

BHSD Approves All-Day Kindergarten and Revises Mid-Year Budget Upon Finding Revenue – Art Aisner - Patch

At least one session of half-day kindergarten will be available, but only at Fox Hills, for now.

All four elementary schools in the Bloomfield Hills School district will have full-day kindergarten classes beginning next fall following a unanimous decision by the Bloomfield Hills School Board of Education Thursday.

With the same 6-0 vote, the board also established at least one session of half-day kindergarten at Fox Hills after several parents raised concerns and showed a demand for the three-hour class. Board secretary Bob Herner did not attend the meeting following elective surgery earlier in the day, BHS Board President Ingrid Day said. He was reportedly feeling fine, she added.

District officials said 18 of 26 school districts in Oakland county have already implemented full-day kindergarten programs or committed to do so, following changes in state law that tied the move to funding. The district would stand to lose \$1.7 million in per-pupil funding if it maintained the half-day structure with today's enrollment.

Assistant Superintendent for Instruction Laurie McCarty said the district would still need to spend roughly \$914,400 to hire the additional full-time teachers, full-time para-educators, and purchase supplies. She also focused on the instructional value of having longer kindergarten because the current student's day is too compact. She estimated that 70 percent of the district's kindergarteners are already taking advantage of extended days in their respective schools and paying the district to do so.

About 61 percent of Patch readers that answered our kindergarten preference poll last month approved of the switch.

District parent Dave Unger, who has one child about to enter kindergarten told the board he preferred a half-day schedule but had concerns of being at least 10 miles away from the school. Fox Hills Fox Hills, which currently houses the district's Bloomin' Tots Pre-school, is located in the northeast corner of the district at 1661 Hunters Ridge Drive.

"We're looking for more flexibility and an option that's not so far away for half-day kindergarten," he said.

McCarty told board members that Fox Hills was the only facility that had the space to house the classes and provide the proper environment for kindergarteners. A second session could be added there if there is enough demand.

Day introduced an amendment to the final motion that allowed for some flexibility in the future should the need change, but endorsed the recommended change prior to the vote. Further details about scheduling and enrolling for the kindergarten sessions are pending.

District Took in More Revenue

The district revised it's annual budget Thursday to reflect an additional \$2 million in revenue that was not expected this fiscal year. District officials projected a \$3.1 million deficit for the current fiscal year but instead found more money coming into the district.

Tina Kostiuk, assistant superintendent for business services, said the majority of the unexpected revenue (\$1.4 million) came in the form of retirement cost relief from the state. The balance was generated from state incentives for student achievement. She said neither could be counted on to repeat. The measure passed unanimously.