



Research Brief

Best Practices

Data were collected on kindergarten classroom practices by asking participating teachers to complete a self-assessment describing the practices they use in their classrooms during the year. The instrument, **Kindergarten Teacher Practices (KTP)**, is based upon an observation instrument, the Assessment of Practices in Early Elementary Classrooms (APEEC) developed by Hemmeter, Maxwell, Ault, and Schuster (2001). The KTP describes practices that are or should be seen in kindergarten classrooms. Part A is composed of physical environment items; Part B is composed of items that relate to the social context and instructional context of the classroom.

The 20 items on the KTP frequency part B that should be seen daily (based upon Developmentally Appropriate Practices as defined by Bredekamp and Copple, 1997) were defined as 'Best Practices'. Results of the KTP examine the use of Best Practices across the 232 kindergarten classrooms in the study from the perspective of student achievement on the KELI (Kansas Early Learning Inventory).

A specific review of the data examined the impact of Full Day Kindergarten, defined as Kindergarten classes that go the full school day, every day (the same schedule as 1st through 12th). Sixty percent (60.2%) of the teachers who participated in the School Readiness Project taught full day kindergarten.

In general, Best Practices are more frequently seen in full day kindergarten classrooms rather than in kindergartens that are scheduled for half day sessions. Non-daily Best Practices do not have a significant impact on the outcomes of any of the domains. Best Practices have a marginal effect on math and general knowledge if the child is in all-day Kindergarten while BP have a significant positive effect on symbolic development, written language, and oral communication whether the child is in all-day Kindergarten or not.

Best Practices AND full day Kindergarten have a significant positive effect on the academic areas: math, general knowledge, symbolic, written language, and oral communication. Putting Daily Best Practices in full day kindergarten is the strongest method of supporting and enhancing student learning.

Of the 20 daily Best Practices, full day and half-day teachers appear to be able to easily incorporate at least 10 to 15 daily best practices. Many teachers in full-day, however, are able to incorporate 16-18 daily best practices while teachers in half-day

Kindergarten are rarely able to incorporate more than 15. Most teachers who practice high levels of Best Practices (at least 10) include centers in their classrooms.

Certain daily Best Practices are seen much more frequently in full day kindergarten. These are significantly higher in full day kindergarten sessions than in half-day sessions. Included in the table are the percentage of teachers in the different schedules and the percentage of the total number of teachers participating in the project. These best practices are among those that are highly recommended to be practices in quality classrooms by professional early childhood groups. Note that the highest percentage for all teachers using these practices is just under 86 %.

| Item | % full day | % half day | % total |
|---|------------|------------|---------|
| 17. Hands-on materials, such as unifix cubes, games, small or art materials are provided for the students in multiple sub areas. | 81.74 | 63.16 | 74.35 |
| 30. Time for children to learn through play exploration or self instruction is provided. | 79.82 | 52.63 | 68.95 |
| 31. Multiple grouping methods (e.g. whole group, small group, individual one-on-one, guided discovery) are used when providing instruction. | 81.74 | 67.11 | 75.92 |
| 44. Students are encouraged to move independently to new activities when finished with a project. | 73.91 | 56.58 | 67.02 |
| 45. Students are allowed extra-time, if needed, to complete a project task. | 93.04 | 70.67 | 84.21 |
| 46. Advance notice about upcoming transitions, both in and outside the classroom, are provided to students. | 90.43 | 78.95 | 85.86 |

Summary: Using the best practices daily improves student achievement. Daily use of these “Best Practices” is easier to accomplish in full day sessions of kindergarten. These practices require time and include: (1) use of centers; (2) more hands-on materials available; (3) multiple instructional methods; (4) student choice; (5) time to complete tasks and to show learning.

Other practices which were higher in full day schedules, but were not significantly different at the $p < .05$ level include enhancing language allowing students to express their thoughts and opinions, diversity teaching. The one practice that appears about the same in both full day and half day kindergarten classrooms is the inclusion of students with disabilities: #47: Students with disabilities participate as fully as possible in all classroom activities.