

## **Full-day kindergarten is coming to Pittsford**

### **Lauren Peace and Justin Murphy**

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The Pittsford Central School District next year will join nearly every other school district in New York in offering full-day kindergarten, it announced Tuesday.

The change is enabled by what state Sen. Rich Funke, R-Perinton, called “the largest kindergarten transition aid ever offered in state history.”

It will reimburse the district for all transition funds in the first year, 65 percent in the second year and 35 percent in the third year, a total that is expected to be at least \$1.5 million.

The other four New York districts currently lacking full-day kindergarten will get the same package, which is significantly more lucrative than what the state had previously offered.

“We’ve known for a long time that the more time you spend at school, the more you learn,” Funke said. “It’s not rocket science.”

An extensive district study had laid out the benefits of full-day kindergarten; nonetheless, Pittsford voters last year declined to support a budget that would have funded full-day kindergarten at the expense of exceeding the state property tax cap.

The district pulled the kindergarten funding before the second vote rather than risking defeat.

That vote now stands as a winning strategy. Pittsford, one of the wealthiest communities in New York, will get the same offering for its young students as every other district in the state, but with the smallest contribution of its own money.

Funke said Pittsford and the other four districts were in a “unique and difficult spot.”

They did not enact full-day kindergarten before the triple whammy of frozen foundation aid, the Gap Elimination Adjustment and the property tax cap made it much more difficult for districts to find discretionary dollars.

At least 20 other school districts throughout the state, including Brighton, Henrietta and West Irondequoit, did add full-day kindergarten after those changes. “I have no idea why they didn’t do it when they had the chance,” Funke said. “That’s really not my job to know. It’s my job to do what I can to help get them even with where everyone else is now.” Pittsford Superintendent Michael Pero said that a full-day program will give students “more time for play, less time in transition, less stress, more confidence.” He will present a budget to the Board of Education on Monday that will include full-day kindergarten, with no cuts to current programs, while staying under the tax cap, he said.

*LPEACE@Gannett*

*.com*

*JMURPHY7@Gannett*

*.com*



**Funke**



**Pero**