



Link to PACE from Danvers Schools Website:

[www.danvers.mec.edu](http://www.danvers.mec.edu)

Contact Al DiGregorio at [ald@ptc.com](mailto:ald@ptc.com) or 978-777-0250

Or Jonell Glass at [johnsonglass@verizon.net](mailto:johnsonglass@verizon.net) or 978-762-6670

March 7, 2008

1. **WELCOME! Introductions and Announcements**

Introductions

Meeting Schedule for 2007-08: April 4, May 2

2. **TODAY'S TOPIC: Full-Day Kindergarten**

Presented by Susan Ambrozavitch, the elementary principals, and Kindergarten and K/1 teachers

Danvers recently studied whether or not to implement full-day Kindergarten within the school system. The school committee agreed to implement the program. The schools obtained a \$195K grant to implement the program, to cover creating the curriculum, funding aides and equipment for each classroom, an implementation coordinator, and attempts at accreditation by the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC).

Rosemarie DiResta, retired principal of Riverside Elementary School, has been hired to be the program coordinator.

Full-day Kindergarten has been studied in Danvers four times over the past 20 years. The results of each committee have shown:

- Available space prohibited implementation
- Support for such a program grew over time

The 07-08 committee included every interested party, from principals to parents to teachers.

The work of the 07-08 committee including studying:

- Available space
- Research on the effectiveness of a such a program
- Programmatic change recommendations (a review of best practices)

- Interviews of nearby communities with full-day Kindergarten programs (more best practices)
- Cost analysis of the funding options
- Survey of the parents and teachers

Other systems found that:

- Full day programs allow for balanced curriculum, including time to play for play's sake
- The schedule allows academics to be enhanced and extended
- The state-wide Kindergarten frameworks are met more thoroughly in full-day programs than in half-day programs

Research shows that the effects of full day programs include (and, interesting, the research is very consistent on these points):

- There is more time for learning
- Students show greater skills development
- The curriculum is equal between all students (different amounts of time in school lead to different amounts of skill development)
- A reduction in transitions for students (and the youngest students have the hardest time with transitions in their day)
- Students show greater academic success throughout their primary grades.

A survey of the Danvers parents of Kindergartners and pre-Kindergartners shows that:

- 85% of parents prefer full time Kindergarten
- Of that 85%, 57% believe that full-time Kindergarten is a high priority for their children
- Of that 85%, 37% believe that full-time Kindergarten is a moderate priority for their children

A survey of the Danvers teachers and specialists shows that:

- 61% strongly agree that full-day Kindergarten should be implemented
- 29% agree that full-day Kindergarten should be implemented
- All **strongly** agree that PLAY is essential the a successful Kindergarten program

### **Discussion:**

Concerns:

- Children going from 9 hours/week to 30 hours/per week of school
  - The program will be structured to ease the children into a longer day.
  - The children are resilient; and also, they take their cues from the parents. Children with parents who support the longer program will find it easier than those who are opposed to the longer program.
  - The teachers all have degrees in early childhood education; they are professionals and know how to make a program developmentally appropriate.
- How the number of students per class affects learning and school experience

- Danvers Public Schools have taken great care to project the school population and current projections and estimates are believed to be as good as they possibly can be.
- It is true that Kindergarten classes have a cap of 20 students per class. Sometimes, a student will have to attend a school other than his/her own home school for Kindergarten. This would be the case *whether or not* full-day Kindergarten was implemented.
- How does the accreditation process work, why are you doing it, and why will all schools not be accredited at once?
  - The grant which is funding our transition to full-day Kindergarten strongly encourages that accreditation be sought, but is not contingent upon it. The grant supports the first round of accreditation.
  - The hope is that continuation grants will cover other schools in the future.
  - The process is similar to the high school accreditation the process, but focuses on Kindergarten-age appropriate learning.
  - The NAEYC accredits early childhood education programs with up to three locations per program. Danvers has five elementary schools, and therefore each school must be accredited separately.
  - The process is quite lengthy. Therefore, one school will apply the first year. Current thinking is that Danvers will strive for one school per year.
- What is the likelihood of receiving continuation grants?
  - As with all grants, that is unclear but Woburn has had one for eight years now.
- How will this affect the Danvers public preschool program?
  - For space and other considerations, all the preschool classes will be located at the Riverside school. This will allow economies of scale and more support for the students than the current distribution, as well as free up space for more Kindergarten classes.

Comment from parent: The NAEYC accreditation process allows mock inspections prior to the actual accreditation inspection. Will the Danvers schools take advantage of this opportunity? Answer from the school system: Now that we know that this is available, we will certainly look into the process!

### 3. Updates and Information

#### *School Committee*

The school committee has recently approved the switch to full time Kindergarten. They are now working on contract negotiations. Grants increased by \$0.5 Million this year. Community that Cares received a grant to implement a 5-year action plan to reduce substance abuse in the town. The police department has obtained an additional \$26K to further their efforts to keep our youth safe.

*DEEP*

Remember the DEEP Ball on March 15, 2008.

*High School Project*

Danvers town and school administration and architects have met with the MSBA for a facility assessment. A final decision on whether we get state funding or not is expected in the spring, but no date is definite.

We will likely have a special town meeting to vote on funding for the school, as the MSBA timeline will probably prevent any action in the regular May meeting.

4. **Next Month: The Arts in the Danvers Public Schools**
5. **Action for PACE Representatives**

Report back on this agenda to your PAC meeting, especially guest speakers and special events.

**Circulate a sign-up sheet** for e-mail addresses; e-mail to Jonell or Al or bring to the next meeting.

Please send people to check out the Danvers Public Schools website (with links to PACE agendas, schedules, meeting notes): [www.danvers.mec.edu](http://www.danvers.mec.edu)

Important Addresses:

Holten Richmond Memorial Fund (to support the Betty Allen Library):

Holten-Richmond Memorial Fund

c/o DEEP

P.O. Box 387

Danvers, MA 01923

DEEP Memberships:

P.o. Box 287

Danvers, MA 01923