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An analysis of teacher perceptions of all day kindergarten

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AN ANALYSIS OF TEACHER PERCEPTIONS
OF ALL DAY KINDERGARTEN

Thesis

Submitted to

The School of Education of the
UNIVERSITY OF DAYTON

In Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for

The Degree

Master of Science in Education

By

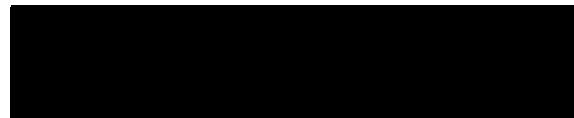
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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Purpose of the Study

In this constantly changing society it is often difficult for educators to determine what is best for children in today's schools. Children of today are very different from those of past decades (Housden & Kam, 1992.) As a result, changes in educational practices are inevitable and necessary. Over the past several years, a growing national trend has developed concerning the practices and policies of kindergarten (Bryant & Clifford, 1992). In an attempt to better prepare children, many schools have adopted an all-day kindergarten program.

All-day kindergarten is not a new idea. When Fredrich Froebel in Germany developed the first kindergarten in 1837, an all-day model was employed. Half-day programs developed primarily to accommodate more children and reduce costs (Alexander, Bender, Gillis, & Ulrey, 1982). Changes in family structure, an increase in kindergarten curriculum standards, and a higher attendance of children in preschool have contributed to this trend toward all-day kindergarten (Elicker & Mathur, 1997). As of 1992, 45 % of kindergarten students attend all day (Karweit, 1992).

As with any change in education, the trend toward all-day kindergarten has sparked controversy among educators. Many teachers disagree about the value of the all-

day model (Holmes & McConnell, 1990). Advocates of all-day kindergarten such as Elicker and Mathur believe that in order to teach kids required skills in today's overloaded curriculum, all-day kindergarten is going to be essential in the future. They believe that, in order to keep up with the changes in society, children need more schooling at an earlier age. Other educators, however, such as Greer-Smith, insist that children are unable to handle a long school day at such an early age, and that the program is not worth the time and money required. To compound this controversy, research on the effectiveness of all-day kindergarten has been inconclusive and conflicting (Puleo, 1988).

Although administrators choose whether or not to adopt an all-day model, teachers are the ones who must implement the program. If the program is to succeed, the role of the teacher is crucial. Teacher support is imperative. For this reason, the study was undertaken to evaluate the perceptions of teachers toward an all-day kindergarten program. It is important to know just how teachers perceive the program if they are going to be the ones responsible for a successful implementation.

Problem Statement

The purpose of this study was to analyze the perceptions of elementary school teachers toward an all-day kindergarten program.

Assumptions

To conduct this study, a questionnaire was used. Several assumptions were made by the researcher, the first being that teachers would answer the questionnaire honestly. Secondly, the researcher assumed that respondents would understand the terminology and

concepts on the questionnaire. Third, the author assumed that the testing instrument was reliable.

Limitations

There are two limitations to this study. One limitation is sample size: only elementary teachers in one urban setting were surveyed. Since a non-probability sample was used, the results cannot be generalized to represent the perceptions of all elementary teachers. The second limitation is the geographical area. Only teachers from one mid-western state were sampled.

Definitions of Terms

All-day kindergarten: All-day kindergarten is a program in which kindergarten students spend five to seven hours in one school setting and program.

Developmentally appropriate environment: A developmentally appropriate environment is one in which teaching methods correlate to the cognitive, socio-emotional, and psychomotor levels of children.

Enrichment: Enrichment is the provision of educational experiences and activities that extend the traditional curriculum.

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF THE RELATED LITERATURE

This chapter includes the review of the related literature. It is divided into the following sections: Reasons for the Trend Towards All-day Kindergarten, Advantages of an All-day Kindergarten Program, Disadvantages of an All-day Kindergarten Program, and Components of an Effective All-day Kindergarten Program.

Reasons for the Trend Towards All-day Kindergarten

One reason for the trend towards all-day kindergarten is the change in the typical family structure. To begin, there has been a dramatic increase in the number of mothers who work outside the home and who have children under the age of six. In earlier generations, working mothers were the exception; they are now the norm. According to Elicker and Mathur (1997), 60% of mothers with children under six now work outside the home. It is no longer assumed that a mother will be able to stay home and care for her kindergarten child during that period of the day when that child is not in school. Gullo (1990) states that increased divorce rates, two-employed-parent families and teenage pregnancies have all contributed to this increase in working mothers, and that kindergarten programs must necessarily respond to these societal changes.

