

Regular Board Meeting – April 15, 2008

## **SUBJECT: KINDERGARTEN UPDATE**

### **OVERVIEW**

Following the approval by the Board of Education in 2006 of a full-day kindergarten program, an examination of facilities, curriculum, staffing, and resources was undertaken in preparation to begin the full-day program beginning with the 2007-2008 school year. Several primary classrooms were converted to kindergarten rooms and aesthetic changes in the hallways were completed to create a more welcoming environment. An English Language Learners classroom in kindergarten (ELL-K) was developed and staffed by an ELL certified early childhood teacher. Located at Jane Stenson School, the ELL-K program serves students from the entire district. In addition, daily, half-hour support of ELL students is provided for those who have acquired a social language in English but need assistance with the academic language. All kindergarten rooms have a full-time teacher assistant. Students appear to be thriving in the full-day session. Plans are in place this spring for the transition to first grade for those remaining in attendance in their home school and for those ELL-K students transitioning to their home school from Stenson.

### **ENROLLMENT**

The total enrollment in kindergarten is similar to the enrollment of 2006-07 with no significant increase due to offering a full-day rather than a half-day program. One student is currently attending kindergarten for less than the full day; one began in the half-day program and transitioned to a full day while a second student began the year in the full-day program and transitioned to a half day. Decisions regarding these attendance patterns were mutually agreed upon by the teachers, parents, and building administrators.

We are offering eight full-day classes, three at Highland, three at Stenson, and two at Devonshire. Enrollment in the full-day, English Language Learner (ELL-K) program at Stenson has increased from thirteen to sixteen students during the year. An additional nine students receive ELL support for one-half hour each day across the three buildings.

### **PROGRAM**

A ninety-minute literacy block and sixty-minute mathematics block are now in place and are accompanied by units in social studies and science with time to more fully develop concepts and vocabulary. Students are exposed to more non-fiction text with accompanying opportunities to grow in general knowledge. Students have time to listen and develop their oral language with increased opportunities to participate during the school day. As a result, the confidence of students has grown. Teachers report that skill development, especially in literacy, number sense, and writing, normally observed after spring break, was evident this year after winter break. Local assessments in these same areas have shown improvement in quality of work. There is time to devote to the Start-Up Phonics program each day to build literacy skills that simply was not available in the half-day program.

Socially and emotionally, deeper and more frequent connections have emerged between students and between teacher and student. Teachers have witnessed an increase in play dates between

students. Relationships between teacher and parents are stronger, which fosters a positive attitude to the first, formal school experience for many of our children and their families. Students are comfortable in their classrooms and have a solid sense of routine in their day.

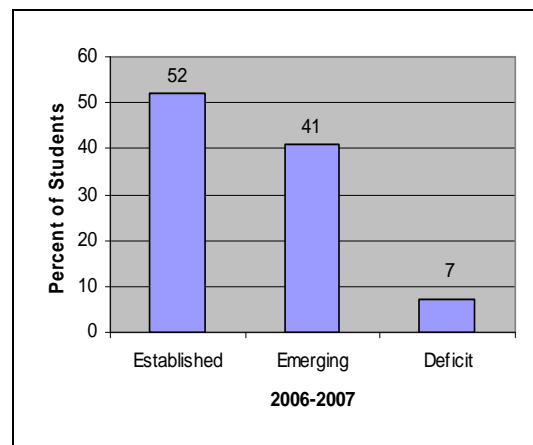
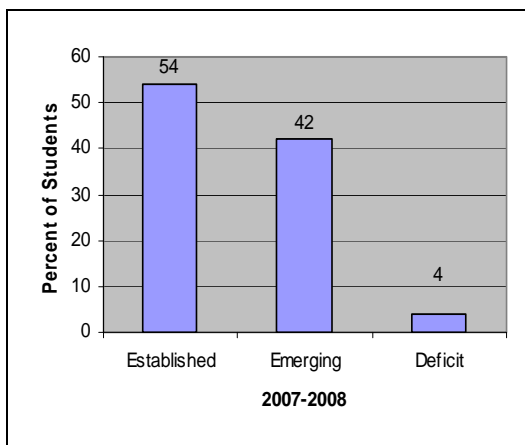
At the same time, there is a respect for the varied, developmental needs of the students, both academically and emotionally. The opportunity for modeling, repetition, and re-teaching is coupled with time for play, physical activity, or rest. To fully support the curriculum and full-day program, supplementary resources were added.

