

# Back to school: updates on 21 Macomb County school districts as students return

## School leaders focus on filling teaching vacancies, plugging security holes



Students mosey through the entrance of Kennedy Middle School in St. Clair Shores during an orientation session held this past Thursday. (DAVE ANGELL — FOR THE MACOMB DAILY)

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Kristi Nickel always looks forward to the crisp days In September that mark the return to school .

Now in her 20th year of being a teacher in the mount Clemens Community Schools District, Nickel has more on her plate than ever before. In addition to working in the high school, she serves as president of the teachers union and she and her husband are the proud parents of Melanie, 6, and 18-month-old Charlie.

But despite her busy schedule, Nickel looks forward to the upcoming year and all it brings.

“In the fall, everyone has had a long summer and we’ve enjoyed it,” she said.

“But I think we’re all eager to get back. Change is hard for everyone, but it’s change in a good way. It’s a brand new school year, brand new opportunities for learning and brand new people to meet.”

With that in mind, here is a brief look at some of the new faces, places and safety spaces that students in every Macomb County district will see for the next 10 months.



Jaclynn Stephens and Melanie Nickel focus on their coloring schools as they prepare for the new year in Mount Clemens Community Schools District. (DAVE ANGELL — FOR THE MACOMB DAILY)

## **Anchor Bay School District**

### **New faces**

The St. Clair County-based district hired more than 20 new teachers over the summer, including five new social workers. A special education supervisor and an at-risk coordinator were also added.

### **New places**

Twenty administrators and staff members became ALICE (Alert, Lockdown, Inform, Counter, Evacuate) trainers, preparing for active shooting situations.

Voters will act on a proposed \$169 million bond issue on Nov. 6 that school officials say would allow the district to complete facility upgrades, address transportation concerns, and enhance building security. If approved, the bond would not result in a tax increase, according to school officials.

A Maker's Space has been added at Middle School South to allow students a place to make or craft anything they want.

## **Armada Area Schools**

### **New faces**

Andy Kasti will provide new leadership at Armada High School as he takes over as the building principal. He worked as the Richmond High School principal over the last four years.

### **New places**

According to Superintendent Michael Musary, the district went through a five-year strategic planning process in the spring and will be rolling out new initiatives in the fall. The last two years have been a challenge and a major goal is to bring more joy back to education. The new vision of the district is to have a community of excellence, achievement, and joy.

Also, Armada Area Schools will have three proposals on the Nov. 8 ballot, and none will increase current residential property taxes.

The proposals include 1) 18 mills for non-homestead property renewal 2) 0.85 mills for the sinking fund, and 3) \$26.5 million bond issue for several district improvements.

A detailed list of the \$26.5 million bond issue can be found on the district website at [armadaschools.org](http://armadaschools.org).

A few of the improvements of the upcoming bond issue include new high school entrance and offices; a parking expansion at the elementary school; cafeteria expansion at the middle school; new student and staff furniture; paving throughout the district; synthetic turf for the soccer/football field and varsity softball field; and new buses.

#### Safety spaces

Another improvement of the bond proposal will be to install new safety entrances at the high school and Macomb Academy of Arts & Sciences.

### **Center Line Public Schools**

#### New faces

- Andrea Kenney is the principal at Roose Elementary School
- John Kelley is the new principal at Center Line High School
- John Grub, the former Roose principal, becomes assistant principal at the high school



Andrea Kennedy, principal at Roose Elementary School in Center Line.



Center Line High School Assistant Principal John Grob



Center Line High School Principal John Kelley



An Anatomage table. This table presents 3D anatomy visualization images at Center Line High School's ATI Academy. (PHOTO — CENTER LINE PUBLIC SCHOOLS)  
New places

Bond work continues as students at Roose Elementary are moving into a newly renovated building this fall, and the middle and high schools had asbestos removed and new flooring laid in all hallways.



Construction is complete on the new Roose Elementary School in Center Line. (PHOTO — CENTER LINE PUBLIC SCHOOLS)

The Academies of Center Line took time over the summer to expand its “toy” collection.

Construction has been underway as Center Line High School's Industry, Technology, & Innovation (ITI) Academy prepares for its new heavy equipment operation & repair training program in partnership with AIS Construction Equipment. After completion of a hands-on two-year program, students will be employable at companies like AIS, Caterpillar, or John Deere.

In another part of the building, the Health & Human Services (HHS) Academy is preparing its new \$80,000 Anatomage table.

The table is the most technologically advanced 3D anatomy visualization and virtual dissection tool for anatomy and physiology education.

Similar to a X-ray machine, the table has been adopted by many of the world's leading medical schools and institutions.

## Chippewa Valley Schools

### New faces

District spokesperson Diane Blain says students will encounter some familiar faces serving in new roles along with some new hires.

