

Memorandum

To: David Fleishman, Superintendent of Schools
From: Eva Thompson, Interim Assistant Superintendent for Elementary Education
Date: May 8, 2019
Re: **Update on Full Day Kindergarten Planning**

Since the December 2018 authorization for implementing a full day kindergarten program, a group of committed and enthusiastic educators has embarked on a planning process for this exciting opportunity.

The Planning Team is comprised of central office administrators, principals, coordinators, teachers, and special educators with dedicated representation from each elementary school and department.

Using the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education's resource, *Elements of High Quality Kindergarten 2.0*, the group began to explore the elements of quality in kindergarten programs that research and practice show are critical to young children's development and successful learning. These elements include: Learning Environment, Curriculum, Instruction, Assessment of Children, Leadership and Professional Development, Family Engagement and Assessment of Program Quality.

Our Working Assumptions for Kindergarten reflect the values and standards articulated in *Elements of High Quality Kindergarten 2.0*. Among the most important:

- When planned intentionally and purposefully, *"Play is the leading instructional approach for delivering standards-based curriculum that is aligned with the MA Curriculum Frameworks."* (p. 9, MA DESE HQ2.0)
- *A high-quality curriculum is executed, presented, and experienced as an integrated system. Children do not develop literacy skills only during reading time or mathematical skills only during a math-specific exercise but instead learn best when provided opportunities to practice and generalize those skills across the course of the day. Curriculum needs to be sensitive to diversity in culture and language, responsive to children with special needs, and to offer flexible and adaptable instruction for children who could benefit from increasing challenges or who need attention to specific areas. Research has demonstrated that kindergarteners need to be engaged in active, integrated learning* (Coppie & Bredekamp, 2009, MA DESE HQ2.0).

Thus, in the two upcoming professional development sessions with all kindergarten teachers, we will explore:

- Integrating intentional and purposeful playful learning into the curriculum
- Structures to Match Learning Goals: from whole class experiences to use of centers (where content, play, and SEL skills are integrated) including management & accountability for student participation and learning in small groups
- Ways to flexibly schedule the kindergarten day
- Assistant & Teacher Partnerships: roles & responsibilities, contracted time for assistants

In the coming months and through next year, Planning Team members will continue to review and adapt our existing curriculum and approaches to learning for our youngest learners. We are currently drafting additional professional development modules for our kindergarten teachers and assistants offering strategies for embedding culturally responsive practices, social-emotional learning, and purposeful playful learning within thematic centers. We look forward to enhancing our existing strong practices.