Amendment #1 DRA benchmarks for Kindergarten and 1st grade

Research based assessment of phonologic awareness and other skills will be required at mid-year and end of year for Kindergarteners. DRA is to be given no more than twice yearly, with end of year benchmark level of 3. 1st grade benchmarks will be revised as follows; Nov. DRA level 4, February DRA level 10, June DRA level 16.

DRA levels A-2 will be reported separately and Pre-A level will be added to report students who are score below 90% accuracy after reading both DRA levels A and 1. Change DRA A-2 forms to reflect a preview of the book and to show accuracy rate as shown on forms provided by author.

Retention policy as related to DRA:
While the district respects the right of parents and teachers under the state education code to retain students in Kindergarten or 1st grade the district recommends the following policy:

No child should be held over in Kindergarten or 1st grade based only on DRA scores. Students in Kindergarten and 1st grade should have global developmental delays, i.e. difficulty in achieving standards in other subjects such as math, P.E., and other skills such as socialization and language acquisition if they are retained. Kindergarteners with DRA scores at or above level 1 and 1st graders with DRA scores at or above level 10 should not be held over.

Rationale:
1) Skills required more closely match state standards.
2) U.S. department of Education research shows the average child begins reading conventionally after age 6. Levels A-2 are considered pre-conventional.
3) More consistent with levels used by other districts across the nation, and in San Diego County.
4) Prevents jump in expectations between Kindergarten and early 1st grade.
5) Allows Kindergarteners and 1st graders time to be instructed in appropriate standards before testing.
6) Prevents identifying students as struggling or “at risk” when there is no scientific evidence to the truth of that statement.
7) Levels are more closely in line with examples in the following resources:
Development Reading Assessment (DRA), The Art of Teaching Reading by Lucy Calkins, Guided Reading by Fontas and Pinnell, Research of Elizabeth Sulzby and William Teale, U.S. department of Education research, Words Their Way by Donald R. Bear, Marcia Invernizzi, Shane R. Templeton, and Francine Johnson, and levels suggested by publishers such as Scholastic, Wright Group and Rigby.
8) Retention policy respects that young children develop skills at different rates and not in a linear manner. Policy is more consistent with research on retention.

Kindergarten Leadership Team, 2005
Amendment #2  
**Quality Kindergarten In-servicing of:**  
Instructional leaders, principals, & teachers and peer coaches  

**Rationale:**

The current method of passing information from the Literacy Department, to Instructional Leaders, to site administrators and peer coaches, to teachers, to parents has created misunderstandings. There are concerns about information passed on by some members of the district staff who advocate inappropriate non-research based practices or extremely inappropriate DRA levels. A new model in which the A Quality Kindergarten Program and the research behind it is presented and explained by the people who developed it is needed. Information needs to be correct and consistent. The Kindergarten Leadership Team believes in the principles of A Quality Kindergarten Program and the supporting amendments, and recognize their importance in the creation of the best foundation for learning. “What’s more, NIH (National Institutes of Health) –sponsored studies are finding that at least 95 percent of even the poorest readers can learn to read at grade level if they are given early and proper instruction in sound-letter relationships. By contrast, as many as 40 percent of school-age children remain poor readers with half of them having serious trouble. A key reason for this huge gap is that for years scientific research has been ignored by educators.” “People blame the kids, the teachers, the parents, the socioeconomic background, all kinds of things except the instructional procedures being used.” (Kelly Lally and Debbie M. Price, Core Reading Anthology: The Brain Reads Sound by Sound) The practices in the classroom must be based upon research of the highest caliber.

