

MENLO PARK CITY SCHOOL DISTRICT

STANDARDS FOR KINDERGARTEN OPERATIONS

RECOMMENDED BY SUPERINTENDENT KEN RANELLA

ADOPTED BY THE BOARD OF EDUCATION

APRIL 13, 2005

Foreword

During the course of the 2004-05 school year, kindergarten teachers and principals, facilitated by Assistant Superintendent Jo Sauer Mitchell, conducted a study of kindergarten programs at Oak Knoll and Laurel Schools. The study was authorized by the Superintendent in the spring of 2004 when it was recognized that the two programs were dissimilar, particularly related to the instructional time of students and the assignment of teachers. The teachers and administrators, who were engaged in the study, developed criteria for assessing programs, reviewed educational research, interviewed neighboring districts and visited the programs within the District. Furthermore, a pilot program of two classes at Oak Knoll School operated full-day programs for volunteer students and parents. The purpose of the study was to identify the “best practices” that could be applied to both schools in the District.

At the March 24 Special Meeting, the Board of Education extended the study in a session that included reports from staff and input from the parents and community members. It was acknowledged at the meeting, that the representative staff and many parents from each school supported their own unique program. It was clearly acknowledged by the Board and those in attendance that the kindergarten teachers, although unable to define one set of “best practices,” had developed quality instructional programs at each school site.

This presentation of recommendations to the Board addresses six significant areas of kindergarten operations including instructional minutes for students, instructional assignment for teachers, allocation of specialist teacher services, services to students with greater needs, class size, and the option for voluntary participation in the Early Primary Program as established by Education Code 8970-8974. It establishes clear standards for operations while continuing to empower the kindergarten teacher teams and principals at each school to develop an instructional configuration and delivery systems to best meet the needs of students within their school communities.

Standard #1 – Instructional Minutes

The instructional minutes for all standard kindergartens in the District shall be 45,000 minutes per year, an average of 250 minutes per day, for 180 instructional days.

Rationale and Application of Standard:

1. Educational studies demonstrate that the level of instructional minutes contributes to the academic achievement of most kindergarten students.
2. The District’s full-day pilot program, the Oak Knoll School extended day program, and many other testimonies of kindergarten teachers outside of the District indicate that more time provides a greater opportunity for activities that promote social-emotional development of children, reducing the stress and anxiety associated with the growing number of more intensive academic standards in recent years.
3. The average number of instructional minutes for kindergarten students in districts similar to Menlo Park City (Las Lomas, Palo Alto, Hillsborough, Belmont-Redwood Shores, Portola Valley, and Woodside) is 252.
4. Because this standard is defined annually (45,000 minutes), each school has the opportunity to structure the configuration and the delivery of services reflective of their unique perspectives on “best practices.” Examples could be the “early-late” program, extending days for small groups, increasing the number of instructional minutes gradually throughout the year, or scheduling extended kindergarten days on specific days per week or year.

Standard #2 – Assignment of Kindergarten Teachers

In accordance with the Master Contract with the Menlo Park Education Association, kindergarten teachers will provide direct instruction for the same number of minutes as all other first and second grade teachers in the District and for the same number of minutes as each other at the two different campuses.

Rationale and Application of Standard:

1. The following are the contractual provisions that enforce this standard:

8.10 Kindergarten teachers will provide instruction the same number of minutes daily as the first and second grade teachers. The time over and above the kindergarten instruction will be assigned by the principal after consultation with the teachers. Assignments will take into consideration a teacher’s interests, experience, credential, training and skills, and kindergarten and District needs.

All District kindergarten teachers will teach the same number of minutes.

2. The amount of the kindergarten teacher assignment along with all other primary teachers will be calculated according to the time school officially begins and ends, excluding lunch and recesses and other preparation periods as established by the Principal.
3. Kindergarten teachers who do not provide the contractual amount of instructional minutes to their classes will be assigned to provide instruction within the primary program in accordance with provisions of the Master Contract.

