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### All-day classes return

Stimulus funds aid kindergarten

By RAYMOND L. SMITH Tribune Chronicle

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The Newton Falls School District will begin full-day kindergarten this fall.

Full-day kindergarten was eliminated in the district in 2003 due to lack of finances.

"Our parents were disappointed when it was canceled," Superintendent David Wilson said last week.

The district is restarting the program this year using money from the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act. Because the federal stimulus funds are a one-time allocation, the district will have to find another way to pay for the program next year.

Wilson said the district decided to move ahead with the program now both because the money is available and the state will require full-day kindergarten programs in all school districts in the 2010-11 school year.

Extending kindergarten to a full day will require the district to hire at least one new teacher. Depending on the demand, Wilson said it could hire a second teacher.

The cost to hire a new teacher is about \$40,000, including salary and benefits.

"The major expense is personnel costs," Wilson said.

Last year, the district had two teachers operating four half-day sessions. There were 83 kindergarten students.

As of July 1, the district has 64 students signed up for classes. Wilson, however, expects that number to increase as word gets out that the city has a full-day program and the school year draws closer.

"We will have people who might have signed their children up for private school programs reconsider because of the all day school," Wilson said.

The Board of Education also decided to waive school fees for students in kindergarten through sixth grade.

School fees typically are for workbooks and other consumable items used in the classroom. Fees are \$25 to \$30 a year for the average student.

"Many of our parents have been affected by the economy through temporary layoffs and job losses," Wilson said. "People are having problems paying for their necessities."

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