



## Preston Plains Middle School

Special Edition Newsletter - May 2020



“At times, our own light goes out and is rekindled by a spark from another person. Each of us has cause to think with deep gratitude of those who have lighted the flame within us.” – Albert Schweitzer

This special edition of the PPMS Newsletter is dedicated to those who have lit the flame of gratitude within all members of the PPMS staff--our parents. Without your efforts on behalf of your child or children, without the schedules you establish and maintain, the support and encouragement you provide, the on-going communication that enables teachers and paraeducators to better meet your needs...in short, without you, we could not have transitioned as well as we have from teaching within a brick-and-mortar school to teaching online. Our partnership is strong and deeply appreciated. Please allow each of us to share our gratitude in our own words. We are in this together for the long haul - Panther Pride!

We also wanted to show PPMS students how much we miss them. Check out our video - <https://youtu.be/ud96snlliYM>. You'll also find the link on the PPMS webpage.



From Dr. Roy Seitsinger, Superintendent:

Dear Parents and Caregivers,

We hope that all of your families are safe and well.

**The massive and unprecedented social changes that we have experienced in response to the COVID-19 virus have been challenging, to say the least. As we moved into the virtual instructional world, your exceptional work in assuming a unique and dynamic partnership with educators and your children to offer home-based distance learning**

experiences is deeply appreciated. As we move forward with new changes, we will explore how to keep best what is working well and look for creative ways to continue to improve our learning community.

Much is on our schedule in the next few months. High on the list is the passing of our FY 21 budget request for next year. Please call into our presentation to the Preston Board of Finance on Thursday, May 14, 2020, at 7 PM to learn about what is essential for next year and future years. We need your support to maintain our programming and staffing. Please contact the central office, our Board of Education members, or your school principals if you have any questions.

We hope you have a safe, healthy, and Happy Spring!

## From Dr. Ivy Davis-Tomczuk, Principal

So much has changed so fast and so completely for all of us that at times it has been dizzying and overwhelming. But as with any crisis, we take one step forward at a time, and slowly we begin to acclimate. The transition PPMS staff members have made since March 16th has been significant, and the changes in each Preston household have been even more significant. I have no idea how many Preston parents secretly wanted to be teachers or seriously thought about home-schooling their kids, but I'm sure it wasn't all of you! Nevertheless, all of you are now homeschooling parents teaching your children or overseeing how your children engage in online learning. Of course, this is in addition to engaging in your own work and the myriad other responsibilities that consume your days.

We know it is difficult for you, and we also know that the time you are taking to engage, encourage, support, guide, prop up, and herd your kids is extremely worthwhile. We are dependent on your help now to ensure that math problems are figured, reading passages are understood, and writing happens along the way. We appreciate how much it takes to do what you are doing, and we are so grateful to you for it. So, please accept this message as my virtual hug of support, and know that we are here for you. 🙏

## From PPMS Staff Members -

**Mrs. April Abrantes, 7th/8th Spanish and English Learner Coordinator:**

I am extremely grateful for the support and guidance that you give to your children everyday that enables them to stay motivated and work on their learning. As a parent of a middle school child, I understand the challenges, frustrations, and sometimes meltdowns that can arise on a daily basis when it comes to doing online schoolwork. I would like to thank you for supporting your children at this time as they cope with constant changes through online schooling and becoming socially

isolated. I have loved teaching and working with your students this year, and even though I can not be a part of their lives at this time, I am grateful to know that they are being supported at home.

**Mrs. Heather Ballestrini, Paraeducator:**

I want to thank all of the parents and guardians at PPMS for taking on this difficult task of supporting your children from home with their online classes. Together, we will get through this historical journey.

**Mrs. Cindy Bearden, Paraeducator:**

To parents and guardians, I would like to express my sincere gratitude for all your help, emotionally and academically throughout this overwhelming school closure. We will get through this together. Stay strong. Stay well.

**Mrs. Deborah Brown, Paraeducator:**

I am writing to thank you for your support during these last 7 weeks. During this time you have been supporting your child/children socially, emotionally, and academically. It has been a trying time for all of us. As social distancing continues, we will need to support each other in order to educate our children. Stay well and be safe.

**Jacque Burzycki, School Nurse:**

Hats off to all parents/guardians. You are amazing! The balancing act that you are walking every day between work, family, and school, must be overwhelming at times. Thank you for hanging in there, and keeping your children healthy, safe, and educated. I look forward to their safe return as happy, healthy children. Stay safe. ❤️❤️❤️

## Mr. Joseph Durfee, Instrumental Music/Band:

Happy Spring! I am truly grateful to all students and parents for the connection in Google Classroom. I certainly consider it a highly valuable tool in keeping students engaged with instrumental music. At this time, students are strongly encouraged to keep a consistent practice routine. Some musical repertoire will dovetail into next year and students who practice will only be more confident in their ability!

