

Port Angeles School District
Full Day Kindergarten Community Pre-School and Day Care Report
March 10, 2008

BACKGROUND

In April of 2007 the board of directors voted to implement full day kindergarten in the 2008-09 school year. To ensure successful implementation and communication, a series of four meetings have been scheduled throughout the 2007-08 school year with community day care and pre-school providers. The expertise and experiences provided by our community day care providers and pre-school programs is recognized and appreciated by the Port Angeles School District. Building on the strength of our community and developing this partnership will benefit the children as we align resources, information and communication for the educational growth and development of the children we serve.

Full Day Kindergarten and Community Work Plan

The Full Day Kindergarten Work Plan is designed to inform and communicate with early childhood educators and develop a lasting partnership. Together participants will examine practice, share professional development opportunities and align early childhood education that creates a bridge from community programs to full-day kindergarten. The following work plan was established for this purpose.

Mtg	Date	Location	Topic	In Attendance
1	Saturday, November 3	Jefferson Elementary 12:30 p.m. – 2:00 p.m.	Transition 2007, Full Day Kindergarten, Professional Development	Community Day Care and Pre- School Providers
2	Saturday, January 12	Jefferson Elementary 12:30 p.m. – 2:00 p.m.	Forum: Early Learning and Development	Community Day Care and Pre- School Providers
3	Saturday, March 22	Jefferson Elementary 12:30 p.m. – 2:00 p.m.	Collaboration, resources, and implementation	Community Day Care and Pre- School Providers
4	Saturday, June 7	Jefferson Elementary	Transitions and community awareness	Community Day Care and Pre- School Providers

The first meeting was held on Saturday, November 3, 2007 from 12:30 p.m. – 2:00 p.m. at Jefferson Elementary School. There were twenty-nine providers in attendance. The agenda for the meeting included a summary of the Port Angeles School District 2007 transitions, and plans for the implementation of full day kindergarten. In addition, one professional learning STARS credit was provided on Washington State Early Learning and Development Benchmarks and Early Literacy Strategies with Libby Correll.

The second meeting held on Saturday, January 12, 2008 was designed to identify and clarify topics that providers believe to be critical considerations for staff as they design a full day program that meets developmentally appropriate guidelines for the social, emotional and educational growth and development of young children.

Utilizing an excerpt from the book titled *Developmentally Appropriate Practice in Early Childhood Programs* from the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC), the twenty-six attendees identified the following quotes and reflections as important considerations and input for the development of a full day kindergarten program.

- Appreciate childhood as a unique and valuable stage of the human life cycle (and valuing the quality of children's lives in the present, not just as preparation for the future)
- Positive, supportive relationships, important during the earliest years of life, appear essential not only for cognitive development, but also for healthy emotional development and social attachment (Bowlby 1969; Stern 1985).
- Appreciate and support the close ties between the child and family
- Respect the dignity, worth, and uniqueness of each individual
- Play is children's work: pretend center, book area, blocks, choices
- Children being given "time" to develop and be ready
- Kindergarten assessment needs to look at the whole child
- More adults are needed in the classroom
- Bring parents into the kindergarten classroom
- Developing relationships with parents is key
- Make schools a welcoming place
- Personalizing the student transition creates trust and bonds
- Increased communication is needed between the parent and teachers
- Social/emotional/behavioral skills are critical to success (building relationships)
- Relationships take time, so full day kindergarten will support this
- Transitions from half day to full day kindergarten helps with transportation needs of families

PRE-SCHOOL/DAYCARE CURRICULUM RECOMMENDATION

The Port Angeles School District wishes to purchase and provide day care and preschool providers a common curriculum that will bridge the learning of students between pre-school and kindergarten. The materials would provide ongoing professional development opportunities between the community and schools. Continued and purposeful conversations around early childhood education, instructional alignment and the development and learning of children will reinforce Washington State early learning and development benchmarks. Perhaps even more importantly, the community and school relationships that are developed will lead to greater support for families and students we mutually serve.

