

Board of Education  
Newtown, Connecticut

Minutes of the Board of Education meeting on Tuesday, November 3, 2010 at 7:30 p.m. in the library at Reed Intermediate School.

W. Hart, Chair	J. Robinson
D. Leidlein, Vice Chair	L. Gejda
A. Buzzi, Secretary	R. Bienkowski
D. Nanavaty	3 Staff
L. Bittman	8 Public
R. Gaines (absent)	2 Press

Mr. Hart called the meeting to order at 7:34 p.m. and requested motions to add items to the agenda.

MOTION: Mr. Buzzi moved to add the discussion of Reed Intermediate School scheduling to the Superintendent's report. Mrs. Leidlein seconded. Vote: 5 ayes

MOTION: Mr. Buzzi moved to add an Executive Session for the discussion of a student disciplinary issue and following Executive Session add a possible vote on the stipulated agreement presented by the Superintendent. Mr. Nanavaty seconded. Vote: 5 ayes

Item 1 – Consent Agenda

MOTION: Mr. Buzzi moved to approve the consent agenda which included the minutes of October 19 and 26, 2010, the Newtown High School Debate Team field trips in November and December, the Community Conversations Grant, the roster of coaches for fall sports at Newtown High School, the resignation of Jason Jacobs, teacher at Newtown Middle School, and the Newtown Middle School field trip to Quebec, Canada in May. Mrs. Bittman seconded.

Mr. Nanavaty asked to remove the minutes of October 26, 2010 because he did not attend and would abstain from voting.

Vote (excluding the minutes of October 26, 2010): 5 ayes

MOTION: Mr. Buzzi moved to approve the minutes of October 26, 2010. Mrs. Leidlein seconded. Vote: 3 ayes

Mr. Nanavaty and Mrs. Bittman abstained because they did not attend.

Item 2 – Public Participation

Laura Roche, 41 Cobblers Mill Road, read a letter regarding the Reed School scheduling in which she stated the schedules vary drastically between clusters.

Kathy Fetchick, 18 Clapboard Ridge Road, was surprised to see the minutes of October 26, 2010 with no detail. She suggested taping the coffees. She mentioned concerns regarding scheduling at Reed and teachers attending a workshop during the day.

Item 3 – Reports

Correspondence Report:

Mr. Buzzi said there were four pieces of correspondence which included a memo from the First Selectman, Mrs. Llodra, to Mr. Hart regarding full-day kindergarten, the

October 26 letter to Dr. Epple with 100 names (attached), the October 26 letter from Karla Kron regarding the high school project, and the October 27 letter to Dr. Robinson from Maureen Cassetta regarding conference days and the day 6 schedule at Reed School.

Chair Report:

Mr. Hart gave the Board the responsibility assignments for the Board goals. Regarding the October 26, 2010 coffee with the Board, most of the issues from that night were regarding the Reed scheduling, the early release Wednesdays, full-day kindergarten, and conference days. The school facilities ad hoc committee will meet November 11. Fran Pennarola will facilitate that committee.

Superintendent's Report:

Dr. Robinson reported that in April staff and students will be going to China. Teachers from Reed and the middle school will also go and be partnered with schools in China. She met with Ron Bienkowski, Pat Llodra and Bob Tait regarding the ordinance for the commission to oversee the health insurance for the town and the district. Dr. Chung replied to our request to update next year's enrollment projection which we will use to build the budget.

Mr. Nanavaty was concerned about Dr. Chung's true numbers for 2011. We will have 5,341 which is more than what he projected for this year.

Mr. Hart stated his numbers generally don't include pre-K like ours do.

Dr. Robinson said Dr. Chung also doesn't include the 40 magnet school students or those attending Abbott Tech.

Mrs. Bittman asked for a letter from Dr. Chung stating the accurate number. We need documentation if he isn't including some of these students.

Mr. Bienkowski said we were planning on using 5,261 students from information he received from the schools.

Dr. Robinson began a discussion on the Reed School scheduling issue. Revisions include fewer assemblies and a rotation of day 6. Reed has always had a day 6 and each year there was a different schedule. This time is not for homework but for enrichment such as tutorials, one-on-one work and other pull-out activities.

Mrs. Leidlein asked the number of minutes required for each subject to be taught each week.

Dr. Robinson said we have a 90-minute literacy block in the district and follow state averages.

