

# PMSD CONNECT ON

Our Mission: To Prepare All Students for Tomorrow's Challenges and Opportunities

2023-24: Issue 1



**1st Day of School**  
**Monday, August 28, 2023**

### Labor Day Holiday:

All schools will be closed on Friday, September 1, 2023 and Monday, September 4, 2023.

### PMSD Open Houses

- **PM East HS:** Tuesday, Aug. 15, 2023, 6:30 p.m., Gr 9 & New Student Orientation; Friday, Aug. 18, 2023, Gr 9 - 12, 11 a.m. - 1 p.m.
- **PM West HS:** Tuesday, Aug. 15, 2023, 6:30 p.m., Gr 9 & New Student Orientation; Thursday, Aug. 17, 2023, Gr 10 - 12, 6:30 p.m.; Friday, Aug. 25, 11 a.m. - 1 p.m. (Walkthrough)
- **East Junior HS:** Monday, Aug. 21, 2023, 3 p.m. - 7 p.m.
- **West Junior HS:** Tuesday, Aug. 22, 2023, 3 p.m. - 7 p.m.
- **Clear Run Elementary Center:** Wednesday, Aug. 23, 2023, Gr 1 & 2, 4 p.m. - 6 p.m.; Thursday, Aug. 24, 2023, K Only, 4 p.m. - 6 p.m.
- **Clear Run Intermediate School:** Wednesday, Aug. 23, 2023, 5 p.m. - 7 p.m.
- **Swiftwater Elementary Center:** Wednesday, Aug. 23, 2023, Gr K only, 4 p.m. - 6 p.m.; Thursday, Aug. 24, 2023, Gr 1 - 3, 4 p.m. - 6 p.m.
- **Swiftwater Intermediate School:** Thursday, Aug. 24, 2023, Gr 4 - 6, 5 p.m. - 7 p.m.
- **Tobyhanna Elementary Center:** Thursday, Aug. 24, 2023, Gr K - 2, 4 p.m. - 6 p.m.; Gr 3 - 6, 5 p.m. - 7 p.m.
- **PMSD Cyber:** Wednesday, Aug. 23, 2023, Gr K - 12, 4 p.m. - 6 p.m.

## All PMSD students NOW eligible for free breakfast & lunch

The Pocono Mountain School District (PMSD) received approval from the Pennsylvania Department of Education (PDE) in July for the district to change its School Nutrition Program, which includes the National School Lunch Program and School Breakfast Program, to the Community Eligibility Provision (CEP) program starting with the 2023-24 school year.

This means all students in Kindergarten through Grade 12 who attend Pocono Mountain School District schools are eligible to receive a free breakfast and free lunch when attending school on school days. Also, parents will not have to complete the free meals applications for the upcoming school year and for as long as the district is approved for CEP.

"We are very pleased that our district will be able to offer all students a free breakfast and free lunch on school days starting with the first day of school," said Dr. Elizabeth Robison, Superintendent of Schools. "Providing free meals at schools for students helps ensure all students receive nutritious meals at school. Food insecurity is a very real thing for many families in our district and across the nation. We are glad that through this program we can help reduce food insecurity concerns for our students and help them focus instead on learning."

The School Board gave its approval at the Board meeting on May 17th for the Business Office to seek approval from the PA Department of Education for Pocono Mountain to switch its School Nutrition Program to the CEP program, allowing all students to receive free breakfast and lunch when in school on school days, beginning with the start of the new school year on Monday, August 28, 2023.

CEP is a non-pricing meal service option for schools and school districts in low-income areas. CEP allows the nation's highest poverty schools and districts to serve breakfast and lunch at no cost to all enrolled students without collecting household applications. Instead, schools that adopt CEP are reimbursed using a formula based on



*Students learn more about healthy eating and farm fresh organic foods as part of the Farm to School Grant program and partnership between Chartwells and Pocono Organics. Pocono Mountain School District was awarded a Farm to School Grant of \$5,052.13 in 2023, to pay for a part-time registered dietician to help implement wellness initiatives in the district to include procurement and incorporation of local produce and herbs into school meals and to install five hydroponic gardens in schools.*



*Clear Run Intermediate School student Alynn Reese goes through the cafeteria line at school. Pocono Mountain School District has received approval to offer all students a free breakfast and lunch on school days beginning with the 2023-24 school year as part of the Community Eligibility Provision program.*

the percentage of students categorically eligible for free meals based on their participation in other specific means-tested programs, such as the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) and Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF).

**What Does It Mean For Your School or Local Educational Agency? What does it do?**

Allows schools and local educational agencies (LEAs) located in low-income areas to provide free breakfast and

lunch to all students

Eliminates the burden of collecting household applications to determine eligibility for school meal programs

### Who benefits?

Everyone!

**Students:** Access to free nutritious meals for all students, no stigma, and less time spent in cashier lines and more time to eat nutritious meals

**Parents:** No household application means less paperwork and no worries about lunch accounts

**School Staff:** Streamlined meal service operation and more time for students to consume their food

**Administrators:** Reduced paperwork and administrative costs, no need to track unpaid meal charges, improved program integrity, and more nourished students ready to learn and grow

### Who can participate?

Schools and LEAs with a minimum Identified Student Percentage (≥40 percent) in the prior school year Note: Identified students = those certified for free meals without the use of household applications (for example those directly certified through SNAP).

### Available To:

- All schools in an LEA
  - A group of schools in an LEA
  - An individual school in an LEA
- (Article includes information compiled from the U.S. Department of Agriculture website - <https://www.fns.usda.gov/cn/community-eligibility-provision>)



# From the Superintendent...

By Dr. Elizabeth Robison  
*Superintendent of Schools*

Our first day of school for students, Monday, August 28, 2023, is approaching quickly. For parents, I know this means you are already planning for the start of the 2023-24 school year. You also may be nervous about all of the things you feel you need to do to make sure your school-aged children have a great start to their school year.

Keeping the lines of communication open between parents and their children is important, but no easy feat. For a lot of parents, it's really hard to get details from their children about the first day of school or any school day. One-word answers like "fine," "okay," "alright," seem more common responses from children than getting anywhere near a detailed explanation about how the school day really went. If this is happening to you, parenting and child development experts recommend taking a new approach to when and how you talk to your children about their school day. This can change the conversation and help children open up about their day.

One common theme among the experts is that students, just like their parents when they get home from a busy work day, may need a little time after the school day ends to decompress. Waiting to ask questions about the day until after children have a snack can really help give them the time they need to relax after a busy day. Also, instead of asking overly broad questions like, "How was your day?" or "How did your day at school go?," which may cause younger children and teens to draw a blank, it may work better to ask questions that are easier for children of all ages to answer.

According to Scholastic Parents (<https://www.scholastic.com/parents/school-success/10-questions-to-ask-your-child-about-his-day-school.html>), "The trick is to ask about things that are specific, but still open-ended. Move beyond "fine" and "nothing" by asking your kids to describe their world. It's also great to start the conversation with an anecdote from your own day. Try one of these conversation-starters:

"1. Tell me about the best part of your day.

"2. What was the hardest thing you had to do today?

"3. Did any of your classmates do anything funny?



**Dr. Elizabeth Robison, the Superintendent of Schools, stopped by Senator Rosemary Brown's Senior Expo, which was held at Swiftwater Elementary Center in July. Hundreds of senior citizens from the district and across Monroe County attend the Expo to learn more about services and support agencies available to them. Dr. Robison was joined by accountants from the district's Business Office and Chartwells employees. The district provided seniors with information on the state and district's property tax rebate program for qualifying seniors and disable property owners.**

"4. Tell me about what you read in class.

"5. Who did you play with today? What did you play?

"6. Do you think math [or any subject] is too easy or too hard?

"7. What's the biggest difference between this year and last year?

"8. What rules are different at school than our rules at home? Do you think they're fair?

"9. Who did you sit with at lunch?

"10. Can you show me something you learned (or did) today?"

Child development experts stress the importance of parents maintaining meaningful communication with their children at every stage of their life, so children will feel comfortable approaching their parents in times of stress or when they need help. They also emphasize that once a parent initiates a conversation with their children it's really important that they take the time to listen to what their children are saying and don't try to rush through the discussion. Children will notice quickly if parents are really interested in what they are saying or are only partially listening to what they are saying.

In addition to keeping the lines of communication open between parents and children, I wanted to provide you with some information that may help alleviate some worries you may have about the new school year.

**Starting a New Grade and/or New School:** With each change of grade and

possibly a change in the actual school your child will attend comes a lot of anxiety. That is why it's so important to attend our school Open House and New Student Orientations. Our school administrative teams are available at the Open Houses and New Student Orientations to answer your questions and show you and your children around the schools. Just learning how to navigate the hallways, finding your child's assigned homeroom, and practicing unlocking a locker (for the older grades) can go a long way to reducing your children's anxiety about the start of a new school year and could help your children feel more comfortable at the school on the first day of school. The schedule for our school Open Houses and New Student Orientations is included in this issue of the PMSD Connection. We usually have a tremendous parent and student turnout at our Open Houses and New Student Orientations. We hope to see you there too.