They include:

- Niyoka Wright is the new coordinator of Assessment and Data Analysis
- Michael Johnson will serve as assistant principal for Shawnee and Cheyenne elementary schools
- Katie Shellabarger will serve as assistant principal for Ojibwa and Miami elementary schools
- Ebony Carter was appointed the specialist for Outreach and At-Risk
- Rene Ribant-Amthor accepted the job of assistant principal at Dakota High School
- Heather Batko will be principal for Cherokee Elementary School
- Mark Johnson, who formerly was the principal at Cheyenne, has accepted the same role at Erie Elementary School
- Anthony Lewis will be the next principal at Cheyenne
- Kristin Doyle is principal for Clinton Valley Elementary.
- Monica Gabriel has accepted the principal's job at Sequoyah Elementary School.
- Shane Finney is the new athletic director for Dakota High School. He previously worked at Cranbrook

In addition, 12 new teachers have been hired and more are expected.

This year, Chippewa Valley welcomes about 1,000 new kindergarten students, who will make up the Class of 2035.

### New places

A new STEM+ class is offered to elementary students K-5. The course features Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics concepts built into fun, hands-on lessons. The curriculum will be developmentally appropriate, integrating real-life problems, while fostering collaboration, communication and creativity.

### Safety spaces

All classrooms are equipped with impact-resistant SchoolGuard Glass.

Emergency blue pull systems that automatically alert police in the event of an emergency are in place.

Several high definition security cameras have been installed.

School administrators recently completed specialized threat assessment training and professional development

Four full-time school resource officers (SROs) will be visible in the schools working with staff and families.

## **Clintondale Community Schools**

### **New Faces**

The south Clinton Township-based district welcomes about two dozen new educators, along with a pair of administrators who have traded places.

Maria Romain is the new principal at Clintondale Middle School as she switches roles with Maurice Woods, who takes her former position of assistant principal at the high school.



Clintondale Middle School Principal

### **Maria Romain**

Romain, a self-described workaholic, had been a secondary instructional coach since joining Clintondale in April 2019.

The district also has a new business and finance director, Edward Makinen, who has 10 years of automotive experience.

Clintondale also has hired 22 teachers and staff including: Darlene Bronson, Maqueisha Brown, Maria Buccilli, Jo-Dee Burton, Peter Danquah, Sherwonna Dennis, Patrice Elem, Kristen Fifield, Erika Hoornaert, Christopher Kasprick, Beith Kraft, Richard Lerman, Cassandra Lipari, Sarah Ostrowski, Kelly Paton, Ann Pattie, Other Rucker Jr., Angela Smith, Michael Szymanski, Charles Thomas Jr., Danielle Vernon-Carleton, and Eugene Williams.

## **Eastpointe Community Schools**

### New faces

Eastpointe students will see a new but familiar face leading the district as Christina A. Gibson begins her first year as superintendent.

Other new administrators include:

- Assistant Superintendent Stephanie Fleming
- Crescentwood Elementary Principal Kristen Crawford
- Eastpointe Middle School Principal Deniescha Malone
- Pleasantview Elementary Principal Falisha Moreland-Trice

### New places

All classrooms at all four elementary schools and the Early Learning center now have new tile floors as well as new entryway canopies.

Upgrades are in progress for the main elementary school bathrooms .

### Safety spaces

The Early Learning Center has a rebuilt front office space to improve entrance security

## **Fitzgerald Public Schools**

### New faces

The Board of Education has initiated a search for a new superintendent following the resignation of Kimberly Pawlukiewicz in August.

Pawlukiewicz left after 19 years at Fitzgerald to accept a role in another school community. The board has appointed business director Hollie Strange to step in as interim superintendent.

Community members are invited to participate in an anonymous search survey. The deadline to provide input is noon Sept. 12.

To participate in the survey, visit [fitz.k12.mi.us](http://fitz.k12.mi.us).

## Fraser Public Schools

### New faces

- Charlene Barla was promoted to director of secondary instruction. She previously served as an instructional consultant.
- Brent Brasure was promoted to director of Career and Technical Education K-12. Previously, he was the director of Career and Technical Education for grades 7-12.
- Amy Porter moved from assistant principal at Fraser High School to principal of Disney Elementary School.
- Keith Tonn moved from principal at Eisenhower Elementary to principal at Mark Twain Elementary.
- Jennifer Kelley was promoted to principal at Eisenhower Elementary. She was previously the Title I Coordinator at Eisenhower
- Abigail Wasil was appointed to the Board of Education in July. She will serve as trustee.







Abigail

Wasil , trustee Fraser Board of Education



Charlene Barla, director of



Secondary Instruction at Fraser Public Schools.  
Jennifer Kelley, principal at Eisenhower Elementary  
New places

Crews worked to install new flexible furniture in the elementary classrooms. The furniture helps teachers design learning with students in mind and follows Fraser's Universal Design for Learning principles. It coincides with teachers completing UDL training and now all of the K-6 classrooms have new furniture.