Mrs. Leidlein requested the time requirements and wanted to be sure there was equity for the students.

Mr. Nanavaty feels this is an administration issue that Dr. Epple has to decide on with Dr. Salvatore. He asked the difference between last year and this year.

Dr. Robinson said this issue did not come to her directly and she is trying to work on the problem. Before Mrs. Denniston retired she revised the schedule. The schedule this

year is the same except we lost 2 rotation teachers so the 6<sup>th</sup> day ended up with a lot of activities. Those two teachers helped the schedule work. There are too many inconsistencies between the clusters. She and Dr. Gejda will be going through the schedule.

Dr. Gejda said Reed School has been working hard to increase the test scores and no longer being on the AYP list for reading. They are very concerned about the performance of our students and have come together as a community with new leadership.

Mrs. Leidlein asked if this would be addressed before the new marking period. Dr. Robinson stated that recommendation would be made before November 11. She supports their work on the schedule and doing what is right for the students.

Mr. Hart asked how a parent should get a fast response if they have a concern about this.

Dr. Robinson said to follow the chain of command with the teacher or cluster and then contact the principal. If there are still concerns the parents should contact her or Dr. Gejda. In this situation we were not given the opportunity as this issue was brought to the Board without meeting with the district administrators.

Mr. Hart mentioned the special meeting on November 9 to interview candidates.

#### Item 5 – New Business

Naviance Program Demonstration:

Cathy Ostar, Director of Guidance at Newtown High School, gave a demonstration of the Naviance program. They started using this program six years ago to help with college searches and the application process. This program sets up a student success plan and now there is also a piece the middle school is using.

#### Item 4 – Old Business

Newtown High School Expansion Project:

Dr. Robinson met with Mr. Dumais, Joe Costa and George Bachman who teaches the greenhouse program. They went over quote comparisons and Mr. Bachman's preference was the second least expensive. Mr. Costa was developing a profile of that greenhouse to present to the Public Building and Site Commission. It will be a standard building but will meet the requirements.

Mr. Nanavaty stated that Public Building and Site is concerned. The cheapest version was not appropriate. Bob Mitchell said the acrylic will cloud up over time and preferred 16mm polycarbonate. These bid numbers include construction. They said it will be done in time for the spring semester.

Rationale for Full-day Kindergarten: (see attachment)

Dr. Gejda spoke about the history of full-day kindergarten programs and the reasons for its growth. We look at school readiness which included literacy and cognitive skills and social, emotional and behavioral development. She focused on three studies. The first was full-day vs half-day kindergarten throughout the nation. Students in full-day

kindergarten are advanced in their cognitive effort in language arts and math and found that all students benefited.

The second study was done in Wisconsin. It was a two-year study and found that in full-day kindergarten there was more child-initiated learning and active engagement. They also included parent and teacher perspectives. The third study was in Washington State study which also showed positive results for a full-day kindergarten program.

Full-day kindergarten for Newtown addresses our strategic plan for student achievement and personal success. We are also trying to become in line with the new standards with the Core Common State Standards (CCSS) which the State of Connecticut recently adopted. These are national standards which have significant impact on the content, knowledge and skills of students.

The kindergarten survey last year resulted in a very positive response to a full-day kindergarten program. There was a pilot program in Newtown in 1988 in Middle Gate School and Sandy Hook School for 8 weeks. The teacher wrote a grant which paid for the buses. At that time we didn't have room to house the full-day program but it had positive results.

Dr. Robinson said the next step in full-day kindergarten program would be to look at space. She plans to meet with each elementary principal.

#### Item 6 – Public Participation

Mrs. Roche spoke again about the Reed schedule.

MOTION: Mrs. Leidlein moved to go into executive session to discuss a student issue and invited Dr. Robinson. Mrs. Bittman seconded. Vote: 5 ayes  
Executive session began at 9:36 p.m. and ended at 10:09 p.m.

MOTION: Mrs. Leidlein moved to adjourn. Mr. Nanavaty seconded.  
Vote: 5 ayes

#### Item 7 – Adjournment

The meeting adjourned at 10:09 p.m.

