

April 14, 2008

Dear UPSD Families:

The purpose of this letter is to provide you with information to help clarify questions you might have regarding funding for full-day Kindergarten in University Place School District. With several neighboring districts now offering free full-day kindergarten, we've received many inquiries as to why U.P.S.D. is not offering this option at this time.

Tacoma School District recently announced they are expanding their full-day kindergarten program for next school year. They have been able to fund this program in the past from federal and state funds they received to provide programs in their schools with the highest levels of poverty. This is also true in Clover Park and Bethel. The state is providing funds (\$36.2 M) for the full-day kindergarten program in Tacoma, but this money is only available for 20% of the poorest schools in the state. Schools that qualify for this funding have a poverty rate of 70% or more. As you may be aware, University Place School District has a poverty rate of approximately 28%, and does not qualify for these funds.

Some school districts have chosen to offer full-day kindergarten using their I-728 student achievement funds. It is a district decision within the parameters allowable under state law how these funds will be used. In University Place, these funds support our first priority of lower class size, especially in our primary schools. Our target class size is 20 students per class in grades K-2, 24 students per class in grades 3-4, and 26 students per class in grades 5-7. In addition, I-728 funds are used to provide smaller classes in both math and English at grades 8-12. Our second priority for these funds is to provide additional instructional programs to our struggling students through our after-school and summer programs. Our next priority is to provide our students with a guaranteed and viable curriculum through continued alignment of curriculum to the desired outcomes for our students. It is also a priority to provide staff development to our teachers so they have the skills to be more effective in the classroom in all content areas.

Both the state and federal government target funds toward schools and districts with high poverty and significant numbers of underachieving students. Because University Place School District does not meet this demographic, we do not receive the additional funds available in districts with substantially higher poverty rates. However, to assist families in need within University Place School District, we are offering scholarships to eligible students in both our Community Pre-School program and our full-day Kindergarten program.

Please feel free to contact me if you have questions or would like additional information.

Sincerely,

Susie Jensen

Susie Jensen
Director of Student Services and Technology