Kindergarten 101 - 2026

February 11, 2026 (Change to accurate date)

[00:06:14] **Dr. David Christopher**
All right. Thanks, Chris, and thank you, Sandra, who's going to do our translation this evening. My name is Dr. David Christopher, and I have the honor and privilege of serving as the superintendent here in the West Chester Area School District. As an incoming parent, you're going to be joining a great, large district with lots of support for students and, you know, lots of opportunities as well. I'm excited tonight to welcome you. I will tell you that it's been a while since I have had a kindergartener starting school. My youngest son is a freshman at Rustin High School, but I can still remember that feeling when you're getting ready to send your, uh, your baby off.

And so, we are glad to have you here with us this evening. We hope you find it to be an eventful and positive night. And I'm gonna turn it over to Dr. Sarah Missett, who is our director of elementary education, to run the program this evening. And thank you all for being here.

[01:01:09] **Dr. Sara. M Missett**
Thank you very much, Dr. Christopher. Welcome, everybody, and welcome to the West Chester Area School District. It is a great place to be, and I know that you are going to fall in love with your elementary school.

I have some friends on with me this evening. Uh, first is Dr. Sandra, Mrs. Sandra Bradley. She's our community engagement specialist. We have Mrs. Kate Coulter, who is our assistant director of pupil services. We have Mrs. Paige Merten, the principal at Hillsdale. Mrs. Merten will be in the Q&A section answering some questions as they come along in the presentation. We have Dr. Erin Stephen from Greystone Elementary. And one of the most important guests we have tonight is Mrs. Suzanne Wethey, who's going to take us through the day in the life of a kindergarten student. She's a kindergarten teacher at Westtown-Thornbury. And Suzanne has been with the district for quite some time. So she's going to take us through what it looks like in every minute of every day.

Let me just give you a little bit of facts about the West Chester Area School District. We are a large district. We are the 11th largest in the state of Pennsylvania. We cover about 75 square miles in seven townships in Chester County. We have over 1,400 employees. More than 63% of our certified teaching staff and 100% of our building administrative staff hold advanced degrees, something that we're very proud of. Our budget is almost $322 million. Uh, Dr. Christopher and our business office do a fine job making sure that we are always within budget.

One of the facts about the district is that we have the lowest tax rate in Chester County, something that, as a homeowner myself in the West Chester Area School District, is very, uh, happy to see that we are one of the lowest. Our district right now, and I put that 12,755 students in today. That is as current as today. We have just about under 13,000 students in our schools, K to 12, in 17 of our public schools. That means 17 — we have 11 elementary buildings. We have three middle schools, and we have three high schools.

Not only do we service our public school students, we also service our non-public schools. We have over 4,000 students in non-public schools, meaning that we also offer transportation to not only our almost 13,000 students in our schools, but to our non-public school students as well, something that our transportation department does a great job every day of the school year.

As I did mention, you are going to be one of 11 elementary schools. We have something called a two-tier start time at the elementary level. We have schools that start on an early start time, and we have schools that start on a late start time. When I say early, there are four schools that start at 8:40. That means that students are in their chairs, in their classroom, ready to learn at 8:40. That would be East Bradford Elementary, East Goshen Elementary, Exton, and Glen Acres. Their student day is 8:40 to 3:10.

The other buildings are what we call our late schools. They start at 9:10, and they end at 3:40. Those are Fern Hill, Greystone, Hillsdale, Mary C. Howse, Penn Wood, Starkweather, and Westtown-Thornbury.

We created this two-tier start system to allow our transportation to have a better routing system. We did this when we knew that we were going to really expand in our enrollment. So, this has been going on now for probably almost 10 years that we have had a two-tier system.

