By Jan Schultz
The Imperial Republican

Twenty more kindergarten students this year than last is responsible for the big increase in K-12 enrollment at Chase County Schools (CCS).

That class has a big impact on the total 582 students enrolled in K-12 after a week of CCS classes. One has to look back to the 2003-04 school year to find a bigger K-12 enrollment when 606 students attended school here.

Not surprisingly, the kindergarten class of 66 students is the largest of all 13 classes at CCS. Last year, 46 kindergartners were enrolled.

Elementary Principal Pat Lane said administrators were expecting as many as 70 kindergartners based on the census and the kindergarten roundup in May.

“We were prepared for that number,” he said.

This summer when the incoming numbers were realized, members of the school board approved a fourth section of kindergarten.

That additional kindergarten classroom is in former Michelle Mroczek’s third grade room, located north a few doors from the other three in the southwest corner of the school building.

That addition was possible when last year’s three third grade sections were reduced to two this year, Lane said.

In other areas, the high school (grades 9-12) has 164 students this year. The junior class is the largest with 56 and the freshman class of 32 is the smallest.

At this time last year, the high school was slightly larger with 169 enrolled.

Lane said after a week of classes, things appear to be settling into a routine.

“Lunch has been a little rough,” he said.

That’s due to a couple of things. The network has been slow all across the state, he noted, but it’s “been smoothed out a lot.”

One of the changes, mandated by the federal government, is the process by which the students go through the lunch line.

Before, the student’s lunch number was punched in at the start of the line, then they went and got their food and went to the salad bar, Lane said.

This year, they are going through the food line first and then checking out so it can be determined they have the “required food groups on their plates,” he said.

One change made this year with the grade 3-6 students involves lunch and recess schedules. Lane said now those students are going to recess before lunch rather than after.

He cites a Wyoming study that showed less wasted food and less discipline problems in the afternoons due to that change.

In the study at one school, 11 gallons of milk was being wasted. After the switch putting recess first, that dropped to just a few quarts, Lane noted.

“That’s because they were hungry and ate better,” he said.

It’s too early to tell if the change is having an effect here, “but the kids are eating,” he said.

He plans to get input from the classroom teachers if they are seeing a change.

Lane said the K-6 students he oversees seem to be adjusting to the new menus, which are putting more emphasis on fruits and vegetables, and they “are liking the food better.”

2012-13 enrollment

Kindergarten	66
First grade	42
Second grade	42
Third grade	43
Fourth grade	40
Fifth grade	48
Sixth grade	35
GRADE K-6 TOTAL	316
Seventh grade	50
Eighth grade	52
Ninth grade	32
Tenth grade	42
Eleventh grade	56
Twelfth grade	34
GRADE 7-12 TOTAL	266
GRAND TOTAL	582

10-year total enrollments

	Total
2002-03	626
2003-04	606
2004-05	577
2005-06	571
2006-07	547
2007-08	518
2008-09	518
2009-10	543
2010-11	563
2011-12	560
2012-13	582

Source: Chase County Schools as of Aug. 28, 2012.