The National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) points to professionalism and professional growth as key to effective PK-3 teaching and, the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards (NBPTS), calls for early childhood educators to participate in professional development on an ongoing basis, rather than remaining static in their

knowledge base and teaching approaches. “Continuous, collaborative learning to inform practice is a hallmark of a professional in any field,” as one of the NAEYC standard puts it.

The next two meetings will focus on a recommendation for curriculum adoption that could provide support, alignment and resources to day care and pre-school providers. At this time, *The Creative Curriculum for Preschool*, developed by Teaching Strategies, seems to be a curriculum that is endorsed by several local early childhood agencies and providers. The assessment toolkit and resources that accompany this curriculum will also be reviewed and considered for recommendation. Along with the examination of the curriculum component, one more opportunity for professional development with Libby Correll will be provided, including a STAR credit. The focus will be, “Developing Young Writers”.

READY! FOR KINDERGARTEN, A PROGRAM FOR FAMILIES

READY! is a research-based, program that shares information with parents about preparing their child for the first day of kindergarten. READY! provides tools and training to parents, legal guardians, and care givers of children from birth to age five. READY!’s primary focus is basic reading, math and social emotional readiness skills. It offers ways to talk, read, sing and play with young children during their early learning years. It also provides many of the supplies you need for these activities. Parents meet three times a year for a 90 minute presentation and discussion. Trained instructors present a carefully researched and designed curriculum that sequences the skills according to children’s developmental characteristics. If parents begin attending when their child is born, they will attend 15 classes by age five.

The implementation of the READY! program has been developed and successfully implemented in the Kennewick School District. It is recommended that this program be investigated for future consideration and implementation in the Port Angeles School District. The intent of READY! is to close the achievement gap or preparation gap that exists before children enter school.

Elementary teachers work hard to provide remediation strategies to close the gap for every student who needs it. This program is designed to reach young children early with short and frequent repetition in the home with people they love and trust.

Making our early learning initiatives a priority will prepare children and support families. Building parent/school relationships early with READY! and providing ongoing educational conversations with community partners and implementing full-day kindergarten, will move us closer to establishing reciprocal relationships with families, day care and pre-school providers and the schools, and enable us to identify and achieve shared goals for children.

In a Policy Brief by the Foundation for Child Development by Michael Sadowski, “Core Knowledge for PK-3 Teaching: Ten Components of Effective Instruction”, he states that both the NBPTS and NAEYC standards stress the importance of parents and families as crucial allies in a child’s education. A solid body of research points to the fact that when families and schools work together, the benefits to student learning are multiplied.

Early Childhood Community Providers Feedback

An opportunity for feedback was provided to evaluate the opportunity and guide the next two meetings. The comments below were taken from the feedback form on January 12, 2008 with participants responding to four prompts: “I would like you to know,” “Celebrations,” “Considerations, Concerns, Challenges,” and “Future Meetings.”

I would like you to know:

- It was informative.
- It was delightful!
- Is there someone who should help children in preschool with speech delays now or should we wait until they get into Kindergarten?
- That this session was very informative. I like the idea of the “slow start” to the school year.
- How timely this topic is! Linking with preschools for school readiness!
- I am feeling soooooo much better about all day kindergarten knowing that extra curriculum won’t be added and that you are as a school district concerned about developmentally appropriate practice is wonderful.
- Timeframe for session was just right (1 ½ hours).
- The daily schedule for the full day kindergarten. We have a full day program at our school (5 Acre School in Sequim) and have found it to be challenging, rewarding and beneficial to children, parents and staff. We would be happy to share our experience (8:20 a.m. – 2:50 p.m. M-F)
- I appreciate that the school district wants to hear from the ECE Community to work together to help children succeed.
- We use slow start on a few preschools with great success.