**School Breakfast and Lunch:** This year all students will be eligible for a free school breakfast and lunch each school day. Parents will not have to apply for free or reduced meals. Check out the article in this issue for more information on this change to our School Nutrition Program. If your children want to purchase additional items at breakfast and lunch beyond what is included in their free breakfast or lunch, those items will be extra, just

as in the previous years. Parents can monitor their children's lunch accounts through the School Café' link on the PMSD website, so they will know if they need to add funds to their children's accounts. Nothing has changed with that process.

**School Safety:** Members of our District Safety Team, administrative team and other district employees attended several school safety training conferences and workshops during the summer break to remain current on school safety initiatives, programs and recommended procedures. We continued to evaluate and assess our school safety measures and procedures throughout the summer and will continue that process throughout the school year. We have made some changes to our school safety procedures for the start of school based on the additional training we attended. While I cannot discuss in detail the specific school safety measures we have in place or the changes we are implementing, I want our parents to know that we take school safety very seriously. It is my expectation that every administrator, teacher, support staff member, and contracted employee in Pocono Mountain School District will remain vigilant every single day throughout the upcoming school year regarding school safety. Our employees should remain fully engaged and committed to closely following all school safety procedures and practices at our schools. We also need students and parents to remain vigilant about school safety. It takes the commitment and awareness of our entire school community to keep our students and schools safe.

As I've mentioned many times in my communication with students and parents, you are the district's eyes and ears in our communities when it comes to school safety. The importance of the role parents and students have in school safety is supported by a report produced by the U.S. Secret Service on "Averting Targeted School Violence – A U.S. Secret Service Analysis of Plots Against Schools," where the Secret Service analyzed 67 averted school attack plots. The report states, "there are almost always intervention points available before a student's behavior escalates to violence." The report further states, "Students are best positioned to identify and report concerning behavior displayed by their classmates," and "The role of parents and families in recognizing concerning behaviors is critical to prevention."

**See Superintendent...Page 4**



# Meet the PMSD Board of Education

With the start of the new school year, Pocono Mountain School District's (PMSD) Board of Education wanted to make sure community members are familiar with their elected representatives on the board.

PMSD has three regions covering its 304 square miles.

**Region 1** (Barrett Township, Paradise Township and Pocono Township) directors are Christina Grape-Garvey, Nathan Strunk, who also serves as the Board Vice President, and Stephen Watto.

**Region 2** (Jackson Township, Tobyhanna Township and Tunkhannock Township) directors are Rusty Johnson, Marion Pyzik, who also serves as the Board President, and Bert Rinehimer.

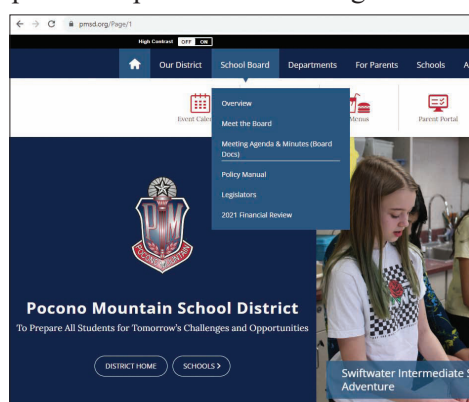
**Region 3** (Coolbaugh Township and the Borough of Mount Pocono) directors are Ronnie Byrd, Anna Lopez and Michael Stern.

PMSD School Board meetings are normally held on the first and third Wednesday of each month at 7 p.m., except during the summer. Meetings are being held as in-person meetings in the Administration Building Board Meeting Room on the Swiftwater Campus. Meetings are also currently being live streamed for community members who cannot physically attend the meeting. A notice and link to register to attend the live-streamed board meeting is posted to the PMSD website at [www.pmsd.org](http://www.pmsd.org) prior the meeting.

Upcoming School Board meetings are as follows:

- August 23, 2023
- September 20, 2023
- October 4, 2023
- October 18, 2023
- November 1, 2023
- November 15, 2023
- December 6, 2023
- December 20, 2023

Note: Meeting dates are subject to change due to severe weather conditions or if the board votes to change the meeting schedule. Any change in meeting dates will be announced and published prior to the meeting.



## Region 1 School Board Directors



**Christina Grape-Garvey**



**Nathan Strunk**  
Board Vice President



**Stephen Watto**

## Region 2 School Board Directors



**Rusty Johnson**



**Marion Pyzik**  
Board President



**Albert (Bert) Rinehimer**

## Region 3 School Board Directors



**Ronnie Byrd**



**Anna Lopez**



**Michael Stern**



# PMSD school safety toolkit includes threat assessments

By Dr. Jeremy Sawicki  
Director of Technology  
& School Safety

Pocono Mountain School District (PMSD) school safety efforts include school-based threat assessments to help keep students, staff and schools safe.

In June 2019, Pennsylvania enacted legislation, 24 P.S. § 1301-1303-E, to amend the Pennsylvania School Code and to assist schools in creating safer environments through the establishment of Threat Assessment Teams.

Threat assessment teams and the threat assessment process are important aspects of the district's school safety and security practices, because "the threat assessment process is a prevention strategy used to identify and assess possible threats of violence before the act occurs," according to Pennsylvania Commission on Crime and Delinquency (PCCD).

Since the legislation was enacted, the School Safety and Security Committee (SSSC), PCCD, and other key stakeholders from across Pennsylvania have developed model procedures and guidance materials to help schools implement the threat assessment process.

PMSD recognized the value of developing threat assessment teams and adopting a threat assessment process prior to the new legislation going into effect. The district formed its threat assessment teams in 2019. The teams, one at each school and a district-level team, were trained on the threat assessment process in November 2019. This is the same process the state has since adopted and recommends as the model procedures for all school districts to follow.

PMSD's teams attended an intensive in-person threat assessment refresher training in October 2021. Additional online training that is available through the PCCD's online Threat Assessment resources is used by the district and school threat assessment teams annually to stay current on the threat assessment process and meet annual state training requirements.

**What is threat assessment and what does this mean for PMSD?**

"Threat assessment is a fact-based process for the

## Recognizing At-Risk Behaviors

Some observable, at-risk behaviors include:

- Unusual social distancing or isolation of individuals from peers and family members
- Sullen or depressed behavior from an otherwise friendly and positive person
- Out of context outbursts of verbal or physical aggression
- Increased levels of agitation, frustration and anger
- Confrontational, accusatory or blaming behavior
- An unusual interest in weapons
- Fixation on violence as means of addressing a grievance

\* K-12 Threat Assessment in Virginia: A Prevention Overview for School Staff, Parents, and Community Members



assessment of and intervention with students whose behaviors may indicate a threat to the safety of the student, other students, school employees, school facilities, the community, or others," according to PCCD's Threat Assessment training materials (Information for School Staff, Parents, and Guardians, <https://www.pccd.pa.gov/schoolsafety/Pages/Threat-Assessment.aspx>).

PCCD further explains that threat assessment is a prevention strategy.

- School communities work together to identify student threats before they become acts of violence
- Schools have systems in place to process information
- Students receive assistance through early identification (PCCD)

PCCD describes a threat as, "a communication or behavior that indicates an individual poses a danger to the safety of school staff or students through acts of violence or other behavior that would cause harm to self or others.

The threat may be expressed/communicated

behaviorally, orally, visually, in writing, electronically, or through any other means."

In addition to forming threat assessment teams and providing training to the teams, the amended PA School Code also requires PMSD and other school entities to develop procedures and guidelines for threat assessments.

PMSD utilizes the model procedures and guidelines provided on the PCCD website.

The student assistance program (SAP) teams and referral process PMSD already has in place in all of its schools is an integral part of each school's threat assessment process. As PCCD states, "The goal of this process is to ensure the safety of the school community, and also to ensure that the student presenting the threat receives assistance through a range of strategies already established in the school."

Students, parents and community members can help keep PMSD schools safe by continuing to report possible threats or concerns about school safety to their children's principals, a teacher or coach, the police, or through the Safe2Say Something anonymous reporting system.

## Superintendent's welcome message...continued from Page 1

If you see or hear something that seems like it could be a concern or a threat against one of our schools, a student or one of our employees, please report your concern immediately to our administrators, to the police or through the Safe2Say Something anonymous reporting system, which is available through an App or through the link on the district website.

**Student Involvement:** Finally, I encourage all parents to help their school-aged children find an activity at their school to participate in this school year. Research shows that, "Participating in extracurricular activities has positive effects on students' success... Adolescents who participate in



extracurricular activities demonstrate higher levels of academic achievement, greater character development, greater social development, and a greater sense of the importance of community involvement." (Department of Education - [files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/](https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/)

EJ1230758.pdf)

Included in this back-to-school issue of the *PMSD Connection* is a list of co-curricular and athletic opportunities available to students throughout the district and a list of the clubs and activities that were available in our

schools last school year. Some of the clubs and activities offered at our schools this school year may change based upon student and school interests. So, please look for flyers, announcements and ParentLink calls regarding sign up dates for school-based clubs, activities, co-curricular and athletic opportunities.

The relationships and connectedness students form through after-school activities will be invaluable to their social and emotional development and wellbeing throughout their school years in Pocono Mountain.

