



*A Community of Learners*

**Title:** Extended Day Kindergarten Update

**TO:** School Board  
Superintendent Kocanda

**FROM:** Barry Rodgers  
Director of Innovation, Teaching and Learning

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**Background**

The School Board approved extended day Kindergarten in May of 2016. The rationale for approving the extended day was to provide a more effective and developmentally-appropriate school day structure. The primary goals established were to:

- enhance social emotional development
- facilitate opportunities for increased peer interaction
- provide timely interventions and developmental support

Approval of the Extended Day program was driven by research which showed that children in early childhood are demonstrating more difficulties with self-regulation, sensory integration, fine and gross motor skills, attention, anxiety, and receptive and productive language. *(i.e. 8-10% of current first graders requiring significant increase in support to access their core education compared to older cohorts.)*

In addition, it was learned that many children attend multiple programs within a day creating multiple transitions and inconsistent schedules. This can be challenging to the emotional needs of five- and six-year-olds who benefit from sustained play and scheduling predictability. *(Prior to EDK approval, 80% of parents planned to enroll their kindergartener in complementary half-day enrichment programs at least 3 days/week.)*

Full Day Kindergarten is becoming the norm in the state of Illinois with over 79% of students now attending a full day kindergarten program. This is a long term trend which shows that the number has tripled since 1973. Locally, we are seeing many school districts responding to student needs and parent demand in adopting full day kindergarten. By the year 2021, all New Trier Township Schools will offer extended day/full day kindergarten programs.

The Winnetka District 36 EDK program has now been implemented for two full school years. Updates highlighting the progress and details of the EDK program as well as additional research were shared in the [May 16, 2017 Board memo](#) and in the [May 22, 2018 Board memo](#).

The May 2018 memo included a comprehensive review of the first year of the EDK program. In this review, there were a number of recommendations provided. The list below denotes areas of significant progress realized during the 2018-19 school year.

- ❑ Kindergarten teachers met with the first grade team to enhance the bridge between the grade levels.
- ❑ Kindergarten teachers maintained the high level of collaboration established in 2018 through building and district meetings.
- ❑ Teachers and administrators reviewed current assessments and the established progress report used by teachers. A district play continuum is now under development.
- ❑ Established more common parent communications in the area of Math with monthly newsletters. This helped to extend children's math learning at home.
- ❑ Increased the collaboration with math, literacy and science facilitators.
- ❑ Teachers determined the amount of time needed to acclimate students to the lunch procedure and will work with the Associates for a timely transition.
- ❑ A schedule was created for the administration of common assessments and interventions for MTSS (multi-tiered system of supports).
- ❑ Modifying special education FTE increased special education support at both Greeley and Hubbard Woods (4 special education teachers at each building). The increase in FTE allowed for expansion of flexible service delivery to kindergarten students in a more timely and streamlined fashion and also promoted greater opportunity for collaboration between special education and general education teachers.
- ❑ The addition of FTE for a speech pathologist enabled one staff member to provide services to PreK and kindergarten students within the District (as opposed to contracting services through NSSED). This promoted

collaboration and efficiencies within the District and among the speech-language pathologists within Greeley and Hubbard Woods.

- ❑ Kindergarten Parent Committee served as a communication liaison with the District to ensure effective program implementation and parent communication.
  - ❑ Plan more opportunities for kindergarteners to visit Crow Island during the year.
  - ❑ Review placement process to ensure Crow Island students are grouped with at least five other students.
  - ❑ Continue to coordinate school events and monitor calendars to avoid conflicts of scheduled events between schools

This memo serves to provide a current update of the program and the anticipated work ahead for the 2019-20 school year.

### **EDK Teacher Reflections: 2018-2019**

Kindergarten is offered at Greeley School and Hubbard Woods School. Since its inception, nearly 300 students have benefitted from the Extended Day program. Teachers continue their efforts toward building a model progressive education program that harnesses the benefits of play-based learning and provides a strong foundation for our students as they begin their educational journey.

Kindergarten teachers met to debrief the school year and review the program in the spring. Key takeaways included:

- ❑ Parent communication was very positive. The intentional approach of the team which included a shared newsletter was well received by parents.
- ❑ The extended kindergarten day has allowed teachers to reach classroom benchmarks for play based learning.
- ❑ The integration of the Prowise interactive board technology served as a valuable instructional tool.
- ❑ The additional time helped teachers build upon units that feature project based learning. Moreover, it has allowed for more student driven inquiry.
- ❑ The additional time has led to increased opportunities for valuable outdoor play.
- ❑ Teachers noted that they have more opportunities to know and support individual students.

