



Preston Plains Middle School

Third Marking Period Newsletter - March 2020

Spring Greetings!

How quickly the school year goes! Even after our mild winter, it's still hard to believe that spring is upon us and the end of the school year is less than four months away. To that end, year-end activities (Field Day, 8th grade Dinner Dance and Graduation) will be scheduled by the end of March. A letter will be sent home to all parents with pertinent information then, and these events will also be added to our school calendar.

A note regarding school absences: please contact Mrs. Burzicki, our school nurse, whenever your child will be absent from school. Please provide the reason for the absence, including information about any confirmed diagnosis (i.e., pneumonia, strep throat, flu, bronchitis, ear infection, etc.). We greatly appreciate your communication.

NEWS FROM PPMS DEPARTMENTS

Superintendent's News:

By Dr. Roy Seitsinger

(1) Coronavirus: Student, staff, and community member safety is our priority. There is much information flowing through the media regarding the Coronavirus. As a district, we are receiving updates by the State Health department, the CDC, and the state Superintendents and School Board Associations. We will continue to distill and monitor the information as it comes to us. We will post the information on our district website, on the Preston Panthers Superintendents Facebook page and, as necessary, through

communication directly with home through letters and/or Blackboard Connect. Please call Central Office if you have any questions. In the short term, please note the information below.

Preventive Measures

- If you have flu-like symptoms, we encourage you to stay home.
- Frequently wash your hands with soap and warm water for at least 20 seconds. If soap and water are not available, use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer.
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose, and mouth with unwashed hands.
- Avoid close contact with people who are sick and stay home when you are sick. An absence from work or school now can eliminate the spread of an infection to others.
- Cough or sneeze into a tissue or your sleeve and wash your hands afterwards.
- Frequently disinfect surfaces with wipes.
- Avoid non-essential travel to highly impacted countries or regions in the world.

(2) FY 21 Budget:

The School Board Finance Committee has just completed a rigorous modified Zero-Based Budgeting (ZBB) review process. The next step will be to present their results to the Board of Education so that they can finalize the budget request to be sent to the town Board of Finance.

For the FY 21 budget, the district will not be adding any new staff or programming requests. This means that if there are any reductions to the request made by the Board of Education they will affect staffing and programming. It is important to pay attention to the process if you wish the district's current programming to continue. Again, if you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact the Central Office for additional information. The dates below are upcoming public meetings the will focus on the budget.

BoE Finance Committee Thursday, 3.5.2020
Board of Education Monday, 3.9.2020
BoE Finance Committee Monday, 3.16.2020
Board of Education: Special Monday, 3.23.2020
Board of Education Monday, 4.6.2020
Budget Submission to Board of Finance Tuesday, 4.7.2020

(3) Spring!

Many activities and events are planned for the Spring. In all these, we hope to continue to recognize our thoughtful, responsible, athletically accomplished, and academically successful students. At our Monday, March 9th Board of Education meeting, besides talking about the Coronavirus, budget, options for new high school partners, and other important matters, nothing will be more important than honoring our students. We will

recognize our Champion Girls Basketball Team and middle students that assisted one of our bus drivers last week.

I hope you have a safe and wonderful Spring!

PPMS Main Office News

by Dr. Ivy Davis-Tomczuk, Principal

As thoughts begin to turn toward summer, parents may be interested in summer camps. Here is a brief listing of the more popular camps in this area. If any of these interest you, please contact the camp representatives directly; many offer early registration incentives.

- Mystic Seaport Museum Sailing and Camp Programs, Mystic, CT: camp options for middle school participants include an am museum day camp combined with pm sailing and navigation; joint camp with Project O includes time on the Project O research vessel along with activities at the museum site; and Growing up in Greenmanville - investigate the families, manners, and past-times of people who lived in 1876 Mystic. More information is included in their Summer 2020 brochure, available in the PPMS Main Office.
- New London 4H Camp, Franklin, CT: camping activities include archery, arts & crafts, performing arts, outdoor activities, drama, designing science experiments, movie making, newspaper, rocketry, and a ropes course. For more information, visit their website at: <http://www.my4hcamponline.com>.
- Denison Pequotsepos Nature Center Summer Nature Camps, Mystic, CT: camp activities include day hiking, exploring, and learning about local ecosystems. For more information, check out their website: <https://dpnc.org/summercamp/>.
- Terra Firma Farm Kids Camp, Stonington, CT (for students up to age 12 years old): camp activities include collecting eggs, milking cows, moving pigs, and other hands-on activities. For more information, check out their website: <http://www.terrafirmafarm.org/summercamp>.
- New England Science & Sailing, Stonington, CT: a variety of marine-based camps are offered. See a full listing at <https://nessf.org/summer-camp/>.
- Mystic Aquarium, Mystic, CT: Two camp options for middle school students include A Week in the Life of a Marine Biologist and Environmental Conservation Camp. For specific information, see their website: <https://www.mysticaquarium.org/learn/summer-camps/entering-grades-7-10/>.

