

# All-Day K: On The Way?



This kindergarten class in Coventry, at Hopkins Hill Elementary School a few years ago, was not full-day, and Coventry's today aren't either. The town is one of nine in the state that do not have full-day kindergarten programs, but a law recently signed by Gov. Lincoln Chafee allows state funds to help startup programs for full-day kindergarten in towns without it by 2017.

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## Chafee signature allows state aid to fund school program

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COVENTRY— Full-day kindergarten may be a possibility in Coventry as Governor Lincoln Chafee signed legislation earlier this week allowing state aid to be provided to those Rhode Island cities and towns that have not implemented the day-long program starting in 2017.

The communities that are transiting to full-day kindergarten will be able to get fully funded by the state under this legislation. The new law is

aimed to help early education for children because without it they will begin to develop behavior issues, according to co-sponsor of the bill District 27 (Cranston, West Warwick) Senator Hanna Gallo, who has been working on this legislation for an estimated five years.

“With Common Core standards being implemented, what students need to know cannot be accomplished in two-and-a-half hours,” Gallo said. “Children need to be able to read and write by the third grade and if they don’t get learn those skills, we will end up paying for them in

special education.”

Gallo explained it as an equity issue because while taxpayers are paying for other cities and towns to have full-day kindergarten, it should be available to everyone in Rhode Island. She said that nine out of the 39 cities and towns in the state do not have full-day kindergarten available, including Coventry.

The Coventry School Department recently received a \$10,000 grant through the Rhode Island

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# Program could be funded by state

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Department of Education (RIDE) that allows the town to develop a proposal for an all-day kindergarten that will be brought forth to the town council and town manager. This grant is not a result of the new legislation but only for the development for a proposal. The town officials then decide whether or not the program will be implemented as they will have to fund a considerable amount to the schools. More state aid could possibly come to Coventry once the legislation is enacted in 2017.

In the past, Oak Haven Elementary School, currently closed, has been proposed as the site if Coventry were to move to full-day kindergarten.

"The town has to invest a significant amount in money in order to reopen Oak Haven Elementary School for the space for the students and will have to double the amount of kindergarten teachers in addition to outfitting the building," Superintendent Dr. Michael



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**Oak Haven Elementary School is the one place that is consistently the focus when the location of any full-day kindergarten program would be located in Coventry, but the costs of re-opening the school seem prohibitive.**

Almeida said.

The school department has until the end of December 2014 to develop a proposal package for the town council. Almeida explained that a full-day kindergarten was not in the school's budget this year because of the amount of money that was allocated to

the schools. This program could impact the community by helping make people decide to move to Coventry in part because of full-day kindergarten. Almeida hopes the community will step back and reflect on how important this initiative is.

The Public Information Offi-

cer from RIDE, Elliot Krieger, explained that RIDE distributes state aid for schools and must come up with a formula in order to do so. This formula is based on enrollment, poverty levels and assessed values in the community which will result in how much state aid the town or city will receive. In addition, Krieger said that each town is not obligated to offer full-day kindergarten if they do get full funding through RIDE.

Senator Gallo hopes the towns will see the value in these programs and realize the amount of money that will be saved is this investment. The necessary tools that are taught in kindergarten will prevent children to have learning disabilities thus resulting in less money spent on special education alternatives, as Gallo explained it.

"The deficient in learning at an early age could end up with behavior problems which are a precursor to dropping out of school," Gallo said.