



LeClaire Elementary Welcomes Three New Teachers - Jessie Buehnerkemper, Kiara Chapman, and Kalan Pelaez

by Mary Ann Mitchell

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EDWARDSVILLE - LeClaire Elementary and Principal Donald Gunter welcomed three new teachers for the start of the 2021-22 school year, including Jessie Buehnerkemper, Kiara Chapman, and Kalan Pelaez.

Buehnerkemper is a kindergarten teacher and comes to LeClaire from St. Boniface Catholic School in Edwardsville where she had taught since 2008, spending five years in fourth grade and eight in third grade. After graduating from SIUE in 2007, she served as a long-term substitute teacher in District #7.

She's in her 14th year of teaching and is enjoying her start at LeClaire.

"The thing I've enjoyed the most about being part of District #7 is meeting new people and learning a new grade level," she said.

Buehnerkemper grew up in Edwardsville and had wonderful teachers in District #7, which made her decide to become a teacher herself.

"I loved the way they made learning fun and exciting," she said. Buehnerkemper now enjoys giving her own students that positive feeling each day while they learn and discover new things together.

Buehnerkemper and her husband Josh live in Edwardsville with their three boys, who keep them busy with ice hockey and soccer. Deacon is in fifth grade at Woodland, Blake is in third grade at Woodland, and Emmett is in Kindergarten at Nelson. The family also has a cat named Piper. As a family, they enjoy going on bike rides, being outside, traveling, skiing, and cheering on the St. Louis Blues.

When she's not in the classroom, Buehnerkemper enjoys going for walks, strolling the aisles of Target, listening to podcasts, and spending time with her family.

Chapman is in her first year as a teacher after graduating from McKendree and is a cross-categorical special education teacher.

"I became a teacher because of my cousin Kamar who has autism," said Chapman. "When we were younger, I taught him how to read and write. Since then I've continued tutoring children and fell in love with helping others learn."

Chapman is enjoying her start in District #7, highlighting the friendships she's gained and the sense of community she feels.

When she's not in the classroom, Chapman enjoys kickboxing and weight lifting.

Pelaez is a first-grade teacher and is in her first year, having recently graduated from SIUE with her Bachelor of Science in Elementary Education. She completed her student teaching in first grade in the Triad District and loved first grade there, and is thankful to start off her career in the first grade at LeClaire.

"I decided to become a teacher because while growing up, I loved everything about school," she said. "I had amazing teachers, both in school and in dance, who were an inspiration to me and I wanted to pass on that feeling to her own students!"

In her short time with District #7, she has enjoyed the teamwork and collaboration across the entire district.

Family is important to Pelaez and says they are a close bunch! She has an older sister, a twin brother, and a younger brother and has a niece who is about to turn one.

When she's not in the classroom, Pelaez can be found hanging out with her friends and family or at the dog park with her Aussiedoodle, Walt.