A second reason for the trend towards all-day kindergarten is the change in the required curriculum to be taught in kindergarten. Kindergarten teachers are required to

have separate curricula for science, math, reading, writing, and social studies, which places more pressure on the teacher than in the past (Damian, 1997). Over the years, more and more required content must be taught. In addition, teachers of today must include subjects such as career education, AIDS education, substance abuse education, and safety education (Kovalik, 1989). Also, the academics themselves have become more stringent in recent years. Olsen and Zigler (1989) explained that the poor scores of elementary and secondary students on the tests of basic skills have fueled the enthusiasm for stronger academics at an earlier age. They state that "Worries over the scholastic deficiencies of our own students have been underscored by unflattering comparisons with students from foreign countries" (Olsen & Zigler, 1989, p. 168). To meet all of these increasing academic demands, an all-day kindergarten program is necessary.

A third reason for the trend towards all-day kindergarten is the increased amount of preschool or daycare to which children are being exposed. According to Housden and Kam (1992), many children who enter kindergarten today have had some kind of prior experience in a structured setting with other children. Rothenberg (1984) agrees, explaining that most children have some kind of preschool experience in Head Start, day care, private preschool, or in early childhood programs outside the home. These experiences have provided children with first encounters to activities formerly first introduced in kindergarten, such as organized instructional and social activities. Students are now coming to school with the background and preparedness necessary for an all-day kindergarten program.

Advantages of an All-day Kindergarten Program

A schedule that is consistent for all students is one advantage of an all-day kindergarten (Karweit, 1992). In an all-day program, kindergarten students arrive and leave at the same time as the other students. Buses would not have to load and unload in the middle of the day. Regardless of when they were held, the kindergarten students could attend special activities that take place during the school day. Also, when students entered first grade, they would already be familiar with the school schedule.

The ability of teachers to give each student more individual attention is another advantage of an all-day kindergarten program (Karweit, 1992). In a two-and-a-half hour day, it would be difficult for any teacher to be able to provide individual attention to all the children in need. The increased school time in an all-day kindergarten allows a teacher the time to provide that crucial extra individual attention. Teachers and students would not feel as rushed in an all-day program. Lafortune and Sumner (1994) state that "proponents of an all-day kindergarten note that it provides a greater amount of time in which the teacher can individualize instruction." While other students are working on an extension activity, a teacher would have the time to go back and provide any necessary remediation or attention a child requires. Also, teachers would spend more time with the children, and would know the children better. A teacher would be better able to identify the strengths and weaknesses of each child.

A better balanced day allowing for more enrichment activities is another advantage of an all-day kindergarten program (Greer-Smith, 1990). According to Harding and Safer (1987), an all-day program allows children additional time during the day for hands-on activities. Also, with a longer amount of time available each day, special

activities such as field trips would be easier to schedule. Extended projects would be easier to complete. If students began a project in the morning, it could be completed in the afternoon. Projects such as cooking experiences and extensive art activities could be included in the longer day. Goffin and Wortzman (1988) conclude that children need more time for play, a crucial developmental activity. Play is how a child acquires and confirms knowledge of his/her environment. Also, play is the time when many children develop their social skills. Getting along with others, sharing, working out differences, and many other important socialization skills are learned during play. Time for play must be allotted into the school day. In an all-day kindergarten, children would have the additional time available for play.

A well-balanced student lunch is another advantage of an all-day kindergarten program (Bornstein, 1985). According to Good (1992), this is particularly beneficial for children from low socioeconomic status. If students are eating lunch at school, then it can be assumed that the children are having at least one well-balanced nutritional meal each day. This is not an assumption that can be made if students are attending kindergarten only half a day. Students cannot learn well if they are hungry or malnourished and an all-day kindergarten at least reassures that at least once a day a healthy meal is offered.

Increased parent involvement is another advantage of an all-day kindergarten program. Nunnally (1996) found that when parent workshops were held, there was "clearly more parental involvement in parent workshops than in the half-day program." Having parents involved is important for a child's learning. If a parent is aware of what is going on in child's classroom, he/she will be better able to help that child succeed.

Higher student attendance is another advantage of an all-day kindergarten program. Bryde and Hough (1992) found that all-day kindergarten students attend school more regularly than their half-day counterparts. A possible explanation is that parents do not consider the student missing a half-day as harmful as the student missing a whole day. Parents may approach an all-day program more seriously than a half-day program. Parents may be more reluctant to allow a child to miss a day in an all-day program.

Better social behaviors are another advantage of an all-day kindergarten program. May (1989) expresses that children in an all-day program exercised more self-control in the classroom. Bryde and Hough (1992) added that children in an all-day program have more time for interaction with adults and other children, resulting in better socialization skills. Children in all-day programs were more likely to approach the teacher, and they expressed less withdrawal, anger, shyness, and blaming behaviors than did children in a half-day program (Eric Clearinghouse on Elementary and Early Childhood Education, 1995). Students got along better with their peers, and had more improvement in social skills. Students in all-day kindergarten programs appeared more confident and sure of themselves.

