

Piscataway Township Schools

Piscataway, New Jersey



Task-Force Summary Report

Submitted By

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**Piscataway Township Schools
Full-Day Kindergarten Task-Force**

Laura C. Morana, Co-Chairperson

Dr. Margaret Freedson-Gonzalez, Co-Chairperson

Patricia McFall, Sub-committee Chairperson

Teresa Rafferty, Sub-Committee Chairperson

Lawrence LoCastro, Sub-committee Chairperson

Cassie Sucher-Greeley

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Background

The Superintendent's vision to forge ahead with the formation of a task force to examine full-day kindergarten as a way of providing an optimal learning opportunity for all five-year olds in Piscataway began with the identification of a diverse group of educators and community members to engage in dialogue as needs were assessed based on research and demographics and essential program components and staffing issues were identified to determine facilities needs. While the task-force was led by Laura C. Morana, Assistant Superintendent for Curriculum and Instruction, and Dr. Peggy Freedson-Gonzalez, Assistant Professor in the Department of Early Childhood, Elementary Literacy Education at Montclair State University, three sub-committees were established and determined to be chaired as follows:

Sub-committee: What does the research say about instruction in a full-day kindergarten class?

Chairperson: Patricia McFall, Knollwood Elementary School Principal,

Sub-committee: What is the community readiness for full-day kindergarten programs?

Chairperson: Teresa Rafferty, Coordinator of Community Education and Outreach, and

Sub-committee: What is the district's readiness regarding staffing and facilities?

Chairperson: Lawrence LoCastro, Board Secretary – School Business Administrator.

The first meeting of the task-force focused on a review of research that examined key elements for enhancing student learning through clearly established teaching and learning goals, the role of the New Jersey Core Curriculum Content Standards, a highly challenging curriculum, academic support services for those who need it, and how highly qualified teachers matter. In addition to establishing meeting dates (Appendix A - Schedule of Meetings), Action Research as the framework for the work of the individual sub-committees was defined to include:

1. **Background:** Include relevant background information specific to the task.
2. **Problem Statement:** Focused statement of the area to be investigated, which must focus on improving instruction.

3. **Research Questions:** Crafted several questions that will guide the research into the identified area and related issues.
4. **Context for the Research Project:** Include brief description of significant information that may be relevant to the area being investigated, e.g. structures, lack of resources, NJCCCS, etc.
5. **Definition of Key Terms:** If necessary, define key terms that may not generally be known to the rest of the group.
6. **Research Base:** Synthesis of relevant research related to identified area, research questions, and possible solutions.
7. **Methodology:** Describe the methods used to collect and analyze data to answer research questions.
8. **Findings, Conclusions, and Recommendations:** Summary of findings, conclusions, and recommendations; charts, or graphs used with brief narrative explanations to present, explain and compare data to support findings, conclusions, and recommendations.

Prior to the establishment of the task force, review of the current literature revealed that New Jersey is one of nine states including New York and Pennsylvania that do not require districts to offer kindergarten (Mackey 2002). However, in the school year 2000-2001, New Jersey districts provided full-day kindergarten programs to 47,963 children and half-day programs to 41,498. The percentage of children in full-day kindergarten has increased steadily in the past decade as reported by the Center for Government Services 2002. In Middlesex County, 11 out of 23 districts have offered full-day kindergarten for several years. Carteret, Cranbury, Dunellen, Highland Park, Jamesburg, Milltown, New Brunswick, Perth Amboy, Sayreville, South Amboy, South Brunswick, Edison and Spotswood started to offer a full-day program in September 2003 and September 2004.

Trends observed in New Jersey reflect trends nationwide. The Early Childhood Longitudinal Study – Class of 1998-1999 (ECLS Class of 1998-1999), reveals the increasing

prevalence in the past few decades of Kindergarten programs with classes that meet for the entire school day rather than just a part of the day. This increase has been attributed to various social, economic and educational factors that include an increase in the number of single parent households and households with both parents working, (e.g., Gullo 1990; Morrow, Strickland, and Woo 1998). Researchers have found that arranging childcare during the workday is less costly and less complicated for these families when the child is in school for the whole day rather than half of the day. Another rationale in support of full-day Kindergarten is that children who have spent some of their pre-kindergarten years in nursery school classes or child care arrangements (often full-day) are ready for the cognitive, social and physical demands of a full-day Kindergarten (Gullo 1990).

The spreading of full-day Kindergarten programs across the nation has also been driven by expectations and research that they promote greater academic readiness and contribute to closing the minority achievement gap between children at risk and their more advantaged peers (Strickland & Woo, 1999). Numerous research studies have shown that children who participate in full-day Kindergarten programs have stronger academic skills in literacy and math in first grade (Hough, D. & Bryde, S., 1996; Morrow, Strickland and Woo 1998), greater social interaction, cooperation and participation in activities across the curriculum in both Kindergarten and first grade (Cryan, Sheehan, Weichel & Bandy-Hedden, 1992), and greater self-confidence, with these effects particularly pronounced among children from lower socioeconomic backgrounds. Student gains made from participation in full-day Kindergarten programs have been shown to be sustained at least through the fourth grade (Education Trust, 2001; Herman, 1984).

Further, research shows teachers in full-day programs have more time to get to know their children through ongoing screening and assessment and individualize their instruction to meet student needs (Herman, 1984; Morrow, Strickland, & Woo, 1999). In some cases, the move to full-day classes has afforded children opportunities to complete a Kindergarten curriculum that has become increasingly rigorous in a less hurried manner (Shepard and Smith 1988; Herman, 1984), with opportunities for a broader range of learning experiences and higher quality interactions with adults. Given what we know about the critical role of the early childhood years in establishing children's foundation for future academic success (Snow, Burns & Griffin, 1998), such findings should be considered highly relevant to any efforts to improve long-term student outcomes.

