senior administrative team have been pleased with the accomplishments of the half-day kindergarten programming offering, they have additionally expressed their concern regarding capitalizing on the potential of a structured full-day offering.

Additionally, many kindergarten teachers have expressed an interest in a full-day offering, since they see how demanding the most recent changes to the state standards have become to accomplish in two and a half hours a day. The standards were designed for a full-day structure and the demands of covering such content in half the time has become unachievable. Cutting some of the standards from daily instruction is required due to time constraints.

## **Culture**

Bolman and Deal (1997) described organizational culture as the *way things are done around here*. In other words, while an organizational chart might

demonstrate how things *should* get done, culture is the reality—it is the patterns, shared assumptions, and interpretations that shape behavior within an organization.

The culture of the half-day kindergarten educational offering is deeply rooted in the idea that, *We are getting good results as is, why change?* While this is accurate, the idea of, *How can we make this better,* isn't at the forefront.

In addition, the half-day kindergarten offering allows for building administration to have some half-time teaching positions for staff not willing to work full-time because of other commitments. This entails simply looking at the best interest of staff and not potentially the best interest for students. The part-time work offering represents one of the very few options for staff wanting to work less than a full-day of teaching. While this can be a convenient offering for staff, it is very dependent on whether the building administration allows for part-time status. Most buildings have two sections of kindergarten, which in essence, encompasses a full-time position. As of 2014, six of the 44 kindergarten staff worked exclusively part-time or the half-day offering timeframe. Again, this represents the culture that has established that part-time teaching exists through offering half-day kindergarten experiences for students.

### **Conditions**

Internal to the organization are structural, cultural, economic, and symbolic factors that often constrain but sometimes also support organizational change. Compared to culture, the conditions are the more tangible elements that shape how to make sense of the surface-level health of the organization. Included are financial issues, departmental configurations, leadership, and human resource issues.



The conditions, by far, become the leading factor for why a full-day kindergarten offering becomes a severe sticking point. State funding, when going from a half- to a full-day offering, does not compensate for the associated costs. The anticipated costs associated with going from a half- to a full-day offering over the next 3 years are shown in Tables 1, 2, and 3.

Table 1

Year One: Anticipated Additional Cost Incurred from Implementing Full-Day Kindergarten

Staffing	\$2,835,500
Facility Modifications	\$240,000
Initial Curricular Materials	\$374,550
Transportation	\$370,000
<b>Year One Total Costs:</b>	<b>\$3,820,050</b>

Table 2

Year Two: Anticipated Additional Cost Incurred from Implementing Full-Day Kindergarten

Staffing	\$2,920,565
Facility Modifications	\$0
Initial Curricular Materials	\$95,850
Transportation	\$379,250
<b>Year Two Total Costs:</b>	<b>\$3,395,665</b>

Table 3

Year Three: Anticipated Additional Cost Incurred from Implementing Full-Day Kindergarten

Staffing	\$3,008,181
Facility Modifications	\$0
Initial Curricular Materials	\$95,850
Transportation	\$388,731
<b>Year Three Total Costs:</b>	<b>\$3,492,762</b>

Obviously, long term costs can be extensive. That being said, District A is a district that puts a significant amount in reserve each year. The calculated reserve amount could be adjusted to adequately compensate for this cost; that is, if the state of Illinois doesn't adjust the current district funding. In that case, the yearly cost could be substantially more for the district.

While cost is the most extensive concern regarding conditions, space is also a condition that needs to be considered. Many schools would need to get creative with their space and how its organized while others would only be able to move to a full-day offering with additions or modification of the building structures (i.e., taking two office spaces and making them into one classroom by removing the dividing wall). Again, this is a factor included in the facility modification costs (see Table 1). While it is a one-time cost and not reoccurring, it would be substantial and would not be something that the state of Illinois would provide additional compensation.

## **Competencies**

Competencies can be seen as *hard* and *soft*. Hard competencies might be the actual skills and knowledge required to carry out specific tasks while soft competencies might be the dispositions, personal affects, leadership styles, and communication styles of individual people.

As mentioned, District 54 once offered a full-day kindergarten program with very loose structures. For the full-day offering to be implemented well, several tight and still some loose structures would need to be put into place. Collectively with teacher and administrative representation from across all 22 schools, a common mission and vision for implementation would need developing. This committee would need to outline the tight and loose expectations to ensure clarity for systemic implementation, as well as outline daily instructional timeframes with structures for acceleration, reteaching skills to those students not yet grasping content, or extending skills for those students already grasping grade level content. The structures would need to be consistent with teacher autonomy occurring with daily lesson planning. Tight structures that have proven successful in other full-day grade levels would be the structures duplicated in the full-day offering for kindergarten.

Ongoing, full kindergarten staff training would be vital to ensure effective implementation. Lencioni (2012) outlined four key disciplines that lead to organizational health:

Discipline 1: Build a Cohesive Leadership Team

Discipline 2: Create Clarity

Discipline 3: Overcommunicate Clarity

#### Discipline 4: Reinforce Clarity

Lencioni's (2012) four disciplines outline a foundation for facilitating the organizational health with implementation of a full-day kindergarten offering.

In addition to staff, community and parent sessions would be critical. Staff-facilitated information sessions on a full-day kindergarten offering at the building level would provide the clarity that the community needs—as these changes relate to the community and their family. When things change in a school or in this case, the instructional time offering, parents want to hear from the classroom teacher and building administration what they will be doing with their children each day—not from central office administration. This would require not only staff input, but clarity too. In essence, overcommunication to all stakeholders about the changes would be key.

Although the increased student achievement in the early grades has improved, more improvements are needed. With a growing focus on early academic success that is connected to long term academic achievement, the need to advance the full-day kindergarten offering to all students is a necessary need.

