



## Preston Plains Middle School

Third Marking Period Newsletter - April 2019

---

# Spring has sprung!

Amazing though it may be, we are in the final trimester and headed for the end of the school year! We have scheduled all of our year-end events. A letter was sent home to parents on March 29th listing events for your calendars (see copy on the PPMS webpage). Spring is the time for field trips and class trips. Teachers send home notices well in advance of events, but it's always a good idea to be monitoring our school website and our online school calendar for notice of upcoming events. Please also be aware that we have now used both of our reserved Storm Days; as a result, May 23rd and May 24th will be full school days for all students.

---

### NEWS FROM PPMS DEPARTMENTS

## Superintendent's News:

By Dr. Roy Seitsinger

Happy Spring!

We are glad for our relatively mild winter this year.

As we head toward the end of the school year, there are many activities and events that our staff and students and families are involved in; please check with our schools to see what interests you.

Spring is also the time when the District presents and defends its budget. This year our focus is Social-Emotional Learning. Our children are experiencing more and more anxiety, depression, and behavior issues that need deeper and more frequent support. We have already implemented programs

and developed school-based practices that support our students. Where our need is most great is in the area of a school social worker. A part-time school social worker will help students and staff identify needs that interfere with learning and work with students to get the services that they need. School social workers work with families to resolve social, emotional, and behavioral problems through assessment, consultation, community networking, creation of behavioral management plans, as well as small group and individual interventions that bridge the home, school, and community gaps.

We encourage you to come to any of the public meetings that discuss our budget.

In the meantime, have a wonderful Spring. Be well. Be safe.

## PPMS Main Office News

by Dr. Ivy Davis-Tomczuk, Principal

Now is the time of year to consider summer camps for your child. Recently, a catalog of Mystic Seaport summer camp offerings was sent home. Programs for middle school students include Navigation and Knots, Marine Explorers, LEGO camps, and a variety of sailing opportunities. Preston Parks and Recreation will soon be posting their offerings for this coming summer season. You can contact Parks and Recreation at [recreation@preston-ct.org](mailto:recreation@preston-ct.org) for more information.

Even though summer is meant to be a time for relaxation and recharging, there's still plenty of time to build skills through reading and math games. Elaine Lettiere, our Library-Media Specialist, will be providing information about our Summer Reading Challenge closer to the end of the school year. There are also some great home activities on [www.readwritethink.org](http://www.readwritethink.org) (see the Parent & After-School Activities tab at the top right). For math practice, consider some of the following programs and apps:

- Prodigy Math Game - covers essential math skills;
- DragonBox Algebra - introduces algebraic concepts through a kid-friendly interface;
- Geometry Pad - builds understanding of shapes and their properties;
- Khan Academy - deepens understanding of math concepts (now includes other content areas).

## Nurse's News

By Ms. Jacquie Burzycki, PPMS Nurse

### **Sun Safety for Middle School Students**

Winter is behind us, which most of us are grateful for, and now it's time to think about our sun exposure and that of our children to prevent the future development of skin cancer.

The latest research, as reported by the Norris Cotton Cancer Center at Dartmouth School of Medicine, shows that **75% of teens surveyed reported experiencing at least one sunburn during the previous summer. Only 33% used sun protection regularly.** Sunburn is frequently seen in the health office after spring break, but particularly, following the Memorial Day break, which is only a few weeks away from summer solstice, June 21<sup>st</sup>. Summer Solstice occurs when the earth's northern pole is tilted to its maximum toward the sun, making it our longest day in the year for the northern hemisphere. It may not seem all

that warm but the sun is stronger in May than it is in August, and we are no longer in the habit of applying sunscreen.

The research shows that 90% of skin cancers are caused from sun exposure, and 80% of a lifetime of sun exposure occurs prior to the age of 18. **During childhood just one blistering sunburn during childhood doubles the risk of developing skin cancer later in life.**

Multiply that fact by repeated sunburn annually, until the age of 18.

Middle school is a time of transition, and young people are beginning to make their own decisions, including health decisions. Parents are very important role models and sources of information at this time. By the time students reach high school their behaviors are much harder to change.

