

Date of Hearing: March 13, 2019

ASSEMBLY COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION  
Patrick O'Donnell, Chair  
AB 197 (Weber) – As Introduced January 10, 2019

**SUBJECT:** Full-day kindergarten

**SUMMARY:** Requires school districts offering kindergarten to provide full-day kindergarten programs. Specifically, **this bill:**

- 1) Requires each school district to implement a full-day kindergarten program beginning in the 2021-22 school year, subject to specified exemptions.
- 2) Defines “full-day kindergarten” as instruction provided for the same number of minutes per schoolday that is offered to pupils in first grade, exclusive of noon intermissions, but inclusive of recesses.
- 3) Specifies that the minimum schoolday in a kindergarten implementing the full-day kindergarten program may be computed by determining the number of minutes of attendance in any 10 consecutive schooldays and dividing that number by 10. If the resulting quotient is 230 or more, the program shall be deemed to have complied with minimum length of school day requirements, even if the number of minutes attended in any one schoolday is less than 230, but not less than 170.
- 4) Specifies that the minimum schoolday for a pupil in a kindergarten, other than a kindergarten which is implementing the full-day kindergarten program, is 180 minutes inclusive of recesses.
- 5) States findings and declarations regarding the benefits of full-day kindergarten.
- 6) Specifies that that numerous provisions relating to the provision of part-day Kindergarten become inoperative on July 1, 2021, and as of January 1, 2022, are repealed, unless a later enacted statute deletes or extends the dates on which they are repealed.
- 7) Makes other technical and clarifying changes.

**EXISTING LAW:**

- 1) Specifies that children between the ages of 6 and 18 years, unless otherwise exempted, are subject to compulsory full-time education. (EC 48200)
- 2) Prohibits a pupil in a kindergarten from being kept in school for more than four hours per day, exclusive of recesses, subject to specified exceptions. (EC 46111)
- 3) Specifies that the kindergarten schoolday may exceed four hours, exclusive of recesses, if both of the following conditions are met:
  - a) The governing board of a school district declares that the extended-day kindergarten program does not exceed the length of the primary schoolday.

- b) The extended-day kindergarten program takes into account ample opportunity for both active and quiet activities within an integrated, experiential, and developmentally appropriate educational program. (EC 8973)
- 4) Specifies that a school district that is implementing an early primary program may maintain kindergarten or transitional kindergarten classes for different lengths of time during the schoolday, either at the same or a different schoolsite. (EC 37202)
- 5) Defines “early primary program” as an integrated, experiential, and developmentally appropriate educational program for children in preschool, kindergarten, and grades 1 to 3, that incorporates various instructional strategies and authentic assessment practices, including educationally appropriate curricula, heterogeneous groupings, active learning activities, oral language development, small group instruction, peer interaction, use of concrete manipulative materials in the classroom, planned articulation among preschool, kindergarten, and primary grades, and parent involvement and education. (EC 8971)
- 6) Defines “integrated, experiential, and developmentally appropriate educational program” as a program that is designed around the abilities and interests of the children in the program and one in which children learn about the various subjects simultaneously, as opposed to segmented courses, and through “hands-on” or “active learning” teaching methods that are more appropriate for young children than the academic “textbook” approach. (EC 8971)
- 7) Specifies that the minimum schoolday for pupils in kindergarten is 180 minutes inclusive of recesses. (EC 46117)
- 8) Requires single session part-day kindergarten classes to meet all of the following:
  - a) The class is maintained for a minimum of 180 minutes per schoolday.
  - b) The kindergarten class teacher is assigned to only one session of kindergarten daily as a principal teacher.
  - c) The kindergarten teacher is a full-time certificated employee.
  - d) The kindergarten teacher shall be available for assistance or assignment in the instructional program of the primary grades when not involved in the kindergarten program. (EC 46118)

**FISCAL EFFECT:** Unknown

**COMMENTS:**

***Need for the bill.*** According to the author, “Full-day kindergarten programs close achievement gaps between young children from minority and low-income families and their peers who reside in more affluent areas. By providing a solid foundation of learning to children from all backgrounds, full-day kindergarten programs ensure all students' academic, social, and emotional success.”

***Benefits of full-day kindergarten.*** A large body of research demonstrates that children benefit from a developmentally appropriate, full-day kindergarten program, especially in terms of early

academic achievement. Full-day kindergarten provides the learning time needed to prepare for mastery of primary-grade reading and math skills, and helps to reduce subsequent needs for remediation or grade retention. Studies show that full-day kindergarten students show faster gains on literacy and language measures and that such gains may last over time, including higher reading achievement through third grade, and possibly through seventh grade. Other studies show similar gains in numeracy and early math skills in full-day kindergarten classes.