“Recent data derived from the National Assessment of Educational Progress (1994) reveals an alarming trend. In the State of California, 59% of fourth grade children had little or no mastery of the knowledge and skills necessary to perform reading at grade level. Even more alarming is that this evidence of serious reading failure cuts across all ethnic and socioeconomic variables.” “In fact, the children of college-educated parents in California scored lowest with respect to their national cohort.” (Dr. G. Reid Lyon, Core Reading Anthology: Statement of Dr. G. Reid Lyon) “Unfortunately, about a sixth of our children have phonological wiring-problems.” “Many of these children end up in special education or Title I programs because they never were taught properly at the outset, and many others flounder with their reading problems remaining undetected.” (Bill Honig, Core Reading Anthology: Reading the Right Way) “By the end of the first grade, we begin to notice substantial decreases in the children’s self esteem, self-concept, and motivation to learn to read if they have not been able to master reading skills and keep up with their age-mates.” (Dr. G. Reid Lyon, Core Reading Anthology: Statement of Dr. G. Reid Lyon)

As important as the reading and academic practice of Kindergarten is, we must also understand what an important time Kindergarten is to social and psychological development. Teachers not only need to be trained in the teaching of academics, but in helping students as they build their educational foundations and entrance into society. The Kindergarteners of today are the citizens, leaders, scientists, etc. of tomorrow. This age is very important in the building of thinking skills, social skills, and self-esteem. The child who knows only frequent failure stops trying. Without a

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change in the current climate, Kindergarteners will stop trying when their educational experience has hardly begun. Teachers need to understand stages of development and how they effect instruction. Many teachers don’t receive enough instruction on child development and its effect on instruction. They may understand the theory, but aren’t sure what it looks like in practice.

Kindergarteners are pushed to memorize books, words or chunks rather than spending a great deal of time singing songs like Apples and Bananas that help teach phonemic awareness. Yet, it is phonemic awareness that is the greatest predictor of reading success in later years. This is in part because of misunderstanding passed on in current training and in-servicing.

While the members of the Kindergarten Leadership Team recognize that there is a great deal yet to learn about how young children learn, we consider ourselves to be well versed in current research and willing to learn more. There are members among our committee who have their National Board Certification, have been Mentor teachers, have taught college courses, done district in-services in the past, and have degrees in Child Development. Most members have a Master degree while one member has several Master degrees and another is in a Doctorial program. As the creators of A Quality Kindergarten Program, we offer the district, Kindergarten teachers, and other primary teachers a great resource. We believe Instructional Leaders, site administrators, peer coaches, and teachers need in-servicing and models of quality programs. We believe the district needs to continue research on Kindergarten. We believe Kindergarten children in San Diego Unified School district deserve advocates for their best education that are very active in looking out for their best interest. With this in mind we propose the following:

The district and the Kindergarten Leadership Team will make a 3 1/2-year commitment to the improvement of Kindergarten programs through in-service, models, and research from March 2005 to June 2008.

Starting point:

2005- Members of the Kindergarten Leadership Team will:

1) In-service Instructional Leaders, site administrators, peer coaches, and Kindergarten teachers.
2) Create a handbook for Kindergarten teachers, handbook for teacher assistants, literature for parents and the public.
3) Establish 2-3 model classrooms
4) Set up research parameters for 3 year study
5) Assist in search for grants to help district with cost of the 3-year study
6) Be responsible for oversight of all in-servicing related to Kindergarten (including Units of Inquiry)

District will:

1) Pay members equivalent of 40 hours pro-rata pay minimum each, for research work this year, in addition to pay for teaching in-services and substitute teachers if needed.
2) Search for grants to help with cost of the 3-year study
3) Assist in setting up of in-services schedule

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A Quality Kindergarten Program

Years 1 and 2 2005-06 and 2006-07

Mentor Kindergarten Teachers will:
1) Create model classrooms to allow for observation, take leadership in in-services, research Kindergarten practice, and go to schools to mentor Kindergarten teachers, principal and Instructional Leaders at other school sites.
2) Be available to speak to the board, public and parent groups.
3) Meet with Kindergarten Leadership Team once a month.
4) Be well versed in textbooks and materials approved by the state and district in all subjects, as well as, the state standards for Kindergarten.

