

REGION: Classes resume in Carlsbad Unified, San Dieguito districts

By CIGI ROSS cross@nctimes.com | Posted: Tuesday, August 30, 2011 5:00 pm

Walking through the front gates at Jefferson Elementary School in Carlsbad on Tuesday, first-grader Abigail Daliot whispered to a friend that it's normal to be scared on the first day of school.

As she waited outside her classroom door, 6-year-old Abigail said she was nervous, but excited about math and music lessons, as classes resumed in the Carlsbad Unified School District.

School also started Tuesday in the San Dieguito Union High School District, which stretches from southern Carlsbad to Carmel Valley.

"So far, everything has gone extraordinarily well," San Dieguito superintendent Ken Noah said around noon. "As I said to a couple principals, it's as smooth a start as I have seen in my four school starts here."

In Carlsbad Unified, Devin Vodicka, director of curriculum and instruction, said it was a great first day across the district's 14 campuses.

"The mood was great. Kids were excited and parents were thrilled," he said. "It was one of our best first days."

Vodicka said students also made an orderly entrance at Carlsbad High School, where construction is still underway for a new classroom complex that is expected to be completed in December.

Other projects completed over the summer include new fencing at several elementary and middle schools that is designed to funnel visitors towards administrative offices. Vodicka said the district had long planned the fencing, but accelerated the timeline after a school shooting at Kelly Elementary School in October.

Vodicka said there were 11,131 students enrolled in the district as of Tuesday morning, including pre-school. He said that number is slightly higher than last year's first-day enrollment but the district expects to add a few more families as the year progresses.

First-grader Jacob Vanderhorst said he was very excited to return to classes at Jefferson Elementary.

"I love math," he said.

Pam Guthey said her son Tor, 5, had spent much of the last week preparing for his first day of kindergarten.

"He couldn't go to sleep for three nights," she said.

Guthey said she has a daughter in fifth grade but was a little sad to have her youngest off to school.

"He told me, 'I'll have days off,'" she said.

This first day of school in the San Dieguito district also marked the opening of a nearly \$9 million performing arts center on the San Dieguito Academy campus that has been in the works for about six years.

The facility includes a 225-seat theater, dressing rooms, an outdoor stage, a 3,700-square-foot music room, soundproof practice rooms and a recording studio.

The district also plans to revamp its cafeterias at Torrey Pines High School and San Dieguito Academy to a more casual atmosphere.

The change will make the lunchroom less like a cafeteria and more like a coffee house or student union, Noah said. Canyon Crest Academy has already changed its dining space and it's been very popular, he said.

Noah said he expects enrollment to remain at about 12,350 students for the 2011-12 school year. The district has 10 schools in North San Diego County.