



A Community of Learners

Information Memo: Extended Day Kindergarten Update

TO: School Board
Superintendent Kocanda

FROM: Barry Rodgers
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Background

At the May 17, 2016, Board meeting, the Board approved extended day Kindergarten for the 2017-18 school year. The rationale for approving the extended day was to provide a more effective and developmentally-appropriate school day structure. Anticipated benefits included the following:

- A longer more cohesive day provides teaching staff opportunity to effectively meet the needs of students
- Streamlined schedules provides a more effective use of time and less transitions for students who typically attend multiple programs
- Sustained time in activities allows for deeper learning and facilitate the important benefits of play-based learning
- Reduction from two classes to one class allows teachers to have a stronger connection with parents
- The new teacher schedule allows for support for early interventions that provide long term benefits for students.

During the 2016-17 school year, a committee comprised of parents, community members, Board members, and administrators was established for the purpose of the District's Enrollment Balancing Initiative. An important consideration of the Enrollment Balancing initiative was to determine logistics for the District's new Extended Day Kindergarten. At the February 2017 Board meeting, it was decided that Kindergarten will be offered at

Greeley and Hubbard Woods in order to provide needed relief at Crow Island School during Phase I of Enrollment Balancing.

Overview

In preparation for Extended Day Kindergarten, administrators and teachers have been meeting regularly to ensure a smooth and highly effective rollout of the program. Key areas of our collective work include curriculum, materials, activities, intervention, facilities, student schedule, staffing, transportation, professional learning, and parent communication.

The Kindergarten Team has focused its efforts in building out curriculum and further developing experiential learning opportunities. The Kindergarten Team's work is grounded in research that supports student growth in all realms of development. Moreover, efforts are centered upon creating a state of the art 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. The Team, comprised of teachers and administrators., has been collaborating and planning since October.

Curriculum Update

The Team has been working to further develop and refine the Kindergarten curriculum. Additional time provided by the extended day supports the development of skills such as positive social interaction, problem-solving, creativity, confidence, sensory integration, attention, and self-regulation. A general overview of the Kindergarten program is provided below.

- Curriculum Addressed in Daily Routines
 - Building a Reading Life
 - Narrative Writing
 - Numeracy Development
 - Earth Science: My Weather and Climate
 - Social Studies
 - Who Am I?
 - Me and My World
 - Individual, Home and School

- School Year Divided into 4 timeframe groupings for Unit of Studies
 - Fall (Aug 25th - Nov 11)
 - Classroom Community Building
 - Monarch Study (Life Science: Plants & Animals in the Environment)

- Informational Reading & Writing
 - Math Units 1 - 3
- Early Winter (Nov 27 - Dec 21)
 - Nursery Rhymes/Fairy Tales
 - Literary Reading & Writing
 - Math Unit 4
- Late Winter (Jan 8 - March 23)
 - Birds of Winnetka (Life Science)
 - Informational Reading & Writing
 - Opinion Writing
 - Math Units 5 - 8
- Spring (April 2 - June 7)
 - Nature Study (Various Themes that tie in Life Science Standards)
 - Informational Reading & Writing
 - Math Units 9 - 11

Embedded/Emergent Studies

- Measurement
- Physical Science: Forces and Interactions (Pushes and Pulls)

Social/Emotional Aspects

- Incorporate Mindfulness Activities in Daily Schedule
- Executive Functioning skill development

Common Celebrations/Field trips

Teachers value the need for Kindergarten children to have several common experiences. This was especially important given the feedback from Crow Island families.

- Backyard Nature field trip to CI Woods
- Monarch Migration
- Winter Bird Sharing
- Mother's Day Necklace

Materials and Furniture

Materials and supplies have been identified to support the learning objectives of our Kindergarten program while ensuring equity in all classrooms at both schools. A full inventory of existing classrooms was conducted to maximize existing resources. The Office of Innovation, Teaching and Learning is working closely with the CFO, Greg Kurr, to place all orders in a timely manner. Materials have been selected to support the following areas:

- Literacy
- Math
- Science
- Block Play
- Dramatic Play
- Art
- Choice Time

A full inventory of Crow Island furniture that could be used for Kindergarten was conducted. Furniture deemed in good condition will be repurposed for use at Hubbard Woods and Crow Island. In addition, a full inventory of classroom storage was conducted. New furniture and storage requests have been submitted and are under consideration. The District will ensure that each classroom provides a well designed and resourced learning environment for all students and teachers.