Something else that I want to talk about before we get going deep into the presentation is we are in our ninth year of full-day kindergarten. We started full-day kindergarten in 2017 and 2018. We knew that we wanted to provide our students with a full-day kindergarten program that offered more time not necessarily more curriculum, but more time. And Suzanne is going to take us through some of the purposeful play that we have incorporated into our day for our kindergartners that allow them to focus in on not just academics but social interactions with each other. It's called purposeful play, and we all do that. Every elementary school has purposeful play as part of our kindergarten program. But again, we're in our ninth year, something that we're proud of. We have school districts that visit our kindergarten rooms to see how we have implemented and successfully played out our full-day kindergarten program.

What can you expect when you get to our schools? We have class-size guidelines. We do not have a class-size policy, school board policy, but we have guidelines, meaning that we really try to stick to our guidelines with regard to class size. For our kindergarten and first-grade classrooms, we have a maximum of 25 students. I will tell you, as the director of elementary education, we are hardly ever at that 25 maximum. We like to keep our class sizes about 21 or 22 students per classroom, something that we are also very, very proud of, that we have smaller class sizes.

Across each grade level, kindergarten grade level, we have a paraprofessional for that grade level. Meaning that that paraprofessional will go into the three or four kindergarten classrooms and support not only the classroom teacher but the students that are inside the rooms, meaning that they will support with academics. They might support with social-emotional behaviors. They also might support with just simply getting things organized for the classroom teacher. But every kindergarten grade level in our district has a paraprofessional.

What I will tell you between now and the first day of school, which is later in the slide, is August 31, 2026, is that you will be offered many, many opportunities to not only come into our schools to meet the classroom teacher, to meet the school, the elementary principal, but to also learn more and more about what you can expect in the first week of school. Your teachers will have classroom supplies posted. Your building principal will offer you opportunities to meet that principal on the playground during the summertime and really for your child to meet other kindergarten students that are going to be in their classrooms come August and September.

Something that we offer in every elementary building is before- and after-care for students K to five. A Child's Place has been in our district for the last maybe nine or ten years, and they provide our before- and after-care. We do have occasional drop-off care. We have a day-off program with A Child's Place, meaning that when we do not have school, we offer a place for you to have your child go to in care when you might have to go to work or another activity. However, you need to be enrolled in A Child's Place.

A Child's Place registration opens in March, and it's better to register early to get a spot in A Child's Place. Again, before-care starts at 7:00 and ends when the school day begins, and after-care starts when the school day ends, and it runs until 6:00. Again, in all of our buildings, all 11 buildings.

What I'm going to do now, I'm going to turn it over to Suzanne Wethey. Suzanne.

[09:20:00] **Suzanne Wethey**
Hi, good evening, everybody. My name is Suzanne Wethey, and I teach kindergarten at Westtown Thornbury. I've been in the district for quite a while. I've had the privilege of working at four different elementary schools in the district. And that was back in the day when it was still only half-day kindergarten. So, I have the lens of teaching both half-day and full-day, with a lot of years of first grade in between. Um, but we welcome you, and I hope that you're excited about this upcoming year ahead. Kindergarten is a big step, but it is a wonderful one.

As a teacher in the primary level, it's just so rewarding and exciting every single year with my new batch of kiddos that come in to see the growth that happens throughout the year. Um, I have four children that went through the district, and I know I've been in your spot sitting as a parent. And I know that what I was most interested in was, what does this day look like? What is my child going to be doing? How do you fill that day?

So, um, as Dr. Missett said, they come in at different times depending on which school you are assigned to. But even at that, the children arrive within a 10-minute window typically. I'm a later school at Westtown-Thornbury. So, they typically arrive to the classroom between 9:00 and 9:10, depending if you know when their bus arrives or if they're a parent drop-off.

As the children come in, we teach them the routines of unpacking and how to get settled for the day. The entire month of September is nothing but getting them acclimated to kindergarten, establishing rules and routines, and letting them feel comfortable. There's a lot to learn, and um, personally, I bribe them a lot of the way with smelly stickers. You never know, you know, what they'll do for a smelly sticker, but they'll do a lot, trust me.

