



SACRAMENTO CITY UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT BOARD OF EDUCATION

Agenda Item# 10.3

Meeting Date: November 6, 2014

Subject: First Reading of New Board Policy: Early Kindergarten

- ☐ Information Item Only
- ☐ Approval on Consent Agenda
- ☐ Conference (for discussion only)
- ☒ Conference/First Reading (Action Anticipated: November 20, 2014)
- ☐ Conference/Action
- ☐ Action
- ☐ Public Hearing

Segment/Department: Academic Office/Early Kindergarten

Recommendation: The Board of Education is requested to approve the Early Kinder Board Policy.

Background/Rationale:

An important step in reaching the vision outlined in Pillar One, *College and Career Ready Students*, of the district's strategic plan, is to build a stronger support network for our youngest learners. In 2010, California enacted the Kindergarten Readiness Act, S.B. 1381, which has moved back the Kindergarten entry date, and requires districts to offer Transitional Kindergarten, affectionately called Early Kinder in SCUSD. This gift of time affords children who turn five between September 1st and December 2nd an additional year of school and serves as a bridge between preschool and Kindergarten.

The district began its implementation of the Early Kinder program in 2011 with five pilot school sites (Alice Birney Waldorf Inspired K-8, Leonardo da Vinci K-8, Theodore Judah, and Hubert Bancroft/Thomas Jefferson). Since then, it has expanded to H.W. Harkness, A.M. Winn, and Pacific, providing students and families regional access for this early educational opportunity. The response from parents and school staff strongly indicate that Early Kinder provides the extra support to help students develop the social, emotional and academic skills needed for regular Kindergarten and success in school.

The adoption of a Board policy will outline the state regulation and prescribe the essential program components that will necessitate that students enrolled in the program will exist with the knowledge, skills, and attitudes that will position them for success in subsequent grades.

Financial Considerations: The adoption of the proposed policy does not have any budget implications. However, the Early Kinder program is supported with funds generated by Average Daily Attendance (ADA) dollars plus added general fund dollars. These additional funds serve to underwrite the costs for classroom set-up, instructional resources and professional learning. The total amount budgeted to maintain the seven programs is \$236,000.

Documents Attached:

1. Executive Summary
2. Proposed Early Kindergarten Board Policy

Estimated Time of Presentation: 30 minutes

Submitted by: Olivine Roberts, Ed.D., Chief Academic Officer

Approved by: José L. Banda, Superintendent



I. Overview of the Early Kinder Program

An important step in reaching the vision outlined in Pillar One, *College and Career Ready Students*, of the district's strategic plan, is to build a stronger support network for our youngest learners. In 2010, California enacted the Kindergarten Readiness Act, S.B. 1381. Prior to that time, children in Sacramento City Unified School District (SCUSD) and throughout the state began Kindergarten at a younger age than almost all other states. These early age students often begin school before they have maturity, early literacy and pre-math skills needed to meet the challenges of a rigorous academic Kindergarten program. Moving back the Kindergarten entry date is a welcome response addressing this longstanding practice and has created a new educational opportunity, Transitional Kindergarten, affectionately called Early Kinder in SCUSD. This gift of time affords children who turn five between September 1st and December 2nd an additional year of school and serves as a bridge between preschool and Kindergarten. Early Kinder uses developmentally appropriate curricula aligned to the Common Core State Standards and taught by credentialed teachers in an enriching environment.

The district continues to deepen its implementation of the Early Kinder program for its students and families. Since its implementation in 2011 with five pilot school sites (Alice Birney Waldorf Inspired K-8, Leonardo da Vinci K-8, Theodore Judah, and Hubert Bancroft/Thomas Jefferson), it has expanded to H.W. Harkness, A.M. Winn, and Pacific, providing students and families regional access for this early educational opportunity. The response from parents and school staff strongly indicate that Early Kinder provides the extra support to help students develop the social, emotional and academic skills needed for regular Kindergarten and success in school. It is the district's intent to expand the program to each school that is able to support this educational opportunity for its school community.

An important step sustaining the Early Kinder program is the adoption of a Board policy. Using the California School Boards Association (CSBA) sample policy as a guide, the district has drafted a policy that outlines the state regulation and prescribes the essential program components that will necessitate that students enrolled in the program will exist with the knowledge, skills, and attitudes that will position them for success in subsequent grades. The following notes a brief description of each section of the proposed Board policy:

- Section one describes the district's intent to provide a high quality Early Kinder program for the children that do not meet the minimum age requirement for Kindergarten in the state of California. It defines the Early Kinder program as the first year of a two-year experience and states that the Board encourages ongoing collaboration among all school community and school district stakeholders.

