



Preston Plains Middle School

Third Marking Period Newsletter - April 2018



Welcome Spring!

After such a long winter with so many weather-related interruptions, springtime has arrived! While our school year has been extended well into June, we look forward to many spring and year-end related activities. Once our Board of Education reviews our school calendar at their April 9th meeting, year-end events will be scheduled and shared with parents by letter.



NEWS FROM PPMS DEPARTMENTS

Superintendent's News:

By Dr. Roy Seitsinger

Superintendent's News:

I think most would agree that this past winter was an interesting one! We missed a total of nine days of school as well as three delays and one early dismissal. This kind of disruption is a challenge to the whole system, parents and families, students, teachers, support staff and administration. The Board of Education, at its meeting on April 9, 2018, being sensitive to these unique circumstances set the end school for students to be Friday, June 22, 2018. Staff will return the following week for professional development and training.

As you know we are also in budget season. The Board of Education and the Board's finance committee conducted a rigorous review of every line of the budget and set a conservative increase of 3%. It is clearly understood by the Board that any significant reductions in the proposed budget will lead to a loss of program and staff. The district is now before the Board of Finance for review and recommendations. The next important meeting of Board of Finance will be held on Tuesday, April 24, 2018. Neither the public hearing nor the

referendum dates have been finalized at the time of this publication. Thank you for your support of the district budget as we move through the process.

With all the hectic pace of the holiday's past and the ever warming days of spring upon us we look forward with optimism for the finish of the school year and the summer break to come. Your continued support of quality education and Preston Public Schools is greatly appreciated. As always, if you have any questions or concerns please do not hesitate to contact my office. In the meantime, enjoy the Spring!

Remember the PALM metaphor and hold your positive thoughts of the children in your life close to your heart.

PPMS Main Office News

by Dr. Ivy Davis-Tomczuk, Principal

Now that we are in the third marking period, thoughts turn to the end of the school year and summer activities. Many parents are often interested in summer camp opportunities for their children. Here are a few offerings for your consideration:

- Mystic Seaport Summer Sailing and Camp Programs - a variety of hands-on programs are offered for middle school students at the Seaport; a brochure is available in the PPMS Main Office.
- New London County 4-H Camp - both day and overnight camp options are offered at the 4-H camp in Franklin, CT; a brochure is available in the PPMS Main Office (registration deadline is April 30th).
- Norwich Free Academy - Endless Opportunities Program for students entering 6th, 7th and 8th grades in the fall taking place during the week of July 9th (Monday through Friday) from 8 am to 12 noon on the NFA campus; more information will be mailed directly to PPMS and PVMS parents.

Nurse's News

By Joyce Vournazos, R.N.

We have made it out of flu season and are moving into spring allergies...if spring ever arrives! Field trips are on the calendar now. Please be aware that all medications (over-the-counter or prescription) that will be needed for a student on a field trip require a doctor's order.

A special note to 6th grade parents: Connecticut state law mandates that all 7th grade students have updated physical examinations with immunization boosters. More information will be sent home before the end of the school year. If your child has had a recent physical, please supply the Health Office with a copy. Thank you!!

Psychologist News

by Olof Sigmarstottir



Click [here](#) for Advisory Page

Supporting vs Enabling

Being a parent of a middle school age student can be very challenging, and parents often struggle with distinguishing between **supporting** versus **enabling** their kids. It might therefore be helpful to take a look at the difference between the two concepts.

The goal of support is to “build up resilience and develop coping strategies”. Most importantly support should always aim to “empower kids to move forward toward more independence”.

As follows are few examples of what is **supportive**:

- Acknowledge your child’s feelings, validate how hard it is to be sad, disappointed, uncomfortable, embarrassed, or struggling.
- Model healthy coping skills for handling frustration, anger and anxiety (or model perseverance if you are still learning how to do this).
- Provide structure at home in the form of appropriate rules, schedule, and positive consequences etc.
- Coach your child through problem she/he cannot handle without support.

