

## **Plainville Citizen – October 2012 Op- Ed, Full Day Kindergarten**

Full day kindergarten, approved by the Board of Education this past June, began in all three Plainville elementary schools on September 5. Parent support for the program was overwhelming, with over 100 parents in attendance at the June 26 Board meeting where the full day program was approved. Previous to this approval, two full day sections of kindergarten were piloted at Linden and Toffolon schools with great success during the 2011-12 school year. Currently 12 out of 15 school districts in Plainville's District Reference Group (DRG) have full day kindergarten programs in place, and more than half of all Connecticut school districts offer a full day kindergarten program. By all accounts, the program is off to an outstanding start in Plainville. The expansion of the kindergarten program in Plainville to full day was done at no cost to the Board's 2012-13 budget, due to additional funding received through the Open Choice program and the elimination of mid-day bussing costs for half day kindergarten.

The full day program offers a number of benefits including small class sizes, increased learning time, opportunities for developmentally appropriate socialization, additional time to monitor student progress and individualize instruction, and more opportunity for parent and family communication. Research relative to full day kindergarten presented at the June 26 Board of Education meeting showed that children who attend full day kindergarten demonstrate increased classroom engagement, more productivity, fewer behavior problems and increased social development. Further, students in full day kindergarten programs require less remediation and have higher attendance rates after kindergarten. Research presented at the Board meeting also

identified examples of dramatic differences in both reading and math achievement for those students who attended full day kindergarten as part of the pilot in 2011-12. One example relative to reading achievement noted that 71% of full day kindergarten students were above the grade level standard for comprehension versus 46% of half day kindergarten students. Similarly 98% of full day kindergarten students are able to identify letters of the alphabet versus 76% of half day kindergartners who met this goal.

The full-day kindergarten program gives our talented teachers the time and opportunity to focus on all aspects of early childhood development. The program insures our students not only have the academic readiness skills they need going forward, but also the opportunity to develop creativity and social confidence. This is a much needed educational addition for the children of Plainville, and one that will chart the course for continued success.