Nurse's News

By Ms. Jacquie Burzycki, PPMS Nurse

Tick borne disease

Several disease producing microbes have been identified in ticks found in Connecticut. These diseases are caused by the transmission of bacteria, parasites or viruses, bacteria being the most common tick borne disease. These diseases include Anaplasmosis (bacteria), Babesiosis (parasite), Borrelia miyamotoi disease(bacteria), Ehrlichiosis (bacteria), and Lyme disease (bacteria).

Most people do not feel the tick bite, and if left undisturbed it will remain attached, drawing blood from its host, until it becomes engorged in 2-4 days. At that time it will drop off. If the tick is carrying disease-producing microbes, it may transmit them to the host during the feeding process.

How to remove a tick:

Remove the tick as soon as it is found. Using tweezers, grasp the tick where the mouth parts enter the skin, pull gently and repeatedly, until it releases its hold from the skin. Do not squeeze the tick's body.

Prevention:

1. Avoid tick habitats
2. Dress appropriately, covering all exposed skin. Tuck pant legs into socks.
3. Check for ticks and remove any as soon as possible.
4. Check pets for ticks and use tick-control products.

The Center for Disease control recommends the following:

When using repellent with DEET, follow these recommendations:

1. Read and follow all directions and precautions on the product label.
2. • Store DEET out of reach of children.
3. • To apply to face, first spray product onto hands, then rub onto face.
4. • Use only when outdoors and wash skin with soap and water after coming indoors.
5. • Higher concentrations of DEET may have a longer repellent effect; however, concentrations over 50% provide no added protection.
6. • Use just enough repellent to cover exposed skin and/or clothing; avoid over-application of the product.
7. • DEET may be used on adults, children, and infants older than 2 months of age. Protect infants from mosquito bites by using a carrier draped with mosquito netting with an elastic edge for a tight fit.

References: 1. CDC 2. Pfizer Global Research and Development.

Psychologist News Click [here](#) for Advisory Page

by Mrs. Olof Sigmarsdottir



How can we help students who are experiencing Anxiety at School...

Part III.

Most School Psychologists/Counselors agree that helping students develop self-regulation skills works better than trying to take their anxiety away or make them anxiety-free. Here at PPMS we have been practicing stress-reducing strategies such as

‘Mindfulness’ to try and help our students become “stress-smart”. By increasing their mindfulness they can become better aware of the thoughts that can cause them to feel overwhelmed. Mindfulness can help students accept their anxiety rather than see anxiety as a problem to be afraid of, which in turn can cause more anxiety. The two research-based counseling approaches shown to be the most effective in teaching positive ways to cope with anxious behavior are cognitive behavioral therapy (CBT) and mindfulness-based stress reduction. Of course we cannot offer CBT to all our students, but we can encourage teachers and parents to practice mindfulness. For example, teachers can say “Let’s just all take a minute to breathe slowly and be aware of our surroundings before we begin our lesson”.

Because anxiety is an internalizing behavior it can be difficult to identify students that are experiencing these behaviors. However, by collaborating with students, parents, nurses, teachers, administrators, and mental health providers, we can work together to maximize the probability of identifying them. Only then can we provide a supportive environment for them to practice new ways of coping with the stress they are experiencing. Here at PPMS we have a great model that offers the ability to collaborate with other professionals. Every week we have Grade level Team Consultation meetings, where the professionals discuss students that may be struggling for many different reasons. This communication model is extremely effective in making sure that students' needs are being met. Finally, we are also addressing anxiety and stress challenges school wide through a mental health awareness day or assemblies. This is a great way to reach all students and provide them with the education they need in order to reach their full potential as a person.

