

Port Angeles School District
Full Day Kindergarten Implementation
Report 1
January 26, 2009

BACKGROUND

In April 2007 the board of directors voted to implement full day kindergarten in the 2008-09 school year. The program implementation, shifting from a half day model with extended day kindergarten for some students to a full day kindergarten program for all students every day, within the Port Angeles School District began in September 2008. This report will provide a mid-year summary of the implementation with principal and teacher anecdotal information and student achievement data.

FIRST DAY ORIENTATION

A Kindergarten Welcome Conference was conducted September 2 and 3 not only to orient the parents and students to their new school, but also provide a positive and nurturing start to full day kindergarten. It was the first scheduled meeting for the parent, student and teacher that provided a personalized two hour school orientation. On the first or second day of school, the parent, student and teacher met in a small group setting for the purpose of establishing the child's beginning learning experiences. This conference was designed to meet the teacher and learn about classroom expectations, goals and special plans for the school year. It was an opportunity for parents to ask questions in a small group setting with five other parents. The students were introduced to other classmates in a small, supervised setting designed to transition the student into a public school setting. This was noted as a highly successful activity and resulted in no students crying on the first day of school, September 4, 2008, when students began their first full day of kindergarten. Teachers reported a great sense of confidence in knowing students' parents, having schedules for after school release procedures and critical student information all completed and in hand. Parents who were interviewed on the orientation days did report more confidence in knowing what to expect, meeting the teacher, and knowing school procedures to support their child. One parent of a first grade student called to report that there was more anxiety for her first grader who did not have the advantage of orientation than there was for her kindergarten student. The success of the two days was underscored across the district with parent, teacher, and principal feedback.

Although the teacher team hoped that each teacher would be able to encourage ongoing parent participation with an invitation to the parent to consider volunteer opportunities, this has not been the case. Student transportation before and after school was especially helpful, and with all other students already in school for two days drivers were able to attend to the new kindergarten students. This resulted in reduced incidents of transportation concerns. The kindergarten teachers recommend this practice continue and would not change the two days of kindergarten orientation as a result of positive student transition into school and the positive support to parents. Teachers reported a productive student atmosphere and increased confidence among all the kindergarten teachers with parental information, student safety and after school information com-

pleted and available for each student. Many schools reported 100% attendance at the orientation and increased attendance at student parent conferences as a result.

KINDERGARTEN CURRICULUM

The kindergarten teachers are implementing the adopted district core curriculum and are enthusiastic about the increased instructional time that full day kindergarten provides to realistically teach the curriculum. New adoptions including *Bridges* math and FOSS Science Kits require more instructional time. Teachers are reporting that they are able to provide in-depth instruction with hands-on opportunities for learning. Some teachers report that in previous years they had to alternate math and science when the kits were at their schools. Now, they have time to teach math continuously and provide more processing time for science. Teachers report the students “love science” and choose math tubs for activity time!

Teachers also eagerly report that students are producing quality writing and longer stories at this time in the year compared to previous years for *Writers Workshop* and journal writing. Teachers are able to assess students’ writing using the continuum for the first time! Previously, this assessment was started in grade one when students could write more independently. Small student groupings, differentiation and additional focused time for literacy instruction using *Houghton Mifflin*, varies across the district with paraeducator access, support from AmeriCorps members, and Response to Intervention (RTI) models. Teachers report that students who enter with more skills are reading more at this time, and students with needs are receiving interventions. They continue to monitor and adjust student interventions to maximize their effectiveness. Most teachers reported that the interventions provided for at risk students were equal to but different than was provided with the extended day model. The extended day model provided for twelve students from two classes. Other students did not receive focused intervention or enrichment. The full day kindergarten class provides staff with more time to serve students of all ability levels throughout the day.

FULL DAY KINDERGARTEN BENEFITS

Regarding the implementation of full day kindergarten, an interview was conducted with each teacher and principal to surface the goals and benefits that have been identified for students and teachers. An end-of-year survey on the full day program will also include an opportunity for parent feedback.

Benefits to Students

- Full day, every day kindergarten provides low-income students more time to focus on early foundational skills and time to practice social skills. Teachers are involved in processing the skills and practicing where before students were sent to the office because teachers felt the pressure of time and could not stop to attend to one or two students at the expense of instruction to the class. The extended day also provides for immediate consequences that assist students in learning alternative ways to solve problems.
- Students adjusted quickly to a full day of kindergarten. In September they were tired but teachers report now that they don’t ask about going home before lunch now!