## **SECTION THREE: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

### **Research Design**

Quantitative data collection assists in clarifying the current levels of interest in the full-day kindergarten offering and staff support for the change in instructional structure. If the purpose of the research involves creating a full-day kindergarten instructional offering, then it will be necessary to examine the system as it is now, as well as the interest for the change by staff and community. The current system and structure has achieved strong academic gains and the change being examined involves seeing what more can be done to even better prepare students for long term success. Moving beyond the current instructional structure requires collaboration and development of systems and structures based on research. A thorough examination of the current structures and research can assist in understanding and developing a sound systemic structure for effective implementation of a full-day kindergarten offering.

When examining the potential of full-day kindergarten, existing district structures can be utilized as a springboard. Staff feedback on what has proven to be most successful—in terms of student achievement gains, the potential for expanding these offerings, or extending the timeframe in which the instruction happens—were examined. Feedback from staff and the community were invaluable to ensuring maximum student academic opportunities.

### **Participants**

Information was gathered from four individuals and groups representing four different schools from across the district. These groups consisted of current kindergarten teachers, current kindergarten parents, incoming kindergarten parents,

and building and assistant principals. Student demographics in each of the four surveyed schools represent the range across all 27 schools in the district. These schools were selected to provide results indicative of the various school groups across the district. Each of these, individually and collectively, offered valuable insight into the existing system and potential future offerings.

### **Data Collection Techniques**

To examine how parents, staff, and building administration felt about a full-day kindergarten offering, data was collected using anonymous online surveys of teachers, parents, and building and assistant principals examining the following:

- Interest in shifting from half- to full-day kindergarten
- Support for the change from half- to full-day kindergarten
- Additional areas of consideration for shifting from half- to full-day kindergarten

Participant invitation letters (see Appendix C) were sent to 44 staff from across each of the three schools, 55 parents of current kindergarten parents, and seven building administrators. Following the invitation to participate in the survey, participants were instructed to go online to complete the survey questions at their convenience. The survey questions (see Appendix D), asked not only the participant's interest in full-day kindergarten, but also specific feedback, to allow for further examination into any concerns.

Invitations were sent randomly to parents, staff, and administrators—all from District A but spread exclusively among three different schools. The goal was to gather data from various schools across the district. Each school from across the

district had very different demographics. Table 4 outlines the demographics of each school that was invited to participate:

Table 4

Demographics of Participating Schools

	<b>Demographics</b>	<b>School Size</b>	<b>Number of Current Kindergarten Students</b>
<b>School 1</b>	White 35% Black 6% Hispanic 37% Asian 19% Multi Racial 3%	Total Enrollment: 501	49
<b>School 2</b>	White 42% Black 4% Hispanic 15% Asian 35% Multi Racial 4%	Total Enrollment: 717	89
<b>School 3</b>	White 63% Black 4% Hispanic 8% Asian 25%	Total Enrollment: 559	74

The survey’s goal involved determining if enough interest existed in a free, full-day kindergarten option before considering anything further. If staff, community, and administration were opposed, it would be very difficult or impossible to successfully implement. Therefore, each stakeholder group’s feedback needs consideration, specifically comments on factors that influenced participants’ responses.

**Data Analysis Techniques**

Survey results were analyzed to determine how much interest existed in shifting from half- to full-day kindergarten. In addition, the surveys were analyzed to determine if additional areas of consideration were necessary for shifting from half-

to full-day kindergarten. The survey results from parents, staff, and building administration were collected and analyzed by the researchers of this study.



## SECTION FOUR: RELEVANT LITERATURE

### Introduction

Research on full-day kindergarten comes from a variety of literature and varying sources. This section focuses on and attempts to synthesize the literature around the following topics:

- Academic achievement
- Social and behavioral effects
- Parent and teacher attitudes
- Research on implementing change

In November of 2009, Patricia Clark, of the U. S. Department of Education, provided a comprehensive research summary on full-day kindergarten. Clark's 2001 work served as a thorough summary of the relevant literature regarding full-day kindergarten and represents a primary source for the information contained in this section.

In the fall of 1998, of the 4 million children attending kindergarten in the United States, 55% were in full-day programs and 45% were in half-day programs (West, Denton, & Germino-Hausken, 2000). Today, there is a clear trend toward full-day kindergarten programs in the state of Illinois with over 76% of school districts offering full-day programs (Illinois State Board of Education, n.d.).

Clark (2001) suggested that the growing number of full-day kindergarten programs is the result of a number of factors including a greater number of single-parent and dual-income families in the workforce who need full-day programming for their children. Many believe that full-day programs better prepare children for long

term academic successes than does half-day programs. Full-day kindergarten programs are also popular with schools because it eliminates the need to provide midday bussing. Still, some argue that a half-day program is less expensive and provides an adequate educational and social experience for young children while orientating them to school—especially if they have attended preschool.

### **Academic Achievement**

In the 1970s and 1980s, there were mixed results concerning the effect of full-day kindergarten verses half-day kindergarten on academic achievement. During that time, consistent findings appeared concerning the positive effect of full-day kindergarten for children identified as being at risk (Housen & Kam, 1992). In the 1990s, research regarding this issue showed more consistent positive academic outcomes for all children enrolled in full-day kindergarten (Cryan et al., 1992; Elicker & Mathur, 1997; Fusaro, 1997; Hough & Bryde, 1996; Koopmans, 1991). To the best of the researchers for this paper’s knowledge, no studies exist indicating that half-day students achieved academically at a higher level than full-day students. Clark (2001) stated:

In a meta-analysis of 23 studies on full-day kindergarten, Fusaro (1997) concluded that children who had attended full-day kindergarten achieved at a higher level than children in half-day kindergarten programs. According to Fusaro, full-day kindergarten accounted for approximately 60% of the variance in outcome measures. (p. 7)

Cryan et al. (1992) conducted a two-phase study that included over 8,200 children from 27 school districts in the first phase and over 6,000 children in the second phase.

In both phases, the researcher found that participants in full-day kindergarten achieved high on standardized tests and had fewer retention rates.

Finally, Hough and Bryde (1996) examined student achievement data for 511 students enrolled in half-day and full-day kindergarten programming in 25 classrooms and found that students in full-day kindergarten scored higher on standardized tests than those in half-day programs.

