



Seneca Middle School students get off the bus for the first day of school in Macomb Township Sept. 3. Seneca's enrollment is around 1,300 this year. Photo by Donna Agusti

Seneca welcomes students for new school year

By: Alex Szwarc | Macomb Township Chronicle | Published September 10, 2019

MACOMB TOWNSHIP — They came in droves off school buses, dropped off by family, and even on bicycles.

For over 1,300 students, Sept. 3 was the first day of school at Seneca Middle School in Macomb Township.

"I'm very excited and we've been working hard all summer getting things together," Seneca Principal Jodi Pirog said moments before the bell rang, ushering in the official start of the school year. "We're a little sleep deprived right now, but we're ready to roll."

Sept. 3 was Pirog's first day at Seneca as principal. She began in that role in July. Previously, she worked at Cousino High School in Warren Consolidated Schools.

Aside from a pair of new secretaries and two new administrators, the Seneca teaching staff remains unchanged from last school year.

"Our teaching staff has been solid and everybody is seasoned, which is good because it's nice to have experience and new ideas coming in," Pirog said.

Seneca foreign language teacher Erin Wayman said that at the beginning of any school year, she loves seeing eager and smiling faces come through her door.

Wayman is entering her 18th year teaching at Seneca.

"In the first week, I have a lot of activities to get them out of their seats and keep them moving," she said. "Middle school kids need that. I do some games in different languages to keep it fun."

She added that with the age of middle school students, there's always something to look forward to.

Student Carson Coles said he was most excited to meet his new teachers.

"I'm excited to be back," he said. "I'm excited to have science and math."

Prior to Seneca, Coles attended Cheyenne Elementary School.

As for what teachers and staff do to ease the transition from summer to school, and with students entering middle school, Pirog said sixth-grade orientation and parents nights are held in the spring.

"We have Jaguar Days where kids come in, get their schedules and go to their lockers, decorate them and find where all their classes are," she said.

Seneca's first day of school was a half day, which Pirog said was helpful so that students could go through their schedules and figure everything out, before lunch is added and "full-day exhaustion."

As a new principal, Pirog said she's lucky to be at a school with much respect in the community, where kids have high academic achievement.

"I really want to take what is already really great and take it to the next level," she said. "The focus is on making sure that all kids have opportunities to get better."

She added that if students are academically talented and need to be challenged, Seneca wants to make sure opportunities are provided.

To make students feel welcomed during the first week of school, grade-level meetings were held with students, who had the opportunity to meet Pirog and assistant principals Matt Swanson and Raymond Buccilli, and go over expectations for the year.

Having worked in education since 1991, Pirog said all first days are the same in that she's a bundle of nerves.

"You think you have everything ready, and then there's always some things that pop up and you have to make a quick decision about it," she said.

Seneca's curriculum night for parents will take place from 6 to 8 p.m. Sept. 12.