

Full-Time Kindergarten in  
Battlefords School Division #118  
Community Schools

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## **ABSTRACT**

Findings from this study indicate that Full-Time Kindergarten programs in the Battlefords School Division appear to have built on the many successes outlined in the literature on Full-Time Kindergarten. The successes reported in this study appear to be similar in that they contribute to the improvement of children's social and language skills, and in some cases their behaviour as well. Participants in this study felt that Full-Time Kindergarten is a positive program that works well for children. Most participants believed that their students or children grew emotionally, intellectually, and socially, crediting these changes to an increase in supervised instruction time, time spent with other students, and a safe, structured learning environment. Most participants also felt that children benefited from the consistency of Monday through Friday attendance and increased time for instruction and social interaction. The program was, above all, convenient for parents who worked, attended school, or had difficulty finding, paying for, or transporting their children to childcare.

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## **INTRODUCTION**

Early years education is receiving increased attention as a result of a growing body of research that links positive educational outcomes with learning in the early years. Along with this awareness of the growing importance of early years education is an awareness that we need to better understand the effects of new early years initiatives on student

outcomes. In the 2004-2005 school year, Battlefords School Division #118 implemented enriched Full-Time Kindergarten programs at two of their seventeen schools, McKittrick Community School and Connaught School, both located in North Battleford.<sup>1</sup> The two schools involved in this study had sixty-one students enrolled in the Full-Time Kindergarten program during the 2004-2005 school year. These Full-Time Kindergarten programs enrolled kindergarten-aged children to attend everyday, all day, during the school week. These programs were implemented as a response to the many students who proved to be unready for grade one. The programs were also part of a renewed focus on early years education, with special attention to language, especially orality, and behaviour.

This research project, a joint effort between Battlefords School Division and CUISR, investigates the perceptions of teachers and parents or caregivers regarding the effectiveness and benefits of Full-Time Kindergarten programs. In particular, this project looks at the implications of Full-Time Kindergarten programs for all parties involved, specifically related to student development, particularly in terms of language and behaviour, and expands the notion of effective kindergartens as seen in improved student achievement. Research design ensures that the experiences and perceptions of teachers, specialists, and parents or caregivers are explored. The project also makes use of quantitative data already gathered by the school division to complement narratives gathered from the various parties. This investigation provides Battlefords School Division with data to make an outcomes-based decision regarding expansion of the Full-Time program to all their elementary schools. The findings are intended to inform the school board's decision-making, as well as potentially inform other school divisions across the province and country.

## **LITERATURE REVIEW<sup>2</sup>**

There is a general consensus in the literature on Full-Day Kindergarten that these programs lead to improved gains in several focus areas for early years learning. Wang and Johnstone (1999) find that students in Full-Day Kindergarten showed more gains in several areas (oral language, emergent reading skills, early math reasoning, behaviours) than those not enrolled in such a program. Rothenberg (1995) indicates that Full-Day Kindergarten students showed more independent learning, classroom involvement, productivity, and reflectiveness. Several others also find that students enrolled in Full-Day Kindergarten showed greater academic achievement than Part-Time Kindergarten students (Cryan, Sheehan, and Bandy-Hedden; 1992; Rothenberg, 1995; Hough and Bryde, 1996; Elicker and Mather, 1997; Fusaro, 1997; Elicker, 2000; Gullo, 2000). In particular, several studies have shown improved literacy (daCosta and Bell, 2001; da Costa, 2005). For example, "Results indicated that, in terms of literacy development, attending full-day kindergarten is superior to attending three-quarter or half day kindergarten" (Zakaluk and Straw, 2002). This overall improvement also extends to behaviour



(Elicker and Mather, 1997; Clark and Kirk, 2000). Finn (2002) describes the Full-Day program as “learning how to learn.”

In terms of who benefits most from Full-Day Kindergarten, the consensus appears to be that it is students and families from poor and/or marginalized communities. Generally, those with low socio-economic status (and therefore more likely to be classified as “at-risk”<sup>3</sup>), which often means visible minorities, seem to benefit most from Full-Day Kindergarten (Puleo, 1988; Housden and Kam, 1992; Karweit, 1992; Rothenburg, 1995; Ross and Roberts, 1999; da Costa and Bell, 2001; Da Costa 2004).

Students are regarded as benefiting from the extended time invested in flexible and informal learning (Fromberg, 1995; Vecchiotti, 2001). Students also benefit from the extended workday because the teacher is more able to work with individual students or small groups (Porch, 2002; Vecchiotti, 2001). Teachers seem to benefit from the increased teaching time and decreased transition time that Full-Day Kindergarten provides, and are allowed more time to assess student progress (Nelson, 2000; Vecchiotti, 2001; Elicker and Mather, 1997). Elicker and Mather (1997) further find that Full-Day Kindergarten helps students make the transition to grade one, provides more flexibility and time to learn, is less stressful and frustrating because of the increased time to fully engage in activities, and helps teachers get to know students and their families better. Wang and Johnstone (1999:27) state, “When considering what kind of kindergarten program to offer, educators must consider both the desire of parents or caregivers as well as the potential effects on student achievement.” When parents are asked about their perceptions of the Full-Day Kindergarten program, they say that it better prepares children for grade one (Mathien and Johnston, 1998). It has also been found to be more convenient for working parents (Rothenberg, 1995), less hectic for children (Porch, 2002), and eases the difficulties faced by parents who struggle with locating and paying for reliable transportation and childcare (Vecchiotti, 2001).

There are concerns that Full-Day Kindergarten’s academic benefits lessen over time. Elicker (2000) states that there is no evidence that the benefits experienced in Full-Day Kindergarten extend past grade one and into subsequent grades. These concerns are being addressed by ongoing research into the long-term effects of Full-Day Kindergarten. Walston and West (2005) state, “Findings from a multilevel regression analysis indicate that children in full-day classes make greater gains in both reading and mathematics compared to those in half-day classes *after* adjusting for gain score differences associated with race/ethnicity, poverty status, fall achievement level, sex, class size, amount of time for subject area instruction, and the presence of an instructional aide” (emphasis in original). In addition, da Costa (2005: 30) states the following:

Given the results in kindergarten, grade one, grade two, and grade three obtained by low SES students who attended full-day kindergarten programs, it is without a doubt that the program (along with other programs made available to students in grades one to three) has positively affected their abilities to read and write in these grades. This comes

in the face of a multitude of family and social issues (e.g. poverty, drug and alcohol abuse, physical abuse, high transience levels) all working to mitigate students' chances of success. Full day kindergarten needs to continue to be offered to low SES students.

## METHODOLOGY

The population for this study consisted of parents or caregivers with children enrolled in Full-Time Kindergarten classes in two Community Schools, three kindergarten teachers in total from both schools, and speech and language specialists, all from Battlefords School Division #118. Of these, the three kindergarten teachers and one specialist were specifically requested to participate. The population from which the parent/caregiver sample was taken consisted of approximately ninety-six parents/caregivers. The researcher, with the help of school staff, carefully chose parents and caregiver participants for taped conversations to enhance representation and reflect the school and community's demographic characteristics. This included considering ethnicity, socio-economic status, number of family members attending the school, sex of family members attending the school, family composition, and parental or caregiver participation in the Full-Time Kindergarten program.

Both quantitative and qualitative methods of gathering data from the sample were employed. Dr. Doug Willms from the Canadian Research Institute for Social Policy at the University of New Brunswick, along with his colleague Teresa Tang, analyzed and reported on data collected by McKitrick and Connaught kindergarten teachers as part of an on-line assessment called the Early Years Evaluation (EYE) Tool. This tool, developed by Willms and Dr. J. Beswick from KSI Research International, assesses students' learning needs and provides a baseline for measuring gains in student learning.

The researcher also made use of quantitative data already collected at both schools, including attendance and turnover rates at each school, the Early Development Instrument (EDI), Brigance assessments, speech and language screens, and all available report cards. All quantitative data were made available to the researcher upon request. (For descriptions of the Brigance, EYE, and EDI, see **Appendix D.**)

Ten conversations were taped with parents/caregivers (six), Full-Time Kindergarten teachers (three), as well as a specialist. These conversations took place as individuals or in groups of two.

A single group discussion with parents/caregivers was also held. Originally, four group discussions in total were to be held, but parents and caregivers at Connaught School, the site for three of these proposed discussions, preferred individual or paired discussions. One group discussion with seven participants, then, was taped at McKitrick School. School staff and/or the researcher contacted participants for the group discussion by letter, and later by phone. No formal script was used during the discussion as

the researcher sought to let participants direct the conversation to those issues relevant and important to them. The researcher began with general questions about both the parent and child's experiences with the program. The researcher listened for, and when necessary prompted further, comments regarding aspects of the program that seemed significant and related to, or differed from, other participants' comments. Participants were prompted with general questions such as, "What do you think the school board or other parents/caregivers from schools with Part-Time Kindergarten programs should know about your experience with the Full-Time Kindergarten program?" or "Do you have any suggestions for next year's program?"<sup>4</sup>

In addition, a phone conversation took place with one parent, during which the researcher was granted verbal approval to take notes. The researcher also received a letter from one child's caregivers that outlined their and their child's experience with Full-Time Kindergarten.

The first phase of data collection commenced when the researcher had conversations with teachers and the specialist. These conversations were set up by the researcher with the aid of the Community School coordinator and kindergarten teachers at each school. The interviews, held in late May and June 2005, took place at the schools and lasted between one and two hours each. Audio recordings were made of the conversations and later transcribed for analysis.

The second phase of data collection involved both quantitative and qualitative research. The first process was quantitative in nature and determined by the interview outcomes. It also coincided with the second qualitative process, the facilitation of focus groups. The researcher, assisted by staff at each school in selecting participants, held focus groups in June 2005. School staff and the researcher set up times and locations that suited participants, and made assurances that participants' needs were being met in terms of transportation, childcare, and meals (during times when conversations were being held over mealtime). Schools sent out an initial invitation letter on behalf of the researcher to parents or caregivers. These letters were followed up with phone-calls from the researcher and/or school staff. The focus groups, lasting between forty-five and ninety minutes, were recorded (with participants' signed consent) and then transcribed. The data were then organized and analyzed in July and August, along with that from the interviews and quantitative data gathered from the schools. All data collection was finished by early July 2005.

### ***METHODOLOGICAL LIMITATIONS***

Several methodological challenges arose during the research process:

- 1) Research began well into the 2004-2005 school year. Prescribed methods of data collection were not in place at the beginning of the school year, meaning that areas for common assessment for both schools were not predefined.