Increased academic achievement is another advantage of an all-day kindergarten program. Alexander and Entwistle (1998) found that standardized test scores were higher for students in an all-day kindergarten. Even in 1970, Klein and Winter found similar results, stressing that the difference is particularly strong in economically or socially disadvantaged children. Puleo (1988) found that at the end of the kindergarten school year, students in all-day kindergarten significantly outperformed students in a half-day program on 22 out of 30 cognitive skills. Lafortune and Sumner (1994) found like results,

noting that the most positive differences at the end of the kindergarten school year for children who attended an all-day kindergarten program were in the areas of math and word analysis. No significant positive differences of cognitive skills were found in favor of students who attended a half-day kindergarten program. In addition to studies claiming that kindergarten performance is better for students in an all-day program, several studies found that later school performance is also positively affected by attendance in an all-day kindergarten program. Studies by Koopmans (1988) and Cryan (1992) found that participation in an all-day program was positively related to performance through first grade. Sevigny (1987) studied even further along the school grades, and found that students who had attended an all-day kindergarten program received better grades on their report cards even in second grade. Rothenberg (1984) explained that when looking at later achievement of students who attended an all-day kindergarten program, in every study, their students scored as well as or better than students from half-day programs, with no adverse effects.

Disadvantages of an All-day Kindergarten Program

One disadvantage of an all-day kindergarten program is the additional amount of money the program requires. It is very costly to change from a half-day program to an all-day program (Ohio State Legislative Office of Education Insight, 1997). Many factors must be considered. Often, there is the added expense of updating a regular classroom into one that is deemed acceptable for kindergarten children. Occasionally, the room that is utilized was not currently being used as a classroom at all, resulting in even more expenditure. Materials, supplies, furniture, and equipment must be ordered. The amount of classroom supplies will double. Schubert (1997) found that of the many expenses

incurred when accepting an all-day program, the most costly expense is teacher salary. If a school formerly had two half-day kindergarten classes, one teacher could teach both the morning and the afternoon session. Conversion to an all-day program would require two full-time teachers. When one adds the teacher salary expense to that of teacher benefits and insurance, the total expenditure is very costly.

Another disadvantage of an all-day kindergarten is the additional space required. The change from two half-day kindergarten classes to two all-day kindergarten classes would require an additional classroom. According to Rothenberg (1984) this is not always possible. Many districts have increasing enrollment, and are already struggling to find enough classrooms to meet the needs of the school's enrollment. Basically, some schools simply do not have the additional classroom space available for the all-day kindergarten. In addition to classroom space that must be made available for an all-day kindergarten program, Lofthouse (1994) contends that there must be space available in the lunchroom for an all-day kindergarten to be considered. Students do not eat lunch at school in a half-day program, but in an all-day program they do, and room has to be available for them to eat.

Another disadvantage of an all-day kindergarten program is that a five or six year old student may not be ready to handle a long school day. Peskin (1986) explained that many early childhood specialists have developed sound arguments against all-day kindergarten. Young children may become fatigued with such a long day. (Greer-Smith, 1990). They may not be able to attend for the additional school hours. Their social, emotional, fine-motor, and visual-motor skills may not be developed enough to meet school demands. In addition, Peskin (1986) states that students may not have the fully

developed auditory discrimination skills that are necessary in many of today's kindergarten programs. Although phonics is often taught in kindergarten, students may not have the auditory development to be able to learn these skills. Students may be pushed beyond their development level.

Components of an Effective All-day Kindergarten Program

Adequate staff development is one component of an effective all-day kindergarten program. The transformation from a half-day program to an all-day program cannot occur overnight. Ample time and planning must be allotted. Professional preparation is crucial (Rust, 1989). According to Fromberg (1992), staff development should begin before the final decision to convert to an all-day kindergarten is made. Teachers should be integral to planning and decision-making, and should have the continued support of staff members and administration. Staff development should include the whole staff, not just the kindergarten teachers (Schubert, 1997). Support for the program from the staff and administration as a whole is necessary for the program to succeed. All staff members should feel supported in that they are working towards a common goal.

In addition, Schubert (1997) adds that staff development must include the education of kindergarten teachers on how to spend each day's extra class time wisely and appropriately. Teachers must be educated on how to use the time as a way to extend and enrich what is being taught in the half-day program, not simply as a way to do more of what is already being done.

