



news alert

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All-day Kindergarten Requirement – Another Financial Blow to Schools

(Lansing, MI)-----A survey conducted by the Michigan School Business Officials (MSBO) found that districts are worried about the additional expense of increasing the hours of instruction for kindergarten students beginning in the 2009-10 school year. In the wake of last week's bleak revenue forecast, districts are wondering how they can possibly comply.

Michigan's School Aid Act for the 2008-09 school year included "intent language" that would change the way kindergarten is funded. The Act outlines increased hours of instruction beginning in the 2009-10 for developmental kindergarten and the 2010-11 school year for all kindergartners. This would result in districts transitioning from half-day kindergarten to all-day kindergarten to receive full funding.

"Many would agree that all-day kindergarten is beneficial for children in most situations, yet the cost for providing this curriculum change without increased state funding, will result in a tremendous financial burden for many districts," said David Martell, Executive Director of MSBO. "Districts are already reigning in costs by reducing staff, collaborating with other districts, modifying their health insurance plans, and transferring more costs to parents - all in an effort to deal with funding that has not kept up with inflation during recent years. The expense of implementing all-day kindergarten or the loss of funding if schools do not, will hurt districts even more."

Of the more than 300 districts who responded to the survey:

- Nearly half of the districts surveyed currently provide all-day kindergarten. The decision of all-day kindergarten is made on a local level.
- 112 districts not offering all-day kindergarten would incur additional estimated costs of over \$67 million for additional staff, facilities, and transportation to implement this new requirement for full funding.
- At least 50 districts indicate that they would need to ask local taxpayers to increase taxes through a bond issue to pay for the doubling of kindergarten classrooms required to move to all-day education at this grade level.

According to Portland Public Schools Superintendent Charles Dumas, "Beyond the issues of fairness in changing State Aid rules and loss of local control, this issue quickly boils down to one of money and unfunded mandates. Yes, we have a choice to increase the length of our DK and Kindergarten classes or lose State Aid. In our case, the choices are to lose up to \$598,344 or spend \$315,344 a year more on DK and Kindergarten. What kind of "choice" is that!"

"Given no additional state funding to implement all-day kindergarten, substantial cost increases will definitely impact class sizes and extra curricular activities such as music, art, physical education, said Martell. "This is also an issue of local control. Decision making by local school boards is crucial. It's the local school board that will need to determine how to accommodate the additional expenses of all-day kindergarten while trying to maintain essential programs for all students. This is a situation where this might be a good idea, but just not a good time without proper funding."

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MSBO is a statewide association representing the interests of over 1,800 school business officials.