

Opening School, SunBay Mathematics Partnership, Bargaining, H1N1 (Swine) Flu

This is an exciting time as we await the arrival of more than 102,500 students who will fill our schools this year. We've been preparing for their arrival since they began their summer break in early June. The school board and I are so appreciative of the hard work and planning you have done over the past couple of months that will make this a great year in Pinellas County Schools.

On Tuesday, classes will begin in the district's 126 schools and 12 charter schools. Twenty-six schools start the year with new principals. There are expected to be 500 buses on the roadways, carrying about 42,650 students to and from 8,565 bus stops. Around 15,627 breakfasts and 51,219 lunches are expected to be served in school cafeterias. More than 17,000 full and part-time employees will be at work in schools and other district facilities, focused and ready to serve students.

Among this year's new initiatives:

- Three Middle School Centers for Gifted Studies at Dunedin Highland, Morgan Fitzgerald and Thurgood Marshall Fundamental.
- First Responders: National Guard Center for Emergency Management at Pinellas Park High - a unique and challenging four-year program magnet program preparing students for career areas such as air-land-seas rescues, civil disturbances, hazardous materials incidents, terrorist acts and natural or man-made disasters.
- The district's first K-8 school - Madeira Beach Fundamental.
- Clearwater Fundamental, newly relocated to the former Kennedy Middle School site.
- A Family Resource Center for Title I families in St. Petersburg.
- The virtual middle school program offering excellence in online learning.

Earlier this month, the district launched a new collaborative math education project called SunBay Digital Mathematics, with the Helios Education Foundation, SRI International and the College of Education at the University of South Florida, St. Petersburg, which we believe will set the direction of the future of our middle school mathematics education. In this pilot program, the focus will be on refining and evaluating the use of proven effective mathematics resources in selected middle school classrooms. Fifteen teachers from seven schools volunteered for the project and will attend ongoing training sessions delivered by USFSP. The pilot project will bring together the use of high-tech software with cutting-edge curriculum and extensive teacher training. This exciting and interactive approach will better engage students and build their capacity to be effective problem solvers with the result of leading the students toward a rewarding career in science, technology or an engineering field.

The School Board and the Pinellas Classroom Teachers Association remain at impasse regarding salaries and benefits for the 2009-10 school year. A Special Magistrate has been selected by the parties and requested from the Public Employees Relations Commission in Tallahassee to hear the case in the event a settlement cannot be reached very soon. Under the current financial conditions, the Board has proposed: (1) No pay increase for 2009-10 but a guarantee of regular step increases for 2010-11, (2) The Board has withdrawn the proposal that would have resulted in two (2) unpaid leave days for teachers, (3) The Board proposed one additional paid day of duty to be used for mandatory training in such areas as Differentiated Accountability, Rtl and Decentralized Decision Making and (4) The Board has also agreed to maintain its current percentage funding level for employee health insurance for 2009-10 which amounts to providing an average increase in Board contributions of approximately \$1,025 per employee. The district is now in the second year of its three-year labor agreements with our four labor organizations.

As a new school year begins, we will continue to educate students, parents, and school staff members on the best ways to stay healthy and avoid the H1N1 (swine) flu. Our district works collaboratively with the Pinellas County Health Department and the State Department of Health officials to monitor this health emergency and will make all decisions in consultation with them. Now is the time for all of us to plan for the flu season and reinforce with students and families the importance of taking health precautions. [Guidelines for staff members](#) can be found on the bulletin board of the staff home page on the district website.

Thank you for all of the hard work you do on behalf of our students. With your support, dedication and teamwork we can make this a successful school year while we work together toward 100% student success. Let's get started!

Julie M. Janssen, Ed.D.