Full-day kindergarten lays the foundation for the transition into formal schooling, and also provides children with more time in a structured environment which may lead to improved social, emotional, and behavioral skills. Parents generally support full-day kindergarten, both for educational reasons, and because it lessens the need for child care arrangements during the workday.

***Importance of quality full-day kindergarten programs.*** Experts argue that a longer day in itself does not mean that the additional time is used in a developmentally appropriate way. In order to realize the benefits of a full-day kindergarten program, certain characteristics are essential. These include an integration of learning with the child's past experiences through project and group work, an unhurried setting, opportunities for informal interactions with other children and adults, an emphasis on language development, information sharing between parents and teachers, an emphasis on reading to children at home and at school, a balance between large-group and individual activities, student assessment through teacher observation and portfolios of student work, and development of social skills, including conflict resolution strategies. Gains are greater when full-day kindergarten is provided using quality standards such as smaller class sizes and the presence of a teacher's aide.

Researchers have found that a full-day program provides greater opportunities for more small-group and teacher-directed individual activities, cooperative group work, and child-initiated free play both indoors and outdoors. The additional time in the school day means the teacher is less pressured to save time by conveying information to the whole group at once. Similarly, the teacher is able to spend time getting to know each child and their learning challenges so that they can ensure that each child masters the necessary skills.

***The availability of full-day kindergarten varies.*** Thirteen states plus the District of Columbia require full-day kindergarten. Thirty five states report that 70-89 percent of their students attend full-day kindergarten programs. Five states have full-day kindergarten attendance over 90 percent. No state prohibits districts from offering full-day kindergarten.

According to the Legislative Analyst Office (LAO), as of 2017-18, 71 percent of school districts in California ran only full-day kindergarten programs, 19 percent ran only part-day programs, and 10 percent ran a mix of full-day and part-day programs. The LAO estimates that approximately 70 percent of kindergarten students attend a full-day program and roughly 30 percent attend a part-day program. Enrollment in full-day programs has grown significantly since 2007-08 when 43 percent of students were attending full-day kindergarten programs. A full-day kindergarten program is defined as one that is four hours or longer. A recent study conducted by the University of California, Los Angeles (UCLA), on behalf of the California Department of Education (CDE) found that the average full-day kindergarten session was 5.6 hours and the part-day sessions averaged 3.5 hours.

The UCLA study found that the average class size for full-day kindergarten programs was 23 children, while the average for part-day classes was 21. Teachers in full-day kindergarten

programs reported spending more time on core instructional content than those in part-day programs. Full-day classes include approximately 9.7 hours per week on English language arts instruction versus 6.3 hours per week in part-day classes. Similarly, teachers in full-day classes spend 5.1 hours per week on math and 1.5 hours on science, compared to part-day classes which tend to include 3.8 hours on math and 1 hour on science weekly. Finally, teachers in full-day classes are able to provide an average of 4.4 hours per week teaching social-emotional skills, while this is limited to an average of 2.7 hours in part-day classes.

***Mandatory offering of kindergarten and compulsory attendance.*** This bill would require school districts to offer full-day kindergarten, but does not require children to attend kindergarten, as compulsory education in California currently begins at age six. Statewide enrollment in kindergarten was 436,480 in 2016-17, while enrollment in first grade in the following year was 456,175, an increase of 4.5 percent. These figures suggest that approximately 95 percent of children in California are attending kindergarten, despite the fact that attendance is not mandatory in the state. ***The Committee may wish to consider*** whether the requirement for schools to offer full-day kindergarten should be matched with a requirement that all children attend kindergarten before enrolling in first grade.

***Barriers to offering full-day kindergarten.*** The UCLA study explored the barriers to school districts' ability to offer full-day kindergarten. Of those offering part-day programs, 74 percent were very, or somewhat interested, in offering full-day kindergarten in the future. School leaders cited a lack of classroom space and/or resources as the biggest barrier to switching to full-day programs. Recommendations from the study suggested that offering funding for additional classroom space as well as differentiated funding for full-day versus part-day Local Control Funding Formula (LCFF) funding would incentivize more LEAs to offer full-day kindergarten.

The UCLA study estimated that the average cost of full-day kindergarten at \$7,882 per student versus \$4,277 for each part-day student. The 2016-17 LCFF target base amount was \$7,083 per kindergarten ADA. The 2018-19 K-3 adjusted base grant is \$8,235 per ADA.

Teachers surveyed for the UCLA study also noted the need for additional training and resources to support students' social-emotional development, through the adoption of developmentally appropriate curricula and professional learning. Sixty eight percent of teachers surveyed responded that they need support in social-emotional development.

