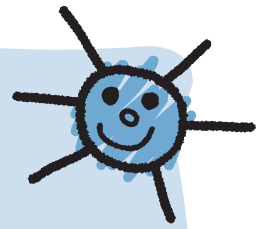


Early Childhood Longitudinal Study

Kindergarten Class of 1998-99

NEWSLETTER



Volume 5: Spring 2006

Sponsored By:



U.S. Department of Education
Institute of Education Sciences
NCES 2006-080rev



Dear ECLS-K Parents, Teachers, and Schools,

The Early Childhood Longitudinal Study, Kindergarten Class of 1998-99 (ECLS-K) followed the progress of students from the fall of 1998 to the spring of 2004. It has been so successful that the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) in the Institute of Education Sciences of the U. S. Department of Education has decided to continue to follow the students as they move on into middle school. We are now asking you as their parents, teachers, and schools to participate in the 2006 and 2007 data collection activities (see project schedule below).

The ECLS-K is a unique and important study. No other research study has ever followed a nationwide sample of about 20,000 students from kindergarten into middle school. The design of the ECLS-K creates the opportunity to address important questions on the factors that are (and are not) commonly associated with children's schooling. The ECLS-K is currently being used to explore many questions about the family and school factors associated with children's academic progress and well-being across the elementary school years, including important health issues such as diet and physical activity. This newsletter describes some of the types of information collected since the study started in 1998.

As the ECLS-K children progress from elementary to middle school they are changing in significant ways. For example, they are likely to have more responsibilities and changing activities. This makes the information that you provide in the 2006-07 data collection very important.

We have much to learn from the ECLS-K about the academic progress and well-being of America's children. Your contributions are extremely valuable. We are confident that the continued participation of the students, their parents, teachers, and schools in the 2006-07 ECLS-K data collection will help educators, researchers, and policymakers better understand how schools and families can best meet the needs of all students. We look forward to working with you in the coming year.

ECLS-K Staff

Project Schedule

Spring/Summer 2006

- Parents grant permission to assess children in the spring of 2007 and identify the schools their children attend.

Fall 2006

- Parents complete interviews.
- Schools schedule assessment dates.

Spring 2007

- Children complete assessments and questionnaires.
- Teachers and schools complete questionnaires.