The literature strongly indicated that students in full-day kindergarten achieve at higher levels than students in half-day kindergarten. The length of the school day is only one dimension of the kindergarten experience. Other important factors involved in student achievement include the curriculum being taught and the quality of the instruction. In addition, several studies found that regardless of the curriculum, low-socioeconomic students benefited greater from full-day kindergarten than middle- or high-socioeconomic students.

### **Social and Behavioral Effects**

Most studies of full-day kindergarten focus on student academic achievement. However, researchers have also examined social and behavioral effects. Cryan et al. (1992) asked teachers to rate half-day and full-day kindergarten children on 14 dimensions of classroom behavior. According to researchers, a clear relationship emerged between the kindergarten schedule and children's behavior. Teachers rated children in full-day kindergarten program higher on 9 of the 14 dimensions. Furthermore, significant differences were not evident in the remaining five dimensions. Other researchers who have studied social and behavioral outcomes found that children in full-day kindergarten programs were engaged in more child-to-

child interactions (Hough & Bryde, 1996) and these children made significantly greater progress in learning social skills (Elicker & Mathur, 1997).

Cryan et al. (1992), in a longitudinal study of kindergarteners, found that full-day kindergarteners exhibited more independent learning, classroom involvement, increased productivity with peers, and reflectiveness than did half-day kindergarteners. They were also more likely to approach the teacher and expressed less withdrawal, anger, shyness, and blaming behavior than half-day kindergarteners. In general, children in full-day programs exhibited more positive behaviors than did pupils in half-day or alternate-day programs.

### **Parent and Teacher Attitudes**

In addition to considering academic, social, and behavioral effects, researchers examined parent and teacher attitudes toward full-day kindergarten. Both parents and teachers whose children were enrolled in all-day kindergarten were generally satisfied with the programs and believed that full-day kindergarten better prepared children for first grade (Elicker & Mathur, 1997; Hough & Bryde, 1996). Teachers and parents also indicated a preference for full-day kindergarten because of the more relaxed atmosphere, time for creative activities, and opportunity for children to develop their own interests (Elicker & Mathur, 1997). In addition, parents reported that full-day kindergarten teachers provided suggestions for home activities more frequently (Hough & Bryde, 1996) and felt that the full-day kindergarten schedule benefited their children socially (Towers, 1991). The teachers surveyed felt that the full-day program provided more time for individual instruction (Housden & Kam, 1992) and indicated that they had more time to get to know their students and families, thus

enabling them to better meet the students' needs (Elicker & Mathur, 1997).

Several studies also indicated that parents favor a full-day program that reduces the number of transitions that kindergarteners experience. Furthermore, families not able to schedule childcare find full-day kindergarten especially attractive.

### **Research on Implementing Change**

When examining the research on implementing change, Lear (1996) quoted statistical data regarding the failure and success of strategic plans in American corporations. According to Lear (1996), most plans that failed had the following in common:

1. An emphasis on financial projections rather than specific tasks to be executed.
2. Lack of an original vision.
3. Lack of "buy-in" from true stakeholders.
4. Lack of communication and collaboration between leadership and the stakeholders.
5. Inconsistent or incomplete communication.
6. Lack of a midcourse correction.
7. Inadequately developed and/or cowardly leadership. (p. 2)

In contrast, successful strategic plans were described by Lear (1996), which exhibited the following characteristics:

1. Proactive efforts that acknowledged inevitable cultural and technological change.
2. Pervasive collaborative efforts.

3. Dynamic and continuous planning that view the process as a journey rather than a destination.
4. Seamless and never-ending communication and articulation of the plan.

(p. 3)

By acknowledging and addressing the survey feedback, the strong structures already in place, the research on full-day kindergarten offerings leading to increased student achievement, and the research on implementing change, developing the successful model described by Lear (1996) will be crucial to being proactive in the implementation of the change in kindergarten offering.

Heifetz, Linsky, and Grashow (2009) noted the need in determining whether or not an organization is ready for change. He identified an issue as *ripe* for change when there is an urgency that has generalized across the system. There appears to be some urgency for systemic change based on the school districts' academic achievement goals focused on early literacy and math development. The urgency appears to differ and may even be seen as nonexistent with some who view the increased achievement as in alignment with the school district goals. For example, some teachers feel students are progressing just fine with the current structures so they may not be as open to change while others would like to see the increased opportunities through offering a full-day instructional model for kindergarten. Even though some may feel differently about the full-day offering, most importantly, it would serve the best interest of the students in the district.

In *diagnosing the system* and determining the *ripeness for change*, Hargreaves and Finks' (2006) illustration of improvement and innovation are considered.

Hargreaves and Fink, utilizing the analogy of a horse, described four different images that might characterize an organization. First, the *dead horse*, which represents an organization doing nothing to improve or innovate within the system. The organization is essentially lifeless. Next, the *Pegasus*, which is a highly innovative organization but lacks practicality and usefulness to its stakeholders. The third image represents that of a *thoroughbred*, which depicts an organization that accepts innovation, runs smoothly, and is the pride of the stakeholders. Finally, the *Ferrari* represents a different kind of horsepower and is an example of the out-of-the box innovative thinking that leads an organization to progressive change. The Schaumburg School District represents a Ferrari at times; but mostly, it is more like an innovated thoroughbred. Stakeholders would like to see an improved system, as noted during School Board meetings, but may not be willing to bite off the cost associated with the change.

### **Summary**

Research supports the fact that greater positive learning and social and behavioral benefits exist for children in full-day kindergarten programs than in half-day kindergarten programs. To the researchers' knowledge, no current studies report that half-day kindergarten produces greater learning than full-day kindergarten. Both parents and teachers whose children were enrolled in full-day kindergarten favored the programs and believed that full-day kindergarten better prepared children for school than half-day kindergarten. In addition, the literature strongly favors full-day kindergarten for at-risk students. It is important to keep in mind that the amount of time a kindergartener spends at school represents only one factor that contributes to

their learning. Parental support, developmentally appropriate instruction, teacher quality, curriculum, classroom resources, and support services all contribute to the learning that kindergarten children may receive at school. Research supports that enhancing kindergarten learning is not only addressed by adding instructional minutes to the school day—increased academic and social/emotional success is dependent upon providing a strong instructional program during the additional time.



