

# Brighton studying full-day kindergarten

District would renovate former Brookside School

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The Brighton Central School District is gathering financial details about a switch to full-day kindergarten in advance of a possible public referendum to be held in the spring. Such a transition would involve renovating the former Brookside School building at 220 Idlewood Road, which now hosts the town recreation department. A consultant study and a district committee both came to the conclusion that locating it there would be a better investment and academically appropriate than the other option, expanding Council Rock Primary School to hold it. Planning and construction could take several years, meaning 4-year-olds would probably not actually begin their longer days until 2019, according to Superintendent Kevin McGowan.

At least until the project goes through, Brighton is in a stark minority in New York for having only half-day kindergarten.

A 2014 survey showed that only 26 school districts across the state lacked full-day kindergarten. Since then, several have announced plans to add it, including Rush-Henrietta and West Irondequoit locally. If Brighton approves the concept, Pittsford would be the only remaining district in Monroe County without full-day kindergarten.

Keeping kindergartners longer solves two problems. First, stepped-up state learning standards mean schools need to impart more to their younger charges than they can accomplish in two or three hours. For instance, kindergartners are supposed to be able to count to 100, supply rhyming words and recognize two- and three-dimensional shapes.

Second, the longer day spares parents the need to find several hours of child care. That consideration has become increasingly important as poverty makes inroads in the suburbs and child care becomes a greater concern for parents.

Brighton estimates it could add more than 100 kindergartners to its student body by 2018, in part by attracting families who pay for full-day programs elsewhere rather than sending their children for a half-day in Brighton.

"We just came to the conclusion that the curricular requirements and expectations for children and needs of parents really necessitated this plan," McGowan said. "It's not as if we found a crisis in achievement, but it's just an opportunity to give our kids everything we want to give them."

The state provides significant funding for the first two years of a district's transition to full-day kindergarten, easing start-up costs for construction, renovation, curriculum development and training, among other things.

The district's work for the next few months will be to come up with good financial numbers. There's no good estimated cost now, but McGowan said it will be a "significant investment" that current savings and state funding will cover only in part.

There will be a series of public presentations and input sessions. The next one will be at the Dec. 1 school board meeting.

For more information, go to [bcsd.org](http://bcsd.org).

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**Brighton Central School District Superintendent Kevin McGowan.**

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