

Triton schools to offer full-day kindergarten in fall

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BYFIELD — The Triton Regional School district will offer a tuition-based full-day kindergarten at each of its three elementary schools for the 2003-2004 school year.

The Triton School Committee approved the program at their last meeting.

This program has been given the go-ahead in the past, but did not have enough participants apply to put it into effect.

Kathy Murphy, director of the Early Childhood Program and chairman of the Kindergarten Task Force, said that she thinks that the program will be successful now.

The minimum class size would be 18 and the maximum 20 students.

If more than 20 students enroll a lottery will be conducted, in a similar fashion to the lottery for enrollment at the district's preschools. If one school in the district filled their maximum enrollment, a student could go to another district school if there were openings.

The projected staff costs for each class are \$25,000 for an additional half-day kindergarten teacher and \$7,000 for an additional half-day instructional assistant, a total of \$32,000.

Murphy estimates that anticipated revenues of \$2,200 per student would be higher than anticipated costs. A sliding scale would be utilized for families who could not afford that fee.

Murphy said that the school district has good experience dealing with the state sliding-scale fee at the preschool program. She also noted that full-day kindergarten avoids additional transportation costs, as those

students would board the buses with the other elementary school students.

Murphy said the statewide average cost for full-day tuition is between \$1,800 and \$2,400.

She provided information about full-day kindergarten in surrounding school districts. Newburyport and Pentucket do not offer full-day kindergarten.

Amesbury offers a program from 8:30 a.m. to 1:30 p.m. at no charge. Georgetown charges a \$2,750 year fee for a full-day program. Ipswich has offered a full-day program using Department of Education funding, but is considering a fee due to the elimination of that funding.

Kindergarten enrollment will begin next week at the elementary schools in Newbury, Rowley and Salisbury. Murphy said the staff will provide parents with an overview of the full-day program and its curriculum and will discuss busing.