

'Countdown' calms kindergarten nerves

ADVERTISEMENT



[Acupuncture Specialist](#)

Jeff Shih-chung Matrician, Lic. Ac. For IBS, GIRD, colitis, indigestion
www.matrician.com

[Boston Acupuncture & Herb](#)

Harvard/MGH research Ac. Prof/China Needham & Boston (MGH), 20y exp IVF
www.AcuHealing.org

By Richard Cherecwich, Staff Writer
GateHouse News Service
Wed Sep 05, 2007, 02:25 PM EDT

Allston, Mass. -

Even though the first day of school isn't until Sept. 10, Julia Weeks, clad in a bright yellow T-shirt and a red plastic firefighter helmet, could hardly contain her enthusiasm.

"I'm going to real kindergarten," she said, flashing a smile while walking with her mother, Elisabeth.

And what about "real kindergarten" (K2) has Julia so excited?

"I'm excited to get homework again," she said.

Julia was one of dozens of Allston-Brighton kindergarteners who, along with their parents, turned out for Boston Public School's Countdown to Kindergarten event in Oak Square on Thursday, Aug. 30. While not every child shared Julia's enthusiasm for homework, they all shared smiles as they listened to stories in the Faneuil Branch Library, climbed into a fire truck at the firehouse, hopped on the moon bounce and colored outside the Oak Square YMCA.

"Starting kindergarten can be really imposing and scary," said Jennifer Doyle, president of the Presentation School Foundation, which has been raising money to buy the old Presentation School Building from the Archdiocese of Boston after fighting long and hard for the right to do so. "With this, the children can see kids and they know them and it's less scary."

Countdown to Kindergarten events are held throughout the city every year before the first day of school and usually draw about 25 children. This year, the event moved from Brighton Center to Oak Square and doubled its attendance to nearly 50 knee-high children clad in yellow "I'm going to kindergarten!" T-shirts.

"It's a way for the community to get behind the kids and say 'we're thrilled' and 'good luck,'" said Denise Snyder, director of Countdown to Kindergarten.

After usual sponsor WBGH could not sponsor the entire event, Boston schools asked the Presentation School Foundation to co-sponsor, much to the organization's delight.

“Part of what we’re all about is supporting families in Allston Brighton,” Doyle said. “This is exactly the kind of thing we exist for. There’s a lot of misperception we’re just about saving the school. This is a great way to reach families that haven’t heard of us.”

And there were plenty of families. The children’s room of the library was packed, and as children’s librarian Vicky Burr read “Look Out Kindergarten, Here I Come,” dozens of children sat on stage while others either rummaged through the stacks or clung to their mothers’ legs. One even offered aloud that she could almost tie her shoes, just like the book’s protagonist.

“I think it’s phenomenal,” Felice Rutstein-Lee said. “Other kids in other school systems don’t have anything like this.” Her son, Benjamin, said he was excited for kindergarten, but he was a little less certain about what he was most eager to learn.

“I don’t know,” he said, sitting beside a bin of juice boxes and pausing to think. “Reading,” he ultimately decided.

His mother was happy that the event calmed the nerves of children going to school for the first time.

“It’s fantastic because it’s an anxiety provoking time for children — and parents,” Rutstein-Lee said.