

From: "lizcamm ."

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To: nfederspiel@nrds.net, lromasco@nrds.net

Subject: early education expansion

Dear Nancy and Lorraine,

I have recently learned that there is an ongoing discussion about the full day Kindergarten waiting list, about a vote to expand the program and when the vote should be. As our Bolton representatives, I would like to share my voice with you now, as I may not be able to attend next weeks meeting.

We recently moved to MA and chose this state and more specifically Bolton, because of the high quality of education. I taught public elementary in Texas where we lived, and knew that I needed to get my children out of that school system. MA has some of the highest rated public schools in the country. When looking for a house to buy, we looked first based on the quality of the school system in the town. We were very drawn to Bolton and were so happy to find a house here that we liked. However, I was floored when I discovered that Kindergarten was only half day. I didn't even know that was an option these days. I was told about being able to choose to pay for a full day option. While not thrilled to be paying for the second half of the day, I was confident that we would get in and it would work out. My son is sixth on the waiting list, and I have been told that we wont know for sure one way or another until May. His birthday is Sept 16th, so he will already be one of the oldest in the class, and now he may not even get to stay all day, like the majority of his peers.

While we pay for this program, it seems that this is still a monetary concern for the district. I must assume that \$3100/year from the 16 kids on the waiting list will not be sufficient to fund another classroom? So this becomes an issue of which program gets priority. Why should the early education program take precedent over other things, such as facilities, athletics and textbooks?

I understand that there is some sentiment that the current group of parents who are upset about being on the waiting list, are just upset because this is where they are, with their kids, now. I would like to point out that this issue of full day Kindergarten or not, is not just about a single year in the lives of our children. There will be 16 children who are essentially a half a year behind their peers and this will follow them throughout their education. They will have had a half a year less of education once they graduate. You may argue that it wouldn't be a discernable difference, but as a teacher in a Kindergarten classroom, I could absolutely tell which kids had missed lots of school, or hadn't come consistently. As the law we all know so well states, all children are afforded an equal education. I can't imagine how not allowing 16 kids the same number of hours of education that the majority of their peers gets, is equal? And at this point, we aren't even asking for it to be free (as it probably should be). We will pay to support the program. While so many states in our country are advocating for a free pre-k program in public schools, I am amazed that we are even discussing the possibility of not allowing any student who wants to attend full day Kindergarten, to do so. There has been so much research lately about how important early education is.

As for the timing of the vote, I implore the committee to vote on this as soon as possible, and not make all these parents wait until May to find out. The enrollment deadline for so many private schools, daycares, and enrichment programs is in February. There are working parents who cannot commit to job opportunities, or those that will be forced into paying deposits for spots in programs for their children that they don't even really want. I know some parents who are thinking of trying to hire a nanny for the second half of the day, and their choice is either to wait till May and hope someone decent is available at the last minute, or hire someone now...possibly having the break an employment contract if this expansion is approved.

I am so glad that this discussion has been brought to the table. Please take some of these things into consideration as progress is made towards a vote.

Thank you,

Liz Cammilleri