Parental involvement is another component of an effective all-day kindergarten program. Harman (1982) insists that parental education and involvement must be an integral part in an all-day program. Most of today's parents of kindergarten children did

not attend an all-day kindergarten as a youngster, so these parents must be educated on the components and philosophy of the program. Involving parents in meetings and staff developments is an effective way to keep the parents involved (May 1989). Parents need to feel like they are part of the educational process. Robinson-Lewis (1991) suggests inviting parents into the classroom to show them some of the activities that are done with the children. Parents can actually participate in some of the hands-on activities that their children do on a daily basis. If parents are made to feel a part of the switch to an all-day program, they are more likely to feel comfortable with and be supportive of the change.

A developmentally appropriate environment is another component of an all-day kindergarten program (Bredekamp & Copple, 1997). Kovalik (1989) states that the environment must be a place in which the children can feel safe and comfortable; it cannot in anyway be threatening to the children. Fromberg (1989) agrees, stating that the classroom must be a nurturing place, adding that for some children the school may be seen as their only real family. Children must feel safe to take risks and know that they will be accepted regardless of the outcome. A developmentally appropriate environment is also one in which the extra school time each day is used wisely. Olsen (1989) states that the schools cannot just adapt a "more is better" attitude. The longer day cannot be used simply to provide more of the exact same activities that were done in the half-day kindergarten.

Maurer and Myers (1987) maintain that the kindergarten environment must provide for active involvement of children. Learning must be based on the experiences of the children. The learning must involve concepts and ideas that are real to the children. Activities that involve real knowledge of the children are important, such as cooking

activities or dramatic play. Real objects that can be manipulated by the children must be utilized. Hands-on activities must be the basis for the learning, as opposed to worksheets or paper and pencil activities. The children must be actively involved in their own learning processes. Individualization in relation to each child's abilities and interests must be considered. In addition, the kindergarten class must provide a balance of activities that require the use of large muscles and outdoor play, opportunities for dramatic play, quiet times, and opportunities to work with art (Harman, 1982).

The provision of ample space and materials is crucial. The room should not be constricted; children should be involved in a variety of activities that enable them to move freely around. Opportunities for play and exploration should often be provided. An abundance of art supplies should be made available to the children. Balaban (1990) sums up a developmentally appropriate environment as one that is not too formal, too pressured, or too academic. Instead, it is a place that through a wide range of appropriate activities, allows and encourages a child to learn at a pace that is appropriate for him/her, in a setting that is safe, nurturing, and comfortable for that child.

A paraprofessional is another component of an effective all-day kindergarten program. Robinson-Lewis (1991) found that kindergarten teachers surveyed believed that a full-time paraprofessional is necessary to fully enhance instruction in an all-day kindergarten program. To allow the youngsters to be involved in the many hands-on activities in an all-day program, a paraprofessional would be required to truly ensure the smoothness of the program and to provide for individual attention many of the children may need.

CHAPTER III

PROCEDURE

Chapter III is comprised of the discussion of the procedure utilized. It includes information concerning the subjects who participated. It also contains information about the schools and community for the setting of the study. Finally, it consists of information pertaining to data collection and administration of the questionnaire.

Subjects

The subjects chosen for this study were kindergarten through sixth grade teachers in a large urban public school district in one mid-western state. The subjects were randomly selected from a district staff directory of teachers' addresses and phone numbers. The range of teaching experience varied from 1 to 30 years.

Setting

Schools

The public schools in which these educators teach vary in enrollment and staff size. The average poverty level for the district is 84%. Minorities account for 67% of student population. The minority population consists mostly of African-American

students. 32% of the student population is Caucasian. Many Appalachian students attend schools in the district.

Community

The school system is located in an urban area of a mid-western state. There are approximately 1,000,000 people living in the city and its surrounding areas. The largest employer in the area is a major military base. In addition, automotive plants account for much of the area's labor. Within the city are several housing projects for low-income families.

Data Collection

Construction of the Data Collecting Instrument

Using information gathered from the review of the literature, thus establishing content validity, the researcher constructed the instrument to be used in the study. The survey was examined by a panel of experts in the field, made up of kindergarten teachers and university faculty, who found the instrument to be valid for measuring perceptions of teachers of all-day kindergarten. The survey was field-tested by kindergarten teachers in a school district, thus establishing construct validity. The instrument was examined and comments were returned to the researcher. Changes were made based upon responses of the field study. The instrument is a Likert-type questionnaire (See Appendix A.) Teacher perceptions of all-day kindergarten were analyzed using the questionnaire.

Administration of the Data Collecting Instrument

The researcher pre-called each participant, asking each to agree to complete the questionnaire. A cover letter (See Appendix B), the instrument, and a self-addressed stamped envelope were then mailed to each teacher who had agreed to complete the questionnaire. Questionnaires were mailed approximately May 15th, 1999. Participants were asked to return the survey no later than June 10th, 1999. Sixty-five questionnaires were mailed. Fifty-eight questionnaires were returned, for a response rate of 89%.

