

Teachers and parents reflect on first day back

BY GREG OLIVER
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WALHALLA — Northside Elementary School teacher Lindsey Rothell admitted the start to school Monday began with mixed emotions — excitement over the return of many students to in-person instruction, but nervousness over health and safety protocols required amidst COVID-19.

But Rothell said those fears quickly subsided once everyone became acclimated to the classroom and the new normal of wearing masks and sitting in desks socially distanced.

"The students are beginning to relax, and you can see the excitement of being back in the class-

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room with their friends," Rothell said. "We are thankful to be back together again."

During the school day, Rothell accompanied her class outside for a 10-minute "mask break" in a designated area of the school.

"It was nice to get fresh air," she said.

James M. Brown Elementary third-grade teacher Jessica Lemere said the first day back "was fabulous."

"Students were so excited to be back in school, and their smiles were contagious," Lemere said. "We are all practicing our social distancing and sanitizing our hands frequently. This year will be a learning curve for all of us, but the love we share will outshine all things."

Ravenel Elementary third-grade teacher Sandra Hendricks said young people aren't given enough credit for being flexible to change.

"My third-graders did such a great job of social distancing, wearing masks and sanitizing their hands between activi-

ties," Hendricks said. "You would have thought this was the norm."

Anxious parents lined up in front of schools to drop off their children early Monday morning.

"I think our hearts were beating a little fast," Brianna Miller said outside Walhalla Elementary. "We are a little bit nervous, but also excited. They're going to do a great job taking care of our kids and making sure they're safe."

Fellow Walhalla Elementary parent Courtney Ellenburg said her children were pumped up about getting back into school.

"The kids were so excited they were up early before they were supposed to be, so that's good," Ellenburg said.

Alisha Turner said she is excited and feels her son will be in safe hands at Walhalla Elementary.

"I know they're going to take care of all the kids, and the staff is great,"

Turner said. "We're very excited, very happy and thankful to be back."



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