



Becca Gimlett, a Blue Heron Middle School reading teacher for sixth through eighth grades, unpacks boxes of books she brought from her previous position in Oregon. (Jeannie McMacken/Peninsula Daily News)

## Jefferson County schools preparing for first day of classes

By Jeannie McMacken

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**PORT TOWNSEND** — Most of Jefferson County's students will bid farewell to summer next week as the 2018-19 school year gets underway.

Teachers and administrators are preparing this week.

Blue Heron's newly-appointed interim Principal Theresa Campbell said she is looking forward to greeting the currently enrolled 351 students. Plans include a festive welcome by staff with noisemakers, party hats and special music.

"I came from Minnesota, and worked in both Minneapolis and St. Paul Public Schools, with about 36,000 students each," Campbell said.

"I lived in a community that was double the size of Port Townsend. So even that small community was big in terms of comparisons."

Both Port Townsend High School and Blue Heron Middle School start classes Tuesday. Opportunity Community Experience, Academics, Navigation (Ocean), the independent study alternative learning program for kindergarten through 12th-grade students held at Blue Heron, begins Sept 10.

Due to the ongoing labor strike by members of Local 302 of the International Union of Operating Engineers in Western Washington, the start of school at the new Salish Coast Elementary is set for Sept. 11.

Chimacum High School, Middle, Elementary and Chimacum Primary begin Tuesday. Quilcene schools begin Wednesday, as do the 78 kindergarten through eighth-grade students enrolled in the Brinnon School district.

Blue Heron's Campbell oversaw gifted and talented programming, and advanced academics departments, she said.

"I was providing training for principals and teachers who chose to come to the training. There wasn't a lot of follow through to see what happened with the students.

"That's why I'm so excited to be here in a small school district.

In the OCEAN classrooms, teacher Virginia Grace was prepping for her students this week.

The program is designed as an alternative learning environment focusing on the environment, music, the arts and the maritime trades. As of a Thursday, 53 students were enrolled in the program which has a maximum capacity of 70.

Grace teaches kindergarten through fifth-grade math/science; and ninth through 12th-grade social studies, health and career life skills. She said she said the first day will be spent "getting to know each other" and believes "it is the most exciting time of the year."

One of the programs Grace is planning for her elementary students is a bike tour of the natural world in the neighborhood.

"Right outside the school is a beautiful wetlands where we'll study birds and plants," she said.

“Then there’s Cappy’s Trails and its woodlands. Then we’ll go to North Beach and study the lagoon. I’m hoping to get someone from the Audobon Society to tell us about all the birds species that live there.”

Becca Gimlett, one of three new teachers at Blue Heron, said she is looking forward to her first day of classes. The reading teacher for sixth through eighth grades comes from Salem, Ore., and has been in Port Townsend for about a month.

“I met some of the kids at the back-to-school night orientation and they were so eager,” Gimlett said. “It was so great to meet the parents and answer their questions and see them excited for my room.

“The kids liked my Star Wars posters and thought I was pretty cool.”

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