## **SECTION FIVE: DATA ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION**

### **Introduction**

While research supports the long-term academic achievement and social and emotional effects of a full-day kindergarten offering, a pulse of where the staff, parents, and administration stand on the change was vital. Therefore, a survey with an open-ended comments portion was utilized (see Appendix D).

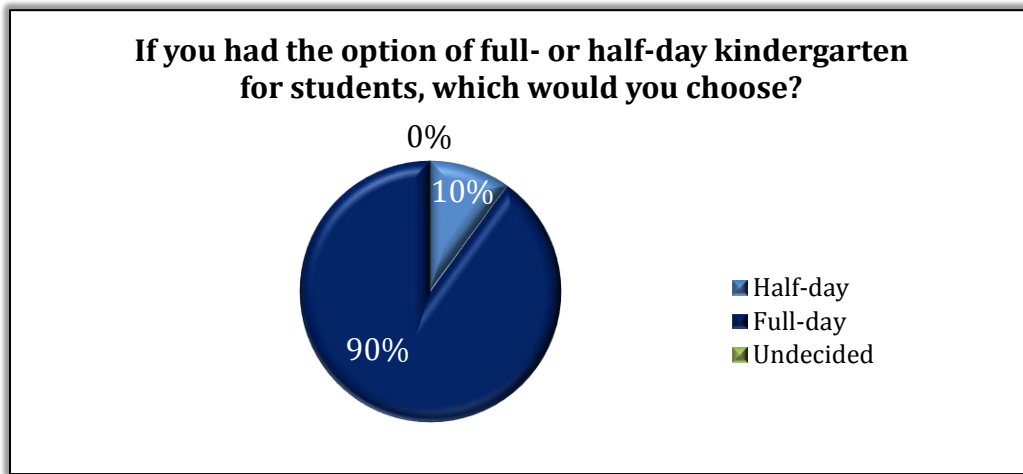
The survey was given to parents of current kindergarten students at three of the district schools. The survey was anonymous and provided the parent perspective on the potential offering. While the survey was given to all parents, only approximately 40% of those invited to participate actually went online and provided feedback.

### **Parent Survey Results**

As part of the change plan, surveys were completed by parents from three schools to gain insight into the parent perspective of the potential full-day kindergarten offering.

Figure 1 provides question one of the survey, which asked what option, full- or half-day kindergarten, would the participant choose for their child. Parent feedback was overwhelming in support of the full-day kindergarten offering with 90% of parents responding that they would select full-day over half-day for their child. However, 10% of parents were in favor of the half-day option. A follow up question provided clarity about what may be of concern for these parents with the full-day option and what needs to be addressed if that was the option for their child.

Figure 1. If you had the option of full- or half-day kindergarten for students, which would you choose?



The following highlights additional feedback provided by parents when asked what questions needed to be addressed related to a full-day kindergarten offering.

Parent Comments:

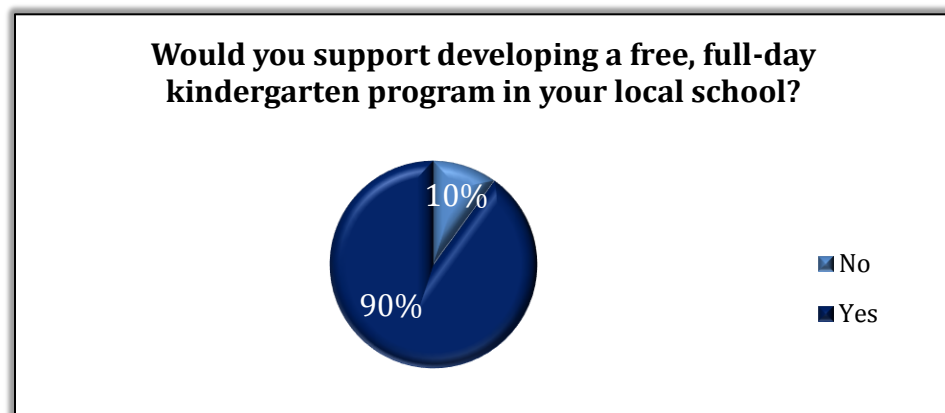
- How will you ensure the second half of the day isn't just a "glorified daycare"?
- Will there be a rest time? Doesn't have to be a nap, just a time of quiet.
- I'm paying so much for the afternoon care for my child now; this is long overdue and makes sense to still have them learning instead of playing at a daycare.
- Is the second half of the day also going to be learning?
- How would lunch work? Would the kindergarten students eat with the sixth grade students or just with other 5- and 6-year-olds?
- Full-day is such a better option for families where both parents work full-time.

The survey feedback demonstrated a wide range of questions parents still had as it related to a full-day kindergarten. While some comments reinforced providing the option of full-day kindergarten, a few involved wanting to know more about how students would spend the second half of the day.

In addition, parents appeared to have other questions relating to logistics (i.e., nap and lunch time). While at first glance, these questions may seem trivial, it is evident that these issues need consideration so that parents are comfortable with how the second half of the day is structured.

As a follow up to question one of the survey, question two asked parents if they would support the development of a free, full-day kindergarten program in their local school. Figure 2 provides question two of the survey and a compilation of survey results relating to question two.

*Figure 2.* Would you support developing a free, full-day kindergarten program in your local school?



Question two results mirrored question one results. Question two was a follow up question designed to gather more information about interest in a full-day kindergarten program if it were offered locally. It appears, based on the data, that

parents interested in a full-day kindergarten may have been interested in the option no matter the location. The survey was anonymous; therefore, it is impossible to confirm if the respondents were identical from questions one and two.

