

All Sandusky County schools back to the books

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Written by
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FREMONT -- While area students soaked up the last remaining hours of summer freedom, many teachers across Sandusky County prepared their classrooms for a new year.

Three kindergarten teachers at Stamm Elementary School in Fremont crowded around a low table with music teacher Jon Torrence on Monday, going over final instructions before the students arrive today.

"The big thing we do to make things easier is collaborate," Michelle Dumminger said.

Dumminger works with the two other kindergarten teachers at the school, Wendy Eakin and Debbie Cheek.

Cheek said she looks forward to meeting all her students and their parents, which will mostly be accomplished at an open house and orientation the day before school begins.

"I look forward to meeting all the kids," she said.

Fremont City Schools will join Clyde-Green Springs Schools, Bishop Hoffman Catholic Schools, Woodmore Schools and Margareta Local Schools in bringing students back today.

Lakota Local Schools, Gibsonburg Exempted Village Schools and Soloman Lutheran School all started classes Monday. Beginning the school year last week were Bettsville, Bellevue and Old Fort schools.

Britta Rowe, a kindergarten teacher at Clyde Elementary School, said she is excited to meet her kids and start her first year as a full-time teacher.

"It's just an adrenaline rush," Rowe said. "Just knowing that this is their first experience with school, and I get to have that with them."

She said she has been working hard the past few weeks, organizing lesson materials, rearranging her classroom library and trying to make the room as close to home as possible for the soon-to-arrive kindergartners.

"I try to walk in the room and think, 'If this was my first time at school, how excited would I feel to be here right now,'" Rowe said.

As important as that child's first impression of her and school, she said, is the relationship a teacher builds with the students' parents.

"It's about the whole family's experience," Rowe said. "Teachers can't stress that enough."

She said orientations and open houses provide teachers an opportunity to begin those important relationships.

Amanda Ruble, a sixth-grade language arts and social studies teacher at Stamm, said she enjoys meeting a new group of students and getting periodic visits from students who have gone on to attend middle school and high school.

"Every year I like getting to meet a new group of kids," Ruble said.

For a teacher, she said, the most important aspect of a new school year is getting to know the new group of kids. Ruble said she does this by talking with the students' former teachers and through activities in the first few days.

"I have the kids do more personal activities that tell me a little bit more about them," Ruble said.

Jennifer Abdoo, a fourth-grade reading and writing teacher at Stamm, tried a new look with her classroom this year, a Hollywood theme. Abdoo agrees that getting to know the students is critical at the beginning of a school year.

"Then I want to build on that relationship with the students," she said. "That is the number one thing."

Stamm Elementary Principal Christine Oravets said she is proud of her staff's efforts to increase the school's state report card ranking from "continuous improvement" for the 2009-10 year to "effective" for 2010-11.

"I can't be more proud of the team I work with here," Oravets said. "They really extend themselves for the good of the kids."

Clyde Elementary Principal Peggy Stickney helped host an open house for students and parents last week, and said many kids seemed ready to return to classes.

"Based on the number of hugs I saw or gave in the hallway last week, it looked like they are ready to come back," Stickney said.

Clyde's elementary, along with many others in the county, will open its doors to hundreds of students today, she said, whether they are ready or not.

Most area schools will give families one more shot at a summer vacation, with a three-day weekend starting Saturday in observance of Labor Day.



Music teacher Jon Torrence meets with kindergarten teachers Wendy Eakin, Debbie Cheek and Michelle Dumminger on Monday at Stamm Elementary School. Teachers at the school were preparing for the first day of school, which is today for most students in Fremont. / Mark Tower/News-Messenger