

Information for the Families of Incoming Kindergarten Students 2018-2019 School Year

Dear Incoming Kindergarten Families,

On behalf of the School Committee and faculty and staff members of Wrentham Public Schools, welcome! Our mission is to work with you to help all of our students become reflective, life-long learners. We look forward to getting to know you and your children.

We want to make the transition to kindergarten as easy as possible. To that end, Delaney School Principal Colleen Wagstaff will host [Kindergarten Information Night](#) on Tuesday, April 3, 2018, in the Vogel auditorium. At Kindergarten Information Night, administrators and teachers will share details about the kindergarten program and answer your questions. As the father of three former kindergarten students (my youngest is in first grade now), I can attest to the benefits of attending Kindergarten Information Night. I hope to see you there.

In addition to Kindergarten Information Night, we have compiled a list of Frequently Asked Questions about Kindergarten in Wrentham, 2018-2019. We hope that the information provided will help you understand our kindergarten options and decide whether half-day or full-day kindergarten is best for your child.

- How many instructional hours does Massachusetts law require for kindergarten? What about the other elementary school grades?
- Why does Wrentham offer free half-day kindergarten and charge tuition for full-day kindergarten?
- What are the hours of half-day kindergarten and full-day kindergarten?
- How many students are in half-day kindergarten and full-day kindergarten?
- Are there designated half-day kindergarten classes?
- How does the schedule work with a mix of half-day and full day students?
- What do the students in full-day kindergarten do after the half-day students leave school?
- Is the extra time practicing the academic and prosocial skills beneficial to full-day students?
- Norfolk and Plainville offer free full-day kindergarten. Why not Wrentham?

- Is my child ready for full-day kindergarten? What do the students do during the day?
- Is there a transition program where students are half-day for part of the year and full-day for the rest of the year?
- Why do you request notice of the request to transition from half-day to full day in mid-October if the transition happens on November 1?
- Why is the school district establishing a transition start date of November 1? Isn't that too early?
- What if my child starts kindergarten and I want to change her/his program after the October 15/November 1 transition period?
- I want my child to attend full-day kindergarten but I cannot afford the \$325 per month tuition. Can the district help?
- Is there going to be an opportunity for me to learn more about kindergarten?
- What do I do if I still have questions?

I hope the FAQs and the information provided at Kindergarten Information Night will answer your questions and help you prepare for the 2017-2018 school year. Please contact Mrs. Wagstaff at wagstaffc@wrenthamschools.org or 508-384-5430 extension 1 if you have questions.

Yours truly,

Allan Cameron
Superintendent of Wrentham Public Schools
camerona@wrenthamschools.org
508-384-5430 extension 3

Frequently Asked Questions about Kindergarten in Wrentham, 2018-2019

How many instructional hours does Massachusetts law require for kindergarten? What about the other elementary school grades?

Massachusetts law requires a minimum of 425 annual hours of learning time in kindergarten and 900 annual hours of learning time for the other elementary grades.

Why does Wrentham offer free half-day kindergarten and charge tuition for full-day kindergarten?

School districts may provide additional hours of kindergarten instruction beyond the 425 for free or for an additional cost. In Wrentham, students may attend half-day kindergarten for free or attend full-day kindergarten for \$325.00 per month. This model is used by many Massachusetts school districts.

What are the hours of half-day kindergarten and full-day kindergarten?

Half-day kindergarten is from 8:20 a.m. to 11:20 a.m. Full-day kindergarten is from 8:20 a.m. to 2:45 p.m.

How many students are in half-day kindergarten and full-day kindergarten?

In the 2017-2018 school year, there are 11 students in half-day and 121 students in full-day kindergarten.

Are there designated half-day kindergarten classes?

No. There are 6 kindergarten classes. All of them have a mix of full-day students and half-day students.

How does the schedule work with a mix of half-day and full day students?

The students learn the same material and participate in the same academic and social skill development. At 11:20, the half-day students are dismissed to go home and the full-day students go to lunch.

What do the students in full-day kindergarten do after the half-day students leave school?

All kindergarten students learn the required content and skills regardless of whether they are in the half-day program or the full-day program. However, students in the full-day program spend additional time with teachers, paraprofessionals, and peers reviewing, practicing, and expanding their understanding of the academic and social skills. For example, imagine Scotty was in half-day kindergarten and Annie was in full-day kindergarten. Both students would learn to count to 100 by tens during a lesson in the morning. That afternoon, Annie would participate in a small group activity to practice counting to 100 by 10s. Scotty would not participate in that additional practice activity since he would not be in school. Full-day students also participate in lunch, recess, and special subjects like art, music, and physical education.

