

Good evening members of the Board. Thank you for this opportunity to speak to you on behalf of the future students of the East Penn School District. Tonight, you will be discussing the option of putting to public referendum, a research-based, proven driver of student achievement – Full Day Kindergarten. I am here to caution you against taking this path. Full Day K is proven to be something that all of our children need. We cannot continue to delay and fall further behind other districts. Bringing it back up for a vote by the board is what the public wants and is simply the right path forward.

One of the most common concerns I've heard with regard to full day K is that 5 year olds aren't ready for a full day of school. One board member who voted no last month, spoke in February about the need to return play back to Kindergarten. I agree!

Remember, this is exactly what was proposed. Academic standards are now more rigorous in most states – regardless if they are in a half day program, or in a program that is the same length as the instructional day of first grade. Wouldn't it make sense to give students twice the amount of time to meet the same academic expectations through play, which is the way they learn best? Presenting school as a place for play AND learning is the perfect type of “transition” many of these students need.

If we want to continue to be seen as a district who understands the needs of children, we must not continue to delay.

Without reiterating all of the data presented in the three board presentations, I do want to call your attention back to one very surprising statistic. In East Penn, a district that prides itself on being student-centered and high achieving, only 9% of its students are enrolled in a full

day K program. Yet across the state, 77% of kindergarten students are in that same type of program. A majority of you are on record as recognizing the positive educational impact of Full Day K.

If we want to continue to be seen as an example of excellence in education, we must not continue to delay.

Finally, I'd like to speak about our role as board members. When voting, voters by and large choose a candidate with two expectations – that the candidate will serve as their representative and that the candidate will learn about a particular topic in order to make an informed vote about what's best for kids AND the community. When the opportunity for a curricular change arises, we CANNOT abdicate that responsibility by choosing not to participate in discussion. Nor should we decide on the direction we as a district should take by using public referendum to set CURRICULAR objectives. But yet even still, I'd argue that a public referendum is exactly what happened on Tuesday, when voters spoke and chose four candidates who were strongly in favor of full day kindergarten.

If we want to continue to be seen as a board who is connected to the community, we must not continue to delay.

So, let's let Tuesday's election speak for itself. Let's give our kindergartners the time to learn AND play. Let's finally give our youngest ones the chance to compete on the same educational playing field as their peers across the commonwealth. Let us not delay.

It is time for Full Day Kindergarten in East Penn.

Thank you.