

Fremont Middle School gears up for first day

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Tracie Dye, a sixth grade English/language arts teacher, shows off her in-room library Tuesday at the new Fremont Middle School building. The new school's first day of classes is Thursday. / Daniel Carson/News-Messenger

FREMONT -- Fremont Middle School will hold its first classes Thursday, and the school's principal said Tuesday that everyone is ready for the arrival of students.

Principal Anthony Walker said the school's faculty and staff had worked Saturday, Sunday, Monday and Tuesday on last-minute preparations for the new \$25 million building's opening.

Walker said that teachers and staff had been cleaning out the old middle school building and bringing supplies to the new facility.

"Our biggest thing was moving and getting the kids in," Walker said.

The new 126,000-square-foot building is organized into five areas: a student union, administrative offices, student activities center, media center and three floors of core subject classrooms.

On the third floor, sixth-grade teachers Lamar Baker and Tracie Dye spent Tuesday going over their classroom setups and reviewing lesson plans for Thursday.

Baker said he had been teaching at Lindsey's Washington Elementary School in the fall, and he acknowledged it will be an adjustment for elementary school teachers as they start at the new middle school.

He will teach science at the middle school, and said he has more storage and sinks in his new classroom.

"I have seven, so that's an improvement," Baker said.

Baker said he and his students will dive into geology when classes start Thursday.

A couple of classrooms down the hall, Dye said her first priority was to get her library set up.

Dye said she spent 24 years at Otis Elementary School before arriving at the new middle school, and she has furnished her new room with plants, trees and a Warren Kimble painting.

"I still wanted to keep a little of the elementary spirit alive for them," Dye said.

The Ohio School Facilities Commission is funding 32 percent of the Fremont Middle School project, with city taxpayers funding the remainder.

The building is spread over 12.5 acres, with students in grades eight, seven and six occupying their own floors for core classroom instruction.

It includes a new gymnasium that seats 650, a centrally located media center equipped with iPads and an adjacent multimedia production lab, and a student activities center with classrooms and practice space for performing and visual arts students.

Walker said that students being dropped off by their parents and walk-ins will enter the building through the main North Street entrance. School buses will drop students off on the opposite side of the building.

He said sixth-, seventh- and eighth-grade students will wait in separate areas of the building in the morning before heading to their lockers and classrooms.

The principal said he had received a lot of positive feedback from parents and visitors about the new building and its layout.

"It's been a great experience. It's nice to see the community support us in this way," Walker said.

Classes start at 7:45 a.m. Thursday morning.