Is the extra time practicing the academic and social skills beneficial to full-day students?

Yes. Research suggests students benefit academically and emotionally from participating in full-day kindergarten. This is an excerpt from *Child Trends*, a nonprofit, nonpartisan research center focused on child development

(<http://www.childtrends.org/indicators/full-day-kindergarten/>):

Overall, children who spend time in full-day kindergarten programs are more likely than children who spend time in half-day kindergarten programs to devote time every day to reading, mathematics, and social studies. Full-day kindergarten allows teachers more time to promote formal and informal learning, reduces the number of transitions in a child's day, and allows children to get used to a schedule similar to that which they will have in first grade. In the short-term, children attending full-day kindergarten programs tend to do better in school than do children attending half-day kindergarten programs, and show stronger academic gains in kindergarten.

In sum, students who spend more time in school demonstrate better academic and social growth. Therefore, most Massachusetts school districts are increasing access to full-day kindergarten.

Norfolk and Plainville offer free full-day kindergarten. Why not Wrentham?

One of the main School Committee priorities is to provide free full-day kindergarten in Wrentham. Unfortunately, we cannot afford to do so at this time.

Norfolk and Plainville spend more money per pupil than Wrentham. In 2016, Norfolk spent \$15,193 per pupil, Plainville spent \$15,099 per pupil, and Wrentham spent \$14,209. If we had that money, we could afford to pay for free full-day kindergarten. We receive about \$300,000 in full-day kindergarten tuition each school year. We cannot absorb the loss of that money without making cuts to other parts of the budget. Since most of our budget is spent on salaries, we would have to cut about 6 teachers or other staff members to close the gap.

Is my child ready for full-day kindergarten? What do the students do during the day?

Our kindergarten teachers structure the full-day kindergarten schedule to foster student success. The children are active and involved in work and play with other children, materials, and adults throughout the day. They learn in large groups, small groups, and individually with teachers. The teachers balance active time with down time so the students are not overwhelmed. Some students may be tired after school, particularly in September. However, almost all of our full-day kindergarten students enjoy school and manage the schedule well.

Are students allowed to transition from the half-day program to the full-day program?

Yes. One benefit of having all kindergarten classes on a full-day schedule next year is that it will be easy for half-day kindergarten students to switch to full-day during the school year at parent request. Parents may change the enrollment of their half-day kindergarten students to full-day until October 15 by emailing the teacher. The students will switch to full-day kindergarten on November 1.

Why do you request notice of the request to transition from half-day to full day in mid-October if the transition happens on November 1?

We need enough time to prepare for the transition so it is as smooth as possible.

Why is the school district establishing a transition start date of November 1? Isn't that too early?

Based on our conversations with other school districts and our experience with kindergarten students, we think the November 1 transition date is optimal for students whose parents do not think them ready for full-day kindergarten at the start of the school year. It allows students two

months of half-day kindergarten to acclimate to school while allowing them to benefit from full-day kindergarten for the majority of the school year.

What if my child starts kindergarten and I want to change her/his program after the October 15/November 1 transition period? We

We understand that families may experience changes in circumstances during the school year. If this happens, we ask parents to meet with the principal to discuss the situation and possible solutions. Each case will be evaluated individually and confidentially.

I want my child to attend full-day kindergarten but I cannot afford the \$325 per month tuition. Can the district help?

Yes. We encourage students' families to contact us if they cannot afford the monthly tuition. We review each tuition reduction or waiver request confidentially and individually. We typically waive or reduce the tuition for students who qualify for free or reduced price lunch, students who receive special education services and require an extended day as part of their IEP, and English language learners. We do not want cost to be the factor that prevents a student from participating in full-day kindergarten.

Is there going to be an opportunity for me to learn more about kindergarten?

Yes. Kindergarten Information Night is scheduled for Tuesday, April 4, 2017, from 6:00-7:00 p.m. in the Vogel auditorium. Parents will learn all about kindergarten in Wrentham at the meeting. The administrators and teachers will be there to answer your questions.

What do I do if I still have questions?

Let us know! You may contact Principal Colleen Wagstaff, Business Director Beth Gilbert, or Superintendent Allan Cameron. We want to help you and your child have a great experience in kindergarten!