

HARRISON from A1

emotions. There's like excitement for summer for some kids, can't wait. And then for other students, school can be the most safe, predictable part of their lives. And that safety net being removed is a hard thing. So those are just the normal things we face," said Brown. "And then the building on top of that."

To prepare for this goodbye, students got to paint their handprints on walls throughout the school and read a book titled "School's First Day of School" about a new school building that is nervous about starting the year. Students also wrote letters to the new and old school.

"I am going to love our new school, but I will miss you. I love you because of the memories," wrote one first grader.

"I love you because you have held strong for many years. I will miss you Harrison. I loved

to have you here Harrison. Thank you for holding us for years. I love you Harrison," wrote a third grader.

"I love your classrooms because you're great. You're the best ever. I will miss the whole school," added another third grader.

The new Harrison school, located just a few blocks away at 8th and Taylor streets, was constructed with money from a 2016 bond. The school will open its doors to students this coming school year.

"It's kind of bittersweet. It's exciting that we're going to a new place but it's also kind of sad and just overwhelming. And my kids went ... to Harrison all the way through and so it's a little sad to say goodbye to it," said teacher Ambyr Hankins.

In addition to the emotions at the school, the teachers are making sure they are prepared to be out of the building by this Friday. Their rooms have been broken down into piles with some going to their new class-



PHOTOS BY ZACH SILVA/COTTAGE GROVE SENTINEL

Among the now empty halls at Harrison Elementary School are boxes, a wall with students' names who are the last to attend the school (right) and items to be moved.

room just down the road while other items will be up for grabs.

Next week principals around South Lane will get a chance to claim items that are no longer needed. After the principals, local nonprofit organizations will take a look at the items before it will be opened up to nonprofits from outside of Cottage Grove. From July 1 to 3, the district will hold a community garage sale. The remaining items at that point will be recycled or stored.

The furniture at the new school will arrive on Aug. 6, and principal Brown notes that the "hope is to get teachers into their classroom somewhere around August 13."

"I honestly started (the cleaning process) probably last year. And so little by little and then this year I went through everything again. Just trying to downsize and make sure I'm

only taking the stuff that I will use," said kindergarten teacher Sarah Parsons.

Parsons had been teaching in her current classroom for 10 years. This same classroom was also her second-grade classroom as a student when she attended Harrison. But with the school year now drawn to a close, Parsons is excited about the rare opportunity to start a classroom scratch and ready to take on the challenge of making the new building not just a structure but a classroom full of life. And she has a method to do that.

"Polka dots. Just put polka dots on anything and it will feel homey," she said with a laugh. "I think the extra touches that make this a special room for kids, they're in those boxes I hope. And honestly, it's who is there. We'll make a classroom family and we'll make it our own. And I don't have huge plans of decorating a whole lot because the kids are going to help me do that. So that will be fun."

Likewise, kindergarten teacher Stephanie Black is



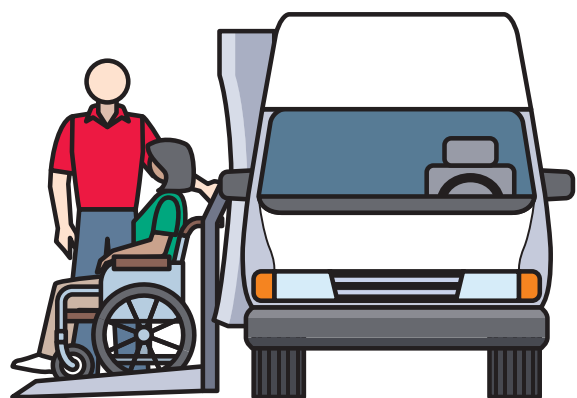
keeping in mind the importance of adding that individualized connection in a brand-new classroom.

"I really do think that will come as we get into that space and find it out because it is adding those little touches of personal things. You know, I'll be

using some of the same things that I used to create a sense of family atmosphere here," said Black. "Like adding their family pictures to some kind of board somewhere — and making it where they can see their name. In a sea of unknown, giving them some known."

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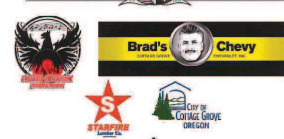


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