

Full-Day Kindergarten Questions and Answers

Updated Feb. 23, 2024

Background Information

Why is Owen J. Roberts implementing Full-Day Kindergarten (FDK)?

Our community has been clear in its desire to see Owen J. Roberts pursue Full-Day Kindergarten (FDK) and to have schools provide educational opportunities that align with those already being offered in neighboring school districts in Chester County and the surrounding region.

Implementing FDK provides a number of benefits to our students, including the creation of a solid basis for future academic success (learning how to be a learner), a deeper dive into content, a slower pace, the ability for reteaching and enrichment, and exposure to a wider range of subjects. In addition, a Full-day program provides more opportunities for academic content and a structured environment, while enabling staff to support emotional learning and focus on social development to build peer connections.

Why is Owen J. Roberts discontinuing its Half-Day Kindergarten program?

The current half-day kindergarten program is not long enough to fully provide instruction for state standards, specific program time allocations, development of interpersonal and soft skills, and social play.

In addition, the current alignment for the OJR grant program with PreK Counts is not appropriate for students transitioning from PreK Counts to OJR half-day Kindergarten. At present time, preschool children in our community have a full-day program, transition to a half-day kindergarten program, and then must transition back to full-time instruction as they enter first grade.

We've also heard concerns from many families about the challenges of providing mid-day transportation for their children to attend a half-day program.

When will the transition to Full-Day Kindergarten begin?

We will implement Full-Day Kindergarten (FDK) in August 2025, as we begin the 2025-2026 school year.

What are the benefits of Full-Day Kindergarten?

Full-Day Kindergarten provides 6.5 hours of school time, more than double the time previously provided to students. Benefits of the additional time include:

More time to cover the State Standards. The State Standards are written for a full-year, full-day Kindergarten experience. Currently, our Kindergarten teachers are trying to accomplish this in a half-day program and are not able to complete the full ELA curriculum by the end of the school year.

More time to implement the resources we use to support the curriculum with fidelity. This includes additional time for students to fully engage in developing concrete understandings of mathematical concepts and engaging in mathematical practices.

More time for students to develop “soft skills” such as self-awareness, self-management, relationship skills, and responsible decision-making.

More time for social play. Currently, students are developing soft skills through academic experiences, but opportunities to practice through dedicated social play time are lacking.

Potential cost savings with retaining students who may start elsewhere for their Kindergarten year and then return to the district in 1st grade.

Will there be an option for Half-Day Kindergarten?

The recommended reason for implementing a full-day kindergarten program is so that all students can participate and take advantage of the greater amount of time for school activities and social interaction. At this time we do not plan to offer a half-day option.

Families with specific reservations about Full-Day Kindergarten are encouraged to discuss their questions with their child’s school principal. While a half-day option is unavailable, schools and families can work together to develop a plan on an individual basis, as requested.

Schedules

What is the class schedule for students enrolled in Full-Day Kindergarten?

In alignment with later school start times for all Owen J. Roberts Students (beginning with the 2024-2025 school year), FDK students will begin their day at 8:50 a.m. and dismiss at 3:30 p.m. (the same as other elementary school grades).

How will Full-Day Kindergarten impact lunch schedules?

Each of the elementary schools is able to accommodate the additional students for Full-Day Kindergarten. It is possible that lunch may need to be extended for some schools, but there is sufficient space to accommodate the children, and each school has a Kindergarten playground area.

History and Comparisons to Other School Districts

Is this the first time Owen J. Roberts has provided Full-Day Kindergarten?

Our school district previously operated a FDK pilot program at East Coventry Elementary School beginning in the 2008 school year. The program was discontinued later and instead all schools had staff available to provide small group instruction for kindergarten students as part of the half-day program.

What were some of the biggest takeaways and lessons learned from the Full-Day Kindergarten pilot program?