Welcome back for the 2023-24 school year. Let's make this a great year for our students.



# Clear Run Elementary hosts school readiness program

By Heidi Donohue, Principal  
Clear Run Elementary Center

For several years, Clear Run Elementary Center and Pocono Services for Families and Children, at The Mountain Center location, have had a strong partnership. This summer, their alliance grew a little stronger.

On the evening of April 19th, our school board gave their blessing for CREC to host a six-week Summer School Readiness program for students currently attending The Mountain Center Pre-K class who were registered for kindergarten and would be attending a PMSD school in the fall. A total of 31 students signed up for the program - 2 students who will attend TEC, 5 students who will attend SEC, and 24 students who will attend CREC in the fall.

With transportation provided, students were bused to and from The Mountain Center, at which time they learned and practiced bus rules. Classroom, hallway, bathroom, playground, and cafeteria expectations were taught, modeled, and reinforced as well. Just like during the school year, students earned Dojo points to be cashed in for a



Pre-K students from The Mountain Center learn new skills at Summer School Readiness program at Clear Run Elementary Center. The program is for students who are registered for fall Kindergarten with Pocono Mountain School District.



It's snack time for the Pre-K students attending Clear Run Elementary Center's Summer School Readiness Program.

variety of incentives. While attending the program students explored math manipulatives, listened to read-alouds, worked on building fine and gross motor skills, and even cooked. Listening, taking turns, following directions, being patient, and learning to be independent are often skills that are taken for granted, but essential for success in schools. Teachers for this program (Arlene Fette, Jessica Franz, Shannon Hagenbaugh, Jennyrose Johnson, and Katie Paciotti) reported that they saw amazing progress in their short time with these students.



Pre-K students get familiar with the things they can expect when they start kindergarten in the fall.



Students learn skills they will need for kindergarten, such as the rules for riding a school bus safely.

## Bus Stop Safety



You **MUST STOP** on roadways with or without painted lines.



You **MUST STOP** on roadways with ridged/grooved dividers.



You **MUST STOP** at an intersection, whether it is or is not marked with a stop sign. All traffic **MUST STOP**.

**FIRSTstudent**

### YOUR SCHOOL NEEDS YOU!

**JOIN THE FIRST STUDENT FAMILY**

As a First Student bus driver, you will make a positive impact in the lives of the 2.5 million student passengers we transport to and from school every day. Your warm smile can change the day for our students and make a difference for our families and communities. We can't wait to have you on our team!

Why drive for First Student?

- Competitive wage + perks
- On-the-job training
- No nights or weekends
- Top 300 on Forbes Best Employers for Women
- Age 50+ Certified Age Friendly Employer
- Ideal for retirees, stay-at home parents or part-time workers

Scan the QR code to apply today!

**APPLY TODAY** [DriveWithFirst.com](http://DriveWithFirst.com)

## School bus safety reminders

PMSD buses may run late the first week of school as it takes more time to pick up students at bus stops and to get students loaded on the correct buses at the end of the school day.

PMSD officials ask for patience as everyone gets back into the school bus loading and unloading routine.

The PMSD switchboard will remain open the first week of school until all buses have returned from the after school runs to ensure all students have made it home safely.

**East Transportation**  
570-839-7121  
ext. 30430 or 30437  
**West Transportation**  
570-839-7121,  
ext. 31424 or 31422



### What can parents do to help ensure their children's safety?

- Arrive at the bus stop 10 minutes prior to the arrival of the bus.
- Please, NEVER, follow or try to flag down a bus if you are late in dropping off your child at the bus stop.
- If your child gets out of the car and tries to "catch" a bus, it puts them in grave danger. The best response would be to continue to drive your child directly to school.
- When you meet a school bus with red signal lights flashing and stop arm extended, you **MUST STOP**.
- DO NOT MOVE until all the children are safely loaded or are 10 feet off of the road and have reached a place of safety.



# SEC takes summer learning to a new level

By Christine Chemchick,  
Learning Support Teacher  
Swiftwater Elementary Center

Each summer morning, students entered the doors of Swiftwater Elementary Center with huge smiles ready to learn. Throughout the six-week summer school program, students had the opportunity to grow academically, socially, and emotionally. Each week, students participated in English Language Arts and Mathematics lessons that contained hands-on learning experiences, themed weeks, and some STEM and STEAM activities.

During the 'Gardening' themed week, students in Kindergarten participated in STEAM lessons, which allowed students to learn about plants and gardening. Teachers began by reading the story, "The Bad Seed" by Jury John. Students were engaged and participating in the book discussion. Students then learned about the process of growing plants. Students were eager to share their personal experiences about planting flowers.

Kindergarten students then planted flowers at Swiftwater Elementary Center. In first grade, Ms. Chichura and Ms. Kalberer's classes read and discussed the story "Seed to Sunflower" written by Camilla de la Bedoyere. Students then created their own addition and subtraction facts sunflower. Students loved this cross-curricular activity.

Ms. Taylor's first grade classroom learned about balloons and ways to inflate a balloon. Students were given a water bottle and a balloon and asked if they could inflate the balloon using these two items. The class placed the balloon over the water bottle to try to inflate the balloon.

While some students were able to inflate the balloon slightly, Ms. Taylor then showed students that you are able to inflate a balloon using four simple items: a water bottle, baking soda, vinegar, and a balloon. Students discussed and created hypotheses,



Students proudly showing off their STEAM activity projects.

completed the experiment, and drew conclusions. Students were amazed that a balloon can become inflated when you pour baking soda into the vinegar.

During 'The Dog Days of Summer' themed week, students in grades first, second, and third learned about the meaning of the "dog days of summer", read summer stories, and wrote about what they like to do during the summer. Freddy, a first-grade student, wrote "I will enjoy the dog days of summer by playing in the pool with my brother."

In second grade, students read the book "Dog Days of School" written by Kelly DiPucchio and completed a writing project. Brenda, a second-grade student wrote, "This summer I will go swimming with my dog." During mathematics, students reviewed shapes, solved equations, and increased their math facts. Students loved learning about the dog days of summer!

The last week of summer school students had a surprise visit from the ice cream truck sponsored by our PMSD Superintendent, Dr. Elizabeth Robison.



4th grade student Nyjeria Nwosu enjoys her ice cream at the end of the summer school session.



Kindergarten students have a great time learning about plants while gardening at SEC.

Students were so excited to have this treat on a hot summer day. Students in Ms. Lattanzio and Mrs. Walter's class created their own favorite ice cream and ice cream cones using the writing and mathematics skills taught in class. Students and staff all had a wonderful summer here at Swiftwater Elementary Center!

## Students excel at the 24 math district & regional levels

By Nicole Lemoncelli  
& Kevin Borrelli,  
Math Teachers

Amy Catalano,  
Director of Curriculum, Instruction for  
Mathematics & Science

The 24 game is a fast-paced mental math game created by Bob Sun right here in Pennsylvania. This spring, Pocono Mountain School District (PMSD) students in grades 4-6 had the opportunity to compete in the 24 Game at the school, district, and regional levels for the first time since 2019.

Sixteen students from each school (Clear Run Intermediate School, Swiftwater Intermediate School and Tobyhanna Elementary Center) progressed to the district-level tournament which was held at Clear Run Intermediate School in March. The contest was competitive and each school had students score in the top eight.

The highest-scoring students in grades 4 & 5 progressed to the regional competitions at Colonial IU in Easton. At this level, 10 Pocono Mountain students advanced to the top 12 for the semifinal round. Adam Vykhov from CRIS took 1st place in the tournament for grades 4 & 5, and Tanner Jackson from SIS took 2nd place.

In the 6th grade tournament at the IU, 11 out of the 12 students in the semifinals were from PMSD. The top three students in this tournament were all from Clear Run. Damarion Daguio in 1st, Nicholas Trindade in 2nd and, Khloe Newlander came in 3rd.

We are excited about rebuilding this program for our students and expanding it in the coming years.



**Back-to-School Vaccine Clinic**

Routine Childhood immunizations, COVID-19 testing, vaccines, and boosters also available

**Thursday, Aug. 17 | 10 a.m. to 2 p.m.**

Pocono Mountain West High School | 181 Panther Lane, Pocono Summit

The Wright Center for Community Health is hosting this health initiative to ensure children stay on track with timely vaccinations.

**No insurance?**  
Ask about our sliding-fee discount program that is based on family size and income.

Here are some of the vaccines to ensure your child is ready for back to school:

- Chicken Pox
- Measles, Mumps, and Rubella (MMR)
- Polio
- HPV
- Pertussis
- Tetanus, Diphtheria, Pertussis (DTaP)
- Hepatitis B
- Meningitis

**Vaccination Information**

- appointments preferred; Walk-ups welcome
- Please bring ID and insurance cards
- Bring Vaccination records
- Must be 5 and up for COVID-19 vaccines and boosters (Guardian must accompany patients ages 17 and under)

For more information, visit: [TheWrightCenter.org](http://TheWrightCenter.org)

Scan here to schedule your next appointment

- Call 570.230.0019
- Visit [TheWrightCenter.org](http://TheWrightCenter.org)

Behavioral Health | Dental Services | Geriatrics | Infectious Disease/Ryan White HIV Services  
Lifestyle Medicine | Men's Health | Pediatrics | Primary Care | Women's Health



# Clear Run Elementary Center to focus on chronic absenteeism

By Dr. Jessica Loverdi, Principal  
Clear Run Elementary Center

“In the 2020-21 school year, at least 10.1 million students nationwide were chronically absent. We estimate chronic absence has more than doubled from the more than 8 million students, pre-COVID-19, who were missing so many days of school that they were academically at risk.