Our school district, in its continued commitment to provide quality instruction for its students as they enter Kindergarten and as they continue their academic experience through the high school years, does recognize the *implementation of the existing grant-funded preschool program* as a vehicle to further prepare its students to enter Kindergarten with the necessary knowledge and skills required to successfully meet state set academic standards. It is the goal of the District to support the implementation of pre-school program that begins to launch four-year olds on a promising journey into elementary and secondary education.

A review of enrollment and student achievement data revealed that 20% of students in Kindergarten during the 2003-2004 school year had not participated in a formal preschool program. To respond to this identified need, an intervention program was organized to take place throughout the summer months (Piscataway Township Summer Program). Additionally, the academic and social/emotional needs are being closely monitored and supported throughout the school year.

Problem Statement

The Piscataway School District has determined that full-day kindergarten is the most effective way of offering optimal learning opportunities as students begin their educational journey through elementary, middle, and as they define their post high school aspirations. Therefore, identifying classroom space, impact on staffing, developmentally appropriate program design, and impact on the community, focused the work of the task-force.

Based on student enrollment and demographic data, enrollment patterns raise serious concerns for the benefit on student learning if half-day Kindergarten programs continue to be offered in Piscataway:

1. The number of students whose primary language is not English continues to increase.
2. The number of students entering Kindergarten who have not participated in a formal pre-school experience has reached a level of 20%; a rather high percentage based on a review of the literature and consultation with literacy development experts.
3. The gap in student achievement between the various demographic groups will continue to be widened.
4. The number of students entering first grade will continue to increase by approximately 20%.

Since the adoption of the *New Jersey Core Curriculum Content Standards* (NJCCCS) in 1996, school districts have struggled with the complex process of implementing these standards at the classroom level and assuring that students attain these standards within the state-mandated timelines. *No Child Left Behind* (NCLB) further mandates that by 2013-2014, all students will reach minimum proficiency or better in language arts and mathematics. Hence in this era of standards, high stakes testing, and increasing expectations of staff, the design, implementation,

and evaluation of program effectiveness is paramount to a high-quality K-12 instructional program. NCLB deemed an important reauthorization of a federal law - first enacted in 1965 - significantly altered the interaction between curriculum and instruction in America. According to W. J. Popham (2004) NCLB outlines a system that aligns assessments to state's content standards. The system of accountability links state annual assessments with the implementation of established core curriculum content standards, making our attention to both the content and implementation of a high-quality curriculum that much more urgent.

The NJCCCS (New Jersey State Department of Education (NJ DOE) 2004 - N.J.A.C. 6A:8 were readopted to provide school districts with better-defined outcomes for students in Kindergarten through Grade 12. Defined in terms of knowledge and skills to be assessed through state mandated assessments at benchmark years (third, fourth, eighth, and eleventh), New Jersey regulations (NJ DOE – 2004) recognize the need for ongoing professional development if the standards-based curriculum reform is to succeed. Furthermore, the content standards are intended to guide districts in establishing curriculum and instructional methodologies to provide students with highly challenging learning opportunities.

Student achievement is at the heart of the Strategic Action Plan, as illustrated by the following Mission Statement and goals:



The mission of the Piscataway Public Schools is the continual development of each child's intellectual, aesthetic, social, and physical abilities in a positive environment which fosters self-esteem. Students in the Piscataway Public Schools will be confident, productive members of society.

- Goal 2 Develop and implement an educational program that fosters innovation in teaching and learning.
- Goal 3 All students must achieve at the highest levels of their ability.
- Goal 4 Create an educational environment that fosters high staff morale and energizes professional responsibility and innovation.
- Goal 5 Encourage the value of academic honor in the community and staff.
- Goal 6 The school district will provide and maintain comfortable, spacious classrooms, appropriate equipment and buildings for all students to facilitate an optimal learning environment.
- Goal 7 The school district will provide a safe and comfortable environment that will encourage all students to attend classes everyday.
- Goal 8 Teachers will encourage participation of all students to make learning more effective and to enhance the learning experience.
- Goal 9 The school district will support diverse learning experiences.

At all levels of our school system, an analysis of both state mandated and local assessments reveal that students have maintained performance in language arts literacy. However, writing skills must be emphasized across the curriculum. In the area of mathematics, immediate attention continues to be required at all elementary, middle and high school levels. The following chart illustrates student performance in our K-3 schools. However, it is important to note that the test results reflect overall student performance and disaggregated results by the various demographic subgroups within each school. An achievement gap between White and Black, Hispanic and Economically Disadvantaged subgroups continues to exist and is in need of immediate innovative approaches. The district's vision for assessment of student learning reflects a combination of both formative and summative tools. Ongoing district-made benchmark assessments have been quite successful in identifying teaching and learning gaps and these will

be continued throughout the 2005-2006 school year. Assessments results are being used to make instructional decisions as illustrated here:

District administrators and school principals monitor program effectiveness to:	❖ Identify program strengths and weaknesses
	❖ Designate program priorities
	❖ Assess alternatives
	❖ Plan and improve instructional programs
	❖ Plan and implement academic support programs
Teachers and administrators make group decisions to:	❖ Determine staffing needs at the school and district level
	❖ Perform individual diagnosis and prescription
	❖ Monitor student progress
	❖ Carry out curriculum evaluation and refinement
	❖ Provide mastery/promotion/grading and other feedback
Parents and students gauge student progress to:	❖ Motivate students
	❖ Determine report card grades and course placement
	❖ Assess student strengths and weaknesses
	❖ Determine home-school interventions
	❖ Make informed educational and career decisions

Spring 2004, TerraNova Second Edition was administered to first and second graders for the first time in our district because of its close alignment with the state mandated assessments being administered at the third and fourth grade level. Results reflect a need to strengthen instruction at the first and second grade level in understanding of literal meaning of passages, drawing conclusions, inferring relationships such as cause and effect, making predictions, transferring ideas into new situations, and judging author's purpose and point of view. Additionally, writing strategies continue to need further reinforcement as students are required to apply information sources to construct meaningful sentences and essays that reflect writing skills that focus on the assigned topic and an overall well-written response. In the area of mathematics, challenging curriculum, instructional planning and design, assessment of student learning, and effective instructional practices continue to be the focus that effectively supports students'

development of deep understanding of numbers and number relationships, and mathematical problem solving.