To enable is to unintentionally reinforce an undesirable behavior. All parents do this to some degree, because it is only normal or natural to want to protect our children from pain, fear, failure, difficulty, and embarrassment. So it is important to stay away from giving in to complaints or demands because we so desperately want to avoid conflict with our kids.

As follows are few examples of what is **enabling**:

- Allowing your child to avoid all uncomfortable situations.
- Cover up for things your child did wrong, forgot to do, or did poorly etc.
- Enforce house rules inconsistently because you feel sorry for them or you are afraid they will not like you.
- Intervene with other adults to prevent your child from experiencing disappointment, rather than helping him/her work through their feelings.
- Preventing natural consequences to take place.

Resource, *The Child Mind Institute*

Department News:

[English/Language Arts](#)

By Melissa Durkee, Vicky Spicer & Christopher Pickett

In Mrs. Spicer’s 6th grade class we are continuing our unit on conventions of Standard English, in preparation for the fast approaching SBAC test. We are practicing comma skills, prefix, suffix, root words, and determining meaning of unknown and multiple-meaning words and phrases. Next, we will dive into a mini unit, where we will write narratives. The end of the year will be focused on reading the novel, *The True Confessions of Charlotte Doyle*, where students will continue to practice the skill of determining a central idea of a text.

In Ms. Durkee's 6th grade class, students are completing a project related to a book they read the 2nd Trimester. We will continue to work on parts of speech, the conventions of standard English (capitalization, punctuation, and spelling), and vocabulary development. Our reading focus will be on the integration of knowledge and ideas, which includes comparing/contrasting literature and evaluating arguments in informational text. Students will experiment with both argumentative and narrative writing. After Spring Break, the class will read the novel *Touching Spirit Bear* (by Ben Mikaelson) and apply their skills from the previous unit on Reading Literature.

In 7th grade, students are working on real-life applications of argumentative writing and persuasive technique. The students will be applying these techniques in an unorthodox manner in their "Gross Soda" project. Students will be producing a sales pitch, designing a logo, and presenting their idea to their peers. I am happy to report that we have some budding marketers in our student body. In addition to argumentative writing, students are working to refine their conventions in preparation for the SBAC test.

In 8th grade, students have been refining their skills as researchers. As ninth grade approaches, the expectations for quality vetting of sources is put at a premium, and our 8th graders have done a fine job of seeking these sources out. In addition to research, students have been improving their craft as poets as they read and emulate some of the styles of a variety of poets. In the coming weeks, students will be working on a poet study where they will note the characteristics and style of the poet as well as the influences from their era. Of course, students will continue to develop their abilities in determining figurative meaning in text, improve their comprehension strategies, and expand their understanding of the conventions.

Mathematics

By Melissa Durkee & Sarah Burton



Click [here](#) for math books online

Students in 6th grade just finished a Geometry Unit solving problems related to area, volume, and surface area. **Statistics** will be the focus for 6th grade students at the beginning of the 3rd trimester. This includes displaying and summarizing data (dot plots, histograms, and box plots), calculating measures of center (mean, median, and mode), and determining measures of variation (range and mean absolute deviation). Statistics will be followed by a continuation of algebraic expressions & equations, as well as a unit on ratios & proportional reasoning.

7th grade students have been working through their Geometry Unit, which finishes with a chapter on finding volume and surface area of cylinders, cones, pyramids, and spheres. We will end the year focusing on **Statistics and Probability**. Topics to be covered include displaying and interpreting data (stem-and-leaf plots and box plots), understanding and applying random sampling methods, making inferences from data samples, and distinguishing between theoretical and experimental probability.

8th graders just finished a unit exploring the Pythagorean Theorem. They are now moving into **Geometric Transformations**... translating, reflecting, rotating, and dilating points in a coordinate plane and comparing the results of the different transformations. Our year will end focusing on **Statistics**, adding scatter plots and two-way tables to the ways we can display and analyze data.