“Chronic absence missing 10 percent or more of school days due to absence for any reason—excused, unexcused absences and suspensions—can translate into students having difficulty learning to read by the third-grade, achieving in middle school, and graduating from high school.” (attendanceworks.org)

Many factors can cause children to be chronically absent from school - missing 18 or more days of school. Did you know that...

1. Absenteeism in the first month of school can predict poor attendance throughout the school year. Half the students who miss 2-4 days in September go on to miss nearly a month of school. \*
2. By 6th grade, chronic absence becomes a leading indicator that a student will drop out of high school. \*

3. Missing 10% of school (1 or 2 days every few weeks) can make it harder to:

- Gain early reading and math skills.
- Build relationships.
- Develop good attendance habits. \*

Focusing on students who are missing 10% or more of school includes identifying barriers to attendance - including chronic illness, anxiety about school, and poverty or stressors at home.

It's important for parents and school staff to work together to identify obstacles so that we can determine a plan to help.

The Attendance Improvement Team at Clear Run Elementary includes school administrators and counselors. In addition, school social workers help to make connections with our students and their families.

District Magistrate Travagline is also an integral member of our team, as she assists with providing resources and supports beyond the school building. Each month, our Team will be reviewing data and developing attendance improvement plans for students missing 10% of school in order to put support in place to help our students and their families improve and maintain positive attendance.



## Help Your Child Succeed in Preschool and Kindergarten Build the Habit of Good Attendance

### DID YOU KNOW...

Showing up on time every day is important to your child's success and learning from preschool forward.

Missing 10% of school (1 or 2 days every few weeks) can make it harder to:

- Gain early reading and math skills.
- Build relationships.
- Develop good attendance habits.

High quality preschool and kindergarten has many benefits!

- The routines your child develops will continue throughout school.
- Make the most of early grades by encouraging your child to attend every day.

### WHAT YOU CAN DO

Work with your child and his/her teacher to develop your child's strong attendance.

Talk about it - sing about it - make it an adventure!

- Set a regular bedtime and morning routine.
- Lay out clothes and pack backpacks the night before.
- Share ideas with other parents for getting to school on time.

Before the school year starts

- Find out what day school starts and begin a countdown!
- Keep your child healthy and make sure your child has the required shots.
- Attend orientation with your child to meet teachers and classmates and find out about health and safety procedures.

Ready, Set, GO!


- If you are concerned your child may have Covid-19, call your school for advice. Ask for resources to continue learning at home if needed.
- Ask family members or neighbors for assistance if you need help.
- Try to schedule non-Covid-19 medical appointments and extended trips when school is not in session.
- If your child seems anxious about preschool or kindergarten, talk to the program director, teacher, your doctor or other parents for advice.

Revised October 2021

Visit Attendance Works at [www.attendanceworks.org](http://www.attendanceworks.org) for free downloadable resources and tools!







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## SEC student clubs support interconnections

By Patricia Lattanzio,  
Teacher & Administrative Intern  
Swiftwater Elementary Center

Swiftwater Elementary Center (SEC) teachers become club advisors to find creative ways to support students' extra curricular involvement at an early age. These clubs evoke a variety of interests for our students. Each unique club provides students the opportunity to expand their skills both socially and academically.

According to Claudette Christison, author of *The Benefits of Participating in Extracurricular Activities* (2013), "Participating in extracurricular activities contributes to adolescents' character development. Students who participate in extracurricular activities report higher levels of self-concept and self-worth (Blomfield & Barber, 2009).

"These clubs include opportunities to develop personal interests and discover an array of strengths and weaknesses (Fredricks & Eccles, 2008), which is especially important during the adolescent stage of self-exploration



Swiftwater Elementary Center club advisors work hard to make clubs fun for students, while students expand their social and academic skills.

(Knifesend & Graham, 2012).

"Building students' self-concept and character development will encourage confidence, which will inspire students to be comfortable being unique individuals."

While clubs like Computer Club, Books and Braids and the Little Cardinals Book Club provide students with the opportunity to build their academic skills, extracurriculars like Kindness Club and CHAPS allow students to build upon their social emotional learning and help the community.

SEC is looking forward to the 2023-2024 School Year.



Swiftwater Elementary Center clubs and activities help students discover their interests.



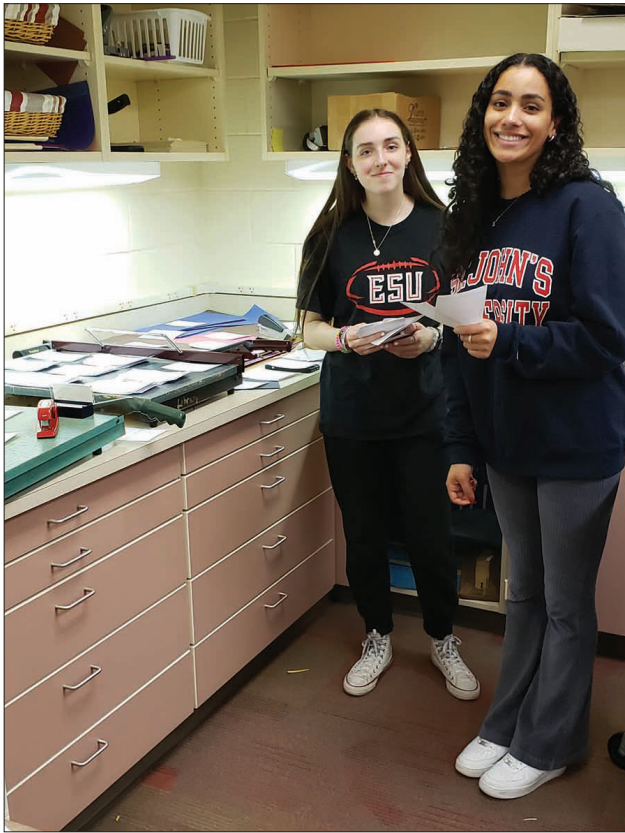
# East High School seniors give back to the community

By Tamala Toleno, Principal  
PM East High School

East High School seniors participated in the 1st Annual Senior Day of Service on Friday, May 26. By giving back to our local community, seniors made an effort to leave our community better than they found it.

East High School Senior Jakub Pochron spent months making connections with organizations across Monroe County. He worked with leaders of the organizations to determine their needs, rallied East High School senior students to provide the manpower, secured teachers to assist at each of the locations, and then managed all the logistics to get seniors to each of their destinations. East High School seniors spent the day volunteering their services both off-campus and on-campus.

- Stroudsburg YMCA: Students helped clean up and prepare the property for its upcoming summer camps.
- Stroud Region Open Space and Recreation Commission Community Garden: Students helped plant and prepare a community garden.
- Stroud Region Open Space and Recreation Commission Gym: Students helped repaint a community gym.
- Camp Papillon: Students helped clean up the property, cleaned the animals' cages, and played with the animals in the shelter.
- East Stroudsburg United Methodist Church: Students helped clean up the church property.
- Spring Village Senior Living: Students interacted and socialized with the elders, cleaned up the property, and conducted arts and crafts.
- Swiftwater Elementary Center: Students repainted the cardinal wings mural.



(Above) Seniors volunteer to help the Pocono Mountain East High School librarian with various tasks in the library, including rearranging books, cleaning up shelves, and preparing to collect Chromebooks. (Top Right) East students helped plant and prepare a community garden for the Stroud Region Open Space and Recreation Commission Community. (Bottom Right) At Camp Papillon students helped clean up the property, cleaned the animal cages, and played with the animals in the shelter.

- East High School Library: Students helped our librarian with various tasks in the library, including rearranging books, cleaning up shelves, and preparing to collect Chromebooks.



- Swiftwater School Campus: Students helped the PMSD grounds crew with a mulching project.
- East High School Campus: Students helped to plant a beautiful redbud tree.
- East High School senior students made meaningful connections with community members and provided the volunteer services necessary to complete important projects throughout our community.

## East High School finishes 2022-23 school year strong

By Tamala Toleno, Principal  
PM East High School

### Graphic Design Class

Congratulations to Senior Louis Matos from Mrs. Baldauff's Graphic Design class! His design for the East High School student planner was selected and will be printed on all 23-24 East High School student planners.



Olivia Handelong, Jessica Butz, Gabriella Maldonado, Frederick Owusu, Carolyn Reed, Megan McLain, Mikenna Price, Evan Schmelz, Jayla South, Michael Hollar, Ashley Carlson, Ethan Kauffman, D'John Kelley, Michael Price, Gavin Sopko, Sofia Zabackis Not Pictured: Owen Shaffer

### East High School Athletic Signing Day

Pocono Mountain East had 17 senior athletes sign-on with their prospective colleges during their own 'National Letter of Intent' signing day event held on May 8. Good luck to our Cardinal Alumni as they start their college journey this fall as student athletes.



