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Coventry goes back to school

COVENTRY — They came, they cried and they conquered the first day of school jitters. With their little hearts in their little throats, Hopkins Hill students tightly clung to their parents' legs, arms, whatever was available, as they walked through the front doors of their school, some for the first time. Many pre-schoolers and kindergartens weren't especially agreeable to the thought of leaving mom and dad on Wednesday, which marked Coventry Public School's first day of school.

"I'm just shy because I'm scared," said a tearful 5-year-old Shailin Lambert, who was starting her first day of kindergarten.

Growing pains weren't just for the kids; parents were weepy, too.

After Lambert was gently ushered away by waiting teachers, her mom Kari Lambert felt it was safe to let out a couple tears of her own.

"I'm ready to cry now," she said. "She's my last one of three kids; I do this with all of them."

Keri Lambert said her youngest daughter was a little nervous the night before and informed her mother that she was not particularly excited about the first day of school, but knew that eventually she would come to love it.

After jokingly being told that she'd have the day to herself now that all her kids were in school, Keri Lambert shook her head and said, "I'm going to feel lost without her today."

On a brighter note, the day wasn't without its share of smiles from students eager to see their friends and teachers sorely missed over the summer months.

Strapped with a shiny new Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtle backpack, kindergartner Killian Harrington hugged his mom and happily trotted off to first period with only a casual backwards wave.

"He was so excited about taking the bus," said mom Sharon Harrington, who, like many parents, had waited for the bus with their child, drove ahead to school, and camped outside of the school waiting for the bus to arrive. "Why is it taking them so long for them to get here?"

With still some kinks to work out, busses arrived slightly later than scheduled, but as Hopkins Hill Principal Fran Murphy put it, the important thing was that they all arrived eventually.

Murphy said the initial shock to the students' systems was somewhat eased by the fact that it was actually the third day in a row the children had attended the school; Monday was an orientation day, Tuesday was the school's annual meet and greet.

"So far there's been a few tears, but not too many," said Murphy. "It's great, it's the first official day of school and the kids are already telling me that they know how to get to their classrooms."

Murphy said that instilling a positive first impression of school is something that children will remember for the rest of their educational days.

"It's important because this is going to set the tone for how they react to school for the rest of their lives," she said. "We want them all to be happy here."

Although the hustle and bustle of the first day seemed at the forefront of every parent's mind, what may have gone unnoticed was the weeks and months worth of work associated with getting ready for the big day.

"There's a lot of preparation that goes into this," said Murphy.

She said that mid-summer, a letter is sent out to parents informing them what class their child is in and what teacher they have been assigned. Then comes letters inviting parents and students to come and see the building and the classrooms, meet the teachers and meet some of their fellow classmates.

For weeks teachers in every school have made frequent visits to their classrooms, putting the finishing touches on the rooms' décor.

"Everything seems to be going smoothly," said Assistant Superintendent of Instruction Michael Convery, noting that it was his first time observing students coming in on the first day. "Everything looks good from where I stand."