- 2) Student turnover rates at both schools are high, resulting in incomplete data for some children.
- 3) Ensuring parental or caregiver representation for taped conversations was difficult because end-of-year is always busy.
- 4) Access to original data (as opposed to a summary or reported data) in electronic form was limited or unavailable for most assessments (e.g. EDI, speech screens, EYE).
- 5) Controls were not in place to account for age, sex, family income, family education, learning assistance at home, or familial attitudes towards education.

### ***GENERAL LIMITATIONS AND CAUTIONS***

- 1) Results from interviews and focus groups, as well as quantitative reports regarding student abilities, provide only a snapshot of the experiences that students, parents or caregivers, teachers, and specialists have had with the Full-Time Kindergarten program.
- 2) The results are not intended to represent individual performance, but instead provide a basis for reflection and further investigation for the entire school community.
- 3) Both schools participating in this study are Community Schools. This study does not seek to distinguish between features of the Community School itself and those of the Full-Time Kindergarten program.

## **RESULTS**

### ***ATTENDANCE***

Before a detailed discussion of attendance rates in the Full-Time Kindergarten program can occur, it is crucial to understand how these rates were obtained. Attendance rates were calculated by dividing the days that each student attended in a given month by the days they were actually enrolled in the Full-Time Kindergarten program during that month. The resulting number is the attendance rate for that particular student in that specific month. Numbers shown are averages of all students' attendance rates for each month. The yearly attendance rate followed the same process, totaling the days attended all year and dividing that sum by the days actually enrolled.

Analyzing results of a program in terms of a student's growth in skills or abilities must be understood and qualified with knowledge of the portion of the program attended. As **Figure 1** indicates, almost one in four students attended Full-Time Kindergarten for four months or less, while just over half attended for nine months or more. Student turnover was relatively high, with over 40% of students attending eight months or less of the

ten month program.<sup>5</sup> Indeed, the author was provided with attendance data for sixty-one students<sup>6</sup>, which indicated that no more than fifty were ever enrolled at one time during the school year, with the number as low as forty-two at times (see **Figure 2**).

**Figure 3** includes attendance data for McKitrick and Connaught, indicating the attendance rates for each school and the average rate between both schools. The overall average attendance rate stayed above 80% for the 2004-2005 school year. To give these attendance data some context, **Figure 4** includes historical attendance data obtained from McKitrick School for the past three consecutive school years. Clearly, attendance rates at McKitrick have improved in conjunction with implementation of the Full-Time Kindergarten program.

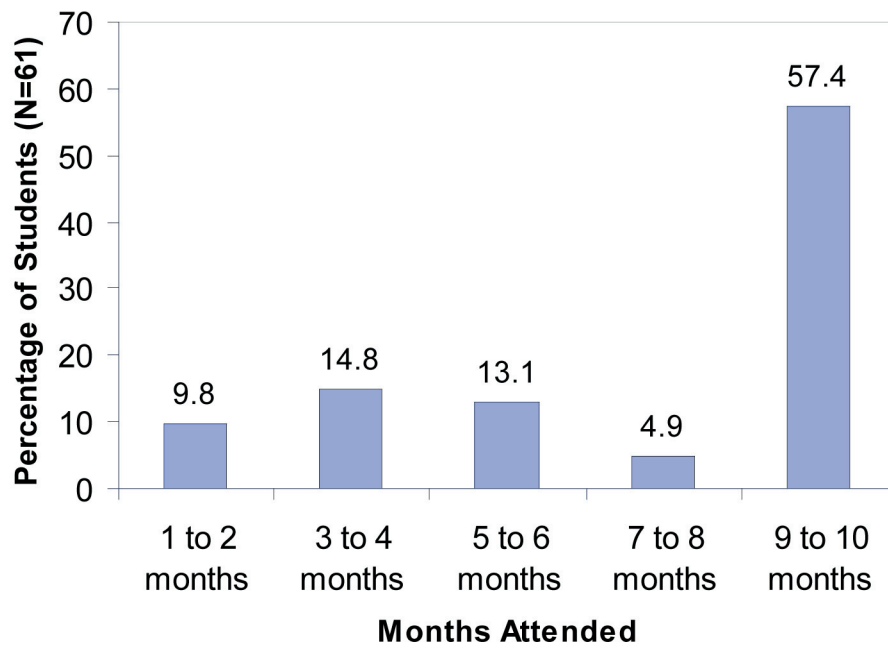
When considering the high attendance rates for the 2004-2005 school year, several factors were of interest. First is the issue of calculating attendance rates. Several students from McKitrick were enrolled in the program (some up to nine months) despite not having attended any days in some of those months. For example, they may have attended for one month and then never attended again, but made no formal withdrawal. While the school considered these students formally enrolled, the researcher did not, and ended their enrollment as of the first month with no days attended. This explains the difference between the 2004-2005 “From School” data and the 2004-2005 “Calculated” rate. Nevertheless, what is clear is that regardless of the effects of students’ enrollment status in the calculation of attendance rates, McKitrick’s 2004-2005 data show better attendance rates than those experienced during the 2002-2003 and 2003-2004 school years.

Participants in conversations held in June 2005 discussed other factors that might have influenced attendance rates. Teacher and parent/caregiver participants felt that the consistency of the program, in terms of the daily expectations of attendance, the relief from childcare, and the fun and quality programming in a safe and structured environment, influenced the high attendance rates in 2004-2005. These factors will be addressed in more detail in the “Consistent” and “Convenient” sections below.

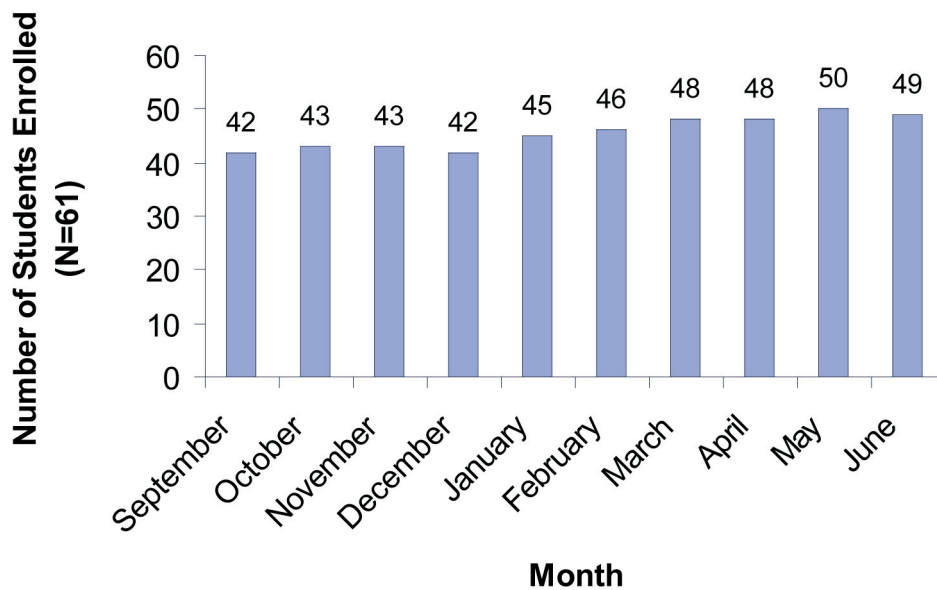
In much of the literature on Full-Time Kindergarten, high attendance rates are directly linked to improved learning outcomes. As **Table 1** demonstrates, there is a clear and significant relationship between improved Brigance (Gr.1) scores and longer periods of Full-Time Kindergarten program attendance. The researcher was unable to reach additional conclusions regarding the Brigance assessments, as Pre and Post assessments were unavailable using the Brigance tool.

It appears that similar practices and expectations across schools and programs within a community, especially Full-Time Kindergarten, are important. As will be discussed, inconsistent attendance is a concern not only for the student who is moving but also for students already present in the classroom. Teachers and staff spend considerable time during the school year going over routines that were taught in the fall in order to teach students who have just joined those classes. Many students also tend to regress

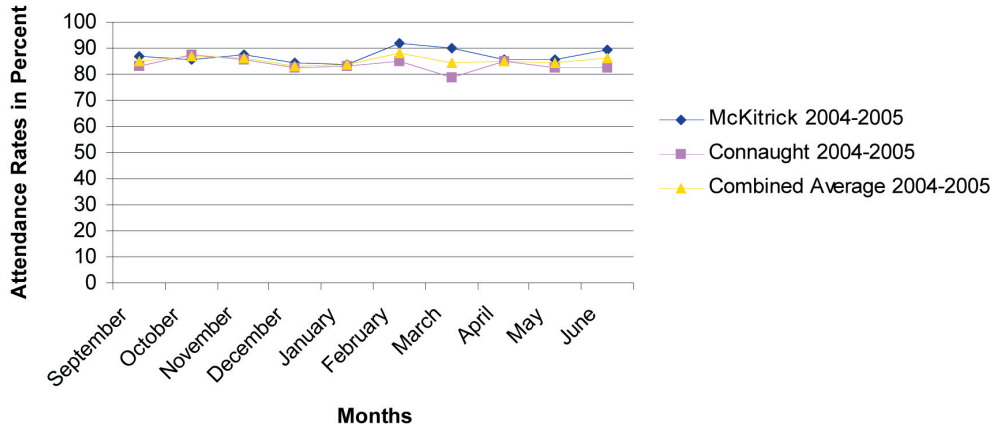
**Figure 1. Total Months of Full Time Kindergarten Attended at McKitrick and Connaught Schools, Battlefords School Division, 2004-2005.**



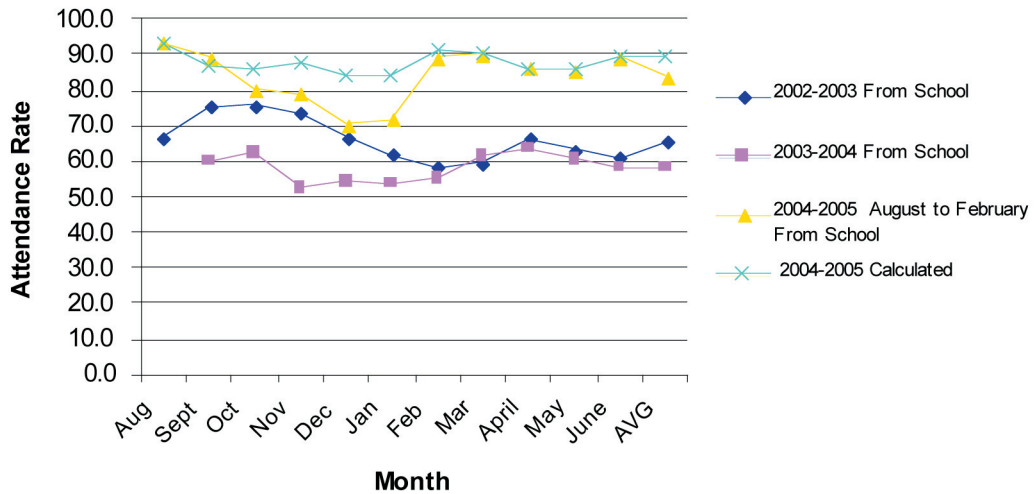
**Figure 2. Attendance Numbers by Month for McKitrick and Connaught Schools, Battlefords School Division, 2004-2005.**



**Figure 3. Full-Time Kindergarten Attendance Rates for McKitrick and Connaught Schools, Battlefords School Division, 2004-2005.**



**Figure 4. Attendance Rates for McKitrick School, Battlefords School Division, 2002-2003 to 2004-2005.**





in terms of practicing their skills because the dynamic of the classroom is upset when a new student joins and is not yet aware of classroom expectations. Thus, attendance has direct implications on the extent of language and behavioural skills development for all children.

