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(L-r) Erin Hanscom, Kelsey Allen, and Nicole Barton all wore the in-style color – purple – to start the new school year. Photo: Gretchen Hildebrand

**AE/MS from page 48**

**New-Family Orientation**

The AE/MS Parent Teacher Organization hosted a kindergarten orientation social the Friday night before the school year began. All families new to our school were invited. We had hoped to be outside, but Andover was dark, windy, and wet as we socialized through the tornado watch.

We had an excellent turnout of families. Families met school staff members and bus drivers and enjoyed a picnic dinner together.

Kindergarten students followed the footsteps in the hallway to their new classroom. They spent time in their classroom with Mrs. Pellegrino and found their cubbies and where they would sit, play, and learn.

**Three Lunch Periods**

There have been some schedule changes within the building. The purpose was to increase instructional time in the middle school. The present grade configurations and enrollment have allowed us to consolidate lunch periods. We had four lunch periods beginning at 11:00 AM and ending at 1:10 PM. We have now combined some grades and are running three lunch periods. With this difference the academic classes in grades six, seven, and eight are now 55 minutes long.

**The First Day Of School**

Thirty-three kindergarten students arrived and were instantly hugged and reassured by Mrs. Pellegrino as they separated from their parents. Many parents of kindergarten students gathered on the school grounds to take photos and cherish the moment, watching their five-year-old walk into the building to begin their kindergarten experience with Mrs. Pellegrino. I have as much fun watching the parents as I do the children.

It is pretty common for kindergarten students to ride the bus the first day of school. And why not? They have been watching the big yellow buses go by their homes for five years, wishing they were big enough to ride the bus to school.

On the first day of school, parents will put their child on the bus, after tak-

ing many photos, and then jump in their cars and race to school to see their child get off the bus and take many more photos. Students then go into the building with Mrs. Pellegrino. Parents linger for a while and eventually go to work or home and anxiously await their child's arrival at the end of the day. It truly is a milestone experience.

**The "New" Gym**

This year, the high point of the first day back was getting a peek at the "new" gym. The peek certainly did not disappoint. Students, staff members, and community members have been in awe at the transformation.

The new gym floor that was installed this summer is going to make a big difference for physical education classes, sporting practices, games, and community gatherings. I am already looking forward to our Veterans Day celebration and Grandparent Thanksgiving!

The new floor is just one part of the gym makeover. A volunteer crew consisting of community members, teachers, and students painted the gym from top to bottom. The color is much lighter. The gym no longer has a black floor and dark walls.

In addition, the boards were removed from the windows to allow natural light to filter in, and that has made a big difference. Brendan Newton is now fabricating a protective grid for the windows. Dan Labonte and a hard-working crew cleaned the gym rafters, removing dirt and grime that had been there for decades.

Our next few fundraising projects are earmarked for replacing the stage curtains and then upgrading our sound system. Our gym serves such an important role as a community meeting place, and we want it to really shine.

Our school Web site continues to become more and more of a resource for school information. Please visit it often at [Andover.K12.nh.us](http://Andover.K12.nh.us).

As you harvest those late summer gardens and find an overabundance, please keep AE/MS in mind. We welcome adding your veggies to our lunch program.

All community members are welcome to stop in and see the new gym. I love to show it off. Come in for a tour.