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- Section two states the student eligibility dates for the current school year and each year after 2014/2015 as specified by the California Department of Education. Parents or guardians shall be notified of program availability and the program requirements. Enrollment in Early Kinder shall be voluntary.
- Section three addresses the district's intent to provide a modified curriculum that is age and developmentally appropriate. Upon the recommendation of the Superintendent or designee, the Board shall approve the academic standards for Early Kinder that bridge the preschool learning foundations and the academic standards for Kindergarten in English language arts, mathematics, physical development, the arts, science, social studies, English language development, and social-emotional development. The number of instructional minutes required for Early Kinder is the same as required in Kindergarten, which is a minimum of 180 minutes. Early Kinder students can be placed in the same room as Kindergarten students.
- Section four stipulates that teachers assigned to an Early Kinder classroom shall possess a teaching credential or permit that authorizes Kindergarten grade level instruction. The Superintendent or designee may provide professional development to ensure that the Early Kinder teachers are knowledgeable about district standards and effective teaching methods.
- Section five specifies students who complete Early Kinder shall be eligible to continue in Kindergarten the following year. Early Kinder students shall return to their designated home school site or school site designated by the Open Enrollment process. A child shall not attend more than two years in any combination of Early Kinder or regular Kindergarten classes.
- Section six delineates that the Superintendent or designee shall develop or identify appropriate assessments for Early Kinder students. The Superintendent will monitor and report to the Board regarding program implementation and student progress.

Ensuring that a broad-based coalition of district's stakeholders had a voice in the process, the policy development engagement approach as outlined in the Board's bylaws was utilized. As a result, the proposed Early Kinder policy was vetted with the District Advisory Committee, District English Learner Advisory Committee; and the Community Advisory Committee for Special Education. The policy was also shared with the Sacramento City Teachers Association. In addition, the Early Kinder Advisory Committee, consisting of teachers, principals, and parents, had the opportunity to review the policy. Furthermore, presentations were made at a Hubert Bancroft PTA meeting and a Pacific Elementary School Site Council meeting; at both of these meetings, all Early Kinder parents were invited to participate and provide feedback. Input from the various stakeholders helped to shape the development of the proposed policy.



The adoption of the proposed Early Kinder policy serves as an essential means to guide the development, implementation, and evaluation of the Early Kinder program in accordance with the Kindergarten Readiness Act. In addition, the policy reinforces the importance of early-childhood education as a vital component of our students' educational experience and contribution to their well-being, social development, and readiness to learn.

II. Driving Governance

The research clearly indicates that high-quality education for young learners is vitally important in assuring school success and plays a pivotal role in closing the achievement gap among groups of students. Children who participate in high-quality early childhood programs tend to perform at/above the proficiency level, have greater language abilities, and fewer grade retentions (Lynch, 2005). According to a study conducted by the RAND Corporation in 2007, the readiness gap mirrors the achievement gap of students in the primary grades. However, the report denoted that entering Kindergarten at an older age is an important predictor for student success. Students who are older when they enter Kindergarten demonstrate a significant boost in academic achievement, self-confidence, and positive attitudes about school and learning.

Consequently, to ensure student readiness, it is vital that SCUSD provides an Early Kinder (two-year) program to give students an additional year to mature socially, emotionally, cognitively, and physically.

III. Budget

The adoption of the proposed policy does not have any budget implications. However, the Early Kinder program is supported with funds generated by Average Daily Attendance (ADA) dollars plus added general fund dollars. These additional funds serve to underwrite the costs for classroom set-up, instructional resources and professional learning. The total amount budgeted to maintain the seven programs is \$236,000.

IV. Goals, Objectives and Measures

The district is fully committed to preparing its students for college and career. Its goal is to provide students with experiences, beginning with the formative years, which will place them on a trajectory that will position them for success beyond their preschool- grade 12 tenure. Hence, the Early Kinder program is critical to accomplishing this end.



To ensure the program's success, the district is committed to providing an infrastructure of support based on research, reform initiatives and exemplary practices. This includes quality professional learning that is continuous and fosters a deepening of subject matter knowledge and a greater understanding of learning for improving classroom practice and student learning, as well as customized targeted support.

Additionally, the district will assess the quality, effectiveness, and fidelity of implementation through the consistent review of curriculum content for alignment to standards, cognitive demand, diversity, and relevance. The quality of teaching and learning will be determined through observations of instructional delivery, progress reports, and teacher reflection. Using multiple measures to further ensure validity, the district will also collect perception data through surveys, and evaluations of professional learning. All results will be used to inform programmatic and systematic changes.