Respectfully submitted:

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Andrew Buzzi, Jr.  
Secretary

October 26, 2010

Dear Dr. Epple,

Our group of Reed Intermediate School parents requested a dialog with you in September regarding our concerns about Cycle Day 6 and the schedule changes that occurred at Reed this year. We were pleased that you and Dr. Salvatore offered the Parent Forums to communicate the background and rationale for these changes.

Initially, our concerns revolved around the inconsistency and the lack of direction with instruction time on Cycle Day 6. Also, we were concerned with the large number of assemblies and their content every 6 days. These changes caused us to review the entire schedule. While we are not education specialists, the schedule is not benefiting our children and we find the current day 6 model to be unacceptable in carrying out the core curriculum.

In addition to the Parent Forums, you invited several parents to further clarify the issues and concerns with a hired consultant. Again, while we appreciate the effort on your part our goal for that meeting was to be involved in a scheduling collaboration with teachers and the administration rather than another venue for us just to voice our opinion to an outside party.

Our primary objective is to see a new schedule implemented at the start of the next rotation so our children will have an improved educational experience at Reed Intermediate.

The topics below are key to making what we believe would be meaningful adjustments to the schedule:

- 1.) **Accelerated Reader (A/R) Program** – Eliminate the A/R program as part of the schedule. Return the A/R component to library, learning lab and reading. This will eliminate the redundancy that is currently creating too much independent reading time and taking away from teacher directed instruction.
- 2.) **Grade Level Assemblies** – As noted in your forum presentation, assembly topics include everything from behavioral interventions to yearbook signing.— The number of assemblies should be reduced. Disruptions to instruction should occur only for culturally and educationally significant programs. The assemblies should be planned well ahead of time and published for parent review.

We do understand the need for a predictable schedule. One suggestion would be to change to an alternating cycle day 6A and 6B structure. This would allow for a reduced number of assemblies, more academic instructional time consistent in all classrooms, and provide sufficient time for teacher collaboration time. Additionally, students who are missing core classes on day six due to assemblies would have this instructional time made up. Bottom line...more direct instruction and time on task.

- As far as the emphasis on Bullying, we understand there are State requirements to promote better behavior. However, while it is important, the manner in which the Bullying or any Core Value instruction is delivered should be improved. Smaller focus groups would greatly enhance absorption of this topic and allow for greater interaction between students.
- 3.) **Special Teachers**-Utilize special teachers over 6-day cycle.
- Potentially alleviate overcrowded gym classes.
- 4.) **Learning Lab** – The guidelines for Learning Lab are inadequate (7 years old as stated in the Parent Forum meeting). New standards should be communicated and reviewed with the teaching staff. Instructional time should not be used for locker clean out and doing homework. There needs to be consistency across all clusters in how this time is utilized. Teachers and Reed Administrators need to be accountable for maintaining this consistency.
- 5.) **Equality and Consistency of Instruction Across Grade Levels** – The Superintendent has spoken about the need for Reed students to have skill proficiency when they move to the Middle School. Based on discussions between parents, teachers, and administrators we do not believe that is occurring at Reed. There is a need to have more monitoring into what is happening in the classroom and more clarification on what constitutes instructional time within our current schedule. Having a clear understanding of each teacher's schedule, unscheduled walkthroughs and sharing best practices may be a productive avenue that will allow for continuous improvement throughout the Reed teaching community.

We are interested in the best possible educational experience for our children and for those children that will arrive at Reed in the future. We expect to see schedule changes at Reed that focus the maximum amount of instruction time on core academics. We expect instruction to be delivered in a predictable and consistent manner across each grade level. With those suggestions in mind, we look forward to seeing your plan of action prior to the start of the next rotation.