Here is a list of Dartmouth Sunsafe recommends for you and your children:

- *Apply sunscreen of SPF 15 (or higher) 30 minutes before you go outdoors.*
- *Always buy sunscreen with an SPF (Sun Protection Factor) of at least 15.*
- *The sunscreen you use should say it protects from both UVA and UVB rays (broad spectrum).*
- *Reapply sunscreen at least every 2 hours and more often if you have been in the water or sweating.*
- *Keep an extra bottle of sunscreen in your car or sport bag.*
- *Wear a hat and protective clothing when outdoors. Hats should protect ears and necks as well as faces.*
- *Tightly woven fabrics block UV rays best.*
- *Wear sunglasses -- pick a pair that block all UV rays.*
- *Stay in the shade whenever possible, especially between 11 am and 3 pm, large umbrellas are a great way to create shade.*

*Especially for adults: Do not use tanning booths or other artificial lights for tanning. Examine your skin regularly. If you notice new, different, or peculiar moles on your skin, contact a physician IMMEDIATELY.*

**Enjoy the weather with the abundance of outdoor activities, and stay Sunsafe.**

## Psychologist News

by Mrs. Olof Sigmarsdottir



Click [here](#) for Advisory Page

## **Conflict Resolution and Conflict Management Styles**

Conflicts are a part of everyday life, so how we handle them is important. Conflict resolution consists of a series of skills which are used by two people (or more) who have agreed to work together to resolve a problem they are faced with. Through the use of communication skills, conflicts can be managed before they escalate. Resolving conflict is rarely about who is right. It is about acknowledgment and appreciation of differences.

People deal with conflicts in a variety of ways. Below are five conflict resolution strategies that people often use to handle conflicts (resources gathered from [theparticipationcompany.com](http://theparticipationcompany.com), and Barb Westwater, Coordinated Health Education Institutes).

1. **Avoidance** means that a person knows there is a conflict but chooses not to deal with it. An avoider walks away from the problem and may avoid the person with whom he or she is having the conflict. Usually when conflict is avoided, nothing is resolved.
2. **Accommodation** means putting aside one's own needs and concerns in order to satisfy the needs of the other person. They are being cooperative but not assertive.
3. **Competition** is trying to win or make the other person lose by giving in. In this style, a person defends his/her position or pursues his/her own goals without regard for the needs of the other person. This style assumes that in order for one person to win, the other must lose. They are assertive but not cooperative.
4. **Compromise** is giving up something in order to get something. It is an attempt to seek middle ground. This happens when participants are partially assertive and cooperative.
5. **Collaboration** is working together to satisfy the needs of both people. It involves problem solving and assumes that both people can get their needs met. One party does not have to win at the other's expense. This is a method when people are both assertive and cooperative.

When dealing with a conflict it may be helpful to teach your middle school child the following skills:

- Use confident body language
- Make eye contact
- Say how you feel, using I-Statements
- Ask for what you need
- Apologize if you have done something to make the situations worse
- Know when to walk away
- Tell them what a true friend is

## Department News:

### **English/Language Arts**

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

In Mrs. Spicer's 6th grade class we are wrapping up our novel unit after finishing *The Cay* and completing our final projects on a topic of our choice relating to the story. We will present our claims and findings in oral presentations to our class using our Google Slides. We will then transition into a writers workshop unit where we will practice writing informative and explanatory texts, as well as arguments and supporting our claims.

In Ms. Durkee's 6th grade class, we have begun working with Informational Texts for the 3rd trimester. Students will examine similar concepts as they had for Literary Texts, i.e. Key Ideas and Details, Craft & Structure, and Integration of Knowledge & Ideas, but the focus will now be on non-fiction pieces. Students will hone their writing abilities to develop a persuasive piece as well as apply many of the new skills relating to informational texts to conduct their own research and write a short paper. For the remainder of the year, students will continue to work with parts of speech (with an emphasis on pronouns), the conventions of standard English (capitalization, punctuation, and spelling), and vocabulary development.

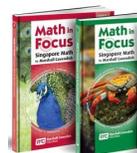
Wow! Can you believe the end of your child's first year of middle school is almost here! They have been doing great. In Mrs. Wolf's 6th grade class, we are reading the novel *Pay it Forward*. Students have been applying skills like determining theme, summarizing and identifying figurative language to the novel. We will end the year with writing an expository piece. Students will continue their reading practice in Readworks and Freckle as well as grammar practice in NoRedInk. These are all websites that students can log into and work on at home as well.

In 7th grade, students are producing an array of written genres from narrative, argumentative, and informative pieces. Recently they developed a marketing campaign for a "gross" soda of their design. As we progress forward we are working to develop our skills in research and applying research to our writing, citing reliable sources in the process. Additionally, students have been working with NoRedInk for the purposes of reinforcing and furthering their understanding of grammar and English language conventions, as well as reading a variety of non-fiction and fictional pieces through our use of Readworks.

8th graders are quickly preparing for the end of their tenure at PPMS - students are beginning to brainstorm speeches for the Recognition and Achievement Ceremony already! Students are working on their understanding of both literal and figurative meaning of poetry and will be studying a poet of their choice, producing a mini-research project on that topic. Returning from break, students will be developing a thesis and defending it through research. As with the 7th grade, they will be using the programs NoRedInk and Readworks to help refine their grammar and reading skills.