Left to Right Amy Catalano, Director of Math and Science, Evelyn Sankey, East HS, and Heather Aulisio, Tobyhanna Elementary Center.

### Outstanding Science Teacher Award

Congratulations to East High School teacher, Ms. Evelyn Sankey. Ms. Sankey received East Stroudsburg University's Chapter Sigma XI Outstanding Science Teacher Award. Evelyn was honored at an awards ceremony at Woodsgate at the Stroudsmoor Country Inn.



# West Junior High implements math workshop model

By Dr. Ann Marie Vaughn,  
Principal  
PM West Junior High School

During the 2022 – 2023 School Year, Pocono Mountain West Administration collaborated with Staff from the Colonial Intermediate Unit 20, to put together Professional Development for Middle School Math Teachers.

During the month of May of 2023, teachers had the opportunity to learn from the CIU20 Staff about the Math Workshop Model and the benefits it can have for students to enhance their learning and comprehension of Mathematics, and allow for more differentiation of topics to meet the needs of various learners within a classroom.

Teachers were also given the opportunity to plan and collaborate with each other, discuss and share resources, and develop lesson plans and units to incorporate their new learnings to prepare for the fall.

Teachers and Administration are excited that for the 2023 – 2024 school year, teachers will be implementing the Math Workshop model, creating resources, and continuing to have coaching and support from the Administrative Team as well as CIU20 Staff throughout the process.

## What is the Math Workshop Model?

The Math Workshop is a framework that allows students to learn new math content each day, practice math

Source: Jennifer Lempp

What it is NOT:	What it is:
• Teachers doing most of the math	• Students doing most of the math
• One assigned worksheet	• Student choice
• Teachers showing the procedure and talking about the steps to follow	• Students talking about their mathematical thinking and reasoning
• Teachers as holders of knowledge	• Teachers acting as facilitators – asking good questions
• Students working in isolation; sharing answers or strategies is cheating	• Students working collaboratively and learning from one another
• Teachers rescuing students	• Students struggling with challenging mathematics and learning from errors
• Teachers presenting to the whole class	• Teacher working with small groups
• Focused on procedural skill	• Focused on conceptual understanding

strategies in a variety of ways, and reflect on their learning through sharing and lesson closure. There are four main components to the math workshop model, which include:

1. Daily Math Warm-up, also known as the ATB (At the Bell) – this may include cyclical review of content, a review of yesterday's material, skills-based practice, or test preparation
2. Mini-Lesson - Students are introduced to new math content
3. M.A.T.H. Practice Time - Students have extended work sessions where they can practice the new content learned that day in small groups and with the teacher, build problem solving skills by solving performance tasks, get hands-on math practice and other activities. This time may include:

- M – Meet with the Teacher – Where differentiated instruction is able to be done in small groups of students, based on their individual needs, assessments can take place, and reinforcement of skills can be broken down as needed.
- A – At Your Seat – Students are able to work on building their math reasoning, modeling and problem-solving skills while utilizing assignments which match their specific skill levels. Activities included here may be reteaching, enrichment, drill and practice, problem solving task cards, project-based learning, math journals, and more!
- T – Technology – Students can utilize a variety of Digital Math Resources provided to them by the district and their teachers,

where lessons are set at the level of the students and specific skills they need to enhance based off of a variety of assessments students take throughout the year.

- H – Hands-On – At this station, students can build their math reasoning and skills through a variety of hands-on activities to increase their Math automaticity and skills focus.

4. Share and Reflect - At the end of each day, it is important that the students reflect on their learning so that the teachers can adjust their upcoming lessons based on student need. This can be done through a variety of ways including Exit Tickets, Journaling, sharing out and “Show what you know” to give teachers more information to assess their students’ learning to guide their upcoming lessons.

## Why are we taking on this endeavor?

The goal of the Math Workshop Model is to increase engagement and differentiation within Math Classrooms through a variety of activities each day. Students will be participating and completing math work which is at their level and allowing them to increase their academic growth.

It will also give students and teachers the opportunity to circle back and enhance areas of weaknesses, allow more opportunity to areas of enrichment, and provide the opportunity for students to enjoy and engage in Math on a daily basis.

# Clear Run Intermediate check ins help build social-emotional strength

By Amy Haynes, Principal  
Clear Run Intermediate School

At Clear Run Intermediate School (CRIS), we are proud to be continuing our Social Emotional Learning (SEL) check ins each morning with all grade levels throughout the school year.

A “check in” is where students record how they are feeling emotionally each morning, using a 1-5 scale.

The number one would indicate that a student is happy and in a good mood, while the number five indicates strong emotions of anger, frustration, and needing to speak with an adult immediately. There is also an optional text box which allows students to comment and provide details regarding their ranking.

Our Guidance Counselors work closely with students to ensure they understand each emotion on our 1-5 scale as well as understand situations that may elicit each emotion. The results of the check-ins are kept confidential between administration, guidance, and teacher.

SEL check ins began a few years back with sixth grade students and have slowly grown over the years



to include all grades Three through Six.

Last year was the first year that Third grade completed SEL check ins.

To begin the process, third graders were taught how to rate themselves and completed a paper check in each morning. Gradually, third graders transitioned to electronic check-ins and followed the same procedures as the other grades.

We saw great success with all grades utilizing the SEL check-ins and are excited to continue utilizing

SEL (Social Emotional Learning) Check-In

5	<b>OUT OF CONTROL/Angry</b> I can't stand this and I'm ready to explode. I want to hit or kick someone, or throw something. I need help from an adult.	🔥
4	<b>Annoyed/Frustrated</b> Loss of some control. I will talk to an adult.	😡
3	<b>Worried/Sick/Sad/Bored</b> I will tell an adult. I will take some deep breaths.	😞
2	<b>I'm Feeling OK</b> Nothing is wrong and I am just feeling okay.	😐
1	<b>HAPPY</b> I am doing great! I feel good about myself and what is going on around me.	😊

them with the entire building for the 2023-2024 school year. Meeting our students at the door and setting them up for success throughout the school day remains a top priority for our CRIS community.



# Welcome to PM East Junior High School

By Dr. Kathleen Fanelli, 7th  
Grade Principal

Dr. Eric Vogt, 8th Grade  
Principal

*PM East Junior High School*

Each year, we at East Junior High School administration and staff get all revved up over the summer to welcome our new 7th graders to the Junior High. We are also excited to welcome back our 8th grade students.

As teachers and administrators, we are focused on content and curriculum. How do we present reading, writing, math, social studies and science in the most exciting ways? How do we best assess student learning?

Each year that goes by provides us with more experience and a greater variety of ways to impart the knowledge we have to give. For example, as we continue to implement STEAM ideas into content area classes, we look for ways to integrate our 3D printers into classes other than the STEAM class.

For students, we believe they also (maybe mostly!) look forward to all the clubs and athletics that we typically have going on after school. Our Fall Cardinal sports include cross country,



***Odyssey of the Mind (OoTM) is just one of the many activities available to students at Pocono Mountain East Junior High School. Two East Junior High teams made it all the way to the OoTM World Finals last school year, with one team placing 3rd and the other team placing 5th in the World.***

football, field Hockey, golf, soccer and volleyball. Winter Cardinal sports include basketball, cheer, swimming, and wrestling. In Spring, our athletes can choose from baseball and softball, track and volleyball. In addition to our athletic programs, East Junior High also has many clubs that students can join; Student Government, PA Junior

Academy of Science, Odyssey of the Mind, Band/Choral groups, National Junior Honor Society, Science Olympiad, Yearbook, and Newspaper are just some of the choices. Students will receive information about these and other opportunities throughout the year on our Morning Announcements, and our announcements are posted on

the EJHS website each day for parents.

As students begin to prepare themselves to return to the routines of the school year, I would remind them to start regulating their bedtime and wake-up times a week or so before opening day! School days begin early. Being well-rested is the very best way to start off the new year and being ready for all the new adventures it shall bring!

Some reminders for JHS students: The Dress Code is still the Dress Code and students are expected to be dressed correctly for school each day, starting Day 1! Water bottles will remain in student lockers throughout the school day, as they did pre-Covid. Also, students will only be permitted to carry their Chromebook case with them – they will not be permitted to carry any type of backpack or large purse during the day. Clothes for PE class can be in a draw-string bag to take from the locker to the gym.

Finally, cell phone/smart watches are not allowed to be used during the school day for any reason. We ask all students to store their cellphone/watch in their locker during the school day, or simply leave it at home.

Parents can reach their child through the main office at any time.

## Learn how to talk about mental health

By Dr. Beth DeLay

Director of Health/Physical Education,  
Guidance & Nursing Services

### For Parents and Caregivers of Children

As a parent or caregiver, you want the best for your children or other dependents. You may be concerned or have questions about certain behaviors they exhibit and how to ensure they get help.

