

## PLEASE READ

Parents Need to Participate NOW in All-Day Kindergarten Discussions

### MAKE YOUR VOICE HEARD!

...OR OTHERS WILL SPEAK FOR YOU (& YOUR CHILDREN!)

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#### **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

Concord's elementary schools have just announced plans to shift to an all-day kindergarten model (yet to be defined), and the community has approximately two months to voice its opinions and preferences. Moreover, a select group of educators - working with the Assistant Superintendent - is meeting now to come up with an optimal model to be presented to the School Committee in January. We believe the rationale for all-day kindergarten (for everyone) does not reflect a commitment to doing what is in the best interest of our children. We are writing to encourage all residents to speak up - by signing the attached petition and/or contacting key decision-makers - in support of an optional all-day program that provides choices for everyone.

#### **KEY BACKGROUND**

On Tuesday night (11/27/07), several parents attended the Concord School Committee meeting. At issue was the recent news that Concord would be moving to all-day Kindergarten (Concord Journal, Nov. 15: <http://www.wickedlocal.com/concord/news/education/x1375683531>), an announcement that, for many, was the first they'd heard of this decision.

The rationale(s) given for this proposed shift are varied, but the central question we have is simple, namely: Is a shift to all-day Kindergarten in the best interest of our children? While we respect the fact that, for many families, a 3:10pm dismissal is a wonderful solution, we know that Concord has an equally sizable number of families for whom the answer to this question is an unequivocal "No". We know our children, many of us have children who have experienced kindergarten in the Concord schools, and we also know the value of having afternoon activities outside an elementary school setting. Further, the Administration's position that a longer day will allow teachers to stretch out - **but not enrich or expand** - the existing curriculum makes it impossible to support the potential (maximum) addition of 15 hours each week. Simply put, different families need different things. We are advocating that any revised kindergarten model should be inclusive, and reflect the needs of BOTH these communities.

#### **HOW TO PROVIDE A RANGE OF CHOICES**

**We propose that CPS propose several plans for the School Committee and parents to consider before a final plan is elected.** *Examples (all taken from surrounding towns) could include:*

- Provide separate classrooms (filled with full- and half-day students) with mid-day transportation;
- Expand the current kindergarten model: Provide half-day kindergarten as well as an expanded Kindergarten Intervention Program, to meet the need for extended-day services;

- If classrooms consist of mixed populations (half- and full-day students), then detail how both Faculty and Administration will whole-heartedly support the wishes of families who opt out of all-day kindergarten.
  - Curriculum weighed toward morning, assured support from teachers and administrators, mid-day transportation home;
- Phase-in longer days, slowly, over the course of the year.

## **HOW TO GET INVOLVED**

The Administration and School Committee is now aware that the limited community reaction to this issue is a reflection of it being a new, largely unknown issue - not an indication of the community's wishes to move to an all-day kindergarten model. The School Committee has advised all citizens to reach out more actively and let their opinions be known.

## **FORWARD THIS EMAIL to Everyone You Know**

- ❖ Even if a family no longer has children in kindergarten, even if they only have an infant... this winter's decision affects everyone.

## **SIGN THE PETITION ([http://www.ipetitions.com/petition/Concord\\_Parents\\_Kinder\\_Options/](http://www.ipetitions.com/petition/Concord_Parents_Kinder_Options/))**

- ❖ By signing the online petition, you are supporting those families that believe strongly a daily half-day option is one we should maintain for those families that want it.
- ❖ We will present the signed petitions to the School Committee in early January 2008. However, given that a subcommittee is meeting now to define what an all-day model would look like, we will forward a copy of the petition to them now, detailing what we believe a broad spectrum of citizens would like to see. This is one way of ensuring the proposals of the Administration (at the January School Committee meeting) would reflect the wishes of ALL Concord's constituents.

## **EMAIL, CALL, WRITE.**

- ❖ Let these decision-makers (see below) know that you want a range of kindergarten options to be made available. (*Note: Anonymous letters aren't considered valid, per the Superintendent!*)
- ❖ If your child is already in elementary school, speak with your child's current teacher or former kindergarten teacher about this issue.
- ❖ "If my phone isn't ringing, then I guess it's not an issue for parents." So spoke one Principal at Tuesday night's SC meeting.
- ❖ Voice your opinions! Write a letter or editorial to the Concord Journal - [concord@cnc.com](mailto:concord@cnc.com) (items due by Monday, noon).

