

AE/MS Committee Recommends Against Full-Day Kindergarten ... For Now

By Jane Slayton
AE/MS Principal

A committee made up of Andover Elementary/Middle School administrators, teachers, and specialists recently studied the option for full-day kindergarten. This fall, the Andover School Board gave the committee permission to study this option. The School Board had one stipulation: it could not be an additional cost to Andover taxpayers now or in the future.

The last several years our kindergarten enrollment has been low, and that started us thinking about offering a full day to best use our resources to benefit children.

Currently, AE/MS offers two kindergarten sessions: morning and afternoon. Students are assigned to one of the sessions for the school year. The morning session runs from 7:45 to 10:45 AM, and the afternoon session runs from 11:45 AM to 2:45 PM. On both ends of the day the kindergarten students are transported with the first through eighth grade students. Mid-day, however, the small bus provides the transportation, dropping off morning students while picking up afternoon students.

Our current three-hour kindergarten day provides limited time for uninterrupted play and the development of independent learning opportunities, in-depth exploration of curriculum, creative opportunities, and socialization skills. For many, extended hours may decrease the number of transitions for those children who attend other programs before and/or after school.

Increased program time is not being considered as a result of increased academic demands. As we talked with administrators and teachers throughout the state who have adopted full-day kindergarten, they praise the expansion of their programs without hesitation.

After thorough consideration and many visits to successful full-day kindergarten programs, we did not recommend a full-day program for Andover Elementary/Middle School for the 2009-2010 school year. The committee's enthusiasm for an extended program at AE/MS remains great, but when it came down to logistics, long-term consistency, and potential future funding needs, we could not in good faith recommend this initiative.

Issues impacting our decision included:

Space: We would need 50 square feet per child, with a minimum size of 1,000 square feet. A separate bathroom is needed. We already need a new location for the present class. They are cur-

rently sharing space with the library, but that is only a temporary solution.

At this point we still have not received a waiver from the State Fire Marshal's Office to allow second grade classes to stay where they are currently located. There is still the fear that we may need to locate kindergarten, first, and second grade classrooms all at ground level.

Funding: It is difficult to make the promise that full-day kindergarten would never be a cost to the school budget. While a primary teacher can be re-assigned next year as the large class works its way up through the system (with other large classes to follow), additional funding may be needed in the future.

Consistency: It was important to the committee that full-day kindergarten be offered on a consistent basis, year after year. It is too difficult and unfair to offer a full-day program only when numbers are low and then not offer it when the numbers are larger.

Length of Day: AE/MS continues to have one of the longer school days in the state: seven hours. While this works well for grades one through eight, it may be difficult for a five-year-old. Certainly, the kindergarten day could be structured in the afternoon to allow for the long day, but it is not ideal.

The Economy: The current economic situation concerns us. This does not seem like the best time to even consider an expanded program, much less implement one.

The AE/MS committee was very impressed with the programs we visited in the state and all the benefits an extended-day program has to offer and is hopeful that in the future we may be able to offer an extended-day program at AE/MS.

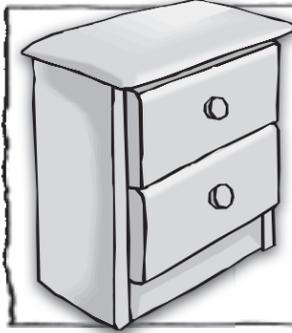
There are currently 33 students that may be attending kindergarten in Andover next year, 26 for the 2010/2011 school year, 22 for the 2011/2012 school year, 23 for the 2012/2013 school year, and 26 for the 2013/2014 school year. These figures are only tentative at this point and were gained by looking at preschool data, birth statistics, and town/school data.

Andover is fortunate to have two excellent pre-school programs in town, and most of the children who come to AE/MS have come through one of these programs. In addition, AE/MS has the best kindergarten teacher in the world! Mrs. Pellegrino has been providing Andover five-year-olds with the best start ever to their educational experience and will continue to do so with enthusiasm and excitement.

ODD JOBS WANTED!

Two Andover boys (ages 12 and 15) are looking for odd jobs at homes in the Andover area. Willing to stack wood, mow lawns, clean up yards, walk dogs, etc.

735-5206



Hand Made! • Solid Wood!
• **FURNITURE** •
Always Below Cost!
**GIMPY'S
WORKSHOP**

252 Switch Road, Andover
"Mike's Hobby Means Savings To You"

GOING AWAY?

Worried About
Leaving Your Best Friend?

call **Mountain High Kennel**

The Camp Dogs Love To Come Back To

Owner on premises • 735-6083

The Dan & Kathleen

HOGAN

SPORTS CENTER

COLBY-SAWYER COLLEGE

What are your kids going to do this summer?
Send them to the

HOGAN SPORTS CENTER RECREATION DAY CAMP

They can attend by the day (\$30) or by the week (\$135).
We offer arts and crafts, sports, swimming, field trips,
fun counselors, and new friendships.

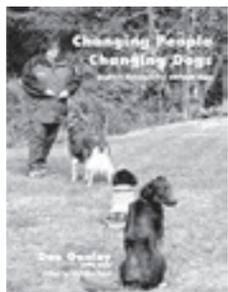
June 22-August 14, 2009

8:30am-4:30pm

Early drop off and late pick up available

Call the Hogan Sports Center at 526-3600 for more information,
or check out our Web page at:

Colby-Sawyer.edu/campus-life/hogan/programs/camp.html



Dog Training & Behavior Consultant

Dee Ganley, award-winning author and dog behavior consultant

Visit **DeesDogs.com** to order Dee's book or get info on classes offered.

Private consultations available.
Aggression issues my specialty. 735-5543



WWW.DEESDOGS.COM