

Northwestern Schools use grant money wisely

Monies helps kindergartners adjust to their new school life

Submitted by: Nichole Smith

“What if the bus leaves me?”
 “What if I can’t find a bathroom?”
 “What if...?”

If you’re one of the many parents of a child entering kindergarten in Northwestern School District this fall, then these questions probably sound pretty familiar to you – and you are probably just as anxious, nervous, excited or even scared as your kindergartner is. However, with the help of a grant from Ohio’s Department of Job and Family Services and Northwestern Elementary’s kindergarten teachers, many kindergarten students and their parents are able to put those questions and emotions to rest before school even starts on August 22.

Northwestern Elementary School was awarded this grant through funds made possible by the Ohio Department of Job and Family Services. The program is being offered to all incoming kindergarten students. The money from this grant allows students to come into the classroom and work on various skills in language arts, math and social skills – all of which are essential to a positive and successful school year. The Kindergarten Readiness Enrichment Program is designed to get the children ready for a full school day, without the chaos that a new school and new surroundings can bring; something that many 5- and 6-year-olds just aren’t ready for.

During the weeks of August 7 and August 14, kindergarten students were able to participate in the half-day program that will help to prepare them for the upcoming year. The children had the opportunity to be bussed to and from the school, if needed, and were given a nutritious snack. Though the majority of the cost was covered through the grant money, there was still a \$10 fee per week. However, the elementary school

has guidelines to find out if that fee can be waived for qualifying families.

“During this program, we are focusing on the areas of math, language arts and social skills,” said Heidi Hartzler, one of the school’s five kindergarten teachers.

While at the school, the children worked individually and in small play-centered groups in the classroom. In each area, children completed various activities designed by the teachers. For instance, with the social skills, the children were encouraged to use playtime.

“To children, playing is learning,” Paulette Agnes said. “By playing with the blocks or trains, the children are learning to share, cooperate and work together in a group.”

She went on to add, “If they play with the trains, they have to put the tracks together and that will help them learn to cooperate with one another. The program also gives them a chance to interact with one another and help get past some of the emotional fears of kindergarten, such as being separated from their parents.”

Hartzler added that while the children get the chance to work in groups, it also gives teachers a chance to work with them one-on-one before school actually begins.

“We can see where the children are and what areas may need more instruction later on,” she said. “We are trying to make the activities as hands-on as possible.”

In the areas of language arts and math skills, students used play-based activities that helped them to grasp concepts

such as storytelling, grouping and sorting. Throughout this time, the children also practiced concepts like how to use inside voices in the school, lining up, taking turns, walking through the school quietly and behaving in a classroom setting – just as if class were already in session.

This may sound all very simple to many people, but these are basic skills that many teachers say some children haven’t had the opportunity to learn. In those first few weeks of school, when things are hectic for everyone, it can be those simple things that make the days run smoothly.

Both teachers agree that the enrichment program would be beneficial in upcoming school years. However, that will

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— Bonnie Hartman, Kindergarten mom

depend on whether another grant is applied for next year, as well as which schools received funds from it.

“This is a big adjustment for kids to make,” said Bonnie Hartman, whose daughter will be entering kindergarten this year said, adding that already she has seen a difference in her daughter and her excitement for school to begin, “This is a great program. It gets them more willing to know what kindergarten is all about in way that isn’t as stressful as those first few weeks of school.”

Hartman also said that she wished the program had been there when her older children began school, and that, overall, this has been a very positive experience for her daughter.

Though the possibility of receiving grants like this in the future is uncertain at this point, everyone involved – from bus drivers to teachers to parents – agreed that the program is a positive and exciting experience. The children are gaining the knowledge they need to start school successfully, having fun and learning at the same time. And really, isn’t that what kindergarten is all about?

School lunch menus

Norwayne High School

- Monday, August 21**
No school - teacher work day
- Tuesday, August 22**
Chicken patty, fruit, vegetables, milk
- Wednesday, August 23**
Fruit salad with yogurt and cheese stick, roll, broccoli and carrots, milk
- Thursday, August 24**
Pizza, fruit, vegetables, milk
- Friday, August 25**
Meat ball sub, fruit, vegetables, milk

Creston Middle School

- Monday, August 21**
No school - teacher work day
- Tuesday, August 22**
Hot dog or corn dog, baked beans, peaches, milk
- Wednesday, August 23**
Sub sandwich, green beans, mixed fruit, milk
- Thursday, August 24**
Sloppy Joe sandwich, pickles, french fries, pineapple, milk
- Friday, August 25**
Pizza, peas, pears, milk

Burbank Elementary School

- Monday, August 21**
No school - teacher work day
- Tuesday, August 22**
Sloppy Joe sandwich, green beans, mixed fruit, milk
- Wednesday, August 23**
Bologna and cheese sandwich, potato wedges, pineapple, milk
- Thursday, August 24**
Chicken patty sandwich, corn, pears, milk
- Friday, August 25**
Pizza, mixed vegetables, peaches, milk

Sterling Elementary School

- Monday, August 21**
No school - teacher work day
- Tuesday, August 22**
Chicken strips, green beans, peanut butter and jelly bar, peaches, milk
- Wednesday, August 23**
Cheeseburger, french fries, mixed fruit, milk
- Thursday, August 24**
French toast sticks, sausage, hash browns, juice cups, milk
- Friday, August 25**
Pizza, peas, pears, milk

Northwestern Elementary School

- Monday, August 21**
No school
- Tuesday, August 22**
(A) Ravioli (B) chicken patty sandwich, green beans, applesauce, milk
- Wednesday, August 23**
(A) Taco salad with breadstick (B) PB & Jelly Uncrustable, carrots, diced pears, milk
- Thursday, August 24**
(A) Fruit bowl complete lunch (B) Cheeseburger on a bun, corn, pineapple tidbits, milk
- Friday, August 25**
(A) Corn dog, (B) fish nuggets, choice of vegetable, choice of fruit, milk

Northwestern Middle School

- Monday, August 21**
No school
- Tuesday, August 22**
Stuffed crust pizza or cheeseburger on a bun, corn, diced pears or orange juice, milk
- Wednesday, August 23**
Chicken nuggets with a roll or deli turkey on a bun, carrots or tossed salad, applesauce or melon, milk
- Thursday, August 24**
Pizza or hot ham and cheese sandwich, green beans or tossed salad, peaches or orange juice, milk
- Friday, August 25**
Chili, chips and cheese or chicken patty sandwich, choice of vegetable, choice of fruit, milk

Northwestern High School

- Monday, August 21**
No school
- Tuesday, August 22**
Ravioli with cheesy bread or chicken patty sandwich, peas, applesauce, milk
- Wednesday, August 23**
Stuffed crust cheese pizza or chili, chips and cheese, corn or tossed salad, peaches or orange juice, milk
- Thursday, August 24**
Deli turkey sandwich or hot ham and cheese sandwich, carrots or tossed salad, pineapple tidbits or melon, milk
- Friday, August 25**
No french fries! Chicken nuggets with roll or cheeseburger on a bun, mashed potatoes with gravy or tossed salad, fruit, milk

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Sun. 6:30 p.m.

Seniors - Tues. 1:00 p.m.

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