

December 9, 2007

To the Concord School Committee:

I would like to express my dismay that the Concord Public Schools is planning to initiate a full-day kindergarten program for the 2007-2008 school year. I urge the School Committee to take into account the feelings of many parents who wish to retain a complete half-day program for their children, with separate classrooms from full-day students, with the same “specials” they now enjoy, and the support of 12:15 buses.

We can look through the research citations offered in the *October 23, 2007 Full Day Kindergarten Report* (available on the curriculum page of the Concord Public Schools website, <<http://www.colonial.net/curriculum/2007-11-19-FullDayKindergarten.pdf>>). It is clear that if there are any academic benefits brought about by full-day kindergarten, they are most likely to be found in at-risk communities. Even in those communities, the gains are often lost by 1st grade (although some studies suggest they may remain until 2nd or 3rd grade but are not long-term). Concord is far from being an at-risk community. Full-day kindergarten is not warranted here in Concord according to the very research offered up by those designing the full-day program.

The current half-day program brings success for almost all of Concord's students; their MCAS scores are some of the best in the state. If the desire to change to full-day is geared towards helping the percentage of children who do need additional hours of instruction, why include all of the children? The current program with additional hours beginning in February only for the children who need extra help is so much better suited to help them - fewer students in the class, with a teacher and an aide who can focus on *their* needs. In the full-day kindergarten plan, the children who do not need extra hours will be spent in repetition of lessons they have already learned? That is no more beneficial to them than it is to have the added attention and focus removed from the children who need the additional help.

The kindergarten children of Concord have not been spending their afternoons in a vacuum. Many parents in Concord are fortunate enough to be able to provide afternoons full of wonderful, enriching educational experiences outside of school that are to be found in Concord — music, dance, theatre, art, and physical education classes, not to mention more time spent in informal socialization. Almost doubling their hours in school decreases the opportunity these kindergarten students have for more essential, informal self-directed learning and more relaxed, self-chosen play.

The additional cost of full-day kindergarten will be almost \$225,000 per year after elimination of the successful remedial extended day program. Those employed in our after-kindergarten program, in busing, and in the extra-curricular programs around town will suffer. If we are going to spend this much additional money for, and require this much time from the youngest of Concord's students, it should be solely with their proven benefit in mind. Please retain the half-day kindergarten program that has already done so much good for our students.

Sincerely,

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