Student achievement data based on TerraNova – Second Edition results as reported below in terms of National Percentiles reveal the performance of the district's first and second graders in mathematics to exceed 84% of first graders' performance nation-wide. Similarly, in the area of reading, students' performance exceeded the group of first and second graders by 82% and 62% respectively.

TerraNova Assessment – Second Edition Spring 2004

	Reading	Language	Mathematics
First Grade	82 %	86%	84%
Second Grade	62%	81%	84%

NJ Assessment of Skills and Knowledge 3&4

Language Arts											
NJ ASK 3 Proficient & Advanced Proficient	All	Gen. Ed.	White	Black	Hispa	Asian	Spe. Ed.	LEP	Econ. Disad.	Pacific Island	Amer. Indian
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
2003-2004	82.4	88.3	85.6	73.7	80.0	91.4	37.5	81.8	70.5	-	-
NJ ASK 4 Proficient & Advanced Proficient	All	Gen. Ed.	White	Black	Hispa	Asian	Spe. Ed.	LEP	Econ. Disad.	Pacific Island	Amer. Indian
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
2003-2004	86.35	96.05	86.35	81.80	83.15	93.25	47.25	69.60	78.75	0.0	0.0
2002-2003	85.4	91.3	89.3	78.3	82.9	77.3	44.9	25.0	78.1	0.0	0.0
2001-2002	78.9	92.0	90.1	72.2	80.6	89.8	32.8	-	69.1	0.0	0.0
Mathematics											
NJ ASK 3 Proficient & Advanced Proficient	All	Gen. Ed.	White	Black	Hispa	Asian	Spe. Ed.	LEP	Econ. Disad.	Pacific Island	Amer. India
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
2003-2004	80.8	85.2	86.3	65.3	78.3	96.1	42.8	87.1	64.1	-	-
NJ ASK 4 Proficient & Advanced Proficient	All	Gen. Ed.	White	Black	Hispa	Asian	Spe. Ed.	LEP	Econ. Disad.	Pacific Island	Amer. Indian
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
2003-2004	73.25	80.2	78.05	59.65	61.8	90.15	48.35	51.45	61.0	0.0	0.0
2002-2003	73.6	79.0	83.5	55.7	66.0	85.4	34.1	25.0	58.3	0.0	0.0
2001-2002	69.6	76.2	77.9	51.2	59.7	87.6	22.0	-	48.6	0.0	0.0

Research Questions

- 1. What is the community readiness for full-day Kindergarten?**
- 2. What does research say about full-day Kindergarten and what should a quality full-day kindergarten program look like?**
- 3. What is the district's readiness for full-day Kindergarten regarding facilities and staffing?**

What is the community readiness for full-day Kindergarten?

Community meetings were organized throughout the summer months as an approach to exploring the degree of interest in full-day Kindergarten programs. The task-force designed an action plan that included surveys and focus groups. Despite the fact that the community meetings occurred during the summer months and outreach efforts continued in the fall, parents and community members in attendance responded in a very enthusiastic and positive manner. The level of community support for full-day Kindergarten appears to stretch across various demographic groups, and while interest is strongest among those with young children, there was still strong support from participants at North Stelton AME Church. This group represented residents whose children had graduated high school but who had had the benefit of full-day Kindergarten in other communities or who had enrolled their children in private schools that offered full-day Kindergarten. They echoed sentiments regarding the educational value of the project. At other community meetings, the participants were parents of pre-schoolers or those whose children were in grade school. Their support for full-day Kindergarten is primarily focused on the educational value, and to a lesser extent, on the need to accommodate parents who work fulltime. Community members emphasized how existing pre-school and daycare programs have exposed children to educational and social experiences that have had a long-term impact on their daily lives.

While the survey was distributed late in the school year, participants mailed their responses to the district; hence, the pool may represent those who are highly motivated. The survey was distributed again in the fall, thereby providing a higher rate of return and additional

information about the interest of the community. Nonetheless, of the 75 surveys returned, over 85% indicated that they were interested or very interested in the issue of full-day Kindergarten. Of these, more than half are the parents of pre-school students; the majority is planning to enroll their children in Piscataway's Kindergarten program, yet approximately 38% indicated the need for a full-day program. Of the remaining 12%, some were somewhat interested and about five parents not at all.

Among the parents who participated in the focus group, parents who stayed home fulltime with their children were also vocal in their support. Several cited the difficulty of cramming the curriculum into a short half-day and the teacher's difficulty in getting to know each child individually or provide individual assistance. One mother who serves as a volunteer one day a week in one of our Kindergarten classes, described the children as "always being rushed." The issue of working parents was cited as important to the concept of full-day Kindergarten; it is a given that if we do not implement a full-day program, these children will be enrolled in a private school. Thus, as the children of parents who work out of the home who have children in first grade with those who had fewer pre-school and kindergarten opportunities, the readiness for Kindergarten becomes more diverse in each of our classes and within schools. This will help in their child's preparedness for the infinite life opportunities each center offers.

Parents expressed a preference for the option of locating full-day Kindergarten in the existing K-3 schools. This preference was based upon not increasing the transition their children already make in the district as a result of the district's grade configuration and transportation-related issues. When the question was posed about classroom additions to facilitate the establishment of full-day Kindergarten in our K-3 schools, parents and community members were supportive. Two thirds of those interested residents stated that they were willing to support

a tax increase of \$10 per month to support full-day Kindergarten. This group also said they were somewhat familiar with full-day Kindergarten programs in other communities and that the long-term impact on their children's learning is far more important. However, when asked if they would support a centralized district Kindergarten, located at Grandview Elementary School, for example, parents and community members stated that it would not affect their support for full-day Kindergarten.

