

City schools welcome students

By Pamela McLoughlin
Register Staff

NEW HAVEN — Architect Kenneth Boroson teared up Wednesday at the opening of the new Mauro-Sheridan School, and it wasn't because he had a son or daughter walking into the new communications, technology and science school.

Boroson, the architect of the new magnet school building that combines Sheridan Middle School with Vincent Mauro School, was reacting to a teacher's comment: "Thank you for helping me make my dreams come true."

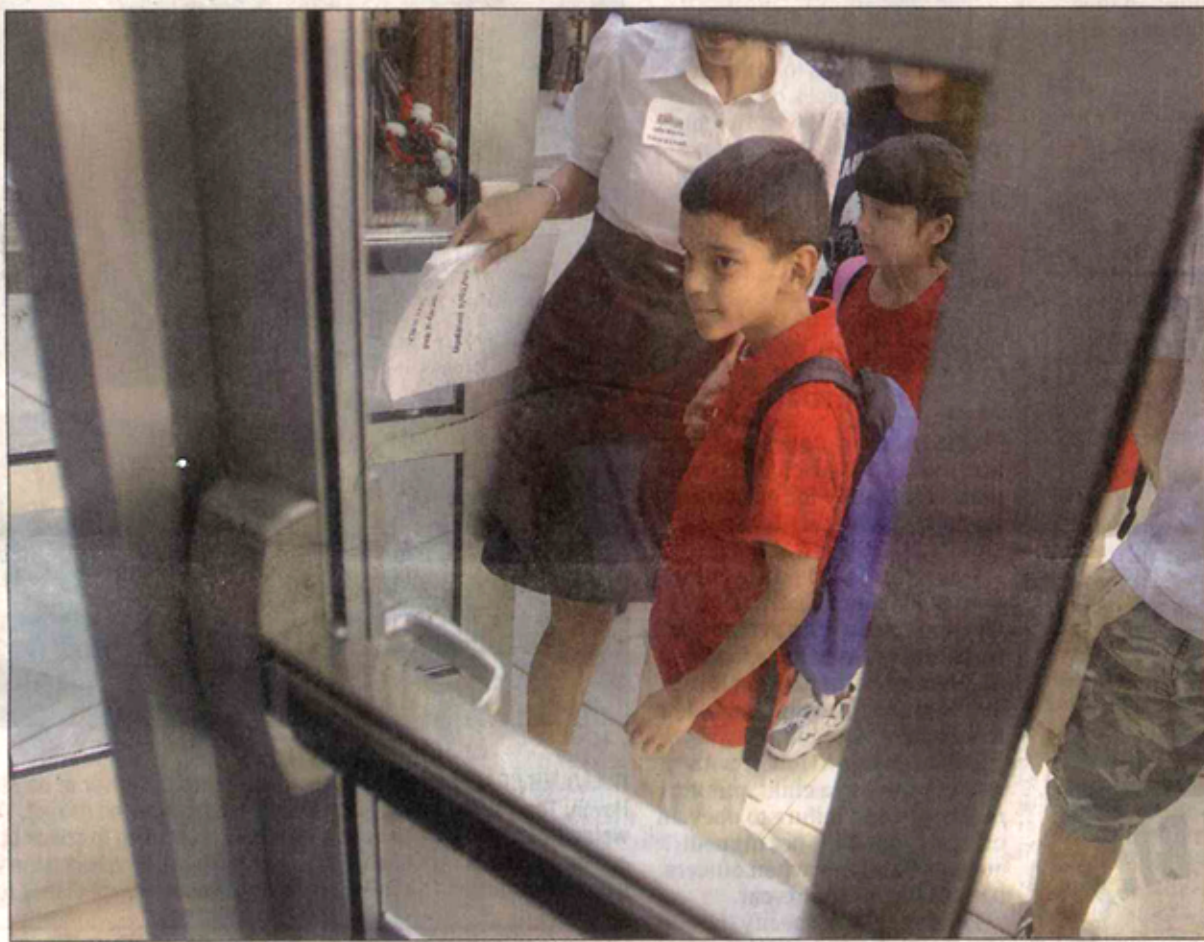
For him, it was the best day of any school architectural project: the first day of classes.

The city welcomed back about 20,000 students in first through twelfth grades to 47 city schools Wednesday, and hundreds more entering kindergarten will join them Friday. Those in pre-kindergarten programs begin next week. Board of Education spokeswoman Michelle Wade said the young pupils are going back later because everything will be more settled, and it will create a safer and more relaxing transition for them.

She said buses were all on time, and the transportation portion of the day went without a hitch.

