

DEPARTMENT OF CURRICULUM AND INSTRUCTION
Wilmette Public Schools

INFORMATION ITEM

Date: **March 19, 2018**

To: **Members, Board of Education**

From: **Building Principals**
 Grade Level Administrators
 Assistant Principals

Gail Buscemi, Business Manager

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Subject: **Kindergarten Enrichment**

INTRODUCTION

On October 23, 2017, the Board of Education approved the implementation of the 2017-2018 District 39 Strategic Plan. The yearly planning cycle includes Strategic Plan updates. This executive summary report will focus on mid-year updates of the action steps identified under Continuing Strategic Initiatives and Annual Business. This month's reports will focus on updates of the New Strategic Initiatives.

BACKGROUND

The Illinois State Board of Education (ISBE) does not mandate kindergarten programming. Illinois School Code provides for optional kindergarten attendance (105 ILCS 5/26-1). In fact, school attendance is not required until a child is 6 years old (105 ILCS 2/26-1). Additionally, Illinois School code provides for either half- or full-day kindergarten programs, but in districts where full-day is offered, half-day options must also be presented for families desiring a shorter school day for their children (105 ILCS 1/10-22.18).

Prior Exploration of Kindergarten Options in District 39

The length of the District 39 kindergarten day has been a topic of interest for the past nine years. The 2008 Community Review Committee (CRC)¹ recommended a study into the feasibility of full-day kindergarten programming as part of their Facilities Report. Surveys that year indicated significant parent and teacher interest in full-day kindergarten programming. However, the 2010-2011 referendum delayed further exploration of kindergarten options until the following school year.

A February 2012 report² included a description of kindergarten demographics and summarized cost and programmatic comparisons of kindergarten options in neighboring school districts and local private, parochial, and park district settings. Following a thorough review of enrollment projections and availability of dedicated space, a fee-based Kindergarten Enrichment Update board report was presented in May 2012. As a result, the Board accepted the recommendation to table further exploration of any expansion of kindergarten programming due to the following concerns:

- Allocating existing classrooms for full-day kindergarten programming would have displaced the Early Childhood program.
- Although the proposed fee-based Kindergarten enrichment option would have been budget neutral, it did not eliminate concerns about classroom space.
- District 39 demographics did not align with districts gaining the most significant benefits of full-day kindergarten programming:
 - Only 1% of students were from low-income families
 - Less than 9% of students were English Language Learners
- The Board cited its 2011 referendum promise to refrain from adding costly programming.

As shared in the September 2015 board report³, renewed community interest combined with an increase in full-day kindergarten programming across the state and in surrounding districts, District 39, once again, reevaluated kindergarten options: kindergarten enrichment and full day kindergarten. The June 2016 board report⁴ indicated that space and funding continued to be the primary obstacles. The report also noted the possibility of bond capacity providing funds for construction in June 2019; however, this goal was tabled for future board decisions.

CURRENT SITUATION

Currently, District 39 offers a half-day kindergarten program, but has neither space nor the budget resources to extend the kindergarten school day. Many District 39 parents pay private tuition for kindergarten enrichment programs and tell us that the transportation and logistics involved are not ideal. Numerous parents have indicated a willingness to pay for an optional fee-based D39 Kindergarten Enrichment program that would essentially extend the kindergarten school day in each elementary building.

¹ 2007-2008 CRC Facilities Report, “Full-Day Kindergarten Research and Recommendations,” pp. 73-80.
<http://bit.ly/2tG6WKQ>

² February 2012 Report to the Board of Education: “Fee-based Kindergarten Enrichment.” <http://bit.ly/2IjK21>

³ September 2015 Report to the Board of Education: “Kindergarten Programming.” <http://bit.ly/2FxTZrV>

⁴ June 2016 Report to the Board of Education: “Review of the 2015-2016 District 39 CONNECTED Strategic Plan.” <http://bit.ly/2FHPTNn>

SPACE STUDY

District 39 secured STR Architects to review space needs at each elementary school. The architects shared their findings with administrators on November 29, 2017 and subsequently presented to board members during the December 11, 2017 Committee of the Whole meeting. This space study revealed the need for classroom additions and the architects shared that they estimated the total cost for construction would be \$5,681,600. They also indicated that the project could be completed for use by the 2020-2021 school year. Using this fiscal information as a guide, District 39 developed a survey to send to families. The goal of the survey was to identify the number of parents interested in a fee-based kindergarten enrichment program.

