

?Welcome to Wellington? ? new school year brings changes for Aurora Senior P.S. community



By Brock Weir

Ken Arnott has always wanted to open up a new school and, this week, the long-time educator gets to do just that ? sort of.

Over his time in Aurora, Mr. Arnott has served as the principal of both Aurora Senior Public School and George Street Public School, but this week he returned to work at the helm of the newly re-named Wellington Public School, which merges the two schools in the old Aurora Senior building under a shiny new name.

?This is kind of like the best of both worlds,? he says. ?You are opening up a new school and you're building the culture of a full kindergarten to Grade 8 school, but the building was already here. We didn't have the pitfalls that you get of building right from the ground up.?

There was, however, much to discover and plan for when it was clear George Street would be closing at the end of the last school year after nearly 60 years. Construction within Aurora Senior to accommodate the students that would normally be housed at George Street began in March, picking up steam considerably after students left for their summer holidays, and it has been full speed ahead as the clock ticked down to the first day of school on Tuesday.

There were some challenges in overhauling a nearly 50-year-old school to accommodate Kindergarten through Grade 3. The entire basement first floor was gutted. Gone is the old music room, along with the old woodshop and home economics rooms. In their place, new classrooms have been constructed and a play area for the kindergarteners has been tarmacked. Upstairs, the old lunch room has been halved in favour of a new lunch room and new music room, and the gymnasium has been overhauled, proudly bearing the emblem of the newly-minted Wellington Wolverines.

?Construction is finished and it has just been go-go-go all week,? says Mr. Arnott. ?It is like moving into a new house, or after you have renovated. Now it is unpacking and sorting in your new place. I have always said the school is more than a building. This school is older, but it looks fresh and new inside, but the key part is the staff and the people in the building. People are pleased and happy to be together after several years as two separate schools with one [common] staff. Now, it is a big difference having us all under one roof.?