For this question, parents who responded *no* were asked to provide feedback about any concerns they had with a free, full-day kindergarten offering. A compilation of these responses follow.

Parent Comments:

- There has to be a cost associated with this and I don't want my taxes to go up anymore.
- My child still takes naps and I don't think 5- or 6-year-olds should be in school for that long.

These two comments were the only areas of concern for parents as to why they would not consider the full-day option—which is very eye opening. This survey feedback provides helpful information when considering areas to address for a district considering the potential offering of full-day kindergarten. Many school systems automatically hone in on academics; however, it appears that the greatest concerns involve financial issues and students' sleep needs.

In addition to the two survey questions, a final survey question gathered other considerations that parents felt needed addressing. These open-ended questions and parent responses follow.

*Beyond instruction and social emotional development, what other factors do you feel need to be considered for a free, full-day kindergarten offering?*

Parent Responses:

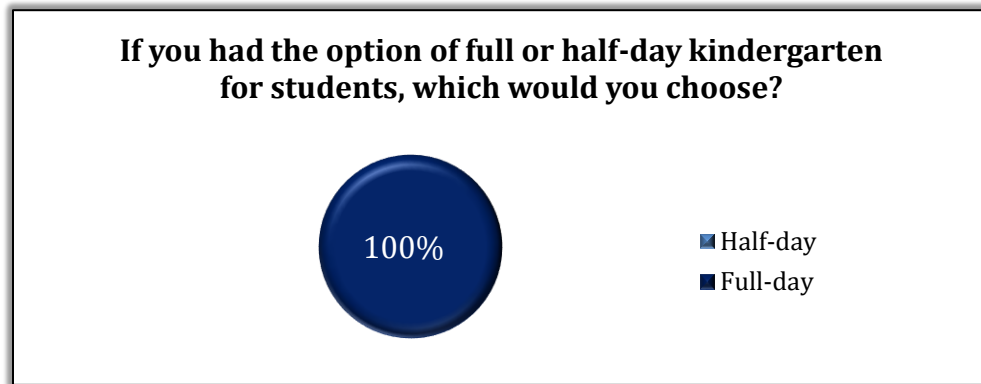
- Lunch time
- Quiet time/nap time
- Don't let the other half of the day be simply daycare
- Make sure the kindergarten students have time to play outside during the day
- Allow the students to have more music, art, and PE since it is so limited with the half-day program
- My child's teacher only works half-day, I would want to be sure the same teacher would be in the classroom in the morning and afternoon

Many of the parents' concerns had nothing to do with academic and was focused on logistics. Any school system outlining a potential transition from half- to full-day kindergarten should determine these considerations.

### **Teacher Survey Results**

Figure 3 shows the survey results of 18 teachers who were 100% unanimously in favor of the implementation of a full-day program. Staff feedback strongly supported its implementation, with one half-time staffer asking if the change would impact current work hours. In addition, staff commented they would like to be part of the committee that develops the instruction and structures associated with such change.

Figure 3. Teacher: If you had the option of full or half-day kindergarten for students, which would you choose?



Teacher survey results demonstrate that they would be in favor of full-day kindergarten for students. Evidently, teachers view the impact of additional time to support students as a critical factor.

In addition to asking teachers which kindergarten time structure they support, a follow up question asked of any potential concerns they had relating to a potential shift from half- to full-day kindergarten. Their responses follow.

Teacher Comments:

- I work part-time—does this mean I have to teach full-time or I don't have a job?
- If there is a committee to talk about what would be done the other half of the day, I would LOVE to be on it.
- We never have enough time to go deep into content because of time. The second half of the day would be so helpful.
- These new standards are hard—we need more time!

An additional survey question asked teachers what instructional and social/emotional

developmental factors need to be considered if a free, full-day kindergarten program was offered:

Teacher Responses:

- Lunch time.
- Specials (art, music, and PE).
- Developing a curriculum the other half of the day—it makes sense to have something we would all follow and not something different at each school.
- What additional textbooks would be provided? We would need more materials.
- Training would be needed on the changes for all kindergarten staff. We can't be expected to figure out another curriculum. Hopefully a committee would be formed and as teachers, we could decide what is done the other half of the day.
- Would there be a nap time? Only a few of my students take naps but I know they need them so I think figuring that out would be important.
- If we have to offer a half-day option, how would that look so the afternoon isn't all content and the morning babysitting?
- We are all out of space in our building, does this mean an addition would be put on?

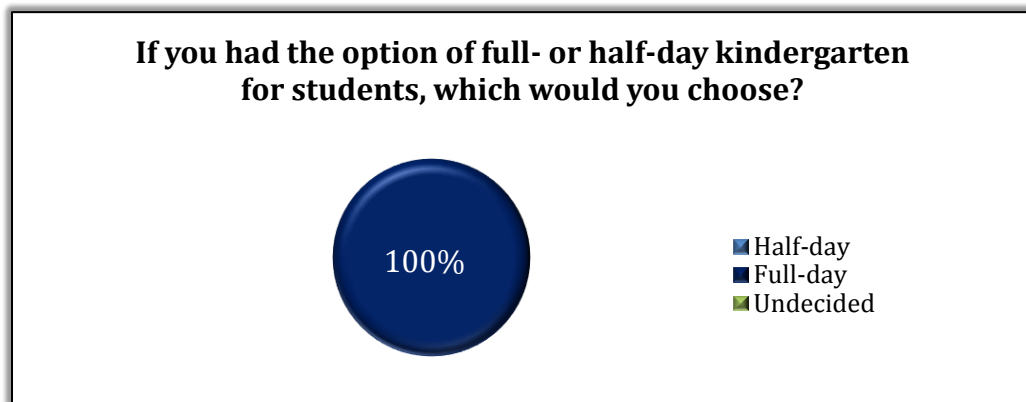
Including these teacher questions and issues would be vital considerations for District A if it were to explore the potential of the full-day offering. As well, when considering the literature on change, taking into account staff input and feedback will

be vital to any successful change.

