



NEW LENOX SCHOOL DISTRICT 122  
102 South Cedar Road, New Lenox, Illinois 60451  
Phone 815-485-2169 Fax 815-485-2236

---

## YOU ASKED.....WE ANSWERED

### **WHY DOESN'T THE DISTRICT HAVE ALL-DAY KINDERGARTEN? (Since the District has a surplus, can't all-day Kindergarten be implemented?)**

Each year the District Administration reviews the viability of introducing all-day Kindergarten. We review the achievement of our students progressing into 1<sup>st</sup> Grade in combination with the financial sustainability of transitioning to an all-day Kindergarten program. At this time, we have determined that the achievement of our students is excellent and not impacted negatively by our half-day program, while the financial instability of state funding continues to impede multi-year sustainability of a full-day Kindergarten program.

#### **Academic Programming Questions**

One interesting note for those concerned about the academic achievement or exposure in a half-day program---

Principal Lori Motsch and her staff implemented the KIDS Assessment Program as a pilot for the Illinois State Board of Education. They have fully implemented the program over the last few years. When reviewed by ISBE representatives for a week, they stated that our program was more rigorous than the majority of full-day programs in the State.

On another note----

Our District offers Art, Music, Spanish, and Physical Education by certified teachers for all Kindergartens students. Finally, our Kindergarten program is assigning each student an iPad creating a 1:1 environment. Dr. Motsch and her teachers have been planning and preparing to fully integrate state-of-the art technological tools for our youngest learners.

One last note about academics----

If the District did move to full-day, the academic content would not be increased, as these younger learners need multiple breaks (naps), lunch, and recess. All day programs would be increased by additional art, music, and physical education.

#### **Financial Sustainability Questions**

NLSD122 has worked very hard the past several years to streamline all its operations and to become as efficient as possible. NLSD122 strives to provide high quality schools and programs at the lowest cost possible. The established goal and strategy is to continue to use any surplus funds left over at the end of each school year to fund repairs and renovations of the district's facilities. NLSD122 has 14 facilities that have to be kept in good condition for future generations of students. In an effort to keep property taxes as low as possible, NLSD122 has been using cash reserves to maintain and renovate facilities instead of issuing more debt that taxpayers would need to pay back over time with interest. The most current capital needs listing is at \$52M making this funding strategy critical to the district's long term sustainability.

The 2016-2017 school year's budget looks very promising. An approximate \$3M operating budget surplus is forecasted. This means that at the end of the year, the District can use up to \$3M to repair and renovate buildings. After the repairs and renovations are complete, the total net budget is \$0. Total expenditures including capital renovations will equal the amount of money collected by the school district. There are no excess funds left over at the end of the year.

NLSD122 is forecasted to receive about \$2.9M in General State Aid from Illinois for the 2016-2017 school year. This is based on a one year, temporary, stop-gap budget passed by Illinois for this school year. There is no certainty of what NLSD122 will receive in future years. Several school funding bills that have passed the House or Senate over the past couple years proposed that NLSD122 would lose \$2M to \$3M in State funding. The amount of General State Aid that NLSD122 will collect in the 2017-2018 school year is unknown and at risk at this time.

One of the Governor's top initiatives is to implement a property tax freeze for all school districts. This has not yet happened; however, the reality of this happening is possible. If this were to happen, NLSD122's annual budget would be decimated and extensive cuts would need to be implemented. Property taxes are NLSD122's primary funding source. With so much uncertainty being caused by property tax freeze initiatives and proposals, NLSD122 must remain very careful with its financial planning.

**All-day Kindergarten would cost at least \$1M more per year and space may become an issue at the Spencer Trail Kindergarten building. After careful evaluation and consideration each year, NLSD122 Administration has not yet seen the benefits to outweigh the costs and unfortunately does not have the future funding certainty in place to take such a risk. Our worst fear is implementing the program and then having to remove it within a few years.**

All of this above information has been discussed as part of the 5-year financial plan that is updated and publicly presented each January and June. At the most recent 5 Year Forecast presentation, Administration explained that the FY18 – FY21 school years are estimated to have a little under a \$2M annual operating surplus each year. The approximate \$2M would then be used on capital projects each year. At the end of each school year, the total amount of funds collected are then used. The fund balance reserves would remain level each year. As disclosed in the presentation, this assumed no property tax freeze and no changes in State funding.

**In closing, for those parents who definitely prefer an all-day program, Dr. Motsch and her staff have partnered with the New Lenox Park District to provide an opportunity for students to remain at Spencer Trail for the entire day. Trailblazers provides extended opportunities for the Kindergarten students and has worked diligently to align its philosophy with the District's philosophy for educating children of this age. By utilizing the few extra classrooms, it has been our hope that this partnership has assisted in meeting the needs of those families desiring full-day programming.**