**Table 1. Association Between Months Attended and Brigance (Gr. 1) Scores for McKitrick and Connaught Schools, Battlefords School Division, 2004-2005.**

Months Attended	Brigance (Gr.1) Score			Total (%)
	41-60%	61-80%	81-100%	
1 to 3 months	2.4	0.0	0.0	<b>2.4</b>
4 to 6 months	0.0	14.3	0.0	<b>14.3</b>
7 to 9 months	0.0	7.1	0.0	<b>7.1</b>
10 months	7.1	38.1	30.9	<b>76.2</b>
<i>**results are statistically significant, p&lt;.01 level</i>				<b>100</b>

N=42, percentage of respondents in each category.<sup>7</sup>

### *LANGUAGE AND COMMUNICATION*

Teacher and parent/caregiver participants indicated that they felt their children were greatly improving in terms of language. Many were pleasantly surprised at the extent of their child’s vocabulary and proficiency with printing letters and numbers. One teacher participant spoke of improvement in language skills, highlighting the children’s “communication skills and their ability to talk about things instead of pointing and [saying], ‘What’s this?’, ‘What’s that?’. They are able to say a sentence or say it in their words.” Another teacher affirmed this observation: “I think their language has improved. I haven’t heard a significant improvement in speech.”<sup>8</sup> Some participants noted that greater access to specialists was helpful to all students, but particularly to those who do not attend everyday. Because of this increased access, the chances that these infrequent attendees see a specialist on a day that they actually attend is believed to be higher than it would have been in Part-Time Kindergarten.

Full-Time Kindergarten was also believed to provide greater opportunity for children to practice their speech and language because they are required to communicate more frequently in busy classrooms and during longer days. Children were perceived to be better at communicating and dealing with disputes themselves rather than rely on a teacher or assistant’s intervention. Speech and language was also linked to behaviour in that children are required to understand the meanings and behaviours associated with particular words and phrases before they can “perform” them. Developing certain language with children gives the teacher, and sometimes the parent/caregiver, greater influence over the child’s behaviour.



The following quantitative measures use teacher and specialist evaluations to add to the parents or caregivers' and teachers' stories regarding language and communication skills. **Table 2** indicates the changes that occurred in between the first and second reporting periods in the areas of language, and reading and number readiness as measured by report cards filled out by kindergarten teachers in March and June of the 2004-2005 school year. These report cards support parents and caregivers' observations and indicate that growth occurred between the first and second report cards in the areas of number and reading readiness. While there was not as much growth evident in the report cards in the area of language, higher percentages of students were already "usually" and "always" displaying the required skills by the time of the first reporting period.

**Table 2. Report Card Results for Language and Communication for McKittrick and Connaught Schools, Battlefords School Division, 2004-2005.**

Report Card (N=53)		First Report (March)	Second Report (June)	Difference
		Usually/ Always (%)	Usually-Always (%)	
<b>Language</b>	Speaks clearly	80.6	77.6	-3.0
	Uses sentences when speaking	94.4	95.9	1.5
	Listens without interrupting	83.3	75.5	-7.8
	Easily uses words to describe things	80.6	81.6	1.0
<b>Number readiness</b>	Counts	86.1	91.8	5.7
	Recognizes Numerals	55.6	75.5	19.9
	Names Numerals	41.6	62.5	20.9
	Can match number of objects to numeral	33.4	85.5	52.1
	Prints numerals	69.4	81.7	12.3
	Recognizes shapes	86.1	95.9	9.8
	Names shapes	74.3	83.6	9.3
<b>Reading Readiness</b>	Recognizes letters of the alphabet	52.8	85.4	32.6
	Names letters	38.8	64.6	25.8
	Identifies beginning sounds	33.3	64.6	31.3
	Can say rhyming words	38.8	53.1	14.3
	Can say opposites	46.9	75.6	28.7
	Is interested in books	80.5	79.6	-0.9
	Progresses from Left to Right	89.5	93.6	4.1
	Recognizes colors	88.5	98.0	9.5
	Names colors	85.7	95.9	10.2

Percentage of students who were reported to be "usually" or "always" displaying the following abilities. For full table see Appendix B.

For assessing students' language and communication abilities, **Table 3** indicates that, according to the EYE evaluation, just over 80% of students show appropriate development in this area.

**Table 3. Early Years Evaluation (EYE) Results for Language and Communication for McKitrick and Connaught Schools, Battlefords School Division, 2004-2005.**

EYE Early Years Evaluation (N=51)	Language and Communication Sub-Domain	
	#/51	%
Appropriate Development	41	80.4%
Experiencing some difficulty	9	17.6%
Evidence of significant difficulty	1	2.0%

When comparing the 2004-2005 school year's EDI results with the 2003-2004 results (see **Table 4**), it can be observed that more students from both McKitrick and Connaught Schools scored in the higher ranges in both the Language and Cognitive Development and Communications subscales in 2004-2005 than in 2003-2004. More encouragingly, substantially fewer students scored in the lowest range of the subscales (below the 10<sup>th</sup> percentile) in 2004-2005 school year compared to 2003-2004, the year before the introduction of the Full-Time Kindergarten. While it is important to note that the two years being compared, 2003-2004 and 2004-2005, represent two different cohorts of children in kindergarten, and although EDI measures how well children are prepared for kindergarten, it appears that children performed better in these two EDI scales the year in which Full-Time Kindergarten program was introduced compared to the year before.

**Table 4. Early Development Instrument (EDI) Results for Language and Communication for McKitrick and Connaught Schools, Battlefords School Division, 2004-2005.**

EDI Early Development Instrument	Language and Cognitive Development				Communication Skills & General Knowledge			
	2003-2004		2004-2005		2003-2004		2004-2005	
	#/25	%	#/46	%	#/25	%	#/46	%
Above 75thptile	4	16.0	10	21.7	4	16.0	9	19.5
75-51 ptile	6	24.0	8	17.4	7	28.0	6	13.0
50-26 ptile	3	12.0	13	28.3	5	20.0	16	34.8
25-10 ptile	8	32.0	12	26.1	4	16.0	12	26.1
Below 10 ptile	4	16.0	3	6.5	5	20.0	3	6.5

The Kaufman Survey of Early Academic and Language Skills (K-SEALS) evaluation (see **Table 5**), as compared to the EYE evaluation, places a total of 50% of students “Below Average” and “Well Below Average” when assessing Early Academic and Language Skills.

It is critical to acknowledge that while these tools may evaluate the same areas for growth and development (i.e. reading readiness), they use different measurement tools that have been developed using different normative groups. For example, K-SEALS was standardized in 1987 and 1988 using a sample of 1,000 children that most closely reflected the United States demographic at that time.<sup>9</sup> Therefore, the normative population against which the children from McKittrick and Connaught are being compared does not necessarily reflect the historical, cultural, and social history of the North Battleford community and its children. The EYE normative group consists primarily of children in New Brunswick, along with those from Ontario.<sup>10</sup> When the EDI normative group was being created, students with “special needs,” or for whom this specific information was missing, were dropped from the sample.<sup>11</sup> The normative sample for EDI, then, does not include any children who would be seen as having special needs and therefore may not necessarily reflect the experiences of communities that have a high number of students with special needs in particular areas. Accordingly, the results for the K-SEALS, EDI, and EYE instruments reported here must be considered in light of the varying groups being used as normative standards.

**Table 5. Kaufman Survey of Early Academic and Language Skills (K-SEALS) Results for McKittrick and Connaught Schools, Battlefords School Division, 2004-2005.**

KSEALS N=48	Early Language & Language Skills Composite	
	#/48	%
Well Above	1	2.1
Above	2	4.2
Average	21	43.8
Below	16	33.3
Well Below	8	16.7

Comments from caregiver participants suggest that they were impressed with their children’s progress with letters and numbers.

I’m really impressed with the amount of knowledge he has at his age ... he knows his ABC’s. He might not be a perfect speller, but he knows how to spell.

She enjoys going to school ... and you can tell she's learning just the way she talks; she knows more words, bigger words. She likes going to school.

He impresses my whole family when he comes home and counts to 100 and starts bringing stuff out ... and its like, "Whoa, we didn't do that in kindergarten!"

Participants who compared the progress of their child enrolled in Full-Time Kindergarten to that of their other children who went through a Part-Time Kindergarten program remarked on the significant advancement that the Full-Time Kindergarten child has made in the mastery of skills such as letters and numbers. One parent remarked on the benefits of pre-kindergarten and its possible connection to her child's success in Full-Time Kindergarten:

When the Full-Time Kindergarten came, for convenience-wise, I was so excited, I was telling everybody ... and skill-wise, I see such a difference between him and the other two. But, like I said, I don't know if it's age, if its pre-K, or what I should attribute it to. But I see a big difference.

While parent/caregiver and teacher participants testified to the improvement in students' abilities in the areas of language and communication, the current available quantitative data at this time are inconclusive. At best, there remains a large portion of students—20-50%, depending on the tool and the particular skills being measured—in the "Below Average Development" or related categories of low achievement. There remains, then, a need for continued programming to foster language and communication skills, and continued collection of data regarding student outcomes in North Battleford for future comparative use.