(Information was gathered from www.schoolcounselor.org)

Department News:

[English/Language Arts](#)

By Ms. Melissa Durkee, Mr. Christopher Pickett & Mrs. Heather Wolf

In Ms. Durkee’s 6th and 7th grade classes, we will wrap up the year working with Literary Texts, examining Key Ideas and Details, Craft & Structure, and Integration of Knowledge & Ideas as they relate to reading fictional pieces. Students will further develop their understanding of both informational and literary text through reading assignments posted on *Readworks.org* as well as in comprehension packets. They will also maintain their practice of grammar skills using *NoRedInk.com* along with additional language arts packets. Students will continue to develop their writing skills with a research paper, applying similar techniques they used while writing argumentative essays, but also integrating *NoodleTools* for the research component. We will continue to utilize the online program *Amplify ELA* to integrate all the reading, writing, speaking, and listening standards associated with ELA.

In review of the second marking period, Mr. Pickett's 7th grade continued studying character analysis, author's craft, and prediction skills through our model texts *A Raisin in the Sun*. Students have balanced their studies between Amplify, our online ELA program, as well as NoRedInk.com. We also delved into non-fiction. 7th graders analyzed case studies of the human brain (and the study of the adolescent brain - very interesting!) and developing their non-fiction comprehension and annotation skills. Students are beginning their study of Edgar Allan Poe and other poets.

8th graders in Mr. Pickett's wrapped up their study of non-fiction narrative skills, as well as the comparison of both the biography and autobiography of Benjamin Franklin. In addition to studying the life of Franklin, students analyzed his style of argumentation and have applied it to several pieces of work. Following those studies, students analyzed Mary Shelley's work, *Frankenstein*, and had numerous philosophical discussions and debates on the consequences of technological advances. In the final marking period, students will be reading about the works of Frida Kahlo and Diego Rivera and how art and language often intersect.

In Mrs. Wolf's 6th and 8th grade classes, students will delve into many of the same features as explained above. Students in 6th grade are getting more familiar with Amplify ELA, which is helping them focus their writing. They are making some good gains on writing for extended periods of time. We are also focusing on examples of good writing using a mentor text. We will transition to writing a narrative later this Spring. Students have accounts in Readworks and NoRedInk with assignments to complete. All of their assignments will be posted to the Google Classroom page.

Mathematics

By Ms. Melissa Durkee & Mrs. Laila Griffin

In Ms. Durkee's 6th & 7th grade classes, we completed our extensive unit on The Number System and have transitioned into an Algebra Unit where students are writing and simplifying algebraic expressions, along with learning how to apply algebraic properties to write and solve equations and inequalities. We will end the year exploring the use of area, volume, and surface area formulas in Geometry, as well as determining measures of central tendencies and measures of variation in Statistics. Sixth grade students will learn how to display this data graphically, while seventh grade students will learn how to analyze statistical data in graphs and explore its relation to probability. Students are encouraged to practice these and other math skills for the remainder of the school year (and throughout the summer) on their individual curricular paths using *Prodigygame.com* and *Aleks.com*.

Mrs. Griffin's 7th grade students worked through the winter with their focus on understanding proportional relationships to include working with application of percentages in the real world. Most recently, students worked with writing algebraic expressions in different forms and solving algebraic equations using properties of equality. From here, we will be extending this knowledge to solving and graphing algebraic inequalities and integrating this into real world context. The remainder of the year will be focused on sharpening their understanding of geometric and statistical measures. 8th

graders have completed units on Linear Relationships and Functions and currently finishing up the unit on Scatterplots and Data this week. Going forward, students will be solving Multi-step Algebraic Equations and go on to Solving Systems of Linear Equations graphically and algebraically. There will be a concentrated effort on applying these skills to real world situations. To close off the year, we will move our concentration to Geometry; topics will include Transformations, Angle Relationships, Pythagorean Theorem and Volume.

All math students should be logging time spent on www.Aleks.com with the intent of filling in any gaps that have been created along the way or strengthening their skills with their individual grade-level curriculum. Please don't hesitate to reach out to gain access to student usernames and passwords. As always, thank you very much for your continued support.

Science

By Mrs. Jenny Sevigny

In 6th grade science, we are continuing to build our skills related to the scientific method. We are taking a closer look at the Sun-Earth-Moon system to see how the interaction of all three celestial bodies affects what we experience here on Earth.



In 7th grade science we are continuing to explore the human body and understand how all the systems of our body work together to allow us to do all the things we want to! We will end the year with our discussion of genetics and inheritance as well as the changing of organisms over time through evolution.

