

FRANKLIN LAKES PUBLIC SCHOOLS

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Kindergarten Programming Full Day Kindergarten

Rationale:

According to the New Jersey Department of Education, in their publication entitled Have You Heard The Truth About Kindergarten: A Guide to Understanding Kindergarten, *"Kindergarten is the place for young children to learn. It must be ready for them so that their learning is unhampered and they can try out new skills without fear of mistakes. Kindergarten is a time of growth, experimentation, and a budding understanding of the world and their place in it."*

The Franklin Lakes Public Schools modified day Kindergarten Program was approved by the Board of Education in 2004, in place of the former half-day program. According to the information provided at the time the program was approved, the program design was intended to provide time for students and teachers to address social-emotional, fine and gross motor, and academic needs, while increasing instructional time, allowing for small group and more individualized instruction, and to provide opportunities for the development of socialization skills.

Since that time, the State of New Jersey has revised academic standards twice for all subject areas, and adopted Common Core State Standards for Language Arts Literacy and Mathematics. The required implementation of these more rigorous standards also moved learning goals formerly found in higher grades, down into the primary grades. In 2010, standards (NJCCCS), that previously were implemented at the discretion of school districts as attained "by the end of 4th grade", became specified by individual grade level, beginning in Pre-Kindergarten. There are Common Core State Standards that are specific to Kindergarten, which must be attained in order for students to be fully prepared for the grade specific standards for First Grade, and so on. These new requirements included recommended numbers of minutes to be devoted to their attainment. In the case of Kindergarten, that time was taken away from the more flexible time that used to be devoted to learning through play and other developmentally appropriate strategies for students of Kindergarten age, in order to be reallocated to the accomplishment of specific standards-based, skill oriented expectations required by the Common Core and revised NJCCCS.

The National Association for the Education of Young Children provides their Top Ten Signs of a Quality Kindergarten including:

1. Children are playing and working with materials or other children. They are not aimlessly wandering or forced to sit quietly for long periods of time.
2. Children have access to various activities throughout the day. Children are not all doing the same thing at the same time.
3. Teachers work with individual children, small groups, and the whole group at different times during the day. They do not spend time only with the entire group.
4. The classroom is decorated with children's original artwork, their own writing with invented spelling and stories children dictated.
5. Children learn numbers and the alphabet in the context of their everyday experiences.
6. Children work on projects and have long periods of time (at least one hour) to play and explore. Filling out worksheets should not be their primary activity.
7. Children have an opportunity to play outside every day that the weather permits. This play is never sacrificed for more instructional time.
8. Teachers read books to children throughout the day, not just at group story time.

9. The curriculum is adapted for those who are ahead as well as those who need additional help. Because children differ in experiences and background, they do not learn the same thing at the same time in the same way.
 10. Children and their parents look forward to school. Parents feel safe sending their child to Kindergarten. Children are happy; they are not crying or regularly sick.
- NAEYC Notes (1997)

All of these elements were purposefully embedded into the original design of the District's Modified Day Kindergarten program. As the standards changed, over time project-based learning, choice time, daily outdoor play and time for interdisciplinary activities that help children to make connections between the subject areas they learn and the world around them, became more difficult to incorporate into the daily schedule with the regularity of the original design. It became apparent that further exploration of a means of bringing these developmentally appropriate activities back to the program was needed.

Considerations:

In 2004, the Board approved a modified day Kindergarten program, which was originally structured as follows:

Time	Schedule of Activities Modified K 2004
8:45	Arrival and unpack
8:50-9:30	Morning Meeting / Shared Reading (Groups A & B)
9:30-10:00	Extension Activities / Journal Time (Groups A & B)
10:00-10:20	Snack / Movement (Groups A & B)
10:20-10:45	Math (Groups A & B)
10:45-11:30	Specials (Groups A & B)
11:30-12:00	Recess (Groups A & B)
12:00-12:20	Lunch (Groups A & B)
Group Dismissal	Group A Monday & Tuesday / Group B Thursday & Friday/ All students stay on Wednesday
12:20-12:30	Quiet Time / Pack Up and Dismissal as noted above.
12:30-1:15	Small Group Instruction (Enrichment / Reinforcement) (Group A or B/Both on Wed)
1:15-2:00	Group Projects (Science, Social Studies, Health, Cooking) (Group A or B/Both on Wed)
2:00-2:10	Snack (Group A or B/Both on Wed)
2:10-2:55	Centers (Group A or B/Both on Wed)
2:55-3:20	Cooperative Play Time (Group A or B/Both on Wed)
3:20-3:30	Pack Up and Dismissal for Group A/B (all students on Wednesday)

In December 2006, the Board voted to further extend the modified day for students from a 12:30 dismissal to dismissal at 1:10, requiring some changes to the structure of the afternoon portion of the modified day.