I have received a few video entries of student performances and have been deeply gratified by their personal commitment to their instrument.

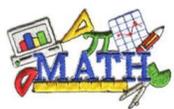
Going forward, I hope to share inspiring musical performances on Google Classroom that spark interest and curiosity. This includes excerpts of U.S. Military Bands, solo artists, and other instrument tutorials. Until we meet again, stay the course!

## Ms. Melissa Durkee - 6-1 Math/ELA, 6-2 Math, 7-3 Math/ELA



**"Life isn't about waiting for the storm to pass. It's about learning how to dance in the rain."** (Vivian Greene - author)

A HUGE "Thank you!" goes out to all parents/guardians for supporting your children at home with their Math and/or ELA assignments. I know it must be incredibly difficult to manage work, home, and **now** school with your children. Making sure they are keeping up with the schoolwork posted on [Google Classroom](#) and checking their school GMAIL account is essential to their success during this remote learning endeavor. I truly appreciate your willingness to communicate with me about your students' progress and reaching out to me via [email](#) for guidance.



In Math, students are completing RETEACH worksheets for instruction and practicing with corresponding assignments on [ALEKS](#). They even play [Prodigy](#) together as a class on Fridays!!

In ELA, students have weekly assignments on [Readworks](#) for comprehension skills and [NoRedInk](#) for grammar practice. Occasionally, other assignments are posted on Google Classroom for Math and/or ELA class.



Thank you AND your children for making this unexpected transition to online learning possible and being willing to learn/adjust expectations along with us! Teachers, students, and parents/guardians - I hate to sound cliché, but **"We are all in this together!!"**

**Mrs. Jennifer Foltz, Resource:**

"Begin each day with a grateful heart" <3

I am grateful each day for the privilege to work with you and your children!! The efforts of families during this difficult time has been fantastic and I couldn't do it without your help and support :) I thank you from the bottom of my heart, and I send you all my best wishes for peace & wellness during these trying times.

**Mrs. Laila Griffin, 7th/8th Math:**

Thank you to all parents and students for being so resilient and making the best of a difficult situation. Your flexibility as we embark on this new virtual learning journey has been greatly appreciated. As difficult as it has been for us to be apart, it has been wonderful to see your children and interact with them through Google Meet sessions. My heart smiles when I hear about the kindness and support we receive as we navigate this uncharted territory. We will get through this together. Take care and stay well!

**Mrs. Diane Hansen, Art:**

*Please accept my heartfelt thanks for everything you do every day to support and care for your family. Wishing you health and happiness until the time when we can safely be together again.*



**Mr. Jason Hicks, Paraeducator:**

A Great big thank you, Parents/ Guardians for your help and support of your and our students through these unprecedented times. I know it is not easy to keep the motivation and interest, but you're all doing an amazing job. We are all in this together and we will get through this! Stay safe and stay well and stay **Preston Strong!**

**Mrs. Linda Jancewicz, Paraeducator:**

I would like to thank all of you parents, grandparents or guardians for everything you are doing during this difficult time. It is a different time with many new experiences for all of us. However, for the parents or grandparents I have had the pleasure of talking to, I have truly enjoyed that. Thank you for taking the time to share how things have been going with your family. Stay strong, stay safe and stay healthy, we'll get through this together.

**Mrs. Elaine Lettiere, Library/Media:**

**Unity is strength... when there is teamwork and collaboration,  
wonderful things can be achieved. ~Mattie Stepanek**

What a whirlwind of a time to be on the front lines of education! As a teacher. As a parent. As a student. I feel like every day brings new challenges but what I see is an incredible energy that is building to make sure that our kids are learning and growing. I thank you so sincerely for your efforts to keep your household going, your families safe, and your kids engaged. We could not be moving ahead without all of your support. I dearly miss our students and our time in our physical spaces. I look forward to the time when we can be together again. Until then, keep up the good work, fight the good fight, and know with my deep appreciation that we are in it together!

**Miss Emma Lotreck, General Music/Chorus:**

Accept this as my ♪ of thanks for supporting and encouraging your children!

May these next weeks hold many dance parties, outdoor adventures, and moments of joy🎵

**Mr. Eric McGlone, Physical Education:**

Thank you for all the help and support! Without you, none of this is possible. We will continue to work together and get through these uncommon times. Can't wait to see everyone. Thanks again!