In 8th grade science we are delving into chemistry and using it to gain a better understanding of the DeepWater Horizon Oil Spill and plastics! From there we will study thermal energy in more depth as we look at states of matter. We will end the year discussing magnetism and information technologies.

Social Studies

By Mr. Chet Stefanowicz & Mrs. Vicky Spicer

In 6th grade Social Studies class, we are beginning a unit on the Indus River Valley and will continue to study the Indian subcontinent. Students have been learning about the process of anthropology and will carry that information over into learning about other ancient cultures through the end of the year.



In 7th Grade Social Studies we just wrapped up our unit on the Roman Republic, which included exciting topics such as the Punic Wars and Gladiator battles, as well as a glimpse into what daily life was like for the typical Roman teenager. We are now transitioning into our final chapter of Rome, where Rome becomes an Empire under such famed individuals such as Julius Caesar and Octavian. We are also studying Roman achievements and wonders like the Coliseum, aqueducts, cement, the arch, and Roman

roads. "Rome wasn't built in a day!" After that we'll transition into the final months of the year and study the fascinating cultures of the Aztec, Inca and Mayans.

In 8th Grade Social Studies with Mrs. Spicer we have just recently begun our unit on Westward Expansion, discovering topics such as, the Oregon Trail, the Gold Rush, Manifest Destiny, interactions with Native tribes including the Trail of Tears, and the Alamo. We will then study Immigration and how the nation expanded, resulting in the split between the North and South. We will end the year studying the Civil War & Reconstruction Era.

Student Support Services

By Mrs. Jennifer Foltz and Mrs. Heather Wolf

Transition Services

Transition planning helps teams plan for a student's life after school services end. Through questioning and research you identify a child's goals, instructional needs and resources needed to help them make the transition. The CT State Dept. of Education realized a need for this when many students with special needs were not prepared for employment and/or independent living after school services ended. These services may include community experiences and instruction in developing daily living skills.

Resources;

<https://www.parentcenterhub.org/transition-goals/>

<http://cpacinc.org/>

Library/Media

Mrs. Elaine Lettiere

Things will continue to stay busy in the third trimester in the library. Students in all three grade levels will continue to hone their research skills by locating appropriate resources, taking effective notes and generating citations. Noodle Tools will continue to be the vehicle in which our research is organized and saved.

Sixth graders will also be working to create research questions and find resources to help them develop answers to those questions. As always, we will be continuing to talk about good digital citizenship. In seventh grade, students will be working with primary sources to analyze historical events and eras. In addition, we will be considering what artifacts our generation will "leave" behind and what that will say about life in 2020. Our eighth graders will hone their abilities to create good research questions and evaluate resources, as well as discussing and analyzing the "fake news phenomena".

As always, book circulation is a valued part of library time. Our collection continues to grow and there is something for everyone in the library. As the year winds down, please help your student round up any missing library materials or arrange for payment. Collecting payment allows us to replace missing and damaged books and keeps our collection current.

Be on the lookout in June for our summer reading expectations!!

Physical Education/Health

By Mr. Eric McGlone

As we move into Spring, students in all three grade levels will complete the Connecticut Fitness test. The four parts of the test are the one-mile walk or run, push-ups, curl-ups, and the sit-and-reach. The sit-and-reach test measures hamstring flexibility. The curl-up test measures abdominal strength and endurance. The push-up test measures upper body strength and endurance. The one-mile walk or run test measures cardiorespiratory endurance, or the endurance of the heart and lungs.

During this physical fitness unit students will develop exercise programs utilizing our new fitness center and equipment.

Español

By Mr. Chet Stefanowicz & Mrs. April Abrantes

In 6th grade Spanish we are just finishing up learning about how to describe ourselves and others. Students should be able to tell you what they are wearing and also describe their physical selves and their personality. We will be starting into houses and learning how to talk about where we live.

In 7th grade Spanish we are currently working on how to tell time in Spanish. We just finished learning how to discuss what we like and don't like to do before and after school. Culturally we have learned about Three Kings Day and the uses of hibiscus in Mexican and American foods.

In 8th grade Spanish we have begun working on a backpack project that reinforces classroom objects vocabulary. The concepts we worked on in trimester 2 were using the irregular verbs ser and tener in the present tense, talking about our feelings, and the differences of when to use the verbs ser and estar. The next thing we will be learning about is the verb ir (to go) and talking about places in Spanish, followed by a very fun food unit. 8th grade students also learned about Three Kings Day and the uses of hibiscus in Mexican and American foods.

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