- Teachers report that full day students who would have had the opportunity for extended day kindergarten are maintaining the progress through alternative interventions including RTI strategies, reading room access, and support with district staff and AmeriCorps members.
- Students who in the past were not served by extended day but who still had learning difficulties are now receiving additional early support.
- Students entering with above average skills have time to further develop their reading and writing skills with the opportunity of a full day.
- Students attend school with more regularity and all elementary schools are emphasizing the importance of attendance.
- Kindergarten provides students with more opportunity to engage in hands on educational activities especially in science, writing, and math.

Benefits to Teachers

- Teachers have time to teach all subject areas more in-depth.
- Teachers extend literacy programs and some use the Daily Five strategies with kindergarten students. Daily Five provides a framework for students to develop independent reading skills.
- Teachers are anticipating that they will be able to offer instruction to students at their instructional level and in small groups as they progress over the next two months and grow in their independence and skill level.
- Teachers shared feeling less stressed by time constraints. Those teachers also felt they had more time to get to know the children and meet their needs.

FULL DAY KINDERGARTEN MID-YEAR TEACHER SURVEY

Kindergarten teachers and principals met with Assistant Superintendent Mary Hebert to provide mid-year feedback and achievement data. The survey displayed in Appendix A was administered at each school.

Student Interventions

Schools are piloting an RTI model to provide interventions and personnel support to meet the needs of students with the most challenges. Some schools report that they are still making adjustments to meet the needs that extended day with small group interventions provided.

Roosevelt Elementary School is the only school that is using an alternative schedule to differentiate for all students. One of the three classroom teachers is serving 15 students who are emerging readers with leveled books they can read and use to develop sight word vocabulary. The other two teachers, each supported with two classified staff, meet with students in three small groups to provide direct instruction at the students' levels. The Resource Room teacher provides instruction for the most at-risk students. This model provides differentiated instruction for all students.

Length of School Day

Child care providers and some parents and teachers were concerned that the full day might be too long for some students. All teachers surveyed reported that students adjusted after the first two weeks of school. Although some of the youngest students still get tired toward the end of the day, the fatigue has not emerged as a concern that overrides the instructional advantages.

Instructional Implications

The kindergarten mid-year assessment has traditionally assessed letter recognition, sounds, rhyming, and basic early numeracy skills. Teacher interviews suggest that the district’s current assessment does not adequately measure students’ application and use of the more advanced skills they have acquired. *Teachers are observing the quality and quantity of student writing in January equaling that usually performed in the spring. Students are demonstrating increased mathematical ability to problem solve, create more complex patterns, and are further in the curriculum with more in-depth understanding.*

Students who entered school with few skills are performing similarly to at-risk students previously served in a half-day model. No significant increases are evident at the mid-year point because, developmentally, those students are still catching up during the first half of the year. Students performing above the lowest group are receiving more intervention with a longer day and are performing with greater consistency. Successful students are having their needs more fully met with the full day model because this model provides increased opportunities to read and write across the curriculum.

Other Observations

One teacher said, “Two thumbs up for full day kindergarten! Once you have tried it there is no going back.” Teachers across the district report that they are able to implement all curriculum areas with greater fidelity because of the increased instructional time.

“We are not so rushed and I love to see our students using the skills they are learning! I used to have to demonstrate science and now the students get to do science.”

Teachers reported at several schools relief from the pressure of too much curriculum to cover in a half day. The science kits forced other instructional content to be reduced or eliminated to fit in the science instruction. Setting up the experiments and cleaning up took too long to provide the time necessary for all students to participate.

Teachers have prepared students to be first graders with skills from maneuvering the playground, lunchroom, homework, PE and music to learning the “Daily 5” expectations. The academic skills and ability to work independently and cooperatively are growing steadily. These opportunities to practice were not possible in a two and a half hour day.

“First grade teachers are going to be amazed, and I can’t wait to hear their comments next year.”

Appendix A

Full Day Kindergarten Mid-Year Staff Survey

Full Day Kindergarten Mid-Year Staff Survey

Date: _____

School _____

Staff: 1 2 3

Students: 1 ___ 2 ___ 3 ___

This is the first year of Kindergarten Orientation. What would you identify as strengths of this parent/student time?

Has the orientation resulted in a higher number of parents volunteering in the classroom?

Is there anything you would change regarding the Orientation?

How did the building accommodate for the following:

Lunch schedule:

Specialist schedule:

Recess:

Is there anything you would change in the current schedule?

Are your students participating in a school wide reading room or literacy intervention program? If so, describe the participation.

What are your observations regarding student/parent relationships?

How did the length of the school day impact students in September?

How does the length of the school day impact students in January?

What are your observations regarding instructional time?

How are you differentiating instruction?

Small group, grade level sharing, skills grouping

How would you compare student achievement from mid-year last year at this time present data after five months of full day kindergarten?

Reading:

Writing:

Math:

Science:

Has attendance patterns changed for your students?

Other observations or comments: