

# K-rationale

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Among the changes beginning next fall at Pike is the initiation of all-day kindergarten. Pike's current kindergarten program, which is technically a three-full-day, two-half-day program, has been in effect for as long as anyone can recall and has successfully addressed the particular needs of five- and six-year-olds who, at that age, are soaking up everything they hear and see and gaining independence rapidly. Caring, attentive, and talented teachers have long injected abundant value and quality into fewer than twenty-seven hours per week. So, why fix what appears not to be broken?

Increasingly, during the past decade, researchers in the field of education have been focusing a great deal of their attention on the earliest years of schooling. One recent study, reported by David Leonhardt in *The New York Times* on July 27, 2010, in an article titled "The Case for \$320,000 Kindergarten Teachers" ([www.nytimes.com/2010/07/28/business/economy/28leonhardt.html?\\_r=1&](http://www.nytimes.com/2010/07/28/business/economy/28leonhardt.html?_r=1&)), examined the life paths of 12,000 thirty-somethings who had participated in a different study as children in the 1980s. One notable conclusion states:

*"Students who had learned much more in kindergarten were more likely to go to college than students with otherwise similar backgrounds. Students who learned more were also less likely to become single parents. As adults, they were more likely to be saving for retirement. Perhaps most striking, they were earning more."*

Other studies, too, show that kindergarten is critical to each student's future success, but it represents more than a prerequisite to first grade. The longer day will allow us to focus even greater attention on the developmentally appropriate needs of kindergartners, not by adding subject areas, but, rather, by developing a schedule and curriculum that greatly

expand students' experiences with each other, their teachers, and the world around them, thereby deepening their overall learning. All-day kindergarten provides critical extra time needed for all students to practice the many skills typically taught in kindergarten, be they academic, social, or emotional. Additional time allows teachers to employ a wider range of instructional practices, which ensures that every student is taught and challenged along his/her own learning trajectory. Those practices could include center-based activities, free play and choice options, and intragrade collaborations.

Our vision is that switching to all-day kindergarten will result in deeper learning in key content areas, such as science and social studies, through increased exploration and experimentation during class time and choice time. We look forward to expanded opportunities to interact with the outside world in the study of science and environmental literacy and with technology and media literacy. We anticipate more choice time, where students are offered a range of activities, gradually teaching them how to make choices, develop their social skills with others, and try out new and exciting activities. There will be additional free-play time, both inside and outside the classroom, allowing students to expand the use of their active imaginations and engage in increased physical activity. And the additional time will allow us to provide more opportunities to build community—within the classroom, across the grade, and throughout the school—by extending grade-wide activities in every part of the curriculum, as well as giving kindergartners the chance to participate in more schoolwide programs.

If, as we are finding, the value of a first-rate kindergarten program is greater than previously thought, then we believe the value of an all-day program to be greater than that of our current program. And that is value worth pursuing. ☺

## Why is Pike changing to all-day kindergarten?