

Full-day kindergarten offers little academic advantage, study says ^[1]

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AVAILABILITY

Read online at [GlobeandMail.com](https://www.globeandmail.com) ^[2]

EXCERPTS

A new study is raising questions about the value of full-day kindergarten, showing children attending the program in Ontario are no better in reading, writing and number knowledge at the end of Grade 1 than their half-day peers.

Critics have characterized the program as an expensive form of government-subsidized daycare and Alberta and Manitoba have decided against funding the program, basing their decisions on the cost. Newfoundland's budget, released Thursday, pledged to implement universal full-day kindergarten in 2016. The minority Liberal government in Ontario has staked its reputation on the success of the program since it was introduced in the fall of 2010. The new longitudinal study questions whether social skills learned in full-day kindergarten translate into academic achievement in primary grades.

A team of researchers from the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education at the University of Toronto tracked about 550 children through the early primary grades. By the end of Grade 1, there was no significant difference between children who attended two years of full-day kindergarten and those in the half-day program when it came to alphabet knowledge, counting and number tasks, and writing a sentence.

Full-day kindergartners did fare significantly better in their vocabulary and their ability to control their behaviour and engage in play-based tasks, important elements when it comes to child development, the study showed.

The findings, which are not yet published, come at a time when the government is facing criticism about overcrowded kindergarten classrooms and the short timeline to roll out the full-day learning program. It has defended the program partly by pointing to a study that it funded showing children enrolled in the first two years of the province's all-day learning program were better prepared for Grade 1 and have stronger language development and better communication and social skills.

Janette Pelletier, a professor at OISE who led the new study, acknowledged that her findings, even though somewhat mixed, wouldn't sit well with those in government who have made full-day kindergarten a signature initiative. But she added that it is naive to expect a new approach to learning to work smoothly during early implementation. Generally, she found that children who attended two years of full-day kindergarten were faring much better than their half-day peers right up until they entered Grade 1.

.... [Read the full-text online](#) ^[2]

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Related link: [Letter to the Editor from study author Janette Palletier - Mar 31](#) ^[3]

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