Technology

The Kindergarten team has worked closely with Director of Technology, Maureen Miller in identifying the following technology for all the EDK classrooms:

- 5 iPad minis for each room
- Swivl video recording device (for documentation)
- OSMO (3 per school)
- Touch screen interactive whiteboard
- Rig-a-ma-jig Jr. (construction play)

Daily Schedule

We are committed to providing a consistent experience for all Kindergarteners in the District. Each classroom will have a schedule that provides time for whole group gatherings, independent choice time, theme-based projects, nature play, literacy and math activities, and related-arts (Music, Art, Resource Center and Kinetic Wellness).

The opportunities for deeper learning provided by the additional time of the extended day will help build important foundational skills such as pre-reading, number sense, and numerical fluency.

An outline of the Extended Kindergarten day can be found here: [Kindergarten Schedule Overview](#)

The Kindergarten day allows for flexibility on any given day to meet the needs of the class. The overall schedule features the following:

- Two 60-minute periods for Choice Time/Project Time

- ❑ Two 30 - 45 minute periods for Outdoor/Nature Play
- ❑ Two whole class activities
- ❑ One game time period (teacher directed activity)
- ❑ One quiet time period (after lunch)

Children will have a related studies class 4 times per week

- ❑ Music (30 minutes)
- ❑ Kinetic Wellness (30 minutes)
- ❑ Art (45 minutes)
- ❑ Resource Center (45-60 minutes)

Extended Day Kindergarten will provide for fewer daily transitions with greater support.

Professional Development

Our greatest asset as a learning organization is the capacity and dedication of our staff. Kindergarten teachers are actively involved in quality professional development to ensure a highly effective and engaging learning experience for all students. This spring, seven staff members attended the Bank Street Kindergarten Conference in New York. The conference focused solely on Kindergarten. Teachers participated in conference activities focused on play-based education, literacy, SEL, art, music and movement and visited classrooms at Bank Street School and PS41.

Other Professional Development highlights include:

- ❑ In February, teachers and administrators attended the Alliance for Early Childhood Summit-*Cultivating the Whole Child: Building Strong Social Emotional Foundations in Today's World* held at the Chicago Botanic Garden.
- ❑ Winnetka University Course: This fall, teachers have designed a Winnetka University Course for Kindergarten focussed on Froebel learning strategies.
- ❑ Teachers will continue to regularly meet as a cohort through ongoing Collaborative Leadership Team Meetings (CLTs).
- ❑ Teachers are seeking upcoming PD opportunities in:
 - ❑ Self-regulation (as related to brain function)
 - ❑ Executive Functioning
 - ❑ Mindfulness

Parent Communication

Outreach activities were established to support the transition process for families, gather feedback from parents, and to facilitate a strong sense of community.

- A District Kindergarten PTO group was established to serve to strengthen kindergarten family connections across the community. The group consists of representatives from each elementary school and is facilitated by Dr. Kocanda.
- February: Beth Carmody and Susan Hugebeck sponsored tours of the schools for future parents
- March 15th: Greeley and Hubbard Woods hosted a Welcome Session to families after notification of building assignment
- April 27th: Annual Informational Session held at Greeley School for Kindergarten parents in partnership with the Alliance for Early Childhood
- May 22nd: A Kindergarten Open House will be held from 3:15-4:15 for parents and children to visit schools and explore classroom spaces and the playground. This is an opportunity to meet with principals, teachers and fellow parents.

In addition to outreach activities, written communication is being enhanced. A Student Profile form was developed to provide background information and help with placement. Each teacher will send home regular newsletters. In addition, the Kindergarten Team will send home three general newsletters throughout the year to include:

- Overview and philosophy
- Play-based and developmental approach
- Major understandings and essential skill development
- Broad overview of upcoming curriculum (ex: Why Monarch Butterflies?)
- Links to research

The teachers are creating a plan for documenting the EDK Journey through visual learning panels to be displayed at the schools.

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, experiential environment. The collective experiences grounded in best practices of progressive education and play-based learning supports the growth and development of all students.

Next Steps:

Kindergarten staff will be working over the summer covering the following topics:

- Math Curriculum
 - Develop Games and Materials
 - Integration of skills into Unit of Studies
 - Alignment with the new math materials
- Fall Unit of Study
 - Create a unit overview for the Monarch study for new teachers

- Highlight literacy, math and science integration points in unit
- Science
 - Develop outlines and learning plans of each unit
- Common Assessments
 - Commit to common tools
 - Gather needed materials and guidelines for teachers
 - Create common Fall Reflection Form
 - Common data sharing procedure
- Phonological Awareness
 - Prioritize activities along the developmental continuum
- Common Communications
 - Kindergarten Semester Newsletters
 - Go-To-School Night Coordination