



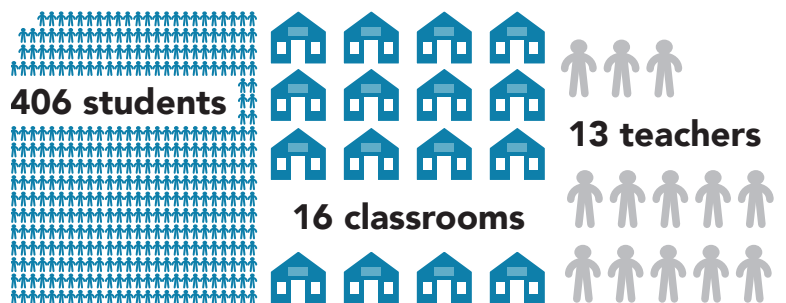
Extending the school day for our youngest scholars: Learning about the first year of full-day 4K implementation in MMSD

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In 2021-2022, the [Madison Education Partnership](#) (MEP), in collaboration with the Madison Metropolitan School District (MMSD) Departments of Early Learning and Research & Innovation, conducted an evaluation of the program to understand how enrolling in full-day four-year-old kindergarten (4K) affects student learning relative to half-day 4K. We assessed differences in gains in achievement, as well as qualitative differences in instruction, time use, and culturally responsive practices across full- and half-day classrooms.

We assessed 406 students, observed 16 classrooms, and interviewed 13 teachers

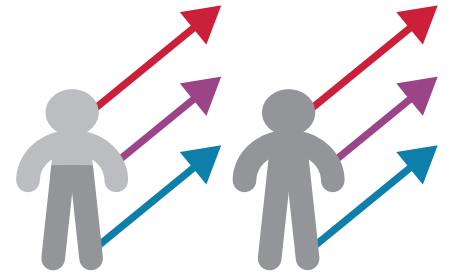
- We assessed students in the fall and spring in literacy, numeracy, and executive functioning.
- We conducted semi-structured classroom observations focusing on instructional content and formats and the use of culturally responsive practices.
- We interviewed teachers to understand how teachers planned their time, their priorities and goals for 4K, and their approach to being responsive to children in their classroom.



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On average, students across both full- and half-day sections experienced growth on literacy, numeracy, and executive functioning assessments from fall 2021 to spring 2022.

- There were no reliably estimated differences in growth, on average, between students enrolled in the full- and half-day programs, even after controlling for differences in student demographics across the two groups.
- These findings are consistent when looking at specific demographic groups (students of different race/ethnicity, special education designation, economic advantage).
- There may be a few reasons why growth in the MMSD full-day 4K program did not exceed growth in the half-day program during the 2021-2022 school year. The Departments of Learning and Research & Innovation are working closely with MEP to understand these findings and continue to evaluate the program into the second year of its implementation.



We saw few pedagogical differences between full-day and half-day classrooms, though a few full-day teachers displayed particularly high use of culturally responsive practices. Both half-day and full-day teachers reported benefits of full-day 4K.

- Across all observed 4K classrooms, Language and Literacy activities were the most common instructional content and whole group instruction was the most common instructional format; this pattern did not differ between full-day and half-day classrooms.
- Across all observed 4K classrooms, the most frequently observed culturally responsive practice was teachers' use of children's home language. Culturally responsive practices were mostly observed during non-instructional periods (e.g., meals, transitions) and/or to provide directives to children. We rarely observed culturally responsive practices when teachers were delivering instructional content. These patterns did not differ between full-day and half-day classrooms.
- We observed twice as many culturally responsive practices in full-day classrooms compared to half-day classrooms, despite observing in the classrooms a similar amount of time; however, this difference was primarily due to a few full-day teachers who used an exceptionally large amount of culturally responsive practices compared to others.
- Teachers perceived full-day 4K as allowing more time for expansive, play-based, and hands-on opportunities and, because they taught fewer students in full-day, teachers felt they could get to know students and their families better.
- Teachers reported benefiting from a more manageable workload in full-day 4K (e.g., fewer students to assess and fewer progress reports to write).

We have some recommendations for future work and reflection.

This evaluation offers an initial exploration of the practices and child outcomes of full-day 4K classrooms compared to half-day 4K. The fact that there were few differences in classroom practices observed or teacher approaches may help explain why there were no significant differences in child outcomes across the two types of 4K classrooms. However, full-day 4K seems to hold promise as allowing teachers the opportunity to be more responsive to children in their classrooms and to benefit from a manageable workload. Program leaders can consider how to ensure teachers are equipped to effectively use the extra time full-day 4K offers. Additionally, given the unique context of the full-day 4K expansion in 2021-2022 (in congruence with the return to in-person learning during COVID-19) and the pilot nature of the classroom observations, future work can continue to explore possible pedagogical differences between full-day and half-day classrooms on a larger scale. It would also be useful to examine whether differences between children who attend half-day and full-day 4K emerge over time (e.g., if children who attended full-day 4K demonstrate greater growth in 5K than their peers who attended half-day 4K).