V. Major Initiatives

As an early adopter of Early Kinder, the district first organized an advisory committee balanced with district administrators, site principals, and parent members. The program is progressing through the work and efforts of implementing sites and the advisory committee. A positive boost for the program was the Packard Foundation's approval for the district's submitted grant requests for three consecutive years of \$15,000, \$25,000, and \$25,000. This much needed grant funding was used to support classroom set-up, instructional materials, professional learning, and school community presentations. The program's focus continues through building a strong foundation by:

- Cultivating a community of practice
- Building a developmentally appropriate curriculum model
- Providing professional learning opportunities for staff
- Building an informational base to inform parents, students, and staff to support Early Kinder growth
- Providing parent engagement opportunity

More specifically, program improvements have been made by:

- Developing CCSS-aligned curriculum
- Supplying needed instructional and classroom materials
- Upgrading the Early Kinder Student Progress Report used to share performance information with parents
- Delivering professional learning such as: Social Emotional Development, Hands-on Learning in Math, and Pathways for Early Learners

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- Providing a School Readiness Developmental Screening Assessment model to evaluate Kindergarten readiness for Early Kinder students

Building a common Early Kinder model that educates the whole child and assisting the existing sites is positioning the district for future program expansion.

VI. Results

While the program is yet evolving, data from varying sources indicate that the program is indeed making a difference and is positively impacting student learning. It has grown from serving approximately 71 students and their families to now serving 156 in schools regionally placed throughout the district. To garner the perception of parents and staff, last spring, a survey was administered to parents and staff at each Early Kinder.

Feedback from parents who responded to the survey is as follows:

- Ninety-nine percent (99%) indicated that Early Kinder provided the time and instruction necessary to develop the social/emotional and academic skills needed at this grade level
- One hundred percent (100%) noted that the program provided appropriate opportunities for social/emotional development to help build positive social interactions with peers and school staff
- One hundred percent (100%) responded that the program provided instructional opportunities to increase self-regulation and accept class/school instruction
- Ninety percent (90%) cited that their child benefitted from having this program to help prepare for Kindergarten/next steps in school
- Ninety-eight percent (98%) indicated that the program provided a variety of learning activities such as: play, student choice, one to one, small group, and large group instruction to help build capacity for their child
- Ninety-eight percent (98%) stated that the program has been a positive learning experience for their child

Feedback from teachers who responded to the survey is as follows:

- Parent involvement has increased
- They have a deeper understanding of the developmental needs of their students
- English learners (EL) are showing tremendous growth
- Better structures are in place so that teaching activities/workshop centers are working more effectively
- Teacher collaboration has increased

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The district continues to build a close working relationship with neighboring school districts in the area and throughout the state. The Early Kinder school sites and district office have hosted and shared materials/ideas with visitors from Early Edge, the California State Legislature, the Sacramento County Office of Education, and surrounding school districts this past year. Sacramento City Unified participates in collaborative meetings with the Sacramento County Office of Education and other district representatives to help build a learning group that supports regional development of this program. In addition, the Community Partners Program with California State University, Sacramento-Student Volunteers/Student Partners has been very beneficial to the Early Kinder program.

Within the district, a more collaborative partnership continues to be developed between Early Kinder, Child Development Department, and the Curriculum & Instruction Department. With the development of Early Kinder, professional development meetings have created more opportunities to open dialogue between Preschool, Early Kinder, and regular K-12 education, helping us build a joint partnership to strengthen early education opportunities for families and students in the district.

VII. Lessons Learned/Next Steps

As the district moves forward with the established Early Kinder sites, the district will continue to build a strong program model by:

- Continuing to provide professional learning in Early Kinder Curriculum and Instructional Practices, Social Emotional and Physical Development, Developmental Play, Assessment for Kinder Readiness, Hands-on Mathematics, and Classroom Management/Behavior Techniques for Early Kinder students
- Continuing to provide developmentally appropriate instructional materials
- Continuing to develop the Early Kinder student assessment model
- Continuing to evaluate program success through student assessments and program evaluation from parents, site principals, and teachers
- Enhancing communication to provide information to the school community and build future enrollment at the school sites
- Organizing and holding monthly meetings to build a common district program model and further develop the program's instructional platform
- Developing new program sites as the district budget allows

Sacramento City USD

Board Policy

Early Kinder (Transitional Kindergarten)

The governing board desires to offer a high-quality Early Kinder (Transitional Kindergarten) Program for eligible children who do not yet meet the minimum age criterion for Kindergarten. The program shall assist children in developing the academic, social, and emotional skills they need to succeed in Kindergarten and beyond.

The district's Early Kinder shall be the first year of a two-year Kindergarten program (Education Code 48000)

The Board encourages ongoing collaboration among district preschool staff, other preschool providers, elementary teachers, administrators, and parents/guardians in program development, implementation, and evaluation.

