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Moraga School District Gives Math Intervention Priority Over Extended Kindergarten

By Sophie Braccini



Moraga School District governing board members and superintendent bid farewell to Parker Colvin, center, who will be leaving California at the end of the year. Surrounding Parker, from left: Bruce Burns, Jim Obsitnik, Shari Simon, Heather O'Donnell, Jon Nickens. Photo Sophie Braccini

needed."

The idea is to train existing kindergarten and transitional kindergarten staff who would be using their contracted hours to teach math intervention between 2 and 3 p.m. The superintendent emphasized the effectiveness of early intervention in math. He also indicated that the assessment test children took last spring was detailed enough to help the district select those areas of mathematics that need most remediation.

The governing board members asked questions about last spring's parent survey, and how children would have been impacted by an extended kindergarten day. Director of Curriculum and Instruction Carolyn Parker, who participated in the extended kindergarten day committee, said it would have meant 30 to 45 minutes of additional instruction time. The extended day would have also included lunch at school.

"The earlier we can start math intervention the better," said board president Shari Simon. "This will open a whole world of possibilities to those children." She highlighted the importance of making the intervention a playful and interesting experience for the children to help them master mathematical concepts.

"This does not mean we are shutting off the extended kindergarten day project," said board member Jim Obsitnik. "We are just reprioritizing it for a later date."

Burns plans to bring additional details about the math intervention program to the next board meeting in December. The board will also decide at that meeting how to replace board member Parker Colvin, who is moving with his family to Chicago. The missing fifth member will be either elected by residents or nominated by the board.

Last spring, the Moraga School District formed an extended kindergarten day committee to study the feasibility and impact of adding a few hours of instruction to the kindergarten day in the district. The report came back favorable, matching a general trend of more children attending full-day kindergarten classes in the United States, according to a report by the Education Commission of the States.

A survey showed strong parental support for the concept of all-day kindergarten, it looked like the idea had momentum. But after fall results from the 2015 California Assessment of Student Performance and Progress assessment, and after further analysis of the scores by grade level, the district felt there was a higher priority to implement an early intervention math program for first and second grade students. The governing board approved that decision at its Nov. 10 meeting.

Though the logistics have not been finalized, Superintendent Bruce Burns is targeting the end of January as a launch date for the new program. "We are not abandoning the extended kindergarten concept," said Burns, "but with limited resources we have to prioritize what we think is most

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