Kindergarten Leadership Team will:
1) Select the Kindergarten Mentor Teachers.
2) Continue in-services, visit schools and provide support.
3) Meet once a month during the traditional school year to work on research and assess progress of the change in the Kindergarten culture of the district.
4) Create new Kindergarten Report Card
5) Meet twice yearly with Board of Education with a mid year and end of year progress report, where the board can evaluate and ask for adjustments in the plan.

The District will:
1) Provide Kindergarten Mentor Teachers with the following: Equivalent of 8 hours a week pro-rata extra pay during the school year and 1 month (4 weeks) full time pro-rata pay during summer of 2005 and Summer 2006, clerical and technical support, lap top computer for research, planning of in-services and maintaining schedule of appointments off site. A second full-time credentialed teacher will be assigned to the classroom in the 1st year of the program to assure continuity for students and to allow Kindergarten Mentor Teachers flexibility to talk to visitors after observation, and allow Kindergarten Mentor Teachers to visit other schools. Fewer off-site visits will be needed during the 2nd year of the program, therefore a budget for substitutes will be used and the focus for off-site school visits will be on focus schools, schools identified by the board or the Kindergarten Leadership Team and new Kindergarten teachers.
2) Assist in setting up of in-services schedule
3) Provide support and assistance in research and data, through the Standards and Assessment Office
4) Direct a representative of the district to work with Kindergarten Leadership on a monthly basis.
5) Pay Kindergarten Leadership Team teachers for attendance at monthly meetings (curriculum pay), conducting in-services, and $800 yearly in pro-rata pay or equivalent, for continued research.
6) $450 per member of the Kindergarten Leadership Team each year of study to go to conferences, visit Kindergartens in other districts, or meet with experts.

Kindergarten Leadership Team, 2005
Year 3  
2007-08

**Members of the Kindergarten Leadership Team will:**
1) Meet 4 to 5 times to look at research and see the effect of the change for Kindergarteners who have been in the program who are now in 1st and 2nd grade. Provide a report to the board in July.

**The District will:**
1) Provide support and assistance in research through the Standards and Assessment Office
2) Direct a representative of the district to work with Kindergarten Leadership on a monthly basis.
3) Pay teachers for attendance to meetings and a $400 in pro-rata pay or equivalent for the year.

*While the complete retraining of the District’s Kindergarten teachers may seem drastic, we believe the current Kindergarten culture in the District requires it.*
Amendment #3  **Paraprofessional Support for Kindergarten Children**

Due to concerns for the safety of children and to reduce the District’s liability, San Diego Unified School District’s Kindergarten Children shall have Paraprofessional assistants (teacher assistants) to ensure their protection, proper supervision, tend to physical needs, and aid in their academic, physical, social and emotional growth in this unique stage of their school career. Assistants are to be present during all hours children are present, to support a safe and Quality Kindergarten.

**Rationale:**

In addition to having a qualified classroom teacher, San Diego City Schools Kindergarten students will have the benefit of daily, consistent classroom Teaching Assistants. Teaching Assistants will provide more complete supervision for the optimum safety, health and well being of all Kindergarten students. This supervision will include within the classroom, playground, office, nurse's station, distant restroom facilities, class field trips, etc. In emergency health and safety situations, (i.e. injury, vomiting, pant-wetting, emotional distress, run-away attempts), as well as times when the teacher must take the required time to do the new computerized attendance system, answer phone calls, etc., **Teaching Assistants will be particularly vital to the children’s safety and to reducing the District’s liability.** Teaching Assistants will allow the Kindergarten teacher to more efficiently do the job of instruction by taking care of the many daily side interruptions and student behavioral issues that occur at this age, as well as help in setting up and preparing and assisting students in the many work stations such as Computers, Recorded Book Listening, Easels, Literacy Centers, hands-on and experiential activities that are required in a quality Kindergarten program.