- ❑ There is more time dedicated to collaboration between teachers within and across schools.
- ❑ The newly mandated Illinois KIDS assessment has represented a challenge as it requires a significant amount of instructional time to administer.
- ❑ Students entering Kindergarten are demonstrating increased needs in the area of social emotional learning and regulation. Students are benefiting from teachers modeling social skills and strategies.

### Curriculum

Within the school year, the EDK teachers had multiple opportunities to collaboratively build curriculum including four District-level release days that allowed for extended time. Highlights of these meetings were the crafting of a new physical science unit, expansion of the kindergarten common units of study, development of new social studies units that incorporate new state standards, and examination of early literacy and numeracy practices and assessment.

In addition, the team has been reviewing the developmental checklist that is used in the spring to document student progress. An evaluation process was established that allowed all teachers to share their feedback. All were in agreement that the core of the checklist was solid and reflected appropriate developmental milestones. Changes made were in the form of additional descriptors or clarifying statements that emerged from their deep reflection of classroom practices, programmatic shifts, and child development. The largest addition to the checklist was a section that included milestones in play development that will provide parents with more information about their child's social and emotional growth. The kindergarten teachers will complete the final revisions during the 2019 - 2020 school year.

This spring, the final grade level meeting included first grade teachers to provide an opportunity for cross-grade articulation. During the meeting, both grade levels developed a broader picture of each other's curriculum and the connection points between the grades. Keeping the children at the forefront of the curriculum, the teachers spent a great deal of time reflecting upon the developmental milestones and needs of children ages five through seven. From these conversations, many ideas about future instructional practices emerged. This summer, a team of teachers began work focused on two of these ideas by compiling a bank of fingerplays and songs to support phonemic awareness growth and compiling an inventory of fine motor resources to support handwriting development.

### School Visits

In the spirit of establishing Winnetka as a model kindergarten program, the EDK staff has opened their classrooms to several different visiting groups. Winnetka hosted observers from area districts Avoca, Lake Forest and Lake Zurich as well as international visitors from Japan. Teachers welcome the opportunity to serve as an exemplar for others who are seeking to incorporate play-based practices into their kindergarten. At the beginning of the school year, the teachers established visiting protocols that respected the privacy of our students while allowing engagement for the visitors. The EDK staff also valued having time during the day to converse with the visitors. This allowed time for them to expand upon play based practices, answer questions and provide advice. Becoming a lighthouse kindergarten program is a priority to our teachers. They are in the process of expanding and refining the information that is presented to visitors and continue to seek out connections with other educators.

### Interventions

The EDK teachers are committed to providing needed additional support to students in an authentic, non intrusive manner. Understanding a child's development and need to acclimate to new situations, the teachers and administrators made a decision that formal requests for interventions would be made in January during a whole team problem-solving data meeting. Recommendations for interventions were based upon teacher observations, classroom behaviors and early literacy/numeracy assessments.

Interventions took place within the classroom allowing teachers and/or building interventionists to tailor classroom play activities to incorporate a child's individual needs. The extended play time during the school day has opened up more opportunities for the interventions to be authentic and non-disruptive to the students while still directly targeting specific skills. Progress monitoring occurred for each student and the intervention was modified as needed. The progress of all students was reviewed during the spring problem-solving data meeting.

### Parent Survey

A parent survey was given to parents providing an opportunity to provide feedback on their child's kindergarten experience. Parents were asked for feedback that would help inform EDK planning for the 2019-20 school year. Overall, parents were very positive regarding the length of the day, although some parents noted that ending school prior to the end of the elementary day resulted in logistical challenges.

Parents noted that the longer school day increased opportunities for inquiry and deeper learning.

### **Alignment with the District 36 Shared Vision**

The Extended Day Kindergarten program reflects the District 36 Shared Vision as our efforts are designed to empower every student to flourish in an innovative and experiential environment. The collective experiences grounded in best practices of progressive education and play-based learning supports the growth and development of all students.

### **Looking Ahead to 2019-2020: Next Steps**

- Continue to Identify and Strengthen skills and dispositions for success in 1st grade.
  - Explore and discuss executive functioning research and resources
  - Expand social thinking experiences for students
  - Prioritize activities along the developmental continuum for phonological awareness
  
- Developmental Checklist:
  - Finalize play descriptors
  - Utilize the revised checklist in the spring
  
- Assessment
  - Continue discussions regarding the use of common assessment tools in terms of appropriateness and timing
  - Review the KIDS assessment
    - To examine kindergarten readiness
    - To improve efficiency in administration
  
- Continue to increase the collaboration with math, literacy and science facilitators.
  
- Implement new Social Studies KUDs and further develop units of study
  
- Continue to develop communications and practices as a model play-based kindergarten program
  - Develop documents and resources to share with visiting groups

- ❑ Develop web presence for Kindergarten program
- ❑ Continue to work with the Alliance for Early Childhood to build capacity and expand network of kindergarten educators