Students at Richards Middle School will be receiving Apple MacBooks this fall. Until now they used iPads. Fraser also purchased new MacBooks for all Fraser High School students and new iPads for students in grades 3-6.

Safety spaces

The district implemented the Second Step program for K-8 students in January 2022. The program provides weekly age-appropriate lessons around social and emotional learning, such as kindness, empathy, and bullying. We will continue using this throughout the upcoming year.

### **Lake Shore Public Schools**

New faces

- Ed Baalaer, former Kennedy Middle School assistant principal, will be leading Rodgers Elementary School as the new principal for the 2022-2023 school year.

• Stephen Gaffigan, former North Lake High School dean of students and Shorian alum, will be the assistant principal at Kennedy Middle School.



A student at Kennedy Middle School in St. Clair Shores tries out his locker combination number.  
(DAVE ANGELL — FOR THE MACOMB DAILY)

### Safety spaces

Lake Shore's safety initiatives for the coming year include Lake Shore Public Schools was awarded the Michigan State Police Competitive Safety Grant enabling classroom door locks to be installed throughout the district.

During the summer break, teams in each building received threat assessment training.

Lake Shore voters approved a \$66.7 million bond proposal to include improved security measures throughout the district.

### Lakeview Public Schools

## New faces

Lakeview Public Schools is seeking qualified applicants to fill a vacancy on the Board of Education in 2023.

The vacancy was created by the resignation of James Kouri, whose term would have ended Dec. 31, 2024. Board members have filled the temporary vacancy through an appointment, which expires at the end of the year.

Candidates interested in serving a partial term from Jan.1, 2023 through Dec. 31, 2024 must file for an upcoming election.

## **L'Anse Creuse Public Schools**

### New faces

- Kevin Blum is principal of L'Anse Creuse Middle School – South
- Paul Clotworthy is associate principal at L'Anse Creuse Middle School – South
- Kimberly Criner is the new director for Special Education
- Amy Gole is the associate director of the Frederick V. Pankow Center
- Justin Hauser is the principal at L'Anse Creuse Middle School – East
- Trisha Lewis is the director for Alternative and Adult Education Program
- Drake Okie is the district Athletic Director
- Darren Weir is the associate director for the DiAnne M. Pellerin Center

In addition, the district hired 40 new teachers this year, along with seven instruction paraprofessionals for student support, and created created new administrative support positions at elementary schools to provide additional support for staff and students.

### New places

The Clinton Township-based district added on several enhancements to buildings:

L'Anse Creuse upgraded their HVAC systems to include an air purification system to improve indoor air quality and safety in all buildings and classrooms.

### Safety spaces

Looking to improve safety and security, L'Anse Creuse added new equipment in all schools and buildings

And they've partnered with the Macomb County Sheriff's Office to hire two additional safety resource officers.

## **Mount Clemens Community Schools District**

### New faces

Mount Clemens students will see 23 new teachers this year, along with two new administrators.