Respectfully,

Signatures below

1	Avery-Calabrese, Christine	35	Duffy, Nancy	69	Pacchiana, Miranda
2	Badiola, Alexandra	36	Eurell, John	70	Parsons, Jeanine
3	Badiola, Joseba	37	Eurell, Wendy	71	Parsons, Jim
4	Baker, George	38	Fetchick, Jeff	72	Patrick, Barb
5	Baker, Stella	39	Fetchick, Kathy	73	Phaneuf, Jeanne
6	Baron, Barb	40	Finnegan, Jennifer	74	Phaneuf, Paul
7	Baron, Keith	41	Futterman, Breda	75	Pryor, Charles
8	Barrett, Jen	42	Futterman, Jonathan	76	Roche, Ken
9	Barrett, Kevin	43	Garner, Larry	77	Roche, Laura
10	Beardsley, Craig	44	Garner, Sarah	78	Sabillon, Sherry
11	Beardsley, Mimi	45	Grossano, Gerard	79	Santore, Lorraine
12	Begany, Bill	46	Grossano, Randine	80	Schickendantz, Leonardus
13	Begany, Janet	47	Harrison, Missy	81	Schickendantz, Leonie
14	Benson, Krista	48	Harrison, Tom	82	Sheridan, James
15	Bogdanoff, Liz	49	Holman, Bill	83	Sheridan, Lisa
16	Bogdanoff, Tod	50	Holman, Tracy	84	Smith, Michele
17	Buchler, Bill	51	King, Laura	85	Smith, Pat
18	Buchler, Pam	52	Kortze, Tara	86	Steinebrey, Jeffrey
19	Calabrese, Pat	53	Kost, Dan	87	Steinebrey, Rachel
20	Carriero, Joe	54	Kost, Nancy	88	Street, Mara
21	Carriero, Lori	55	Lambert, Eric	89	Street, Rick
22	Carson, Russell	56	Lambert, Melanie	90	Trede, Kelley
23	Carson, Stephanie	57	Leuci, Anthony	91	Trede, Michael
24	Celentano, Andrea	58	Leuci, Myra	92	Ursem, Kirsten
25	Celentano, James	59	Lombardo, Mary	93	Venezia, Joe
26	Chanko, Eric	60	Mason, Bob	94	Venezia, Kym
27	Chanko, Susan	61	Mason, Denise	95	Walsh, Kinga
28	Clifford, Lea Ann	62	Maturo, Fran	96	Weiland, Jim
29	Clifford, Pete	63	Melillo, Michele	97	Wellman, Andy
30	Collins, Suzanne	64	Melillo, Ron	98	Wellman, Caren
31	Conte, Dave	65	Mulligan, Shannon	99	Williams, Rich
32	Conte, Kelly	66	Muzzio, Tricia	100	Williams, SuZanne
33	Dubois, Chuck	67	O'Brien, Christopher		
34	Dubois, Judy	68	O'Brien, Susan		

Cc: Dr. Janet Robinson, Superintendent of Schools  
 Dr. Dr. Anthony Salvatore, Reed Intermediate School Assistant Principal  
 Mr. Bill Hart, Board of Education Chairmen  
 Mrs. Debbie Leidlein, Board of Education Vice Chair  
 Mr. Andy Buzzi, Board of Education Secretary  
 Mr. David Nanavaty, Board of Education  
 Mr. Richard Gaines, Board of Education  
 Mrs. Lillian Bittman, Board of Education



# **NEWTOWN PUBLIC SCHOOLS**

## **Planning for the Success of All Students**

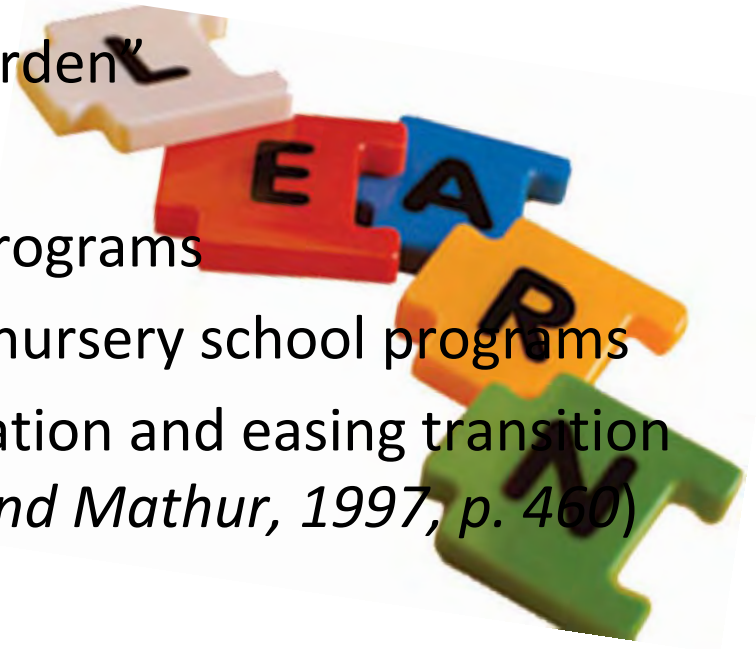
**Part I: Rationale**  
**Full Day Kindergarten**  
**Presentation to the Board of Education:**  
**November 3, 2010**  
*Revised 11/8/10*

