

## **Reasonable Interpretations and Guiding Change Documents**

### **Reasonable Interpretations Document**

The Board of Education is the governing body of the school district, charged with the development, review, revision, approval, and assurance of the implementation of policies. It is the charge of the Superintendent to make a reasonable interpretation of the intent of these policies, and then act upon them.

Similarly, there are instances that require action of the Superintendent as requested by the Board of Education. Many of these instances come under the umbrella of policy. However, the level of detail contained in policy may not provide enough detail for the Superintendent to address the needs of the Board. In cases like these, the Superintendent is charged with developing regulations, processes and procedures to fulfill policy requirements.

In order for the Superintendent to have the ability to make a reasonable interpretation of the intent of the full Board, a Reasonable Interpretation (RI) document may be crafted. This document should be crafted by the Board as a whole or by committee. A Reasonable Interpretations document is most appropriate when clarifying the format of reporting and progress monitoring.

The Reasonable Interpretations document includes:

- Reference to a policy, goal, process, program, product
- Reason the policy, goal, process, program, product is in need of monitoring or action
- Declarative statement about the nature of the information required by the Board
- Clearly defined expectations regarding the type of work product required by the Board
- Time frame the Board expects the work product to be complete

**Franklin Lakes Public Schools: Board of Education  
Reasonable Interpretations Prepared for the Superintendent of Schools**

**Please check one**

**Board**

**Board Committee**

\_\_\_\_\_ *Committee Name*

**Subject:** (Provide policy, goal, process, program, product to which this document refers)

Full-day kindergarten

**Reason:** (Provide reason the policy, goal, process, program, product is in need of monitoring or action)

To provide information to Board members on full-day K implementation

**Declarative statement about the nature of the information required by the Board:**

See Below

**Clearly defined expectations regarding the type of work product required by the Board**

See Below

**Deliverable Time Frame / Date**

See Below

***Declarative statement about the nature of the information required by the Board:***

- The information the board requires is research-based, data-driven, inclusive of all stakeholders, committee-driven, transparent. Committee-process research with frequent committee updates to the community. Research to be compiled by a working committee of teachers, administrators & staff that does not start with a premise for change, but rather is a study of our existing program/schedule to assess its strengths/weaknesses.
- To determine if there are compelling, data-driven, research-based reasons for moving from Franklin Lakes' current modified kindergarten to full-day kindergarten by implementing a stakeholder-inclusive committee structure including but not be limited to: administrators, principals, teachers, specialists, and parents. This committee would conduct comparative analysis of our current modified K program/schedule with FLOW & other high-achieving school districts, including but not limited to: Quality of instruction before quantity, # of hours/week; Costs to implement and execute program change (specifically the cost of multiple teachers in the classroom increasing the cost of Kindergarten instruction), content comparison, needs for curriculum changes. Research would determine the outcome; not the outcome driving the committee.
- Please put together a committee of kindergarten general education and special education teachers, principals, and curriculum director to conduct:
  - A comparative analysis of our current K program/schedule with other FLOW and high achieving school districts. Request to include the number of hours per week and detailed course content and schedule. Include any provisions for special education children.
  - An analysis of high achieving school districts offering interdisciplinary education at the kindergarten level. Include any provisions for special education children.
  - Provide detail on strengths and weaknesses of our district's content within the current schedule as compared to current research and trends in early education
  - Provide detail on strengths and weaknesses of our district's content within the current schedule as compared to strengths and weaknesses of FLOW and other high achieving districts
  - Provide detailed schedule of time comparing current Kindergarten program and schedule with proposed program and schedule including specific amounts of time spent weekly on ELA, math, science, social studies, specials, multidisciplinary instruction, learn by play, interdisciplinary projects, etc. in each.
  - Committee to first consider increasing the quality of our current program without increasing the number of hours
  - Any recommendation to increase the number of hours must be driven by data, research and analysis proving increase in student performance
  - Any recommendation to increase the number of hours would come with detail of expected staffing, including provisions for special education children.

- Any recommendation to increase the staffing would include anticipated costs of the increased staffing to the district.
- Any recommendation to increase the staffing would include the accreditation requirements of the staff.

