Fremont City Schools start new year in rain

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First Day of School: Students at Atkinson Elementary head back to school on the first day of class in the Fremont City School District on Tuesday, Aug 27, 2013.

FREMONT — Fifth grader Tyler Durbin spent most of his summer vacation underwater.

Durbin went swimming, took a vacation to Cedar Point with his family, then came back to the Fremont Rec Center and swam some more.

It is only natural, then, for Durbin to return to Atkinson Elementary in the pouring rain today as Fremont City Schools began the new academic year.

Second-year Atkinson Elementary Principal Chris Ward said for new and returning students, the message he teaches stays the same.
“I have one rule: respect,” Ward said. “The kids all learned that last year. I go around to each classroom starting today and I remind them of that rule.”

Reading resource teacher Jane Fleming said teachers took time before school began to write positive and motivational messages in chalk for the students on ground outside.

The rain began with a trickle then turned into a downpour just minutes before school officially began.

“I’m sure it’s all washed away now,” Fleming said with a smile.

The motivational messages an example of a staff Ward said goes overboard and bends over backward to make school a positive experience for kids.

“They work so well together,” said Ward of his staff. “They’re willing to do anything not only for each other, but for our students. It’s a great staff and it makes my job easier.”

Ward said most of the staff returned from last year. Atkinson also welcomed four new staff to the elementary school: art teacher Greg Harrison, reading teacher Sherry Wager, special education teacher Jannelle Head and psychologist Keri Vela.

“I’m excited to start the new school year here,” Head said. “The staff and principal have been very welcoming. It’s been great so far.”

Atkinson said she is looking forward to working with some of the new technology and smart boards in forming interactive lessons for the students, building relationships with the students and working with other members of the staff.

“The rain can’t ruin our day,” Head said. “Rain or shine, we’re going to have a good day.”
Fremont City Schools head back to class on Tuesday, Aug 27, 2013.
An early morning storm passes as traffic backs up while parents drop their kids off at Atkinson Elementary in Fremont for the first day of school on Tuesday, Aug 27, 2013. / Jonathon Bird/News-Messenger

Students and parents make their way into Atkinson Elementary through the pouring rain on Tuesday, Aug 27, 2013. / Jonathon Bird/News-Messenger
Fifth Graders file into Michele Plihall's classroom at Atkinson Elementary in Fremont on the first day of school on Tuesday, Aug 27, 2013. / Jonathon Bird/News-Messenger

Second graders in Connie Snyder's classroom draw family portraits as a way to get to know each other during the first day of class at Atkinson Elementary on Tuesday, Aug 27, 2013. / Jonathon Bird/News-Messenger
Julie Davlin and Jane Fleming help first graders get situated on the first day of class at Atkinson Elementary in Fremont on Tuesday, Aug 27, 2013. / Jonathon Bird/News-Messenger