## **Concord School Committee (your elected representatives!)**

Peter Fischelis (Chair) 35 Longfellow Road, 978-369-4352, [pfischelis@yahoo.com](mailto:pfischelis@yahoo.com)

Fabian Fondriest, 44 Middle Street, 978-371-5642, [ffondriest@homesite.com](mailto:ffondriest@homesite.com)

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Becky Shannon, 127 Commerford Road, 978-371-1806, [beckysmail@comcast.net](mailto:beckysmail@comcast.net)

Jerry Wedge, 84 Walden Terrace, 978-287-4078, [jerry@wedgedesign.net](mailto:jerry@wedgedesign.net)

### **School Superintendent**

Brenda Finn, Superintendent of Schools, 978-341-2490 x8112, [bfinn@colonial.net](mailto:bfinn@colonial.net)  
Diana Rigby, Assistant Superintendent, 978-341-2490 x8131, [drigby@colonial.net](mailto:drigby@colonial.net)

### **Elementary Principals**

Sharon Young, Alcott School, 978-341-2490 x2110, [syoung@colonial.net](mailto:syoung@colonial.net)  
Rob Colantuono, Thoreau School, 978-341-2490 x3110, [rcolantuono@colonial.net](mailto:rcolantuono@colonial.net)  
Pat Fernandes, Willard School, 978-341-2490 x4110, [pfernandes@colonial.net](mailto:pfernandes@colonial.net)

### **COME TO THE SCHOOL COMMITTEE MEETING - VOICE YOUR OPINIONS!**

- ❖ <http://www.colonial.net/schoolcomm/2007-2008-meetingdates.pdf>
- ❖ Upcoming meetings: Dec. 11, 2007 at 6:30 in Ripley Conf. Room 1
  - Jan. 8, 2007 at 6:30 in Ripley Conf. Room 1
  - Jan. 22, 2007 at 6:30 in Ripley Conf. Room 1

### **STAY INFORMED.**

- ❖ E-mail us at [concordk@gmail.com](mailto:concordk@gmail.com) if you'd like to have your email placed on a distribution list that we will use to help you learn more and/or get involved. You will be kept informed of the latest updates and activities, provided a forum to connect with your peers, and you might just help us ID a great way to affect positive change for all involved!

### **FINALLY...**

Be aware that a reportedly final decision on this will be made in late January when the plan currently being developed will be presented to the School Committee. If you want a voice in this process, the time to read, reflect and respond is NOW.

Many thanks----

Carolyn Wilkins and Mike Farber  
Jennifer and Larison Johnson  
Judy and Lee Rosenbaum  
Carla and Eric Macy  
Fred Martin and Wanda Gleason

### **BACKGROUND INFORMATION FOR THOSE WISHING TO DIG IN:**

#### **11/27/07 SCHOOL COMMITTEE MEETING:**

- The subject of moving to all-day K is now in the discovery/planning phase; the kindergarten teachers are working to define an optimal model (led by Kindergarten Dept. Chair Jacqui McKenna)
- At Tuesday night's meeting, it was requested that this planning committee provide the School Committee with a range of models, not merely one solution, for consideration and input.

- The 2008 School Budget (presented last night) already reflects both a jump in Kindergarten teacher salaries (from 70% to 100% time) and a reduction in the bus services (elimination of the mid-day run);
  - The Administration clearly anticipates a move to all-day K; it's incumbent upon parents to voice their views about **which model(s) best serves the needs of our children, not the needs of the town/school's budget.**
- At an upcoming School Committee meeting (late January/early February 2008), the SC will hear from the Administration on its proposal for a revised kindergarten model(s). At this meeting, the School Committee will accept community input.
- Subsequently, the School Committee will put the proposal to a vote for implementation.

**GET INVOLVED... VOICE YOUR THOUGHTS ... CONNECT!**