

EVERY DAY MATTERS

An Evaluation of the Full-Day, Every Day Kindergarten in Saskatchewan (2019–2024)

SUMMARY REPORT

A SASKATOON PUBLIC SCHOOLS FOUNDATION STUDY DEMONSTRATING CONSISTENT EVERYDAY LEARNING INCREASES EARLY ACADEMIC SUCCESS



Saskatoon Public
Schools Foundation



UNIVERSITY OF
TORONTO



Saskatoon Public Schools
Inspiring Learning

BUILDING AN EQUAL START FOR EVERY CHILD

Saskatoon Public Schools Foundation (SPSF) launched *Early Learning Equal Start* in 2019 to ensure our youngest learners are ready to thrive as they begin their school journey. What began as a pilot program in one school has expanded to 29 classrooms in 25 Saskatoon Public Schools.

To evaluate the outcomes of this initiative, SPSF partnered with the University of Toronto to conduct an independent, multi-year study.

This study compared children in Saskatoon Public Schools who attended full-day, every day kindergarten to their peers in half-day every day or full-day alternating day kindergarten programs. This examination provides the most rigorous evidence to date on the benefits of consistency in early learning.

This summary presents the key findings, implications, and recommendations from that evaluation. The evidence will help guide the next chapter of early learning in Saskatchewan.

Access to consistent, every day, high quality kindergarten is one of the strongest predictors of high school graduation.



“This is more than an initiative. It is a proof point. We now have undeniable evidence that full-day, every day kindergarten changes lives.”

— Zeba Ahmad, CEO, SPSF

EVIDENCE THROUGH PARTNERSHIP

SASKATOON PUBLIC SCHOOLS FOUNDATION AND SASKATOON PUBLIC SCHOOLS

We are an independent charity working in partnership with Saskatoon Public Schools to support students, schools, and teachers with a focus on literacy, wellness, and innovation while recognizing the vital role that public education plays in our society.

Since 2008, SPSF has worked with schools, donors, and community partners to remove barriers and expand opportunities for students. Through *Early Learning Equal Start*, SPSF is creating lasting impact for children and families in Saskatoon. SPSF extends a HUGE thank you to Saskatoon Public Schools for their ongoing partnership and support.

A COLLABORATION GROUNDED IN DATA

Early Learning Equal Start was developed and funded by SPSF and implemented in partnership with Saskatoon Public Schools. The evaluation was conducted by the University of Toronto, under the leadership of Dr. Elizabeth Dhuey, to provide an objective, data-driven analysis of the program's outcomes.

EVALUATION OVERVIEW

From 2019 to 2024, the initiative grew from one pilot classroom to 29 classrooms in 25 schools. This phased rollout allowed for meaningful comparisons between three program types:

1. Half-day, every day kindergarten
2. Full-day, alternating day kindergarten
3. Full-day, every day kindergarten

The study measured gains in literacy and school readiness, controlling for differences in schools, years, and student characteristics to ensure fair comparisons.

ABOUT THE EVALUATION:

2019 – 2024

5 Cohorts | 25 Schools |
29 Classrooms

Measured using:

- Early Years Evaluation (EYE) – School readiness
- Alphabet Benchmarks – Letter recognition and sounds
- Acadience Reading – Early literacy skills

OUTCOMES WERE MEASURED USING:

EARLY YEARS EVALUATION:

School (Student) Readiness Tiers

1 = ON TRACK

2 = NEEDS TARGETED SUPPORT

3 = INTENSIVE SUPPORT

ALPHABET BENCHMARKS:

Recognition of uppercase/lowercase letters and sounds.

ACADIENCE* READING:

Composite measure of literacy skills (meeting benchmark/at risk).

*www.acadiencelearning.org

UNIVERSITY OF TORONTO COLLABORATION

The Full-Day, Every Day Kindergarten evaluation conducted by University of Toronto Professor of Economics, Dr. Elizabeth Dhuey examined how consistent daily attendance and instruction influences school readiness and early literacy.

SPSF provided funding, while Saskatoon Public Schools delivered programming and the University of Toronto designed and conducted the research analysis. Data was collected by Saskatoon Public Schools and evaluated independently by Dr Elizabeth Dhuey.

This partnership shows how educators, community leadership and academic rigor can build evidence for lasting educational change.

THE EVIDENCE IS UNDENIABLE

OUTCOME 1 | STRONGER SCHOOL READINESS

Children who develop strong reading skills early are more likely to succeed throughout their schooling and subsequent high school graduation.

Full-day, every day kindergarten raises Tier 1 (on track) placement by about 19 percent and reduces Tier 2 (needs targeted support) by about 50 percent compared with half-day kindergarten.

19% MORE LIKELY TO BE ON TRACK
TIER 1

OUTCOME 2 | DAILY CONSISTENCY MATTERS

Daily attendance matters more than simply “more hours per day.”