Analysis of the Data

The data was analyzed several ways. First, percentage responses for individual questions were analyzed to determine if participants agreed with the statements concerning all day kindergarten programs. A Kolmogorov-Smirnov statistical test was employed to determine if the participants' responses were different enough from what would be expected with standard distribution of scores for statistical significance. Questions were ranked in order to determine with which statements participants agree most strongly. Finally, the mean sum total scores were analyzed to see if there was a difference in responses when one considers the factors of years of teaching experience, kindergarten model currently employed, and grade level taught.

CHAPTER IV

RESULTS

This chapter contains presentation of the results of the study. Following each presentation, one will find discussion of the results.

Presentation of the Results

Five tables were used to present the data. The descriptive results for each question in the instrument, expressed as percentages, are presented in Table 1. The first column contains the statements from the instrument. The responses to the choices were as follows: strongly agree, agree, undecided, disagree, and strongly disagree. Table 2 presents the rank order of statements according to mean strength of agreement with statements. Table 3 displays the mean sum score according to grade level taught. Table 4 presents the mean sum score according to years of teaching experience. Table 5 shows the mean sum score according to current kindergarten school model.

Table 1

Percentage Results of the Perceptions of Elementary Teachers of All-Day Kindergarten

Survey Statements	SA	A	U	D	SD
1. All-day kindergarten provides more opportunities than half-day kindergarten for the teacher to provide individual attention	56.9	34.5	5.2	1.7	1.7
2. In all-day kindergarten, it is easier than in half-day kindergarten for the teacher to recognize the need for student remediation.	50.0	31.0	8.6	8.6	1.7
3. In all-day kindergarten, it is easier than in half-day kindergarten for the teacher to identify the talents of the students.	46.6	36.2	6.9	8.6	1.7
4. There are more opportunities for enrichment activities in all-day kindergarten than there are in half-day kindergarten.	62.1	34.5	1.7	0	1.7
5. There are more field trip opportunities in all-day kindergarten than in half-day kindergarten.	56.9	24.1	6.9	10.3	1.7
6. There is more time for play in all-day kindergarten than in half-day kindergarten.	46.6	36.2	13.8	1.7	1.7
7. In all-day kindergarten, students can be involved in more hands-on projects than in half-day kindergarten.	56.9	27.6	10.3	3.4	1.7
8. There is more parental involvement in all-day kindergarten than in half-day kindergarten.	12.1	12.1	55.2	17.2	3.4

Table 1(cont)

	SA	A	U	D	SD
9. Children in all-day kindergarten develop better social skills than children in half-day kindergarten.	24.1	36.2	24.1	13.8	1.7
10. All-day kindergarten better fits the needs of working parents than half-day kindergarten.	60.3	29.3	6.9	3.4	0
11. Children in an all-day kindergarten show more improvement in language skills than children in a half-day kindergarten.	25.9	34.5	32.8	5.2	1.7
12. Students in an all-day kindergarten leave school more fatigued than in a half-day kindergarten.	5.2	19.0	37.9	29.3	8.6
13. All-day kindergarten has a more varied curriculum than half-day kindergarten.	37.9	36.2	17.2	6.9	1.7
14. A paraprofessional is necessary in an all-day kindergarten.	62.1	20.7	8.6	8.6	0
15. All-day kindergarten has a better balance of large and small group activities than half-day kindergarten.	36.2	36.2	13.8	12.1	1.7
16. Students in an all-day kindergarten will be better prepared for first grade than students in a half-day kindergarten.	43.1	29.3	20.7	5.2	1.7
17. All-day kindergarten permits more time than half-day kindergarten for small and large motor development activities.	44.8	43.1	5.2	5.2	1.7
18. Most children of today are mature enough to handle all-day kindergarten	19.0	46.6	15.5	10.3	8.6
19. Teachers feel less rushed in an-all day kindergarten.	43.1	29.3	20.7	5.2	1.7

A Kolmogorov-Smirnov statistical test was performed on each question to determine if the results are statistically different from what would be expected with standard normal responses. The possible score for each question ranged from 0.00 to 1.00, with 1.00 being what one would expect predicted percentage of answers to be. Anything close to zero indicates that the responses are directed heavily enough in one direction of the survey to state that the results are significant. On every question of the survey, the score on the Kolmogorov-Smirnov test was 0.00. This means that on every question, participants overall felt more strongly towards one end of the survey responses. In this survey, the results weighed heavily towards the direction of being in favor of all-day kindergarten, thus calling the results significant.