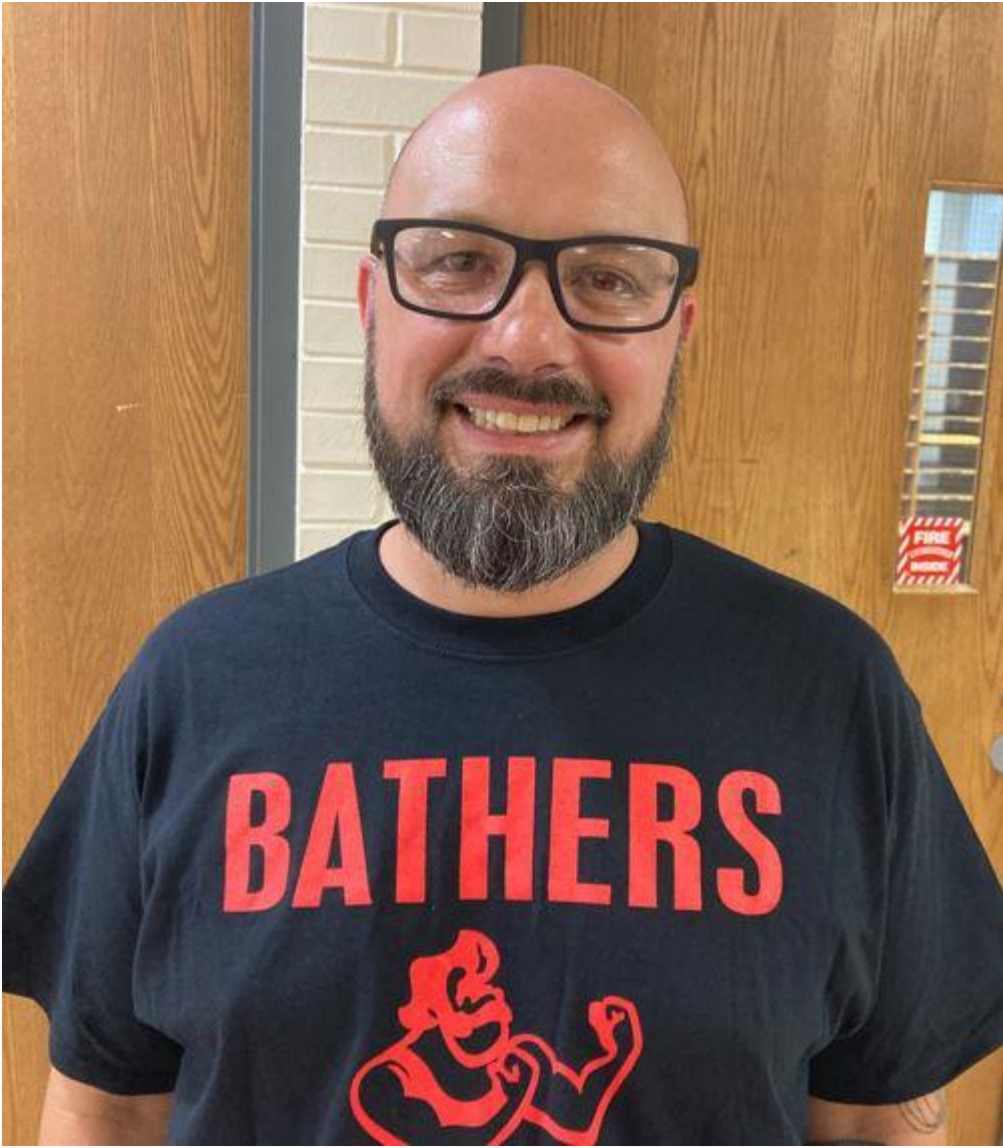
New staff at Seminole staff includes:

- Leah Fowler, fourth grade
- Andre Fullwood, Learning Room
- Kayla Gamble, kindergarten
- Kayla Hood, first grade
- Jennifer Jones, resource room
- Allison Lynn, first grade
- Karen Minor, second grade
- Katy Morehouse, third grade
- Laura Pruitt, speech pathology
- Rachel Russo, first grade
- Laura Stark, kindergarten
- Rachel Stockwell, developmental kindergarten
- Mandi Wise, media specialist

New educators at the Secondary Complex:

- Nadita Barnabas, High School/Middle School science
- Jeremy Brock, High School/Middle School social studies
- Joshua Conover, High School math
- Lauren Finn, High School English Language Arts
- Grant Hill, High School, English Language Arts
- Dylan Jaskolski, High School social studies
- Kelly Jensen, High School/Middle School English Language Arts
- Danielle Stephens High School/Middle School Instruction

Meanwhile, the new administrators are David Lavender and Diya Bethel.



Mount Clemens Assistant





Superintendent David Lavender,  
Seminole Academy Principal Diya Bethel

Lavender, a 22-year educator is the new assistant superintendent. He formerly worked for Lakeview Public Schools in St. Clair Shores where he served as principal of Jefferson Middle School for the past 15 years.

He was named Lakeview High School Teacher of the Year in 2004.