Although not addressed in the UCLA study, it has been suggested that an additional barrier to moving to a full-day program would be teacher workload issues, subject to collective bargaining. In many districts offering part-day kindergarten, kindergarten teachers serve as the lead teacher for part of the day and may assist in another kindergarten or other primary grade classroom for the balance of the school day. Under this model, there are two fully credentialed teachers in the classroom able to meet the need for individual or small group attention. Shifting to a full-day kindergarten program would require teachers to serve as lead teachers for a longer period of time each day, thus each kindergarten or other primary classroom would only have one teacher available. In addition, many kindergarten teachers contend that a kindergarten program requires additional planning time due to the higher level of hands-on activities necessary to meet the developmental needs of young children. A shift from a part-day to a full-day kindergarten program could mean the loss of planning time for kindergarten teachers. ***The Committee may wish to consider*** whether these factors present additional barriers to the implementation of full-day kindergarten.

***Funding for kindergarten facilities.*** The 2018-19 budget allocated \$100 million in one-time General Fund to allow school districts to construct new school facilities or retrofit existing school facilities in order to provide full-day kindergarten. Priority is given to school districts financially unable to contribute a portion or all of the local matching share required and that meet the requirements for financial hardship, as well as those located in an underserved community with a high population of pupils who are eligible for free or reduced price meals. Schools are required to provide a 50 percent match for new construction and 40 percent for retrofit projects. According to the LAO, 70 districts applied for this funding with a total of \$262 million in requests. Of these, an estimated 76 percent already offer only full-day programs.

The Governor's 2019-20 budget proposes an additional \$750 million for these purposes. The LAO recommends that this proposal be rejected as the program is not likely to notably advance the state's objective of increasing the number of full-day kindergarten programs.

***Timing of implementation.*** This bill requires every school district to implement a full-day kindergarten program by the 2021-22 school year. The California Association of School Business Officials expresses concern with the timeframe this bill mandates to implement full-day kindergarten. They state that "school districts will need additional time and funding to scale up these programs, build compliant infrastructure and attract the workforce to teach these classes."

***Prioritizing children with the greatest need.*** Research demonstrates that full-day kindergarten can produce long-term educational gains, especially for low-income and minority students, and thus may be an effective strategy in helping to close the achievement gap.

Title I of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act, provides financial assistance to LEAs and schools with high numbers or high percentages of children from low-income families to help ensure that all children meet challenging state academic standards. Schools in which children from low-income families make up at least 40 percent of enrollment are eligible to use Title I funds for school-wide programs that serve all children in the school.

Given the potential difficulty of implementing full-day kindergarten across the board in a relatively short timeframe, it may be advisable to prioritize implementation based upon the number of Title I eligible pupils at a particular school.

***The Committee recommends*** that the bill be amended as follows:

- 1) Clarify that the requirements to offer full-day kindergarten applies only to those school districts serving pupils in early primary grades, so as to exclude those districts serving older pupils, including high school districts.
- 2) Add a requirement that charter schools serving early primary pupils would also be required to offer full-day kindergarten programs.
- 3) Require that schools in school districts or county offices of education, and charter schools, with school-wide Title I eligibility implement full-day kindergarten in the 2021-22 school year; and all other schools implement full-day kindergarten in 2022-23.

***Prior and related legislation.*** AB 48 (O'Donnell) states the intent of the Legislature to create the Kindergarten-Community Colleges Public Education Facilities Bond Acts of 2020 and 2022, to

provide funds to build and modernize education facilities if approved by the voters. This bill is pending before this Committee.

AB 123 (McCarty) of this Session, states that it is the intent of the Legislature to provide high-quality universal preschool, which would include the California State Preschool Program, federal Head Start programs, and transitional kindergarten, to all four-year-old children, starting in the communities that need it most. This bill is pending before this Committee.

SB 837 (Dodd) of the 2017-18 Session, would have expanded eligibility for transitional kindergarten to all four-year olds, phased in over a two-year period beginning in the 2020-21 school year. This bill was held in the Senate Appropriations Committee.

AB 713 (Weber) of the 2015-16 Session, would have required, beginning in the 2017-18 school year, a child to complete one year of kindergarten before he or she may be admitted to first grade. This bill was held in the Senate Appropriations Committee.

AB 1444 (Buchanan and Weber) of the 2013-14 Session would have required, beginning with the 2016-17 school year, a student to have completed one year of kindergarten before being admitted to the first grade, thereby requiring kindergarten attendance. This bill was vetoed by the Governor.

**REGISTERED SUPPORT / OPPOSITION:****Support**

None on file

**Opposition**

None on file

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