

Former principal of year to open Primrose School

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Primrose School of Castle Rock celebrated a groundbreaking Friday despite the fact that the school is almost built and scheduled to open sometime in July. School officials said the facility will enroll about 200 students.

As a blustery snow fell outside Friday, more than a dozen people huddled inside the partially built Primrose School of Castle Rock to celebrate its groundbreaking.

The school on New Abbey Lane near The Outlets at Castle Rock is the second Primrose franchise built in Douglas County by education veteran Shawn Batterberry.

After spending 21 years in the public schools, the former Colorado Principal of the Year decided it was time to try his hand in the business world. It wasn't surprising that, in 1999, Batterberry, 46, decided to open the Primrose School in Lone Tree. Primrose Schools is a franchise of nationally accredited educational child care schools with locations across the country.

Aside from exploring the business side of education, Batterberry said there was another reason he decided to make the switch from full-time educator to business owner.

"My wife was tired of waiting for me to come home for dinner," Batterberry said with a chuckle after Friday's ceremony. Batterberry co-owns the school with his wife, Linda.

"There's a big need for this school here; we have parents who drive their kids from Castle Rock to the Lone Tree school," Batterberry said. "We're already getting excellent inquiries, and there will

likely be a waiting list soon."

The school, Batterberry said, is unlike most businesses that simply offer day care. Instead, children ranging in age from 5 weeks to 5 years old who attend Primrose receive a balanced learning program that blends child-initiated and teacher-directed activities - the two core philosophies of the school.

Primrose of Castle Rock will enroll about 200 students, and the facility has 10 private classrooms equipped with wireless technology, five separate and secure playgrounds and a garden called the Primrose Patch. The school offers educational child care for infants, young toddlers and preschool-aged children, in addition to private pre-kindergarten, kindergarten and after-school programs.

The school's premium tuition ranges from about \$150 to \$315 per week, or \$7,500 to \$15,000 a year, Batterberry said. Construction on the \$3.6 million facility will be completed by July.

To some parents with children enrolled at Primrose, the cost is well worth it. Mike Baumann of Highlands Ranch has two children - a 1-year-old boy and a 4-year-old girl - enrolled at Primrose in Lone Tree and may move them to the Castle Rock school, he said.

Unlike past day cares, Primrose has gone above and beyond Baumann's expectations.

"We're just real pleased with the steps they take to not just babysit, but teach our kids and interact with them," Baumann said. "There's more structure than we were used to. It's by far the best preschool we've seen."

Castle Rock Mayor Randy Reed and local economic developers lauded the opening of Primrose as a positive boost for the town and for providing parents with a quality alternative for early childhood education.

"The fact that Primrose will bring in 30 to 35 skilled employees, a payroll of \$500,000 per year and a quality facility is like a shot in the arm for Castle Rock," said David Mitchem, director of the Castle Rock Economic Development Council. "A lot of parents were interested in high-quality education for their children and Primrose hits that target right on. We need more facilities like it."

Standing in the infant room that will soon see babies learning sign language and developing their motor skills, Batterberry looked around at the wood-frame shell of the school after he officially broke ground and couldn't help but smile.

This school, after all, is part of what his life's work has been all about.

"If people are looking to give their children a head start on their education, this is where they need to be," Batterberry said.

For more information, visit Primrose Schools online at <http://www.primroseschools.com>.