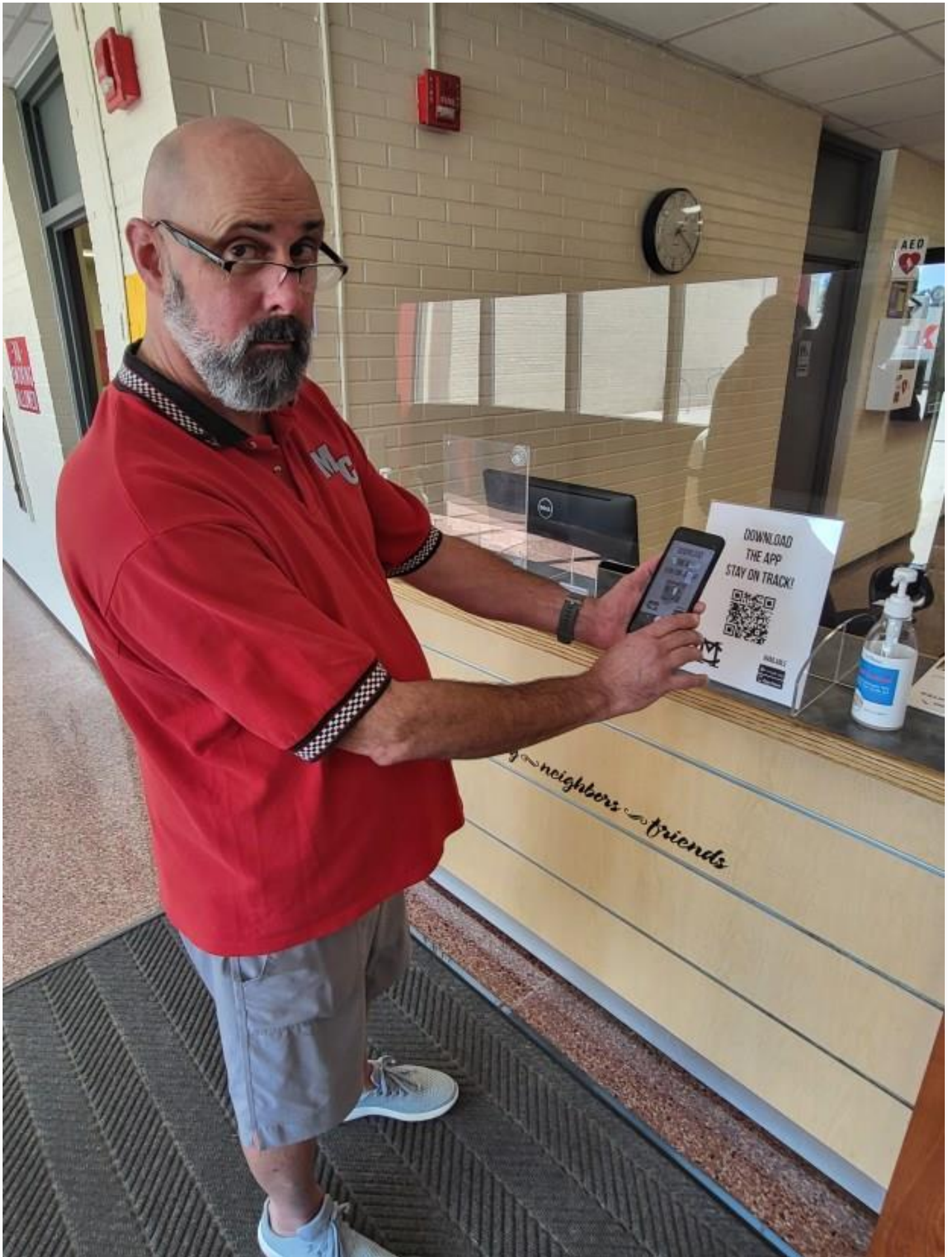
Across town at Seminole Academy, Bethel takes over as principal.

The 19-year educator formerly worked as assistant principal /interim principal at Hilbert Middle School in the Redford Union School District. Before that, she worked for Detroit Public Schools Community District as a master teacher, interventionist and elementary Title 1 teacher.

New places

Senior producer Patrick Linabury says a new phone app that is geared toward secondary students and their families is available on iPhone and Android.

The one-stop app provides information on schedules, contact to teachers, special events, and other information, and can contain social media.



Patrick Linabury, a senior producer at Mount Clemens Community Schools, demonstrates a new school app that is now available on iPhone and Android. (DAVE ANGELL — FOR THE MACOMB DAILY)

## **New Haven Community Schools**

### **New faces**

Cheryl Puzdrakiewicz is the new superintendent for the district, which includes the Village of New Haven, and portions of Macomb, Lenox, Chesterfield and Ray townships.

Puzdrakiewicz, who formerly served as the leader of Fitzgerald Public Schools, has 32 years of experience in the field of education ranging from classroom teacher, to building principal, and special education administrator in a Central Office position.

## **Richmond Community Schools**

### **New places**

Richmond has completed construction of new baseball and softball fields and new parking lots. The projects bring to a close the second year of a three-year construction program financed through a voter-approved bond.

The district is launching three new CTE (Career and Technical Education) courses for the upcoming school year. The courses are teacher cadet, computer programming and video game development, and automotive technician in partnership with Dick Huvaere's Richmond Chrysler Dodge Jeep RAM.

World- renowned Kagan Cooperative Learning spent two days providing professional development with Richmond's teaching staff on cooperative structures.

## **Romeo Community Schools**

### **New places**

The 2021 \$87.5 million bond is well into the design work for the first slate of projects. Those include renovations to the Croswell Early Childhood Center; STEM, art and outdoor classroom at Hamilton-Parsons and Indian Hills Elementary.

Other bond work includes the renovations to the Memorial Field facility.

Meanwhile, work is coming to a close on Romeo's final two 2016 bond projects.

Those include the new tennis at Romeo High School, which were recently finished. Construction on the new transportation facility is underway but the timeline to completion has been set back due to a series of delays that are impacting construction efforts everywhere.

The outstanding 2016 projects are being incorporated into the 2021 bond schedule and include student lockers and interior door replacements at Romeo Middle School as well as serving area upgrades.

