

GETTING A JUMP START

Wilson welcomes kids into IB program

Tiffany Lankes

Staff writer

The prestigious International Baccalaureate program has a worldwide reputation for teaching students critical thinking skills and preparing them for college.

So in that regard, Nasaria Taggart-Parker and her classmates at the city's Wilson Magnet Foundation Academy are getting a jump start, given that Wednesday was their first day of kindergarten.

Wilson welcomed 70 students into the first kindergarten class that will have the opportunity to spend their entire school career in the IB program. The district has had an IB program at Wilson Commencement High School for years, but has recently looked to expand the model to include middle and elementary school students.

"It's really exciting to welcome kindergartners to a new school knowing you'll be able to see them all the way

See PROGRAM, Page 8B



From left, Amor Bostick, Angel Nunez and Michael-Anthony Wynn, all age 5, color in apples on paper on their first day of kindergarten at Wilson Magnet Foundation Academy on Genesee Street. ANNETTE LEIN / STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER



Kindergarten teacher Katie Chinappi, center, plays the bean bag game with her class at the Wilson Magnet Foundation Academy on Genesee Street. ANNETTE LEIN STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER

Article Continued Below

[See PROG on Page B08](#)

Program

Continued from Page 1B

through,” said Wilson Principal Deasure Matthew.

The IB program is an internationally recognized teaching model that was created in 1968 as a way to offer the children of ambassadors, military personnel and expatriates a consistent and high-quality education anywhere they traveled. The program is well-respected for its focus on critical thinking, global awareness and college readiness. Elementary school children learn foreign languages, and high schoolers can earn credit for college.

Schools must apply for the IB designation, a process that can take between three and five years. Leaders from the organization that authorizes and oversees IB programs will visit Rochester in November to sign off on the Wilson Foundation program.

Although New York schools were initially slow to embrace the model, the state now has one of the highest concentrations of IB schools in the country. And while once seen mostly at the high school level, in the past decade more districts have expanded their programs into elementary and middle schools. That push has been especially acute as states look to raise their standards for what students need to learn before they graduate because the IB model already offers a rigorous learning model.

The City School District has been working on its plans to develop an IB program that spans from kindergarten through high school for several years. A district spokeswoman, however, said the district was not prepared to talk about the program. If approved, Wilson will join a handful of other Monroe County schools with the IB designation for elementary schools, including some in Hilton, Greece and East Irondequoit. Several other districts are seeking to expand their programs, and the Monroe No. 2 Orleans Board of Cooperative Educational Services in Ogden has responded to that interest by becoming a state training site for IB teachers.

In the city, the IB model also offers another perk: A draw for middleclass families who might otherwise leave the city in search of better educational opportunities.

“There’s certainly a set of people who want to stay in the city and this program is a good way to do it,” said Kate Kressmann-Kehoe, whose son is in the third year of the program. “I knew kids who had come out of the high school program and we were just really impressed by the education they had gotten.” For teachers like Katie Chinappi, the teaching style helps better engage students — even the very youngest in her kindergarten classroom — in what they are learning.

That’s largely because IB teachers go through intensive training, learning techniques to tap into their students’ different learning styles. Many of the lessons are taught through hands-on projects that force students to find the answers to their questions using real world resources. And teachers collaborate with each other to help their students make connections between subjects. Wilson leaders have also been looking to Hilton’s Quest Elementary School for guidance as they develop their program.

“Typically with kids you get them asking ‘Why are we learning this?’” Chinappi said. “But with this they get it. It’s an honor to me to start working with the first class that will go through the entire IB program in Rochester.”

Much of that, however, was lost on little Nasaria and her classmates as they learned about apples their first day of school.

For her, school had a more basic appeal. “We get to come back tomorrow,” she said.

TLANKES@DemocratandChronicle.com [Twitter.com/TiffanyLankes](https://twitter.com/TiffanyLankes)

Srzhuhg#e | #WHFQDYID

Frs | ułj kw#E #5345#Ghp rfuđw#dqg#FkurqIfđ#3 < 23 925 345