

New Monocacy Elementary taps into nature to save on energy costs

By Rebecca VanderMeulen
Reading Eagle

Step into Daniel Boone School District's new Monocacy Elementary Center and you'll notice a couple of things right away: it has lots of windows and lots of yellow, blue and green paint.

"It's pretty and it's bright," parent Maureen M. Wookey of Douglassville said during a recent visit.

Daniel Boone opened the \$22.5 million school in Amity Township on Monday to about 300 students.

In its first year, the district's newest building will serve students in kindergarten through third grade. Fourth and fifth grades will be added over the next two years.

The school was built with energy savings in mind, said Mark A. Morella of KCBA Architects of Hatfield, Montgomery County.

About 100 thin pipes were sunk into the school grounds to depths of 300 feet. The pipes contain liquid that cools as it moves downward and heats as it rises toward the surface, Morella said.

The geothermal system - not boilers and chillers - will heat and cool the building.

Also, air from classrooms is pumped into equipment that removes heat before the air is pushed out of the building. That heat will warm fresh air brought in from outside, Morella said, explaining that energy is conserved in the process.

As students checked out their new school during a recent open house, Principal Melanie A. Hefter greeted many by name. Hefter also is principal at Birdsboro Elementary.

The Monocacy students seemed to like their principal and the new school.

Wookey's 7-year-old daughter, Mackenzie, mentioned the abundance of yellow paint.



Click on picture to enlarge.

Reading Eagle: Jeff Connor
Reading Eagle: Jeff Connor Monocacy Elementary Principal Melanie Hefter, left, talks with Celena Gaines and her son Michael Gaines, 5, from Douglassville, who is attending kindergarten at the new school. Students, parents and faculty are pleased with the new facility.



Reading Eagle: Jeff Connor
The cafeteria at the new Monocacy Elementary typifies the bright and airy design of the school.

"I sort of like the color yellow, and it's all over the school," the second-grader said.

Morella said the colorful paint scheme is supposed to give the school character.

"They're basically happy colors," he said.

Alisa R. Brumbach, who teaches computers and remedial math, said she liked the natural light from Monocacy's many windows.

There's a cost saving in that feature as well, Morella said, explaining that sunlight will reduce the need for artificial lighting.

Monocacy is the third school Daniel Boone has constructed since 2002. The district also built an intermediate school and a middle school, both in Amity Township.

An official dedication for Monocacy is set for Oct. 26 at 2 p.m.

And another project is in the works, as the district plans to temporarily close its oldest building, Amity Primary Center, after this school year to complete renovations.

Ann Marie Traynor, assistant to the superintendent, said the hope is that the closing will last only a year, but most of the details haven't been worked out.

Amity Primary Center serves kindergarten through second grade.

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