*Revised 11/8/10*



# Recent History of Full-Day Kindergarten Programs

- 1837: Froebel created a “child’s garden”
- 1960-70:
  - Publicly-funded kindergarten programs
  - 2.5-3 hour days modeled after nursery school programs
  - Curriculum focus: play, socialization and easing transition from home to school (*Elicker and Mathur, 1997, p. 460*)
- 1990:
  - More academic and skill oriented
  - Play and socialization less important
  - “Full-day” programs grew (45% of 5-year olds)
- 2005:
  - 55% of kindergarteners in FDK





# Reasons for the Growth of Full-day Kindergarten Programs

- Kindergarten teachers found it difficult to meet curriculum needs
- Early childhood advocates critical of highly structured half-day “academic” kindergarten (large-group instruction, desk work, segmented daily routines)
- Potential for more child-centered programs
- Wor



**Best Start...Best Future**

# School Readiness

**Development of foundational skills is vital to student success:**

- Literacy and cognitive skills**
- Social, emotional and behavioral development**

**Full-day Kindergarten will increase the time spent with students allowing for:**

- Less pressure to cover the content and more time to use a brain-based approach to teaching and learning, ie, less whole group instruction, more time exploring and constructing one's knowledge. Teacher language less directive and more robust**
- More opportunities for students with areas of weakness to receive interventions and students with special needs to receive more services**




***What does the  
research say?***

# Study #1: Full-Day vs Half-Day Kindergarten


Data collected from “The Early Childhood Longitudinal Study-Kindergarten Cohort” (Lee et al, 2006)

- 504 schools, over 8, 000 students, 50% Full-day Kindergarten
- Children who experience FDK as a whole-school program are advantaged in terms of their cognitive effort (.93 effect size in LA ; .75 effect size in math)
- ALL children benefit in terms of learning more
- FDK teachers use the additional time with their students to broaden their social as well as their academic experiences



# Study #2: Wisconsin Comprehensive Evaluation

- Two-year study focus on program content and processes
- Multiple measures: surveys, interviews, observations, report cards, first grade readiness ratings
- Results: FDK experience showed:
  - More child-initiated learning activity
  - More teacher-student interactions (one-to-one)
  - Higher levels of active engagement
  - Higher levels of positive affect
  - Differences between HDK and FDK became stronger in year 2 of study
  - Teacher and parent perspectives supported classroom-observed data



# Wisconsin Study: Parent and Teacher Perspectives

**STUDENTS:** better able to initiate and engage flexibly, explore deeply and respond to challenges

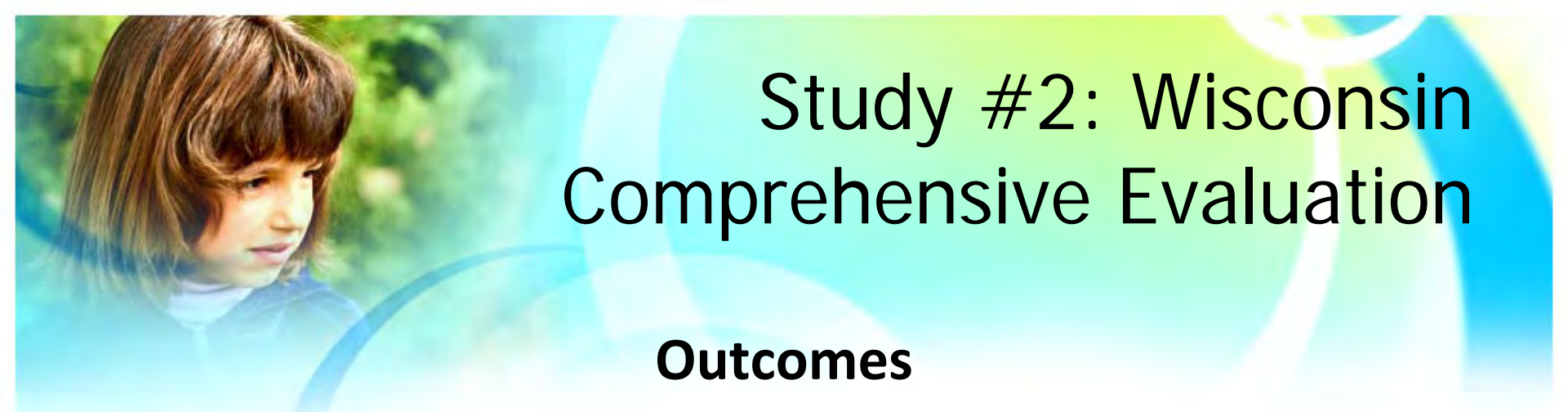
**TEACHERS:** (on practice)