#### What to Look For

It is important to be aware of warning signs that your child may be struggling. You can play a critical role in knowing when your child may need help.

Consult with a school counselor, school nurse, mental health provider, or another health care professional if your child shows one or more of the following behaviors:

- Feeling very sad or withdrawn or easily irritated for more than two weeks
- Seriously trying to harm or kill themselves, or making plans to do so
- Experiencing sudden overwhelming fear for no reason, sometimes with a racing heart or fast breathing
- Getting in many fights or wanting to hurt others
- Showing severe out-of-control behavior that can hurt oneself or others
- Not eating, throwing up, or using laxatives to



make themselves lose weight

- Having intense worries or fears that get in the way of daily activities
- Experiencing extreme difficulty controlling behavior, putting themselves in physical danger or causing problems in school
- Using drugs or alcohol
- Having severe mood swings that cause problems in relationships
- Showing drastic changes in behavior or personality
- A drop in their school performance

Because children often can't understand difficult situations on their own, you should pay particular attention if they experience:

- Loss of a loved one

- Divorce or separation of their parents
- Any major transition—new home, new school, etc.
- Traumatic life experiences, like living through a natural disaster
- Teasing or bullying
- Difficulties in school or with classmates

#### What to Do

If you are concerned about your child's behaviors, it is important to get appropriate care. You should:

- Talk to your child's doctor, school nurse, or another health care provider and seek further information about the behaviors or symptoms that worry you
- Ask your child's primary care physician if your child needs further evaluation by a specialist with experience in child behavioral problems
- Ask if your child's specialist is experienced in treating the problems you are observing
- Talk to your medical provider about any medication and treatment plans

#### How to Talk About Mental Health with Your Child

Do you need help starting a conversation with your child about mental health?

Try leading with these questions, and actively listen

**See Mental Health...Page 11**



# SEC's custodial team prepares school for 2023-24 SY

By Karen Doughton, Principal  
& Dr. Krislin Ofalt, Principal  
Swiftwater Elementary Center

People often wonder what happens during the summer in our schools. Summer time is very busy for our staff as we close-out one year and prepare for the opening of the school year.

The custodial staff begins preparations for the coming school year prior to our students leaving in June by assisting teachers and students with organizational checklists and readying all areas of the school to be cleaned and disinfected over the summer months.

This takes much time, effort and focus for our crews of custodians across the school district.

At Swiftwater Elementary Center (SEC), our crew



begins by creating maps dividing our classrooms and large group areas into sections to be cleaned

and sanitized. Each member of the custodial team is responsible for waxing floors allowing for several coats to be applied in areas using a very systematic procedure that requires advanced planning.

In addition, SEC proudly hosts several events during the school year and each summer, we plan for a community event that welcomes hundreds of our senior citizens annually. This past summer, Senator Rosemary Brown hosted the "Senior Expo 2023" on July 18, 2023.

This event was a great success and much of the credit goes to our custodial crew who prepared our large group areas and hallways to provide a comfortable environment for our community members.

The SEC custodial crew is greatly appreciated as they work very hard to make our school safe for students and staff each year.

#MENTAL HEALTH MATTERS  
#MENTAL HEALTH MATTERS

## Mental Health...continued from Page 10

to your child's response:

- Can you tell me more about what is happening? How are you feeling?
- Have you had feelings like this in the past?
- Sometimes you need to talk to an adult about your feelings. I'm here to listen. How can I help you feel better?
- Do you feel like you want to talk to someone else about your problem?
- I'm worried about your safety. Can you tell me if you have thoughts about harming yourself or others?

When talking about mental health problems with your child you should:

- Communicate in a straightforward manner
- Speak at a level that is appropriate to a child or adolescent's age and development level (preschool children need fewer details than teenagers)
- Discuss the topic when your child feels safe and comfortable
- Watch for reactions during the discussion and slow down or back up if your child becomes confused or looks upset
- Listen openly and let your child tell you about their feelings and worries

### Get Help for Your Child

- Seek immediate assistance if you think your child is in danger of harming themselves or others. 988 Suicide & Crisis Lifeline. Call or text 988 or chat the Lifeline.

Source: <https://www.samhsa.gov/mental-health/how-to-talk/parents-and-caregivers>

## PM CYBER Always Open for Playing too

Working closely with the secondary teaching staff during the 2022-2023 school year, Director Nora Wandalowski was able to successfully submit and have approved the core courses in ELA, Math, Science and Social Studies to be used in the NCAA initial-eligibility certification process for student athletes.

Why is that a big deal? Students who are enrolled in the Pocono Mountain School District, not just in the Pocono Mountain Cyber Program, and are interested in competing in college sports will be able to select Pocono Mountain Cyber Program core courses from the list of requirements in the NCAA Eligibility Center. Offering courses that are approved by the NCAA allows for PMSD student-athletes to expand their course options within the school day and beyond while meeting the requirements for NCAA eligibility.

In order to meet amateurism standards and demonstrate academic preparedness, an athlete

must complete all core courses and meet all Pocono Mountain School District graduation requirements.

Pocono Mountain Cyber Program has highly qualified teachers dedicated to providing daily, live instruction and support as students work on Imagine Edgenuity content.

Many of these teachers are also coaches throughout the district, both for East and West Athletics. These teachers and coaches understand the need for a flexible curriculum and schedule to support all students.

If your student is enrolled in Pocono Mountain School District, participates in athletics and wants

to attend college, PMSD Cyber Program has all the required courses cleared and approved for NCAA eligibility keeping PMSD Always Open for Learning and Playing! Contact Nora Wandalowski at [nwandalowski@pmsd.org](mailto:nwandalowski@pmsd.org), 570-839-7121 extension 75400 to learn more.



## EJHS Guidance: What your counselor can do for you

Are you a Pocono Mountain East Junior High School (EJHS) 7th or 8th grader wondering what your Guidance Counselor can do for you?

Well here is your answer! Mrs. Bradley is the counselor for all 7th graders. She will be working closely with Dr. Vogt, the Principal for 7th graders, to keep an eye on how everyone is adjusting to the junior high experience. There will be welcome meetings, getting to know you surveys, and both Dr. Vogt and Mrs. Bradley will be meeting with your teachers each week to get updates on your progress.

If you are an 8th grade student, your counselor is Mrs. Cetta, and your Principal is Dr. Fanelli. Mrs. Cetta is new to EJHS this year, but not to Pocono

Mountain School District. In fact, Mrs. Cetta and Dr. Fanelli previously worked together for a long time and are excited to be back together.

The first goal of both the counselors and the principals is to have every student feeling comfortable and confident at East Junior High School.

The first few weeks of school are always tricky as everyone meets their new teachers, learns the new routines, and finds their way in the building. Fear not, every staff member is here to help that process. You can ask any adult and they will help!

Throughout the year, the counselors are available to meet with any student who is experiencing any type of

See EJHS Guidance...Page 17





# New school year, new beginnings at Tobyhanna Elementary Ctr

By Dr. John Kevra, Principal  
Tobyhanna Elementary Center

We say it every year but it's worth repeating, "Where did our summer go?"

It seems like yesterday we were winding down our 2022/2023 school year and enjoying all our traditional year end events such as our concerts, plays, graduation walk, and Moving Up Ceremony. It reminds me of the saying, "The days drag by but the years fly by!" Fortunately, even as the years fly by, Tobyhanna Elementary Center (TEC) has always successfully kept up with the times. It is most definitely a challenging task since our technological world is so dynamic. However, TEC has consistently managed to meet those challenges while creating a welcoming environment for all our students and their families. Rest assured that the upcoming school year will prove to be no different.

Most of us are already aware that after 20 years of dedicated service to TEC and 38 years total in public education, Dr. D'Angelo decided to retire. I am truly honored to be following in her footsteps. Every year she served as TEC's principal, our school got better and better. They are certainly big shoes to fill! However, her dedication to children was inspirational and her guidance over the last several years will make the transition that much smoother.

Of course, that means we are also welcoming a new Assistant Principal, Ms. Jessica Grebb. Ms. Grebb is joining our administrative team after working in the PMSD as a special education teacher for a total of 7 years. She was a teacher at the West Junior High for one year and at CRIS for 6 years. No doubt her special education background, as well as her desire to learn and grow, will add to the productive and positive atmosphere at TEC.

We also bid a fond farewell to Mrs. O'Leary, our 5th grade special education teacher, and Christine Stosek, an administrative assistant in the main office. Mrs. O'Leary's replacement is Hannah Kassim, a recent graduate of Bloomsburg University. We've already had the pleasure of her contagious enthusiasm and eagerness to get started. I'm sure she'll be a huge asset to our teaching team. We all wish Christine the best of luck as she moves forward in life. She will be missed by all, especially her office coworkers.

Finally, we are pleased to welcome back Mrs. Karla Scheld! After a yearlong absence, she is returning as part of our second-grade teaching team with warm smiles all around.

TEC also has some changes to our Parent Teacher Organization (PTO) Board as well. Bridget Gollin, very successfully served as PTO Board President for the two years, maximum allowed. During her tenure, TEC's PTO became an integral support of almost everything occurring in the school. Her leadership made our school an even more welcoming and productive environment for everyone. She too will be missed.

