



Hingham Public Schools

KINDERGARTEN ENROLLMENT REPORT UPDATE FOR FALL 2018

September 14, 2018

GENERAL INFORMATION

The data included in this report is as of the writing of this document and reflects enrollment reported by the four elementary schools as of the September 6, 2018 K starting date.

The total K enrollment is currently at 285 students (278 full-day, 7 half-day). September enrollments in 2017 (289 students), 2016 (275 students), and 2015 (302 students) do not present a clear enrollment trend and that reality does impact our ability to project future growth. This not only impacted projections for our annual K class size, but it set the base for the year over year growth calculations for overall enrollment.

For the current school year, the anticipated tuition revenue does exceed the offset in the approved FY 19 budget by about \$60,000. The majority of the 285 families are paying the full \$3,650 tuition. There is no fee for either the 7 half-day students or the 15 students who are entering kindergarten with IEPs. The parents of 9 students requested a full or partial tuition waiver, for which they were eligible based upon the 2018 tuition sliding scale. Tuition for three of the four retained students also was waived. Five families were responsible for the \$150 "processing fee" that is assessed for late enrollment.

AGE AT ENROLLMENT DETAIL

Of the 285 students, 33 (11.6%) entered HPS K in 2018 at age 6. This is compared with 45 or 15.6% for last year's class. This includes students held out or retained last year; most of them were part of the number that prompted exploration of the "age at enrollment" issue. Some are students that we did not know about in spring 2017 and therefore did not have any parent communications with, until they showed up to enroll this year. It was to be expected that such students would be age six at the time of their enrollment in this year's K.

One thing to keep in mind is that ten students in last year's K class had been retained from the prior year. We noted that anomaly in some of the public discussions last year as a factor in the higher number of age six enrollees in the 2017-2018 class. For the 2018 K class, there are only four students retained from last year, one at each school. This is a more typical number of students retained. As a result of this one factor, the total age six at enrollment number is down somewhat.

Among the students who entered K in September at age 6, 3 were born in June 2012; 15 in July, and 10 in August for a total of 28 "summer birthdays." Five of these older children have birthdays earlier than June of 2018; we believe that some of them are children with disabilities. Among children who entered K at age five this year, there are a total of 34 July

and August, 2013 birthdays (20 born in July and 14 born in August). So, not all children with July and August birthdays are held out, as is sometimes the perception.

We were pleased with the number of parents of current Kindergarteners who did meet or speak on the phone with principals. Most had questions about the readiness of their child or concerns including maturity, delayed developmental or behavioral issues, shyness, etc. Some parents did provide documentation from a pediatrician or other specialist to support their intent to enroll their child next year. There were a total of 26 conferences with parents, most in person and fairly equally distributed across the four schools. Clearly the message that HPS staff wanted an opportunity to have input into the decision about age at enrollment was heard and acted upon. Based upon parent reporting, a total of 17 age-eligible students will defer enrollment to the 2019-2020 school year. The true number of holdouts is of course unknown, as not all parents of five-year-olds shared their plans with the district.

School	Enrolled	Age 6 entering K	Number of conferences held by principals	Number of planned holdouts to 19-20	Comments
East	64	9+1*	8	8	3 sections of K
Foster	80	6+1*	4	4	4 sections of K
PRS	60	3+1*	7	1	3 sections of K
South	81	11+1*	7	5	4 sections of K
Total	285	29+4*	26	18	4 students retained, as opposed to 10 in the 2017-2018 class
*retained student/s					

COMMENTS/ISSUES AND CONCERNS

Despite a greater effort to connect with parents of age-eligible children, we continue to be frustrated in trying to make those contacts. We appreciate that the majority of parents did enroll their children in a timely fashion, as evidenced by the small number of “processing fees” assessed. Nevertheless, calls and emails to more than 25 parents on our original “census” list of age-eligible students went unanswered. As a last resort, a couple of principals even went on “field trips” to the addresses we had. In some cases, the families had moved but were still on the Town’s street list. Other parents had enrolled their children in private school K or Pre-K programs without contacting the HPS. Our concern of course is that at least some of these children will arrive next year as six-year-olds without our having been involved in any discussion on the topic. As well, HPS staff time can certainly be put to better use than in tracking families.

There continues to be a concern that a few individual private pre-school teachers are recommending to parents that their children’s K entry be delayed until age 6 as a routine matter. We have identified a couple of instances where that has happened recently and we have addressed the concern with the director of those schools; but we also found that some parents reported that situation as having happened in the past but may not be current preschool practice.

We have had excellent cooperation with the private pre-school directors who attended one or more of the three forums held last winter. Further, the HPS kindergarten teachers hosted a meeting with the private preschools (both teachers and directors) last April, to discuss kindergarten readiness. It was an opportunity for HPS teachers to share curriculum and program practices and goals and to share the HPS philosophy that entering K at age five is the right decision for most children. We hope that a collaborative meeting like the April 2018 one becomes an annual spring activity.

We continue to be most appreciative of the help we receive from the local preschool programs in distributing information about K enrollment and related forums and the mandated “child find” message to the early childhood and new to Hingham families.

CONCLUSIONS

Because this is the first K enrollment period when we have focused on the age at enrollment issue, we did not expect to see a great change in numbers given that the 2017-2018 holdouts were already in the “pipeline” to enter K at age six. However, we have been encouraged that providing earlier information about K curriculum and readiness expectations has made parents more open to learning about what is available in the public schools and more willing to engage in conversations with HPS staff about what is right for their child. Our feedback is that parents have appreciated the information shared in the forums and commented positively on what’s available on the website and through private conversations with HPS staff.

Changing a culture of making decisions for one’s child based upon what peers are doing to a more collaborative (home with school) exploration based upon facts and the individual child’s readiness is a slow process. We are encouraged that there has been a reduction in the numbers of children entering K at age 6, but we plan to continue the efforts begun last winter as noted below.

RECOMMENDATION FOR FUTURE ACTIONS

- (1) Continue early outreach efforts for parents of young children. These include:
 - a. finding additional ways to connect with parents and new families beyond pre-school shared notices, school-based e-mails and Facebook, and the print media;
 - b. continuing to offer November and January parent focus groups to share program expectations and curriculum information, policy and practice guidelines for K enrollment and registration process details; and
 - c. ensuring regular updating of the K website page as a “go-to” source of factual information.
- (2) Continue to maintain positive working relationships with local preschools by:
 - a. hosting annual sharing sessions between HPS kindergarten teachers and preschool teachers;

- b. including pre-school staffs directly in hearing information about upcoming changes in HPS curriculum, policy and practice; and
 - c. engaging in discussions with pre-school personnel that enroll Hingham five-year-olds in both K and Pre-K programs such as the Conservatory.
- (3) Gather midyear information from parents of the 2018 K class as to the accuracy of their initial perceptions about readiness or other concerns and to invite parent suggestions for reducing parent anxiety about their child's readiness for the K experience.
- (4) Continue to work with the Town Clerk and the elementary principals to refine the data about the number of age-eligible children (five-year olds) that we get from the Clerk's office each spring, and thereby reduce the number of potential kindergartners that we have such difficulty in tracking.