- more developmentally appropriate
- individual parent/student contact
- integrative curriculum planning

**PARENTS:**

- more relaxed pace
- in-depth exploration and learning
- increased level of satisfaction with curriculum

HDK parents requested FDK!



# Study #2: Wisconsin Comprehensive Evaluation

## Outcomes

- Greater kindergarten progress
- Higher levels of grade 1 readiness
- Child-initiated activities accounted for more time in FDK
- In year 2, increase in teacher interaction with students on individual work, child-initiated learning center activity and free-play opportunities. There was a decrease in teacher-directed learning activities, especially large-group instruction.

- *Elicker, 1997*



# Study #3: Washington State Study (2007)

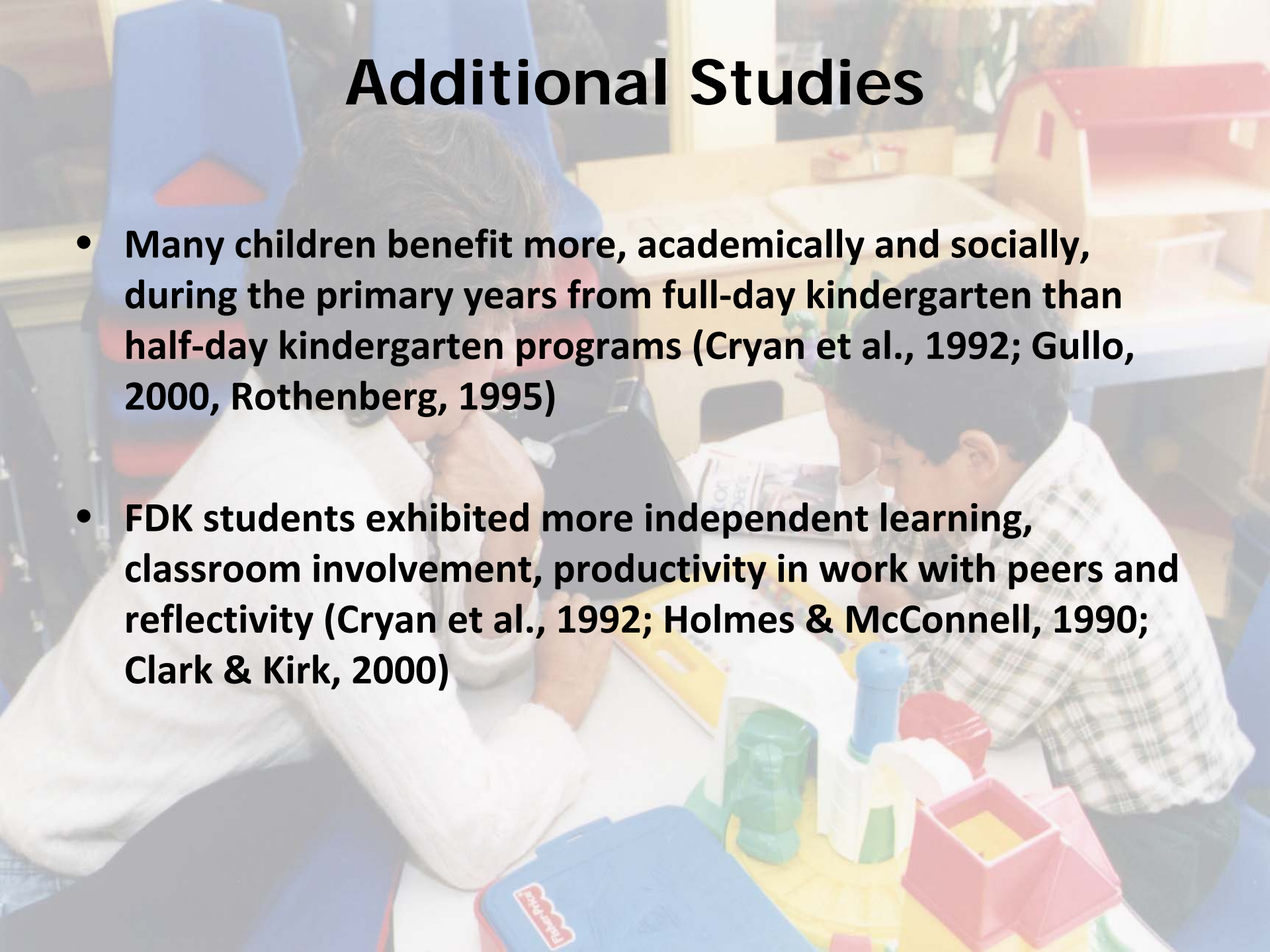
## Analysis of Full-day Kindergarten Programs in Washington State

