

EDUCATION

New faces, spaces come to county schools this year

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Two whole months of respite from the school doldrums are quickly fading as districts start to open their doors for another 180 days of instruction on Monday.

Unionville-Chadds Ford and Upper Darby lead the pack this year as all of their students head back to the classrooms Monday morning. Ridley and Southeast Delco will also open their doors ahead of the Labor Day holiday.

Gov. Tom Wolf on Aug. 21 made a special start to the school year with an appearance at Coebourn Elementary School in the Penn-Delco School District, speaking before dozens of school leaders from regional school districts about the good that investment into the public school system can be.

With Wolf's encouraging boost, teachers and students can prepare for the same routine of structured learning in the main content areas of math, science, English and history/civics. But a number of them have plenty of new things to look forward to.

Deteriorating bathrooms in the Upper Darby High School have been completely renovated and the fighting Royal athletes will have a new track and field to play on. The home opening game for Upper Darby football is Sept. 6 at 7 p.m.

Near the close of summer, student volunteers from the Upper Darby Arts and Education Foundation's service club worked to help beautify a segment of the 69th Street business district. Students rolled up their sleeves to contribute to a 135-foot mural that will encapsulate the culture and history of Upper Darby. The mural is still being painted on the side of the building at 44 S. 69th St.

As the district works on two major capital improvement plans, students in other districts will get to see new buildings and spaces be built from the ground up.

Marple Newtown and Haverford school districts will continue construction projects on some

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MEDIANEWS GROUP FILE PHOTO

The cafeteria space in the Southeast Delco School District Kindergarten Center will be fully functional again after being closed for most of the last school year. Water pooling on the roof and a faulty support beam closed the space down in October 2018. The problems have since been fixed.



SUBMITTED PHOTO

The new Springfield High School continues construction and should open for the 2020-21 school year.

of their elementary schools, including Lynnewood Elementary School in the latter district that broke ground in June. Culbertson and Loomis elementary schools in Marple will be renovated and expanded on to accommodate grow-

ing enrollment figures. These projects are expected to be finished next year.

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In Southeast Delco, a damaged roof and support beam at the Kindergarten Center has been fixed and regular programs will continue there. In October 2018 a school staff member noticed the structural damage to the ceiling of the school's cafeteria and was reported to the appropriate authorities. A reported 4-foot pool of water collected on the roof and may have exacerbated a faulty structural support beam.

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SUBMITTED PHOTO

The new Upper Darby High School track and field that was under construction this summer. The first home game for the football team is Sept. 6.

Schools

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of the school's cafeteria and was reported to the appropriate authorities. A reported 4-foot pool of water collected on the roof and may have exacerbated a faulty structural support beam.

The cafeteria, which also serves as the auditorium and gymnasium, was closed for the remainder of the 2018-19 school year for safety reasons.

The district was also looking at potential slashes in programs and staff as it wrestled with a \$2 million deficit. Southeast Delco Superintendent Stephen Butz said Aug. 22 that programs have not been cut and a number of positions have not been filled due to attrition as a way to save money. He said there should not be a noticeable difference to students in their learning environments but expected a slight bump in class-

room enrollments.

New classmates and buildings are the only things on the horizon in the next year.

In order to help with the nationwide substitute teacher shortages the Delaware County Intermediate Unit is hosting training dates on Sept. 5 and 6 for its guest teacher program that allows any college-educated person to be a substitute on a day-to-day basis. People who complete the training will be issued a substitute emergency permit by the Pennsylvania Department of Education for use in districts participating in the IU's guest teacher consortium. More trainings are scheduled for January and March.

As school districts have plenty to look forward to within the next year, students were able to get a preview of their own before school starts.

School introductions, community socials and meet-and-greet sessions dotted schools across the county to blend some summer fun



SUBMITTED PHOTO

One of the newly renovated bathrooms at Upper Darby High School. Fixing over a dozen bathrooms at the school of 3,700 students was an investment of \$1.9 million.

into the new school year.

New Marple Newtown Superintendent Tina Kane did some meet and greets, and while she is not

a new face to the district, this is her first go as the top educator there. Some Upper Darby elementary schools had some ice cream

socials in the week leading up to the first day of school.

The Chester Upland School District took it once step further with a block party at Eyre Park and a Chester High School Community Night. Knowing breakfast is the most important meal of the day, fifth-graders in Chichester were invited to a welcome breakfast two weeks before they start getting back into the swing of things for the new year.

The Pennsylvania Department of Education says there were 75,000 public school students in Delaware County last school year, plus thousands more for private school students. The county will once again be bustling with armies of yellow school buses helping to bring students to and from their educational institutions. Each day will bring them a new piece of knowledge that educators hope carry over on to standardized test performance and bring them that much closer to the next summer.