

Rush-Henrietta Central School District

# Full-day Kindergarten Program

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## Introduction

Beginning in the fall of 2017 the Rush-Henrietta School District will expand and enrich the current kindergarten half-day program into a full-day program to provide a strong foundation for all students in their early learning years. The extended learning time will increase student mastery of the wide range of literacy, numeracy, and content area skills that are required by the New York State Learning Standards.

May 19, 2017

## **Rationale for a Full-day Kindergarten Program**

The Rush-Henrietta Kindergarten Program is a comprehensive program that includes all core academic areas while addressing the physical, social, and emotional developmental needs of students. This full-day kindergarten program is a proactive approach to address individual learning needs, reducing learning gaps and the need for remediation in later years, and ensuring continued academic success as students progress in school. As a school district, we strongly believe in providing quality first teaching centered on best instructional practices. In a kindergarten program, these practices include language-based experiences, early literacy instruction focused on phonological awareness, reading and writing as well as the constructivist approach to math.

A half-day kindergarten alternative is not offered in the Rush-Henrietta School District. In order to offer a half-day program, the kindergarten program would need to revert back to a half-day program and those who stay for a full day of instruction would be offered extension activities after the half-day program. Thus, providing two different kindergarten programs which would yield two different outcomes. This would widen the gap of skill levels between the students entering from a full-day and a half-day program into the first grade program. The district believes that offering a full-day kindergarten program will best meet the instructional needs of our students.

## **Kindergarten Philosophy**

Kindergarten is the time for children to grow in an interactive learning environment that focuses on the total student; addressing their physical, social, emotional, and intellectual development. In kindergarten a wide range of experiences are provided to develop each child's sense of competence and positive feelings about learning in order to establish a base for lifelong learning.

## **Kindergarten Program Overview**

Kindergarten is a child's introduction into their formal schooling experience. It lays the foundation for school success over the course of the year and for successful transition to first grade. A rich kindergarten school year prepares a child for success throughout their education, as well as a lifetime of learning. A child-centered, full-day program establishes a strong foundation for learning in the early years, and does so in a learning environment that promotes the physical, social, emotional, and intellectual development of all children. The full-day kindergarten program provides young children with a wide range of multiple opportunities to learn, practice, and demonstrate knowledge and skills in all areas of learning.

Kindergarten includes inquiry-based learning, during which children explore answers to their questions through hands-on interaction with materials, building their questioning skills, and enhancing their understanding of key academic concepts in an interactive and engaging classroom. Students gather and process new information by capitalizing on their previous experiences to further develop their understandings in all content areas. At this early age of learning, skills such as thinking critically, speaking and writing clearly, working with others, and problem solving are integrated into the kindergarten curriculum. Information communication technology skills are embedded in purposeful learning experiences.

Most importantly, kindergarten teachers and school staff provide a nurturing environment. Students must feel secure, valued, and cared about when attending school. A Positive Behavior Intervention and Support (PBIS) system is implemented to help ensure students are safe and able to learn. With guidance, support, and encouragement students begin to make informed choices and practice individual decision-making. During the kindergarten year, students are developing social-emotional skills and a positive self-image to foster personal and intellectual development.

## **Kindergarten Instructional Time**

Rush-Henrietta kindergarten students will attend school for 6.25 hours (375 minutes) per day.

The allocated time for instruction per content area will be:

Daily Routines	30 minutes
English Language Arts	145 minutes
Mathematics	60 minutes
Social Studies, Science & Health	30 minutes
Physical Education, Music & Visual Arts	35 minutes
Intervention & Enrichment	30 minutes
Lunch	30 minutes
Recess	15 minutes

No provisions have been made for rest time or play time other than recess. Teachers are expected to provide children with appropriate quiet time and physical activity when student behavior indicates these needs.

## **Kindergarten Academic Program**

### **English Language Arts:**

The kindergarten program provides 145 minutes of English Language Arts instruction each day, with an emphasis on reading, writing, language and word study. In addition, listening, speaking, and technological information literacy is addressed. The additional time dedicated to English Language Arts in the full-day program allows for a focus on student mastery of skills in these areas. An increased emphasis is placed on phonemic awareness, word study, and comprehension in the full-day program. During this time a district approved foundational skills program for all students is implemented by each kindergarten teacher. The district balanced literacy framework defines the instructional practices to deliver the English Language Arts curriculum while providing rich literacy experiences to foster student enjoyment and appreciation for reading and writing.

### **Mathematics:**

The full-day kindergarten schedule includes 60 minutes for mathematics instruction each day, which gives students ample opportunities to master their number sense and fluency which is essential for math learning in subsequent years. Students are introduced to the relationship between numbers and quantities and build a foundation for place value as they count, represent

and compare whole numbers. Students also use manipulatives to learn about geometric shapes and measurement. The Standards for Mathematical Practice and vocabulary are embedded within daily instruction.

### **Social Studies, Science and Health:**

A dedicated time of 30 minutes is allotted each day for social studies, science and/or health instruction. This provides students with an in-depth introduction and beginning application of essential practices and understandings in these content areas.

During social studies lessons teachers further develop the understandings students bring to school gained from their families and communities to develop an ever-expanding sense of place within the world. Social studies instruction begins with the child's present knowledge and then moves outward to develop important connections with the larger geographic, historical, political, and economic world. This is accomplished by discussions and interactive instruction that includes visual and auditory learning experiences.