Fortunately, she is being replaced by Ms. Maria Truman. We feel confident that she will continue Bridget's level of excellence. Other members of the new PTO Board include: Ms. Martina Polomcak and April Murray as Vice Presidents, Ms. Jenn Ednie as



(Above) Students attending Tobyhanna Elementary Center's (TEC) Summer School program enjoyed treats from the ice cream truck. (Below Left) Dr. Elizabeth Robison, the Superintendent of Schools, arranges for the ice cream truck to visit each schools during the district Summer School program, so all students can experience the excitement and fun of a visit by the ice cream truck at their schools. (Below Right) Barkley, TEC's therapy dog, can't wait to start a new school year and make new friends."



Treasurer, Ms. Amy Hindson as Secretary, and Ms. Annie Messina as Teacher Liaison.

Most importantly, please show them your support by becoming a member of the PTO. A family membership is only \$7.00. If the fee presents a hardship, please contact the office and we will discuss it. Your membership does not obligate you to anything more than a show of support and the money collected funds numerous enjoyable events that directly impact our students.

Additionally, the PTO welcomes everyone to their monthly meetings and if you want to be more involved, let the board know. Finally, all parental support is welcomed and appreciated.

It isn't just new personnel that our students will meet in the upcoming year. In an effort to keep our students engaged in a curriculum that is relevant and rigorous TEC will be introducing a remarkable, new computerized support called IXL.

IXL is a computer program that is made available for students in grades 4-6. It focuses on phonics, reading comprehension, writing strategies, and language arts skills. IXL utilizes lessons, games and assessments that are based on each student's individual needs and skill levels. The program also provides teachers with valuable data on where particular students are lacking academically. The teachers can then go into the program and select certain skills for students to concentrate on when they feel the student needs more practice in a certain area.



As a parent you need to know that this is something that your child can utilize at home. It is easily accessed on the Clever portal! TEC is sending four of our teachers to an in-depth training about the program to become IXL experts so look for more information about this exciting program in the future.

Furthermore, during the upcoming school year Tobyhanna Elementary Center students will continue to enjoy many of the creative approaches to education that we currently utilize. These approaches include our celebration weeks, Reading Rally, Fall Festival, and numerous assemblies.

They will also have opportunities to participate in the school play, morning announcements, musical events, student government, Future Teachers of America Club, Athletic Club, Puppy Post Office, daily Check and Connect, and of course, the "person" they most look forward to seeing the first day of school, their friend, Barkley. With so many positive things to anticipate, it's no wonder we have smiling faces rushing to the front doors on our first day of school!

As parents and guardians of our students you will feel comfortable knowing that we continue to make safety a priority as a district and as a school.

Over the summer numerous administrators, teachers, and school counselors attended an in-depth training about family reunification in the event that our students ever had to be evacuated. This is just one example of how seriously we take school safety.



# Make 2023-24 the year to try new school activities

The upcoming 2023-24 school year is going to be another great year for student activities, intramurals and athletics.

With the start of a new school year just around the corner, district officials want to stress the importance of parents encouraging their school-aged children to get involved in the many fantastic, challenging and rewarding co-curricular and athletic opportunities available in Pocono Mountain School District (PMSD) schools from elementary to high school.

With strong support from the School Board and administration, the district continues to provide student activity bus runs at the secondary level after school to ensure every student has the opportunity to participate in after-school co-curricular and athletic activities.

Co-curricular and athletic activities not only teach children teamwork, determination and the value of practice and hard work, but they also help students build self-confidence. Activities are also a lot of fun and a great way for students to make new friends through shared interests.

To help start the important discussion between parents and their school-aged children about which activities to join when school starts, here is a list of the many opportunities offered in our schools.

## Co-Curriculars Opportunities

### High School:

- Band
- Chess
- Chorus
- Dance Team
- FBLA - Future Business Leaders of America
- Indoor Color Guard
- Jazz Ensemble
- Junior Academy of Science
- Marching Band
- Mock Trial
- Musicals
- National Art Honor Society
- National French Honor Society
- National Honor Society
- National Music Honor Society
- National Psi Alpha Honor Society
- National Spanish Honor Society
- Newspaper
- Odyssey of the Mind
- Peer Support
- Pep Band
- Robotics
- SADD
- Scholastic Scrimmage
- Science Olympiad



*The Odyssey of the Mind program is just one of the many activities available to students at Swiftwater Intermediate School and other district schools.*

- Show Choir
- Speech and Debate
- Student Government/Council
- Urbane, District Gospel Choir
- Yearbook

### Junior High:

- All School Play
- Band
- Chorus
- Jazz Ensemble
- Junior Academy of Science
- National Junior Honor Society
- Newspaper
- Odyssey of the Mind
- Peer Support
- Student Government
- Yearbook

### Elementary & Intermediate:

- All School Play
- Odyssey of the Mind
- Student Government
- Yearbook

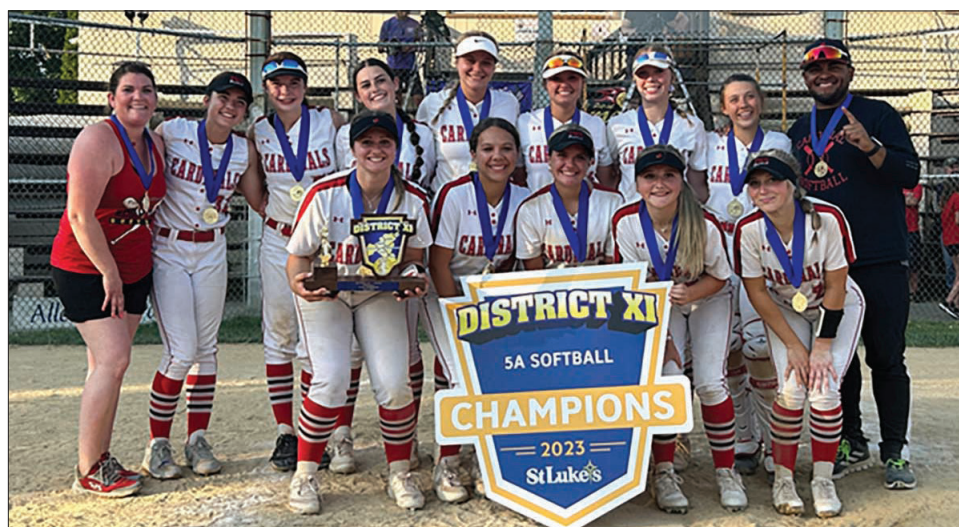
## Athletics

### High School:

- Baseball
- Basketball (Boys & Girls)
- Competitive Spirit
- Cross Country (Boys & Girls)
- Field Hockey
- Football
- Golf (Boys & Girls)
- Soccer (Boys & Girls)
- Softball
- Swimming (Boys & Girls)
- Tennis (Boys & Girls)
- Track (Boys & Girls)
- Volleyball (Boys & Girls)
- Wrestling (Boys & Girls)

### Junior High:

- Baseball
- Basketball (Boys & Girls)
- Cross Country (Boys & Girls)
- Competitive Spirit
- Field Hockey



*The East High School Girls Softball Team were the District XI 5A Champs. Pocono Mountain School District offers great athletic opportunities for students including PIAA fall, winter and spring sports.*

- Football
- Soccer (Boys & Girls)
- Softball
- Track (Boys & Girls)
- Volleyball (Boys & Girls)
- Wrestling (Boys & Girls)

## Intramurals/Clubs/Activities

### High School:

- Academic Assistance Club
- Anime Club
- Aavidum
- Black Student Union
- Broadcast Studio Club
- Computer Club
- Environmental Club
- Envirothon
- Esports Club
- Eye to Eye Club
- Future Health Professionals Club
- Gender & Sexuality Alliance Club
- Human Rights Club
- Leo Club
- Literary Magazine Club
- Multicultural Student Union
- National French Honor Society
- National Spanish Honor Society
- TV Studio
- Poetry Club
- Psi Alpha Honor Society
- Reading Olympics
- The Acceptance Club

### Junior High:

- Aavidum
- Art Club
- Broadway Appreciation Club
- Chess Club
- Computer Coding Club
- Envirothon
- Eye to Eye Club
- Pep Band
- PMTV Live
- Pride Club
- Science Club
- Science Olympiad
- Reading Olympics
- The Herren Project

- What's Cool About Manufacturing Club

### Elementary & Intermediate:

- 3rd Grade Early Risers Chorus
- Art Club
- Building Leaders of Tomorrow
- Cardinal Athletic Club
- Chorus
- Community Helper
- Computer Club
- Dance Team
- Double Dutch Club
- Drama Club
- Envirothon
- Fitness Club
- Future Teachers of America
- Girls on the Run
- Intro to Dance & Performing Arts
- Math Facts & Strategies Club
- Mindful Moments
- Morning News
- Mural Painting Club
- Musical Club
- Peer Support
- Pride Ambassadors
- Prop Crew/Costume Club
- Readers & Learners Club
- Recycling Club
- Robotics (Intermediate Level)
- Stage & Set Design
- STEAM Club
- Technology Club
- West Athletics Club

## Intramural Athletics

- Basketball Weight Training/Conditioning
- Baseball Strength and Conditioning
- Competitive Spirit
- Football & Agility
- Softball
- Track and Field Conditioning
- Volleyball Conditioning
- Field Hockey
- Swimming
- Golf
- Weight Lifting/Conditioning
- Wrestling



## Let's improve attendance in 2023-24

By Dr. Kathleen Fanelli,  
Principal  
& Dr. Eric Vogt, Principal  
PM East Junior High School

Attendance in school is one of the clearest predictors of successful completion of high school that exists. Some students struggle with attending school regularly. A few facts about attendance requirements from PDE for parents:

- Students with more than 3 unexcused absences are considered "Truant" by law. If a student stays home because he/she is ill, a parent note is required within 3 days of the student's return to school. Absence notes can be handwritten and signed by the parent and delivered to the main office by the student or emailed by the parent to [ejhsattendance@pmsd.org](mailto:ejhsattendance@pmsd.org).
- Students who accrue 6 unexcused absences are considered "habitually truant." If students approach this designation, Guidance will be reaching out to set up a "School Attendance Improvement Conference" with the goal of providing whatever assistance is necessary. This year, we have an Attendance Consultant from IU 20 that is working with us as a liaison between the school, the family, and Children & Youth.