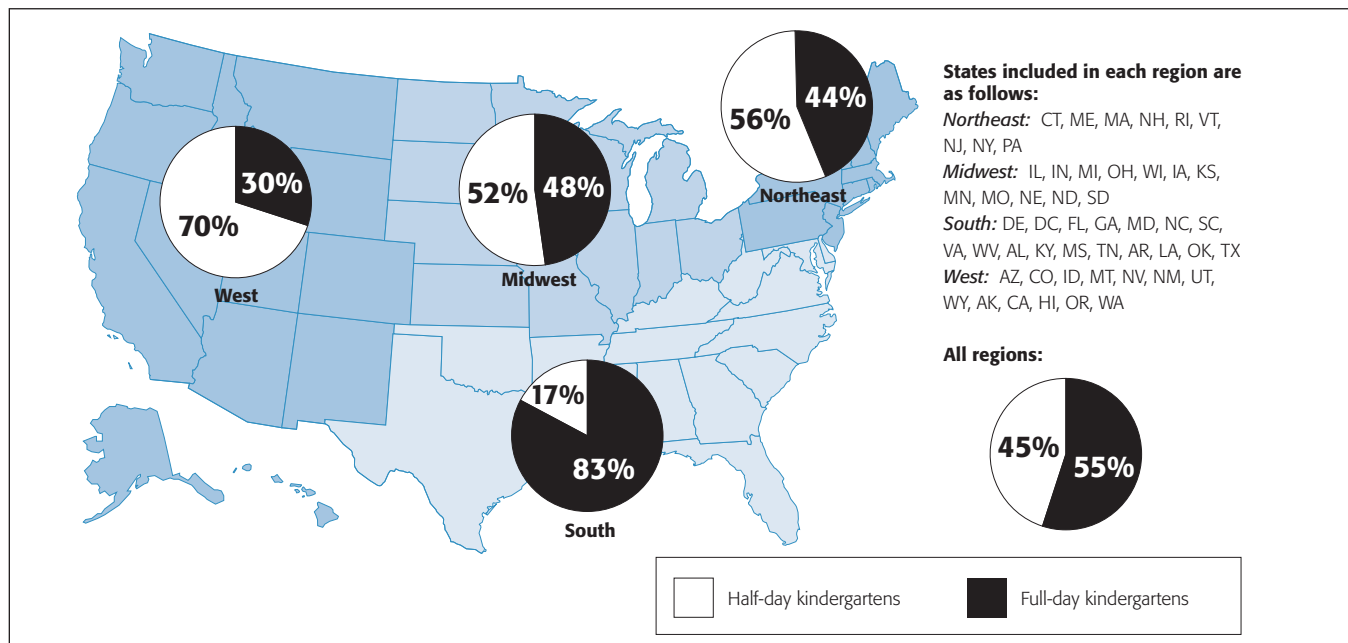


Some Things We've Learned

Regional Differences in Kindergarten Programs

Since the 1930s, children attending kindergarten traditionally enrolled in half-day kindergarten programs. Changes in American society and education over the past 20 years have supported the rise of full-day kindergarten programs. ECLS-K research results published in an NCES report have shown that there are differences in the students' kindergarten experiences depending on where in the country they live (Figure 1). In fall 1998, over one-half of children enrolled in kindergarten attended a full-day kindergarten program. More kindergartners living in the South attended a full-day program (83 percent) than a half-day program (17 percent). On the other hand, more kindergartners living in the West attended a half-day program (70 percent) than a full-day program (30 percent). More information from the ECLS-K about kindergartners can be found in *Regional Differences in Kindergartners' Early Education Experiences* (NCES 2005-099).

Figure 1. Kindergartners attending half-and full-day programs: School year 1998-99



SOURCE: Regional Differences in Kindergartners' Early Education Experiences (NCES 2005-099)

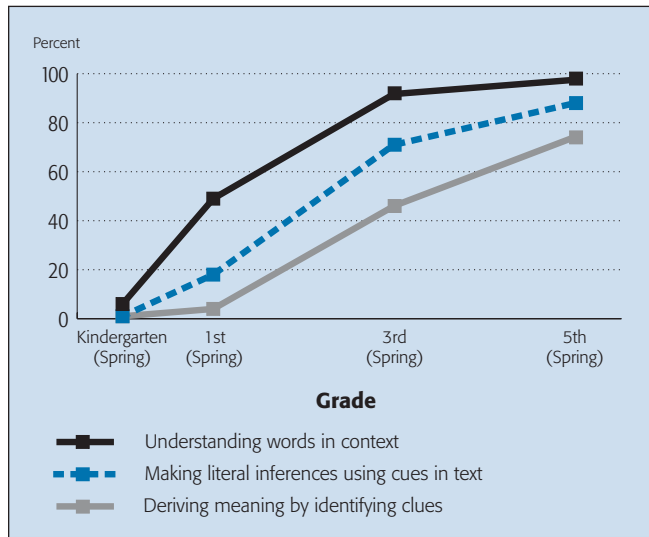
Academic Skills

Parents, teachers, and policy makers are interested in the pace at which students master reading and mathematics skills. By gathering this information from the students at various points in time, the ECLS-K has allowed researchers to better understand when children learn certain skills.

For reading, the ECLS-K measures children's basic literacy, vocabulary, and comprehension skills. The ECLS-K measures five levels of reading comprehension, 1) understanding words in context (knowing what words mean in text), 2) literal inference (interpreting the meaning of words from information found in the text), 3) deriving meaning (reading between the lines, drawing on background knowledge to understand what the text is saying), 4) interpreting beyond text (understanding how the author uses language and describing how a story relates to something in real-life experience), 5) evaluating nonfiction (analyzing biographies and news articles). This newsletter focuses on three of the five levels of reading comprehension assessed by the ECLS-K: understanding words in context; literal inference; and deriving meaning. In the spring of kindergarten, a small number of the ECLS-K students could understand words in context; about half of them could by first grade; and nearly all could by third grade. Additionally, by the spring of first grade about 18 percent of the students could make literal inferences and 70 percent could by third grade. While few students could derive meaning at kindergarten or first grade, nearly one-half could by third grade, and about three-fourths of them could by fifth grade.



