Keep Full-Day Kindergarten in West Hartford Public Schools

The Superintendent presented a "tightened" budget to the community on March 7, 2017, as well as a set of 32 additional budget reductions for consideration by the Board of Education. One of the proposed considerations was the elimination of full-day kindergarten in six non-Title I schools. This change would affect approximately 303 kindergarten students in 2017. As a group of parents, educators, and early childhood service providers, we oppose this proposal and advocate for full-day kindergarten in every West Hartford elementary school.

1. **Full-day kindergarten is cost effective.**
   - Investments in quality early childhood programs generate returns of 3-to-1 or even higher, which translates to $3 saved for every $1 invested. An early investment in children's social, emotional and intellectual skills means lower grade retention and dropout rates for students later in life. (Economic Policy Institute and Committee for Economic Development)
2. **Full-day kindergarten increases student achievement.**
   - Longitudinal data demonstrate that children in full-day kindergarten classes show greater reading and mathematics achievement gains than those in half-day classes. (Walston and West)
   - Full-day kindergarten can produce long-term educational gains, especially for low-income and minority students. (Education Commission of the States)
   - In full-day kindergarten classrooms, teachers have more time to get to know kids and identify and address their learning challenges early. (Center for Evaluation and Education Policy)
   - Full-day kindergarten provides a bridge between prekindergarten programs and more structured learning in first grade. (Education Commission of the States)
3. **Full-day kindergarten results in healthier, happier children.**
   - Full-day kindergarten offers social, emotional and intellectual benefits to kindergarteners, giving them more time to focus and reflect on activities, and transition between them. (National Institute for Early Education Research)
4. **Full-day kindergarten is preferred by parents.**
   - In a 2000 study, 100 percent of full-day parents and 72 percent of half-day parents noted that, if given the opportunity again, they would have chosen full-day kindergarten for their child. (National Center for Educational Statistics)
   - 74% of children in West Hartford have two parents who work outside the home. Half-day kindergarten will pose substantial challenges for working parents. (United States Census)
5. **Full-day kindergarten is critical to West Hartford's viability.**
   - West Hartford has had full-day kindergarten for almost 20 years. The Town's commitment to early childhood education has long been a selling point for young families.
   - 168 of 169 Connecticut towns provide full-day kindergarten for all children. (SDE)
   - 99.7% of Connecticut's kindergarteners attend full-day kindergarten programs. (SDE)
6. **In West Hartford, the proposed elimination of full-day kindergarten in six non-Title I schools drives an artificial wedge in our community**.
   - In West Hartford poverty and need are not isolated to Title I schools. According to School Profile and Performance Reports for 2014-2015, there are students who are eligible for free or reduced price lunch at each non-Title I school: Aiken: 7.4%; Braeburn: 13.6%; Bugbee: 7.3%; Duffy: 12.3%; Morley: 7.8%, Norfeldt: 6.2%.