Quoting Residents:

- “Kids are capable and ready for a challenging learning center, readiness for first grade is so critical, and a half-day does not allow for a smooth and positive transition.”
- “My children go to private school; I come from New York where full-day Kindergarten is offered. This is the best thing for their learning and success.”
- “Value of our homes will increase if the school system is excellent.”
- “This is an idea whose time has come in Piscataway; I do not know why full-day Kindergarten has taken so long.”
- “Familiarizing children with a full-day routine will help them in first grade. Now it takes them until December of first grade to adjust to a full-day program. Some of these students have been doing a full-day program since they were two years old.”
- “I have been in my son's classroom; I can't believe what they teach now. My older children never did that much. I see why the teachers need more time.”

In the past, the community has always supported education. In 2002, the community supported the construction of additional classrooms in our elementary and middle schools and a major expansion at the high school level with a referendum approval of \$53,000,000. Prior to the construction in these schools, the district went through inconsistent increases in enrollment at all levels. Even though there was a significant increase in tax levy in April 2003 and April 2004, the budget was successfully approved by the Piscataway Township community.

What are the district's staffing and facilities needs for full-day kindergarten?

Patterns of enrollment in our K-3 schools for the past six years reveal a steady increase of 20 % between Kindergarten and first grade. The district's demographer reports that, based on an analysis of enrollment data, birth cohorts, and census figures, enrollment in a full-day Kindergarten program within the district may not be influenced due to parents' decision to enroll students in a private or parochial schools despite the districts' establishment of a full-day Kindergarten program. For first grade, the 20% figure should be used while projecting enrollment, facilities and staffing needs. Research shows that the average number of children in full-day classes (20.3) is higher than is found in half-day classes (19.1). Thirty-nine percent of full-day classes have between 21 and 25 children compared to 26% of half-day classes, but very large classes (more than 25 children) are uncommon in both full-day (10%) and half-day programs (7%). Classroom instructional aides are more prevalent in full-day classes. Sixty-one percent of full-day classes and 44 percent of half-day classes have an aide who works for at least an hour per day directly with the children on instructional tasks (National Early Childhood Longitudinal Study – Class 1998-1999). A survey of districts in Middlesex County regarding class size in full-day Kindergarten classes revealed an average teacher/student ratio of 1:24.

Projections provided by the demographer were used to make full-day Kindergarten program decisions for the 2005-2006 school year. These reveal a difference in enrollment between the projected enrollment for the 2005-2006 school year and the 20% recommended projections if the district were to offer a full-day Kindergarten program ranges from 4 to 11 additional students in each of the elementary schools.

Kindergarten – Third Grade Enrollment 1999 – 2006

School	1999 2000	2000 2001	2001 2002	2002 2003	2003 2004	2004 2005	2005 2006	+ 20% K Project Enrol.	+ 30% K Project Enrol.
Eisenhower									
K	104	93	105	88	124	106	115	126	138
1 st .	121	123	111	114	120	133	125		
2 nd .	117	116	124	114	111	121	132		
3 rd .	129	111	123	131	121	101	121		
						461	493		
Grandview									
K	91	109	86	93	101	95	110	114	123
1 st .	125	110	138	92	110	113	111		
2 nd .	136	126	121	138	95	117	117		
3 rd .	134	134	134	115	138	102	118		
						427	456		
Knollwood									
K	89	99	91	96	91	91	105	109	118
1 st .	114	106	124	108	111	114	110		
2 nd .	131	121	106	115	122	115	118		
3 rd .	133	132	132	101	120	118	116		
						438	449		
Randolphville									
K	99	99	94	117	103	94	107	113	122
1 st .	130	111	123	119	134	111	110		
2 nd .	141	144	118	118	116	123	112		
3 rd .	112	135	140	123	122	124	125		
						452	454		

Kindergarten Program Staffing 2004 - 2005 and 2005-2006 Grades K-3

School	Half-Day Teachers 2004-2005	Half-Day Classrooms 2004-2005	Full-Day K Teachers 2005-2006	Full-Day K Classrooms 2005-2006	Teacher-Student Ratio
Eisenhower	3 = 6K Sections	3	+2	+2	1:25
Grandview	3 = 6 K Sections	3	+2	+2	1:23
Knollwood	2.5 = 5 Sections	3 (1/2 not in use)	+2.5	+2	1:22
Randolphville	2.5 = 5 K Sections	3 (1/2 PK use)	+2.5	+2	1:23

Enrollment/Staffing Projections 2005-2006 Grades K-3

School		Enrollment 2004-2005	Current Teachers 2004-2005	Enrollment 2005-2006	Teachers Needed 2005-2006	Difference
Eisenhower						
	K	106	3	**126	5	**+2
	1 st	133	*6	125	6	-
	2 nd	121	6	132	6	-
	3 rd	100	6	121	6	-
Grandview						
	K	95	*3	**114	5	+2
	1 st	113	6	111	6	-
	2 nd	117	5	117	5	-
	3 rd	102	4	118	6	+2
Knollwood						
	K	91	2.5	**105	5	+2.5 *
	1 st	114	6	110	6	-
	2 nd	115	5	118	5	-
	3 rd	118	5	116	6	+1
Randolphville						
	K	94	***3.0	**107	5	+2
	1 st	111	6	110	6	-
	2 nd	123	6	112	5	-1
	3 rd	124	5	125	6	+1

* = Grant – funded 50%

** = 20% increase in enrollment from 2004-2005

*** = 50% salary part of 2004-2005 budget

While enrollment figures at the elementary level remain constant, an analysis of third grade enrollment for the 2005-2006 school year reveals the need to establish additional third grade classes at Randolphville, Grandview, and Knollwood schools. Eisenhower's enrollment figures will continue to be addressed through grant funds that support class size reduction at the first grade level in 2005-2006.

