

## The Public Schools of Brookline Transition to Kindergarten

### Overview:

The Public Schools of Brookline (PSB) transition to kindergarten plan was designed with input from parents, the Early Childhood Council and Principals in Brookline. Initially a pilot, this has been refined over the past three (3) years to the current plan.

Transition processes are also a requirement of the K-3 Alignment Grant, as well as the Community Partnerships for Children (CPC) and/or Coordinated Family and Community Engagement (CFCE) grant. Moreover, these processes comply with National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) standards and are based on Transition to Kindergarten Work outlined by Robert Pianta (sources referenced).

### Timeline:

Following is the general timeline used for kindergarten registration in The Public Schools of Brookline:

#### January

Parents receive information on registration through the PSB website, Brookline Interactive Group (BIG), posters, school-based information dissemination, community schools and the Brookline TAB.

#### February

- Initial registration dates are conducted at each school.
- Registrations continue at each school throughout the spring.
- Buffer families may register at any of their buffer-designated schools.

#### Spring

- Language screenings begin (March)
- Decisions on buffer placement are made as late as possible but prior to Peek and Practice events.
- Visits held as late as possible to ensure greatest participation numbers.
  - Parents are invited to a guidance meeting with their child (May)
  - Parents and children attend Peek and Practice; Children participate in a kindergarten simulation (June)
- These events allay fears, offer good memories of the kindergarten experience and verify information received at screening. They also help to ensure class placements that are well-balanced with appropriate supports.
- Children and parents participate in a wide range of all school events and begin to feel as if they are part of their school community.
- Parents participate in information sessions to discuss kindergarten transition, Brookline curriculum in kindergarten, daily schedules, lunch program and Elementary World Language.
- Children participate in screening for kindergarten. Screening is a state requirement.
- Students from METCO and Materials Fee programs are assigned where space is available.

- Students from the METCO program participate in LAUNCH, a summer program for entering kindergartners at the Devotion site. This is critical in becoming familiar with the community and Brookline classroom rituals and routines.

### Summer

- Summer registration begins the first week of July and continues through mid-August.
- Enrollment numbers are gathered and monitored by the Superintendent's office on a weekly basis throughout the summer.
- Summer letters to children are sent out from teachers at middle or end of August.
- Children are invited to "drop in" days to meet their teachers before school officially begins.

### Peek and Practice:

Brookline is unique when compared to other suburban school systems, in that we have many languages, countries and backgrounds represented among children entering kindergarten. Given that the majority of these students are registered by the beginning of June, we believe that conducting Peek and Practice and class placement at that time benefits our students and programs in the following ways:

- allows students an opportunity to visit their new school, to meet potential classmates, and to allay fears about their next transition
- gives teachers the ability to assess students in small groups, identify possible concerns, recommend participation in summer programs (LAUNCH), and create balanced classroom assignments
- provides METCO and Materials Fee students and families with an introduction to their new community
- visual supports for students with special needs are completed and in place before children begin school
- children attending summer LAUNCH are placed in classes with their school-alike classmates
- teachers have the opportunity to observe strategies and adaptations that are necessary for optimal progress on the part of children with significant needs
- parents have an opportunity to ask question, receive information about school culture and norms, and to meet teachers and specialists
- allows teachers and administrators to learn more about students, thereby ensuring that students are placed appropriately
- allows teachers the information needed to talk with prior year teachers and/or visit a summer placement of particular students

The staffing required for this orientation experience (on average) consists of 14 individuals, as follows (at each Peek and Practice session):

- three (3) kindergarten teachers and three (3) Peek and Practice teachers – Peek and Practice teachers lead the experience while kindergarten teachers observe and rotate among the classrooms to see all of the students
- three (3) paraprofessionals for classroom support during the program
- two (2) paraprofessionals supporting individual students with special needs
- one (1) building principal to meet with parents and provide school-based information
- one (1) Early Education Principal to lead parent information sessions
- one (1) guidance counselor

Moving this experience to August is difficult in that:

- teachers and specialists have not yet returned, meaning that they will need to be compensated (additional pay or compensatory time);
- families are on vacation and, therefore, student and parent attendance will be lessened;
- classrooms are still being set-up, buildings are being cleaned and summer programs run into the first weeks of August;
- parents will be denied access to most after-school programs, including Extended Day;
- Massachusetts requires screening results in October

#### METCO and Kindergarten:

- The number of students considered for kindergarten enrollment in any given year is based on the graduating class of the prior year.
- METCO students are offered a seat at a particular school in early May after language screenings and buffer zone students have been placed. Siblings are offered a seat at a particular school after enrollment has been confirmed (April)

#### Materials Fee and Kindergarten:

- Applications are available on a staggered basis:
  - Unit A (Teachers) – January
  - Other School Staff – Late February
  - Town Employees – Late March
- Materials Fee students are offered a seat at a particular school in April. Siblings are offered a seat at a particular school after their enrollment has been confirmed (early April).

#### Kindergarten Class of 2013-2014 Profile:

- March 1, 2013 Enrollments: 484 students registered and/or slots allotted (442 residents, 22 materials fee, 20 METCO); 10 of these materials fee students were siblings; 2 of the METCO students were siblings
- Language Screenings (March): 43 students
- April 12, 2013 Enrollments: 545 students (502 residents, 21 materials fee, 22 METCO)
- Out-of-District Requests (May): 8 students
- IEP Placements (May): 6 students
- Buffer Requests: 95% provide a specific school preference
- June 1, 2013 Enrollment: 584 students
- Summer Registrations: 36 students
- September 9, 2013 (First Day) Enrollment: 625 students
- September 30, 2013 Enrollment: 630 students

#### Elements to Consider (April 1<sup>st</sup> Assignment Plan):

- Approximately 100 resident kindergarten students typically register after April 1<sup>st</sup> of each year. Many also come to us with older siblings.
- We currently operate four (4) busses and six (6) vans. The vans are filled and busses typically have approximately ten (10) empty seats on their morning and afternoon runs.
- Adding a bus costs \$55.4k.
- We believe that this assignment plan, as presently described, could:
  - dramatically increase transportation of our students, thereby adding to costs;

- disrupt our neighborhood school model;
- lead to situations where families would/could be split between schools;

Sources:

- *Successful Kindergarten Transition: Your Guide to Connecting Children, Families, and Schools* by Robert Pianta Ph.D. and Marcia Kraft-Sayre L.C.S.W. (May 12, 2003)
- *School Readiness and the Transition to Kindergarten in the Era of Accountability* by Robert Pianta Ph.D., Martha Cox Ph.D., Kyle Snow Ph.D. and Ruby Takanishi Ph.D. (Feb 23, 2007)
- *The Transition to Kindergarten* (NCEDE) by Robert Pianta Ph.D., Martha Cox Ph.D. and Donald "Bailey Jr." Ph.D. (Nov 30, 1999)