

Early Childhood Facilities and Programming Update

Board of Education Meeting
November 18, 2018



Why are we Discussing Early Childhood Programming Facilities?



Our primary Early Childhood Center (ECC) facility located at Fairfield Warde High School is at maximum capacity.

- An additional classroom was opened at the ECC prior to the start of the 2016-17 school year due to increased enrollment
- Prior to the start of the start 2017-18 school year an additional ECC classroom opened at Stratfield Elementary School due to increased enrollment
- Enrollment at the ECC is projected to continue to increase
- This impacts the ratio of students with disabilities to nondisabled peers as well as special education teacher caseloads.

ECC student enrollment data from 2009 - 2018 as of October 1 / June 1

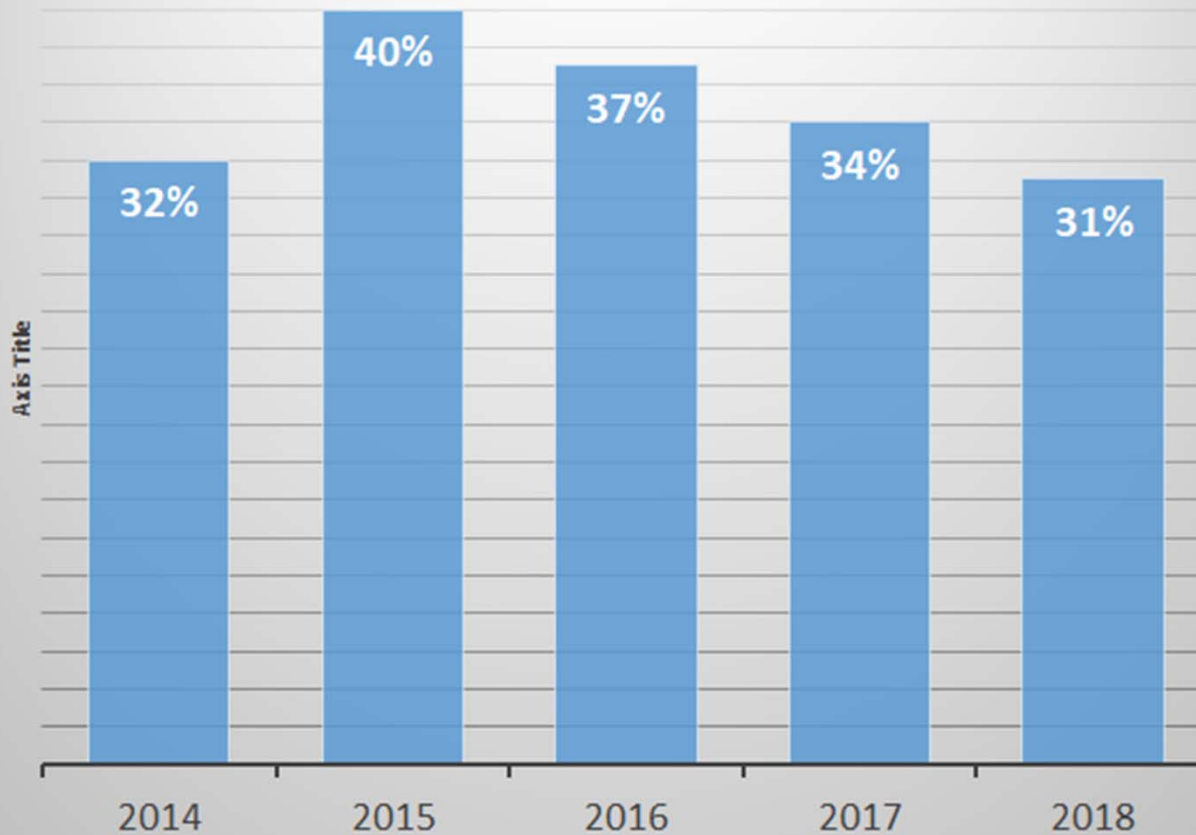
09-10	10-11	11-12	12-13	13-14	14-15	15-16	16-17	17-18	18-19	19-20
58 / 75	52 / 71	102 / 133	113 / 141	96 / 121	96 / 115	103 / 131	115 / 145	120 / 161	123 / 165	130 /

Ratio of students with disabilities to nondisabled peers in early
childhood classes:

June 2018: 15% - 35% (ECC location at FWHS)

September 2018: 20% -40% (ECC at FWHS and Stratfield)

Peer to IEP ratios over time



Percentage of nondisabled peers in early childhood classes over time at the start of each school year.