**Mr. Christopher Pickett, 7th/8th ELA:**

Hi families! During these unprecedented and *uncommon* times, I'm reminded of a quote from Andrew Carnegie about teamwork: "Teamwork is the ability to work together toward a common vision. The ability to direct individual accomplishments toward organizational objectives. It is the fuel that allows common people to attain uncommon results." While there has been disruption to our traditional method of instruction, it has been through partnership between PPMS staff and the Preston community that we are able to make things work. Our vision remains unchanged and our collaborative spirit allows for us to adjust and achieve our goal. Thank you for your support during these times. Looking forward to a time to interact in person!

**Mrs. Jennifer Sevigny, 7th/8th Science (and filling in for 6th Science):**

Hello Parents!

A huge thank you to all of you for all the help and support you have given not only to your students but to the PPMS staff! These are not easy times for anyone and I know there is so much going on! I miss all my students so much and I am so thankful that we are able to communicate through *Google Classroom*. Please know, your efforts do not go unnoticed. In our house, we always say "teamwork makes the dreamwork." While this may not be the best of times, all we can do is work together to make it the best situation possible! Thank you for your kind words, your quick responses when we reach out and for the support you are giving your students as they adapt and attempt to learn in a way that is totally new. They have been doing awesome and that is in large part to all you are doing. Never hesitate to reach out with any questions or concerns! I am only an email away.

**Mrs. Olof Sigmarsdottir, School Psychologist:**



Dear Parents,

I just want to take a moment to commend you all on the amazing job you are doing trying to balance work, house chores, self-care, and now co-teaching. Thank you so much for your partnership, we couldn't do it without you!!!

In addition, I want to inform you that I will continue to provide your students with social/emotional/learning through our Advisory program by email on weekly bases. Please feel free to ask your child to share the activities with you, because social/emotional support has never been more relevant for our children as it is now. I miss seeing their happy faces and being able to support them in person :) **Thank you again, and stay well!!!**

**Mrs. Victoria Spicer, 7th/8th Social Studies:**

Hi Parents!

What a whirlwind, crazy time to be alive- and be a parent! I can commiserate with you on many levels as we wade through these uncertain times. With ever changing moments of fear, frustration, anger, joy, happiness & peace, at the end of the day, we are still mom or dad to these kiddos in front of us.

I wanted to take time to say, "THANK YOU!" Thank you for all you are doing to aid in this surreal learning process as we (the teachers) attempt to provide support from a digital platform for our students- your children. ❤️ It goes without saying that I truly, deeply miss each and every single one of my students. I hope that you and your family are well, healthy and safe. Remember- it is okay to not be okay - and sometimes we all need a little help, or a little time to heal. Please know I am only an email away with any questions or comments you might have regarding your child's progress in 7th and 8th grade social studies work and also just here in general! I have adored talking to many of you over the last few weeks, commiserating and connecting. I extend all of my support possible during this remarkable time. Thank you, and be well! 😊

**Mr. Chet Stefanowicz, 6th Spanish, 7th Social Studies (and filling in for 6th grade Social Studies):**

I continue to be amazed daily by the level of engagement your children are demonstrating. None of that achievement is possible

without the active participation of parents at home. Without the buy-in at home, none of this would be possible.

I have made comments in meetings that my house is currently home to three certified teachers and only one child in school, yet we are still exhausted and frustrated. I am sure many of you are as well. You did not sign up for this, but you are demonstrating the flexibility and patience that are hallmarks of great teachers! I miss seeing your children and I look forward to the time when we can be back together in person.



**Mrs. Susan Strader,**

Unlike you, my household is quiet with our youngest son, a College senior and my husband here at home. Quiet but very busy. I sorely miss my school "children", the daily interactions and school day routines that we all thrive on. We are experiencing an incredible historic event TOGETHER, which provides me some solace in the unknown of it all. I am so appreciative of all you are doing, **THANK YOU** from the bottom of my heart for supporting your child's on-going learning from home.

**P**artners in Education

**A**vailable with a hug

**R**eady to help

**E**nduring many hardships

**N**ovice homeschoolers

**T**otally awesome

**S**taying strong

**Mrs. Kaitlyn Vacchina, Speech-Language Pathologist:**

Thank you for all your support and encouragement during this time. We couldn't be doing this without you. These are times that we were not prepared for as teachers and we are learning each day. As a parent myself, these days can be very overwhelming. You are doing amazing work and it is appreciated by all of us. We are grateful for you!

*Mrs. Heather Wolf*

6th ELA, 8th Resource:

**Thank You, Parents!**

Thank you for creating study spaces.

Thank you for making "school schedules" at home.

Thank you for navigating Google Classroom.

Thank you for motivating your child to complete their work.

Thank you for guiding your child through this uncertain time.

Thank you for leading them through lessons.

Thank you for becoming your child's middle school teacher.

Thank you for everything you have done to help your child learn.

Thank you for being a role model.

**PRESTON PUBLIC SCHOOLS**  
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