

**Early
Childhood
Education:
Foundation for
Learning**



In the Spotlight

Chambersburg
AREA SCHOOL DISTRICT

These are a few ways adults can help prepare children for kindergarten:

- **Read aloud** to your child as often as possible. Let your child see you reading.
- Take time to **listen to and talk with** your child each day.
- Have your child participate in a **summer reading program** at the local library.
- Let your child **spend time outdoors** and have space and freedom for active play.
- Give your child opportunities to **recognize and name letters** of the alphabet.
- Involve your child in **number and counting activities** with items such as socks, soup cans, buttons, or coins. Practice counting to 10 or higher.
- **Make** a grocery shopping list together.
- **Plant flower seeds** in a pot or in the ground. Watch them grow.
- **Practice** bouncing a ball. Count the number of bounces.
- **Tell** stories, **sing** songs, and **recite** nursery rhymes with your child.
- Help your child **practice zipping** his or her coat **and tying** his or her shoes.
- **Encourage your child to read** familiar cereal boxes, magazines, newspapers, recipes, directions, road and store signs, etc.

THESE ARE EXCITING TIMES at the elementary level in the Chambersburg Area School District. We are clearly focused on success for every child. Many of our efforts are geared toward reading and math initiatives and are driven by the results of standardized and research-based assessments. Research shows if we reach children at an early age, we're able to build on that foundation and make tremendous gains in the years ahead.

Our students continue to impress all of us. Every day in elementary classrooms across the district, children are performing at astonishing levels. Teachers recognize the urgency of No Child Left Behind and are offering creative, effective instruction. As educators, there's nothing more rewarding than being a part of student success and seeing students eager to learn.

"...our number one priority!"

This issue of *In the Spotlight* captures a bit of what is happening at the elementary level and our commitment to early childhood education. Student achievement has been and continues to be our number one priority!



Catherine M. Dusman

— **Catherine Dusman**

Assistant Superintendent for Elementary Services
Chambersburg Area School District





PRESCHOOL COLLABORATION GROUP

To help prepare children for life in the classroom, the Chambersburg Area School District sponsors a preschool collaboration group where local daycares network with each other and the district, share resources and instructional practices, and discuss ways to build math and literacy skills in preschoolers. The collaboration group, open to all area daycare agencies and providers, promotes educational activities that meet early learning standards recommended by the Pennsylvania Department of Education.

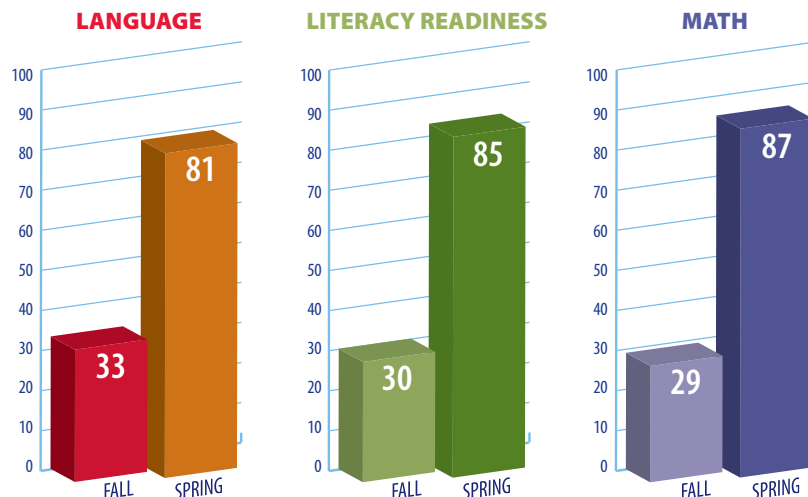
For more information about the collaboration group and its monthly meetings, contact Sharon Love at 261-3361 or lovesha@chambersburg.k12.pa.us.

PRE-K Counts! (& reads, plays...)

IN 2007, the Chambersburg Area School District received a grant from a state initiative called Pre-K Counts and used the funds to contract with Franklin County Head Start to establish classes at Scotland and Hamilton Heights elementary schools. Three- and four-year-olds with a need for academic enrichment were selected for the early intervention preschool experience. The Pre-K Counts classrooms emphasize literacy and math readiness, physical, social, emotional, and cognitive development, health care screening, and nutrition.

