



Frequently Asked Questions – Enriched Developmental Kindergarten January 3, 2006

What kindergarten programming options will be available in 2007-08?

The Honeoye Falls – Lima School District currently provides an option between a half-day and extended-day program for our kindergarten students. The current half-day and extended-day kindergarten models will continue to be offered in 2007-08, should parental interest allow adequate enrollment for each program.

Following a community meeting last February, the Board of Education determined that ongoing study of kindergarten would continue through the 2007-08 school year, for potential change in 2008-09. In continuing its study of enriched developmental kindergarten and full-day kindergarten models, the Lima Primary staff and Kindergarten Study Committee have developed a kindergarten model that would begin to integrate components of an enriched developmental program into our kindergarten classrooms. The District is currently conducting a survey to gauge the interest of pre-k parents in a full-day kindergarten pilot program. Depending upon parental interest and approval of the Program Budget Advisory Council and Board of Education through the Quality Education Design program budget planning process, an uncertain number of full-day enriched developmental kindergarten classes could be piloted in 2007-08.

Why is the District looking to pilot a full-day kindergarten option in 2007-08?

The children who will enter kindergarten in the 2007-08 school year will be the class of 2020, and we must envision what the world will be like when they graduate. Our students need both a strong traditional educational foundation, as well as a new set of skills, to be prepared for success in our ever changing world. The workplace of the future will require employees who can problem solve, think critically and creatively and initiate their own learning. Schools must keep their approach to education current to give students the tools they need to thrive in the modern world.

What does an enriched developmental program look like?

The proposed components of an Enriched Developmental Kindergarten program include:

- Continuation of Current Kindergarten Curriculum Across ALL Options – a focus on literacy and math instruction, library and physical education as specials would continue in half-day, extended-day or pilot model classrooms
- Smaller Class Sizes – kindergarten class sizes would range, on average, from 18-20
- Increased Individualized Instruction – instruction would be centered around the needs, talents and interests of each individual student
- Field Trips/Hands-on Learning – authentic learning opportunities would occur inside and outside the classroom
- Foreign Language – Spanish would be taught to students, beginning in kindergarten and continuing throughout their years at HF-L
- Music and Art – special classes and arts experiences through the day would be included in the kindergarten curriculum
- Character and Citizenship Development – increased opportunity for class discussion and activities to enhance children's social skills and awareness of their role in a global society
- Learning Centers – expanded opportunities for small groups of children to choose activities, explore and learn together
- Dramatic Play – playtime would be preserved and extended to assure learning through imagination and pretending
- Inquiry/Discovery Based Science Learning – children would learn science through hands-on experiences that teach them how to pose questions and explore answers

How long do students attend school for a half-day, extended-day and full-day program?

- Half-day: 8:45 am – 11:15 am
- Extended-day: 10 am – 3 pm
- Full-day: 8:45 am – 3 pm

Between a full day of school and the additional time on the bus ride, isn't that a long day for a kindergartner?

The bus rides for most kindergartners throughout the half day, extended day and full day kindergarten programs would be shorter and more efficient, should full day kindergarten be implemented.

This year, 95% of the school districts in New York State provide full day programs and a majority of districts in the United States offer full day programs. The average kindergarten child is enrolled in a full day program without exceeding his/her stamina based on the length of the day.

The most recent data from the New York State Education Department shows that 101,818 students are participating this year in full day kindergarten classes throughout NY. Children ARE handling a full day program in overwhelmingly large numbers.

The full day kindergarten debate in Monroe County is a fairly localized phenomenon. While 95% of NYS school districts offer full day kindergarten, only 47% of Monroe County School Districts provide full day kindergarten. Of the 56 Counties in NYS, only Schenectady County has a similar pattern with just one of 6 districts (17%) offering full day kindergarten.

In Singapore and Hong Kong, public schools provide preschool programs beginning at age 3. The U.S. has a lower enrollment rate for children in preprimary programs (prior to Grade 1) than all G8 nations, except Canada.

The Extended Day schedule seems like its working. Why not just keep it?