### ***BEHAVIOUR AND SOCIAL SKILLS***

Behaviour and social skills were highly emphasized by the school board and teacher participants as integral to the Full-Time Kindergarten program. With some students in particular, more instruction time appeared to have been spent on social skills than other academic topics. Teacher participants believed that this emphasis was critical before engaging those particular children in other forms of instruction. As one teacher said, "Our

mandate is to have kids attending, and behaviour would be an aspect of it. Behaviour ... being able to learn, knowing the function of a school, the function of a classroom, and the function of learning.”

Participants felt that the focus on social skills also had a positive impact on other aspects of learning. Participants believed that while particular students with behaviour problems may not always be able to make huge leaps in terms of academic achievement, they will be more capable of being in a classroom setting and to engage in future learning as a result of their Full-Time Kindergarten experience. The students were seen to be building a foundation for learning. Another conversation with a teacher went as follows:

Teacher: When X first came, he had no idea where to sit. ... [N]o, he would just scream, walk around, he wouldn't do anything. ... Now he participates, he accepts consequences, he knows. ... [I]t's night and day.”

Researcher: So what would you attribute this huge success to?

Teacher: Being here everyday. Everything is the same everyday, the same for all the kids. ... [T]he Early Skills Program for sure ... that's helped him a lot.

When looking at the students' performance in the behaviour subscale (Social Competence) of the EDI, substantially fewer students scored in the lower end of the scale (below the 25<sup>th</sup> percentile) in 2004-2005 than in 2003-2004. In 2004-2005, 37% of students in the two schools scored in the lower range of the EDI subscale, while a full 60% of students scored in this range in the year before. Similar results are seen in the relevant scale (Social Skills and Behaviour) from the EYE instrument. The EYE instrument, which was implemented once in June at the end of 2004-2005 school year, indicates that only one in four students were experiencing difficulty with social skills and behaviour in the classroom (see **Table 7**). Between February and June 2004-05, when the EDI and EYE were completed, respectively, the percentage of students scoring in the lower ranges on each scale decreased (37% of students in the EDI, down to 25% in the EYE). While this may indicate a significant improvement, the reader is cautioned to remember that the school experienced a high turnover of students, with 40% of students attending the program for eight months or less.

**Table 6. Early Development Instrument (EDI) Results for Social Competence for McKitrick and Connaught Schools, Battlefords School Division, 2004-2005.**

EDI Early Development Instrument	Social Competence			
	2003-2004		2004-2005	
	#/25	%	#/46	%
Above 75thptile	4	16.0	7	15.2
75-51 ptile	1	4.0	10	21.7
50-26 ptile	5	20.0	12	26.1
25-10 ptile	8	32.0	6	13.0
Below 10 ptile	7	28.0	11	23.9

**Table 7. Early Years Evaluation (EYE) Results for McKitrick and Connaught Schools, Battlefords School Division, 2004-2005.**

EYE Early Years Evaluation (N=51)	Social Skills and Behaviour Domain	
	#/51	%
Appropriate Development	37	72.5%
Experiencing some difficulty	11	21.6%
Evidence of significant difficulty	3	5.9%

Teacher participants indicated that appropriate social behaviour<sup>12</sup> is also directly related to consistent instructions and expectations, which result in children learning and displaying acceptable social behaviour more quickly. For example, the Early Skills Development Program (see **Appendix E**), which is available at both schools, offers one-on-one instruction for students with behaviour problems, as well as opportunities to practice acceptable behaviour. Programs like Early Skills are based on positive reinforcement that lead to the intrinsic valuing of good behaviour on the part of the student. One key to this program is that it attempts to maximize consistency between teachers, school staff, Early Skills personnel, and the home. Techniques for encouraging the child to display appropriate behaviours or skills are transferred from one caregiver, teacher, or supervisor to another. This program, and others like it, can help caregivers achieve and maintain a positive attitude towards the school, the staff, and learning in general. It is also crucial in providing hope and support for parents or caregivers of children with behavioural challenges.

Participants spoke positively about access to resources for their children, such as speech pathologists, KidsFirst, and Early Skills.<sup>13</sup> One Early Skills specialist indicated that when looking at data from McKitrick and Connaught, those children targeted by Early Skills and who attended the full year scored higher on a Child Behavior Checklist (also known as “Achenbach”; see **Appendix D**) than they did at the beginning of the

year. That students with significant behavioural difficulties remained at the school for the program's duration is itself a notable success. Furthermore, when parents of students targeted by Early Skills filled out a Parenting Stress Index (see **Appendix D**), the reported levels of stress in terms of social isolation decreased between the beginning of the year and the end.

Because children are attending more often, most have more frequent access to services that they require. Parent participants also commented that students are bringing home skills that they learn at school, such as the ability to deal with issues or to be quiet and wait for instruction when requested to do so. Some comments from parents include:

She's not as shy. She used to be really shy.

When you're an only child, it's only you. All the time. And then she'd cry if she couldn't get her way. When she started kindergarten, it took a couple of months, but she shook that off. Now she knows how to take turns. She's more grown up, I would say.

He had his way all the time ... he was spoiled rotten ... but I found that he learned you've got to take turns, you don't interrupt people. ... [H]e brings a lot of them home ... like the things they teach him ... how to be patient. And he'll sit and fold his hands.

When asked what they felt was responsible for these improvements, participants often cited the increased time and extent of supervised interaction with other children. This more frequent and more diverse interaction (e.g. with older children, attending assembly, field trips) required children to learn quickly about timing, patience, sharing, taking turns and dealing effectively with issues (especially in larger classes), respect for other students, sitting still and waiting for instruction, responsibility for their actions, and completing tasks. As one parent said,

It gave [child's name] interaction skills. Now that she has more kids to adjust with all day long, she has to learn patience, timing, how to interact with other kids. ... I noticed her picking up on stuff like that.



Report card data on social development (see **Table 8**) did not report extensively on student behaviour, but neither did they suggest any indication of substantial growth in the areas measured. Again, however, the reader is reminded that the body of students assessed in March for the first report card does not contain the same students who were assessed in the second report card in June.

**Table 8. Report Card Comments on Social Development for McKittrick and Connaught Schools, Battlefords School Division, 2004-2005.**

Report Card Data N=53		First Report (March) - Usually/ Always (%)	Second Report (June) - Usually- Always (%)	Difference
<b>Social Development</b>	Works and plays cooperatively	83.4	79.2	-4.2
	Respects the rights and properties of others	86.1	81.3	-4.8
	Adopts classroom rules and routines	66.7	68.8	2.1
	Appears to be happy and enjoying school	100.0	93.8	-6.2

### *CONSISTENCY*

The theme of consistency ran throughout participant conversations. Consistency, in this context, can be understood to mean regularity, predictability, and recurring patterns. That definition should be kept in mind in the discussions that follow regarding school schedules, the relative ease of transition, preparation for grade one, children’s ability to flourish and refine skills (provided that they have consistent feedback), the building of foundations for learning, students’ enjoyment of Full-Time Kindergarten, possible benefits to teachers, and access to resources.

#### *Schedule*

When parent and teacher participants were asked whether they had a preference, they indicated that it was for Full-Time Kindergarten over any form of Part-Time Kindergarten. Parents found that it was easier to remember the days that their children were to attend school. Indeed, many stated that both their children and themselves as caregivers were less confused about their schedule now that they have school every day of the week.

I think it’s stabler. ...[Y]ou know what’s going to happen that day. Instead of rushing around and forgetting things with your kids. **(parent)**



Some [students] are coming half a day a week, or one day, half here and half there during the week. But to me, if it was only every other day of school, they might be showing up on days they don't have school. I think there is more of a chance that they might hit it on the right days. **(teacher)**

(This latter point, however, is somewhat muddled by Family Days.<sup>14</sup> For example, children regularly show up the morning of a Family Day even though they are not to be there until the afternoon.)

Caregivers also said that they spend less time transferring children to and from school or to other childcare arrangements, which means that the children spend more time either playing or engaged in educational activities. As one parent said,

They are in one specific place. You don't have to be chasing them around all over the world. They are in one spot. They are there for the day. Plus they are getting that extra learning time, too.

This positive development is corroborated by teacher participants' suggestions that Full-Time Kindergarten's value is effectively more than twice the time spent in Part-Time Kindergarten because there is less regression of skills in between classroom times. Students have more time to work on and successfully complete particular projects, receive more assessment and feedback, and use their skills on a more regular basis.

### *Transition and adjustment*

When speaking of children's transition and adjustment to the program, two main themes emerged. The first is that parents as a whole felt their children adjusted quickly to Full-Time Kindergarten—some immediately, such as those who were already in full-time care, while others two months at the longest. One teacher participant mentioned that children in all grades required a short time of adjustment as they moved from their summer schedules to school schedules and the accompanying routines. As this teacher said,

But again, it's after summer and I don't know any grade two or three class that isn't tired going back to school for the first couple weeks anyway.

The second theme is that all participants involved in the study felt that their children were ready for Full-Time Kindergarten. Some felt that their children should have been enrolled in kindergarten the previous year, but were held back because of strict cut-off dates. Several parents felt that children who are born shortly after the cut-off should be assessed to see if they are ready to enter kindergarten. Teacher participants indicated that children did not need to nap during the school day, and conversations with parents indicated that most students were already in full-time care situations, where they did not nap, before they entered the Full-Time Kindergarten program. Some comments from parents include:

His biggest complaint about pre-K was that he knew there was two classes ... and why couldn't he go in the morning and afternoon?

[Child's name] quit napping when he was two, so I wasn't concerned about a lack of energy.

My son was used to it.

He was quite tired for the first couple months. ... [H]e does much better.

A few parents indicated that, initially, their child had to nap after school or went to bed earlier, but these instances were on days when the child was more active than usual or at the very beginning of the school year. As one parent said,

She seemed to handle it really well. ... [S]he fell asleep almost right after school, but ... now she's fine. I think it depends on what they've done during the day.

#### *Preparation for grade one*

Many participants felt that Full-Time Kindergarten better prepares children for grade one in terms of the length of the school day, classroom activities, and adjusting to going to bed and getting up at certain times, especially for those who were not previously doing so. One parent who had previous children in part-time programs said of the Full-Time Kindergarten program:

[T]his one is better. [Child's name] is way more prepared for grade one than the other two were. I know that for sure ... [my child] shouldn't have any problems adjusting to grade one.