"The Pre-K Counts partnership with Head Start, led by Executive Director Carol Sutton, has been an incredible success for our district, and we hope to expand the program from four to six classrooms next year," says Dr. Paul Sick, CASD Elementary Principal. "We believe emphasis on the whole child provides the necessary foundation for each student to achieve success when they enter kindergarten."

Percentage of Children Who Are School-Ready After a Pre-K Program
Fall 2005 vs. Spring 2006 Assessments



Jill Hazelton reads with students at St. John's Nursery School in Chambersburg. St. John's is one of nearly two dozen daycare providers that participate in a preschool collaboration group with the school district.



Full-Day KINDERGARTEN

A CHILD'S EARLY YEARS are the most formative, and the Chambersburg Area School District is committed to engaging young minds by offering full-day kindergarten classes. A full-day schedule alleviates the pressure of packing academics into a half day to meet state mandates and allows for a greater variety of activities, including art, music, library, and gym.

In 2006-2007, the CASD piloted a full-day kindergarten class at Scotland and Stevens elementary schools. This year, the full-day program was expanded to Andrew Buchanan, Fayetteville, U.L. Gordy (at Fayetteville), Grandview, and Stevens.

"Everything was literacy-based the last few years," says Lois Weaverling, a U.L. Gordy full-day kindergarten teacher. "Every single minute was accounted for. Everything seemed so stressful. Now we have time to relax. We have time to have fun. They're still kids, you know."

Not only time for fun, but also time to learn. Research has consistently shown that students in full-day kindergarten outperform their peers in half-day programs, and students in the district's full-day classes have scored 10 percentage points higher on middle of the year literacy assessments than their half-day peers.



"I have more time to thoroughly teach the skills and concepts to the students with the full day," explains Stevens kindergarten teacher Michael Helm. "The students' confidence grows. They have a sense of accomplishment."

Next year will see additional full-day classes at Hamilton Heights, Scotland, New Franklin, and Marion. All CASD kindergarten classes are expected to be full day by the 2009-2010 school year.

"Professionally, this is the most rewarding year of teaching ever because of the all-day kindergarten. I have children writing and reading ... sentence after sentence with capitals and periods and punctuation marks. It's phenomenal!"

—Lois Weaverling, a CASD kindergarten teacher of 38 years



Clockwise from above are the kindergarten classrooms of Michael Helm, Heather Kuchar, Kelly Holland, and Lois Weaverling.



LONGER SCHOOL DAYS

Under a new district schedule implemented in 2009-2010, elementary students will attend school from approximately 9 a.m. to 3:45 p.m., and secondary students will attend from 8 a.m. to 2:45 p.m. The change will allow for greater transportation flexibility and professional development opportunities and will add 15 minutes to the elementary day. **Those extra 15 minutes per day will translate into more than a week of additional instructional time for students over the course of a school year.**



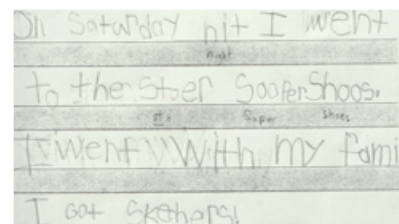
Grandview Elementary teacher Michelle Rydbom has seen her kindergarteners become independent writers with the help of Kid Writing.

THE KID WRITING INITIATIVE

Kid Writing is an innovative approach to teaching children the functional aspects of writing, and teachers are seeing the benefits across the school district. Students participate in an interactive writer's workshop or journaling session that includes a mini-lesson, picture and writing time, and sharing time. The learning is self-directed: students write about what they want to write about, discovering how phonics and written language work in the process.

"Kid Writing allows students to discover that each letter makes a sound and that sound can be written on paper," says Michelle Rydbom, a kindergarten teacher at Grandview. "It is such a powerful process that allows all students to work on their own developmental level and become excited about the task of writing."

The Kid Writing initiative has been implemented in kindergarten classes over the past four years, and students are quickly surpassing expectations. Next year the program will be expanded to first grade, and eventually to second grade and beyond.



BUILDING a Good FOUNDATION MENNO HAVEN VOLUNTEERS

AS FORMER ELEMENTARY TEACHERS, Anne Jaklich and Barbara Townsend believe in the importance of early childhood education and are volunteering at Scotland Elementary School every Tuesday morning. The two sisters are residents of Northfield at Menno Haven and see the volunteer work as an opportunity to bridge the generation gap in the classroom.

