

Coming back to school



CHRIS PIETSCH/The Register-Guard

Principal Allan Chinn stops to talk to his 7-year-old niece, Ellie Chinn-Vreim, during a morning tour of Howard Elementary School. Chinn attended the school as a child and also taught there before moving into administration with the Eugene School District.

Principal knows what it's like to be a kid at Howard Elementary

By JOSEPHINE WOOLINGTON
The Register-Guard

Howard Elementary School Principal Allan Chinn had one goal during the first hour of the first day of school: help calm what he calls the "crazy, mad rush."

"I feel like I ran two miles," classroom assistant Kelly Henson jokingly told Chinn after he asked how her day was going so far in one of the school's kindergarten classes.

The 41-year-old Chinn helped escort nervous students to their classes on Tuesday, which marked his second year



Chinn family photo

Allan Chinn and his sister Lisa wear their 1970s Howard T-shirts.

as principal at the elementary school off River Road where he had his first teaching job — and where he himself attended school as a youngster.

He still gets nervous on the first day of school.

"You never know what's going to happen," Chinn said in his office decorated with stuffed animals and thank-you notes from students. "Kids might break down crying or get lost on the bus. Some kids get so scared that if you even ask them their name, they can't say anything."

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School: Niece likes principal's office

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The past few weeks, Chinn said, have been especially stressful as he prepared the school's 19 teachers for more than 340 students this year — about 40 more than usual. Chinn said the school hired a new part-time kindergarten teacher at the last minute to split the school's 64 kindergartners into three classes. The teacher, Paula Robertson, had only 2½ working days to set up her classroom, Chinn said.

Veteran first-grade teacher Linda Kirk said her class of 30 students is the largest she's ever had. Chinn said the unexpected enrollment spike may be a result of more parents opting to send children to the school in anticipation of a brand-new school building set to open in fall 2015.

Howard, which was built in 1949, is among four schools in the Eugene School District that will be replaced thanks to a \$170 million bond measure approved by voters in May. Construction will probably take place next summer in the baseball fields behind the school.

"That's going to be hugely exciting," Chinn said. "When I went to school here in the 1970s,



CHRIS PIETSCH/The Register-Guard

Principal Allan Chinn joins fourth-graders Joshua Berger, Sandra Rowe and Sahalie Kane (right) in demonstrating that they are listening to the teacher.

it wasn't really a new school even then."

Chinn, who went to Kelly Middle School and graduated from North Eugene High School in 1989, said he always knew he wanted to work in education.

Both his parents were teachers in Eugene. His father even constructed the large royal blue "Howard Elementary School" sign that is still in front of the school.

His sister, who also went to Howard, was a classroom and P.E. teacher at the school while he taught second and third grade there in the late 1990s.

Chinn's 7-year-old niece, Ellie Chinn-Vreim, is a second-grader in the

school. On Tuesday, Ellie said she sometimes goes to Chinn's office to talk.

"I like it," she said of having her uncle at the school. "It's fun."

First-grade teacher Kirk, whom Chinn calls his mentor, said Chinn often shows students a photo of him and his sister in their "Howard Roadrunners" T-shirts next to the school when they were students there.

"He can point to that picture and say, 'I know how you're feeling because I was a student here, too,'" Kirk said. "He adds a lot of passion and depth to his work because he went here."

She said Chinn plays with students at recess every day and frequently

visits classrooms to read to students. He tries to show students that he's someone they can talk to even when they're not in trouble, she said.

After teaching at Howard, Chinn served as the school's Title I remedial coordinator. He later became an assistant principal at Cal Young Middle School and then principal at Corridor Alternative Elementary School and Yujin Gakuen Japanese Immersion Elementary School.

When the principal's job at Howard opened two years ago, Chinn jumped at the opportunity.

Part of the job's appeal, Chinn said, is Howard's advanced technology. Every classroom in the school has an electronic, interactive white board — called a "smart board" — and Apple laptops for students to use. Starting this year, second- and third-graders will use iPad minis for some classroom lessons.

Chinn said he still remembers his principal while he was a student at Howard — Don Essig, the longtime public announcer for the University of Oregon football and men's basketball teams.

Chinn's hope: that students will also remember him long after they've left Howard Elementary.

Park: Commissioners to discuss events center's future

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urday and 3:45 a.m. Sunday, Russell said. Parks staff on site at the festival didn't have access to the stage's electrical generator and could not shut off the power until they found one of the organizers both nights, he added.

While the Kaleidoscope cleanup at the site is ongoing, Russell said left-over trash and possible environmental damage are also "concerns" that could constitute other contractual breaches.

One Eleven responded with dismay Tuesday. Jason Lear, an organizer, said the company is "deeply disappointed that our deal was canceled this morning without the year's notice required by our contract and without benefit of a public hearing on the matter."

Lear confirmed Tuesday that the festival had lost money in its first year. The company had been

for the entire community," he said.

Kaleidoscope, an event dominated by electronic music that attracted 6,000 to 9,000 people a day, drew noise complaints from far and wide. Nearby neighbors said their houses shook from the thudding music. In Springfield, there were at least 16 complaints that weekend from as far as five miles away. Critical observers also complained of illegal drug use and trespassing by festivalgoers, traffic congestion and accidents, and disturbances to the area's wildlife.

What remains to be seen is whether the criticism of Kaleidoscope will jeopardize other gatherings at the fledgling county events center, known as "Emerald Meadows," which hosted its first event in 2009.

The county hosted four events this summer at Emerald Meadows. A fifth, a tribal fun run, was recently canceled by its organiz-

hold a public discussion about the future of the events center at its regular meeting next Tuesday.

Park neighbors and enthusiasts urged the commissioners at Tuesday's meeting to scrap the venue and cancel all future events there.

"On our farm, mistakes are made every day. We own up to them, learn from them and move on," said Jim Evonuk, Emerald Meadows' closest neighbor. "It is time for the Lane County commissioners to do the same. ... Cancel all events at the meadows and let Mother Nature fix the travesty that has happened."

Conversely, two organizers of the Fairieworlds festival said the commissioners shouldn't make an across-the-board decision on the venue. Emilio Miller-Lopez said his festival hasn't drawn any sound or traffic complaints in its five-year run at the park.

"There should be an in-

and the neighbors' concerns.

"I would like to see the neighbors have input on future events there," he said. "At the same time ... there are some events that may be appropriate out there."

Commissioner Sid Leiken said he was looking forward to next week's briefings by the Parks Department about their vision for the area.

"I'll be curious to get an understanding of 'Why did we go this route in the first place?'" he said.

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