So, I teach them the routine of how we get them packed. And then typically, at least at our building, what we do is, just to get them settled and ready for the day, I place out, um, fine motor bins at each of their tables. So these fine motor bins are exactly, you know, what they are, fine motor skills types of skills. So there might be something like Play-Doh, um, Legos, a cutting activity. There's four different activities that they do, and they rotate. So each day they'll get to do a different activity. This is just building on their fine motor skills, which are so important at this grade level. For example, in September, the activity might be I have some laminated little trees, and they might be rolling little balls of Play-Doh and putting the little apples onto the tree. And then I have little tweezers, and then they have to take the little tweezers to build that hand strength, reach in, pick the apple off the tree, put it into the basket, count the apples. That's an example of one of the fine motor activities that we might do. And each week we change them.

This is just meant to settle them as everybody's getting in, and I'm looking to make sure everybody's remembered their lunchbox and the important snack. Make sure we have our snack settled. And then we move on, after the announcements, to do the morning meeting.

The class meeting really sets the tone for the day. This is probably, if you have older children or if you remember yourself from elementary school, coming to circle time, what used to be called circle time. But it's a nice welcoming time where we get together and we set the tone for the day.

In our building, we typically will pull up a calendar. Everything's electronic now, so we have a beautiful smartboard that you can highlight and write on. The kids love to come up and play on it and to help volunteer. So, we'll do our calendar. We might sing a song, introduce a poem, talk about what we're doing for the day or for the week, and then we move relatively quickly into our language arts block.
You can see on the slide how it's broken down. Purposeful play, typically, we do at the end of the day. So, I'll talk about that a little bit later. We do incorporate, like I said, fine motor bins in place of that in the morning.

Language arts has some very important components. The first component that I'd like to talk about is Heggerty. Heggerty is a wonderful program that we adopted a number of years ago that focuses on phonological and phonic awareness. And what that does is we're using the program to do short little lessons every day to teach the children how to listen to and manipulate sounds. There isn't any letter knowledge needed in order to do Heggerty. So we're really training their brain on how to put the sounds together.

And it's a wonderful program. It starts off with the children working with the whole word. So, for example, one blending type of activity. Now say rain bow. Put that together. And they would go rainbow. And then obviously that's easy for their little brains to remember because it's the whole word. Eventually we'll move to syllables, and then we'll say okay, now let's put ta ble, and then that repeat. There's hand motions that go with it. Table. Until eventually we get down to the individual sounds, which is much harder for them, where it might be okay. Now let's put this together. r a t, rat.

And then eventually we'll do all kinds of words. By the end of the year, I can say okay, let's tap out princess, and they'll go p r in c ess. So it builds, and it's cumulative. It's a short drill. It's very important. So that is one of the first things that we do every day. We transition then into foundations, which is our phonics program. Now, the foundations program is connecting those sounds to the letter knowledge. So, this is where we're going to learn how to read and to spell words, as well as how to properly form the letters.

If your child doesn't know their letters yet, don't panic. If they don't know their sounds yet, we'll get there. We'll work with them. It's helpful if they know the letters in their name and if they can recognize their name going into kindergarten, but trust me, the first couple months of kindergarten, we're going to go over that.

Typically, by December, right now the kindergarteners are able to read consonant vowel consonant words, the CVC words. So, words like mom, dad, lip, sat, cat. And so, December is about the time that we're working with those types of early words. And the third component of the program is schoolwide. Schoolwide is our program where we work with fiction and non-fiction. We have our stories, poetry, and we'll talk about things like characters, setting, problem, solution, retelling, being able to write about the different stories that we read.

Kindergarten writing, by the way, is a developmental process that starts very early on. And we'll start very early with the children just labeling with a letter that they hear. So maybe they'll draw a picture of a sun, and if they know that that's an S, that's fantastic at the beginning of the year.

We do encourage them to spell out words phonetically. As they learn more letters and more sounds, we're going to start to transition them into more traditional spelling. As they start to learn some of the sight words, then we're going to be able to encourage them to use the traditional spelling patterns in their writing.

We use the science of reading when it comes to sight words. So, it's not just rote memorization. We actually teach them what it is about the words. So, for example, the word said. The beginning sound obviously follows the rules and makes the sound, and it's the vowel pattern in the middle that they have to remember by heart.

