

**Have a Wonderful
and Safe Summer!**



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Karen L. Bilbao, Superintendent of Schools

Superintendent's Update

June 2009

Congratulations to the Class of 2009!



Full Day Kindergarten Comes to All Middletown Elementary Schools in 2009-2010

At a widely attended public meeting on June 17, 2009, the announcement was made that full day kindergarten would be implemented in September of 2009 at all of Middletown's elementary schools. The decision was made after extensive public input was received from a previous meeting, held on June 2nd to address a proposal to phase in full day kindergarten over a two year period. The Board of Education and the District Administration determined that the need to have equity for all Middletown students who were kindergarten age was the highest priority.

At the June 17th public meeting, a detailed explanation was provided as to where the funding would come from for the positions that would staff the full day kindergarten classes. Instructional efficiencies, widely discussed during the budget season, have allowed the district to shift positions from other areas of the instructional program to staff these kindergarten classes. The same process was used to shift eleven (11) positions that supplemented the existing staff to provide the co-teaching model that was implemented in the elementary schools in the current school year. After the scheduling and staffing processes were completed in May of this year, ten (10) positions were identified that could be reconfigured to form the basis for the full day kindergarten staffing. Those ten positions, along with seven (7) teaching positions in current early childhood programs, the Multi-Age Program (5 positions) and the Inclusion Kindergarten Program (2 positions), a total of seventeen (17) total positions were identified that could be utilized. The remaining five (5) positions that were needed to staff the entire district's full day kindergarten were determined allowable to be funded through offsetting expenses within the context of the entire budget that would be ultimately charged to the ARRA (*American Recovery and Reinvestment Act*) funds that Middletown is receiving. The total ARRA allocation for Middletown is a net of 2.6 million dollars and is designed primarily to optimize opportunities for inclusion of students with disabilities into general education programs.

The full day kindergarten will be one more important opportunity that will allow for appropriate inclusion of students with disabilities, just as students are appropriately included in classes throughout all the grade levels. The half day kindergartens were conducted in such a short time frame that teachers had great difficulty implementing the entire curriculum. Getting to know the needs of up to 50 young children was a tremendous challenge for the half day kindergarten teachers. The teachers will now have the time

to differentiate instruction through group-work and center-based learning that is the hallmark of a full day program. The goal will be to develop the academic, cognitive, linguistic, sensory-motor and social-emotional aspects of all the children.

The best and most advantageous part of the plan is that Middletown's kindergarten students will be able to attend full day classes in their home schools. The district administration is now busy preparing the necessary classroom spaces that will be used for the full day kindergarten classes. Some classroom space has become available through the district's new co-teaching model, which brings teaching services into the general education classrooms rather than sending students out to separate resource rooms for instruction. Those resource services were often provided in large classroom spaces that were divided for small group utilization. Now those classrooms are available to be utilized for general education classrooms. Other necessary classroom space will be obtained through the conversion of rooms that had been utilized for special subjects, like art, music and Spanish. Computer labs in some buildings are being converted into regular classrooms and the computers are being moved to media centers or right into grade-level classrooms so that the technology can be utilized daily and integrated into the curriculum. Some buildings are even converting library spaces to be used as classrooms, but the district is committed to insure that every building will have an appropriate space for the library, because a core district value is to insure that all students have the opportunity to choose books that will stimulate their love of reading. All kindergarten classrooms will be assigned to rooms that have bathrooms whenever possible. This may require some classrooms at other grade levels to be moved to new locations within the buildings, thereby allowing principals to cluster classrooms that provide for even better teacher collaboration within grade levels.

The summer will be a busy time for the district, ordering furniture and materials for the new kindergarten classrooms and preparing the staff by offering training for all involved. Paraprofessionals will also be a part of the staffing for the classes, with full day paraprofessional services assigned to each classroom. Embarking on full day kindergarten will be one of the most important initiatives this district has ever accomplished, since research is clear that full day kindergarten provides educational benefits to all types of learners.

Important Notices

- ◆ **Summer Reading Lists are posted on the District Website at www.middletownk12.org.**
- ◆ **High school student internship opportunities within the district's summer programs. Applications are on the District Website,**
- ◆ **A limited number of job opportunities for high school students are available through the YMCA to work with the District Facilities Department. Students must meet the free and reduced lunch criteria or have an IEP. Please contact Mr. Gary Laermer, President and CEO of the Community YMCA, at (732) 671-5505, ext. 21.**