

Principally Speaking
from the desk of Melissa Burns, Principal

Welcome to another great school year at Olive Chapel Year-Round Elementary School! Our staff set sail for another fantastic year during the first week of July with professional development and a very nice luncheon provided by our PTA. The new school year has begun smoothly, and we are looking forward to sailing our Clipper ship through another successful school year working as a team!

This year OCE is starting out with more students enrolled than in the four and a half years I have been principal. Growth in our student population has been inevitable due to new construction and reassignment of students in the Apex community. Our enrollment has continued to increase and is currently at 1,020 students; however, we are adjusting to the challenges of growth and are thrilled to have added so many incredible students to our school family. We were also excited to welcome back our returning students after the week-long break between school years. The students made a graceful transition between school years, with awareness of procedures and routines in the classrooms, hallways, and café.

Along with our new students, we welcome new staff members to our school. Mr. Tim Chadwick has joined Mr. Shillings as a full-time assistant principal. Mr. Chadwick worked as an AP intern at OCE last year. We have added a few additional teachers to our staff as well. Our 5th grade team welcomes Ms. Summer Bearance, who has several years of teaching experience and is the parent of a new OCE kindergartener, and Ms. Rahnesia Dyer, a natural in the classroom thanks to her mother, a school principal. The 3rd grade team welcomes Mr. Jeff Sidney, originally from New York and coming to OCE from Davis Drive Elementary. The 2nd grade team welcomes Ms. Kit Sheckler, who brings enthusiasm and many years of experience at other schools in Wake County. Michigan native Mr. Mathew Pelletier is an addition to the 1st grade team, coming to us from teaching 5th grade at Green Year-Round Elementary. The Kindergarten team welcomes two new teachers, Ms. Kristen Bruce and Ms. Deanna Burk, both of whom have several years of experience, including working in Wake County Schools.

Other smiling new faces you may encounter include Ms. Cheryl Bruns, a full-time media specialist working with Mr. Caggia in the Media Center. Ms. Holly Laird teaches reading as a literacy support teacher in the Media Center, coming to OCE from Brooks Elementary and Leesville Elementary. Ms. Erika Gulino joins our special programs team after moving from New York; she is joined by Ms. Pegie Douglas, who has returned to teaching after brief retirement. Another retiree coming back to teaching is Ms. Kay Lindsay, who moved to the 2nd grade team after teaching kindergarten last year.

New itinerant staff members we would like to welcome include Ms. Amy Masterman, who will teach art classes at OCE, Baucom, and Salem Elementary. We welcome back Ms. Jennifer Freund (formerly Ms. McNabb) and Ms. Julie Zenkel, who will teach music and PE classes, respectively. We are also fortunate to have Ms. Carol Arbogast join Ms. de Alberdi to provide additional support to our students through AG programs.

You will see also a new face in the front office. We are excited to welcome Ms. Leah Bracy to our office team as our health room/clerical support staff. Additional support staff members

include Ms. Crissy Ortell, Ms. Mary Sue Rigano, and Ms. Rachel Yates. All three are teacher assistants working in 1st grade and kindergarten classrooms.

Kudos to our custodial team for the great job they have done during the quick transition in July! We were happy to have Ms. Ruth Hall, head custodian, return to our staff August 4th after recovering from knee surgery. The custodian team worked diligently, and we greatly appreciate all of their hard work during Ms. Ruth's recovery. Great job!

Having additional students at our school is a great advantage when we can add such phenomenal staff members to our team. We welcome all of our new staff and new families. Our staff and the new PTA Board, led by president Carolyn Sloan, are excited and looking forward to another remarkable school year filled with learning and teaching along with fun memories for everyone at Olive Chapel Elementary!