Science

By Christine McNeil & Jenny Sevigny

In 7th grade Science this trimester we will be continuing our study of the human body! We will be discussing the digestive system and will then move on to DNA, heredity, and the reproductive system. The year will end with a discussion on food preservation and bacteria!



In 8th grade Science we have moved on to our unit on chemistry! We are working to understand what atoms are and how they interact. Our final unit of the year will be a culmination of our forces and motion unit focusing on building and designing bridges to withstand a variety of forces!

In 6th grade Science we just finished our weather unit by taking our weather tools outside and collecting data such as temp., relative humidity, wind direction and speed. Don't worry we got it in before our lovely April snow storm! Our next unit focuses on Ecosystems and Biomes. We will be taking a walk to Avery Pond to get water for our snail biome jars and also incubating our chicken eggs after April vacation. Pretty soon it will be warm enough to take our classroom pet Baljeet the tortoise out for some dandelions!

Social Studies

By Christine McNeil & Vicky Spicer

In 6th Grade Social Studies we have started our unit on Ancient India. We are studying how the Harrapans began this civilization in the Indus River valley continuing with the theme of water equals life. The main religions of Ancient India are Hinduism and Buddhism, and we're seeing how these ancient practices still influence modern day India. We are watching a movie about Ghandi and looking at his message of nonviolence and making connections to Martin Luther King Jr. and Ceasar Chavez.



In 7th Grade Social Studies we are full force into our Ancient Rome Unit. We are covering topics such as geography and the rise of Rome, including its legendary origins of twin brothers, Romulus and Remus. We are covering the early republic, making connections between government and society of Ancient Rome and the modern day American three branches of government. We're studying the forum, gladiators, and major leaders such as Spartacus, Caesar, and Octavian. We are also looking at major Roman engineering and architectural feats such as aqueducts, the arch, and Roman roads.

In 8th Grade Social Studies we have 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 Jennifer Foltz and Heather Wolf

Fair doesn't mean giving every child the same thing, it means giving every child what they need. -Rick Lavoie

“Differentiated instruction is doing what’s fair for students. It’s a collection of best practices strategically employed to maximize students’ learning at every turn, including giving them the tools to handle anything that is undifferentiated. It requires us to do different things for different students some, or a lot, of the time in order for them to learn when the general classroom approach does not meet students’ needs. It is not individualized instruction, though that may happen from time to time as warranted. It’s whatever works to advance the students. It’s highly effective teaching.”- Rick Wormelli : *Fair Isn't Always Equal, Assessing & Grading in the Differentiated Classroom*

Library/Media

By 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 on evaluating their own media use and be considering how to be good digital citizens and ethical users of the internet. 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 2018. Our eighth graders will be evaluating internet sources for bias and credibility 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

Eric McGlone

Since January, all three grade levels have been participating in a “team sport” unit. The activities have included basketball, floor hockey and boccer (combination of soccer and basketball.) Students have worked hard to master the basic skills of each sport. At the conclusion of each sport unit, students put their newly learned skills to use and competed in a full game!

As the weather begins to break, we hope to get outside to begin our lacrosse unit!

Español

Sr. Stef

Test your 6th grade students at home by asking them to describe you! We have been working hard at learning a multitude of descriptive words as well as the vocabulary needed to describe clothing. Test your child at home and see how they do!

7th graders have had the opportunity to create their own hotels in an exciting tourist location of their choice and have also spent some time learning the lakes and rivers of South America. We are now working through the 5 senses with interesting “sense based” activities to go along with them.

8th grade has finished verbs for a short time at least. They took their big test and have moved on to maps and directions. We will have some fun leading blindfolded classmates through a maze using only our new direction vocab. Then comes a class favorite... food!

PRESTON PUBLIC SCHOOLS
Preston Plains Middle School
1 Route 164, Preston, CT 06365
860-889-3831