### Roseville Community Schools



A crew works to install new safety glass at Roseville High School. (MITCH HOTTS — THE MACOMB DAILY)

New faces

The district welcomes these new administrators:

- Chris LaFeve, Roseville Middle School principal
- Robert Beato, Eastland Middle School principal
- Kirk Duncan, Roseville High School assistant principal
- Joe Jelsone, Eastland Middle School dean of students

New places

Roseville has increased green initiatives throughout the district, including adding recycling dumpsters, planting trees at several locations, and upgrading windows

### Safety spaces

According to district spokesman Joe Genest, officials spent much of the summer bulking up on safety and security measures.

In August, representatives from the Michigan State Police trained administrators on Run, Hide, Fight active shooter protocols. Administrators will be training the rest of the staff on these protocols this fall.

Over the summer, doors at all the buildings were installed with Legacy Barricade door safety systems. These systems offer an additional level of protection to staff and students in the classroom in case of a lockdown situation.

### **South Lake Schools**

#### New faces



Heather Bowersox –  
Elmwood Elementary School principal



Andrew Rousselo – South Lake High School principal

According to Superintendent Ted VonHiltmayer, the southern St. Clair Shores school community has brought two new administrators on board.

Andrew Rousselo takes over the leadership role as principal of the high school for the upcoming year.

Over at Elmwood Elementary School, Heather Bowersox is the new principal.

### **Utica Community Schools**

New places

District officials will be introducing a new strategic plan titled AccerlateUCS.

Over the past year, Macomb County's largest school district has been seeking community and staff input for long-range goals for the district.

This year, the district will be introducing a new mission and vision as well as actionable plans for reaching identified goals. For information, visit [uticak12.org/accelerateucs](http://uticak12.org/accelerateucs)

In construction projects, facility improvements funded by the 2018 bond took place at 21 sites across the district. The projects fit into the three targeted areas for the bond issue: safety, technology, long-range facility improvement needs.

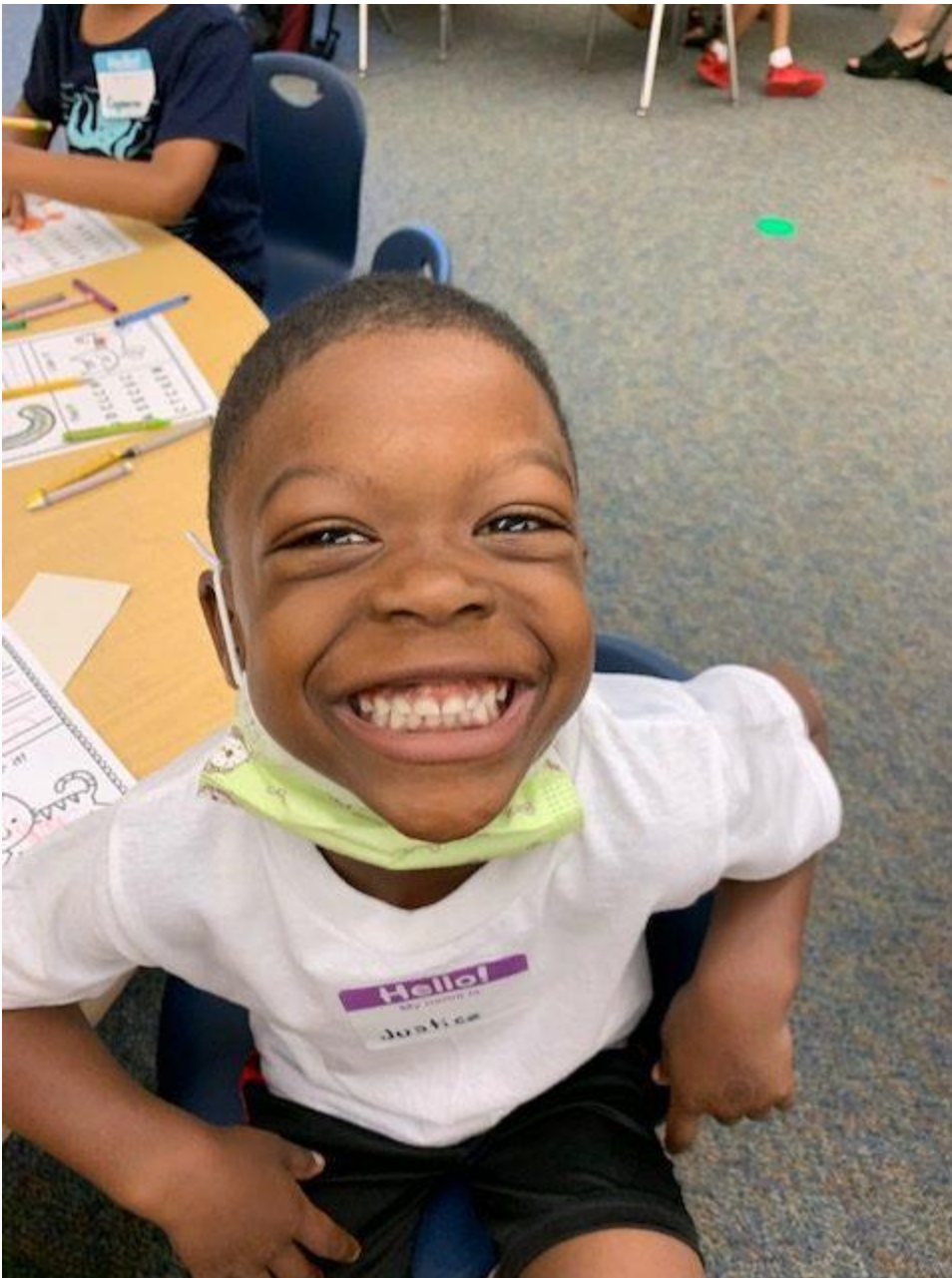
Larger projects this year include completion of secure entry ways at every UCS school; further support of district's 1:1 initiative through the replacement of 2,000 laptops and 650 iPads; and site work, paving, roofing and heating and cooling projects across the district. For information: [uticak12.org/2018bond/updates](http://uticak12.org/2018bond/updates)

