

Where Opportunity Matters

September 2015

THE Drum Beat

OF THE PIQUA CITY SCHOOLS

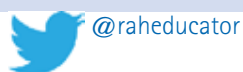
Thanks to Community— New Schools Create Real Possibilities!

The 2015-16 school year will be a memorable one—the opening of three new schools: Piqua Central Intermediate, Washington Primary and Springcreek Primary schools. Now we truly have the types of learning environments that create the opportunities for all Piqua students to learn.

It would not have been possible without the tremendous support of our community. Thanks to our voters, we were able to build these schools in a smart way with the State of Ohio picking up nearly half of the construction costs. We built the schools based upon what was needed for a modern education and efficient day-to-day operations. We wanted Piqua students to have the same opportunities that students in other school districts had, but without abundant luxuries. We built what was necessary and nothing more.

Thanks to the cooperation of teachers, support staff and administrators, who worked extra hard during the summer, we were ready for the students when the doors opened August 24.

Rick Hanes, Superintendent



THREE NEW SCHOOLS ARE OPEN!

The First Day of All New Firsts

New faces. New places. Students and staff can hardly contain their enthusiasm as they enter a new chapter with the opening of new primary and intermediate schools. Excitement was most evident when one girl scurried toward the entrance of Piqua Central Intermediate School (PCIS) and, pointing to her

curbside, it was "organized chaos." Getting accustomed to a new routine when you've tripled the number of staff and students requires patience.

Both Gearhardt and Strehle extend kudos to their "blended" staffs many whom helped unpack boxes and organize



backpack, shouted, "I can't wait to get homework." She scores an "A" for attitude.

Washington and Springcreek Principals Mindy Gearhardt and Connie Strehle, respectively, along with PCIS Principal Jake Amlin, remained highly visible as school buses and parents delivered pre-kindergartners through sixth graders. With Strehle directing bus traffic and Gearhardt motioning cars

classrooms this summer. "We have a great team and are very fortunate," smiled Gearhardt. "From custodians to teachers, I'm very pleased. We do have the best staff." Strehle concurs. Adding, "We're off to a great start and it's unbelievable how well everyone works together."



The first school day at Washington Primary (above), Piqua Central Intermediate (center) and Springcreek Primary (below).

Both are equally enthusiastic about a new scheduling model which enables students to break into smaller groups with intervention specialists, Title I teachers and instructional aides for individualized instruction. Each building also has a guidance counselor to help students develop work and social skills and focus on peer

CONTINUED ON PAGE 2





New staff for the 2015-16 school year. (Teachers pictured at left; administrators, below).

New Teachers and Administrators Join PCS

The merger of seven primary and intermediate schools into three new facilities is no easy task. Aside from physically moving students, books and learning materials from one building to the next over summer months, Assistant Superintendent David Larson led the team effort of transitioning staff to their new homes and welcoming some new employees.

Early results indicate personnel matches at Washington, Springcreek and Piqua Central Intermediate Schools are a "win-win" formula representing a homogenous blend of talent and skills spread districtwide.

Larson explains the staffing process began several years ago when teachers were given intent forms and options as to where they would like to be assigned once new buildings opened. Based upon the needs and strengths of each building, existing staff were reassigned. "We did our best based on their skills and where they best fit," he noted, adding some changes were made to accommodate staff requests.

This year new instructional staff members (replacing people

who retired or vacated existing positions) were welcomed including those from Upper Valley Career Center involved in satellite programs at Piqua Junior High School and several Title I positions from the Educational Services Center (ESC).

New administrative staff include Teresa Anderson, director of student services; Rob Messick, director of curriculum and instruction; Kylee Harmann, psychologist; Jonathan Shoffstall, assistant principal, Springcreek; Shannon Pence, assistant principal, Washington; Jennifer Garland, food service supervisor; and Lori Sexton, assistant principal, PHS.

Instructional hires include Erin McGaharan, guidance counselor, PJHS; Alexandra Spurling, science, PJHS; Kyla Starrett, language arts, PHS; Jean (Koth) Goettemoeller, math, PHS; Jennifer Smith, physical education, Springcreek; Kelsey Treon, Spanish, PHS; Lauren Mehling, guidance counselor, primary schools; Lindsay Muhlenkamp, Toni Riley and Georgia Willson, guidance counselors, PHS; Kacie Pace, social studies, PHS; Elizabeth Myers, mathematics, PCIS;

Katelyn (Confer) Jenkins, algebra, PHS; Stephanie Friend, first grade, Springcreek; Melissa Brandewie, language arts, PCIS; Nancy Conrad, math, PCIS; Betsey Johns, language arts, PCIS; Damion Skeans, media, PHS and Julia Hale, third grade, Springcreek.

Also Erin Monnier, first grade, Springcreek; Elizabeth Titus, mathematics, PCIS; Jennifer Moore, first grade, Springcreek; Nicole Richardson, kindergarten, Springcreek; Kurt Albers, intervention specialist, PJHS;



Maria Oldiges, guidance counselor, Washington; Shawn Agne, science, PHS; Tiffany Suman, Title I, Washington; Justin Hemm, social studies, PHS; Andrew Blum, science, PHS; Carl Gural, science, PHS; Shellie Drake, first grade, Washington; Becky Pottorf, language arts, PCIS; Jason Pecori, German, PHS, and Tricia Zimmerman, Title I, Washington.

The First Day of Firsts

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

interaction, homework and even career opportunities.

There will be added emphasis on reading and mathematics and a "back to the basics" approach where multi-sensory teaching methods will be taught in areas along with Chromebooks for kindergarten students through third graders to assist them with schoolwork.

