

Good afternoon Ms. Leonardo,

Mr. Steen kindly copied me to the email you sent him. I am happy to add a few more points to consider.

This is a topic we have been researching for many years. In fact, there has been consistent support from me, and Boards of Education, for kindergarten. However, as you can imagine, it's not easily done when space is a major factor. Other township districts have seen declining enrollments which provided them new spaces to offer programs and also provided available teaching staff (cost neutral). This has not been the case in D39. Our schools are full, and D39 adding full day K is a significant expense. In fact, we added 4 classrooms to Romona a few years ago. Two of those new classrooms were built with the specific intent of a future full day K option. We were excited to have Romona "sorted out" while we worked on the space issues at the other elementary schools. The very next year Romona's enrollment increased, as more families moved in and those classrooms were needed for the other grades.

For just a little background, unlike other township communities, Wilmette has had private options for kindergarteners soundly established. These have been successfully in place well before my tenure in D39. Previous Boards of Education have been very clear that they support full day K options, but the solution needs to be sustainable. If we can offer a program once...we must have the space and resources to maintain a program going forward. So that is what we have been doing, generating sustainable options. I am confident that we can figure out some workable options, but as always revenues/expenses/space will be a focus.

As you can see, In the past few years we have been sorting out solutions. My aim is to provide the school board new options by this spring (some of them will be fee-based).

Thank you again for reaching out,

Ray



Dr. Ray Lechner
Superintendent
Wilmette Public Schools District 39
www.wilmette39.org | 847.512.6030

Begin forwarded message:

From: Mark Steen <steenm@wilmette39.org>
Subject: Re: Full Day Kindergarten in Wilmette
Date: March 1, 2018 at 5:58:04 AM CST
To: Michelle Leonardo <michelleleonardo@me.com>, Ray Lechner <lechnerr@wilmette39.org>

Ms. Leonardo,

Thank you for your note and your thoughts - understanding what the community wants and needs is a key part of our responsibility as Board members. We'll continue to discuss the options and implications of full day Kindergarten in our meetings and we welcome your continued thoughts as we go through this process.

Take care,
Mark

On Wed, Feb 28, 2018 at 3:09 PM Michelle Leonardo <michelleleonardo@me.com> wrote:
Hello Wilmette School Board:

I just received an email about the last board meeting where you rediscussed the full day Kindergarten for Wilmette. I'm overjoyed that you have reconsidered and are now open to it! My daughter is registered is currently registered for morning Kindergarten at Central School for the 2018-2019 school year.

I'm finding it very difficult to find afternoon enrichments that will meet her learning needs to substitute what she is missing out on compared to the other New Trier full day districts. I'm also willing to pay for the additional learning at the school, as we would be paying for enrichments anyway. I'm sure, as your recent survey pointed out, we are in the same boat as many other Wilmette Kindergarten families.

I am fully behind opening up full day Kindergarten as soon as possible, even next year if that could be done.

Thank you again for reconsidering this very valuable school issue for our Wilmette children and community.

Sincerely,

Michelle Leonardo
202 Girard Ave.
Wilmette, IL 60091

On Jan 22, 2018, at 12:12 PM, Michelle Leonardo <michelleleonardo@me.com> wrote:

Dear Wilmette School Board:

My daughter Ellyse is eligible for Kindergarten next year in Wilmette and I just registered her at Central School last week. I am beyond disappointed a city of the caliber of Wilmette is not yet offering full day Kindergarten. This is particularly disappointing when all the other New Trier districts are offering full day Kindergarten and have been able to make it work.

It is a detriment to our bright children who love to learn to keep them from the full day experience. It also is a huge burden to working families to schedule day care around a half day program.

Please reconsider all avenues in order to make full day Kindergarten in Wilmette work for the children and families.

Regards,

Michelle Leonardo
202 Girard Ave
Wilmette, IL 60091

Thank you for sharing this information. We hope to have an update at our next Board of Education meeting, which is Monday, March 19th. Our focus continues to maintain the integrity of our current program, with the possibility of making more options available to students.