Science instruction captures the natural curiosity that young children display: exploring, asking questions, playing with new objects, experimenting with different senses and observing. Time is provided for students to investigate, experiment, and apply problem solving skills. Students find answers or reach conclusions using their observations through an inquiry approach and hands-on experiments. The methodologies used in science, as well as in social studies, are also used for health instruction. The kindergarten health instruction promotes the understanding of health and wellness.

During social studies, science and health content instruction teachers integrate foundational literacy and math skills. For example, shared readings of narrative and expository text related to the content standards can reinforce academic vocabulary, concepts about print, analysis of text, and fluency. Students also engage in interactive writing lessons using learned content for informational writing. A math example is students creating graphs to represent data collected during a science observation.

**Physical Education, Music and Visual Arts:**

Students engage in 35 minutes of a physical education, music or visual arts class each day taught by a content area certified teacher. These classes provide sensory and intellectual exploration that connects the creative and cognitive development of young children. Classroom teachers consult with the physical education teachers to embed additional physical education instruction within the school day. Together, teachers provide learning experiences that help children construct knowledge and understandings to enhance their development.

**Intervention and Enrichment:**

The full-day kindergarten program provides increased flexibility in delivering intervention and enrichment opportunities. Children learn at different rates; some need additional instruction to master certain skills while others quickly master skills with minimal instruction. Teachers respond to the individual student needs throughout the instructional day. In addition, a 30 minute dedicated time for intervention and enrichment provides additional time and support for mastering and applying foundational literacy and math skills.

Intervention instruction reinforces foundational literacy (decoding and encoding) and math skills for students needing additional time and strategies to master these skills. Enrichment instruction expands on content objectives for students who have mastered the skills and are ready to apply their acquired skills beyond the standards. The intervention and enrichment time offers fluid opportunities for students to receive responsive education, based upon individual strengths and needs.

<b>KINDERGARTEN INSTRUCTIONAL DAY</b> <b>Instructional Practices</b> <b>4-day rotation schedule</b>	
<b>Daily Routines</b> 30 minutes	Breakfast, Attendance, Announcements, Calendar, Daily Schedule “Morning Message” using a language-experience approach End of day “wrap up”, dismissal procedures
<b>ELA Reading</b> 70 minutes	Read Aloud Shared, Guided and Independent Reading Reading Conferences Center-based activities Literature discussion Author Study (content curriculum integration)
<b>ELA Writing</b> 30 minutes	Modeled, Shared, Interactive, Guided and Independent Writing Writing process instruction Writing conferences (integrated content curriculum)
<b>ELA Language &amp; Word Study</b> 45 minutes	Prescriptive phonological program Handwriting program Large group initial instruction
<b>Math</b> 60 minutes	Mini-lessons Number Talks Guided Math Center-based activities
<b>Social Studies/ Science/Health</b> 30 minutes	Modeled, Shared and Interactive Instruction Hands-on experiments Inquiry based thinking & discussions (integration of math and literacy skills)
<b>Intervention / Enrichment</b> 30 minutes	Differentiated literacy and/or math instruction based on student needs small group differentiated practice
<b>Specials</b> 35 minutes	Physical Education (2 days) Music (1 day) Visual Art (1 day)
<b>Lunch</b> 30 minutes	
<b>Recess</b> 15 minutes	Meaningful and interactive play

The sequence of when each content area is taught within the day varies upon school schedules.

## **Kindergarten Assessment Practices**

Assessments guide teaching and learning, identify intervention and enrichment needs, and inform program effectiveness. Kindergarten students are given age-appropriate assessments aligned to the kindergarten standards that are both formative and summative.

The formative assessments are teacher constructed tasks that provide immediate information of student learning during instruction. Kindergarten teachers assess and support individual learning through interaction and observation. Teachers maintain anecdotal records of student performance based on their observations of students while they are participating in a variety of learning experiences. The summative assessments kindergarten students complete district developed benchmark assessments for English Language Arts and Math. These assessments evaluate student learning at various times throughout the school year and compare student growth against the grade level standards. Both summative and formative assessments are used to monitor student progress toward meeting the standards. They also provide ongoing feedback that is used by teachers to improve their teaching and by students to improve their learning. The collected student assessment data is reviewed to provide a comprehensive evaluation of student progress throughout the year.

Individual student assessment information is shared with parents to inform them of their child's development and identify strategies for supporting progress. This information is communicated through the district reporting system. Parents receive quarterly report cards, with the first report card reviewed at the fall parent teacher conference. Throughout the year kindergarten teachers provide periodic updates to parents based on individual student progress.

## Home School Partnership

Starting kindergarten is a milestone for a child and their family and it can cause excitement and anxiety. Kindergarten teachers understand a family's perspective about the transition to kindergarten. They also recognize that families are a child's first teacher and as such their partnership is needed and valued. Teachers understand that the transition to school may be challenging for some students. School staff work with families to ease the transition and to help ensure a positive kindergarten experience.

It is essential, every effort is made to ensure ongoing, effective communication and partnerships be established and maintained with families. Teachers communicate, interact, and collaborate with families to establish positive and purposeful relationships.

Activities to support home school partnerships include:

- ❖ kindergarten orientation and open house
- ❖ district, school and teacher webpages
- ❖ individual parent-teacher conferences
- ❖ home reading programs
- ❖ special events, such as math and literacy nights
- ❖ home visits by school staff when necessary
- ❖ opportunities to volunteer