(cf. 0420 – School Plans/Site Councils)
(cf. 1220 – Citizen Advisory Committees)
(cf. 6020 – Parent Involvement)

Eligibility

The district's Early Kinder Program shall prioritize student enrollment for children whose fifth birthday lies between: (Education Code: 48000)

- November 2 and December 2 in the 2012-13 school year
- October 2 and December 2 in the 2013-14 school year
- September 2 and December 2 in the 2014-15 school year and each school year thereafter

Parents/guardians of eligible children shall be notified of the availability of this program and the age, residency, and any other enrollment requirements. Enrollment in the Early Kinder Program shall be voluntary.

(cf. 5111 - Admission)
(cf. 5111.1 – District Residency)
(cf. 5111.12 – Residency Based on Parent/Guardian Employment)
(cf. 5111.13 – Residency for Homeless Children)
(cf. 5141.22 – Infectious Diseases)
(cf. 5141.3 – Health Examinations)
(cf. 5141.31 – Immunizations)
(cf. 5141.32 – Health Screening for School Entry)

Curriculum and Instruction

The district's Early Kinder Program shall be based on a modified Kindergarten curriculum that is age and developmentally appropriate. (Education Code: 48000)

(cf. 6141 – Curriculum Development and Evaluation)

(cf. 6161.1 – Selection and Evaluation of Instructional Materials)

Upon recommendation by the Superintendent or designee, the Board shall approve academic standards for Early Kinder that bridge preschool learning foundations and Kindergarten standards. Such standards shall be designed to facilitate students' development in essential skills which may include, as appropriate, language and literacy, mathematics, physical development, the arts, science, social studies, English language development, and social-emotional development.

(cf. 5148.3 –Preschool/Early Childhood Education)

(cf. 6011 – Academic Standards)

(cf. 6174 – Education for English Language Learners)

The number of instructional minutes offered in Early Kinder shall be the same as that required for the district's Kindergarten program.

(cf. 6111 – School Calendar)

(cf. 6112 – School Day)

Early Kinder students may be placed in the same classrooms as Kindergarten students when necessary, provided that the instructional program is differentiated to meet student needs.

Staffing

Teachers assigned to teach in Early Kinder classes shall possess a teaching credential or permit that authorizes instruction at the Kindergarten grade level.

(cf. 4112.12– Certification)

The Superintendent or designee may provide professional development as needed to ensure that Early Kinder teachers are knowledgeable about district standards and effective instructional methods for teaching young children.

(cf. 4131– Staff Development)

Continuation to Kindergarten

Students who complete the Early Kinder program shall be eligible to continue in Kindergarten the following school year.

Students enrolled at a regional non-neighborhood Early Kinder school site shall return to their assigned/neighborhood home school to continue their regular 2nd year in Kindergarten. Parents requesting to continue the second year of Kindergarten at a regional non-neighborhood school would apply to do so through the Open Enrollment Process.

A student shall not attend more than two years in a combination of Early Kinder and Kindergarten. (Education Code 46300)

(cf. 5123 – Promotion/Acceleration/Retention)

Program Evaluation

The Superintendent or designee shall develop or identify appropriate assessments of Early Kinder students' development and progress. He/she shall monitor and regularly report to the Board regarding program implementation and the progress of students in meeting related academic standards.

(cf. 0500 – Accountability)

(cf. 6162.5 – Student Assessment)

Legal Reference:

Education Code

8973 Extended-day Kindergarten

44258.9 Assignment monitoring by county office of education

46111 Kindergarten, hours of attendance

46114-46119 Minimum school day, Kindergarten

46300 Computation of average daily attendance, inclusion of Kindergarten and transitional Kindergarten

48000 Minimum age of admission (Kindergarten)

48002 Evidence of minimum age required to enter Kindergarten of first grade

48200 Compulsory education, starting at age six

60605.8 Academic Content Standards Commission, development of Common Core Standards

Management Resources:

CSBA PUBLICATIONS

Transitional Kindergarten, Issue Brief, July 2011

CALIFORNIA DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION PUBLICATIONS

Transitional Kindergarten FAQs

California Preschool Curriculum framework, Vol. 1, 2010

California Preschool Learning Foundations, vol. 1, 2008

PreKindergarten Learning Development Guidelines, 2000

First Class: A Guide for Early Primary Education, 1999

COMMISSION ON TEACHER CREDENTIALING PUBLICATIONS

11-08 Transitional Kindergarten assignments, Credential Information Alert, August 25, 2011

Web Sites:

CSBA: <http://www.csba.org>

California Department of Education: <http://www.cde.ca.gov>

California Kindergarten Association: <http://www.ckanet.org>

Commission on Teacher Credentialing: <http://www.tkcalifornia.org>