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## Kindergarten changing to full-day

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### **District will pay for it with stimulus money; teacher looks forward to it**

FREMONT -- Renee Diebler, a kindergarten teacher at Lutz Elementary School, says a benefit to having full-day kindergarten in the school district starting this fall is that children won't be rushed through the curriculum.

While a lot of time is dedicated to language arts and reading, the curriculum also includes math, social studies and science.

Currently the kindergarten morning and afternoon sessions last 2 1/2 hours.

"We're excited about this," said Laurie Godfrey, director of curriculum, assessment and development. "We know this will help us. ...We felt we weren't providing enough instruction time."

Godfrey said the other areas of curriculum were being fit into the schedule when it was possible. Most school districts in the state and surrounding area already have full-day kindergarten including parochial schools.

"This will really level the playing the field. Students won't be rushed through the curriculum and we will be able to serve students with intervention during the school day," Godfrey said.

The district will use stimulus funds to offer the full-day kindergarten in all buildings, which the district is waiting for to come through within the next several weeks. Godfrey said with the full-day kindergarten a few more teachers will be needed along with new curriculum materials. Previous budget constraints prevented the district from making the change earlier.

Diebler is looking forward to the change so they can slow down and have a better focus.

"We're trying to do a full curriculum in a half-day right now," she said, noting the full-day will benefit all children especially at risk and for those children who are ready for new challenges.

"We'll be able to expand on curriculum," Diebler said.

The full-day kindergarten would last the same time as the rest of the school which is 9 a.m. to 3:30 p.m.

Kindergarten registration has also begun this week and will last until May 22. The district also changed the eligibility date for registration, so that a child is to be five years old by Aug. 1, instead of by Sept. 30 for kindergarten this fall.

According to the district newsletter, Superintendent Traci McCaudy said children who attend a full-day outperform children who attend only a half-day.

Kindergarten teacher Karen Christensen at Winchell Elementary School in Fresno, Calif., said teachers should embrace all-day kindergarten because kindergartners no longer just drink milk, eat graham crackers, play and take naps. Today, the pressure to increase test scores begins in kindergarten, she said.

The California Department of Education requires kindergartners to count to 30, write a coherent sentence with punctuation, and read at least 20 words -- such as "the" and "said" -- that are frequently written in books.

Christensen said a half-day of kindergarten, or 3 1/2 hours, isn't enough time to effectively teach those requirements, as well as attend to her other duties such as nurturing the children and teaching them to socialize in a public setting.

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Renee Diebler, a kindergarten teacher at Lutz Elementary School, works with her students Wednesday on counting, learning the days of the week, telling time and identifying coins. (Leslie Bixler | News-Messenger)