



## Memorandum

To: Madame Chair Smith, Board Trustees, Dr. Shon Hocker

From: Patty Morrison; Assistant Superintendent of Elementary Schools

Date: July 29, 2022

Re: Balanced Beginning Kindergarten Program

Balanced Beginning is a new program we are offering to our incoming kindergarten students and families in August 2022. Through collaboration and research originating from many of the kindergarten teachers, we developed a way to offer this slower start to the first four to nine days of schools for our kindergarten students. The main tenant is to offer a shorter day for the first days of school asking students to attend a morning or afternoon session on those days with the purpose of reducing the number of children working with their classroom teacher and specialists as they start on their new kinder adventure. This time will allow for more attention to relationships and trust building, increased parent communication and gives our teachers an opportunity in this way to observe and assess what the needs of each of their new students are.

Research was brought forward by Bryan Elementary kindergarten teachers noting this popular program being utilized in other districts. Other important outcomes we anticipate are reducing anxiety for the children as they start school due to a much smaller student to teacher ratio. This time allows for more direct instruction about all the ins and outs of school increasing understanding and independence more quickly for our newest students. During these days the school schedule includes all the usual parts of the day such as time with specialists, lunch, learning and gaining skills in the everyday things such as utilizing bathrooms, getting from or to the bus, walking in the hallways safely and plenty of supervision and introduction to recess rules and safety guidelines.

While some of the expectations of our new program were “tight”, some were “loose” as school teams designed what would work best for their school population. Schools where higher incidences of dysregulated behavior might be running the program for the first nine days wherein some of our school communities are choosing a four day balanced beginning. All of the different introductions of this program will be monitored for success and the full elementary administration team will discuss all aspects upon completion to determine the strengths and weaknesses of the program.

Every elementary school began communication to families about this in May. We have communicated through our district and school webpages. We will continue these efforts throughout the summer with an increased focus on kindergarten family communication when administration returns in August.

Some schools have run similar initiatives in the past independently and this will give us the opportunity to align our best ideas together and give Balanced Beginnings the CDA Public Schools “stamp” that assures we are doing our work based on evidence while taking parent feedback along with teacher insights into account along the way.

If you have any questions or concerns I can clarify, please let me know and I’d be happy to discuss.