And we have mapped out the words and explicitly teach the sight vocabulary to them as well in kindergarten.

Typically, we will start the year just getting them used to how to do maybe one activity independently during that language arts time so that, while they're working independently at one activity, the teacher can pull a small group. They have to learn, you know, what to do while the teacher is working with a small group of children and understanding that they have a limited attention span.

So, it's usually just like one activity that they'll do. They have to learn when to interrupt the teacher. What is an emergency? You know, blood and vomit are always emergencies. You know, if they don't feel well, it's an emergency. But where they can go get an extra pencil or to ask three before me. These are all routines that we build and learn in the beginning of the year to build success then throughout the year so that the teacher can work with small groups of children. So we will see small groups in kindergarten, and they will be needs-based.

[28:30:14] **Dr. Sara. M Missett**
Thank you, Suzanne. What I'm going to do, I'm going to show you a clip of what purposeful play looks like in our kindergarten rooms. We're just going to spend a couple minutes on that, and then Erin Stephen, Dr. Stephen, will be, uh, introducing the next slide.

[28:45:09] **Kids on a Video Clip about Purpose of Play**
I need Blueberries. We need blueberries. Can I? Okay. Where are the blueberries? Rita, where are the blueberries?

[29:19:05] **Dr. Erin Stephen**
Thank you, Dr. Missett. This is Erin Stephen. I am the principal at Greystone Elementary. I am really excited to be here tonight and share a little bit about our educational programs, as well as hopefully get to meet you guys very soon.

You heard a little bit about their English language arts, mathematics, and science and social studies in a typical day, but one of the things we focus on is beginning with readers and writers very early in kindergarten. We use the foundations program to

support phonics and foundational reading skills to ensure that all of our students have that very strong literary base. And then we use a schoolwide reading approach to promote the love of reading. We do highlight special months, like March is Reading Month, to help strengthen the love of reading across grades, as well as strengthen comprehension as early as kindergarten.

Through a writing workshop, we help students express ideas clearly, promote creativity, and then we write for a variety of reasons, as you could see in the previous video, even making a shopping list. We just encourage the students to practice writing every day.

In math, we use illustrative math as our core resource. This math program emphasizes problem solving and age appropriate concepts, but really focuses on mathematical thinking. Along with that, we heard a little bit about our small group or our math workshops, which allows students to engage in hands-on learning with manipulatives. They cooperate with peers, and they really can, during this time, receive targeted supports or enrichment based on their needs. One of the goals at Westchester is to really focus on the why behind math and not just the memorizing of mathematical facts and procedures.

In science and social studies, they learn by inquiry. We heard a little bit about our science program, but really our goal is to connect science and social studies to real world examples. So, particularly in kindergarten, we focus on learning about the weather and communities. You could see that in the video and hear a little bit about that in purposeful play, as well as take part in celebrations that help understand traditions and cultures all around the world. These experiences are meant to encourage curiosity, collaboration, and meaningful discussions amongst the students in the classroom while still having fun.

In addition to our academics, we can talk a little bit about our supports in our school. So, we had talked a little bit about our reading. So, students that receive reading support help strengthen those foundational skills we talked about, but really we focus a lot on building confident readers. We want to make consistent progress with our reading. We have many different entry points in our kindergarteners, and we

want to make sure that all of them feel successful, supported, and also being responsive to their current needs.

We work closely with our school counselors in our school, especially the school counselors located right in the kindergarten hallway, and they really play a vital role in supporting our students' social and emotional well-being. We're going to hear more about the things we do for social and emotional wellness in our students next. But really our counselors work individually and in small groups to help support the students and their needs. In addition, they will provide lessons in the classroom and partner with families and staff to help navigate some challenges that might come up in kindergarten, as well as some of those transitions early on in the school year. I know our counselor stands outside the first week of school and helps our incoming kindergarteners who are just a little nervous about entering a new building for the first time. They are amazing, and they've really helped the kids come in. Within the first hour of school, everyone's smiling, playing, and having a great time.