Thanks,



Dr. Ray Lechner

Superintendent

Wilmette Public Schools District 39

www.wilmette39.org | 847.512.6030

Members of the Board,

Because many people who are not involved with instrumental music have been surveyed, it is important to clarify some misconceptions. I ask that each member of the board, and any member of the community who follows board communication, consider the following:

1. **Rehearsals and sectionals are different.** What we commonly call a “sectional” is a time to focus on instrument specific skills. This is where students learn the skill set they need in order to confidently and successfully play a particular instrument. In a rehearsal, each instrument group learns how to apply what they are learning in their sectional time so that the group, through teamwork, can achieve success. To remove sectional time or make it optional is not best practice. There is no other place in school where we ask students to achieve without first giving them the tools they will need.
2. **When students miss class time for a sectional, they will continue to achieve academically.** People *feel* otherwise under the false premise that when students go to sectionals they become absent from school altogether. In fact, while at sectionals they are working hard and developing critical skills. Please take the time to investigate the following research into the effect of pull-out lessons. Excuse the long urls, but in case you are reading on paper you will need the text to find the items when you get online.
 - a. From *The Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development*
<http://www.ascd.org/publications/researchbrief/v2n18/toc.aspx>
 - b. From *Sage Journals*
<http://journals.sagepub.com/doi/abs/10.1177/8755123311418482>
 - c. A collection put together by *The American String Teacher Association*
<https://nafme.org/about/position-statements/specialized-music-instruction-position-statement/specialized-music-instruction/the-elementary-pull-out-crisis-using-research-effectively/>
 - d. Research from Andrews University
https://docs.wixstatic.com/ugd/8d9a80_23bce17931d143709673838a7e0a42d4.pdf
 - e. Research from Calvin College
https://docs.wixstatic.com/ugd/8d9a80_d08281a496794aae9026d36d48d43606.pdf

Thank you for your time and your consideration.

Respectfully,

Evan Canel, Wilmette Resident and D39 Parent

March 5, 2018

Good morning M/M Proeve,

This is a topic we have been researching for many years. In fact, there has been consistent support from me, and Boards of Education, for kindergarten. However, as you can imagine, it's not easily done when space is a major factor. Other township districts have seen declining enrollments which provided them new spaces to offer programs and also provided available teaching staff (cost neutral). This has not been the case in D39. Our schools are full, and D39 adding full day K is a significant expense. In the past few years we have been sorting out solutions. My aim is to provide the school board options by spring (some of them will be fee-based).

For just a little background, unlike other township communities, Wilmette has had private options for kindergarteners soundly established. These have been successfully in place well before my tenure in D39. Previous Boards of Education have been very clear that they support full day K options, but the solution needs to be sustainable. If we can offer a program once...we must have the space and resources to maintain a program going forward. So that is what we have been doing, generating sustainable options. I am confident that we can figure out some workable options, but as always revenues/expenses/space will be a focus.

Finally, if you are not currently a parent, and wish to receive D39 updates about our work with Kindergarten, you can subscribe here: http://www.wilmette39.org/news/subscribe_or_unsubscribe_to_community_email

You will get Kindergarten information, and a lot more.

Thank you for reaching out,

Ray



Dr. Ray Lechner
Superintendent
Wilmette Public Schools District 39
www.wilmette39.org | 847.512.6030

On Feb 28, 2018, at 5:04 PM, Sheila Proeve <proeves@yahoo.com> wrote:

Dear Dr Lechner,

I appreciate your commitment to the excellence of District 39.

I am a resident of Wilmette and parent of three young children. I am writing to you to express my interest in following developments regarding a full day Kindergarten program at District 39.

Many surrounding North Shore communities such as Kenilworth, Winnetka, Glencoe and Evanston have a full day Kindergarten program. I am surprised that Wilmette's District 39 still does not.

Please include me on correspondence or surveys on the topic.

Many thanks,
Sheila

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Sheila Proeve

Dear Ms. Dean,

Thank you for the continued communication regarding your Board's decision to dissolve Youth Connection. I know that decisions like this are never easy. I want personally thank you for everything you have done during this time of transition.

Also, I want to express a deep and sincere appreciation for all that Youth Connection has done to serve our students and community over these last 30 years. You have filled an important need and we are already working hard to plan for next year. Our goal is to provide a smooth transition for the 2018-19 school year that will honor the integrity of the Youth Connection program.

Sincerely,

Ray



Dr. Ray Lechner
Superintendent
Wilmette Public Schools District 39
www.wilmette39.org | 847.512.6030

Begin forwarded message:

From: Kristen Dean <mrs.kristendean@gmail.com>

Subject: Youth Connection Formal Announcement of Dissolution

Date: February 23, 2018 at 9:16:32 AM CST

To: Ray Lechner <lechnerr@wilmette39.org>

Cc: Tracy Kearney

<kearneyt@wilmette39.org>, fabesl@wilmette39.org, cesaretj@wilmette39.org, schaffa@wilmette39.org, sternwee@wilmette39.org, panzicaf@wilmette39.org, steenm@wilmette39.org, Denise Thrasher <thrashed@wilmette39.org>, Presidents <president@highcrestpto.org>, WJHS PTO President <president@wjhspto.com>, Romy DeCristofaro <decristr@wilmette39.org>

Dear Dr. Lechner,

Please see my attached letter.

