

Students get back into the swing of school days

There are plenty of new things for parents, students and teachers to adjust to as classes began district-wide on Wednesday.

By **AMY CAVALIER**
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Walking into Cathy Drew's kindergarten classroom at Cobbles Elementary on Tuesday afternoon, Skyler Weber expressed some trepidation.

"How will I know where to sit?" she asked her mother. "I don't even know how to read."

Drew reassured Skyler that she does not assign seats so she could sit wherever she would like on the first day.

Students in the elementary schools headed back to school a day early on Tuesday for an afternoon open house. It was a chance for the younger students in the district to break in their new back packs, meet their new teachers and find out who is in their class this year.

Lou Anne DaRin, a third grade teacher at Cobbles, took some time on Tuesday to get to know a little bit about what her students did over summer break. One student told her she climbed a mountain above the clouds in Maine. DaRin told her that they'd be learning how to locate Maine on a map in her classroom during the school year.

In October, DaRin will be leaving Penfield to spend three weeks in Tokyo with the Japan Fullbright Memorial Fund Teacher Program.

She was one of 200 educators chosen out of a national pool of more than 1,700 applicants to participate in the program. The teachers will travel to 20 host cities where they will have direct contact with Japanese teachers and students in all grade levels.

"We've taught Japan for 10 years in the third grade now," she said. "To experience it first-hand and then be able to bring it back to the kids and share it with them is a valuable experience."

DaRin's students won't have to wait until she returns in November to hear about her adventures. She will teleconference with them using a laptop and cameras.

"The only trick is the 13-hour time difference," she said. "It'll be 11 p.m. there when it's 9 a.m. here."

At the Tuesday, Sept. 4 Board of Education meeting, Superintendent Susan Gray reviewed some of the curriculum and other work that's been done over the summer months.

The Department of Buildings and Grounds stayed busy this summer with facilities improvement projects. At Penfield High School, a new water main for hydrants was installed, the interior office walls were built, some painting was done and the lap pool saw some work.

At Bay Trail, offices and rooms got paint and some floor and wall repairs were done among other work.

All the elementary school gymnasium floors were resealed over the summer and HVAC filters were

replaced in all the district buildings.

Scribner and Harris Hill got new gym lighting. Some asbestos removal was undertaken at Cobbles. At Harris Hill, drainage was installed in the large playground area.

Indian Landing saw major landscape work. At the district office, the parking lot was painted and resealed, new carpeting was installed and hallways and offices were painted.

In the Department of Curriculum and Instruction, summer work included K-8 parent guides. The documents outline the district's core curriculum for kindergarten through eighth grade. The documents are available on the district's website, www.penfield.edu and will be handed out on curriculum nights.

An Elementary Math Textbook Committee is being formed to bring recommendations on textbooks to the board this winter. According to Gene Mancuso, director of curriculum and instruction, it has been about seven years since the district reviewed its elementary math textbook materials.

The adoption process overview is available for viewing on the district's website and members of the public are welcome to attend the committee's meetings.

In the lunchroom, the Board of Education decided earlier in August to eliminate the 25-cent fee for reduced-price meals, making them free to families who meet the income requirements. Other lunch prices will remain the same. Break-



STAFF PHOTO/AMY CAVALIER

Lou Anne DaRin, a third-grade teacher at Cobbles, meets Olivia Nguyen and her father Tien Nguyen during an open house held on Tuesday.

fast costs \$1; lunch at the elementary schools costs \$1.90, and lunch at the secondary level costs \$1.95. Extra milk is 45 cents.

And in the mail, tax bills should have arrived at this point. In Penfield, the tax rate for 2007-2008 has been set at \$26.01 per \$1,000 of assessed valuation. For a person with a home valued at \$150,000, that would mean a tax bill of \$3901.50 for the 2007-2008 school year.

Since Penfield's equaliza-

tion rate has fallen to 95 percent, residents there will pay slightly more taxes than residents who live in Perinton, Pittsford, Macedon and Walworth and pay Penfield school taxes. Residents in Perinton and Pittsford will pay \$24.71 per \$1,000 of assessed valuation and residents in Macedon and Walworth will pay \$24.66 per \$1,000 of assessed valuation.

In other news, the School Board approved hiring Dr. Vincent Coppola of Western New York Educational Ser-

vice Council to assist with the search for a new superintendent. Gray announced her plans to retire on Jan. 1 earlier this year.

And drawings for the \$66 million building project approved by voters in May are getting more detailed. The Board hopes to hold a work session in November to discuss the work done up to this point.

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