



Wagner Ranch welcomes kindergartners to their first day of school

First Day Excitement! By Cathy Tyson

If you belong to a family with school-aged children, there's no other day of the year that rivals the first day of school in overall excitement and anticipation, except perhaps the last day of school. The 2007-2008 school year began throughout Lamorinda last week.

On Wednesday, August 29, Wagner Ranch Elementary School in Orinda welcomed back 389 students for the start of the new school year. Bright sunshine greeted the children as they streamed in, for the most part wide-eyed in anticipation of the school year about to begin. Most had shiny new backpacks, haircuts and a parent in tow, except for those who announced to their parents, "I don't need you to walk me in. You have to drop me off at the curb, and my friends must not see you." The students received notice of their assigned teacher only the day before school started at Jumpstart.

School supplies, the lunch program, spirit wear, Girl & Boy Scouts sign ups, and more are all part of the Jumpstart program, organized by Parent Club volunteers, where Wagner Ranch families have one stop shopping for all their school needs. At Jumpstart, when students turn in their emergency form, they get a welcome packet that has their teacher and classroom information.

"My daughter ripped it open, and started screaming, she was thrilled she had Mr. Dow for third grade" reports Karen Englund of daughter Jenna. The kids start networking right then and there, the question of the day being, "who do you have?"

Kindergartners have a bit of a different start than the older kids. Wednesday is orientation day, where kinders come in groups of five for an hour with one or both parents to check out their new classroom. "It makes the transition a little less stressful," says teacher Dianna Burns. "They get to explore their new environment, and find their cubby." Thursday the 30th is their first "full" day, class starts at 8:00 and goes until 11:30.

For the balance of the students, most were eagerly anticipating the new school year. "Jenna was counting the days for about the last three weeks, prepping her outfit and dreaming of getting Mr. Dow. She was over the moon, incredibly excited." When asked how she felt as a parent about school starting this year, Englund replied, "dancing in the street. I'm happy they're happy," referring to Jenna and son Nolan, a new Orinda Intermediate School student.

Chris Dow does have a reputation as a celebrity around campus, because prior to this year, he was the science instructor. "It was an exciting day, and it went by very fast," notes third grade teacher Dow. He has nineteen students in his class. "It helps to have most of the kids know me. I felt flattered that they were excited. It was a big day."

"We had a good smooth start today," said Principal Janis Americh. "Everything went like clockwork. I was really pleased with the electronic registration system. This was my first try with Jumpstart, and it went quite smoothly. We did have to scramble with a new building and playground equipment, but everyone rallied to finish up."



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