Teaching Assistants will be an academic support to help students to achieve to their highest potential in all areas of the curriculum. Teaching Assistants will be able to work with small groups and individuals on reinforcement, staying on task, encouraging increasingly higher levels of quality production, while the teacher is providing the primary instruction or performing individual assessments. Teaching Assistants can work with individual children in need to guide them in correct handwriting skills, reinforcing letter recognition and sound-letter correspondence, reading practice, and many other areas where some children may need extended individual time and attention to not fall below grade level.

Teaching Assistants will be an important Oral Language Development support by providing another adult model for English Language development for Second Language Learners and Bi-literacy students, as well as for all Kindergarten students who need to develop a strong Oral Language base in Kindergarten for reading and writing readiness, thinking, questioning, and self-expression skills, etc.

Teaching Assistants will support the Kindergarten students in successfully meeting all areas of California State Standards, complying with the California Education Code, and achieving academic success. Furthermore, these Paraprofessionals will be supportive of the needs of the development of the Whole Child (Cognitive, Physical, Social and Emotional), helping San Diego City Schools to have an excellent Kindergarten Leadership Team, 2005
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high quality Kindergarten Program, supports students in having a successful joyful first year in formal education. In addition, assistants will receive valuable classroom experience that will prepare them to be outstanding teachers in the future.

**Researched recommendations for Teaching Assistants include:**

“Learning to Read and Write: Developmentally Appropriate Practices for Young Children, part 2, A joint position of the International Reading Association (IRA) and the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC)”…

“IRA and NAEYC believe that goals and expectations for young children’s achievement in reading and writing should be developmentally appropriate, that is, *challenging but achievable, with sufficient adult support.*”

NEA Special Report on Early Childhood Education (April 2003)…

“When dealing with Kindergarten children – who because of their age require assistance in performing various life skills, pose unique health and safety concerns, etc. – the primary need is for additional adult supervision in the classroom. Accordingly, the Committee recommends that kindergarten teachers should have the assistance of a full-time aide.”

Policies Essential for Achieving Developmentally Appropriate Early Childhood Programs, Developmentally Appropriate Practice in Early Childhood Programs Serving Children From Birth Through Age 8, Sue Bredenkamp, Editor

"Implementation of developmentally appropriate early childhood programs requires limiting the size of the group and providing sufficient numbers of adults to provide individualized and age-appropriate care and education. Even the most well-qualified teacher cannot individualize instruction and adequately supervise too large a group of young children. An acceptable adult-child ratio for 4- and 5-year-olds is 2 adults with no more than 20 children. Younger children require much smaller groups. Group size, and thus, ratio of children to adults, should increase gradually through the primary grades."

Kindergarten Leadership Team, 2005
Amendment #4  **Modification of Full Day Kindergarten**

Modified days are to be 4 hours a day, excluding lunch, and must include a 15 to 20 minute recess and 10-15 minute nutrition break. Modified schedule starts from the first day of instruction and goes through Winter break on the traditional calendar. Minimum days are not effected.

**Rationale:**
Over fifty percent of the nation’s schools have implemented Full Day Kindergarten programs in order to assist in alleviating the growing child-care dilemmas and to help better prepare students for the academic rigor of first grade. Simultaneous to the growth and acceptance of more full day programs nationwide, each district and community that debates this change have legitimate reasons for their position favoring either side. While full day is indicative of growing needs for child-care with more dual employment of parents, there is also national research and concern in this social trend and its effect on children, specifically in more aggression in children attending extended day care and in full day Kindergartens as opposed to children who spend more time at home with parents. National education and child development experts and leaders have expressed concern over growing societal expectations and their effect on pre-school and Kindergarten age children in America. Their concerns include pushed down academics, a trend away from the values of free play, exploration and recess, and a culture that is centered around adults and less in the protection of children’s right to a wholesome childhood. **Our district can facilitate child-care, but its first responsibility is to what is best for children, not what is most convenient for adults.**

