

## Green looks at full-day kindergarten

Tuition to be required to join pilot program

2.12.07

By Katie Byard  
Beacon Journal staff writer  
Saturday, February 10, 2007

The Green school district might offer a longer school day to some of its littlest pupils.

The district might launch a pilot program next school year, making full-day kindergarten available to as many as 120 children.

To participate, however, parents would have to pay tuition.

Green would join a growing number of Ohio districts offering a full-day schedule to at least some of their kindergartners.

Some studies indicate that students can benefit from a 'well-structured, curriculum-based' all-day kindergarten, said Donna Plunkett, Green's curriculum director and a member of the committee that is proposing the program.

She said a full-day schedule can be most beneficial to pupils entering kindergarten with less-developed skills.

Plunkett acknowledged that some research shows that the long-term benefits of all-day kindergarten are not clear.

She argues, however, that 'soft research' -- reports from teachers, parents and children -- shows that many students who were in all-day programs 'feel like they are confident learners, and like school more -- clear through the 12th grade.'

All-day kindergarten was discussed seven or eight years ago, district Treasurer Roy Swartz said. The Green district considered renting space in a church and passing along the rental cost to parents as part of tuition.

With the recent opening of a new elementary school, Green now has its own space for the program, Superintendent Dave Macali said.

The pilot would be housed at Greenwood Early Learning Center, which now houses only pre-kindergarten and kindergarten programs.

Green -- like many other districts in Ohio -- does not have the money to offer full-day kindergarten without tuition, Macali said.

The state requires and pays for a half day.

Green officials say tuition would be necessary to offset the projected pilot cost of roughly \$239,000 to \$386,000 annually. The committee studying the idea says that up to three additional teachers would be needed.

Macali said low-income students would get a tuition break, based on family income and size.

Many districts offering full-day kindergarten pay for it with state poverty-based assistance.

But Green -- a suburban district with relatively little poverty -- gets less than \$30,000 a year from this fund, Swartz said.

Nearby Jackson Local charges \$225 a month and Lake Local charges \$2,100 a year, payable in four installments. Both offer optional programs.

Macali said that the board held an informational meeting with the study committee this week and he plans to recommend the school board approve the pilot at its March 19 meeting.

The program would run for the next two school years. If it goes well, the district may continue to offer the program to a limited number of students or expand it to all eligible children.

The discussion comes as the number of all-day kindergarten students in Ohio is increasing.

State data shows that in 2005-06, about 54 percent of the 135,292 children enrolled in public-school kindergarten attended full-day classes. In 2003-04, the percentage was about 49 percent. About 523 of the state's 613 school districts offer the full-day schedule to at least some kindergartners, Ohio Department of Education spokesman J.C. Benton said.

The state school board has long advocated full state funding for all-day kindergarten, Benton said. However, the legislature has declined to approve the funding.

Feel free to [click here](#) and download this article in .pdf format!