There are two major reasons to reconsider Extended Day. The first is a practical reason - the cost to transport kindergarten children on a later morning run is investing in oil companies rather than in educational enhancements to children's learning. The second reason is that the shortened day restricts flexibility to schedule in field trips, art, music and other components of an enriched program.

Will support services be available in the Enriched Developmental Kindergarten?

Support services are provided to any child who has a need, regardless of the child's placement in any given option. The full day schedule allows for more flexibility in scheduling support services when needed.

Is it possible to change your child from one option to another after the year begins?

It is often difficult for a child to move between classrooms after the year begins because it means severing friendships and starting new ones. Also, we have found it difficult to have enough kindergarten children to opt for a half day program. Therefore, if children exit the half day classroom for another option, it could mean an imbalance in numbers across classrooms. One way a parent might consider easing their child into a full day schedule is to request an early release within the full day program. This way, the parent can pick the child up daily at the half day dismissal time, yet opt to extend the child's day to full day during the year by removing the early release request.

Will the evaluation in the Spring be used to determine which children should be recommended for Enriched Developmental Kindergarten?

No. The purpose of the Spring Screening is not to place children, but to balance classes heterogeneously. Placement occurs by parent request at the time of registration which precedes Screening. Screening is useful in gathering basic information about our kindergarten class and to have an opportunity to provide information between home and school before the kindergarten year begins. While we are willing to provide input to parents in helping them with their decision regarding kindergarten, we recognize the many options parents have for placement, delayed entry or homeschooling and will respect the ultimate choice of the family.

Why would Spanish be introduced and not some other foreign language? Would it be continued beyond kindergarten?

Spanish is one of the easiest foreign languages to learn. Since we have a Spanish speaking community nearby and the opportunity to form a partnership with a Spanish speaking school through a Sister School/Sister City Partnership, it is likely that we would be able to structure some authentic learning experiences for our children. When a young child learns one foreign language, it is easier for them to learn others as they advance in school. It is our hope that children will be fluent in one foreign language and master a second language by the time they graduate. The U.S. is promoting the need for more language learning as a means for national defense and economic development. Internationally, high performing countries encourage the mastery of languages.

I'd like the components of Enriched Development Kindergarten continued past kindergarten. Will this happen?

We anticipate that a program review of the Enriched Developmental Kindergarten will provide guidance on what should be continued past kindergarten. We have already determined that inquiry-based science learning will be an important part of the K-5 program based on an Elementary Science Program Review. Our research on early introduction of world languages shows that instruction maintained throughout the elementary years is most beneficial.

Will children in full-day kindergarten get extra rest time?

It is normal for children of any age, even adults, to need a period of adjustment to a school day schedule at the beginning of the year. The best support for transitioning into a full-day routine is to provide a regular bedtime. This routine schedule is most helpful when it is in place at least a week before the school year begins. Studies show that most children require 9 hours per sleep each night. Deprivation of adequate sleep at night is a greater factor in a child's alertness during the day than is the length of the school day. Some rest time will be provided at the beginning of the school year.

What is the cost impact of full day kindergarten?

A full day program would reduce the additional costs currently spent for half day and extended day separate bus runs by \$133,000. This money would be reallocated to those additional costs needed for Enriched Developmental Kindergarten. Some transitional costs needed for the first year are estimated at \$5,000 to \$6,000.

Isn't this pushing down too much into the kindergarten year?

We have consulted with our school physician, developmental experts from SUNY Brockport and the research on early learning. The program we're proposing stimulates the mind and body in a balanced and developmentally-appropriate manner. This is the reason we are emphasizing more opportunity for free play and exploratory experiences rather than more academics.

Why not just put the money into other programs? Why focus on kindergarten?

We know from research on the brain and early learning, that these are the most important years for rapid cognitive development. We also know that these are the most critical years for formative development of social skills. There is no better investment in the long-term capacity of learners than at this early stage. We also know that the highest performing countries in international studies (ie Singapore, Hong Kong, Japan, Finland, Netherlands, Korea) have a strong commitment to early childhood education.