### Safety spaces

Working closely with law enforcement, Utica Schools regularly evaluates and improves its multi-layered approach that focuses on facility changes, training and student mental health. Enhanced training, professional development on student mental health and the installation of Nightlock door security are examples of safety-related initiatives this year.

### Van Dyke Public Schools





This young man was all smiles during an orientation at Van Dyke Public Schools. (PHOTO – VAN DYKE PUBLIC SCHOOLS)  
New faces

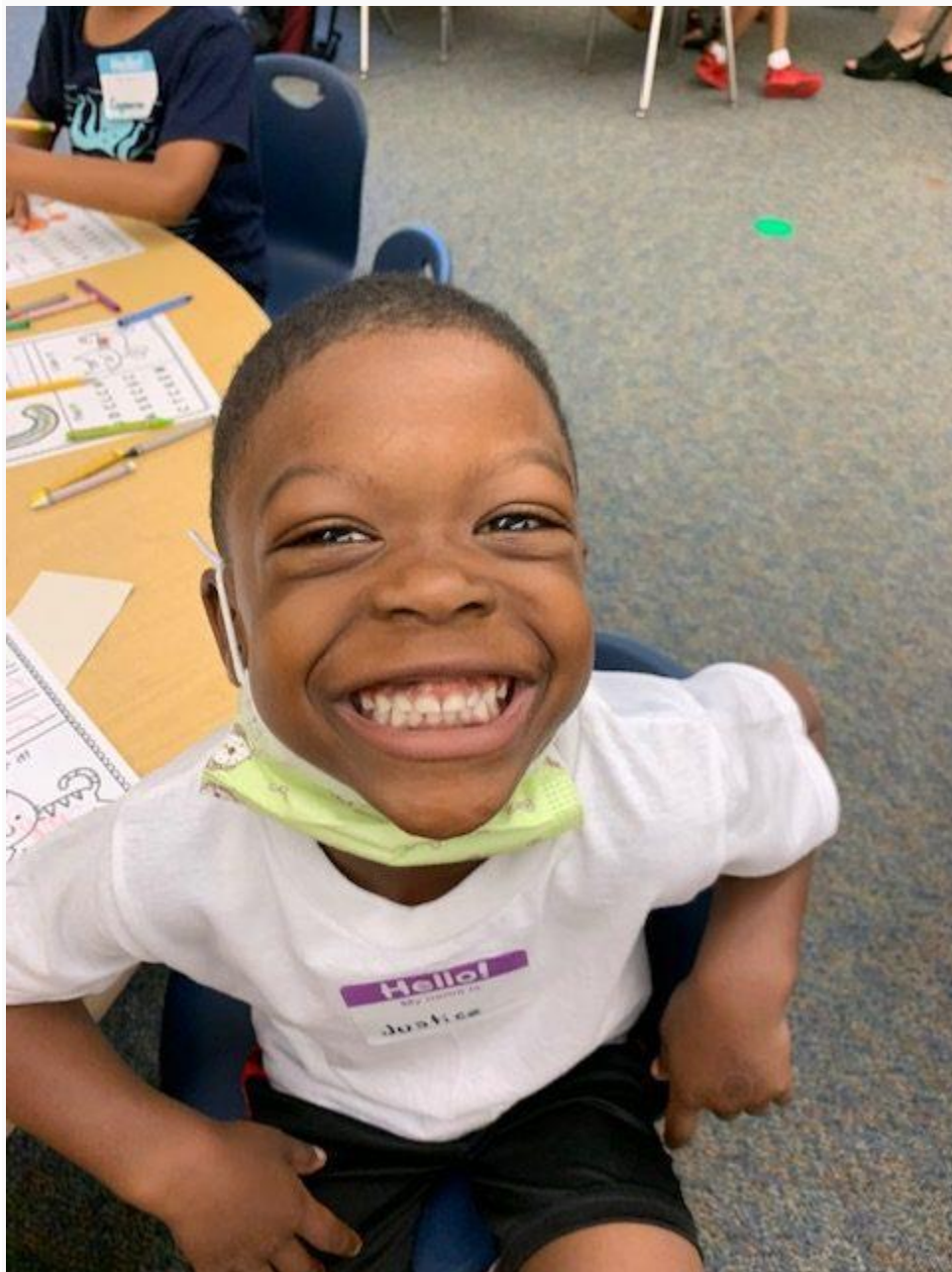
Several new faces can be seen in Van Dyke's buildings this year including:

