

Back to school Tuesday for year No. 2 on 45/15 schedule

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The weather may be hot and sunny outside, but that's not stopping kids and families from preparing for the first day of school next week.

Students on the 45/15 schedule at Sumner Elementary School (and also some at Woodson Kindergarten Center) head back to the classrooms Tuesday.

"We are so excited about year two," said Sumner principal Sheila Berger.

Sumner is continuing its 45/15 calendar for a second school year. School will be in session for four 45-day quarters, with 15 days off in between. Summer break is 30 days.

Sumner's open house was Thursday, where students could meet their teachers and bring in their school supplies. Parents are grateful for school to start again, Berger said, no matter what the schedule.

"I think adults get more hung up on the calendar," Berger said. "It's just a day of work, or day of school for kids. They're anxious to see their friends."

Lots of positives from year one

The official marker of how well students at Sumner did or improved with the new calendar last year — state test scores — hasn't been released yet. Everything points to good news though, so far. Math assessments (online) look really good, Berger said, with the percentage of kids proficient between 20 and 30 percent higher than in past years.

Nothing's official until the test results are all available, but "what we're seeing looks very positive," Berger said.

"I'm looking forward to really positive academic results to share with the community," Berger said. "I think that will get people's attention."

The learning didn't stop in intercessions for some students, as Sumner had classroom offerings during this time, and "something really clicked with having our kids in our building with our staff," Berger said.

Another positive sign Berger can note is the number of students on the 45/15 calendar at Woodson. They had to add a section this year, making it three sections with a total of 60 students. Berger said she thinks that number will continue to increase as the years go on.

Keeping the routine

First-grade teacher Debbie Lewis has 21 kids who will enter her classroom for their first day of school Tuesday. The 45 days on, 15 days off schedule helps from a student standpoint.

"It keeps the instruction going," Lewis said. "It keeps those routines consistent. I think it's good to get back... and keep moving forward."

Renee Gogolewski's son, Toby, is a fifth-grader at Sumner. Toby's dad, Chris Gogolewski, is also a second-grade teacher at Sumner. They are all really happy with the modified calendar, Renee said.

"He's ready to come back to school," Renee Gogolewski said. "I think the timing is perfect. He's ready to come back. He's ready to learn."

Sumner registration was last week, and the mass registration for the rest of the district is in early August, so Berger wasn't sure how many more kids might still register. About 300 students came to class for the first day of school last year at Sumner, which has been the smallest Austin elementary school by enrollment for the past 10 years, Berger said.

Students living within the Sumner school boundaries could opt out of attending with the 45/15 schedule and instead open-enroll in another elementary school within the district. Students from other schools could also decide to open-enroll at Sumner. Last year, the difference of students opting out and open enrolling was about a wash, Berger said.

There's still time to be a part of the 45/15 schedule this year.

"It's not too late to send your kids to school," Berger said. "We would love to be bursting at the seams."