We do offer speech and language supports to students who need it. This helps with communication and language development, specifically looking at articulation and expressive and receptive language. These are both critical for development of reading skills, but as well as those social interactions. Our speech therapist is located in the building, and each of the schools have a full- or part-time speech person.
In addition to speech, we also have what we call an OTP, occupational and physical therapist. And these are students that need support in fine and gross motor development, particularly looking at students with sensory needs, as well as having maybe some physical access boundary difficulties that we try to overcome and then help them to fully engage in their school day.

Finally, we also have English language development teachers in every school building, and they help support multilingual learners. They help build English proficiency while honoring and valuing home language and cultures. Together, all these services really reflect a commitment to support the whole child and ensure that every student feels successful and supported and ready to learn.

My last slide, to talk to you a little bit about safety, and safety is always a top priority, outlines some key steps that we take to keep students and staff safe every day. We

regularly conduct security drills for both students and staff to know what to do in different situations. These drills are developmentally appropriate. So they are for kindergarteners, specifically K through five students. They're communicated clearly to parents what we're doing, when we're doing it, and they're focused on preparation and not fear-based. So, we want students to know if the fire alarm goes off, we're quiet and we leave. What exit do we leave the building? And we get in line and we tell the teacher that we are here.

Our staff is trained to use Navigate 360, the Navigate 360 security system. It allows us to communicate effectively and respond quickly during any type of emergencies and ensure there's a coordinated district level response. So, not only is this the building in communication with itself, but also in communication with the district office.

We have so many members of our community join us in our buildings, whether that is to chaperone a field trip or take part in special events that happen in the school building every day. And any adult that would like to volunteer in our school, we're required to have clearances on file. This is a very important layer for safety, and it helps us maintain a secure environment for all students.

The information about becoming a volunteer is available online. I strongly encourage you, as you register, to also get your clearances together because they can take a little bit of time, and there's so many opportunities to come in the building and help us with the many activities that we have, such as class parties or special PTO sponsored events.

In addition, we work closely with our school safety teams and local partners to review procedures, monitor our practices, and continuously improve in any school safety situations. Our goal is simple, just to ensure that every student feels safe, supported, and ready to learn.

[36:52:06] **Dr. Sara. M Missett**
Thank you, Erin. I appreciate that. I'm going to ask Kate Coulter to take the next couple slides. Kate is our assistant director to pupil services, as I mentioned. and a longtime counselor in our district who I just think the world of. So Kate, take it away.

[37:09:21] **Kate Coulter**
Hi, everybody. My name is Kate Coulter, and as Dr. Missett mentioned, I am the assistant director of pupil services, which simply means I supervise our mental health staff within all of our buildings. But before that, for 16 years, I was a counselor at Fern Hill Elementary. So I am really thrilled to be able to talk to you about this part of getting ready for kindergarten.

What I'm going to be talking about a little bit, just for the next two slides, is what we call social and emotional competencies. Basically, that's saying what can you do at home now to make sure that in approximately 200 days your child is ready for kindergarten.

You'll see at the top that we specifically wrote practice makes progress because there's going to be some of these that you look at and you're going to say, "Oh my gosh, you know, Jose doesn't know how to do that at all. We are in trouble." There's going to be other people that look at some of them and say, "Oh, we got this. Don't worry." Please don't say that. Please, because that is the fastest way for karma to make your child have a giant meltdown. And then you're going to realize that maybe we need to work on this a little bit more.

So, please know that everything I'm about to talk about, I'm going to give you some quick tips on how to work on each one of these. They are just to work on, right? When you get into kindergarten, the teachers are going to continue to work with these skills with your children. So, if they don't have them perfect, we don't expect them to have them perfect. We would just like you to kind of start to think about them.

