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Fundraising flurry for Boone's full-day kindergarten program

Daniel Boone group quickly raises \$32,000, but needs about \$390,000 more - and soon

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With less than a month remaining to raise \$425,000 to restore full-day kindergarten in the Daniel Boone School District, a group of parents is planning fundraisers, passing out fliers and reaching out to other parents at kindergarten registration.

In two weeks, the Daniel Boone Public School Initiative has raised about \$32,000 in pledges and heard from other parents who are in favor of donating, leaders of the new group said Wednesday.

"We're open for business," Alinda V. Ferez said.
"We're open to accept donations."

The group is raising money because Daniel Boone decided to cut kindergarten classes to half day from full day next year to reduce a \$6.9 million budget deficit. Two weeks ago, the school board agreed to reinstate full-day kindergarten if the group can raise \$425,000 in six weeks to cover the salaries and benefits of seven teachers, who will be laid off otherwise.

Ferez and Craig Brown want kindergarten parents to donate up to \$2,000 to the Daniel Boone Public School Initiative, the newly created nonprofit formed to preserve full-day kindergarten.

No family would be obligated to donate and if the drive succeeds, all kindergarten students would be eligible for full-day kindergarten regardless of which families donated.

The group has to raise the money by March 27 so the district can plan its kindergarten program.

Dr. Gary L. Otto, district superintendent, said the group's passion is wonderful but some parents can't afford to donate.

"I don't really think it's fair for parents to reach into their pockets to pay for something that previously was paid for with grants and curriculum money from the state," he said.

The nonprofit group attracted about 20 people at each of its first two weekly meetings. More than a dozen showed up Wednesday in Douglassville for the third meeting. Afterward, parents Aaron Bell and Bob Dugan each said they plan to make \$2,000 donations.

"I want my child to have the full day of education," Dugan said.

Bell said the amount sounds like a lot but it's less than what alternatives like day care or private kindergarten would cost.

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Reading Eagle: Jeremy Drey
Treasurer Alinda V. Ferez listens to ideas during a Daniel Boone Public School Initiative meeting Wednesday in Douglassville, where the nonprofit discussed ways to raise \$425,000 by March 27 to save the full-day kindergarten program.

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"When you compare it to paying \$6,000 to get private, it seems well worth it to me," he said.

Over the past two weeks, several parents with the initiative have been distributing fliers and soliciting local businesses for donations.

"There's a lot of disappointment that these children are in the position that they are," Ferez said of future kindergarten students.

Parents with the Daniel Boone Public School Initiative went to kindergarten registration at Monacacy Elementary Center on Tuesday to talk to other parents, gauge interest in donations and hand out information.

Only two of the 20 people registering their children said they didn't want to donate, group members said. Others said they were interested and one parent even brought a donation check to the registration.

Some parents were worried that the district might not bus kindergarten students in the middle of the day - that morning students would only be bused to school and afternoon students would only be bused home, meaning parents would have to make arrangements in the middle of the day. The school board hasn't made a decision about the midday busing, according to school board President Andrew Basile.

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