

School changes this season

Written by Amber Wright



Rickey Mikelman gives instruction on how to teach Singapore Math.

Cleveland area schools start new classes, schedules and programs

With fall approaching, changes are the norm. Along with the physical turning of the leaves, some Cleveland area schools will also turn over a new leaf.

Students are experiencing new electives and new schedules this year. The way certain subjects are being taught are also being tweaked bit.

According to the Cleveland School District Superintendent Dr. Jacquelyn C. Thigpen, most schools have less class periods a day, but the class periods are longer.

“The main purpose behind this change is to give the students additional time in core classes,” said Thigpen.

However, some schools such as Bayou Academy are seeing an opposite change.

They are going from a six period schedule to a seven.

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“We were trying to offer more electives to students,” said Headmaster Robert Foust. “The high school students are now offered photography, and Bible Studies is offered to both high school and junior high students. “I think students need to be well-rounded. Required classes don’t leave much room for electives,” explained Foust.

Cleveland High School is also offering a new elective as well: Russian language.

Principal Steven Craddock says the students involved are really loving it.

“It offers a fresh alternative to foreign language,” he said.

East Side High School has expanded the number of class periods to eight, and they are 10 minutes longer. The school is also using some Internet-based programs in order to aid students with their core class work as well as ACT preparation.

“Programs such as Study Island and USA Test Prep are the two programs we use the most,” said Principal Randy Grierson.

“The programs are designed to assist students primarily in passing the subject area tests that are required to graduate from high school, which have increasingly been a major factor of the dropout rate in Mississippi,” explained Grierson.

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The principal at Presbyterian Day School, Diane Burd, said, "We are really concentrating on common core standards that have been adopted by the state this year."

In addition, they are pushing the use of new technology hard. Last year, PDS began to use interactive boards in kindergarten through sixth grade classrooms, and this year they are working to get the same technology in the pre-school classrooms.

One of the biggest changes the Cleveland School District is implementing, however, is the use of Singapore Math in kindergarten to sixth grade. It uses methods such as model drawing and number bonds.

Ricky Mikelman, a presenter from Staff Development for Educators out of New Hampshire, led a five-day workshop during the last week of August for Cleveland School District teachers.

Assistant Superintendent of Curriculum, Instruction, and Assessment Dr. Lisa Bramuchi said, "The teachers are just loving it. They are dying to get back in there (the classrooms)."

Crystal Thomas, a fourth grade math teacher at Parks Elementary commented, "I think it will help us more with common core, using it in all kinds of ways such as audio and visual. As a parent of a visual type of learner, I'm excited to see all the different types of learning styles this method hits on."