“Research suggests that how Kindergarteners spend their time may be more critical than the amount of time children spend in class.” (U.S. Department of Education: Office of Education Research and Improvement). These studies found little difference between the long term academic success of students in half programs and full day programs. A look at other San Diego County school districts with high quality and developmentally appropriate Kindergartens show most with half day schedules. Two examples are: (1) Poway Unified, with half-day, successful, developmentally appropriate Kindergartens with district-wide high test scores. A.M. and P.M. Teachers work within each other’s classrooms to provide support. (2) Del Mar District, which attempted Full Day for one year, then repealed it and went back to half-day because it was considered too demanding on the children. Their teachers provide an extended time with a different small group of their own students 4 days a week.

Some positive results have been found in the current research regarding Full Day Kindergarten. Researchers have discovered that children are not rushed through academics, and have more time to socialize and play in a full day program. Yet, **researchers also stress that the positive benefits of Full Day Kindergarten stem from how the day is structured. They warn that the successes can be negated by excessive attention focused solely on academics.**

Too often educators teach from one extreme to the other. San Diego Unified School District (SDUSD) implemented Full Day Kindergarten without adequate preparation for
the transformation. The present research was not taken into account, and dialogue with parents and educators did not occur. The district demanded a full day of academics. Naps were not allowed, and playtime was discouraged. The structure of the day was not developmentally appropriate. Home centers were sometimes removed, as well as, blocks, alphabet puzzles, and magnetic letters. The district had lost sight of the population it was serving – four and five year olds. It was more important to make the students perform, than to consider their inherent needs. Although touted as a success by the district, Full Day Kindergarten has placed unnecessary social, emotional, and academic stress on the students.

Kindergarten was designed as a transition from home or preschool to elementary school. Currently our Kindergarteners start in a full day academic program the first day of school. A modification of the full day will give young students more time to transition to a full day schedule and a full day schedule will be more effective late in the school year as students tend to mature, are less tired, and more able to focus and listen attentively. There must be a balance between academic and developmental curriculum. The social and emotional aspects of early childhood education are just as crucial as the academic. “Learning through play” is a fundamental method of teaching in a Kindergarten classroom. Students need to enjoy learning and the classroom environment, so they may build a strong foundation towards their educational careers as life-long learners. The implementation of a transition period into Full Day Kindergarten would facilitate this process, and allow students to acclimate more easily to their new setting without the physical and mental demands of a six hour structured program. Using these modifications, Kindergartners would be permitted a smoother adjustment to the introduction of their scholastic endeavors.

Other positive outcomes of the transition time would be a more effective presentation of A Quality Kindergarten Program and use of Kindergarten teachers as support for other primary children in the afternoons. As Kindergarten children have short attention spans, teachers in a quality program will spend a great deal of time planning for an activity that may last 10 minutes. The hands-on nature of a quality program requires a great deal of time in the collecting, organizing, and set-up of materials. As the quality of instruction during the time of day when young children focus best is a critical component of an excellent quality program, the modified schedule would allow the teacher more time for this important planning. Kindergarten teachers would also be available in the afternoons to work with students in other primary grade classrooms who need additional support or to assist with staff development by taking classes while teachers of other grades observe in other classrooms.

We need to look at how the decisions being made for Kindergarten will affect the future of our children. The transition from a modified day to a full day will allow for the researched positive outcomes of both programs, more time for social, emotional, physical development and adjustment to the school setting.

Kindergarten Leadership Team, 2005
Amendment #5  **Bi-literacy, MEC, and SEI**

The district will provide bi-literacy programs with material in both languages whenever there is a phonics or literacy adoption. The district will provide all current bi-literacy classrooms with the same materials and texts currently provided to English classrooms for phonics, phonemic awareness, and literacy. District will allow sites to use material budgets to purchase hands-on materials for 2nd language students. Students in bi-literacy programs, MEC and SEI classrooms are all to have the same access to *A Quality Kindergarten Program*, as all other Kindergarten classrooms.

