

All-Day Kindergarten

Research shows that full day kindergarten helps kids do better in reading and math. Early childhood programs like all-day kindergarten are good investments that generate short and long term returns. Ohio was going to provide full day kindergarten, but eliminated the mandate in 2012, largely because it was unfunded.

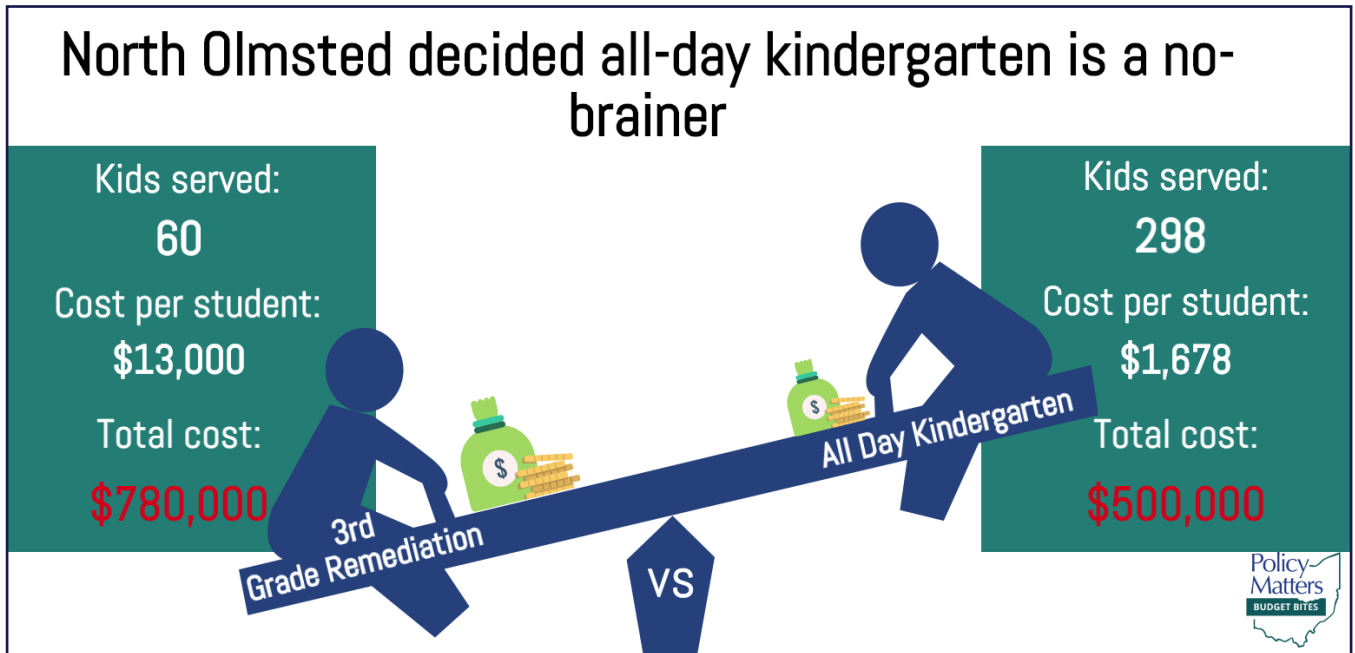
Nationally, there has been a clear trend toward making the first year of education as strong as possible by offering a full day of kindergarten. Here in Ohio, some districts receive full per-pupil funding for kindergarten, but the majority do not. Many districts charge tuition, as The Plain Dealer outlined last year: Fairview Park, for instance, required \$2,250 per pupil, and amounts ranged from \$1,900 in Solon to \$3,400 in Hudson.

NORTH OLMSTED’S INVESTMENT

Other districts, like North Olmsted, took a different approach. The school board considered the cost of all-day kindergarten versus the potential cost of

remediation should a child fail to meet the third-grade reading requirement.

Forty percent of North Olmsted students come from “economically disadvantaged” households and 50 percent of students qualify for free and reduced meals. North Olmsted also has a high percentage of students for whom English is a second language. School officials worried that at least 20 percent of students (about 60) were not on track to pass the state’s 3rd Grade Reading Guarantee requirements. Officials knew all-day kindergarten would especially benefit these students, but if they charged tuition for the additional hours, many of the students who needed it most could not afford it. In addition, officials worried students who cannot pass the third-grade reading test and are held back are more likely to drop out of school – something North Olmsted would not accept.



Beginning with the 2013-2014 school year, North Olmsted school officials estimated it would cost an additional \$1,678 per student or \$500,000 to provide tuition-free all-day kindergarten to all 298 students. They estimated it might cost as much as \$13,000 per student or \$780,000, for 3rd grade remediation. Using these calculations and considering what was at stake, the district may have saved \$280,000 by investing in free all-day kindergarten.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Ohio can provide funding for all-day kindergarten. Instead, lawmakers chose to cut taxes for the wealthy. Over time, the state legislature also eliminated the local tangible personal property tax, greatly reducing resources for schools, and phased out the tax reimbursements that were promised.

They have transferred substantial resources to charter schools, which in Ohio are poorly regulated and many have abysmal outcomes. This has dramatically reduced resources for public school districts.

In our Investment Budget for Ohio, Policy Matters called for increasing funding for K-12 education to provide full day kindergarten for all Ohio students. The executive budget neither calls for nor provides funds that would permit schools to offer tuition-free for full-day kindergarten. As the 2018-2019 budget moves through the General Assembly, lawmakers should make all-day kindergarten a priority.