

# Teachers get A for classroom decorations

Mary Cutter and Barbara Aupperly have spent countless hours creating characters, designing bulletin boards and cutting out name tags to engage the classroom full of young students ready to learn.

Ms. Cutter, a first-grade teacher at St. Thomas Aquinas Elementary School in Hampden, chooses a theme for her classroom every year and runs with it. Some of her themes in the past have been Disney, Scooby Doo, Arthur and Peanuts characters. This year the walls and doors will display Rugrats while on her bulletin boards there will be a reward chart, a math and reading session, the weather and more.

"I'm very crazy about it," said Ms. Cutter with a laugh. "The backgrounds and boards have to match."

She makes sure to put vocabulary words all over the room so her first-graders will know what an object is and how to spell it. She said she puts pictures with the schedule of the day so it will be an easier transition for the children who are not used to sitting in a classroom all day.

"I don't want them to be afraid to write because the words are in the room; they just need to look for them," said Ms. Cutter who has been a teacher at the school for 27 years.

While Ms. Aupperly, a third-grade teacher at Our Lady of Hope-St. Luke, Dundalk, doesn't get to pick her own theme for the year, all of the teachers come together to choose a theme for the school. This year the theme is "Look for God in every face." She and her class will discuss what the theme means and then evaluate whether or not they have lived up to the message.

"I try to have a colorful room, but not too busy looking because it's distracting to some of the students," said Ms. Aupperly, who decorates a prayer table in her room for Lent, Advent and ordinary time. She said her students keep her on track when it comes to changing the prayer table

Both teachers agree that it is important to have each child's name on the door and on his or her desk. Ms Cutter said it helps the children to feel welcome to the class and feel that the desk is their own.

“I think it’s important to have the children’s name visible,” said Ms. Aupperly. “Last year their names were in manuscript and when they switched to cursive writing they were so excited to get their new name tag in cursive.”

Ms. Cutter said teachers have to try to engage their students in the educational decorations of the classroom.