According to teachers who previously had the full-day program, the longer amount of time addressed the problems previously listed. In addition, we learned that student attendance increased with an FDK compared with students enrolled in the half-day program and that students entering first grade were far more prepared in regard to stamina and an understanding of the daily routines.

The increased academic achievement and growth were noticeable when compared to the students in a half-day program during the Kindergarten year. However, we learned that the gains leveled off by second grade for many students and by third grade for all students.

We found that students had more opportunities for activities designed to increase fine motor skills and that when students came from full-day kindergarten into first grade, they had better OT skills and were more fluent writers. Students also had better social competencies, especially in the area of relationship skills and emotional regulation, having been in a full-day program.

What was the feedback from OJR teachers who taught Full-Day Kindergarten?

Teachers who have taught both full-day and half-day classes have indicated that the quality of time spent teaching the whole child (academically and socially) and building relationships with the students was better with full-day students. They had time to focus on each child during the day.

Do other school districts have Full-Day Kindergarten?

Here in Chester County, 8 out of 12 districts currently have full day kindergarten. Unionville-Chadds Ford School District is adding full day kindergarten in 2025. In Downingtown School District, 4 out of 10 schools currently have full day kindergarten and qualifying families can transport students to those schools.

Likewise, in neighboring Montgomery County, 18 out of 21 districts currently have full day kindergarten and one additional district is adding full day kindergarten in 2024.

Considerations and Costs

Will families have to switch schools to accommodate Full-Day Kindergarten?

Some families will be impacted by redistricting students from French Creek and East Vincent to East Coventry. For example, families of students who currently attend the Autistic Support class at French Creek will be moving to North Coventry.

As part of preparation for the implementation of FDK, the administration at Owen J. Roberts will develop a redistricting plan and communicate that plan with families beginning in the winter of 2025. This timeline will help to provide ample time for students and families to begin their transition for the fall of 2025.

What operational considerations are being taken into account when planning for the implementation of Full-Day Kindergarten?

After assessing the classroom capacities and facility capabilities throughout the school district, the administration is confident it can effectively implement Full Day Kindergarten in a timely and efficient manner, and with minor disruptions to students' learning environments.

After a comprehensive elementary school building classroom review, including enrollment projections, all schools can support Full Day Kindergarten with the following adjustments:

- North Coventry Elementary: Conversion of Instructional Common Areas to 4 classrooms
- French Creek Elementary: Move two Special Education Autistic Support classrooms to North Coventry Elementary; add a student restroom in an existing classroom. Redistrict 50-100 students to East Coventry Elementary.
- East Vincent: Redistrict 40-80 students to East Coventry Elementary.
- West Vincent: Add a student restroom to an existing classroom.

What financial and budgetary considerations are being taken into account when planning for the implementation of Full-Day Kindergarten?

Financial considerations include:

- Ongoing annual operating costs such as additional staff, including teachers and paraprofessionals, and the salaries and benefits associated with those positions.
- Adding Kindergarten sections would be determined by the projected enrollment scheduled for review in the fall of 2024. The best estimate at this time would be a net increase of 3-4 teachers over the course of the next two years. This would include the anticipated increases among the grade level classroom teachers K-6 for 2024-25 and 2025-26 together. The caseloads of special education teachers and the number of paraprofessionals for kindergarten could increase this estimate.
- In addition, we anticipate one-time capital costs and initial costs for technology, curriculum materials, furniture, and building renovations.
- A preliminary breakdown of costs is included in the administrative presentation to the School Board, available online by [clicking here](#).

Timeline

What is the timeline for implementing Full-Day Kindergarten?

Summer 2024 - Complete building renovations

Fall 2024 - Complete redistricting plan

Fall 2024 to January 2025 - Begin communicate redistricting plan to community

Summer 2025 - Hire kindergarten teaching staff and convert KLAMS positions; purchase technology (laptops and projectors) and curriculum materials

August 2025 - Move to Full Day Kindergarten Program