Cynthia Doucette, Executive Director of [The Warming House](http://TheWarmingHouse.org), has expressed interest in welcoming and increasing access for District39 students in 2018-2019. Her email is cynthia@warminghouse.org.

Respectfully,

Kristen Dean

Youth Connection, President of Board of Directors

816 Oakwood Avenue
Wilmette, IL 60091

February 23, 2018

Dr. Ray Lechner
Superintendent, Wilmette Public Schools District 39
615 Locust Road
Wilmette, IL 60091

Dear Dr. Lechner,

With great sadness, I am formally confirming that Youth Connection's Board of Directors has voted "yes" on dissolution. Dissolution will take effect June 30, 2018, which is the end of Youth Connection's financial year, with every effort being undertaken to maintain regular RAD, DEN and Homework Club programming until the end of the 2017-2018 school year.

In my previous correspondence, I encouraged District 39 and partnering organizations, such as the Highcrest Middle School PTO and the Wilmette Junior High School PTO, to work together to continue the work Youth Connection began nearly 30 years ago. We believe the community's need for low-cost, inclusive, and low-pressure activities during after school hours is as great as it ever was. DEN drop-in attendance has varied from eight to 30 kids during these winter months. RAD consistently welcomes 20 to 30 kids every day. Homework Clubs host eight to 12 kids Monday through Thursday.

Even on low-attendance days, our organization has always held that there is no such thing as "just 10 kids;" they are 10 kids, and they are Wilmette's kids. We've been glad they are there rather than alone or pursuing or promoting risky behaviors. They need caring, present adults; interaction with similarly developing peers; and regular opportunities to be kind, connected, and accepted young people.

The middle school years can be tumultuous, lonely, and stressful. Kids are not the Bonsai trees we parents and educators can be guilty of grooming them to be - unnaturally forced into an exact shape. While appropriate rules and expectations are understandable during a school day, there has to be time after the bell rings when kids can stretch themselves into the shapes they want to become. It's the only way anything remarkable ever *becomes*.

As an outside organization, Youth Connection sought to meet this need. We helped countless families meet their financial goals or overcome periods of financial stress; we helped families and children navigate tricky adolescent years; we gave "no cut" opportunities to children to perform in plays, musicals and rock bands that had nothing to do with a curriculum; we worked closely with District 39 to create supported social opportunities for students with intensive IEPs; and we promoted a spirit of service and empathy towards others. Dedicated volunteers often made this happen on a privately funded "shoestring" budget.

Unlike any District program or funding, Youth Connection programs were offered without the need for parents to complete lengthy applications or disclose personal financial information to establish need. Families simply utilized the programs when necessary. And, most importantly, the kids and their families benefited.

I have only been involved with Youth Connection for three years, but I am extremely proud of this time and the mission we promoted. I am also amazed that Youth Connection was able to serve Wilmette for as long as it did. There may have been bumps along the way, but Youth Connection remained committed to the mission of serving children who needed a safe, fun and engaging place to be after school. I tip my hat to the past board members and executive directors who took their responsibilities as “neighbor” and “partner” earnestly, and to those who worked hard and long to resist the ever-increasing tendency within the community to push kids faster, farther and earlier to be “ready for New Trier.” Their lack of selfishness and commitment to community is inspiring.

My final remaining recommendation to the District is to consider offering a no-cost or low-cost bus rider option to any student who wishes to go directly to The Warming House (at Lake and Ridge) after dismissal in the 2018-2019 school year. Cynthia Doucette, Executive Director of The Warming House, recommends initially offering this option for 5th through 7th graders one day per week (Wednesday), with the potential to increase in frequency. This option could be open to 8th graders every day of the week. With open communication and planning on the part of both The Warming House and District 39, The Warming House may be able to increase staff and hours to accommodate the younger District 39 students on additional days and/or during additional hours. Similar to the existing WJHS Activity Bus, this bus option would help HMS and WJHS students navigate the distance between their schools and The Warming House regardless of weather or seasonal darkness. In this regard, Wilmette would remain more like other New Trier feeder districts, such as Winnetka and Glencoe, that offer students Youth Connection-like after school programming through partner agencies.

I am copying this letter to the attention of the Wilmette PSD39 Board of Education; to Denise Thrasher, Administrator for Student and Special Services; to Romy DeCristofaro, Interim Administrator for Student and Special Services; to Jennifer Finger, the Highcrest Middle School PTO President; and to Robin Cook, the Wilmette Junior High School PTO President.

Sincerely,

Kristen Dean
President, Youth Connection Board of Directors