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Wellington expands all-day kindergarten classes

Cindy Leise

WELLINGTON — For every child it was different, but the 107 youngsters in five all-day kindergarten classes had a reason to be thrilled to be in school.

Some liked playing with their friends, while others liked the hamburgers for lunch.

Justin Yeager, 5, said he wasn't scared at all to start kindergarten at Westwood Elementary School.

"I've been to preschool," Justin said.

Others said they liked being at "the big school" with older children.

"I think it's pretty cool," said Hannah Maitland, 5.



Lunch was hamburgers for the students attending all-day kindergarten Tuesday at Westwood Elementary in Wellington. (Photo by Bruce Bishop, The Chronicle-Telegram.)

Excitement built early on as the children walked a red "carpet" — a long red column of paper — with their parents watching as kindergarten started last Wednesday.

"We didn't have any criers, but we had some parents crying," Westwood Principal Sheila Buckeye said.

The first day of school for the rest of the district was Tuesday, but the kindergarteners spent that day coming to staggered, one-on-one introductions with their teachers at Westwood.

The all-day, free kindergarten, which attracted five children through open enrollment, has been a goal of the Wellington school board for several years and now it is a reality, Buckeye said.

Wellington used to have just one all-day kindergarten class, but now there are five classes, she said.

By year's end, the children will be reading, writing and doing math, she said.

Buckeye said she is proud of the staff assembled to teach the little ones.

What makes a good kindergarten teacher?

"You have to be flexible, with a good working knowledge of child development, and you have to have the ability to teach individually and in a group setting," she said.

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