So quickly, separating from a parent or caretaker. Some kids are fine at this and they do this kind of from birth. They're fine. And other kids, it's a little bit more difficult. And so what you want to do is take very small steps with your students with that. So, you know, it might just be going with your child to a neighbor's house and being there, and then maybe to that neighbor's house and you walk out of the house and you're outside, and then maybe the next time you're at home for a couple of minutes. And you build up some endurance with that with your kids and let them

realize that you're always going to come back again. They're going to be allowed to see you again. And so that way, when they get to school, that kind of long day is not the first long day that they're away from you because that can feel very overwhelming.

Sit and pay attention. Again, you want to work up to this. It's a little bit more difficult for boys, I think, in general. But again, you know, even if for five minutes, have them sit and do a very preferred activity. It might be doing a puzzle, some Legos, watching a movie, and then slowly build that. And then when you see that they can do that, maybe then start just kind of reading to them from across the room or having a conversation where they're just kind of sitting in one spot, having them eat and just stay at the table and having conversation. Those are nice ways to work up to that.

Following directions. You know, so many of us, and probably those of you that are here, are so good at anticipating what your child needs. And this is kind of the next two, following directions and communicating. And we just really, you know, we know that they're going to want a cup of milk before bed, or we know that they're going to want the orange instead of the apple. So they don't really even need to use their words to communicate with us or follow directions.

So, what we're asking is that you kind of allow them to communicate what their wants are, right? So ask them, "What was it that you wanted? What would you like before bed?" Or do you want an orange or an apple or something else, maybe? And then in following directions, start to build the directions, right? So you might just, with your child, maybe just one direction is all it is. The direction is just sit down at the table. It's time for dinner. Maybe some, you know, you can start to build that once they get that. You know, could you run upstairs and put your sweatshirt in your room and come back down? And you little by little start to build that direction chain so that they're able to follow more than one direction at a time.

Sharing and taking turns is tough. And I know that there's a lot of experts that say that, you know, really maybe put away all of, when you have a play date, put all the toys away that your kids don't want to share, and that's okay. And it is okay. I'm not saying it's not. However, I would say to really, this is something that kids really kind of struggle with.

And so, I'll say the story that I always say because it is so funny, and it illustrates the point so well. So, like Dr. Missett had said, we spend, or maybe it was Dr. Stephen who said, we spend as counselors the first week or so in the kindergarten classrooms just playing and kind of getting the kids together in twos and groups. And I was playing Candyland with a student, and everything was going great. And this little girl kind of, you know, took her turn, and then it swept her back to the beginning of the board again, and she then swept the board, right? She just used her arm and swept the whole board and screamed, and it was a big scene.

So, I called her mom and said, "Hey, you know, we might need to think about this. You know, this is what happened today in kindergarten." And her mom was like, "Oh, I understand completely. I know what went wrong. At home, we just take out all of the pieces that might make her go backwards. So you can just do that from now on."

And so, we were like, well, okay. So that's not going to happen at school. But really just allowing your student or your child to be a part of a team and that they take their turns. It is great to be a leader. We want to foster that in our kids. But sometimes in games you just have to be, or in school you also have to be, a follower, and that has to be okay as well.

So really foster games too that there's not always a leader, like puzzles or something, or that there is a leader but that students have to take turns listening to other kids, like for example old school Mother May I or Simon Says, something like that where they don't always get to be the leader, and that is completely okay. That goes together with working together as part of a group as well.

Compromise and cooperate. You know, you can practice that at home constantly, almost setting up situations where they do have to compromise, even if it's not a situation where that would normally happen. Now, if you have other kids, I'm thinking that normally happens, you know, but allow them to figure out the compromise.

So, if the situation is who is going to pick the movie for the evening or who gets to sit next to mom on the couch, instead of saying let her sit here or Jimmy gets to pick

the movie, say to your kids, "Okay, you know what? I think that I trust you that you can work this out. Figure it out. You guys go into the kitchen, and when you figure it out and you've come up with the compromise, come on back and we'll talk about it." And then you'd be kind of surprised at how quickly they can come up with a compromise and cooperate with each other if they know that the activity is at stake.