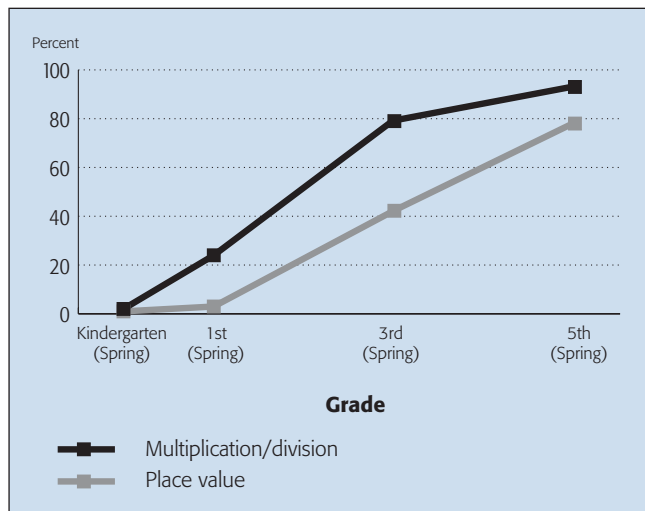
Figure 2. Specific reading skills: School years 1998-2004



SOURCE: Fifth Grade: Findings From the Fifth-Grade Follow-up of the Early Childhood Longitudinal Study, Kindergarten Class of 1998-99, E.D. Tab (NCES 2006-038).

The ECLS-K also collects information on the students' mathematics skills such as multiplication and division and understanding place value (i.e., ones place, tens place, and hundreds place). About one-fifth of the students could multiply and divide by first grade, and nearly all could by fifth grade. Although student understanding of place value begins a little later, by fifth grade over three-fourths of the students demonstrated such understanding. For more information on the specific reading and mathematics skills that the ECLS-K students possess, please see, *Fifth Grade: Findings from the Fifth-Grade Follow-up of the Early Childhood Longitudinal Study, Kindergarten Class of 1998-99, E.D. Tab* (NCES 2006-038).

Figure 3. Specific mathematics skills: School years 1998-2004



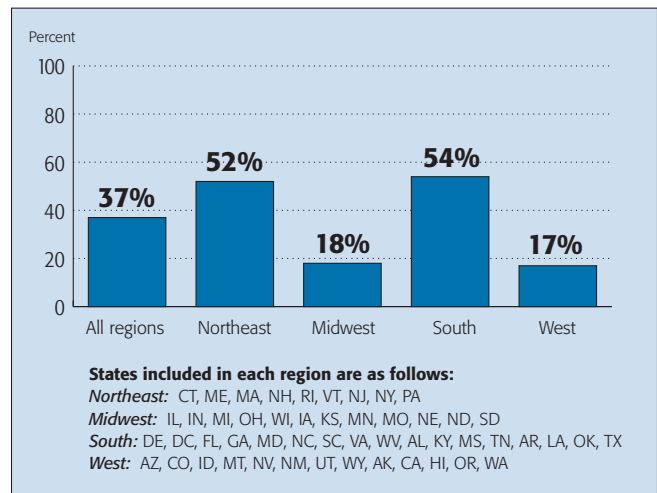
SOURCE: Fifth Grade: Findings From the Fifth-Grade Follow-up of the Early Childhood Longitudinal Study, Kindergarten Class of 1998-99, E.D. Tab (NCES 2006-038).

Food and Nutrition

The quality of children's diet has gained substantial national interest in recent years as the types of foods and beverages sold in schools have changed. Among the changes that have occurred is the sale of foods and drinks that are not part of the federally sponsored school meal program. The ECLS-K asked schools to identify the types of foods and snacks available for students to buy from vending machines, snack bars, and school stores. In spring 2004, about one-third of the ECLS-K students could buy various foods and snacks at their schools including cookies, crackers, or other baked goods; ice cream and frozen yogurt; fruits and vegetables; and salty snacks. Many students could also buy bottled water and fruit juice, while a few could buy sodas, sport drinks, or fruit punch.

The availability of these foods and snacks at schools differed by where the students lived. For instance, ECLS-K students attending schools in the West and Midwest were less likely than those in the Northeast and South to be able to buy ice-cream or frozen yogurt at their schools. Approximately 20 percent of students in the West and Midwest could buy these frozen snacks at school, while about one-half of the students in the Northeast and South could.

Figure 4. Fifth-graders able to buy ice cream or frozen yogurt at school: School year 2003-04



SOURCE: Early Childhood Longitudinal Study, Kindergarten Class of 1998-99 (ECLS-K), spring 2004.

Additionally, students in the West and Midwest were less likely than students in the Northeast and South to be able to buy fruits or vegetables at their schools. Approximately 20 percent of the students in the West and Midwest could purchase fruits and vegetables at school, while 40 percent of students in the Northeast and 49 percent of the students in the South could.