Randolphville has had three kindergarten teachers in the school budget. However, due to a decrease in enrollment, only 2.5 positions were in place during 2004-2005. The remaining part of the teacher's salary was supported through Pre-school program grant-funds. The district saved 50% of the kindergarten teacher's salary during 2004-2005.

Grandview Elementary School received grant funds to support the establishment of an additional 50% Kindergarten class. This can continue to be supported during the 2005-2006 school year.

Knollwood has had 2.5 positions locally funded. Grant funds will support the additional 50% Kindergarten position during the 2005-2006 school year.

Each of our schools is projecting to have one staff member retire at the end of the 2004-2005 school year. Therefore, offering a savings of approximately \$20,000 per staff member that can be used to support full-day Kindergarten teachers' salaries.

A staffing analysis reveals that the number of library clerks can be reduced at the K-5 level without impacting on the quality of services to be provided to students. Therefore, it is recommended that the reduction of a full-time position to half-time be considered.

If teacher/student ratio at the Kindergarten level is to be established at 1:20 without a classroom assistant, noon-time aides' time warrants extension by one additional hour.

Preparation period for all Kindergarten teachers can be accomplished through the efficient scheduling of special subject area classes: art, music, library, physical education, and world language. No additional staff is needed.

The use of facilities to fulfill full-day requirement needs will not interfere with the long-term plan to return K-3 special education students to a least-restrictive environment.

Another consideration that must be taken into account is the unanticipated enrollment of students that can reach 30 %. Existing facilities will not support an unanticipated 30% enrollment.

Therefore, in addition to leasing space outside the school environment, additional staff, and support services will be warranted.

The efficient use of facilities can be maximized to meet the projected enrollment of 20% for the 2005-2006 school year through the following classroom space reallocation:

- Eisenhower:** Occupational Therapy Room's relocation to Social Worker's Room
Anticipated closing of a special education class
Sub-division of art room to create two special education classrooms
Reassess use of existing staff/faculty lounge.
- Grandview:** Two existing grant-funded preschool classes can be relocated to Fellowship Farms Building as the extended-day Kindergarten program will not be needed within school hours.
Existing Assistant Director's use of a regular classroom for office space needs to be reconsidered. Returning to the original office space at Schor Middle School or using office space at PHS continues to be viable options.
- Knollwood:** Reassignment of classroom use will support the establishment of full-day Kindergarten program.
- Randolphville:** Reassignment of classroom use will support the establishment of full-day Kindergarten program.

The relocation of a special education class from Martin Luther King to the Middle School level will allow for the relocation of one special education class from Randolphville Elementary School to Eisenhower Elementary School.

To allow for additional classroom space at the elementary level, the two grant-funded preschool classes can be relocated to the middle school setting, Schor or Quibbletown Middle Schools.

The inclusion of special education four-year olds can be maximized by assigning students to the existing grant-funded preschool program.

Transportation Cost

Transportation costs have been calculated by the Transportation Department as illustrated here:
2004-2005 Transportation cost of half-day routes = \$ 125,000

Based on the current number of Kindergarten students that require transportation, the estimated cost for transportation for full-day session next year is approximately \$125,000. This includes three additional regular routes at \$30,000 and one special route at \$35,000. The elimination of the Kindergarten mid-day routes would save \$78,500. It is recommended that \$46,500 be included for increased transportation costs for the 2005-2006 school year.

Transportation cost for full-day Kindergarten is = \$ 46,500

Classroom Furnishings

School	2004-2005 K Sessions	2005-2006 K Classes	Additional Classes	Total
Eisenhower	6	5	2 X \$8,000	\$16,000
Grandview	6	5	2 X \$8,000	\$16,000
Knollwood	5	5	2 X \$8,000	\$16,000
Randolphville	5	5	2 X \$8,000	\$16,000
Existing Program	22	12	\$1,000	\$12,000
Total	12	21	8	\$76,000

Full-Day Kindergarten Staffing - Recommendation

School	Full-Day K Teachers Needed	Projected Salary and Benefits	Teacher Student Ratio	Classroom Assistants Half-Time	Assistants' Salary	Total
Eisenhower	+2.0	\$106,000	1:25	5	\$50,270	\$156,270
Grandview	+2.5	\$132,000	1:23	5	\$50,270	\$182,270
Knollwood	+2.5	\$132,000	1:22	5	\$50,270	\$182,270
Randolphville	+2.0	\$106,000	1:23	5	\$50,270	\$156,270
Total	9.0	\$476,000		20	\$201,080	\$677,080
Grant Funds	-1.0	-\$48,000				-\$48,000
Total	8.0	\$428,000		20	\$201,080	\$629,080
Transportation						\$46,500
Teacher Training						\$5,880
Furnishings						\$76,000
Total						\$757,460

What does research say about full-day Kindergarten? What should a quality full-day Kindergarten program look like?

Members of the task-force dedicated time and energy to research effective full-day Kindergarten programs currently in place in our tri-state area. Several visits were made to learn about the benefits, challenges, and successes in offering a full-day Kindergarten program. During the months of June and July 2004, task-force members established contact and visited school districts like Warren, Flemington-Raritan, Mansfield, Edison, and Staten Island.

Additionally, Dr. Margaret Freedson-Gonzalez, professor at Montclair State University's Early Childhood and Literacy Department, at a meeting held on May 18, 2004, spoke favorably about the profound opportunities for social, emotional, cognitive, and literacy development from birth through age five, and emphasized that children **are** acquiring knowledge and skills in Kindergarten that are critical to their future school success. She went on to state how children's skills at the end of Kindergarten predicted reading achievement at the end of first grade, in turn, a predictor of children's achievement through 9th and 10th grades. She described the benefits of a content and language-rich Kindergarten where the early identification and targeting of instructional strengths and needs allows teachers to "craft" programs that support development of foundational early literacy skills and a life-long love of learning. Such an environment contains specific centers where students may make choices, further refine their alphabet knowledge and experience self-selected reading – all done in a strategic way targeting students' unique and diverse needs.