The data was placed into groups of percentage responses for the number of teachers who agreed or strongly agreed to the given statements.

95% -100% of participants agreed or strongly agreed there are more opportunities for enrichment in an all-day kindergarten.

90%-94% of teachers agreed or strongly agreed that all-day kindergarten provides more opportunities for the teacher to provide individual attention, and that all-day kindergarten better fits the needs of working parents.

85%-89% of teachers agreed or strongly agreed that students in an all-day kindergarten can be more involved in hands-on projects and activities that provide small and large motor development activities.

80%-84% of teachers agreed or strongly agreed that in all all-day kindergarten it is easier for the teacher to identify the talents of the students and the need for student

remediation, that there is more time available for field trips and play, and that a paraprofessional is necessary.

70%-74% of teachers agreed or strongly agreed that all-day kindergarten has a more varied curriculum, a better balance of large and small group activities, and better prepares students for first grade. Also, this percentage agrees or strongly agreed that teachers feel less rushed in an all-day kindergarten program.

65%-69% of teachers agreed or strongly agreed that most children of today are mature enough to handle all-day kindergarten.

60%-64% agreed or strongly agreed that in an all-day kindergarten children develop better social skills and show more improvement in language skills.

35%-39% of teachers agreed or strongly agreed that students in an all-day kindergarten leave school more fatigued.

20-24% of teachers agreed or strongly agreed that there is more parental involvement in an all-day kindergarten.

Table 2

Rank Order of Statements According to Mean Strength of Agreement with Statements

1=Strongly Agree 2=Agree 3=Undecided 4=Disagree 5=Strongly Disagree				
Statement	Mean			
Q4	1.45			
Q10	1.53			
Q1	1.53			
Q14	1.64			
Q7	1.66			
Q17	1.76			
Q5	1.76			
Q6	1.76			
Q2	1.81			
Q3	1.83			
Q16	1.93			
Q19	1.93			
Q13	1.98			
Q15	2.07			
Q11	2.22			
Q9	2.33			
Q18	2.43			
Q8	3.05			
Q12	3.17			

Table 2 ranks the statements in order according to strength of agreement with each statement. Although the Kolmogorov-Smirnov Test shows that the response to each question is statistically significant enough to say that respondents overall agreed with all-day kindergarten, there are particular statements about which participants felt most strongly. Question 4 has a mean of 1.45, meaning that most of the participants strongly agreed that an all-day kindergarten has more opportunities for enrichment activities. Participants also agreed strongly that all-day kindergarten better fits the needs of working parents, with this question showing a mean of 1.53. Showing a mean of 1.57, participants agreed there are more opportunities in an all-day kindergarten for the teacher to provide

individual attention. Another strong response from the respondents, with a mean of 1.64, is that there should be a paraprofessional in any all-day kindergarten program. With a mean of 1.66, respondents believe that in an all-day kindergarten, students can be involved more in hands-on projects.

Two of the statements showed that teachers are undecided on these issues. With a mean score of 3.05, teachers were undecided on whether or not there is more parental involvement in an all-day kindergarten. With a mean score of 3.17, teachers were also undecided on whether or not students leave school more fatigued after attending an all-day kindergarten.

Table 3

Mean Sum Score According to Grade Level Taught

Grade Level Taught	Mean Sum Score
Kindergarten	36.45
1 st -3 rd	38.48
4 th -6 th	38.37

Table 4

Mean Sum Score According to Years of Teaching Experience

Years of Teaching Experience	Mean Sum Score
1-5	36.83
6-10	39.43
11-15	41.00
16-20	36.17
21 +	37.21

Table 5

Mean Sum Score According to Current Kindergarten School Model

Model	Mean Sum Score
All-day	39.21
Half-day	35.15

Finally, Table 3 lists the mean sum response for all questions according to the factors of grade level taught, kindergarten model currently employed in each participant's school, and years of teaching experience, to see how these factors affect responses. The possible range of the mean sum is 19-95. Evaluating the data, one can observe that all of the mean scores are closely clustered around a score of approximately 38, with the mean of the mean sums falling at 37.8. As a result, it can be stated that none of the factors evaluated, grade level taught, years of teaching experience, or current kindergarten school model, directly impact the teachers' perceptions toward all-day kindergarten in this study. The results were consistent regardless of any of these factors.

Discussion of the Results

Since it is teachers who must implement any all-day program on a day-to-day basis, it is clearly important to determine how teachers perceive such a program. Looking at the results in this study, teachers agree that all-day kindergarten is a positive experience for all involved, including parents, teachers, and students. Although teachers agree that the benefits outweigh the disadvantages, the strength of agreement varies among the groups.