**Research:**

- Comparison of our program to full day programs in the state, by number of hours, curricular comparison, assessment of specifically what is missing
- Comparison of the number of weekly hours in our PreK program, modified day K program to the number of hours in the average Bergen County Full day K program
- Analysis of what skills are missing from our current program
- Is there any specific ‘achievement data’ for kindergarten that shows that our “almost full day” program may be lacking in comparison to full day programs
- Is there risk that more hours are too many, children are becoming overscheduled, too many pressures, even the need to be “on” all day is a pressure - what about the value of downtime in child development?
- Research/comparison of best practices with high achieving schools, schools that have changed from modified full day kindergarten to full day kindergarten, and schools that chose modified full day instead of full day.
- Our modified full day consists of 28 hours and 40 mins, please compare this to other FLOW/Bergen County/State of NJ districts in terms of program hours and curricular offerings.
- Plenty of research has been provided indicating that full day programs are academically superior to half-day programs. A typical half-day program consists of 12.5 hours per week (5 X 2.5 hours). Our modified full day program consists of 28 hours 40 minutes per week, which is far greater than typical half-day programs and only 4 hours and 40 minutes less than our full day program would be (33 hours and 20 minutes). Without existing research to support the benefits of a change from a modified full day schedule to a full day schedule, please provide some form of data driven or research based information to indicate a compelling need for this change. Specifically what value-added academic improvement will result from the additional approximately 168 hours per year of instructional time to our students.

**Budget:**

- Budgetary impact of full day K – complete information, including but not limited to the # of additional push in class periods that will be required by specials teachers in order to continue small group instruction as promised, and in order to achieve ‘multi disciplinary programming’, assessment of the dollars that will be spent writing curriculum

**Curricular:**

- Description of the multi disciplinary program, not in broad definitions as described thus far, but specifically how it would be done in kindergarten and how many additional resources would be needed to push into classrooms

- Information about pros and cons of having multiple teachers in a kindergarten setting (lack of consistency and impact on young age group)
- Information about why our current kindergarten teachers seem to feel this program change is not needed
- Information about how the current teachers will be scheduled to write the new curriculum without taking them out of their current classroom settings
- Information on the cost for teachers to develop the program on their own time, since Professional Development days have been determined, if program were to be implemented in Sept. 2016
  - Hours? Total stipend cost? Other costs?
  - Desire to keep teachers in the classroom to maintain consistency in current classes
- Presentation from teachers with the work they have done to prepare for this, why they think it is needed and how they think it will benefit our students

**Policy:**

- Information about how many K students in a class is ‘too few’ according to the research and what we might need to do about class sections that are too small. Are we running the ideal class sizes to optimize a full day program? Do we need to address the class size, gender imbalance, behavioral issues that come with ‘too small’ class sizes before we add hours to the student’s day?

**General Questions:**

- Do we feel that changing our already very successful Kindergarten programming is more important than the revision of our science curriculum, and is it the best place to commit our central resources (curriculum director, principals to work with curriculum, scheduling and staffing issues) when we seem to have so many important issues on the table right now? Why?
- Have our Kindergarteners missed benchmarks? Are they unprepared for 1<sup>st</sup> grade?
  - Why are we rushing this, then?
- What has been done to integrate multidisciplinary instruction including project based learning into our current Modified program?
- IF a change is warranted, what is the need for the short time frame to implement this in September, why not implement for the following year (2017-2018). The initial thought when it was tabled last winter (Jan. 2015) was to start planning for an implementation a year and a half away, and yet this was not done. Why not do it now and allow for a more thoughtful implementation?
- I have heard that teachers were not aware that parents would be able to ‘opt out’ until they heard it was announced in a board meeting, and they are concerned by lesson planning challenges it will lead to. Is it wise to implement something new for our youngest students that has not been thoughtfully planned for a smooth transition for all stakeholders.
- Everyone would agree that our current kindergarten program is very successful, what is the rush to implement a full day kindergarten program for this coming September if there are still so many questions and concerns among board members, teachers and parents?

***Clearly defined expectations regarding the type of work product required by the Board:***

**Committee:**

- Committee structure - Superintendent would facilitate, Committee would report to board monthly
- Specific Process for curriculum development that includes effective participation of teachers, students, parents, community, BOE, as specified in Board Policy 6141 for Curriculum design/development to be developed prior to Board's approval of the extension of the day
- Committee to research cutting-edge, successful kindergartens (either public or private; half-, modified-, and full-day)
- Committee to focus on improving quality of instruction and preparedness
- Committee to find data & research that supports any changes
- Please form a committee to:
  - conduct a comparative analysis of our modified full day K program and # of hours/week vs. current research and trends in early education.
  - conduct a comparative analysis of our district's # of hours/week vs other FLOW & high achieving districts' # of hours/week
  - conduct a comparative analysis of the content covered in our program's # of hours/week vs. the content in other high achieving districts' # of hours/week
- Pursuant to Board Policy 6140 & 6141: The teachers/principals/CD-membered committee conducts site visits to multiple high achieving school districts (even some private schools as was done by the math committee five years ago); analyze current research and trends on early education; conduct a comparative analysis of our district's # of hours/week vs other FLOW & high achieving districts' # of hours/week; conduct a comparative analysis of the content covered in our program's # of hours/week vs. the content in other high achieving districts' # of hours/week; provide detail on strengths and weaknesses of our district's content within the current schedule as compared to current research and trends in early education; provide detail on strengths and weaknesses of our district's content within the current schedule as compared to strengths and weaknesses of FLOW and other high achieving districts; provide comparative data on our Kindergarteners' readiness for 1<sup>st</sup> grade as compared to FLOW and other high achieving school districts; provide comparative schedule as to the current Kindergarten program and any proposed changes (whether with or without extending the number of hours); Should the teacher/principals/CD-membered committee choose to recommend extending the # of hours/week then the committee would provide a detail of expected staffing. If this was the recommendation of the committee then the superintendent would provide detail staff costs and accreditation required of the staff (what type of staff).

