



Santa Barbara County Education Office

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Welcome back to school

By Susan Salcido, Santa Barbara County Superintendent of Schools

In just a few weeks, students will be headed back to classrooms throughout the county. For those of us who work in education, the start of a new year brings a special thrill, as the machinery of schooling starts whirring and humming, and everyone begins to gear up for the excitement that lies ahead.

Teachers put the finishing touches on lesson plans, and get their classrooms ready. Parents finalize back-to-school shopping for backpacks and supplies; administrators, bus drivers, crossing guards, custodians, cafeteria workers, and grounds crews all work diligently to get everything ready.

That's what I love the most about opening day — how all the pieces come together, with everyone working to help make school welcoming and productive for the students we all serve.

We are grateful for all the dedicated professionals, along with all the parent volunteers and classroom aides, who often work quietly behind the scenes to make our students' school experience so rich and rewarding. For many young people, a kind and caring bus driver or custodian can truly help make school a happy place.

Examples of these individuals are everywhere. Raymond Segovia, for one example, is a painter in the Santa Maria Joint Union High School District and a recent Classified School Employee of the Year. He takes pride in the work he does to keep his schools crisp and fresh for current students. School employees up and down the line with this dedication and professionalism help enhance the academic environment for young people, and also act as strong role models for students in terms of work ethic and attention to detail.

Nancy Weiss, the award-winning director of food services in Santa Barbara Unified School District, also helps students blossom and grow. She led the district to a national school lunch award for serving exceptionally healthy meals to 7,000 students in 28 locations. Her work and that of so many hundreds of others in schools throughout Santa Barbara County make a meaningful difference for young people every day.

When you ask adults what they remember about their own school experience, many talk about a teacher or principal or guidance counselor who made a difference in their lives. Often, they also speak warmly of the special people they interacted with on a daily basis — the bus drivers and crossing guards, the custodians and cafeteria workers, the nurses and front office staff, and the volunteers and classroom aides, who made a difference in their lives in a personal way as well. These varied individuals greet our students every day, making them feel welcome and safe. Their roles are vital.

As parents, grandparents, neighbors, friends, and students start to gear up for opening day, I want to welcome the whole community back to school. It is also a good time to remind everyone of all the people involved with schools who come together, determined to make the school year a success for all. They are important, special people, deeply committed to the success of our students, and we are grateful for the vital roles they all serve.

Here's to a wonderful school year for all.

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