



Q&A on Full-day Kindergarten Concord School District for 2017-18

The Concord School Board is pleased that there is so much public interest in our budget process this year, and specifically in the question of whether the District should create a District-wide full-day kindergarten program for next year. Here is some background information on the issue that may be helpful to District residents as they prepare to share their input at public hearings next week.

What kindergarten and early childhood programs does the District currently offer?

The Concord School District has offered half-day kindergarten for many years in all elementary schools. Transportation to after school childcare sites in the city has been provided for kindergarten students. We also provide two types of preschool programs - special education preschool program and a preschool program connected with our high school technical center program for aspiring educators. Preschool students who are identified as having special education needs are entitled by law to services beginning at age 3. Our special education preschool program includes typically-developing peers who pay tuition for the program. The District also operates Family Centers in several locations including schools which reach preschool age children along with their parents.

We also provide extended day kindergarten programs using federal Title I funds; these programs are specifically aimed at students who are experiencing educational challenges. Our Administration has recently proposed that these Title I programs could be expanded to a full day program for eligible kindergarten students and estimates that with the grant-funded expansion there could be programming for up to ninety students who qualify for Title I support programs.

What did the District learn through its early childhood task force last year?

The School Board's Instructional Committee developed a steering committee to review early childhood education in our district with specific attention to our kindergarten programs. The steering committee was charged with gathering information through research, analyzing the associated impacts, developing options for our community, and presenting findings to the School Board.

Our steering committee focused our work on the elements of our essential question - What are the best practices in kindergarten programming and how do these practices connect with early childhood programs in our school community? We decided that we would need to review research on early childhood education programs, to consider space options in our current elementary school facilities, to develop an associated cost overview, and to predict district and community impact.

The Steering Committee reviewed the many program options that Concord School District offers to support young learners. At the time of this committee work, we had 105 students participating in our developmental preschool for three to five-year-old learners at Mill Brook and Beaver Meadow Schools. There were seventeen young learners in the CRTC Crimson Tide

program at Abbot Downing School. Our district half day kindergarten programs had 269 students enrolled during the 2015-2016 school year. Our district also offers an extended day kindergarten program for 60 of those learners in a Title I grant funded program and for 10 kindergarten students with educational disabilities. A review of twelve local, private programs confirmed that sixty-three Concord resident students were enrolled in their full-day kindergarten programs during the 2015-2016 school year.

After reviewing associated research our committee found that, though not definitive, research has pointed to positive outcomes for young children experiencing high quality full day kindergarten programs. It is unclear whether all the benefits seen in primary school years, including academic, social and emotional growth, extend beyond the third grade. A critical element in creating high quality early childhood programs is understanding and implementing developmentally appropriate practices.

The Concord School District and our community providers offer a wide range of programs, supports, and services for preschoolers and their families. The District offers an integrated preschool, including students with and without disabilities, family resource centers in several neighborhoods and extended kindergarten programs for some students eligible for Title 1 and special education program support. Our community provides a menu of various options for parents, including all-day child care, part- and full-day kindergarten and before and after school care. Our school staff members work closely with colleagues in the community to support the variety of needs of our youngest learners and their families.

While we are not seeing a significant increase in universal preschool programs being offered by school districts in our surrounding communities, there has been an increase in the number of districts offering full-day kindergarten. Parents describe challenges in schedules for their children and family, as well as the increased costs for child care associated with part-day kindergarten.

The annual cost for implementing a full-day kindergarten program in the Concord School District is projected to be approximately \$1 million. In the short-term it appears that space is available to add to our early childhood programming, although this may require some disruption to the location of our existing district preschool programs. Loss of tuition revenue by community preschool and child care facilities, if we created full day kindergarten programs, would negatively impact some providers.

I thought the Board already voted on this issue - why are we looking at it again?

In November 2016, the Board voted to instruct District administrators to include full-day kindergarten for all students in the District's proposed budget. The purpose of this process was to gain an understanding of the impact of expanded kindergarten programming on other aspects of the District's existing operations, including elementary school class sizes.

The Board also wanted to be able to consider the cost of expanded kindergarten in the context of other pressing budget issues over which the District has little or no control, including the downshifting of state retirement system costs, increased special education costs, the need to address aging facilities like Rundlett Middle School, and the need to replace heating systems at four schools due to the closure of Concord Steam.

What would it mean for the District’s budget - and for Concord taxpayers - to create a full-day kindergarten program for next year?