A review of the research led the committee to the findings of the Coalition of Education 2000 from the Early Childhood's Longitudinal Study conducted by the US Department of

Education - National Center of Education Statistics reports the following long-term benefits of full day Kindergarten:

- Children demonstrate increased academic achievement and there are fewer grade retentions in later school years.
- Schools' remedial instruction and special education costs decline because of the implementation of a developmentally appropriate program.
- Children from low income and educationally disadvantaged backgrounds or not having had a preschool experience, in particular, have demonstrated lasting academic and behavioral benefits.
- Teachers have time for in-depth lessons that give children academic foundations, time to reinforce age-appropriate behavior, and time for hands-on exploration of new learning concepts.
- The full-day approach has as its centerpiece a child-oriented setting that promotes the development of independence, mature social behaviors, and creative thinking.
- Students who participate in full-day Kindergarten demonstrate greater independent learning.
- Students who participate in full-day Kindergarten demonstrate positive feelings about their kindergarten experience.

James Elicker (1997) stated, "Today's Kindergarten curriculum is more academic and skill-oriented than 25 years ago. Spending a full day in class may be less stressful for youngsters than trying to cram the demands of today's Kindergarten program into traditional half-day schedule." As reported by the Condition of Education 2000 Report, today's children come to Kindergarten with wider development readiness. It is very difficult for teachers of half-day programs to meet the individual needs of forty to fifty children on a daily basis. Our present Kindergarten teachers report that it takes much longer to get to know their students' strengths and areas in need of academic intervention. The full-day Kindergarten program would provide the time to individualize the curriculum for children with diverse backgrounds.

Kindergarten with a developmentally appropriate curriculum allows the teacher to accommodate individual differences. James Elicker's work in 1967 allowed for the study of Kindergarten classrooms – over a two-year period, his findings revealed that developmentally appropriate programs are less stressful and better prepare students for first grade. In addition, Elicker's study revealed that parents reported higher levels of satisfaction with the full-day Kindergarten program. "The parents appreciated the more relaxed pace of the full-day program," he says. "They also liked the in-depth explorations and learning that were possible because time was more available, and they appreciated the increased attention their children received from teachers." In addition, other stresses were associated with half-day Kindergarten. Working parents had to juggle their schedules to make child care arrangements and pick up children during the day. Also, children themselves may feel stressed if they have to go from a school situation to a daycare environment where different rules and expectations may apply.

Educators and parents have attributed the following to full-day Kindergarten:

Benefit for Students

- ❖ More "time and opportunity to play with language" (Fromberg, 1995, p. 235) as well as to "explore subjects in depth" (Vecchiotti, 2001).
- ❖ A more flexible and individualized learning environment ((Vecchiotti, 2001).
- ❖ More individual and small-group interaction with the teacher than it is possible in most half-day programs (Porch, 2002, Vecchiotti, 201).

Benefits for Parents

- ❖ Parent education opportunities increase, especially in the area of parenting skills and knowledge regarding recent research about how kindergarten children learn in developmentally appropriate settings and how parents can tap into the Kindergarten children's curiosity to explore and manipulate their environment (Bodrova & Leong, 1996; Bransford, Brown, & Cocking, Eds., 2000).
- ❖ Increased opportunities to become involved in their children's classrooms, as well as to communicate with teacher.

- ❖ Less difficulty arranging childcare and transportation (Vecchiotti, 2001)
- ❖ The opportunity for lower-income families to enroll children in a high-quality early education program that might not otherwise be affordable in the private market (Vecchiotti, 2001).
- ❖ Possible lower child-care costs (Rothenberg, 1995)

Benefits for Teachers

- ❖ Increased time to spend with students individually and small groups (Porch, 2002).
- ❖ Increased time to get to know and communicate with parents (Vecchiotti, 2001).
- ❖ Reduced ratio of transition time to learning time (Miller, 2002)
- ❖ Lower teacher/student ratio – 20-25 per year as compared to 40-50 – than in two half-day classrooms (Elicker, 2000).

Research supports the establishment of full-day Kindergarten programs and further suggests that early immersion with exposure to print and reading provide greater achievement. A quality program that addresses storybook reading, knowledge about print, comprehensive strategies, writing activities, oral language, and literacy integrated in content areas are beneficial to children in Kindergarten. Exploration and socialization are key components for success in language development and academic achievement. Teachers report that a longer day provides for larger blocks of time because there is more flexibility in the schedule to teach in greater depth of understanding.

The work of the sub-committee supports a recommendation for the Piscataway Township School District to implement a full-day Kindergarten program for the 2005-2006 school year. The sub-committee strongly requests that we give our kindergartners a “Gift of Time” to learn in the 21st Century. The implementation would allow for increased instructional time. This would allow teachers to have more time to teach and lead the development of desired content and skills using a developmentally appropriate model. Academic instructional time would allow for multi-sensory teaching with the use of manipulatives, especially in mathematics consistent with the

district's standards-based curriculum and new instructional materials. Small group and individualized instruction would allow for appropriate early intervention and acceleration of student learning. More interaction between the teacher and the students would provide opportunities for investigating the "big ideas" consistent with the district's curriculum design framework, Understanding by Design.

Assessment of student learning would be completed in a more consistent manner and as part of a continuous cycle for monitoring student progress. More time for shared reading as a whole class would facilitate the development of language skills to ensure the appropriate development of these skills with children whose native language is other than English and those with special needs. Socialization can be best accomplished as a result of increased time for interaction with peers and adults. Lunch and recess time would facilitate children to interact socially in an informal setting.