- Vic Breithaupt, director of Safety and Crisis Response
- Joann Iras McKinley, McKinley Elementary School principal
- Melissa Pluszczynski, Carlson Elementary principal
- Steve Filiccia, Lincoln Middle School principal
- Van Daugherty, Lincoln Middle assistant principal
- Derek Lawson, Lincoln High School principal

Van Dyke will welcome about 20 new instructional staff, along with new paraprofessionals and hall monitors.

### New places

A number of new and bolstered programs are in the works including Responsive Classroom training in grades K-5; staff retention strategies; library supplies and books; Ionization Project Installation; individual school initiatives supplies; Behavior Intervention support staff; additional student laptops; Mi-Fi devices for wireless support as well as mobile hot spots.



This young man was all smiles as he prepares for a new year in the Van Dyke school community. (PHOTO — VAN DYKE PUBLIC SCHOOLS)

Van Dyke is also offering after school tutoring and transportation; staff vaccinations; water bottle stations; mental health support staff – additional school social workers; HVAC and plumbing

updates; Middle School pilot mathematics program; additional charging laptop carts; sensory paths; and Smart Boards and installation.

### Safety spaces

The Warren Police Department will offer one additional school resource officer.

The district has a security camera project and upgrades.

### Warren Consolidated Schools

#### New faces

- Xavier Whitacre, principal, Beer Middle School
- Kelley Durand, assistant principal, Sterling Heights High School
- Coreen Tremmel, executive director of Staffing & Employment, Human Resources
- Susan Andrzejewski , manager of Fiscal Services Manager, Business
- Ashley Agrusa, assistant supervisor of Nutrition Services, Nutrition
- Chad Ballee, athletic director for Cousino High School
- Stephen Bardelline, athletic director for Warren Mott High School

Warren Con also welcomes seven new teachers, two social workers, one speech-language pathologist, one technical, 10 nutrition service positions, two transportation workers, one custodial, four secretaries, two lunchroom employees, four childcare personnel and 21 classroom aides.

#### New places

Warren Con officials are implementing several construction projects financed through a May voter-approved \$150 million bond program.

First up are building and cooling system replacements. Design work is currently underway, with installation set to begin in the summer of 2023.

### Safety spaces

More than 125 Warren Con employees participated in Active Shooter Response Training in August presented by Rick Scholz, district director of Security and Crisis Management, in partnership with the Sterling Heights and Warren police departments.

Training sessions placed staff members in realistic scenarios in a variety of school environments such as classrooms, hallways, media centers, and cafeterias.

Other safety protocols include security cameras installed throughout district facilities, including busses, with real-time access by local police departments and the county; school resource officers stationed in all three high schools; regular A.L.I.C.E. drills; all staff crisis drills; secure entrances with controlled access; and an extensive security and crisis management plan.

## **Warren Woods Public Schools**

### **New faces**

Warren Woods is welcoming two new administrators this year – Pinewood Elementary School Principal Heather Brodi and Warren Woods Middle School Assistant Principal Jennifer Boggio.

The district hired about 10 new teachers.

### **New Places**

Warren Woods hosted the largest summer school program it has ever held with more than 250 students enrolled in grades K-5 and over 230 students at the secondary level

The district will launch in-school 1:1 device accessibility for all high school students in the fall. All high school students will have access to a laptop in every course.

Other classroom upgrades include each high school room will be equipped with a Smart panel, document camera and sound system funded by the 2020 bond issue. Identical systems were installed in kindergarten through eighth grade at the start of last year.

A new math program for grades K-5 will be unveiled in September. An investigation and pilot program for the Bridges Math program will follow. Officials anticipate the new tools and resources will help both teachers and students.