

Full Day Kindergarten is an important issue here in Summit. At the League of Women Voters Candidates Forum, my opponent and I discussed our positions on this issue.

As I said in the Candidates Forum, I support universal full day kindergarten for several reasons. First, the educational experts in the Summit Public Schools have found that it is a beneficial program and recommended its implementation in 2012-13. The Board of Education approved the program but was ultimately overruled by the former mayor and Council at the Board of School Estimate. Superintendent June Chang continues to speak about the educational benefits of full day kindergarten noting that “with careful planning and budgeting, a Full Day program for all Summit families is something I believe we can work towards.” <https://www.tapinto.net/.../summit-school-board-narrowly-appr...>

Second, there is clearly demand from Summit residents. I have spoken to many Summit residents who want this program. The demand is further illustrated by the fact that 2/3 of the kindergarten students in the Summit Public Schools have chosen full day kindergarten despite the \$7,150 annual tuition, and even more families would likely choose full day kindergarten if they could afford it. Finally, full day kindergarten is offered by 80% of the towns in New Jersey so not having it puts us at a competitive disadvantage and could affect our property values as young families choose other towns with full day kindergarten instead of Summit.

I challenge the Board of Education to develop a cost estimate for implementation. It has been several years since any cost estimate has been made public, and during that time conditions have changed. The Board of Education should look at whether the program can be implemented using existing facilities and should determine what the annual operating costs would be. As a community, we can then discuss how to implement this program without increasing taxes.

At the Candidates Forum, my opponent stated that he would defer to the educational experts to determine the need for full day kindergarten and then proceeded to inject his own personal opinion asking, “What problem are we trying to address here?” My opponent then cited data to justify his opposition to full day kindergarten. This data came from an October 2016 Board of Education Workshop meeting presentation by Jennifer Ambrose, Director of Elementary Education at the Summit Public Schools. Ms. Ambrose qualified the presentation of these numbers, stating that the data set was too small to be used to draw conclusions. <https://video.summit.k12.nj.us/app/sites/index.aspx...> (The data discussion begins at the 5:07 mark.)

Full day kindergarten is a worthwhile program that has the support of Summit educators. As my opponent has stated, politicians should defer to the educational experts. You can view the debate clip with my answers and those of my opponent on this topic here.