KINDERGARTEN ENRICHMENT SURVEY

The purpose of the D39 Kindergarten Enrichment Survey was for families to share with the District whether they would have utilized the proposed kindergarten enrichment option, had it been available, or would consider in the future. The survey shared that District 39 is exploring the feasibility of offering a sustainable, fee-based kindergarten enrichment option; the per pupil yearly cost for a five-day a week, 176 school day enrichment program is estimated to be \$6,500.00. The earliest the District would be able to offer this program would be the 2020-2021 school year. After collecting and analyzing results, District 39 would determine whether to move forward with next steps toward a kindergarten enrichment program.

Survey Results

Approximately 650 people responded to the survey and produced the following results:

- 70% (457) of respondents indicated that their child participated in a kindergarten enrichment program.
- 68.8% (444) of respondents shared they would participate in the proposed kindergarten enrichment program.
 - Of these respondents who indicated that they would participate in the proposed kindergarten enrichment program:
 - 71.6% have children aged three and under.
 - 72.8% have a kindergartner currently enrolled.
 - 68% have a first grader currently enrolled.

These survey results indicate much support for a fee-based kindergarten enrichment program. As a result, the district has researched space and funding options for consideration.

SPACE AND FUNDING OPTIONS

The chart below summarizes the cost breakdown of two space scenarios for consideration:

	Scenario 1	Scenario 2	
	Build Classrooms 2020 - 2021	Build Modular Units 2019 - 2020	
Projected Recovery Time	10 years	10 years	5 years
Total Construction Cost	\$5,681,600	\$1,056,036	\$1,056,036
<i>Program Cost per Pupil</i>	\$4,145	\$4,145	\$4,145
<i>Construction Cost per Pupil</i>	\$2,344	\$588	\$1,176
Total Cost per Pupil	\$6,489	\$4,733	\$5,321

Based on the information above, here are two funding options:

FUNDING OPTION A

- District 39 assumes all construction costs (build classrooms **or** build modular units).
- Parents pay 100% of the program cost per pupil.
 - The optional parent fee, in both scenarios, is \$4,145.

FUNDING OPTION B

- Parents assume all construction costs (build classrooms **or** build modular units) and program costs per pupil.
 - For permanent classrooms (10 years) - The optional parent fee is \$6,489.
 - For modular units (10 years) - The optional parent fee is \$4,733.
 - For modular units (5 years) - The optional parent fee is \$5,321.

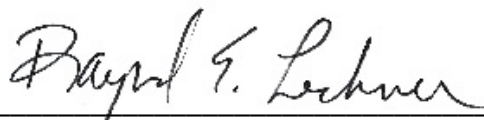
NEXT STEPS

District 39 will review space and funding options at the Committee of the Whole on April 9, 2018. This review includes the potential impact on fund balances for each space and funding option will be conducted. A fee-based enrichment program would be a first step toward reaching the ultimate goal of full-day Kindergarten.

CONCLUSION

District 39 Administrators and staff continue to address the goals and/or outcomes of the 2017-2018 Strategic Plan. With consideration to ISBE mandates, school code, space and funding constraints, administration presents this report on a fee-based kindergarten enrichment option. District 39 is committed to responding to the expressed needs of the community for a full-day Kindergarten by offering a fee-based kindergarten enrichment program as a first step. The work will continue and the Board may expect a full Strategic Plan review in June.

Recommended for presentation to the Board of Education,



Raymond E. Lechner, Ph.D., Superintendent