## Mathematics

By Ms. Melissa Durkee & Mrs. Evelyn Gallegos



Click [here](#) for math books online

During the 3rd trimester, students in 6th grade will finish up a unit on algebraic expressions & equations. This will be followed by a brief unit on ratios & proportional reasoning, including finding equivalent ratios, determining unit rates, and calculating percentages. Before the year ends, we will find time to tackle certain aspects of Statistics as well as further explore the Geometry standards.

7th graders are just about done with the scale drawings unit. We are headed toward the last two standards in 7th grade math: sampling populations and probability. Those concepts are within the statistical domain and will keep us busy through the end of the school year.

8th graders are focused on their geometry standards: The Pythagorean Theorem, transformations, and volume of cylinders, cones, and spheres. They will then move on to statistical data that includes interpreting scatter plots and two-way tables.

## **Science**

By Mrs. Christine McNeil & Mrs. Jenny Sevigny

In 6th grade Science we're finishing up our Weather Unit by going outside! The students are using a variety of tools to measure and chart the weather. Next, is our Ecosystems unit where in the beginning we talk about weather vs. climate and how that affects the different biomes and ecosystems. This year the students will be creating a Wormery, Aqua-farm and terrarium. They will have to research what the animals that will be living in their systems need to live and survive there. Finally, we end our year studying Plate Tectonics and The Rock Cycle.



In 7th grade this trimester we will be wrapping up our discussions about the human body and will be moving into the study of DNA, looking closely at how we inherit traits from our parents. In addition, we will be examining evolution! Students have been working hard on their research and presentations on the digestive, cardiovascular, and respiratory systems.

In 8th grade, we are working on our Deepwater Horizon and Chemistry unit! Students have been studying atoms and the periodic table and will be diving into chemical reactions. We will end the year talking about waves and finally working on our engineering task of bridget building.

## **Social Studies**

By Mrs. Christine McNeil, Mr. Chet Stefanowicz & Mrs. Vicky Spicer

In 6th grade Social Studies with Sr. Stef. we are learning all about the continent of Africa. We have talked about the beginning of our species and looked generally at the geography of Africa. Students are presenting on different ancient African empires while we are concurrently reading the book "A Long Walk to Water". We will be moving on to the Middle East and finishing the year with Egypt.



In sixth grade Social Studies with Mrs. McNeil we are mid-way through our Ancient India Unit. The students are completing 5 missions that incorporate the Grapes of Civilization that include Geography, Religion, Achievements, Politics/Government, Economy and Social Structure. They are also reading a historical fiction novel of their choice about characters who live in India and are children their own age. Our class project ( which they need to bring in a box for), is creating a story cube for a Jataka Tale! These are moral stories of the Buddha during his 550 reincarnated lives! For our last unit of the year we will be traveling to Ancient China

In 7th Grade Social Studies with Mrs. Spicer we just wrapped our unit on the Roman Republic, which included exciting topics as the Punic Wars and Gladiator battles, as well 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!"

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 Mrs. Jennifer Foltz and Mrs. Heather Wolf

"If your child is struggling in school, what happens in the classroom can affect how he feels and acts once he's back home. But it's important to remember that it works both ways: What happens at home can make a big difference in your child's ability to bounce back from difficulties and keep trying hard in school."

This quote from the article *Why It's Important to Make Simple Changes at Home* by Lexi Walters Wright illustrates the fact that when home and school work together, students benefit more! Her tips are geared for students with ADD/ADHD or Executive Functioning issues but will certainly benefit all students. This article as well as other great resources for parents can be found at [www.understood.org](http://www.understood.org).

## Library News

By Mrs. 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 creating research questions and finding 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 2019. 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. McGlone

Spring is here! Students just completed their basketball and boccer-ball unit. We will now transition into lacrosse which is a new skill/sport for many students. Our focus will be learning the three basic skills of lacrosse which include the cradle, throwing and catching. After lacrosse, students will participate in the second phase of the Connecticut Fitness Test. Students will be tested in the mile run, push-up, curl-up and sit & reach. They will compare their previous scores and mark their improvements.

In Health, we will continue our focus on healthy decisions and behaviors. We will finish the semester with a unit on Human Growth & Development.

# **Español**

By Mr. Chet Stefanowicz

*6th grade- Students are working on describing themselves and other people around them. We have been learning clothing vocabulary as well as physical descriptions and character traits. We will then be reading a book about pirates and will finish the year with a unit on popular sports in Latin America.*

*7th grade- Students just finished a unit on comparisons where we got to learn all about Andean animals. They are finishing up on daily routines at the moment and then we will be moving on to reading a book on a magical statue in Bolivia. We will finish up the year learning fruits and vegetables and hopefully have time to make and present salsas!*

*8th grade- Students just finished up with a unit on ordering in a restaurant where they had to create menus and then “serve” other students entirely in Spanish. We are starting into command forms and learning about household chores. We will finish up the year learning about the verb “estar” along with emotions and locations.*

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

---