Looking at the benefits for parents, teachers overwhelmingly agreed that the all-day kindergarten better fits the needs of working parents. Although teachers agreed that the schedule better fits the needs of parents, teachers are undecided on whether there is more parental involvement in an all-day kindergarten. Teachers overall also established that an all-day kindergarten program is beneficial for teachers. Seventy-two percent of teachers agreed that teachers feel less rushed in an all-day kindergarten. Teachers overwhelmingly confirmed that an all-day kindergarten provides more opportunities for enrichment activities. Teachers also agreed that an-all day kindergarten provides more opportunities for hands-on activities. Teachers decided strongly that an all-day kindergarten provides the teacher with more opportunities for individual attention. One issue about which teachers felt strongly was that of a paraprofessional in the kindergarten classroom. Eighty-four percent felt that a paraprofessional is necessary for an all-day kindergarten to be successful.

To summarize, it can be said that teachers overall felt positive toward an all-day kindergarten. The statistical means for the statements fell mostly within the agreed or strongly disagreed categories. Teachers who completed the survey felt that all-day kindergarten is valuable for the parents, teachers, and children.

CHAPTER V

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This chapter includes a summary of the study, what conclusions were reached as a result of doing this study, and suggestions for practitioners. The researcher also makes recommendations for future study.

The trend towards all-day kindergarten has sparked a controversy among educators. Advocates believe that children are being required to learn more and more at an earlier age; in a two and a half hour kindergarten program, it is impossible for a child to acquire all of the necessary knowledge. They insist that students from today are different from young children of yesterday and that they are able to handle a longer school day. Other educators, however, feel that all-day kindergarten is not beneficial and that students are not able or ready to handle an all-day kindergarten.

The purpose of this study was to analyze the perceptions of elementary teachers toward an all-day kindergarten program. A Likert-type questionnaire was administered with nineteen questions measuring the perceptions of teachers towards all-day kindergarten was administered. Participants selected a response ranging from strongly agree to strongly disagree for each statement concerning all-day kindergarten. The survey was distributed by mail to teachers in a large urban school district. Fifty-eight participants responded to the survey.

The results suggested that teachers who responded are in support of an all-day kindergarten program. Although the teachers are undecided on issues of parental involvement and student fatigue, they strongly agreed or agreed with the statements stating the benefits of an all-day kindergarten program.

Conclusions

The writer concludes that teachers believe that all-day kindergarten is a worthy endeavor in today's changing educational structure. Teachers are aware of all of the demands placed on a kindergarten teacher, and realize that an all-day kindergarten may be a step towards meeting all of those demands. Also, teachers believe that opportunities for activities beyond the stereotypical school day are presented in an all-day kindergarten. All-day kindergarten is beneficial for parents, teachers, and students. According to Elicker and Mathur (1997) 60% of mothers with children under six now work outside the home. Many children in a half-day kindergarten program go to a day care site for the time they are not in their kindergarten class. As teachers, it seems educationally sound to say that if the students spend the remainder of the day in a site that is outside the home, it is better to maintain consistency by keeping students in only one setting where consistency is present.

The writer concludes that the teachers who responded to the questionnaire support an all-day kindergarten as reflected in their answers. Teachers are being forced to teach more and more in the same amount of time. With a two-and-a-half-hour day, it is very stressful for a teacher to try to create lessons that will cover the mandated curriculum. Allowing teachers a longer period of time to teach the same material allows the teacher to feel comfortable that the goals and objectives can be achieved.

Teachers also agreed that an all-day kindergarten is beneficial for the students, particularly in certain areas. According to Fromberg (1992) it is important that students have enrichment activities in a kindergarten program in order to truly reach their potentials. In virtually every study evaluating effective all-day kindergarten programs, the importance of hands-on activities is noted. Wood (1997) states that it is crucial for students to have direct experience with that which they are trying to learn. Manipulatives help the child to process the information. Connections with real life are made when students can actually involve all of their senses in the learning process. Because there is more time in an all-day kindergarten, teachers can provide more time for all of these rich hands-on experiences.

All children are not going to come into any school setting with exactly the same background, experiences, and knowledge. Also, children are going to learn at different rates once they do enter school. For these reasons, students will always be at different levels in their learning processes. It is often necessary for a teacher to provide individual attention to a child. In an all-day kindergarten, a teacher has the additional time in a school day that is not available in a half-day program. A teacher can allow students who do not need the additional attention to move to an alternate activity while the teachers gives the much-needed attention to particular children. Perhaps with all-day kindergarten, attention can be given to those children who so often recently seem to be slipping through the cracks in our educational system. This corroborates results found by Robinson-Lewis (1991) that teachers believe strongly in the need in a kindergarten classroom for a paraprofessional in order for that program to be a success. Because children in a kindergarten are often as young as four, it is important that a teacher have help with the

little day to day items that come up in a classroom. This way, the teacher can stay focused on instruction while the paraprofessional helps with all the additional tasks.