### **Administrative Survey Results**

Along with parents and teachers, building administration from each of the three schools were surveyed. Figure 4 provides a summary of the administrative survey results from survey question one.

*Figure 4.* Administration: If you had the option of full- or half-day kindergarten for students, which would you choose?



Building administration were 100% unanimously in support of students having the option of attending full-day kindergarten. As with the parent and teacher survey, follow up questions were asked relating to any additional questions relating to the potential shift and the impact on their school:

#### **Administrator Comments:**

- It would be great to offer students a full-day starting in kindergarten. What does the cost of that look like? When we are already considering cuts because of Senate Bill 16, does this make now a bad time to potentially explore this option?
- Our building has so many students that could use the other half of the



day for additional learning. Many go home to family members who aren't working with them in the afternoon. It would be great to keep the momentum going at school.

- Our students could benefit from the extra time when the gap is small and we can better support them with catching up to grade level.
- It only makes sense since most of the children from our school go to a daycare the other half of the day. These facilitates do not have certified teachers working with students and often the children simply play and don't do any additional learning.

The survey included an additional question relating to what additional considerations to take into account for instruction and social and emotional development.

#### Administrator Responses:

- Space—we are full; an addition would be needed.
- Lunch support. Currently our lunch moms have full sections; additional help would be needed.
- I have three, half-time teachers in kindergarten; would job-sharing be an option?
- Cost! This would be expensive. If implemented, it would be vital to ensure this is something that can be sustained long term.
- Parent sessions informing them of the structure and what it means for their child. Support for each school with these evenings.
- We have full-time PE, music, and art staff considerations for additional classroom and specials staff.

The building administration survey results demonstrated unanimous support for the full-day kindergarten structure. While the administrators surveyed were in support, they had many questions and concerns about the impact this change would have on their school and community. The obvious need of funding an additional \$3 million with the current state aid set to potentially be redistributed across the state and with District A set to potentially be hit with a \$16-million-dollar decrease in funding represented concerns. These survey results represent valuable considerations to a school district interested in a full-day kindergarten option. They may also ensure that all stakeholder concerns, areas of need, and feedback are addressed and the implementation to full-day successful.

Within the survey feedback from administration, staffing was a concern that became apparent—from lunch time support to classroom teachers. Hiring staff represents such a substantial role of the building administration that it seemed natural that they would highlight this concern.

### **Summary of Findings**

The survey results represented 90%-100% support of a free, full-day offering for students among parents, teachers, and administration. These results highlight the tremendous interest in the potential offering. Even though interest in the full-day offering was high, significant issues and concerns were mentioned that would need to be addressed if the offering was developed in District A. These include:

- costs for sustaining implementation;
- staffing;
- structure of the school day; and

- community information sessions.

Administering the survey allowed an opportunity to highlight potential concerns, issues, and considerations relating to the potential change to the kindergarten structure. Administration was concerned with sustainability when taking into account the funding shortfall in Illinois. Sustainability represents a substantial concern that would need to be addressed to best support families and deal with potential questions that may arise in the community. Within the survey, teaching staff that currently teach half-time expressed concerns regarding if the change from half- to full-day would impact their work schedules, despite their support for the offering. These issues would need to be addressed. Parents expressed a range of concerns such as eating lunch with older students, nap time, and the need for clarity regarding if a cost would be associated with the change. Based on the survey results, gathering parent feedback would be valuable to successful implementation of full-day kindergarten as well.

## **SECTION SIX: A VISION OF SUCCESS (TO BE)**

### **Introduction**

To determine what successful implementation of full-day kindergarten would include in District A, Wagner et al's (2006) Four Cs Change Leadership Model was utilized as a tool for examining and establishing a vision for successful implementation (see Appendix B). The Four Cs Change Leadership Model reveals a picture of improvement leading in the direction of innovation.

While the research supports the implementation of the full-day kindergarten structure for better academic achievement, aligning to best practice instruction and implementing a systemic wide structure with teachers at the development stage would be vital to long term implementation success. The following sections (Context, Culture, Conditions, Competencies) represent how the researchers envision each of the Four Cs when the model is successfully up and running in District A.

### **Context**

With the implementation of full-day kindergarten, District A provides the time and support needed to create the best possible learning opportunity to fully implement the Common Core State Standards for kindergarten. Adjusting from a half- to a full-day structure allows District A to provide the time that 70% of the districts in the state offer. The full-day structure ensures the time needed is available daily. Essentially, District A can proactively prevent long term difficulties.

### **Culture**

All stakeholder groups will be involved in the change process from half- to full-day kindergarten; doing so establishes a culture of cohesion. Creating a task force

comprised of representatives from each stakeholder group would ensure that all perspectives are considered during the design phase. For example, the following would be helpful:

- A clear instructional and structural outline for the second half of the school day (including time allocations for a full-day structure).
- Outlining a plan for instructional and structural changes to the Board of Education.
- Determining ways to monitor progress and data, and providing acceleration support for students.
- Establishing collaborative planning teams for kindergarten teacher teams in every school.

In addition, including the families and community within the school community highlights the changes and provides an overview of the changes with complete transparency. Listening to parent concerns, questions, thoughts, ideas, and feedback at open houses or in individual meetings establishes an open door policy and willingness to address anything that may arise.

### **Conditions**

Establishing building master schedules provides daily or weekly in-building kindergarten staff collaboration opportunities and monthly cross-district collaboration with all kindergarten staff. These professional collaboration opportunities provide the time for staff to reflect and refine instructional structures. Staff uses the collaboration time and support to discuss academic successes, struggles, and ongoing supports necessary in meeting the needs of all kindergarten students.

Another condition to consider involves creating classroom environments with easy access for support staff to provide acceleration and instructional support within the full-day kindergarten classrooms.

A final condition involves having multiple, small group instructional space with the classrooms, which allow support staff and classroom teachers to parallel teach within the one classroom space.

### **Competencies**

The shift from half- to full-day kindergarten has staff using the instructional resources aligned to the Common Core State Standards for kindergarten. Classroom teachers plan collaboratively in daily and weekly plan times for instruction of all the standards. Teachers discuss not only *what* they will teach but also *how* they will teach high quality lessons that ensure long term academic success for all kids.