Adding full-day kindergarten would add approximately \$1.2 million to the District’s budget in the first year, and about \$1 million per year each year thereafter (this annual cost would increase as salary and benefits costs increase each year). Most of the increase in cost is due to increased staffing needs, including classroom teachers, additional specialist teachers, and assistants. At this time, state adequacy funds support kindergarten students as half-day only, so the District cannot count on receiving any additional revenue to offset these costs.

The budget the Board voted to post does not include full-day kindergarten for the coming school year. The budget does include 3 teacher reductions to correspond with declining enrollments while keeping elementary class sizes within the range of the District’s guidelines. This budget, which will be presented at the public hearings, would increase the local and state school tax rate by \$0.69 or 4.57% or an additional \$172.50 per year for a \$250,000 home.

The Administration’s proposed budget, which included full-day kindergarten and an associated reduction of 4 additional elementary teaching positions, increased class sizes for students in upper elementary classes, would have raised the local and state school portion of the tax rate by a total of \$1.04 or 6.89% over last year. For a person with a house valued at \$250,000, this would represent an estimated increased annual cost, above the amount paid last year, to the taxpayer of \$260 for this portion of the tax bill, although the exact amount could vary depending on how much the assessed valuation of the home changes in the coming year. Including full-day kindergarten without the elementary teacher cuts, the budget would potentially increase the local and state tax rate by \$1.11 or 7.36%, or an additional \$277 per year for a \$250,000 home.

While there is much more to the budget than simply the impact of the decision around full day kindergarten programming, the chart below offers an outline of the FDK related conversations. There are several different options and several points of impact to our budget. This information should be used as an estimate of the school portion of the taxes. There are important details around reductions and impacts that are not visible in this chart.

FY2018	SCHOOL BOARD POSTED BUDGET NO FDK	BUDGET WITH FDK, 3 TEACHER REDUCTIONS	BUDGET WITH FDK, 7 TEACHER REDUCTIONS
Description of budget impacts to our elementary schools	Reduced budget by 3 elementary teachers	Reduced budget by 3 elementary teachers	Reduced budget by 7 elementary teachers
Est. Local & State School Tax (% increase)	4.57%	6.69%	6.23%
Est. Local & State School Tax (\$ increase)	\$172.50	\$252.50	\$235.00
Est. Impact on \$250,000 homeowner (Est. '16 assessment)	\$3,945.00	\$4,025.00	\$4,007.50

What about “Plan B” - is that off the table?

Last fall, the Board asked the administration to cost out a “Plan B” option that offered full-day kindergarten to some, but not all, students, with the focus on ELL and free/reduced lunch populations, and a lottery for others. In addition, the Board had some discussions during the budget process of the possibility of charging tuition for full-day students who could afford it. However, Board members had concerns about the equity and logistics of these proposals, and they are not being considered further at this time.

If the NH legislature votes to support full-day K, will that reduce the costs to Concord taxpayers?

Yes, but not for next year. There are at least two proposals pending in the NH legislature that would provide school districts with additional funding for full-day kindergarten. One would change the state’s adequacy formula to provide the same level of funding for kindergarteners as for other students in those districts offering full-day kindergarten. The other, which is part of Governor Sununu’s budget proposal, would provide targeted grants to districts offering full-day kindergarten, using a formula based in part on the district’s population of ELL and free/reduced lunch students. The legislature will not make its decision on the bills until after the Board votes to adopt its budget.

Neither bill, as drafted, would provide funds to the District for the first year of full-day kindergarten, and neither would cover the full \$1 million cost of continued operation of the program. In the future, if state adequacy funds full-day kindergarten programs, that may lead to an estimated additional adequacy funds of nearly \$500,000 for our school district.

How and when will a final decision on this issue for next year be made?

The Board will be holding the following public hearings to hear public testimony on the proposed budget:

<u>PUBLIC HEARING #1</u>	<u>PUBLIC HEARING #2</u>	<u>VOTE ON FINAL BUDGET</u>
<u>Date:</u> March 20th <u>Location:</u> Mill Brook School <u>Room:</u> Multi-Purpose Room <u>Time:</u> 7:00pm	<u>Date:</u> March 22th <u>Location:</u> Rundlett Middle School <u>Room:</u> Media Center <u>Time:</u> 5:30pm	<u>Date:</u> March 29th <u>Location:</u> Central Office <u>Room:</u> Board Room <u>Time:</u> 5:30pm

Where can I get more background information on this issue?

[Findings of the Early Childhood Education Steering Committee 2016](#)

[Concord School Board - Budget 2017-2018 Meetings-Notes-Videos](#)