Recommendations

The researcher would like to recommend that school districts consider the option of an all-day kindergarten program to better meet the needs of parents, teachers, and students. Because support from parents is necessary for any educational change, the researcher suggests that a needs-assessment survey first be completed to ensure that the parents are willing to agree to such a change. If a change to all-day kindergarten is made, the researcher suggests that ample staff development be included as a critical part of the change. Only with the support of everyone involved can any change in the structure of education be successful.

The researcher would also like to recommend that additional studies be completed on the effect on fatigue in an all-day kindergarten setting. With more studies, this issue can be addressed.

In addition, the researcher recommends that further studies on parental involvement in an all-day kindergarten be conducted. Parental involvement is crucial for an all-day kindergarten to be successful.

Finally, the researcher recommends that teacher perceptions toward an all-day kindergarten continue to be evaluated. Only with support of the teacher can any teaching program truly be as successful as it is intended to be.

APPENDIX

APPENDIX A

KINDERGARTEN QUESTIONNAIRE

Please circle the appropriate response:

1. How many years have you been teaching?

1-5 6-10 11-15 16-20 more than 20

2. What grade do you teach? K 1 2 3 4 5 6

3. What kindergarten model(s) does your school have?

All-day Half-day Both

4a. Do you currently teach kindergarten? Yes No

4b. If yes, what model do you teach? All-day Half-day

4c. If no, have you EVER taught kindergarten? Yes No

QUESTIONNAIRE DIRECTIONS:

For each question, please circle the appropriate response. Use the following key :

SA= Strongly Agree

A= Agree

U= Undecided

D= Disagree

SD= Strongly Disagree

1. All-day kindergarten provides more opportunities than half-day kindergarten for the teacher to provide individual attention.

SA A U D SD

2. In all-day kindergarten, it is easier than in half-day kindergarten for the teacher to recognize the need for student remediation.

SA A U D SD

3. In all-day kindergarten, it is easier than in half-day kindergarten for the teacher to identify the talents of the students.

SA A U D SD

4. There are more opportunities for enrichment activities in all-day kindergarten than there are in half-day kindergarten.

SA A U D SD

5. There are more field trip opportunities in all-day kindergarten than in a half-day kindergarten.

SA A U D SD

6. There is more time for play in an all-day kindergarten than in a half-day kindergarten.

SA A U D SD

7. In all-day kindergarten, students can be involved in more hands-on projects than in half-day kindergarten.

SA A U D SD

8. There is more parental involvement in all-day kindergarten than there is in a half-day kindergarten.

SA A U D SD

KEY:**SA= Strongly Agree****A= Agree****U= Undecided****D= Disagree****SD= Strongly Disagree**

9. Children in an all-day kindergarten develop better social skills than children in a half-day kindergarten.

SA A U D SD

10. All-day kindergarten better fits the needs of working parents than half-day kindergarten.

SA A U D SD

11. Children in an all-day kindergarten show more improvement in language skills than children in a half-day kindergarten.

SA A U D SD

12. Students in an all-day kindergarten leave school more fatigued than students in a half-day kindergarten.

SA A U D SD

13. All-day kindergarten has a more varied curriculum than half-day kindergarten.

SA A U D SD

14. A paraprofessional is necessary in an all-day kindergarten.

SA A U D SD

15. All-day kindergarten has a better balance of large and small group activities than half-day kindergarten.

SA A U D SD

16. Students in an all-day kindergarten will be better prepared for first grade than students in a half-day kindergarten.

SA A U D SD

17. All-day kindergarten permits more time than half-day kindergarten for small and large motor development activities.

SA A U D SD

**18. Most children of today are mature
enough to handle all-day kindergarten.**

SA A U D SD

**19. Teachers feel less rushed in an all-day
kindergarten.**

SA A U D SD

APPENDIX B

May 5, 1999

Dear Teachers,

I am a teacher in the Dayton Public Schools. I am currently working on a Masters thesis on All-day Kindergarten. As you know, many schools are switching to this model. I am interested in your perceptions of all-day kindergarten. With this questionnaire, I hope to get a general perception of Dayton Public School teachers towards all-day kindergarten.

I realize that your time is valuable and that as Dayton Public School teachers we have a lot of paperwork demands placed on us. The questionnaire should only take 5-10 minutes to complete. I REALLY need to get as many surveys back as possible. I have enclosed a self-addressed stamped envelope so that you can return the survey easily. Your help is GREATLY appreciated and I want to thank you in advance.

Sincerely,

Dana Darling

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