Showing empathy is sometimes a tough one because, just like anything else, there are some kids that are just born full of empathy, and they are just sensitive little souls from the day they come out. And that's wonderful. And then there are other kids that, as parents, you might wonder a little bit, like I just feel like my child does not really show a lot of empathy for other kids and they're kind of for themselves. And that's okay too because really that's actually pretty developmentally appropriate. Kids just by nature at this age are fairly self-centered.

And so what you want to do is just really start to point things out to your kids that might let them show some empathy. So, it might be things like, you know, if you passed somebody who's, say, disabled in a grocery store, and you might, you know, some parents have that tendency to just kind of move your child past that person. Take a minute and just explain the disability and how it might affect that person in life, and then talk about how do you think that makes that person feel or what could we do in that situation, you know? And don't be afraid to talk about that.

Talk about how your day went, you know, and if at dinner you had a crummy day and you say, "I just had a really bad day, and this is what happened. Does anybody have any suggestions?" Allow them to start to take part in those conversations because they're getting to be that age now where they can take part. And I think you'll be surprised at really, you know, how empathetic they can be. And then it's a cycle because if they show empathy and you give them reinforcement for doing that, they're going to want to show that empathy and kind of tap into that side of themselves more and more.

The last one is what I call the super power of the group. Dr. Missett, we can go to the next slide, please.

Building resilience. So quickly, this picture on the left is a very ugly tree, but it is actually a tree that is on a trail that I walk on, the Peruvian Trail. And one year I passed it and the tree caught on fire. It was a small fire, and it was all blackened. And this picture I took was the tree the next year, and it went from a completely charred dead tree to this tree that, granted, is not beautiful and not even pretty, but it sure was resilient, right? It came out and it made itself grow again.

And that is what resilience really looks like in kids a lot of times. It's not always the movie where the underdog wins the day and, you know, the team wins and they get the car. Sometimes it's not that, and actually that's okay because resilience isn't, like it says, pretty or perfect or even close to pleasant.

Some of the times when our kids learn resilience the most is when they're experiencing something uncomfortable and they do it anyway, right? So they don't have to do it perfectly, but they're celebrated and you all celebrate together for them just getting through it. If you have a child that maybe has anxiety, just doing the thing, making the attempt to do what you're asking them to do, that might be the celebration.

And then the next time, it's like a tool in a tool belt. The next time they're called on to do something similar, you can look back at that and say, "Do you remember when you did that other thing and you did it? It wasn't fun, but you did it. You can do this hard thing."

Not to hearken back to a couple years ago, but one of the things that really took a hit with our kids was their resilience. And that's what we're seeing across the board from kindergarten through 12th grade, is that our kids really struggle with feeling feelings that are uncomfortable and continuing on, forging ahead and just saying, "I feel sad or mad or frustrated or scared, but I'm still going to do what I need to do. I'm not just going to shut down."

So what I would say, if you want to put something in your child's backpack that you know is going to make them successful in kindergarten and beyond, it's the idea that they are resilient.

I will tell you from many years of being a counselor in schools and then even before that in private practice that the kids that, as young students, had anxiety or had a tick or maybe had an allergy that they had to deal with, we find that those students, when they get to be teenagers, are actually some of the most well-adjusted, resilient teenagers that you find because they learned the tools to deal with the non-perfection. They learned how to get through some of the things that they just had to get through and live their lives and enjoy their lives.

And so when they got to be teenagers and all of the awful things that start to happen and feelings and emotions and hormones happen, they already had those tools in their toolbox. And so they were able to handle it much better.

So I ask you, if nothing else, if the next slide doesn't happen, if this slide, if you can let your child lose at a game and it's okay. There's a winner and a loser. I know that that is not a very popular statement, but it's life. And so the quicker your kids can realize that and you can practice that, the easiest way to practice that is on the side of a field. Most kids are starting to play sports at this point. And I'm sure you've all seen the parents, hopefully you haven't been the parents, who are screaming and having a fit on the side of the field because their team lost.