An additional support service is being explored through a partnership with Educational Testing Service (ETS) that is in the process of submitting a Request for Proposal (RFP) to the United States Department of Education (US DOE) that seeks to identify, implement, and evaluate innovative curriculum design to enhance the learning of students in Kindergarten. The successful award by the US DOE would result in technical assistance professional development opportunities for schools interested in participating in a three-year research study innovation. The goal of the research study is to implement and evaluate the *Tools of the Mind* (TOM) model at Metropolitan State College of Denver which has been identified as an innovative early childhood approach with research-based strategies to develop school readiness. The project is based on the idea that social and emotional self-regulation, such as the ability to sit and pay

attention, remember on purpose, plan one's actions, reflect on one's thinking, take turns, cooperate, and act empathetically toward peers is as important as knowledge about letters and numbers. This emphasis is supported in current research showing that self-regulation has a stronger association with academic achievement than IQ or entry level reading or math skills. A number of studies show a strong link between the self-regulation in preschool and later school achievement (see Kaufmann report and Ready to Enter for the reviews of research). Brain research points to the fact that the preschool period is one in which these self-regulatory capacities are developing. Research on early aggression also supports the importance of learning emotional self-regulation at this age. In addition, Kindergarten teachers rank self-regulation as the major characteristic necessary if a child is to be ready for school.

Summary

In order to forge ahead with the Superintendent's vision, a task force was established to examine full-day Kindergarten as a way of providing an optimal learning opportunity for all five-year olds in Piscataway. Mr. Copeland invited a diverse group of educators and community members to join a task force that would engage in dialogue as needs were assessed based on research and demographics, identifying essential program components and staffing issues to determine facilities needs. The Piscataway School District has determined that full-day Kindergarten is the most effective way of offering optimal learning opportunities as students begin their educational journey through elementary and middle school and as they define their post high school aspirations. Therefore, identifying classroom space, impact on staffing, developmentally appropriate program design, and impact on the community, focused the work of the task force.

Prior to the establishment of the task force, research of current literature revealed that New Jersey is one of nine states including New York and Pennsylvania that do not require districts to offer Kindergarten (Mackey 2002). However, in the school year 2000-2001, New Jersey districts provided full-day Kindergarten programs to 47,963 children and half-day programs to 41,498. The percentage of children in full-day Kindergarten has increased steadily in the past decade as reported by the Center for Government Services 2002. In Middlesex County, 11 out of 23 districts have offered full-day Kindergarten for several years. Carteret, Cranbury, Dunellen, Highland Park, Jamesburg, Milltown, New Brunswick, Perth Amboy, Sayreville, South Amboy, South Brunswick, Edison and Spotswood started to offer a full-day program in September 2003 and September 2004.

A growing body of research supports our curricular vision for all students – the establishment of the most effective teaching and learning practices that influence student achievement from Kindergarten through 12th grade. In order to provide an optimal learning environment for all students in Piscataway Township Schools, the District has launched a standards-based process for the design, implementation, and evaluation of curriculum. This process responds to state and Federal standards, educational research, and the district's philosophical vision, i.e. that curriculum should assist every student in reaching his/her potential, and it should describe what students will learn and how the result will be measured.

The task force responsible for surveying the community designed an action plan that included surveys and focus groups. The level of community support for full-day Kindergarten appears to stretch across various demographic groups, and while interest is strongest among those with young children, there was still strong support from participants at the various community organizations that supported the organization of focus groups designed to engage parents and community members in much needed discourse around the establishment of an optimal learning setting for all five-year olds in Piscataway.

Residents whose children had graduated high school but who had had the benefit of full-day Kindergarten in other communities or who had enrolled their children in private schools that offered full-day Kindergarten echoed sentiments regarding the educational value of the project. At various community meetings, the participants were parents of pre-school students or those whose children were in grade school, those who support for full-day kindergarten is primarily focused on the educational value, and to a lesser extent, on the need to accommodate parents who work fulltime.

As reported by the Condition of Education 2000 Report, today's children come to Kindergarten with wider development readiness. It is very difficult for teachers of half-day programs to meet the individual needs of forty to fifty children on a daily basis. Our present Kindergarten teachers report that it takes much longer to get to know their students' strengths and areas in need of academic intervention. The full-day Kindergarten program would provide the time to individualize the curriculum for children with diverse backgrounds.

A Kindergarten with developmentally appropriate curriculum allows the teacher to accommodate individual differences. James Elicker's work in 1967 allowed for the study of Kindergarten classrooms – over a two-year period, his findings revealed that developmentally appropriate programs are less stressful and better prepare students for first grade. In addition, Elicker's study revealed that parents reported higher levels of satisfaction with the full-day Kindergarten program. Patterns of enrollment in our K-3 schools for the past six years reveal a steady increase of 20% between Kindergarten and First Grade. The district's demographer reports that based on an analysis of enrollment data, birth cohorts, and census figures enrollment in a full-day Kindergarten program within the district may not be influenced due to parents' decision to enroll students in a private or parochial schools despite the districts' establishment of a full-day Kindergarten program. Therefore, the 20% figure should be used to project enrollment, facilities and staffing needs. Research shows that the average number of children in full-day classes (20.3) is higher than is found in half-day classes (19.1). Thirty-nine percent of full-day classes have between 21 and 25.). A survey of surrounding districts regarding class size in full-day Kindergarten classes revealed an average teacher/student ratio of 1:24.