"It's the foundation," Jaklich says of the elementary grades. "I've always felt the primary grades were really the building blocks, because if the children get a good start there, then they can build. It's the most important age."



Anne Jaklich and her sister volunteer at Scotland Elementary once a week, working one-on-one with kindergarteners and first and second graders on fluency, phonics, and number recognition, reinforcing concepts taught in the classroom.



A student creates her own work of art at "A Day with the Arts" using the theme of Scott Joplin and ragtime.

A CELEBRATION OF THE ARTS

A focus on early childhood education includes not only academics, but also the arts. The Youth Arts Initiative is an annual celebration of the arts for children developed in partnership with community groups including Downtown Chambersburg, Capitol Theatre Center, Franklin County Foundation, Wood Foundation of Chambersburg, Cumberland Valley School of Music, Danza Antiqua, and the Chambersburg Ballet Theatre School and Company. The celebration brings kindergartners and first, second, and third graders to the Capitol Theatre Center each spring for "A Day with the Arts" to experience art in forms such as music and dance.



RESPONSE to Intervention

RESPONSE TO INTERVENTION is a research-based approach to education that allows teachers to tailor their instruction to individual student needs, rather than employ a "one size fits all" approach. RTI is used for language arts in kindergarten through third grade throughout the district. Core teams of teachers, principals, school psychologists, reading coaches, and other specialists and support staff gather and analyze data from assessments to evaluate each student and tweak classroom instruction appropriately.

The core teams meet every four to six weeks to track student progress and craft instructional plans, but the teachers, reading specialists, and other team members are in constant contact, adjusting their lessons to reflect student needs.

"This is really the most excited I've been because this is about classrooms without walls. It's about what the children need."

—Carole Kirkpatrick, a third grade teacher at Grandview Elementary School

Kindergarten Reading Proficiency with RTI

2004 - 2005	
Beginning of Year.....	52%
Middle of Year	57%
End of Year	66%
2005 - 2006	
Beginning of Year.....	36%
Middle of Year	67%
End of Year	73%
2006 - 2007	
Beginning of Year.....	44%
Middle of Year	76%
End of Year	82%
2007 - 2008	
Beginning of Year.....	65%
Middle of Year	81%

After the implementation of RTI, we see higher scores at the middle of the year than we've seen at the end of previous years.

A SUCCESS STORY

At Grandview Elementary School, third grade teachers Carole Kirkpatrick and Charlotte Hafer implement Response to Intervention in the form of guided reading groups. Six groups rotate between different stations for an hour each morning, and each student is assigned to a group depending on his or her needs.

"The beauty of this is we can respond quickly because we're continually monitoring their progress," says Kirkpatrick. "We don't wait for the report card or PSSA testing. As soon as we see progress forward or backward, we respond."

Kirkpatrick and Hafer communicate with each other and with reading specialists and other members of their core team, discussing student progress and shifting students between groups. Hafer has taught in the district for nearly 40 years but is sold on the idea of RTI.

"Being able to reach individual needs of the students is one of the best parts of Response to Intervention," she says. "And the kids feel good about themselves."



Data for RTI is collected with an assortment of tools, including I-Station, an interactive literacy-based computer program.

Third grade students in guided reading groups at Grandview practice reading comprehension, fluency, inference making, main ideas, and spelling skills. The groups concentrate on language arts while incorporating other content areas such as science and social studies.

Chambersburg Area School District

435 Stanley Avenue • Chambersburg, PA 17201

(717) 263-9281

www.chambersburg.k12.pa.us

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CONSTRUCTION UPDATE

Our community helps ensure the very best education for young learners by providing facilities in which they can excel. Our elementary building program currently includes the 94,000-square-foot Benjamin Chambers Elementary School under construction on Miller Street in Chambersburg.

New facilities such as Ben Chambers as well as the new Fayetteville Elementary, which opened in 2007, are an incredible resource for students, offering state-of-the-art computer labs and classroom spaces, libraries, gymnasiums, and cafeterias. We believe students deserve the best possible environments that will inspire success.

(above) Benjamin Chambers Elementary School will open this fall, combining King Street, U.L. Gordy, and Mary B. Sharpe.