Celebrations:

- Great to hear everyone’s concerns.
- I appreciate that you value what early childhood professionals concerns are.
- Glad to hear not looking at intensifying curriculum for full day
- The emphasis on relationship and social – emotional learning.
- Class meetings!!! Great idea.
- Developing a useable, concise readiness pamphlet that helps parents understand standards within the context of normal variation/individual strengths/challenges.
- I so appreciate the school district’s willingness to learn about the early childhood community, our concerns and passions.
- I appreciate being listened to and asking what we think about what children need.
- I felt the information and concerns shared helped bring unity and understanding regarding different points of view.
- I am happy to have the school district reaching out to early childhood people. I think we have knowledge, passion, education and experience to share with kindergarten teachers.
- I’m glad to hear that all day kindergarten is not going to try to include “more” in the children’s curriculum other than more time to work with the children and let them work through play.

- Great job of listening and sharing by everyone.
- It was great to see the collection of people had many of the same thoughts and questions. We are fortunate to have the ability to build these relationships as a smaller community.

Considerations/Concerns/Challenges

- I like that kindergarten is considering 4 days a week for each child rather than 5 days. With one day half, more one on one with them.
- To keep all day K afternoons non-pressured!
- A challenge is how to get parents to get started now in preparing their child. Some parents don't like this sometimes and feel offended, when we just want to help them be ready.
- Need to explore how the daycare providers will assist in taking the students who would be home on Monday or Fridays if the 5 day model of attendance Mary Hebert presented is implemented.
- It is important for the early learning community to hear what is happening in Kindergarten classrooms. It helps clear up misconceptions.
- Maybe worth some discussion – curriculum planning/alignment discussion with Head Start
- Screening and referral process (issues/developments of changing demographics)
- I wondered if more awareness of developmental “benchmark” could begin in preschools to help lessen the anxieties about standard based assessments.
- How to support families and meet their concerns for school readiness.
- To provide support for Kindergarten teachers to give them time to work with what they have in a slower, kinder more appropriate way.
- Love slow start; need to think about the 4 day – all day school – would love it to work.
- Young children (including 5 & 6 year olds) need the space to grow and meet all their developmental needs appropriately, emotional and social. They need to grow at their own pace. For young children to develop new skills they have to be ready to accept them and experience them repetitively over period of time.
- I think teachers need training/help in how to incorporate parents into their classrooms – a whole new area, I know, but so important for the relationship building for schools and parents.
- Dr. Cohn said at the last meeting that the district was planning on moving curriculum down a grade. Has the district changed plans (I hope)? Will you clarify this at the next meeting please?
- Informing parents of kindergartners who do not have other children in school, including Lower Elwha children through partnership with other Early Childhood Centers. We do this somewhat, other ways, methods.
- Would the full day be shorter than the rest of the elementary students? I've seen K 8:30 a.m. – 1:30 p.m., 1st – 5th 8:30 a.m. – 2:30 p.m.

Future Meetings:

- I like Saturdays. I would prefer earlier in the day – 9:00 a.m. – 11:00 a.m. instead of 12:30 p.m. – 2:30 p.m.
- I can't wait to learn more of what is expected of me as a teacher to get preschoolers ready.
- I will be coming to the next two meetings.

- RTL is committed to helping transition to Full Day K
- Thanks for including us in the conversation and planning. Please include us in the K meetings as well.
- I'll be there!
- Please call me at OCS 457-4640 for future meetings – especially those involving K teachers.
- I would be willing to work on SLOW START/registration process/format. I have been doing this for 29 years and have found it exceedingly successful. (Joy Sheedy – 457-6549)
- How about creating a handout for parents of incoming kindergarteners to give to current preschoolers so they know what the district is really planning instead of relying on the rumors that people are hearing. (Pam Maurides – 417-6496)

DISTRICT CONTACT

For more information about Full Day Kindergarten, please contact Assistant Superintendent Mary Hebert at 360.457.8575.