These numbers may fluctuate with rolling enrollment.

Current Early Childhood Programming Facilities

Six Classrooms at Early Childhood Center at Fairfield Warde High School that service students with disabilities and nondisabled peers. (students attend 4 days per week)

One classroom at Early Childhood Center at Stratfield Elementary School that services students with disabilities and nondisabled peers. (students attend 5 days per week)

One classroom at Stratfield Elementary School that services students without identified disabilities (students attend 5 days per week)

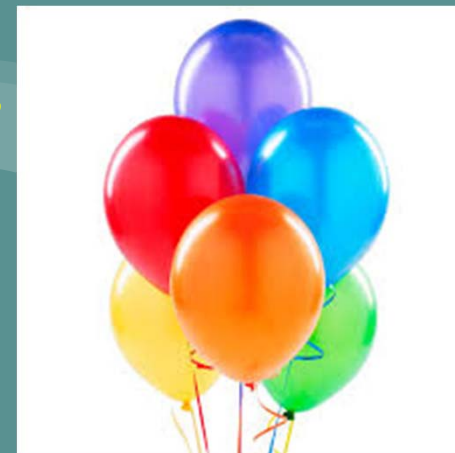
One classroom at Burr Elementary School that services students without identified disabilities (students attend 5 days per week)

Sources of Information gathered since September 2018 Regarding Preschool Programming

- Parent Focus Groups
- Phone calls with parents of students who attend ECC at Stratfield Elementary Schools
- Two staff meetings with early childhood staff
- Meetings with early childhood consultant
- Visits to other public school preschool programs
- Visits to various potential external locations
- Meeting with elementary leadership team
- Analysis of all FPS elementary schools to determine feasibility of developing a second early childhood education site at one of our elementary schools



Agenda Items Reviewed in Focus Groups



- Reviewed the reason Focus Groups were formed
- Reviewed October 1 and June 1 five year student enrollment data at the Early Childhood Center from 2014 - present
- Sought input from group members on what each participant considered an important or critical factor to high quality preschool programming
- Sought input from group members on potential solutions to our current early childhood facility challenges

Parent Focus Group Input

Important Factors in Preschool Programming:

- A sense of community and team
 - Parents feel that they are not alone
- Ongoing collaboration and communication among all staff (certified, non-certified, consulting staff) and parents
- All related services staff are onsite (speech, school psychologist, school social worker, OT, PT, BCBA, nurse)
- Certified staff with expertise in early childhood education
- Opportunities for play
- Access to unified arts (art, physical education, music, ...)
- Manageable class size
- Increase ratio of students with disabilities to nondisabled peers



Parent Focus Group Input continued



Important Factors in Preschool Programming:

- Balance between teaching academics, social, communication and independence skills
- Facility equipped for preschool students (bathrooms, playground)
- Administrators who understand the needs of preschool children
- Professional development specific to preschool students
- Programming flexibility (continuum of services provided)
- Manageable special education teacher caseloads
- Available early childhood resources to parents
- Facilitate a strong connection with SEPTA
- Empowering parents to understand their child's disability
- Offer parents support groups

Parent Focus Group Input

Possible Solutions To Current Challenges:

- Investigate potential external locations to relocate the Early Childhood Center
- Investigate the possibility of acquiring additional space at Fairfield Warde High Schools
- Place portable classrooms at current Early Childhood Education site
- Investigate available space in our elementary schools
- Consider the possibility of redistricting



Parent Focus Group Input



Possible Solutions To Current Challenges:

- Investigate the possibility of developing two ECCs within FPS
- Relocate to existing schools
- Lease commercial space
- Contract with a realtor to locate potential locations to house the Early Childhood Center
- **Build a new Early Childhood Center**

Early Childhood Staff Input

Important Factors in Preschool Programming:

- Sense of community
- Programming that offers a continuum of services
- Collaborative model: within classrooms and within/between disciplines (PLCs)
- Focused on all developmental areas: cognitive, academic, communication, social/behavioral, motor
- Staff with preschool specific expertise
- Programming that supports parents and families
- Increased percentage of peer models



Early Childhood Staff Input

Important Factors in Preschool Programming:

- Appropriate space for teaching and learning
- Alignment with Kindergarten, supporting transition
- Smaller class sizes
- Smaller special education teacher caseloads
- Common planning time
- Air conditioned space
- Appropriate playground and bathrooms



Early Childhood Staff Input

Possible Solutions to Current Challenges:

- Relocate the preschool program to a bigger facility
- Investigate utilizing additional space at Fairfield Warde High School
- Investigate use of external facilities
- Redistrict to an FPS school with lower enrollment
- Convert a portion of one elementary school into an early childhood program
- Develop a program for students who need an additional year prior to entry into kindergarten



Elementary Leadership Team Input



Important Factors in Preschool Programming:

- Alignment between preschool and kindergarten curriculum
- Alignment between state Early Childhood Outcome Data and FPS expectations
- IEP Goals and Objectives: Align with kindergarten curriculum
- Service Delivery: Focus on increasing student independence and small group instruction
- Increased collaboration between general education and special education staff to increase teacher capacity
- Supporting parents through the transition from preschool to kindergarten

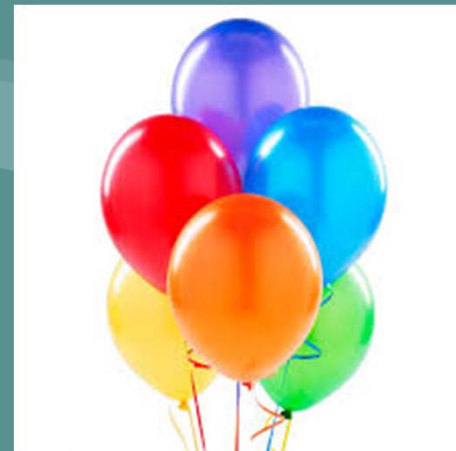
Elementary Leadership Team Input

Possible Solutions to our current facilities challenges:



- Maintain preschool program at Early Childhood Center located at FWHS for three year olds and relocate program for four year olds to elementary schools
- Investigate the possibility of relocating preschool to our elementary schools
- Consider developing a pre-k program for five year old students
- Cluster groups of preschool classrooms in elementary schools that will allow for collaboration among staff as well as a continuum of services
- Provide increased professional development opportunities between preschool and kindergarten teachers

Early Childhood Consultant Input



- The Fairfield Public Schools is a member of the Early Childhood Council through Cooperative Education Services
- To date Fairfield Public Schools' staff has met with our early childhood consultant on two occasions to review:
 - Various preschool program models
 - Discussion of various preschool schedules (four days vs five days)
 - Development of consistent preschool schedule
 - Discussion of student groupings (three year olds, four year olds, mixed age grouping)

Early Childhood Consultant Input

- Evaluation and child find processes
- Process of transitioning preschool students to kindergarten
- Appropriate preschool class size
- Ratio of students with disabilities to nondisabled peers
- Service delivery
- Increased collaboration between preschool and kindergarten staff



Visits to Area School Districts

Since September four preschool programs in other Fairfield County School Districts have been visited by FPS staff.



- Each district has a student with disabilities to nondisabled peer ratio of at least fifty percent.
- One program was located in one location within a primary elementary school
- One program was located in one primary location with one preschool classroom located within the attached elementary school due to increased enrollment
- One program was located within three elementary schools and planning on building one location to house preschool programming within the next few years
- One program was located within five schools throughout the district

Visits to Area School Districts

- Schedules varied among preschool programs visited
 - Four Days versus Five Days
 - Half-days versus extended or full days
- Class sizes did not exceed 15
- Student access to specials (art, physical education, music) differed among districts



Visits to Potential External Sites

- To date two potential external early childhood programming facilities have been toured
- Additional potential external locations to be explored prior to December Board of Education Meeting
- Consideration in selecting potential early childhood program facilities include: accessibility, playground space, bathroom facilities, classroom space, ect.



Analysis of FPS Elementary Schools

Main Features:

- Air conditioning
- ADA accessibility
- Playground space
- Current classrooms available
- Location
- Current unique programs currently in existence in our elementary schools



Analysis of FPS Elementary Schools

Visited Stratfield, Holland Hill, McKinley and Burr Elementary Schools to date as potential in-district early childhood programming options

Will visit North Stratfield Elementary School prior to December 2018 Board of Education Meeting

Will meet with the Superintendent prior to the December Board of Education meeting to discuss early childhood programming in the Fairfield Public Schools moving forward



Next Steps

- Discuss and gather staff input regarding proposed preschool schedule for 2019-20 school year
- Develop proposed preschool schedule for 2019-20 school year
- See remaining potential FPS and external programming facilities
- Gather remaining input from parents of current students who attend the ECC at Stratfield
- Make recommendation to the Board of Education for the 2019-20 school year
 - Discuss potential short-term solutions
 - Discuss potential long-term solutions