### **Summary**

The research supports the need for providing the extended learning opportunity of a full-day of instructional structure at the kindergarten level. With a task force of staff, parents, and community, the design of the full-day structure is designed with all stakeholder groups represented.

## **SECTION SEVEN: STRATEGIES AND ACTIONS**

Moving forward requires a bit of a waiting game because of the state funding dilemma. District A has a multimillion dollar deficit in state funding should a school funding bill pass the State Senate. Maintaining further research on the topic of full-day kindergarten and connecting with districts that have had success will be valuable to the committee should the House of Representatives vote *no* to the Senate Bill causing the stall.

Figure 5 presents strategies and actions for District A's full-day kindergarten implementation, which can be applied, pending clarity on the Senate Bill.

Figure 5. Strategies and actions.

Strategy	Action
Focus on community awareness of the benefits of full-day kindergarten so they understand the impact long-term to society as a whole.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Board of Education presentation on the potential shift and literature to support the change.</li> <li>• Staff and administration overview of the shift from half-to full-day kindergarten.</li> <li>• School-based open house events providing overview of the change in kindergarten structure.</li> </ul>
Provide staff development on curricular changes so staff is adequately prepared for effective implementation.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Professional development sessions for staff in the spring, prior to the fall implementation.</li> <li>• Summer yearlong planning classes for kindergarten staff to plan and develop high-quality lessons.</li> <li>• Follow up professional development in the fall so all staff hired during the summer are prepared for implementation.</li> </ul>
Determine staffing and facility modifications to ensure space and accommodations for five and six year olds have a learning environment that is age appropriate with highly certified staff delivering instruction.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Solicit and hire staff of high quality and caliber to fill new kindergarten vacancies.</li> <li>• During the summer months, complete construction modifications to facilities without adequate classroom space for the additional kindergarten sections.</li> </ul>
Make data-based decisions to ensure appropriate class configurations are balanced based on student need.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Utilize initial screening assessment data to balance classroom sections.</li> <li>• Create class lists.</li> </ul>

While the state funding has stalled implementation for District A, continuing to examine possible ways to implement this change, regardless of funding issues, will be critical. When research so resoundingly outlining a 3-to-1 return on the investment in early education, continuing to maintain conversations with senior district



administration will be key. Various problems and issues will always arise—whether it be state funding or facility space—that makes being creative and thinking outside the box critical. Conversations haven't stopped. However, examining other ways to support implementation and the impact of long-term funding will need to continue.