### PERFORMANCE INDICATORS

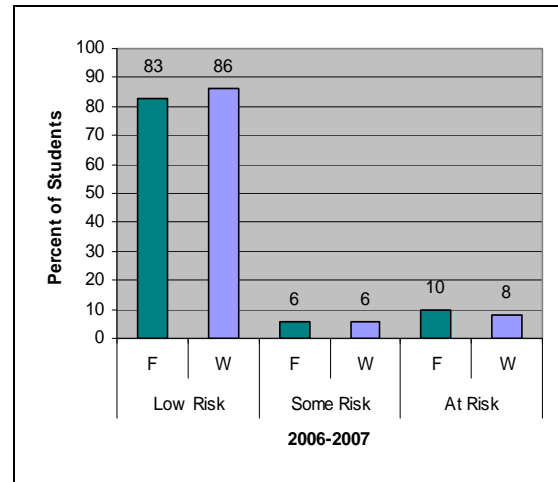
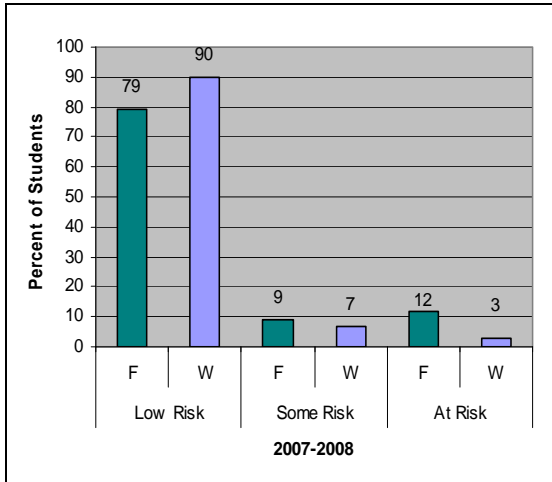
In addition to assessments developed and utilized by teachers across the grade level, students in grade K are administered a standardized test. The Dynamic Indicators of Basic Literacy Skills (DIBELS) are a set of measurements widely used across the nation as valid indicators of early literacy development. They serve as formative assessments of progress in literacy skills correlated with success in achieving adequate reading outcomes for the present and future grade levels. Two important measurements taken during the first six months in kindergarten are initial sound fluency (ISF) and letter naming fluency (LNF).

Examinations of the graphs that follow indicate that more students are moving from the mid-range category to the higher performing category; similarly, more students are progressing from the lowest category to the mid-category. Positive growth is more evident in letter naming than initial sound fluency but both increases in the upper categories are consistent with the local formative assessment measures.

Initial Sound Fluency  
Percent of Students with Established, Emerging, and Deficit Performance  
Winter 2008



**Letter Naming Fluency**  
**Percent of Students with Low, Some, and At Risk Performance**  
**Fall to Winter Progress**



**TRANSITION ACTIVITIES**

A variety of transition activities for kindergarten students and parents have recently begun and will continue through the close of the school year. Parents of ELL-K students were invited to the PTA Bingo Nights at Devonshire and Highland Schools in addition to the Family Craft Night at Highland School in late April. ELL-K students will visit the buildings they will attend next year and see the schools which will be attended by their classmates. Opportunities to have lunch at Devonshire or Highland, be a pen pal with the principal of their home school, and meet new classmates and first grade teachers are other activities that have been planned. The ELL-K teacher has discussed these events with the ELL-K students and will be attending these activities to serve as a bridge in relationship-building between the students and their home schools, and between the students and their new, soon-to-be classmates and teachers.

**SUMMARY**

The full-day kindergarten program has been well-received by students, parents, teachers, and community members. The opportunity to expand literacy, mathematics, science, and social studies, the opportunity to practice the many forms of expression developed through art, music, and physical education, and the opportunity to incorporate the work and joy of the early years in the form of play have all been afforded by the move to a full-day program. Formal and informal indicators of student growth are apparent. Social and emotional well-being has been fostered. Exposure and practice in receptive and expressive language has been enhanced to provide a firm foundation on which to build the primary, intermediate, and junior high programs. The needs of at-risk, regular, and advanced students are better addressed. In the words of our teachers, “Full-day kindergarten is incredible.”