An assessment of facilities supports the planning and implementation of a full-day Kindergarten program effective September 2005. Members of the task force dedicated time and energy to research effective full-day Kindergarten programs currently in place in our tri-state area. Several visits were made to learn about the benefits, challenges, and successes in offering a full-day Kindergarten program. During the months of June and July 2004, task force members established contact and visited school districts like Warren, Flemington-Raritan, Mansfield, Edison, and Staten Island. The work of the sub-committee supports a recommendation for the Piscataway Township School District to implement a full-day Kindergarten program for the 2005-2006 school year. The sub-committee strongly requests that we give our kindergartners a “Gift of Time” to learn in the 21st Century. Therefore, the Full-Day Kindergarten Task Force makes the following recommendations:

Recommendations

- **Utilizing identified classroom space in each of our elementary schools actively pursue the establishment of a full-day Kindergarten program to accommodate the projected increase in enrollment of 20% in each of our schools, effective September 2005.**
- **If enrollment in the full-day Kindergarten program exceeds 20%, space outside our elementary schools will be identified to address the needs of all eligible and interested residents.**
- **Consider the recommendation from the task force as a viable alternative for full-day Kindergarten implementation, effective September 2005.**
- **Half-time classroom assistants should be hired if teacher-student ratio exceeds twenty.**
- **Convene existing task force throughout the 2005-2006 school year to monitor program planning , implementation, and evaluation.**
- **In preparation for the implementation of the program in September 2005, design an Action Plan that delineates strategies and tasks integral to the successful planning and design process.**
- **Continue to secure the services of Dr. Margaret Freedson-Gonzalez throughout the planning, implementation, and evaluation phase of the district initiative throughout the 2005-2006 school year.**

Full-Day Kindergarten Program Planning and Implementation

Action Plan 2004-2005

Task	Timeline	Person Responsible	Resources Needed	Evaluation Method
Prepare Preliminary Summary Report to Share with Task-Force Members for input/comments	December 2004	Laura C. Morana	None	Report Completion & Mailing of Preliminary Summary Report
Convene task-force to Review/Discuss Preliminary Summary Report	January 2005	Laura C. Morana & Sub-Committee Chairs	None	Date of Meeting Meeting Minutes
Present Preliminary Summary Report to Superintendent for Input/Comments	January 2005	Laura C. Morana & Sub-Committee Chairs	None	Date of Meeting
Present Preliminary Report to District's Curriculum Committee	January 2005	Laura C. Morana & Sub-Committee Chairs	None	Date of Meeting Meeting Minutes
Present Preliminary Report to Board of Education	February 2005	L.C. Morana & Sub-Committee Chairs	None	Date of Meeting Meeting Minutes
Establish Training Program for All Full-Day Kindergarten Teachers	February 2005	L. C. Morana & Assistant Directors	None	Training Schedule August 2005
Plan to Visit Kindergarten Programs where Tools of the Mind (TOM) is being Implemented	February March 2005	L. C. Morana Administrators Parents Teachers	None	Visit and Debriefing Session
Establish Curriculum Realignment Design Project	February 2005	L. C. Morana & Assistant Directors	None	Project Schedule July 2005

Task	Timeline	Person Responsible	Resources Needed	Evaluation Method
Establish Curriculum Report Card Realignment Project	February 2005	L. C. Morana & Assistant Directors	None	Project Schedule July 2005
Plan and Introduce Full-Day Kindergarten Initiative to Faculty and Staff in K-3 Schools	February 2005	L.C. Morana Principals	Time to Meet	Meeting Schedule Written Feedback
Establish Public Relations Campaign to Introduce Full-Day Kindergarten Program and Plan to Communicate Progress to Members of the Community	February 2005 & March 2005	L. C. Morana T. Rafferty C. Keck & D. Ford	Printing and Publishing Services	Brochures, Advertisements, Meeting Schedule, Registration Materials
Organize Requisition for Materials and Supplies	March & April 2005	Principals & Staff Developers	None	Completion of Requisitions
Coordinate Registration and Screening of All Kindergarten Eligible Students	March 2005	Principals Assistant Directors Enrollment Office	Release Time	Registration Completion Student Enrollment Profile Established
Organize District-Wide Kindergarten Program Orientation	May 2005	L. C. Morana Principals Assistant Directors Staff Developers	Time to Plan	Meeting Calendar Feedback Forms Sing-in Sheets
Organize Class Lists to Create Balance in Enrollment and Academic Needs	May 2005	Principals D. Kehoe Assistant Directors Staff Developers	Time to Organize Class Lists	Class Lists Organization

Task	Timeline	Person Responsible	Resources Needed	Evaluation Method
Plan and Finalize K-3 Master Schedules to Reflect District's Full-Day Kindergarten Program Components	March – June 2005	Principals L. C. Morana D. Kehoe Assistant Directors	Time to Meet	Full-Day Kindergarten Schedule Completion
Recruit and Hire High-Quality Teachers	April-June 2005	Principals Assistant Directors Human Resources Manager	Posting of Positions; Place ads in Star Ledger	Recruitment and Hiring Process; Interviews; Schedule Hiring of Qualified Staff
Design Full-Day Kindergarten Program Web site	May & June 2005	C. Keck Assistant Directors	Time to Design; Recruit Students	Web site Completion and Maintenance
Complete Requisitions to Purchase All Needed Supplies and Materials	April & May 2005	Principals & Staff Developers	Business Office Support to Process Requisitions	Requisitions
Organize Ongoing Technical Support Schedule for All Full-Day Kindergarten Teachers to be Provided by Staff Developers	June –July 2005	Assistant Directors & Staff Developers	None	Technical Support Schedule
Organize Ongoing Technical Support Schedule for Parents of Full-Day Kindergarten to be Provided by Teachers and Staff Developers	July 2005 Through May 2006	Assistant Directors Principals Teachers Staff Developers	Sites for Meetings	Technical Support Schedule

Appendix A

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Appendix B

Task-Force Meeting Calendar

April 20, 2004: Initial Meeting

Time: 3:20 – 5:00

Location: Administration Building

Introduction/Goal Setting

May 18, 2004: Second Meeting

Time: 3:20 – 5:00

Location: Administration Building

Reporting Progress

June 8, 2004: Third Meeting

Time: 3:20 – 5:00

Location: Administration Building

Reporting Progress

July 20, 2004: Fourth Meeting

Time: 3:20 – 5:00

Location: Administration Building

Findings and Recommendations

Action Research Presentations

January 13, 2005:

Time: 3:20- 5:00

Location: Administration Building

Report Summary and Recommendations