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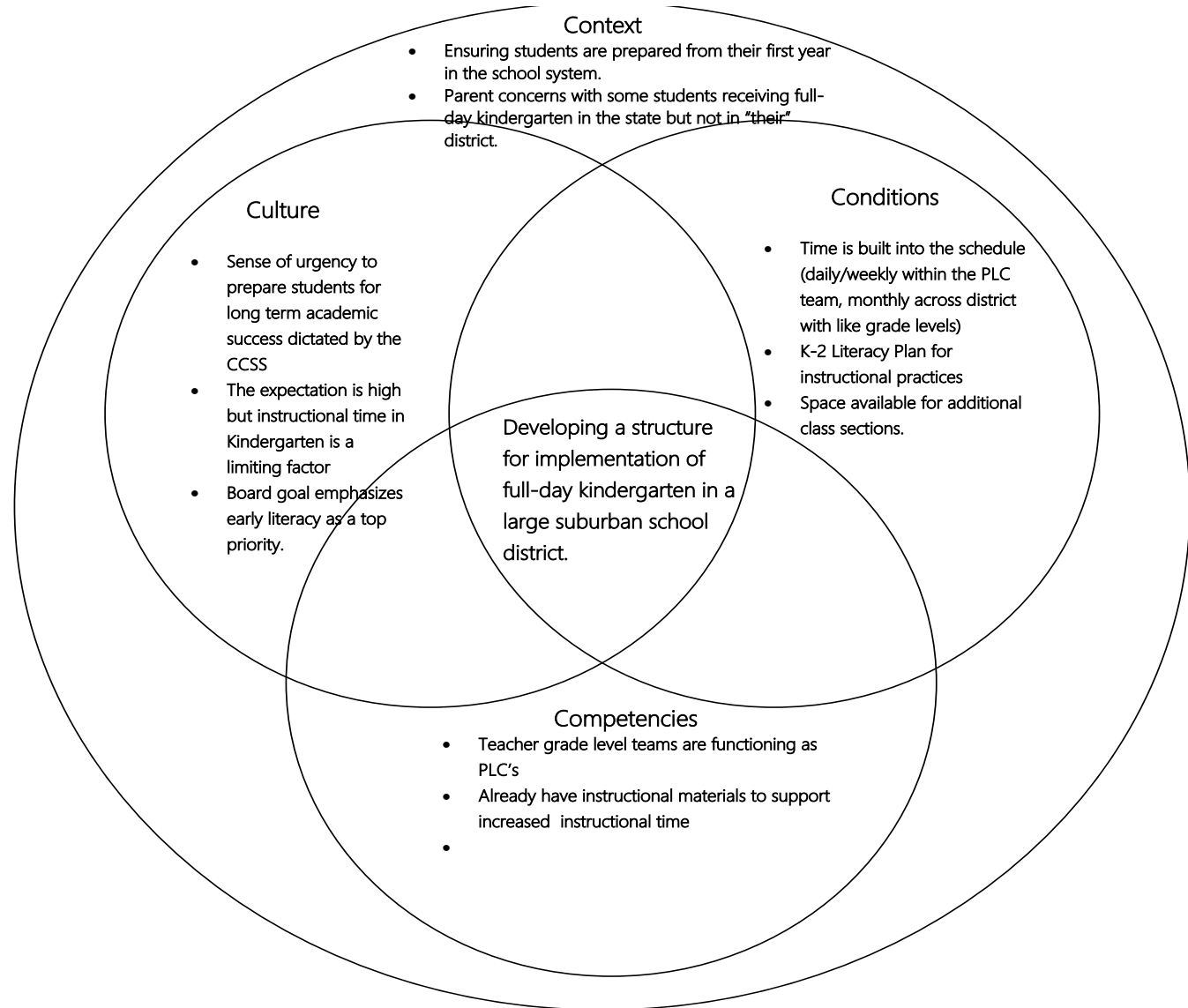
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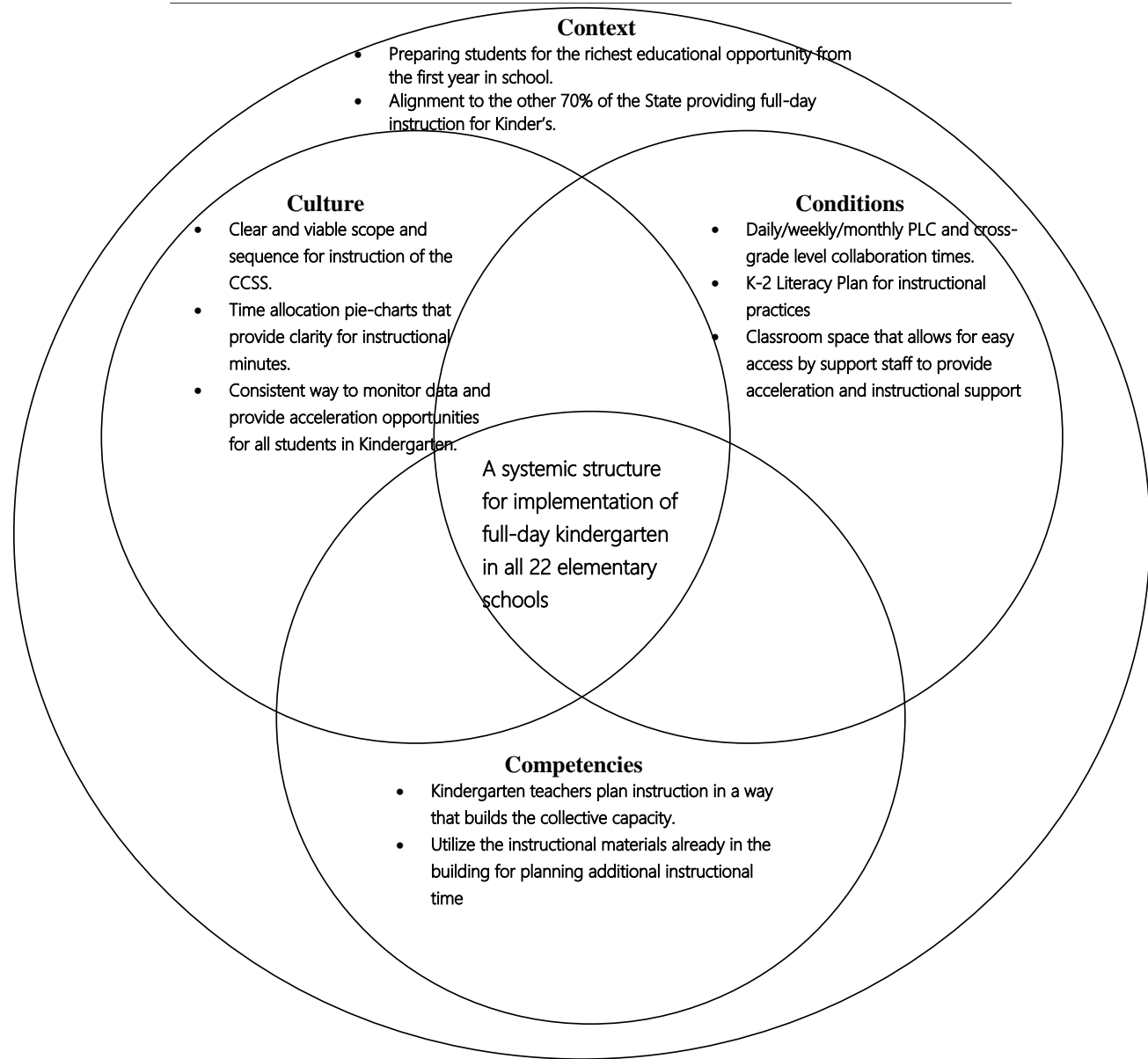
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## Appendix A: “As Is” 4C’s Analysis for District A



## Appendix B: “To Be” 4C’s Analysis for District A



### Appendix C: Survey Invitation Letter

We are writing to request your participation in an on-line survey of full-day kindergarten. We are doctoral students at National-Louis University, and our dissertation study is investigating interest and system needs of full-day kindergarten in an Illinois elementary school district.

The questionnaire should take approximately 10-15 minutes to complete. You can complete the survey via Survey Monkey (<http://www.surveymonkey.com/s/JMVQ6DW>) during a time that is convenient for you.

Of course, confidentiality will be respected for each participant and the results will be completely anonymous. All responses will be confidential: names, schools, or districts will not be used in any presentations or study discussions. Only the researchers will have access to the questionnaires.

We hope you will consider participating in this study. Please contact us if you have any questions:

Erin Knoll, Doctoral Student, [erinknoll@sd54.org](mailto:erinknoll@sd54.org)

Brad Carter, Doctoral Student, [bradcarter@sd54.org](mailto:bradcarter@sd54.org).

Thank you very much for your support.



Appendix D: Survey Questions—Full-Day Kindergarten Interest

1. If you had the option of full or half-day kindergarten for students, which would you choose?
  - a. Half-day
  - b. Full-day
  - c. Undecided

What questions do you have that need to be addressed?

2. Would you support developing a free, full-day kindergarten program in your local school?
  - a. Yes
  - a. No

If you answered no, what concerns do you have with the full-day offering option for students?

3. Beyond instruction and social emotional development, what other factors do you feel need to be considered for a free, full-day kindergarten offering?