

Teachers, administrators ready for students' return

School starts Wednesday, Sept. 2

By Erin Tiernan

The lazy days of summer, now in scarce supply, will soon give way to another school year as of 8:15 a.m. on Wednesday, Sept. 2, the first day of the 2009-2010 school year.

Some teachers and administrators have persevered through broken air conditioning in heat and humidity to prepare their curriculum and classrooms for Jamestown's 486 students in kindergarten through eighth grade.

"School never stops really," said Kathleen Almanzor, principal of the Lawn Avenue School, which includes grades 5 through 8 – at least not for Jamestown's 51 teachers. "Teachers are in working, they've been in and out all summer planning together as grade-level teams and doing their classrooms," she said.

Conferences, technology tutorials and the integration of collaborative teaching approaches have kept faculty occupied throughout the summer, according to Almanzor and Melrose School Principal Carole Melucci.

According to both Melucci and Almanzor, enrollment is steady, but just because numbers aren't increasing, that doesn't mean the quality of education is leveling off. This year, the Jamestown school district will apply a new strategic plan known as "rigor, relevance and relationships," which emphasizes the importance of close, trusting relationships between students and teachers, as well as a focus on real-life application of topics taught in the classroom.

Once teachers have built trust

and respect with their students, Melucci said, "then kids will take risks, try new things and not be afraid to make mistakes and learn."

Both Melucci and Almanzor are excited to start a new year with a new focus.

"We all know that such a big piece about kids being successful in school is building successful relationships with their teachers and with each other," Melucci said.

Along with the new strategic plan, students can also look forward to improved technology and a more interactive teaching experience. Mobile computer labs – also known as laptops – will be available for use in classrooms, much like teachers in past generations would borrow the department television to show educational videos.

Digital SMART Board technology will also be incorporated into the classroom experience, offering teachers a chance to blend traditional teaching techniques with the expectations of today's technology-dependent society.

Several new faces, along with some that are familiar, will join the staff and faculty this year.

Jamie Ordway will join the second grade co-teaching team as the general education teacher; two years ago, she taught kindergarten at Melrose School.

The co-teaching teams at Melrose School are integrated classrooms where special needs children participate in a traditional classroom setting. Melucci said

this is a functional, universal approach that promotes growth and acceptance in children from an early age.

In the fourth grade, Amy Simoes will take on the special education role, co-teaching with general educator Jayson Juhnowski.

In the fifth grade, Jenn Clark will replace Robin Sweet, who retired earlier this year. The sixth grade language arts position will be filled by Laurie George, while returning teacher Tom Carney will be the seventh grade language arts teacher.

Gwen Spence will serve as director of student services, Dr. Lisa Whorley is the new psychologist and Christine Antidormi is the new speech pathologist.

Both Almanzor and Melucci agreed that the new hires are highly qualified individuals with lots of energy to add to Jamestown's schools.

"We always get excited at this time of year," Melucci said. "It's almost September and we're excited for the kids to come back."

So far, Jamestown has avoided difficult program cuts like those that other communities are experiencing due to tough economic times.

Teacher contract negotiations are set to open in February 2010, according to Almanzor.

"We're lucky [that] the community has always historically been very supportive of our schools," Almanzor said. "The teachers are very dedicated to doing what's right for the students."

Melrose School implements new arrival and departure procedures

Beginning Wednesday, Sept. 2, Melrose School will implement new arrival and departure procedures at the school.

For morning arrival, buses will drop students off at the main entrance of the building, cars will drop students off at the Arnold Avenue entrance, walkers will go directly to the playground area and preschoolers will be dropped off at the preschool door.

For afternoon dismissal, buses will pick up students at the main entrance of the building, cars will pick up students at the Arnold Avenue entrance, walkers will exit from the art room door and preschoolers will exit from the preschool door.

Students who walk will now exit from a different place than those who are picked up by car. A parent should keep a child's teacher informed of changes in dismissal plans. Those who need to come into the building during drop-off or pick-up, should park on Melrose Avenue on the west side of the street (as designated by signage). There will be no parking in either lot at any time during arrival or dismissal. Children arriving after 8:15 a.m. should use the front entrance, and must be signed in at the office.

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FOUR LAWS OF ECOLOGY

1. Everything is connected to everything else. There is one ecosphere for all living organisms and what affects one, affects all.

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2. Everything must go somewhere. There is no "waste" in nature and there is no "away" to which things can be thrown.

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3. Nature knows best. Humankind has fashioned technology to improve upon nature, but many "improvements" are detrimental to the natural system.

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4. There is no such thing as a free lunch. Everything comes from something. There is no such thing as spontaneous existence.

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Thank you to Barry Commoner, author of *The Closing Circle* (1971), for the brilliant exposition of these laws. And thank you to his learned disciple, Professor Harry Shealy, for disseminating them.

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