

News Release

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Sept. 16, 2016

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Students benefit from state funded full-day kindergarten

ARLINGTON- School started this week for kindergartners in Arlington Public Schools (APS) and this is the first year APS provided fully funded full-day kindergarten to all families. Last year, APS provided full-day kindergarten to students at Eagle Creek, Kent-Prairie and Presidents but due to limited state funding, had to make a one-year budget adjustment to cover the cost of Pioneer's full-day kindergarten program. Now, the state pays for all APS full-day kindergarten programs. Prior to state funding, full-day kindergarten was tuition based and paid for by families.

"This really evens the playing field for those families who struggled to pay the tuition but wanted their child in a full-day program as opposed to a half-day program," said Terri Bookey, APS Director of Early Learning and Categorical Programs. "The full-day model is really the best model for kindergartners. It stimulates creativity, helps them become problem solvers, increases their oral language and increases their social interactions."

Kindergartners started school on Sept. 13, several days after school began for first- through 12th-grade students. This is because the state requires schools to hold family connection conferences so teachers can meet the families and gauge a student's skill level. Families also came in during "Jump Start" right before school started so students could get used to a full-day program.

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“On the first day of school, my lessons focused on using scissors, how we hold a pencil and lots of teaching and re-teaching of things like lining up, hallway behaviors and lunchtime procedures. I also spent a lot of time talking with students about being a friend to others,” said Presidents Elementary Kindergarten Teacher Patty Donaldson. “The district and state have changed the focus on kindergarten to a more social/emotional based start rather than rigorous academics. This way, we can focus on the skills that create great learners.”

“Full-day kindergarten really prepares the students for first-grade,” said Bookey. “First-grade teachers are telling us that the kindergartners are much better problem solvers, can communicate better, have the stamina for learning tasks and are more mature learners overall.”

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Cutline: Kindergartners in Patty Donaldson's class at Presidents Elementary worked on their coloring skills on Sept. 13, the first day of kindergarten.