Amlin appears most excited with focusing on instruction

after spending several years examining blueprints for PCIS. The intermediate school is "capitalizing on the strengths" of its staff and, like Washington and Springcreek, providing students with personal schedules which reflect reading and math needs. "We want to see where kids are and help them grow," he emphasized. There's new opportunities to build a new culture. Amlin, Gearhardt and Strehle are up to the challenge.

The Big Move is Complete

The Piqua City Schools' multi-year project to construct three new schools (with a pricetag shy of \$55 million) encompassed more than just bricks and mortar.

The addition of three new schools (with the State of Ohio paying 47 percent and local taxpayers contributing 53 percent) represents a major accomplishment for PCS.

Project/Business Manager Curt South might have been the subject of singer Sheryl Crow's song "a change would do you good." There were many changes to consider, such as new transportation routes; reassignments of bus drivers, food service workers, custodians and secretaries; disposal of decades-old buildings; and the physical move from Nicklin, Favorite Hill, High Street, Bennett and Wilder into new facilities. And yet, South always managed

a smile and repeated the mantra "on time, on budget" when commenting on its progress.

Using a new software program and with input from several bus drivers and principals, new bus routes were identified based on where each of the estimated 1,800 bussed students reside. These new routes are designed to ensure buses reach their destinations safely and efficiently.

The physical move itself was accomplished internally through the "awesome" efforts of PCS custodial staff. Thanks to these individuals, with assistance from the US Army Reserve, thousands of boxes were transported, saving an estimated \$100,000 in



Secretaries, food service workers, and custodians (pictured here) all have new places to work.



moving costs for the district. The demolition of existing buildings, which will be accomplished in two parts (asbestos abatement and demolition) will be completed by December.

What Will Happen to Former School Sites?

Like dominos the vacated primary and intermediate school buildings are individually being demolished and the properties are being graded and converted into green space. What does the future hold for sites located at Nicklin, Favorite Hill, High Street, Bennett and Wilder?

Piqua City Schools administrators and board members recently met with City of Piqua commissioners and staff to begin discussions on opportunities for redevelopment for the five properties. Superintendent Rick Hanes suggested, "If we

do anything, we want to make sure it's in the best interest of the community. A collaboration with the City will benefit all of us." While the former Nicklin property

is being viewed as a potential land laboratory to be used by Piqua Central Intermediate School, remaining properties have the potential to become

neighborhood or riverfront parks and/or residential developments, according to City Planner Chris Schmiesing.

The city has a comprehensive plan which suggests that under-utilized sites be strategically redeveloped and incorporated "back into the community fabric." The former school sites, it is anticipated, could be converted into new recreational, business and housing opportunities while enhancing the surrounding neighborhoods.

Neighborhood meetings will eventually take place at each site to solicit feedback and engage residents who can offer new ideas.



Piqua City Schools
Administrative Offices
719 E. Ash Street
Piqua, OH 45356
937-773-4321
www.piqua.org

The *DRUM BEAT* is published and distributed quarterly by the Piqua City Schools for district residents, and is also posted on the district website.

BOARD OF EDUCATION
Lori Webster, President
Frank Patrizio, Vice President
Andy Hite
Bob Luby
Steve Greggerson

Richard A. Hanes,
Superintendent
Jeremie Hittle, Treasurer

Piqua City Schools
719 East Ash Street
Piqua, OH 45356



For more information
check our web site:

www.piqua.org

NON-PROFIT ORG.
U.S. POSTAGE
PAID
PIQUA, OH
PERMIT NO. 362

Postal Customer ECRWSS

Fun and Safe

Recess ranks high among students' favorite activities. The newly-constructed playgrounds at Washington and Springcreek Primary schools as well as Piqua Central Intermediate School feature more apparatus than the traditional swings and jungle gyms. Business Director Curt South suggests the equipment specified came about as the result of numerous meetings with the

design team. "The idea behind the equipment is to improve physical fitness, balance and coordination while still being fun to play on." And, in the event of a tumble, there are two types of playground surfaces to cushion the blow: a soft poured-in-place rubber with red and blue speckled topcoat and also a firmer surface in the shape of squares that can be used as a tumbling mat.

Laptops Go Home

"Today's youngsters were born into a world of computers," commented kindergarten teacher Kendra Krouskop-Smith. So it made sense for her class to participate in a laptop computer pilot program last spring. This was all part of a \$2.1 million early literacy grant awarded PCS along with Milton-Union and Franklin Monroe school districts.

This fall, kindergartners and first grade students districtwide will take home computers to reinforce, together with their parents, what is learned in the classroom. Director of Technology Erich Heidenreich said that 624 take-home devices have been delivered along with 48 classroom sets. The project, held in conjunction with Think TV/ PBS, provides invaluable resources to students. All youngsters (grades K-3) should now have access to Chromebooks.

Where Opportunity Matters

The Public is Invited!

Board of Education Meeting
September 24 at 6 p.m.

PHS Homecoming Dance
October 3 at 8 p.m.

PHS Fall Choir Concert
October 18 at 2:30 p.m.

Board of Education Meeting
October 28 at 6 p.m.

Board of Education Meeting
November 19 at 6 p.m.

Senior Citizens Holiday
Breakfast
December 5 at 8 a.m. at PCIS

PHS Holiday Vocal Concert/
Cookie Walk
December 13 at 2:30 and 4 p.m.

PHS Holiday Band Concert
December 14 at 7 p.m.

Board of Education Meeting
December 15 at 6 p.m.