After the required implementation of Kindergarten specific Common Core State Standards for Language Arts and Math in 2010, and the revised NJ Core Curriculum Content Standards for the other disciplines from 2008 through 2014, the modified day Kindergarten schedule continued to be altered to meet these new requirements. As a result, the Kindergarten schedule evolved to include required number of minutes, established by the District, for Language Arts, and Math, as well as recommended time for Science, Social Studies, World Language, Music, Art, and Physical Education. The District outlined these requirements based on the scope of the content, as well as requirements noted in the New Jersey Administrative Code.

The current modified day Kindergarten program schedule is as follows. It should be noted that some of the morning time slots are ordered differently from classroom to classroom, but length of time is the same across the district. Also, afternoon time slots include a variety of subject area instruction in addition to small group instruction. Schools teach Science and Social Studies for 60 minutes each week, mainly in the afternoon when only one group (Group A or Group B) is present. Spanish is a push-in experience for 20 minutes per week. Music, Art, and Library are scheduled during specials time for 40 minutes per week, and Physical Education is scheduled during specials time for 80 minutes per week. Students are scheduled for CSI instruction while other students are working in small groups in their classroom. Regular time dedicated to group projects, cooperative play, choice time, extension activities, and quiet time is no longer scheduled in the same way it had been when the program was originally designed. These activities now must be incorporated whenever possible.

Time	Sample Schedule of Current Activities (Since Adoption of the CCSS)
8:45-8:50	Arrival
8:50-9:00	Morning Meeting
9:00-10:00	Language Arts (60 min per day)
10:00-10:40	Math (40 min per day)
10:40-11:20	Gym/Specials
11:20-12:00	Small Group Instruction / CSI
12:00-12:45	Lunch/Recess
12:45-1:05	Class Meeting
1:05-3:25	Small Group Instruction / Science/Social Studies (60 min per week each) / Language Arts / Specials
3:25-3:30	Pack Up and Dismissal

Investigation

Determining the feasibility of adding time to the modified day Kindergarten program in order to keep important developmentally appropriate elements in our Kindergarten program, the Franklin Lakes Public Schools explored several elements:

- Needs of Students
 - A need to increase frequency of project-based learning
 - A need to increase frequency of choice time
 - A need to increase indoor/outdoor playtime
 - A need to increase interdisciplinary experiences
 - Maintain quality and rigor of the existing program, including academic rigor, small group experiences
 - Provide daily activities that teach and reinforce executive skills, socialization, and exploration
- Needs of Parents
 - A need to offer a program that lessens or eliminates the need for parents to place children in fee-based childcare or other instructional programs upon their early dismissal from school two days per week.
 - A need to offer a program that provides a full school day, as many students are enrolled in full-day Pre-Kindergarten programs, and are prepared for a developmentally appropriate full day of school.
 - A need to offer a program that continues to include small group, individualized instructional experiences.
 - A need to offer a program that provides daily activities that teach and reinforce executive skills, socialization, and exploration.
 - A need to offer a program that continues the quality and rigor of the existing modified day Kindergarten program.
- Needs of Staff

- Staff requires administrative support in the design of a schedule and the provision of resources in support of a flexible use of time and implementation of a developmentally appropriate Kindergarten instructional design.
- Staff requires that the program design provides daily activities that teach and reinforce executive skills, socialization, and exploration.
- Staff requires us to maintain the integrity of the current program, including small group, individualized learning opportunities, while incorporating time for project-based, hand-on, inquiry and exploration.
- Staff required time during the 2015-2016 school year to engage in committee work tasked with preparation for the implementation of full-day Kindergarten programming (scheduling, curricular/instructional activities, etc.)
- Staff requires professional development including appropriate workshops and site visits to high quality full-day Kindergarten programs in other districts.
- Staff requires assurance that the program designed by teachers and administrators now, will be maintained, supported, and respected in future school years.
- Budgetary Implications
 - \$30,000 cost saving in transportation route reduction.
 - Approximately \$10,000 cost for committee work (Instructional / curricular design) already incorporated in current budget.

