

Champions Half-Day Kindergarten Enrichment Program

Citizens for Education recently sat down with Joy McClendon, Director of Elementary Education, and Jen Weisenbach, Champions Area Manager, to discuss the Champions Half-Day Kindergarten Enrichment Program.

Currently, Champions runs three half-day Kindergarten Enrichment Programs for Council Rock PM kindergarten students, daily from 8:45 am to 1:00 pm. The morning programs are held at Holland Elementary, Maureen Welch Elementary and Newtown Elementary, and are open to all Council Rock families. The program filled a need many working Council Rock parents faced: Where to send their PM kindergartners in the morning?

It seems there are ample PM enrichment programs in the area for AM kindergartners, but only limited AM programs for the PM students. Champions stepped in to fill the void. For \$99/week, Council Rock parents can have their PM kindergartners attend a morning enrichment program within the district. Class size is capped at 24 students per class and registration is on a first-come, first-served basis, completed online only. This eliminates the need for parents to camp out hours before registration. Parents are responsible for transporting their child to the program in the morning. The district then transports the children to their respective home schools for their afternoon kindergarten class.

In the past, there has consistently been a discrepancy in the AM and PM kindergarten enrollment numbers. Many working parents, who needed their children in school all day, requested AM kindergarten and then had their child bused to a PM kindergarten enrichment program nearby. As a result the morning kindergarten class sizes were always much higher than the afternoon class sizes. With the Champions Program in place, the AM and PM class sizes are now more evenly balanced.

The Enrichment Program curriculum consists of opportunities to explore art, dramatic play, math, science, Spanish, problem solving, and language and motor skills, in both large group and small group settings. The children rotate through nine centers in small groups that help them build skills for success in school. The curriculum is not designed to duplicate what is taught in Council Rock kindergarten classrooms; it is aligned with and meant to enrich the district's curriculum. A certified teacher and an assistant staff each class. Champions employs the teachers and assistants and equips the classrooms with all needed supplies and materials.

A typical morning in the Champions Program begins with "Morning Meeting," where the children discuss a theme and the weather and have share time. Next, they rotate through the small group centers. After a break for snack time, the children participate in a large group activity. Recess is next and the students will head outside if the weather cooperates. After recess it's time for lunch inside the classroom. When lunch is finished there's time to go back to the activity centers before dismissal. As you can see, there is constant activity going on each morning!

The Champions staff and Council Rock kindergarten teachers communicate to find out what is working and what is not. Changes are made to the program if needed. Parent feedback is also encouraged and appreciated.

It appears as though the Council Rock families have embraced this enrichment program as 69 of this year's 72 spots are filled. At this time the district does not have plans to expand the program beyond the 3 elementary schools.