

DEPARTMENT OF CURRICULUM AND INSTRUCTION
Wilmette Public Schools

INFORMATION ITEM

Date: October 28, 2019
To: Members, Board of Education
From: Katie S. Lee
Administrator for Curriculum & Instruction

Rebecca Littmann
Principal, Central School

Aaron Dubnow
Principal, Harper School

Dana Nasiakos
Principal, McKenzie School

Cindy Anderson
Principal, Romona School

Subject: Kindergarten Enrichment Program Update

BACKGROUND

During the 2017-2018 school year, District 39 and the Board of Education initiated a study regarding the feasibility of a fee-based Kindergarten Enrichment program. The district hired STR Architects to conduct a space study. Based on STR's estimated cost for construction, administration surveyed families to gather levels of interest or commitment to a fee-based kindergarten enrichment program if the fee was set at \$6,500 per student. Since the D39 Kindergarten Enrichment Survey results indicated much support for a fee-based kindergarten enrichment program, the Board of Education and administration continued exploring making this program possible for District 39 families.

Throughout the year, the Board engaged in discussions and administration presented board reports on space and funding options, two survey results, and budget scenarios on the potential impact on fund balances for each option investigated:

- March 19, 2018 - Board of Education Meeting
- April 9, 2018 - Committee of the Whole Meeting
- April 23, 2018 - Board of Education Meeting

- May 14, 2018 - Committee of the Whole Meeting
- May 21, 2018 - Board of Education Meeting
- June 11, 2018 - Committee of the Whole Meeting
- June 18, 2018 - Board of Education Meeting

As a result, District 39 administration recommended a phased implementation of Kindergarten Enrichment Program. The enrichment offering proposed would be self-sustaining with no (or minimal) impact on tax dollars.

Phased Implementation of Kindergarten Enrichment Program

- Half-Day Kindergarten Enrichment Program Implementation Phases
 - Phase 1: Half-Day Kindergarten Enrichment Program offered to District 39 families as an optional fee-based program at Central and Harper Schools starting fall 2020. Fee established at approximately \$6,500 per student.
 - Phase 2: Half-Day Kindergarten Enrichment Program offered to District 39 families as an optional fee-based program at all elementary schools starting fall 2021. Fee established at approximately \$6,500 per student.

In January 2019, the Kindergarten Enrichment Program committee was established to begin developing the optional enrichment programming. The representatives explored other districts such as Barrington 220 and Downers Grove 58 offering a similar type of program. This exploration inspired thoughts and ideas contributing to an initial draft of the Kindergarten Enrichment Program goals. After receiving suggestions from members of the Board, administrators and teachers, the committee revised the statement of the Kindergarten Enrichment Program goals:

District 39’s Kindergarten Enrichment Program will provide a child-centered environment that fosters social emotional experiences to inspire kindness, empathy, and resilience. Through academic enrichment, socialization and play, the program offers opportunities for students to become critical and creative thinkers as well as responsible and productive lifelong learners.

KINDERGARTEN ENRICHMENT PROGRAM DEVELOPMENT UPDATE

The Kindergarten Enrichment Program Development Committee is comprised of four Kindergarten teachers and all principals representing their respective schools. This team has met to continue the work of developing District 39’s Kindergarten Enrichment & Enhancement Program also known as KEEP39.

What is the District 39’s Kindergarten Enrichment & Enhancement Program (KEEP39)?

Aligned to the district’s mission statement, KEEP39 will provide a child-centered environment designed to offer opportunities for students to enhance development as critical and creative thinkers as well as responsible and productive lifelong learners. The fee-based optional enrichment program will enhance the existing, high-quality, half-day academic Kindergarten through enrichment and exploration. It will enrich learning in literacy, math, social studies,

science, socialization and purposeful play. It will also provide enhanced social emotional experiences to inspire kindness, empathy, and resilience.

During the 2020-2021 school year, kindergarten students will attend District 39's existing half-day academic program in the morning and eligible students may choose to participate in the optional enrichment program at Central and Harper Schools in the afternoon. The program requires a fee of \$6,460. The fee will be approved annually and posted on the District 39 website informing the community that the fee covers personnel and material costs related to enrichment.

How will this fee-based optional enrichment program benefit our students?

KEEP39 offers many benefits to District 39 families and students. The following are some highlights:

- Enhanced experiences led by certified District 39 kindergarten teachers
- Expanded exploration in math, science and social studies
- Enhanced literacy activities in beginning reading and writing skills, phonics, phonemic awareness, fluency, vocabulary and comprehension
- Nature-based experiences with access to the outdoor classroom
- Increased opportunities for socialization, play and social emotional exploration
- Increased transition convenience for families and students
- STEM/STEAM (science, technology, engineering, art and mathematics) activities and challenges with certified District 39 specialists
- Approximately four additional hours per day which includes time for lunch and recess

What will a typical day of academic Kindergarten and KEEP39 look like?