Another parent spoke of her older son's experience with Part-Time Kindergarten:

With [child's name], he figured he could stay up late every other night, 'cause he didn't have school. It was hard to get him on a schedule. He was okay with the program. ... [I]t wasn't enough. It wasn't enough time for him either.

Caregivers who have had children go through other types of part-time programs feel that their Full-Time Kindergarten child is better prepared for grade one than their older children. However, this should be qualified by the fact that the researcher was not able to control for students who attended pre-kindergarten the previous year compared to those who went directly into Full-Time Kindergarten. Those who previously attended pre-kindergarten or similar programs offered by First Nations communities would presumably be more ready for the rigours of a full day at school than those with no exposure to the school-learning environment.

I don't know how much of it is ... age. ... I don't know how much is pre-K, how much is [Full-Time] K, ... but I definitely think [the child] has had a big improvement over the other ... kids when they were in K.

I'm worried my kid's going to be bored when he hits grade one because he already knows how to do his letters and numbers.

While some teachers and parents believed that not all children need Full-Time Kindergarten to succeed because they might be engaged in school preparatory activities at home, such as literacy or numeracy activities, not all children are engaged in these activities. Full-Time Kindergarten is believed to counter the disadvantage of those children who lack this school preparatory environment at home. Participants feel that while some students may not excel in Full-Time Kindergarten, they will be more ready to learn in grade one than they would have been without it or with a Part-Time Kindergarten program.

Participants commented that society seems to be changing, and that Full-Time Kindergarten is becoming necessary to help students who are not yet ready for school. As one teacher said regarding Full-Time Kindergarten,

I don't think it's a necessary thing for everybody. But I do think because the way society is changing, and there really aren't that many stay-at-home parents anymore. Everybody seems to be coming from a two-income family or a single-parent family. I think there's some things lacking for many kids.

Teacher participants felt that if a child's experience in kindergarten is positive, they will be more prepared to learn and succeed in grade one. Those who may not need Full-Time Kindergarten will still excel, but in the process also create a more solid foundation for future learning. Some participants expressed concern that those children who excel in Full-Time Kindergarten may be bored in grade one if they are required to re-learn skills that they have already mastered. Therefore, considerations may need to be made regarding transition into grade one for some students finishing Full-Time Kindergarten.

When participants were asked whether they felt the Full-Time Kindergarten program should be expanded to include all kindergarten classes, a large majority believed that it should.

I think it's beneficial. They should do it in all the schools. It really helps the kids with the interaction, and their readiness to write.

I think it's a good idea. I think every school should have a Full-Time Kindergarten.

### *Potential to flourish*

Many perceive that longer days, which generally translate into longer activity or station time, are beneficial for students. Students have time to get settled and become engaged in (and often complete) particular activities in a single day. Participants felt that students learn more social skills by spending more time with other children. Students also take part more frequently in school life, coming into regular contact with other students and staff members in the hallways, attending assembly, and walking or bussing home with friends or siblings. They often feel like "big kids." As one parent said,

They feel part of the school I think. They're more involved. ... [T]hey don't miss ... half the assemblies. They probably feel more involved, I think, because they are there for everything.

Furthermore, because more regular attendance is perceived to be beneficial, fewer children "fall through the cracks," and issues are addressed as soon as possible. This has proven to be especially true for students who have been identified as having learning or behavioural challenges. One parent stated,

I'm glad for [child's name], because it takes him a lot more to learn something. ... I'm glad he has the extra learning opportunity.

### *Building foundations for learning*

Caregivers who had older children go through different types of Part-Time Kindergarten programs also feel that Full-Time Kindergarten students are progressing further and faster. One factor may be that several students in the Full-Time Kindergarten program have previously been enrolled in a pre-kindergarten program. Full-Time Kindergarten gives them a better chance at being successful in grade one as opposed to struggling to catch up or, as happened to some participants' children, being kept back or in specialized classes. One participant said, "I think the point of the program is to catch them up to where other kids in other communities are already." Teacher and parent/caregiver participants indicated that students who did not necessarily need extra assistance excel in the Full-Time Kindergarten program and have an excellent grasp on the material. One parent said,

[E]ven when the kids aren't encountering difficulty, when they're getting the extra exposure and that, even if it's just the basic skills, and they've got it solid ... they're going to have a lot better base for going on to grade one.

### *Student enjoyment*

All participants felt that the children enjoyed Full-Time Kindergarten. Parents said such things as, "The weekend is too long," "They have fun," "They have friends," "[They] are excited about learning," "They get to play with other children and siblings," and "He looks forward to it everyday." Many students love to bring work home and are excited about sharing it with their parents.<sup>15</sup> Another parent commented,

He'll come home and tell me that they were learning about this letter today, and these are all the words he knows that start with it. ... He lets me know what they are doing.

Some students enjoy the program so much that they still attend their original school after moving out of the area. Several want to attend even when they are sick. Teachers feel that students are "learning to learn," and are enjoying it. Students are gaining confidence in themselves and in their skills. This has become possible because they have greater time to work on and succeed at projects, which leads to intrinsic learning. Participants indicated that the children feel secure, safe, and respected. Comments from teachers include, "They're not scared of being in school," "They're comfortable and confident," "Their confidence is so high," "They work at things they can be successful at," and:

I think the kids feel secure here. It's a place they go everyday where they will get fed, they will get taken care of, they're going to be respected, they're going to have fun, they're going to learn.

#### *Possible benefits to teachers*

As mentioned previously, teachers in other studies reported benefiting from increased teaching time and decreased transition time. Teachers also have more time to assess and evaluate student progress (Nelson, 2000; Vecchioti, 2001). The literature also shows that students were able to benefit from the extended time invested in flexible and informal learning (Fromberg, 1995; Vecchioti, 2001). In the context of this study, when teacher participants were asked if they had more time for individual assessment because of the Full-Time Kindergarten, the responses were varied. Each school had a different arrangement in terms of staffing, so no general conclusions can be reached in this regard. Participants believed that if class sizes were optimally kept at between sixteen and twenty-one students, and if this group of students had a teacher and a teacher assistant (with only one teacher per class the critical element), more individual student assessment and evaluation would be possible. One school in this study had an unexpectedly large class that required two teachers. Often, one of these two teachers would take a portion of the students into an empty classroom for part of the day. The time taken to get students organized, moved, and settled, combined with the other teacher trying to keep the other students' attention during this move, proved to be a difficult environment for any regular assessment and evaluation to occur.

So, there's no time for major assessment. You do what you can, when you can. You do some formal stuff here and there, but it's just sheer numbers.

The other teacher found that having a teacher assistant was helpful in many areas, particularly when playing a supervisory role during assessments. This assistance enabled assessments to be done fairly regularly during the year.

*Access to resources*

With longer days in place, access to most resources increased. Because the students were at school for longer days, it meant that they had more time to be available to speech and behaviour specialists. They also had more frequent access to food, counseling, and school culture. This increased access, however, occurred alongside an increased demand for resources. Teachers also become aware sooner of each student's particular needs, some of which required the attention of a specialist. As one teacher said,

And another thing about Full-Time Kindergarten is all of the different resources I can access—speech, occupational therapists, and ed. psych. and all that. I think there's more of an opportunity for them to get to the schools and see these kids, whereas, if we were here everyday, they might not get seen as often.

Teacher participants felt that access to speech and behaviour specialists was sufficient. This access was important because teachers need help in responding to students' behaviours or challenges for which they have not previously received training. As one teacher said,

I just know that myself, I don't feel qualified, or that I know enough to be able to help somebody if they are having trouble with their speech or all the stuff that goes with it, like making a word come out of your mouth or hearing it come in. So I'm really glad that there are things set in place because I don't know enough to even know where to start with that.

This appears to be especially effective when specialists (e.g. Early Skills) speak with teachers or work in students' homes to assist caregivers in dealing with these issues. This network of communication and "transferring" of parenting and teaching skills can help maintain some consistency for the child between home and school. The school offers other services as well, such as KidsFirst and referrals to counselors when needed. Several caregivers commented on the helpfulness of these resources and the resulting improvement that they have seen in their child/ren. One parent said,

It's with KidsFirst. I found that really helpful. ... [T]hat's something that, for us, has really made a huge difference.

### *CONVENIENCE*

Similar to previous studies (Rothenburg, 1995; Porch, 2002; Vecchiotti, 2001), when asked what they liked about the program, caregivers' most frequent answer was its convenience. Many participants worked, including some with shift-work that did not coincide with the school's time table, some were attending school themselves, and many struggled with finding quality, affordable childcare. Some participants thought that the reason why enrollment numbers were unexpectedly high at one school was the program's convenience. As one teacher reported of parents' comments,

They all like it over half-time. ... They don't have to worry about, "Do they have school today?", "Is it Tuesday, Thursday this week, or Monday, Wednesday, Friday?", "Do I need to find a sitter?"

However, participants did not necessarily feel that this convenience was a unique or negative aspect of the program. One participant stated that most families find school a convenient and safe method of providing childcare for students of any age.

For many families that already had children attending the respective school, the program proved to be a welcome opportunity for the smaller child/ren in the family who wished to attend full-day school like their older siblings. As one teacher said, "Their kids wanted to come to school, so it wasn't a fight to get them out the door." In fact, many older siblings are able to provide interim care for younger siblings in terms of walking or bussing them to and from school, or supervising them before the caregiver returns home. As some parents said,

We got out of school at the same time, and by the time I got home, he was just getting home with [his siblings].

It kind of works out for me, too. Like my oldest one walks him to and from school so I don't have to worry.

This frees up some of the caregivers' time, and they feel more secure knowing their child is being walked or bussed to and from school by family members.



Many parents/caregivers indicated that Full-Time Kindergarten is more convenient than the part-time program because they have to work during the days. Parents/caregivers from dual income or single-parent homes reported that finding and ensuring quality, affordable childcare for half-days was difficult. Furthermore, the childcare being provided previously, whether from family members, babysitters, or daycare, was not as structured and learning oriented as the kindergarten. One teacher stated that,

Yes, there are lots of kids who go to sitters, or baby sitters, or other childcare places. But to me, it's still not the same as school. There is somewhat of a routine, and they are being socialized and social skills and stuff like that, but school is just a different environment. There is more structure and more routine, and there's a greater variety of people you meet at school, I think, than you do at daycare or at the babysitters. . . . Just things that we do, like the round dance, we brought in the elders and the drummers and the singers. You wouldn't meet those people if you went to daycare. Daycare has lots of structure, but you are still not being exposed to those opportunities that you would at school.