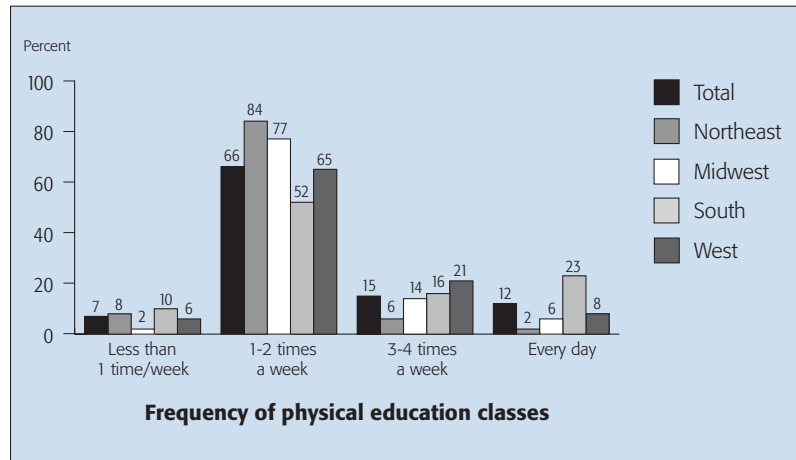


Physical Activity

Students' physical activity is another issue of national importance. In elementary schools, opportunities for physical activity take place mostly during physical education (PE) classes and recess. Data from the spring 2004 collection showed that 12 percent of ECLS-K students had PE classes every day, while an additional 15 percent had PE 3 or 4 times a week. Regionally, almost one-fourth of students in the South had PE every day, while 2 to 8 percent in other regions did.

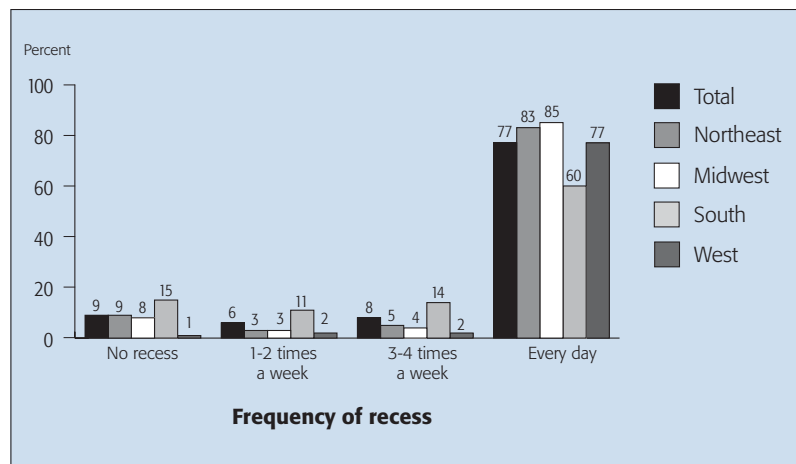
Nationally, 77 percent of ECLS-K students in the spring of 2004 had recess every school day, and 9 percent had none. Sixty percent of students in the South had recess every day compared with 77 to 85 percent of those living in other parts of the country.

Figure 5. How often fifth-graders have physical education classes: School year 2003-04



SOURCE: Early Childhood Longitudinal Study, Kindergarten Class of 1998-99 (ECLS-K), spring 2004.

Figure 6. How often fifth-graders have recess: School year 2003-04



SOURCE: Early Childhood Longitudinal Study, Kindergarten Class of 1998-99 (ECLS-K), spring 2004.

All responses are confidential

The success of the ECLS-K depends on your cooperation and we are counting on your participation. Your responses to the ECLS-K questionnaires are confidential. Your answers will be combined to produce statistical reports, and will not be disclosed or used in any identifiable form for any other purpose unless otherwise compelled by law. Additionally, no individual data that links your name, address, telephone number, or identification number will be included in the statistical reports or otherwise released.

To learn more about the ECLS-K

You can learn more about the ECLS-K at <http://nces.ed.gov/ecls>. Free copies (limited quantity available) of the published ECLS-K reports cited in this newsletter can be ordered at the ECLS web site <http://nces.ed.gov/ecls> or from the U.S. Department of Education's Publications Center (ED Pubs) toll free at 1-877-433-7827.

Thank you again for playing a vital role in the ECLS-K.