During Phase I implementation, registered kindergarten students would attend the existing academic Kindergarten in the morning and opt to participate in KEEP39 in the afternoon. If the student is registered for the fee-based optional program in the afternoon, they will engage in theme-based exploration through enrichment experiences that will be designed in the following areas:

- Mathematics, Literacy (reading/writing), Science (STEM/nature), Social Studies (cultures/community)
- Arts (crafts, music, movement)
- Social emotional development (kindness, empathy, resilience)
- Play (socialization, cooperative games, self-regulation, social thinking)

REGISTRATION OPTIONS

The members of the Kindergarten Enrichment Program Development Committee, in collaboration with administrators, explored registration options for Phase I. During the October 21, 2019 Committee of the Whole meeting, the board members were presented with registration option A and option B.

After being presented the pros and cons of option A and B, the Board discussed and dismissed option B. In addition, board members offered option C for consideration to the administration team. The registration options discussed are listed below with each respective pros/cons:

- **OPTION A:** KEEP39 registration will open for Central and Harper students only in 2020-21, with ongoing program evaluation and hopeful launch of the program district-wide in the 2021-22 school year

Pros

- Strong sense of community and connectedness for students
 - All students to remain at one school
 - Increased likelihood that students will have their Kindergarten teacher for enrichment
 - Transition from AM to PM program would not require transportation provided by families
 - Summer/fall enrolled students at Central/Harper would have equal opportunity for KEEP39
- Greater layer of accountability and safety for each child
- Opportunity to evaluate program in its pilot year as it is designed

Cons

- Delayed opportunity for Romona/McKenzie students to access to KEEP39 during phase 1 year of 2020-21
 - Romona/McKenzie students have opportunities to participate in other kindergarten enrichment programs through community programs and the Wilmette Park District's Kindergarten Enrichment Program
 - Disappointment of Romona/McKenzie families
 - Potential delay of construction cost recovery if there is lower participation in phase 1 year
- **OPTION B:** KEEP39 registration will open for Central and Harper students first with a lottery for any remaining spots for McKenzie and Romona students in 2020-21, with the hopeful launch of the program district-wide in the 2021-22 school year.

Pros

- Some Romona/McKenzie students may have access to KEEP39 during phase 1 year of 2020-21
- Additional enrollment would/could guarantee full enrollment sections and keep recovery of construction cost on track

Cons

- Less continuity of community from AM to PM program for McKenzie/Romona students
- Ensuring equity of access is a concern
 - McKenzie/Romona students admitted dependent on enrollment numbers at Central/Harper
 - Delay of disappointment *if* spots available do not fully capture interested families
- McKenzie/Romona students would not be with their specific school peers and/or Kindergarten teachers

- Logistical factors such as:
 - Central/Harper: Late registration/fall move ins - potentially no KEEP39 spots available
 - McKenzie/Romona: Transition from AM to PM program would require transportation provided by families
 - Required transition would reduce time for enrichment programming to less than 4 hours per day
- **OPTION C:** KEEP39 registration will open for Central and Harper students first with a lottery for any remaining spots for McKenzie and Romona students in 2020-21. The McKenzie/Romona students who obtain a spot through the lottery process would *also* register for academic Kindergarten at the respective school. For example, a Romona student with a spot at Harper School's KEEP39 would attend AM academic Kindergarten at Harper for only one year. This Romona student would return to Romona School for grades 1-4.

Pros

- Some McKenzie/Romona students may have access to KEEP39 during phase 1 year of 2020-21
 - Full enrollment sections
 - Recovery of construction cost remain on track
- Potentially smaller Kindergarten class sizes at McKenzie/Romona
- Strong sense of community and connectedness for students
 - All students to remain at one school
 - Increased likelihood that students will have their Kindergarten teacher for enrichment
 - Transition from AM to PM program would not require transportation provided by families
- Greater layer of accountability and safety for each child

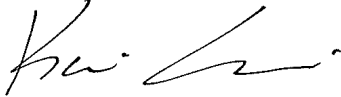
Cons

- Ensuring equity of access is a concern
 - McKenzie/Romona students admitted dependent on enrollment numbers at Central/Harper
 - Delay of disappointment *if* spots available do not fully capture interested families
- Central/Harper: Late registration/fall move ins make it difficult to predict
- McKenzie/Romona students would not be at the same school as their older sibling, if applicable
 - Transportation to Central/McKenzie would be provided by parents - AM drop off and PM pick up, which may be a challenge if siblings attend McKenzie/Romona
 - Transition of schools for lottery students into 1st grade at McKenzie/Romona
- Logistics of organizing and communicating a lottery may be challenging, especially considering strong likelihood of late move-ins/registering students

CONCLUSION

Based on a careful review of the pros and cons by administration and the Kindergarten Enrichment Program Development Committee, we respectfully recommend that the District pursue Option A. District 39 administrators and staff have worked diligently on the development of KEEP39. The work will continue throughout the year and the Board may expect an update in January/February Board of Education Meeting.

Recommended for presentation to the Board of Education,



Kari Cremascoli, Ph.D., Superintendent