Letting them see that it's just okay that sometimes you lose. That sometimes you're the winner of a game, and sometimes you're the loser in the game, and that's okay. It is okay. Life will go on.

So, you know, of all of these tools, again, please know you are working towards progress. And the beautiful thing is that we have tools in place that I think everybody kind of mentioned already. We have a Second Step program, which is a social emotional learning program that starts in kindergarten and goes all the way through elementary school. And each week they work on different skills, identifying feelings, feeling your feelings, understanding feelings, getting along with others, relationships.

So we're going to be working on these skills with your students as well. And I guarantee you that your students are going to be in fantastic hands, and I really, really welcome you to the West Chester Area School District.

[51:00:05] **Dr. Sara. M Missett**
Thank you, Kate. Appreciate that.

So, the next couple of slides that I'm going to take you through are relatively important because they have some pretty important dates and some things for you to do. The most important date that you want to see on this slide is Monday, August the 31st. That is our first day of school. We will be starting school K to 5, K to 12, on Monday, August 31st.

In mid-August, you will be receiving, through the parent portal—which is our portal for you to have access to all kinds of your child's records—your transportation and your teacher assignments. We have a more exact date when we get closer into the summertime, but it's usually about August, maybe 14th or 15th.

Registration is open now. We ask you; we beg you, we ask you to tell your friends, please register as soon as possible. The reason why we want families to register sooner than later is because that also impacts our staffing. When we know how many kids are coming through our doors on Monday, August the 31st, we also know then how many sections of a classroom that we're going to have. And that helps us to hire our teachers sooner than later because we know that the sooner that we hire the teachers, the better quality that we have.

So again, spread the word. We're going to put it on social media after tonight that register, register, register. If you go to our district website, it is an icon in the top, maybe mid, maybe to right corner of student registration. Please do that.

And then again, you will be receiving information from your child's elementary school principal about kindergarten orientation, popsicles on the playground, when you are going to have your child come in for an assessment so we can place them in the most appropriate place. So be on the lookout for that.

But again, we don't have your email until you register in our schools. So we need your email. I have emails from where you might likely have gotten this registration link, from our preschool parent group. But again, we want to make sure that we have your exact email. So, register.

If you have a question about registration, call your home school. You can call my office, and I'll be more than happy to help you.

Kate might have said this, and I would like everyone to take a couple minutes, and I want you to scan whatever bar, whatever scan might help you. This is going to take you to a document. It's called Get Kindergarten Ready. It might be maybe eight or nine pages long, and it's going to take you through some of the things that you can do to prepare your child for kindergarten. Kate mentioned a couple of the skills, but there are a couple other activities or other kinds of things that you might do with your child to get ready.

I'm going to leave this open for just a minute so you can scan that. This webinar is being recorded. We are going to make sure that this is posted on our website tomorrow, along with the presentation, along with the Get Kindergarten Ready. So we will make sure that everybody has what they need.

Before I end tonight, I want to give a couple quick thank-yous that I didn't do in the beginning.

I want to thank you. I want to thank, first of all, Paige Merten, who is in the Q&A section and who has been answering questions all evening. So thank you, Paige, for doing that. Paige is the principal at Hillsdale.

I want to thank Sandra Bradley for making sure that we have appropriate translation. I hope everybody talks slower than usual, Sandra.

And most importantly, without Chris Cromwell and Annie Korb, I would not have been able to present tonight because sometimes I need my tech support to help me. They are our instructional technology coordinators in the district, and they are a huge help not only to me but to almost every person in the district. So Chris and Annie, thank you for being a part of tonight. Thank you for getting me through the presentation and getting me through the little bumps.

Again, parents, we welcome you to the West Chester Area School District. You're going to fall in love with your elementary school. It's a great place to be. If you ever have any questions, finding me or your building principal is quite easy. Go on our website and find our emails. We are around. We are here. We want to help. We want to make sure that you are ready, but more importantly, we want to make sure that your child is ready.

So, with that, I'm going to keep this slide open for a little bit longer. I thank you for attending tonight, and we will see you soon.