Recommendation:

In order to ensure that the District's Kindergarten programming includes all of the developmentally appropriate experiences in its original design, an increase in the student day to 5 full days per week is recommended.

The New Jersey Kindergarten Guidelines state "A full day schedule allows more time for formal and informal learning activities across the content areas. It provides ample time for projects, engagement in the arts, individualization, and social interaction with adults and other children. Children have more time to ask questions and explore topics (Brewster 2002; Housden 1992). Full day kindergarten, along with well designed preschool education programs for three- and four- year-olds, has been shown to reduce long term costs for special and remedial education (Housden 1992; Barnett 2002) and reduces the number of children who are held back a grade (Brewster 2002).

Full day kindergarten accommodates the schedules of working families and eliminates the need for children to be transported to alternate childcare settings (Housden 1992). School districts with half day schedules often have difficulty arranging after school care for kindergartners." (2011)

This recommendation includes the addition of instructional time to the student day allowing teachers to incorporate those developmentally appropriate elements noted above:

- Project-based learning
- Choice time
- Indoor/outdoor playtime
- Interdisciplinary experiences
- Small group instruction
- Activities that teach and reinforce executive skills, socialization, and exploration

Instructional Time:

The recommended change adds approximately 5 hours per week to the time each student is in school. This equates to somewhere between 185 and 200 additional hours of instruction for each student over the course of 40 weeks of actual instruction. The school year is about 42 weeks, so this calculation excludes weeklong holiday breaks.

Scheduling Potential

Time	Sample Schedule of Activities 5 Full Days per Week
8:45-8:50	Arrival
8:50-9:00	Morning Meeting
9:00-10:00	Language Arts (60 min per day)
10:00-10:15	Mid Morning Snack
10:15-10:40	Choice Time with Ongoing Investigations / Centers
10:40-11:20	Math (40 min per day)
11:20-12:00	Small Group Instruction (in-class) / CSI (with CSI staff)
12:00-12:45	Lunch/Outdoor Recess
12:45-1:00	Quiet Time / Independent Reading / Read aloud
1:00-1:20	Writing / Interdisciplinary Experiences (all subject areas, whole group and small group)
1:20-1:40	Choice Time with Ongoing Investigations / Project-Based Learning (all subject areas)
1:40-2:20	Science (60-80 min per week) / Social Studies (60-80 min per week) / Specials
2:20-2:30	Afternoon Snack
2:30-3:10	Gym (80 min per week) / Specials
3:10-3:25	Sharing, Review, Closing
3:25-3:30	Pack Up and Dismissal

This sample schedule is based on the incorporation of developmentally appropriate, research-based program elements that allow for a predictable flow to the school day. There is a distinct opening and closing of the day, as well as time for movement and rest. Another aspect to be considered is that the learning environment should match the learning experience. An appropriate balance of indoor and outdoor activities is important to Kindergarten aged learners.

In addition, flexibility for the arrangement and re-arrangement of time by the teacher is important. Pairing interdisciplinary, project-based, and choice time in the daily schedule, allows for this flexibility to be achieved. Content-based experiences are mixed with exploratory experiences allowing students opportunities to interact with one another, to ask questions, to solve problems, and to create. The scheduling of small group instruction enabling individualized opportunities to occur can include a variety of teachers at a given time. For example, some students may be scheduled to work in a small group with their classroom teacher, while other students are working with a CSI teacher, Librarian, Art or Music teacher, outside of regular “specials” time, in order to work on an aspect of an interdisciplinary learning experience. At other points in the day, a small group of students could be working with their teacher while other students are engaged in independent centers or choice time in the same classroom. Teachers and administrators will purposefully create a schedule conducive to these experiences.

The interdisciplinary or multidisciplinary nature of the instructional design enables teachers to facilitate learning by guiding the natural curiosity of their students. Inquiry-based learning that allows students to explore and create, helps students to develop their desire to make connections and to understand more deeply.

This document is intended to support the recommendation to expand the student schedule to 5 full days per week, as well as the need to engage teachers and administrators to engage in the work of preparing for a September 2016 implementation of a full day Kindergarten program.

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