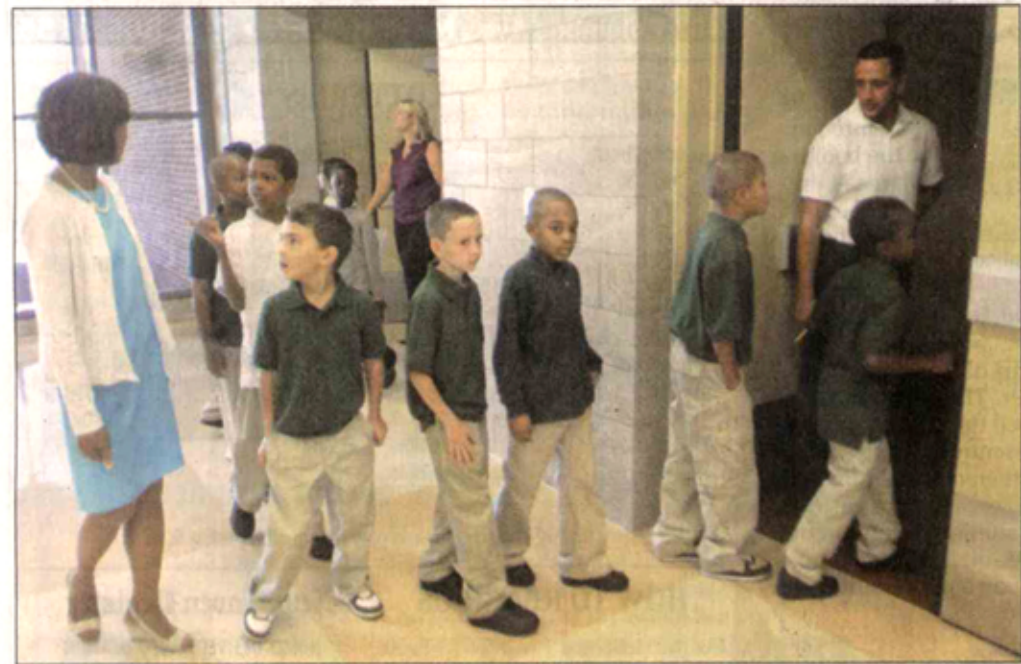
Wade said school officials were delighted with attendance at the high schools, and that is a start to a top agenda item

See Schools, A4



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Literacy coach Judy Nacco holds second-grader Jeremy Perez's hand as he enters Mauro-Sheridan Science, Technology and Communications Magnet School on Fountain Street for the first time Wednesday.



Peter Hvizdak/Register

ABOVE: Bishop Woods School Principal Barbara Chock, left, talks to students as they enter Brian Earley's third-grade classroom Wednesday, the opening day of school for about 20,000 students across the city. Bishop Woods, on Quinpiac Avenue, underwent a \$38 million renovation. **RIGHT:** Superintendent of Schools Reginald Mayo speaks to teachers, students and their families outside the new Mauro-Sheridan Science, Technology and Communications Magnet School on the opening day of classes, as Mayor John DeStefano Jr., right, listens.



Brad Horrigan/Register



Catalisa Preston, a second-grader at Roberto Clemente School, receives a book bag Wednesday from Erica Garcia of Sigma Gamma Rho Sorority, an international, nonprofit, community service organization.

Schools: Time to open books again

Continued from A1

of Mayor John DeStefano Jr.: To reduce the dropout rate.

DeStefano, who said he was pleased by the look of the two new school buildings and especially what's going on inside — including a dramatic jump in test scores at Bishop Woods and a vast improvement in lagging scores at Sheridan — also said there is still much to be done in school reform.

Closing the achievement gap for minority students tops his list, along with reducing the dropout rate, even if it means longer school days, more flexible schedules or grading schools, DeStefano said. DeStefano, who called Wednesday "a good day," said he wants New Haven to become a competitive city when it comes to sending students to college.

"If you don't graduate (from college), you're at a huge disadvantage," DeStefano said.

A special spotlight was on two redesigned schools: Mauro-Sheridan and Bishop Woods School, where celebratory ribbons were cut; music played and teachers and students were addressed by top city and education officials. Among the

honored guests at each school were their architects, Boroson of Boroson Falconer Architects and Engineers at Mauro-Sheridan, and Jim LaPosta of JCJ Architecture, Hartford, at Bishop Woods.

"It's my favorite day, in terms of seeing all the faces of students and teachers going into a building ... It's the culmination of the work of so many different people," Boroson said.

Mauro-Sheridan will be a science, technology and communication magnet school. The school, originally built about 1922, underwent a like-new renovation with an addition for the cafeteria. In attendance at the dedication was Vincent Mauro Jr. and a few other relatives of Vincent Mauro, after whom the school was named. Mauro was a longtime aldermanic president and Democratic town chairman who died in a car accident.

The Mauro-Sheridan school project cost \$47.5 million.

Bishop Woods, a neighborhood school that abuts a bird sanctuary and was designed to be in harmony with nature, will serve students in pre-K through eighth grade. Its size was doubled to 75,000 square feet in a \$38 million project.

"All in all, it was a really joyous day," said LaPosta, who along with his staff proudly gave directions to students and staff after festivities. "The school looks fabulous, it was a real labor of love."

Mauro-Sheridan Principal Denise Coles-Cross had 440 students at Vincent Mauro School and now she has an additional 190. But she didn't flinch at the increase, saying she'd take more if there was room.

"It was beautiful to see the children's faces (react to the new school); it was something very special," Coles-Cross said. She said children deserve the best and they got it in the state-of-the-art technology and labs, as well as experts to teach. She said the school has a robotics program, a video communications lab and big screens in each classroom for children to watch morning announcements, rather than just hear them through speakers.

Coles-Cross said children are naturals with technology, and are catching on quicker than adults. She said the great new school and happy children reminded her of how kids look in a toy store.

"A school should be a toy store of learning," she said.

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Denise Coles-Cross
Mauro-Sheridan principal

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