Several participants also indicated they were able to attend school themselves during the days, and no longer had to worry about securing childcare because of the Full-Time Kindergarten program. The program also ensured that both caregiver and child had the same schedule.

Many participants also enjoyed the Full-Time Kindergarten Family Days. Overall, parent participants felt that it was a positive experience for caregivers and their child/ren. Teacher participants felt that Family Days helped parents and caregivers regard the school as a positive place, rather than one limited to negative interactions. One teacher said,

I think it's a good thing because they can see the school as a positive place. Unless you get somebody who is really involved . . . the only other time they see the inside of a school is for interviews, or if they get called in if something bad has happened, . . . their kids are in trouble. So I think it's good that they get to be in the school and it's a happy time, not a stressful time.

Some parents/caregivers described their child's excitement with bringing "home-work" to complete with their caregiver.<sup>16</sup> They also described how much they enjoyed sharing this activity with their child/ren, despite having to work it into a very busy schedule. As one parent said,

[Child's name] loves it. She loves going and getting things to bring home for homework. She comes home right away and sits down and does it and makes sure we sign it, so she can bring it back. She just loves coming.

## **CHALLENGES**

### ***STAFFING***

Regular staffing was a challenge to maintaining consistency in the classroom for the Full-Time Kindergarten program's first year. Having two teachers in one classroom also proved to be a challenge. While the teachers worked collaboratively, it was not easy to amalgamate different teaching philosophies and patterns. The logistics of decision-making were also difficult in an institution that typically has one teacher responsible for making decisions for each grade/room. Additional consultation, discussion, and time was required for two teachers to make these decisions.

### ***SPACE***

Space was also a concern because there was a large class in one room. The lack of space meant that instruction and assessment time was lost due to groups breaking off and traveling to other locations in the school. Along with the loss of space, there was also a considerable loss of flexibility because of the need to move students back and forth, and the resulting disruption that this caused to those students who remained behind. Teacher participants also felt that behaviour would have been more improved if there were enough space available to have two separate classes with their own rooms. This improvement in behaviour would then be expected to improve academic learning.

Also related to space and staffing, a few parent participants from both schools mentioned the bullying from older kids that occurred at recess. Parents were concerned that supervision of the younger children was inadequate. These parents felt that bullying was leading to aggressive behaviour in their own children. It is critical to note that the parents believed that, overall, their children enjoyed and benefited from both the program and most of the interactions that their children had had with others, especially their classmate friends, but that free-time interaction should be monitored more closely to prevent bullying.

### ***COMMUNICATION***

It appeared that mechanisms for communicating with parents about a child's progress differed from school to school in terms of comprehensiveness, reason for contact, and approaches used. Comments include:

I've never met the teacher.

I'm happy with hearing just about the bad stuff. I know if I had any concerns about anything, they'd let me know. I know that.

That's what I mean, I'm busy, and I don't know the progress at all. I don't see the work.

Participants themselves had varied levels of involvement in their child's Full-Time Kindergarten program. While a few were content to remain spectators, several expressed interest in being more active in their child's education. Some parents stated,

I just wish [child's name] got homework because I'd like to be more involved in his education.

I just wish that there were ways to be more involved in what [child's name] is learning.

Specific requests centered on learning about what their child was learning as opposed to how they were doing in the classroom. Knowing what the children were being taught at school would facilitate parents and caregivers' efforts to work with them at home on particular skills or subject matter. A key request was to provide periodic reporting of course content or subject matter in addition to that of performance:

Even if they have one report in between ... even if it wasn't used so much for testing...just a note home in between saying, this is an area your child needs to work on, or [your child] is doing very well in this area. ... [J]ust something simple.

Some participants also appeared to be unaware of programs in place at the school, such as KidsFirst or Early Skills, but indicated interest in accessing resources offered by these programs upon hearing of their presence at the schools.

## ***FAMILY DAYS***

While many participants found Family Day to be a positive experience, it was not without its challenges. Designated funding appeared difficult to access at times, and in some cases money earmarked for other uses at the school was used to help pay for Family Day expenses. This, in turn, reduced the amount of money available for its original designation. In addition, many caregivers work during the day and are unable to attend, while others simply did not feel that Family Day was an important or useful event. The decision of a caregiver to not attend Family Day directly affects the child, who may also then not attend. This is upsetting for many students. Family Day also requires some families to find childcare for half a day, and one participant explained that their child feels “insulted” that they have to attend daycare on those half days. Finally, many families/caregivers require advance notice to attend but first must make necessary arrangements.

## **CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

This pilot study of Full-Time Kindergarten program’s impact, evaluated in the first year of its implementation, reveals several findings. From analyzing the available quantitative data, it can be surmised that in spite of demands placed on children and caregivers to get kindergarten students to attend school all day, everyday, attendance rates in Full-Time Kindergarten improved after the program’s introduction. Many educators believe that regular attendance is an important factor to any classroom success. This study also presents some suggestive evidence for improvement in cognitive, language, and communication skills among children who attended the Full-Time Kindergarten program, especially those who attended more regularly during the year. It is acknowledged, however, that the cognitive, language, and communication outcomes need to be more fully scrutinized in relation to participation in Full-Time Kindergarten programs in a manner currently unavailable. Similarly, the impact on behavioural and social outcomes in children who attended Full-Time Kindergarten programs is currently indeterminate.

Insights gained from analyzing qualitative data reveal a more robust picture. Parents, caregivers, and teachers uniformly report that Battlefords School Division’s Full-Time Kindergarten program was regarded highly in its first full year of implementation. The caregivers and teachers believe that the Full-Time Kindergarten program is beneficial to all students, and that it better prepares the children for grade one than Part-Time Kindergarten programs. From conversations with parents/caregivers, teachers, and a specialist, it is clear that most of those involved with the program feel that not only is it a success and deserving of continuation, but it should also be further developed and expanded to encompass more schools and communities.

While acknowledging these successes, significant challenges remain ahead. Some of these include resource allocation and setting up program assessment procedures

that, in turn, may be used to understand the Full-Time Kindergarten program's long-term impact on students, school staff, families, and the community. This process of systematically capturing data and acting upon it cannot be done without developing a framework for action, such as a program logic model. A program logic model would provide the school division with clarity on the program's rationale, better define long and short terms goals, establish what processes are in place to achieve these goals and what resources are available, help distinguish priorities, and determine the next steps to be taken in relation to the program evaluation.

When developing such a framework, teachers and caregiver participants both stated that decision makers must consider the diverse needs of students, communities, and schools. As one teacher said, "It's very beneficial. But, I think with that you need to recognize the differences between communities." Implementation of, and improvements to, Full-Time Kindergarten should reflect this understanding. In addition, "While full-day programs do provide children with more opportunities to learn, it is the quality of these programs that most directly affects students' learning" (Wasik, Bond, and Hindman, 2002: 101). Future considerations should take into account that increased time in the classroom does not necessarily lead to increased achievement. Intended outcomes need to be carefully considered and specified for areas of focus, such as behaviour and speech and language development. Furthermore, specific curriculums must be developed to work towards achieving these outcomes. Curriculum planning should utilize the evidence provided in this report and consult with teachers, speech and language specialists, and behaviour specialists in the system to create relevant and achievable goals for students.

Having recommended that a program logic model must guide any evaluation of the Full-Day Kindergarten program, the next section outlines the components of a program logic model, and within each component what types of questions need to be asked. This outline does not intend suggest that some of these activities are not already in place, but is simply to facilitate reflection and dialogue.

The following outline is modified from Railsback and Brewster (2002) and the University of Wisconsin (2002). Outlined below are four aspects to a program logic model: define outcomes; define inputs; define outputs; and address assumptions. It is important to note that these steps are not mutually exclusive, but rather build on and inform other steps.

### **1. Define Outcomes**

- Program goals (short, medium, long-term) must be specified at the outset.
- In each area of development (e.g. language, behaviour), what exactly should students be able to do by the end of the year?

- How do we determine that students have achieved these milestones?
- How will these achievements be measured?
- How long should these benefits be expected to last? Will we need to consider changing other curriculums as a result?

## **2. Define Inputs**

- How much time should/can be allocated for teachers and specialists to develop new curriculum (e.g. time to visit other sites and learn from their experiences)?
- What type of space is allocated to the program?
- Are teachers and assistants assigned to provide appropriate instruction and assessment?
- Are there adequate classroom supplies and funds for Family Days and/or release time for assessment, evaluation, and reporting?
- When is a Full-Time Kindergarten class too big to be effective?
- Are there contingency plans for a larger than expected class size or limited classroom availability?
- Is it possible/preferable to integrate assessment practices that are part of the learning process rather than a diversion?

## **3. Define Outputs**

- What are the means for beginning/continuing the development of curriculum for Full-Time Kindergarten? Should curriculum be expanded in general, or merely be targeted in specific areas for expansion, such as speech, language, or behaviour?
- Which assessment tools can best measure predefined outcomes? Do these assessment tools' normative standards reflect the school and community demographic? Should they?
- How can communication with parents be enhanced?
- How can opportunities be provided for parents to relate their learning philosophies and goals? Are these philosophies and goals similar/different than the school's philosophies and goals?
- How can opportunities be solicited, encouraged, and provided for parental engagement, leadership, and support in their children's schooling experiences?
- How will a program's effectiveness be demonstrated?
- How can controls such as age be measured and accounted for, and should they?

#### **4. Address Assumptions**

- What is assumed of students' knowledge and skills at the beginning of the year?
- What levels of improvement, and in what areas, are sufficient for continuation of the program?
- What levels of improvement, and in what areas, are sufficient for the expansion of the program?
- What is meant by school readiness? Should the assumption be that students are prepared for school or should it be that the school is prepared for students?
- What practices should be encouraged?
- What practices should not be encouraged?
- What role or societal function do/should these schools/programs play?
- What is important about Family Day to families? Are families informed, or are they consulted as partners in the schooling of their children?