Data and scientific evaluation demonstrates full-day, every day kindergarten and full-day, alternating day kindergarten are NOT equal in the majority of domains examined.

**FULL-DAY, EVERY DAY
OUTPERFORMS
ALTERNATING DAY AND
HALF-DAY KINDERGARTEN**





OUTCOME 3 | LITERACY GAINS ACROSS MEASURES

Early literacy improves under full-day, every day kindergarten.

- **Alphabet benchmarks:** Full-day, every day kindergarten increases the share of students “meeting benchmark” by 15-20 percent and reduces the “at risk” by 50 percent.
- **Acadience Reading:** Full-day, every day kindergarten improves “meeting benchmark” by 27 percent and reduces “at risk” by 22 percent.
- **Inconsistent Effects:** Full-day, alternating day kindergarten shows smaller or inconsistent effects; in Acadience, full-day, alternating day kindergarten sometimes improves benchmarks, but not more than full-day, every day kindergarten.

OUTCOME 4 | GREATER EQUITY AND INCLUSION

Benefits extend across groups, with notable gains where needs are high.

Full-day, every day kindergarten increases Tier 1 (on track) for both Indigenous and non-Indigenous students; estimates are especially large for Indigenous and immigrant students in some models, though fewer observations make some estimates less precise.

LAYING THE FOUNDATION FOR LIFELONG LEARNING

Early literacy is one of the strongest predictors of future success in school, in work, and in life. When children develop strong reading and language skills early, they are better equipped to engage with every subject that follows.

EDUCATIONAL IMPACT

Children who build literacy skills early are more likely to stay on grade level, graduate from high school, and pursue further education.

Data from Saskatoon Public Schools showed that children entering Grade 1 from full-day, every day kindergarten were more confident readers and demonstrated higher readiness scores than peers from alternating day or half-day programs.

Saskatchewan students rank among the lowest in reading comprehension to other provinces.

(PISA, 2022)

ECONOMIC IMPACT

Literacy fuels productivity and innovation. Even modest improvements in literacy rates can add billions to the economy through a more skilled, adaptable workforce. Investing in early literacy is one of the most cost-effective economic strategies a government can make.

EQUITY AND OPPORTUNITY

Strong literacy skills narrow opportunity gaps. Gains are particularly meaningful for Indigenous, newcomer, and multilingual learners who face systemic barriers to access. This work aligns with the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's Calls to Action by strengthening early-learning supports for Indigenous children and communities.

THE BOTTOM LINE

In short, ensuring that young learners achieve Grade 3 literacy by Grade 3 through full-day, every day kindergarten is not only an educational imperative but also an economic strategy. By equipping more children with strong literacy and readiness skills from the start, Saskatchewan can improve graduation rates, reduce long-term costs, and build a more resilient, equitable, and competitive economy.



WHAT THIS MEANS FOR SASKATCHEWAN

The evidence is clear. Full-day, every day kindergarten consistently delivers stronger learning outcomes than half-day or alternating day programs. These gains extend beyond the classroom, shaping long-term educational achievement, equity, and economic resilience.

- **BOOST SCHOOL READINESS**

Ensure more children enter Grade 1 equipped to succeed academically, reducing the need for costly remedial supports.

- **ADVANCE EQUITY**

Provide particularly strong benefits for Indigenous, immigrant, and other high-need populations, narrowing opportunity gaps and addressing systemic disadvantages.

- **DELIVER ECONOMIC RETURNS**

Build a stronger workforce through higher literacy and productivity while reducing long-term public costs in education, social assistance, and health.

- **SUPPORTING FAMILIES**

Lower family expenses, open more childcare spaces, and strengthen the overall network of care that helps parents balance work and family life.

Evidence from Saskatoon shows that consistency in early learning changes outcomes.



FROM EVIDENCE TO ACTION

The findings from this evaluation provide a clear path forward:

1. POLICY

We must act. Make full-day, every day kindergarten a cornerstone of the early learning strategy in Saskatchewan.

2. PRACTICE

Continue to refine and expand evidence-based early learning programming.

3. PARTNERSHIP

Encourage and support collaboration between Saskatoon Public Schools Foundation, Saskatoon Public Schools, and government to scale what works.

4. INVESTMENT

Government can, as most of the country has, ensure full-day, every day kindergarten is available to Saskatchewan families. Donors and partners can continue investing in SPSF to lead innovation for kids. Communities can advocate for equity and literacy in every circle.

This progress reflects the dedication of educators, families, and community partners who believe that every child deserves an equal start.

Investing in full-day, every day kindergarten is an investment in Saskatchewan's future.



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This summary report is based on research evaluated independently by Dr. Elizabeth Dhuey and the University of Toronto (2025).