

# Kindergarten Study Committee

## Final Report

### January 26, 2010

#### **Committee Co-Chairs:**

Superintendent Terri Sinatra, Board of Education Member Jackie Gibson

#### **Committee Members:**

Jason Bellows, Board Member Fran Brennan, Dawn Cammarano, Frank Cammarano, Patrick Cunningham, Kellie Davideit, Board Member Eileen Frowenfeld, Business Administrator Mike Harvier, Bernie Hetzel, Allison Inserro, Jim Jacques, Tyler Kandel, Jonathan Lifton, Albert Musmanno, Ed Pierce, Moss School Principal Paul Pineiro, Barbara Rivera, Carla Trolaro, Sara Weissblum, Scott Wentnick, Jennifer Woods

#### **Meeting Dates:**

August 18, 2009, October 8, 2009, November 30, 2009, December 22, 2009, January 21, 2010.

#### **Committee Goals:**

The committee was formed to examine various aspects of full-day vs. part-day kindergarten including educational pedagogy, district facilities, and district finances and then to make a report to the public in January 2010.

#### **Process:**

The committee met on five separate occasions. Over the course of the five meetings the committee undertook a number of activities to become knowledgeable about the educational pedagogy of kindergarten, financial implications of any changes, district classroom space and Board of Education office facilities. These included:

- Committee members found and shared articles and studies relevant to half-day vs. full-day kindergarten programs and articles related to the educational finance situation in New Jersey.
- Committee member Albert Musmanno created a spreadsheet of all Middlesex County school districts showing which have full-day and which have half-day kindergarten.
- Business Administrator Mike Harvier made several presentations about the costs that would be involved in expanding to a full-day kindergarten program, the cost of increasing the length of the current half-day program, and a general overview of the district's budget and budget development process.
- Moss School Principal Paul Pineiro guided committee members on a tour of the Moss School facilities to get a general idea of the building's size, the number of classrooms and the amount of office space in the building.
- Moss School kindergarten teachers Michelle Smith and Christina Spring spoke with the committee. They spoke about the relative advantages of a longer school day for kindergarten,

realistic expectations of kindergarten aged students, and the high level of academic achievement among Metuchen kindergarten graduates.

- The group discussed what members viewed as pros and cons of full-day and half-day kindergarten and created two lists.
- The group brainstormed a number of different possible configurations for kindergarten and funding possibilities to pay for potential expansion.

### **Final Recommendations:**

The committee did not reach a consensus on the educational value of full-day vs. half-day kindergarten programs. The committee came to the consensus that a slightly longer kindergarten day would allow for a more relaxed and less rushed day that would provide teachers and students with more instructional time and opportunity to develop a greater rapport with each other. We would like to propose expanding each session (morning and afternoon) by approximately one half hour. This could be accomplished through negotiations (for time and compensation) and approval from the MEA (Metuchen Education Association).

The committee did not come to a consensus that full-day kindergarten would be financially feasible at this time. It was discussed that the expanded half-day would cost about \$40,000 to \$60,000 per year which is much less than the estimated \$400,000 to \$500,000 in recurring costs (and estimated additional \$117,000 in initial construction and furniture purchases) to expand to a full-day program. Expanding the half-day would add instructional time without incurring the costs of doubling the number of kindergarten teachers, instituting lunch services for the school, constructing additional classroom space, finding rental space for the Board of Education offices, and potentially adding bussing for kindergarten students.

The committee understands that the Metuchen School District's ability to implement our recommendation is dependent upon the financial situation of the district and the State of New Jersey. There is a possibility that state aid and district budget caps may both be drastically reduced for the 2010-2011 school-year at the same time that district enrollment may be increasing. This could impede the district's ability to maintain current programs and eliminate the ability to expand or add new programs at this time.

The committee suggests that the district consider reconvening the ad-hoc Kindergarten Committee at a future date to stay current with changing conditions in Metuchen and in the State of New Jersey.

### **Acknowledgements**

The Kindergarten Study Committee consisted of a cross-section of members of the Metuchen community as well as school district administrators and members of the Board of Education. Two kindergarten teachers, Mrs. Michelle Smith and Ms. Christina Spring, also met with the committee and provided their valuable input. We would like to thank the committee members, district administrators, and teachers for their time efforts, and contribution of ideas to this process.

Respectfully Submitted by Terri Sinatra and Jackie Gibson