In order to answer some of the preceding questions regarding outputs, it is recommended that consistent data collection take place at both Full-Time Kindergarten schools and at control schools employing a Part-Time Kindergarten program but possessing similar community demographics as the Full Time Kindergarten schools. It is recommended that schools collect data at specified and strategic times throughout the school year. Coordinated data collection using strategically chosen tools may, in fact, reduce the amount of time spent in assessment, evaluation, and reporting. Once goals are specified and the most appropriate measurement tools are chosen, extraneous assessment and evaluation tools are unnecessary. Care must be taken to ensure that outcomes being measured are being defined the same in all locations (e.g. attendance). It is also recommended that data be collected in electronic form wherever possible to minimize data entry and expedite future data analysis. Most assessments, such as the EYE and students' attendance and enrollment, are done with the aid of computers and are therefore easily available in electronic form. Items such as the Brigance are easily entered in spreadsheets or statistics applications. When data are processed or collected from sources outside the school or school division, original or raw data should be accessed and obtained wherever possible. By doing so, the division will be able to conduct their own analysis of issues not covered by the summary report received, but are nevertheless pertinent to specified outcomes.

By developing a Program Logic Model for the Full Time Kindergarten program, and by following through on systematic data collection and analysis, Battlefords School Division will be able to further build on the many successes demonstrated by the participants' stories and may begin to address the challenges addressed in this report.



## NOTES

- <sup>1</sup> Community Schools most often exist in communities serving at-risk and/or marginalized populations. However, the principles underlying their governance extend to all educational institutions in every community. These schools receive additional resources to help promote community involvement in the school and school involvement in the community. For more information, see [http://www.sasked.gov.sk.ca/branches/children\\_services/community\\_ed/cecommschools.shtml](http://www.sasked.gov.sk.ca/branches/children_services/community_ed/cecommschools.shtml)
- <sup>2</sup> Much of the literature on Full-Time Kindergarten, as understood by Saskatchewan and the Battlefords School District, prominently uses the term “Full Day Kindergarten.” While these two terms have different meanings in the Saskatchewan context, for consistency’s sake the authors use the term Full Day Kindergarten throughout the literature review.
- <sup>3</sup> While “at risk” is a commonly used term, the term “serves to decontextualize the problems associated with students who experience oppression and marginalization” (Salm, 2004) and “preempts discussion about unfair social structures, about exploitative adults, and about irrelevant or unworkable institutions” (Wotherspoon and Schissel, 2001).
- <sup>4</sup> For more information on the qualitative research process, see Clandinin, D. Jean and Connelly, F. Michael. (2000). *Narrative Inquiry: Experience and Story in Qualitative Research*. San Francisco: Jossey Bass Publishers.
- <sup>5</sup> Please note that McKittrick School’s Full-Time Kindergarten program began in August. Because only two days were available to be enrolled in that month, attendance data analysis does not include August.
- <sup>6</sup> While the data was originally for sixty-two students, one student attended for only half of one day all year. This student’s data was therefore disregarded.
- <sup>7</sup> Please note that forty-two students were evaluated using the Brigance tool. Thus the percentages of months attended are different than those calculated in the previous section, which included data from sixty-one students.
- <sup>8</sup> Teachers distinguish between language (i.e. words, vocabulary) and speech (i.e. making vowel or consonant sounds).
- <sup>9</sup> See <http://www.agsnet.com/assessments/technical/kseals.asp#5>
- <sup>10</sup> See <https://www.ksiresearch.com/eye/TAMaterials/EYEFULLDescription.pdf>
- <sup>11</sup> See [http://www.offordcentre.com/readiness/files/RESULTS.Normative\\_Data.pdf](http://www.offordcentre.com/readiness/files/RESULTS.Normative_Data.pdf)
- <sup>12</sup> Appropriate social behaviour can most generally be understood from various evaluative tools used for this project as working and playing cooperatively, respecting the rights and property of others, accepting classroom rules and routines, and having a positive attitude towards learning.
- <sup>13</sup> For information on KidsFirst, see [http://www.sasked.gov.sk.ca/branches/ecd/kids\\_first.shtml](http://www.sasked.gov.sk.ca/branches/ecd/kids_first.shtml). See **Appendix E** for more information on the Early Skills Program.
- <sup>14</sup> Family Days involve caregivers interacting with their child/ren, students, the teacher/s, and other caregivers while engaged in an activity chosen by the teacher/s. Activities



may include bowling, skiing trips, or informative trips to local businesses. These activities take place for half the school day, with the children excused from school during the other half.

- <sup>15</sup> Not all students, however, bring work home with them. Several parents commented on this when they heard that other children brought back homework but their child did not. There did not appear to be consistency between schools, or between students in a class, in terms of who brings work home. Parents were of varied opinions regarding whether students should bring work home.
- <sup>16</sup> The nature of homework in this context did not appear to be for grading purposes, but rather to help develop or refine a particular skill.

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**Appendix A. Report Card Results for McKitrick and Connaught Schools, Battledowns School Division, 2004-2005.**

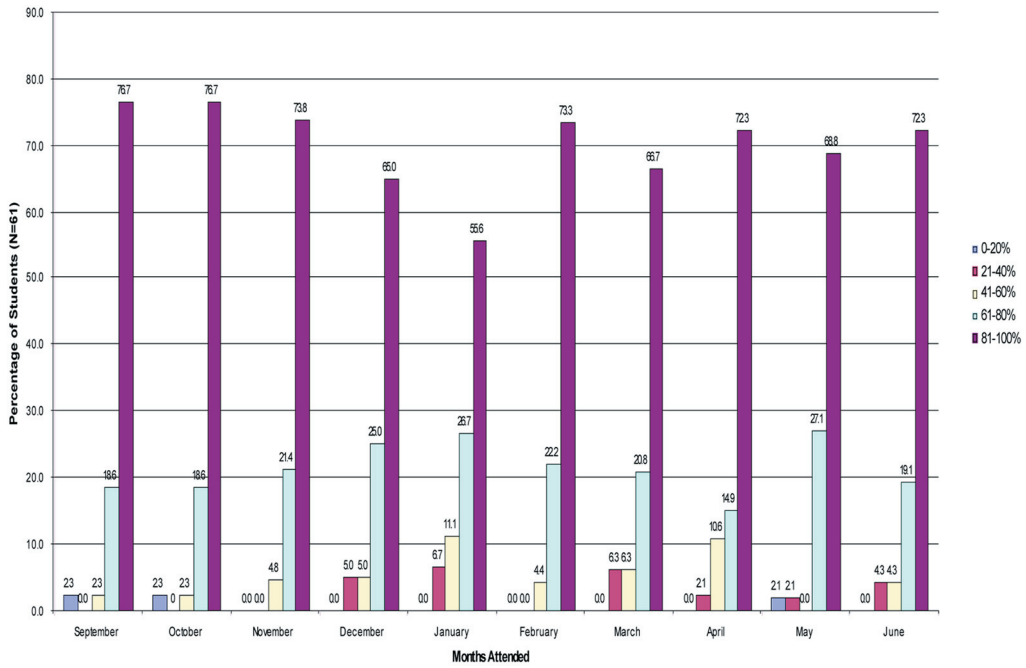
		Frequency of Behaviour			
		Not Yet	Sometimes	Usually	Yes
<b>Social Development</b>	Works and plays cooperatively	0.0 / 2.1	16.7 / 18.8	41.7 / 35.4	41.7 / 43.8
	Respects the rights and properties of others	0.0 / 2.1	13.9 / 16.7	50.0 / 37.5	36.1 / 43.8
	Adopts classroom rules and routines	0.0 / 8.3	33.3 / 22.9	41.7 / 18.8	25.0 / 50.0
	Appears to be happy and enjoying school	0.0 / 2.1	0.0 / 4.2	44.4 / 27.1	55.6 / 66.7
<b>Physical Development</b>	Takes part in physical education activities	0.0 / 0.0	16.7 / 14.6	47.2 / 31.3	36.1 / 54.2
	<i>Large Motor Skills</i>				
	Can throw	0.0 / 0.0	4.2 / 2.2	4.2 / 6.5	91.7 / 91.3
	Can catch	0.0 / 0.0	12.5 / 4.3	79.2 / 21.7	8.3 / 73.9
	Can skip	19.4 / 8.5	22.2 / 23.4	33.3 / 12.8	25.0 / 55.3
	Can hop on one foot	9.5 / 0.0	14.3 / 12.5	57.1 / 31.3	19.0 / 56.3
<i>Fine Motor Skills</i>	Can cut accurately	5.6 / 8.2	25.0 / 2.0	58.3 / 59.2	11.1 / 30.6
	Can trace accurately	4.5 / 8.2	13.6 / 2.0	68.2 / 75.5	13.6 / 14.3
	Can hold pencil properly	2.8 / 2.0	5.6 / 2.0	52.8 / 30.6	38.9 / 65.3
	Colors inside the lines	5.6 / 8.2	11.1 / 8.2	75.0 / 55.1	8.3 / 28.6
	Uses glue responsibly	0.0 / 2.0	11.1 / 8.2	75.0 / 55.1	13.9 / 34.7
<b>General</b>	Can print own name	5.6 / 2.0	2.8 / 2.0	2.8 / 4.1	88.9 / 91.8
	Knows own address	NA / NA	NA / NA	NA / NA	NA / NA
	Knows own phone number	NA / NA	NA / NA	NA / NA	NA / NA
	Is aware of safety rules and symbols	16.7 / 3.3	0.0 / 30.0	33.3 / 56.7	50.0 / 10.0
	Is able to dress and undress self	2.8 / 2.1	0.0 / 0.0	0.0 / 0.0	97.2 / 97.9
	Works on a computer	0.0 / 0.0	42.1 / 29.0	0.0 / 16.1	57.9 / 54.8
<b>Number readiness</b>	Counts	0.0 / 2.0	13.9 / 6.1	8.3 / 2.0	77.8 / 89.8
	Recognizes Numerals	16.7 / 4.1	27.8 / 20.4	41.7 / 38.8	13.9 / 36.7
	Names Numerals	19.4 / 6.3	38.9 / 31.3	33.3 / 33.3	8.3 / 29.2
	Can match number of objects to numeral	4.8 / 2.1	61.9 / 12.5	28.6 / 41.7	4.8 / 43.8
	Prints numerals	5.6 / 2.0	25.0 / 16.3	36.1 / 28.6	33.3 / 53.1
	Recognizes shapes	0.0 / 0.0	13.9 / 4.1	25.0 / 14.3	61.1 / 81.6
	Names shapes	0.0 / 2.0	25.7 / 14.3	34.3 / 36.7	40.0 / 46.9
<b>Work Habits</b>	Is able to work independently	8.3 / 8.2	38.9 / 28.6	27.8 / 34.7	25.0 / 28.6
	Cares for and puts materials away	2.8 / 4.1	5.6 / 12.2	33.3 / 18.4	58.3 / 65.3
	Uses time wisely	11.1 / 10.2	38.9 / 30.6	36.1 / 46.9	13.9 / 12.2
	Demonstrates good listening skills	8.3 / 10.2	33.3 / 26.5	41.7 / 32.7	16.7 / 30.6
	Responds to directions	2.8 / 4.1	30.6 / 20.4	44.4 / 28.6	22.2 / 46.9
<b>Language</b>	Speaks clearly	5.6 / 8.2	13.9 / 14.3	25.0 / 18.4	55.6 / 59.2
	Uses sentences when speaking	0.0 / 0.0	5.6 / 4.1	36.1 / 28.6	58.3 / 67.3
	Listens without interrupting	5.6 / 6.1	11.1 / 18.4	61.1 / 44.9	22.2 / 30.6
	Easily uses words to describe things	11.1 / 6.1	8.3 / 12.2	52.8 / 44.9	27.8 / 36.7
<b>Reading Readiness</b>	Recognizes letters of the alphabet	25.0 / 4.2	22.2 / 10.4	13.9 / 22.9	38.9 / 62.5
	Names letters	30.6 / 6.3	30.6 / 29.2	19.4 / 33.3	19.4 / 31.3
	Identifies beginning sounds	44.4 / 6.3	22.2 / 29.2	22.2 / 33.3	11.1 / 31.3
	Can say rhyming words	30.6 / 18.4	30.6 / 28.6	19.4 / 28.6	19.4 / 24.5
	Can say opposites	12.5 / 8.2	40.6 / 16.3	6.3 / 42.9	40.6 / 32.7
	Is interested in books	2.8 / 4.1	16.7 / 16.3	19.4 / 16.3	61.1 / 63.3
	Progresses from Left to Right	5.3 / 0.0	5.3 / 6.5	47.4 / 32.3	42.1 / 61.3
	Recognizes colors	2.9 / 2.0	8.6 / 0.0	11.4 / 8.2	77.1 / 89.8
	Names colors	2.9 / 4.1	11.4 / 0.0	34.3 / 40.8	51.4 / 55.1
<b>Art and Music</b>	Participates in and enjoys singing	13.9 / 6.1	16.7 / 20.4	33.3 / 24.5	36.1 / 49.0
	Takes part in rhythmic activities	15.8 / 6.5	10.5 / 3.2	47.4 / 29.0	26.3 / 61.3
	Participates in drawing and painting	2.8 / 2.0	2.8 / 2.0	11.1 / 12.2	83.3 / 83.7