**Rationale:**
Currently there are bi-literacy classrooms which did not receive literacy and phonics/phonemic awareness materials in English when the district purchased materials for all other classrooms. These teachers are expected to teach both languages, but are not given the English materials. Children in these programs are also expected to spend 4 to 5 hours in a literacy block. Teachers and students must be given access to the same state approved English material all other students in the district have.

Bi-literacy, MEC, and SEI students of all primary grades, but most especially Kindergarten, need access to hands-on materials to look at and touch as they learn the names and labels for items in English. It is inappropriate to limit sites’ 2nd language material budgets to books.

San Diego Unified School District Bi-Literacy and Second Language Kindergarten students shall have the same opportunities for a Quality Kindergarten Program as regular English language students. All Kindergarten children need and deserve to be provided a Developmentally Appropriate curriculum with challenging but attainable grade level benchmarks. Children whose primary language is not English, and are in the process of acquiring English proficiency, must be properly supported in this important development, and should not be unfairly penalized academically.

The Kindergarten Study Group, which has included bi-literacy teachers, teachers of SEI/MEC students, and surveyed and interviewed teachers in these areas, has determined that better supports for Bi-Literacy, SEI and MEC students, and changes in the DRA benchmarks for Bi-Literacy programs are needed.

Children who are learning a second language need a great deal of support in oral language experience. Kindergarten is a very important time for all students to develop vocabulary, but especially for Second Language Learners. One of the guiding principles of the Quality Kindergarten is the need for a strong foundation in Oral Language Development in Kindergarten, which will facilitate the successful progress of all English Language Learners.

English Language Learners (ELL) in the recent past had curriculum supports (i.e. Hampton Brown “Into English”) that have been de-emphasized with the increasing Literacy component demands. Where recently ELL students’ proficiency level in reading

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in English was not required to be as high as fluent English speakers, now all ELL students have the same grade level requirement. District-wide ELL students were found to be 87% below the mid-year level reading target for Kindergarten in 2003. Clearly more Oral Language Development, support and time to acquire the second language is needed for those without English Language Fluency in Kindergarten.

Curriculum supports for Bi-Literacy students must be adequate for proper instruction, not mere translations of English materials. Quality curriculum supports are needed to properly support the success of Bi-Literacy students.

It is recommended that there be a Special Committee made up of Kindergarten and 1st Grade teachers of Bi-Literacy classes, to include members of the Kindergarten Leadership Committee and CABE, to discuss and address their most critical concerns with the District. State and Federal Laws that provide for the parental-student rights for the choice of waivers and to actively participate in site and district bi-literacy and Second Language committees must be properly followed in San Diego City Schools. There are many reports of non-compliance to the law in this area. This must be immediately rectified.

Amendments 1-5 Prepared by Catherine Perry, Kimra Musser, and Janice Schell on Behalf of the Kindergarten Leadership Team.

Kindergarten Leadership Team, 2005
Literature and Research Review

Other References:


A Quality Kindergarten Program

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Internet Resources:

Access to Kindergarten: Age Issues in State Statutes

Best Evaluations for the Youngest Students by Ellen Booth Church
www.scholastic.com/schoolage/experts

California Department of Education: Kindergarten in California
http://www.cde.ca.gov/ci/gs/em/kinderinfo.asp

Critical Issue: Addressing the Literacy Needs of Emergent and Early Readers
http://www.ncrel.org/sdrs/areas/issues/content/cntareas/reading/li100.htm

Effects Of All-Day, And Half-Day Kindergarten Programming On Reading, Writing, Math And Classroom Social Behaviors by Charlene Hildebrand
http://www.nationalforum.com

First Academic Goals by Ann E. LaForge www.scholastic.com/schoolage/experts

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Kid Source Online www.kidsource.com

Learning to Read and Write Developmentally Appropriate Practices for Young Children, part 2 : A joint position of the International Reading Association (IRA) and the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC)
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Kindergarten Leadership Team, 2005