Standard #3 – Allocation of Specialty Teachers to the Kindergarten Instructional Program

The following will be general guidelines related to the allocation of instructional services provided by specialists to kindergarten students:

| <u>Specialty</u> | <u>Approximate Minutes Per Week</u> |
|--------------------|-------------------------------------|
| Music | 30 |
| Physical Education | 20 |
| Art | 30 |
| Total | 80 |

Rationale and Application of Standard:

1. The level of service by specialists in enrichment/extension programs was determined upon the initial implementation of the parcel taxes that fund the instructional services.
2. The level of service is intended to be applied consistently at each of the grade levels including kindergarten.
3. Each school will have the opportunity to apply this standard in accordance with its unique scheduling and program considerations.
4. The extent of visits or instruction to the Library and Technology Lab will be determined at the schools.

Standard #4 – Intervention/Support Services to Identified Students

Each school’s kindergarten program will develop the manner by which students who require special and additional services can participate in extended instructional minutes and in groupings that address individual needs.

Rationale and Application of Standard:

1. Educational studies indicate that students from lower socio-economic families and those with little experience within developmental preschools will benefit from additional instructional time and more extensive experience in kindergarten.
2. Each of the configurations under consideration or currently operating within the schools has the opportunity to provide additional services to the students who most need them. Examples include additional extended day opportunities at Oak Knoll (more days per week) or at Laurel where students may attend more than one small group session per day.

Standard #5 – Class Size

No later than the beginning of the 2006-07 school year, each school will implement the State Class Size Reduction Program. In the spring of each year, the administration will plan for class sizes of 20 students. The flexibility provisions of the State program in which actual class sizes may exceed 20 per class will accommodate spikes in enrollment in proximity to the opening of the school year or after the first day of instruction.

Rationale and Application of Standard:

1. All similar districts in proximity to Menlo Park currently operate kindergarten programs in accordance with the State Class Size Reduction Program.
2. Anticipated State revenue for the 2005-06 school year could be \$272,812 to offset the costs of additional kindergarten classes and contribute to the overall revenue of the District. (In the event that classes exceed 20 students per class, new flexibility provisions in the State Program will enable the District participation with financial penalties.)
3. Due to the timing of the Board decision related to this standard, the Superintendent will work with each school principal regarding implementation. Facility and operational constraints as well as overall growth in enrollment at each of the schools may prohibit one or more of the schools to fully implement prior to 2006-07.

Standard #6 – Voluntary Participation in Early Primary Program

Full-day kindergarten programs may operate at each of the schools comprised of voluntary teachers and parents in accordance with the provisions of the Early Primary Program as defined in Education Code Sections 8970-8974.

Rationale and Application of Standard:

1. The Early primary program is defined by Education Code as *an integrated, experiential and developmentally appropriate educational program for children...that incorporates various instructional strategies and authentic assessment practices, including educationally appropriate curricula, heterogeneous groupings, active learning activities, oral language development, small group instruction, peer interaction, use of concrete manipulative materials in the classroom, planned articulation among preschool, kindergarten and primary grades, and parent involvement and education.*
2. This full-day option will be presented to the Board of Education by the Principal of the school at which time the features of the proposed program will be presented to reflect the provisions of the Education Code. The Board of Education will provide authorization through Board Resolution for initiation of the class(es).
3. The Early Primary Program will be voluntary for both the District teachers for assignment and the parents of children enrolled.
4. The Superintendent will work with the principals to provide additional support and resources to Early Primary Programs, which may include additional allocation of instructional aide time, additional preparation time for teachers, and necessary supplemental materials and/or equipment and furniture.

SUMMARY

These recommendations for District standards intend to align quantitative measures for kindergarten operations. The standards are presented with the full recognition that the teacher teams at each school site can best configure the groupings of students and the organization of instruction to achieve qualitative results of student achievement and enriched experiences.

It is the role of the District in establishing these standards to assess and audit compliance and to assist the school with providing necessary resources for implementation and strategies for evaluation.

The District acknowledges that the Menlo Park Education Association may demand to bargain the impacts of these standards if they are able to identify specific impacts on mandatory negotiable subjects that have not already been bargained.