Top left corner = first report (March).  
 Bottom right corner = second report (June).

**Appendix B. Report Card Results with Differences from First to Second Report for McKittrick and Connaught Schools, Battlefords School Division, 2004-2005.**

Report Card Results N=53		First Report - Usually/ Always (%)	Second Report - Usually- Always (%)	Difference
<b>Social Development</b>	Works and plays cooperatively	83.4	79.2	-4.2
	Respects the rights and properties of others	86.1	81.3	-4.8
	Adopts classroom rules and routines	66.7	68.8	2.1
	Appears to be happy and enjoying school	100.0	93.8	-6.2
<b>Physical Development</b>	Takes part in physical education activities	83.3	85.5	2.2
	<i>Large Motor Skills</i>			
	Can throw	95.9	97.8	1.9
	Can catch	87.5	95.6	8.1
	Can skip	58.3	68.1	9.8
	Can hop on one foot	76.1	87.6	11.5
	<i>Fine Motor Skills</i>			
	Can cut accurately	69.4	89.8	20.4
	Can trace accurately	81.8	89.8	8.0
	Can hold pencil properly	91.7	95.9	4.2
	Colors inside the lines	83.3	83.7	0.4
	Uses glue responsibly	88.9	89.8	0.9
<b>General</b>	Can print own name	91.7	95.9	4.2
	Knows own address	0.0	0.0	0.0
	Knows own phone number	0.0	0.0	0.0
	Is aware of safety rules and symbols	83.3	66.7	-16.6
	Is able to dress and undress self	97.2	97.9	0.7
	Works on a computer	57.9	70.9	13.0
<b>Number readiness</b>	Counts	86.1	91.8	5.7
	Recognizes Numerals	55.6	75.5	19.9
	Names Numerals	41.6	62.5	20.9
	Can match number of objects to numeral	33.4	85.5	52.1
	Prints numerals	69.4	81.7	12.3
	Recognizes shapes	86.1	95.9	9.8
	Names shapes	74.3	83.6	9.3
<b>Work Habits</b>	Is able to work independently	52.8	63.3	10.5
	Cares for and puts materials away	91.6	83.7	-7.9
	Uses time wisely	50.0	59.1	9.1
	Demonstrates good listening skills	58.4	63.3	4.9
	Responds to directions	66.6	75.5	8.9
<b>Language</b>	Speaks clearly	80.6	77.6	-3.0
	Uses sentences when speaking	94.4	95.9	1.5
	Listens without interrupting	83.3	75.5	-7.8
	Easily uses words to describe things	80.6	81.6	1.0
<b>Reading Readiness</b>	Recognizes letters of the alphabet	52.8	85.4	32.6
	Names letters	38.8	64.6	25.8
	Identifies beginning sounds	33.3	64.6	31.3
	Can say rhyming words	38.8	53.1	14.3
	Can say opposites	46.9	75.6	28.7
	Is interested in books	80.5	79.6	-0.9
	Progresses from Left to Right	89.5	93.6	4.1
	Recognizes colors	88.5	98.0	9.5
	Names colors	85.7	95.9	10.2
<b>Art and Music</b>	Participates in and enjoys singing	69.4	73.5	4.1
	Takes part in rhythmic activities	73.7	90.3	16.6
	Participates in drawing and painting	94.4	95.9	1.5

**Appendix C. Attendance Rates Per Month for McKittrick and Connaught Schools, Battlefords School Division, 2004-2005.**





## **Appendix D. Basic Descriptions of the Brigance, EYE, EDI, Child Behaviour Checklist, and Parenting Stress Index.**

### **Brigance**

The Brigance is designed to screen key developmental and early academic skills. Key areas screened are: personal data response; color recognition; visual discrimination; picture vocabulary; visual motor skills; gross-motor skills; rote counting; body parts; numeral comprehension; ability to print personal data; syntax and fluency; ability to draw a person; number readiness; ability to read uppercase or lowercase letters; ability to recite alphabet; auditory discrimination; phonemic awareness and decoding; listening vocabulary; word recognition; computation; numerals in sequence; work/help skills; feeding/eating skills; dressing/undressing skills; toileting skills; play skills and behaviours; and an ability to get along with others. Brigance screens assist teachers with program planning and mandated screening compliance, as well as indicating developmental problems such as language, learning, or cognitive delays, and identifying children who have academic talent or intellectual gifts.

Taken from <http://www.curriculumassociates.com/order/newproduct.asp?topic=T0Aandsub=T0A1andtitle=brigscreenk1andType=SCHandCustId=6437650423608241203473>

### **Early Years Evaluation (EYE)**

The EYE is designed to assist educators in assessing the skills of children age four to six years as they prepare for, and make the transition to school. The EYE assesses five aspects of early child development that are closely related to school preparedness and emergent literacy skills: 1) awareness of self and the environment; 2) social skills, behaviour, and approaches to learning; 3) cognitive skills; 4) language and communication; and 5) physical development.

The EYE measures can be used to: assess learning needs upon entry, or shortly thereafter, into junior or senior kindergarten (ages four to six years); identify children who may need extra help to develop reading and numeracy skills; provide a baseline for assessing learning gains during the first few years of elementary school; monitor the early childhood outcomes of a school, community, province, or state; and map community outcomes and relate them to community resources.

Taken from <https://www.ksiresearch.com/eye/>

### **Early Development Instrument (EDI)**

The EDI measures children's readiness to begin learning at school by asking questions about five different areas of their development: 1) physical health and well-being; 2) social competence; 3) emotional maturity; 4) language and cognitive development; and 5) communication skills and general knowledge.

The results are interpreted for groups of children. The EDI does not provide diagnostic information on individual children, nor is it designed to measure a school's performance. For communities that want to ensure that all children enter school ready to learn, the results of an EDI are meant to provide a snapshot on how their young children are performing. This will assist in mobilizing resources to support children's development in their first five years so that they will be able to begin school ready to learn, benefit from education, and participate in school activities offered.

**Taken from the 2004-2005 EDI results package for Battlefords School Division**

### **Child Behaviour Checklist**

The Child Behaviour Checklist records the behavioural problems and competencies of children aged four through sixteen years as reported by their parents or others who know the child well. For more information see Achenbach, T.M. and Edelbrock, C. (1983). *Manual for the child behaviour checklist and revised child behaviour profile*. Burlington, VT: Queen City Printers.

**Taken from <http://www.injuryresearch.bc.ca/Publications/Repository/Child%20Behaviour%20Checklist.pdf>**

### **The Parenting Stress Index (PSI)**

The PSI is a 101-item questionnaire parental self-report designed to identify potentially dysfunctional parent-child systems. An optional nineteen-item Life Events stress scale is also provided. The PSI focuses on intervention into high stress areas and predicts children's future psychosocial adjustment.

**Taken from <http://www.people.virginia.edu/~rra/psi.html>**



## **Appendix E. Information on the Early Skills Development Program.**

The Early Skills Development Program enhances the quality of life of those kindergarten children with persistent aggressive or violent behaviour by developing social and behavioural management skills in the classroom and at home through intensive individualized programming. These direct and equitable interventions by teachers, parents, and mental health workers maximize the development of socially acceptable behaviours, which leads to improved health and well-being.

The initiative has the following broad goals:

### **For the Child**

1. Replace inappropriate behaviours, such as persistent aggression or violent actions, with appropriate or socially acceptable behaviours so that successful learning can occur and improved health and well-being be achieved.

### **For the Environment**

1. Support and enhance the home and school environment to develop, support, and sustain socially acceptable behaviour.
2. Support the maintenance of ongoing academic learning for the designated children.

### **For the Human Services Delivery System**

1. Enhance cooperation and coordination among sectors in the human services delivery system for young children and families.
2. Demonstrate the key components in successful programming for kindergarten children with persistent aggressive or violent behaviours.

The Early Skills Development Program holds promise for helping young children with persistent aggressive or violent behaviours to modify their aggressive responses and use appropriate social skills.

For more information, contact Maxine Ekstrand, Child and Youth Services, North Battleford, (306) 446-6555.

