Governor offers full-day kindergarten implementation plan

INDIANAPOLIS (December 5, 2006) - Governor Mitch Daniels today proposed offering full-day kindergarten next year, beginning with the state's neediest children. The plan would frontload implementation such that a majority of the state's kindergarten-age children would be enrolled beginning in August 2007.

The governor said students who are eligible for free and reduced price lunch -- about 33,000 children or 37 percent -- should be the first to get the opportunity for state-funded full-day kindergarten (FDK). Over the next two years, FDK would expand to cover all of the state's districts and children.

"Our goal is getting kids to the starting line of life ready to learn. Too often, many of our children arrive at first grade already behind," said Daniels. "Full-day kindergarten works, it's needed, and it's time to get it done."

A number of Indiana school corporations already offer FDK programs. The governor's plan intends that districts currently offering such programs maintain those efforts, and he expects that others would quickly expand FDK offerings by augmenting state funding with general operating funds or by allowing parents to enroll their children for a fee, as many do today.

Daniels said the state also should cover up-front costs associated with FDK implementation. His plan would include a one-time up-front payment for August to December 2007, so schools have the resources they need in the first semester before regular school funding formula payments begin to arrive in January 2008. Start-up costs would be about $25 million.

The governor proposes expanding FDK after the first year by school district according to the percentage with the most low-income children.

Research about the benefits of effective full-day programs is plentiful. Among superintendents of Indiana school corporations with such programs:

- 96 percent report improved academic achievement
- 93 percent cite improved social skills and related fewer distractions and discipline
- 53 percent fewer students are not ready to move to first grade
- 53 percent report better attendance

"This is my best effort to reflect the varied views of Hoosier educators, parents, and other experts we've heard from as this plan has come together. There's more to do, and we'll be open to compromise and hearing about other ways we can bring FDK to all of our youngsters as quickly as we can and with the quality Hoosiers demand," said Daniels.

The cost to implement statewide would increase gradually as more children are enrolled and the school funding formula accounts for all children. In Fiscal Year 2008, the state cost is estimated at $49 million; $95 million in FY09; $175 million in FY10; and $231 million in FY11. Estimated state costs when all districts are fully funded would be about...
$255 million annually, beginning in FY12.

The governor said higher expectations created by FDK should carry into grades one, two and three. He said he would ask members of the General Assembly and the state Board of Education to ask these questions, as a full-day program is considered:

- How will accountability be built in to full-day kindergarten programs?
- How can teachers in grades K-3 be better prepared to teach reading?
- Are the state's kindergarten standards adequate?
- What are the right assessment tools for teachers?
- How should the state board and Department of Education best evaluate full-day kindergarten to ensure it is the best investment of taxpayer dollars?

Source: Governor Daniels’ website, Press Releases, [http://www.in.gov/gov/](http://www.in.gov/gov/)

For the proposed phase-in of full day kindergarten, start-up costs of $25 million, plus $49 million in fiscal 2008 and $95 million in fiscal 2009 total $169 million for the biennium.