

## Back To School

# Students Arrive For Another Year

By NICOLE HATCH  
News Staff Writer

Traffic was unusually heavy this morning as buses and cars filled with students made their way toward schools across the county.

Arriving at their destination, both children and parents were greeted with signs welcoming back the people that makes school what it really is. Teachers and helpers stood outside the schools and along the halls making sure everyone knew where to go and a warm smile was readily accessible to all who felt lost on the first day of school.

Despite the butterflies students may have reported feeling in their stomachs, most were excited about the upcoming school year that began today for Surry County students. So were the teachers, most of them dressed in nice outfits to bring the school year in on an optimistic note.

Some parents may have been relieved to see the school year begin after a long summer. But most parents of kindergarten students did not feel that way. One mother was overheard saying "that is so hard to do" as she walked out her child's classroom.

Things were especially exciting at the new White Plains Elementary School. A new coat of paint, air-conditioned rooms, clean carpets, bright-colored walls — all these

things were the icing on the cake for an exciting new school year.

"A new school, new teacher, new classmates" were things Will Jackson, a third-grader at White Plains Elementary, said made him feel excited about the school year. And yes, Jackson cited "seeing my old friends" as another exciting part of his day.

The new school building made the day for third-graders Elissa Simmons and Summer York. "It is big and huge and it is a whole lot better than the old school building. I like the paintings and all the beautiful colors," Simmons said. According to York, "It is kind of different with all the painting on the walls and the big items everywhere."

The paintings on the wall — nobody could miss them and nobody did. Even parents were talking about the murals lining the hallways of the elementary school that attracted their child's attention.

"My kid was really excited about the paintings on the walls and the way they have it decorated," said Carolyn Johnson, the parent of a kindergarten student. "It really looks good."

The new school building, which is a first for the county school system's facility plan, is a definite improvement over the old White Plains school, according to Walter Willard,

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Staff photo by Nicole Hatch

The smile on second-grader Elizabeth Fahey's (center) face does not adequately describe Fahey's feelings as her classmate, Magan Hodges (right), and teacher assistant Karen Vernon (left) try talking Fahey into going to class. Fahey was among several students who were apprehensive about the first day of school today.

# Students

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whose fourth- and sixth-grade children are transferring from city schools. "It has been a long-time needed," he said.

The new building is nice, but it doesn't do away with all the nervousness one may feel on the first day of school. Second-grader Amber Puckett, whose eyes showed signs of a tearful morning, said she was more nervous and scared today than excited. But Puckett's lips turned up into a smile when a friend came up and started talking to her.

Another nervous person was Bryan Burcham, a sixth-grader who is transferring from a school in Virginia. But like others, Burcham said he expected to make friends and enjoy school as the year moves on.

"I'm nervous because I am in the fifth grade now," said Brenda Hazelwood as she and her mother were trying to figure out where the girl's class was. But once the nervousness is gone, Hazelwood said she would enjoy school — especially because her school "is better than the old one."

The students are back and the school halls have some activity in them now. Teachers find that exciting. But what could be more exciting than a new school building?

"It is great. I now have a classroom which I didn't have in the old school. I have a new desk ... you can't beat coming in and having everything brand new. It is just wonderful," said Maria Fiordilino, a special education teacher.

The nice setting is what Karen Vernon, an assistant first and second

grade teacher said she finds exciting. "Comfortable, cool — everything is just perfect here. We just couldn't wait," Vernon said.

"Nice and clean and no flies" is what Glenda Weddle said was "wonderful" about the new school building. And Sue Gammons, a first and second grade teacher, said she was just looking forward to the new school year.