

NOSD officials say option fails to meet rigors of academic expectations

Citing increasingly rigorous academic standards that reach to the youngest students, the Northern Ozaukee School Board agreed Monday to discontinue half-day kindergarten starting next school year.

Supt. Blake Peuse said half-day kindergarten has become an underutilized approach to teach youngsters.

“Half-day kindergarten has been an option for many years, however we have had only a handful of families take advantage of this in the last 10 years,” Peuse said in a report to the board.

In recent years, he said as few as three or four children have been enrolled in the half-day program.

Peuse said the importance of full-day kindergarten is mounting as the district embraces the Common Core Standards for learning, which sets benchmarks of for mastering core subjects.

“When students are engaged in half-day kindergarten, they accumulate approximately 540 hours of instruction for the school year,” he said. That is half the classroom time students in full-day kindergarten receive.

“We need to focus on readying our students to enter the first grade with grade-level-appropriate skills, especially in the area of reading, literacy and basic math skills,” Peuse said.

That preparedness follows students throughout their school careers, he said.

Peuse said full-day kindergarten allows teachers to provide a better balance of time for academics and socializing skills.

Although not advocated as a financial move, Peuse also noted that the district receives 40% less state aid for students enrolled in half-day kindergarten compared to full-day kindergartners.