**Focus Groups/Survey:**

- Before any recommendation there will be multiple parent/community (inclusive of parents of all grade levels) focus groups conducted with the intention to vet community feedback and inform the committee as to what the community values in its Kindergarten program and expectations.
- A more comprehensive survey and/or focus groups of the entire (school) community that seek to determine what parents value in a kindergarten program. The survey conducted almost 18 months ago was not a very comprehensive survey as it consisted of three questions, did not explain what the modified full day program consisted of, and did not reach/solicit input from the majority of the community.
- Please form focus groups of parents with children recently and/or currently enrolled in our modified full day K program to assess what they value in our current program and possibly what they would like to see in our program.

**Information:**

- Answers to additional questions as asked by board members
- A detailed timeline of meetings and scheduled time when the curriculum development work will be done
- A listing of who will be participating in the curriculum development work (committee)
- An outline of curriculum and what the schedule would look like in terms of specials teachers pushing in – if specials teachers do not push in, how do we achieve the small group instruction?
- An overviewing of the staffing plans for K resources
- If there is a recommendation for a change to the # of hours/week by the Committee the Committee will provide curricula changes to warrant such scheduling changes.
- Please outline what is specifically occurring during the small group instruction and CSI in the current program.
  - Is a child receiving CSI pulled out each day of the week for the entire session?
  - What would be done to meet CSI needs in Full day K?
- Please break down the current weekly afternoon schedule in detail including time and content
  - a. The current program provides ample time for small group and individualized instructional experiences. It already provides daily activities that teach and reinforce executive skills, socialization and exploration. Please provide reasons/research/data showing that our children need more.
  - b. Do the children need to do reading/writing, interdisciplinary experiences and choice time with investigation and project based learning 5 days per week, or would a curriculum change implementing this 3 times a week suffice?
  - c. Please provide data or research to support the replacement of the afternoon language arts sessions with interdisciplinary experiences, choice time and project-based learning?
  - d. How would this be addressed for our Opt-Out Students?
- Should we be voting on a curriculum change for Kindergarten before we even think about voting for 5 full days?

- Hear from the kindergarten teachers and Mrs. Steines directly as different information is coming from different administrators.
- Provide information as to what the new afternoon schedule will consist of (small group instruction in reading/writing vs specials, etc.).
- Option for Parents to Opt-Out: What impact would the opt-out have on the schedule? What exactly would we offer?
- Are Kindergarten teachers in favor of an opt-out option as this may cause scheduling problems for them?

**Data/Research:**

- Data on our current K students' readiness for 1st grade and beyond.
- Any recommendation to increase the hours/week of the Kindergarten program must be supported by research that explicitly defines linear gains in cognitive outcomes.
- If the quantity needs to change to meet the quality, then it needs to be supported with solid data.
- Quality vs. Quantity - Improved quality instruction may not need more time in the day.
- Site visits or at the very least, communication with districts that changed from modified full day kindergarten to full day kindergarten to get feedback, determine pros and cons of the change, information on the type of program elements added to their schedules (i.e., academic, learn by play, specials, etc.).
- Specific quantitative and qualitative value a full day schedule brings over our current modified full day schedule (what academic benefit will the students gain that they can not gain with our current program)
- Please provide data on our current K students readiness for 1<sup>st</sup> grade
- Please provide data on our past 3 years of K students' readiness for 1<sup>st</sup> grade.
- Please provide comparative data on our Kindergarteners' readiness for 1<sup>st</sup> grade as compared to FLOW and other high achieving school districts
- Please provide research/data for interdisciplinary instruction at the Kindergarten level

***Deliverable Time Frame / Date:***

- As to not unduly burden staff, the Committee conducts research over the course of an entire school year with frequent updates to the Board and community.
- To relieve any burden on teachers and admin and to reduce amount of time teachers are being taken out of the classroom, the study and community focus groups would take place over the course of a year. (December 2016)

- Time frame would be dependent on how long it would take Dr. Furnari to gather the additional information and research asked for. In large part it would be due to how and when, she wants to proceed. However, I am not in favor of a January implementation.