### Outcomes:

- FDK results in positive academic achievement , social benefits and school readiness for students
- Cost savings as fewer students require remediation
- FDK is a growing national trend

# Additional Studies

- **Many children benefit more, academically and socially, during the primary years from full-day kindergarten than half-day kindergarten programs (Cryan et al., 1992; Gullo, 2000, Rothenberg, 1995)**
- **FDK students exhibited more independent learning, classroom involvement, productivity in work with peers and reflectivity (Cryan et al., 1992; Holmes & McConnell, 1990; Clark & Kirk, 2000)**





# Full-Day Kindergarten Program: Implications for Newtown

- Newtown's Strategic Plan
  - student achievement and personal success
- Learning opportunities (grade 1 and beyond)
- Consistency in district programs
- Alignment with practice in similar towns
- Interest in Newtown as a place to live and raise children

# Meeting 21st Century Standards

**Recent adoption of Core Common State Standards (CCSS) by the State of Connecticut**

**Significant impact on the content, knowledge and skills of students**

**Crosswalk comparing the CCSS to the CT state standards to which our curriculum is currently aligned:**

- CCSS English Language Arts: 25 standards that appear in the new kindergarten standards that are currently in the Grade 1 CT standards**
- CCSS Mathematics: 22 standards in the CCSS kindergarten standards that correlate to present CT math standards, primarily in grade 1, also grades 2 and 3**

# Kindergarten in Connecticut School Districts

- **126** school districts provide a longer school day for kindergarten students than Newtown offers.
- **63** school districts offer FDK to all students.
- **32** school districts offer FDK to some students.
- **17** school districts offer extended-day kindergarten to all students.
- **14** school districts offer extended-day programs to some students.

-CSDE *Kindergarten Program Type and School Districts (2009-2010)*





# Kindergarten Programs DRGs A and B

## DRG A Districts:

- All districts offer a Full-day or Extended-day kindergarten programs to all or some of their students

## DRG B Districts:

- 10 districts offer Full-day or Extended-day kindergarten programs to all or some of their students



# Full-Day Kindergarten for Newtown Students

## 2009-2010 Full-Day Kindergarten Survey

I have a child entering kindergarten in the next three years.

Yes: 568

No: 36

If available, I would be interested in having my child attend Full-Day Kindergarten. (*Survey question glitch: only 418 responses.*)

Yes: 360

No : 58

# **Full-Day Kindergarten Pilot in Newtown**

**1988 Pilot at MGS and SHS**

**8-week pilot April, May, June**

**District grant paid for bus transportation**

**Students had 2 days of full-day program per week (10 students)**

**Teacher reports there was a greater opportunity to**

- **socialize and communicate with others (sharing)**
- **1:1 conferencing with students**
- **hands-on activities (math manipulatives, outside “field trips”)**
- **handwriting; pencil grip**





# Full-Day Kindergarten for Newtown Students

## Rationale for Full-Day Kindergarten

- Development of foundational skills and conceptual knowledge that is vital to student success (Engagement)
- Development of social, emotional and behavioral skills
- Increased readiness for all students entering Grade 1 and beyond
- Additional time for interventions and supports
- District equity and consistency of programs
- Meet developmental and curricular needs through best instructional practices

# ***Questions???***



**“It’s All About The Students!”**