Education Field Trips must be pre-approved (there is a form on our website or your student can pick one up in the office) and only 5 school days can be excused by District policy (Policy #204):

- Students in grades K-12 may not spend more than a total of five (5) school days on approved



educational trips in any given school year. No approval of non-school district sponsored educational trips or tours will be granted at the following times during the school year:

- During the first or last five (5) days of the school year.
- During the administration of achievement tests or statewide assessments tests.

Our goal is, of course, to have students present in school unless they are ill. If your student is ill, sending in the parent note is crucial.

Once students fall into the "truant" category, there are steps that we are required to take, up to and including involving Children & Youth and filing truancy charges with the District Magistrate. If you have concerns about your child's school attendance, please contact his/her Guidance Counselor: at 570-839-7121 extension 50460 or via email:

Mrs. Mary Bradley – Grade 7 Counselor [mbradley@pmsd.org](mailto:mbradley@pmsd.org)

Mrs. Nicole Cetta – Grade 8 Counselor [ncetta@pmsd.org](mailto:ncetta@pmsd.org)

Everyone wins when we work together with families to have our students here in school to the greatest extent possible!

### School Safety Training...



Dr. Robison and a team from Pocono Mountain School District, and School Resource Officers (SROs) from the Pocono Mountain Regional Police Department attended a training day in July at the PSBA School Safety Institute. The training offered both classroom instruction and hands-on, active participation in safety drills assisted by virtual technology that added realism to the drill scenarios. The safety training helps prepare district officials and SRO on how to respond to various situations that could occur at schools.



Have a terrific school year!!!

The Administration and Staff  
Pocono Mountain School District

## Tobyhanna Elementary ready for the new school year...continued from Page 12

We will continue to require identification from all school visitors and safety clearances for all parent volunteers. We will also do everything we can to ensure that our staff is trained in school safety efforts, CPR and First Aid certified, and our security guard is properly utilized and visible to students and school visitors. We know how important it is that our children feel comfortable to participate and learn in a secure environment.

Parents often ask us what they can do to enhance their child's academic experiences at such a young age. Our answers have always been the same. Please send your child to school everyday unless they are truly ill. Ensuring that your child is well rested, completed their homework, wearing the required, proper clothing, are other ways you can support us and



them. Finally, please sign up with your child's teachers so you will receive all Class DOJO messages. Class DOJO has proven to be the most important means of mutually communicating on an almost instantaneous basis. It is crucial that our students fully understand that we are here to help and support them as they learn

to love learning as a team. These efforts on your part, combined with our efforts at school, will ensure that happens.

In conclusion, parents should know that the entire staff and faculty at Tobyhanna Elementary Center are anxiously awaiting the start of an amazing 2023/2024 school year. Our goal continues to be to provide quality academics in an environment that is safe, stimulating, and enjoyable. How can we possibly go wrong with so many positive events, changes, clubs, activities, parents, teachers, and students? Most importantly, please start the school year feeling confident that your children are in the best hands with capable, caring, creative, teachers and staff members.

See you soon!



# PMSD Cyber Program is Always Open for Learning!

By Nora Wandalowski, Director  
PMSD Cyber Program

The Cyber Program offers options for all learners in Kindergarten through 12th Grade. Residents of Pocono Mountain School District are welcome to enroll in the program and experience the independence of cyber learning. Students can take all elementary core courses, and secondary academic, advanced and AP courses in Math, Science, English, Social Studies and electives while working with highly qualified, PA certified, Pocono Mountain teachers.

Cyber offers options beyond the traditional classroom for all PMSD students. Flexible schedules through full time at-home cyber instruction, a hybrid combination of in-person and at-home instruction, additional enhancement courses to bridge any academic gaps, and credit recovery to support students earning back lost credits are available.

PMSD Cyber Program students have the option to work at their own pace to complete courses and often they accelerate through requirements. Many high school students opt to participate in Cyber for the flexibility to work part-time jobs during traditional school day hours and complete course assignments in the evening. Additionally, having the option to participate with their peers in school sports, activities and events, is why families select the PMSD Cyber Program over all others.

Students on all grade levels who do not want to participate in a full-time Cyber Program but still need a flexible schedule can participate in a hybrid schedule with the PMSD Cyber Program and the traditional brick-and-mortar building.

Selecting the correct subjects for online study and for participation in the traditional building will be a team decision with the student, parents, a PMSD Cyber teacher, and building level staff meeting together to develop the best program for each individual student.

Most elementary students participate in core courses at the traditional brick-and-mortar building; while many secondary students choose to participate in the many Art, Music and Technology programming that Pocono Mountain has to offer.

PMSD Cyber Program is here to offer the best option for all PMSD students.

Using the Imagine Edgenuity Learning Management System (LMS), PMSD Cyber Program offers competitive courses for students on all instructional levels. From students participating in Advanced Placement courses, to students struggling with the core curriculum in need of additional instructional assistance, kindergarten students just learning how to navigate the school community, and for returning students working to earn a diploma, Imagine Edgenuity has a curriculum that can meet individual student needs.

All PMSD Cyber Program students participate in an individualized learning environment under the instruction of PA certified subject area Pocono Mountain teachers and work toward earning a Pocono Mountain School District diploma.

Students participate in daily live lessons with PMSD Cyber Program teachers. Working with teachers that

## PMSD Cyber Kettle Creek Field Trip



**PMSD Cyber Program students participate in field trips and other in-person activities that enhance their educational programming and give them opportunities to interact with other students and their teachers. Parents considering cyber school for their children should check out the PMSD Cyber Program.**



**Students enrolled in the PMSD Cyber Program attended Carnival Day to enjoy fun activities with their classmates. Cyber Program teachers work to make learning fun for their cyber students.**

are located on West Campus allows PMSD Cyber Program to offer the personal connection that sets it apart from other cyber schools.

All teachers have live instruction scheduled throughout the day to guide students through the Edgenuity Course Map. All students can schedule an appointment to come in and meet with a member of the Cyber Staff to receive face-to-face support. Meetings with teachers are offered daily through Zoom and can be scheduled by appointment for one-on-one instructional support.

Also, students who are enrolled in the Pocono Mountain School District and are interested in competing in college sports will be able to select and participate in PMSD Cyber Program core courses

from the list of requirements in the NCAA Eligibility Center. In order to meet amateurism standards and demonstrate academic preparedness, an athlete must complete all core courses and meet all Pocono Mountain School District graduation requirements and PMSD Cyber Program is here to provide options for those students.

Meeting individual needs is the goal of the PMSD Cyber Program. The opportunities for core course completion, recovery of course credits, enrichment beyond the school day, and access to face-to-face teachers is what sets PMSD Cyber Program far above and apart from all other cyber schools. Additionally, the PMSD Cyber Staff has planned multiple fun activities for students to gather together with Cyber classmates and make connections.

Last year, the PMSD Cyber Program hosted Fall Festival, Winter Movie Day, Read Across America Book Fair, Carnival day and an Ice Cream Social. PMSD Cyber Program students also went on field trips to The Bog, The Coal Mine and to see The Railriders.

More events and field trips are planned for the 2023-2024 school year to keep our PMSD Cyber students connected to and socializing with peers.

If you are a district resident looking for the best Cyber Program for your student, or want to learn more about the full-day and hybrid programs for students in Kindergarten through 12th grade offered by PMSD Cyber Program, please contact Nora Wandalowski at [nwandalowski@pmsd.org](mailto:nwandalowski@pmsd.org), 570-839-7121 extension 75400 to schedule an appointment. PMSD Cyber Program is Always Open For Learning!



# Coffee & smiles are always brewing at WHS's Coffee Corner

By Michele Connors, Assistant Principal  
PM West High School

Coffee, tea, hot chocolate, and a delicious assortment of treats are what customers can expect to find at West Coffee Corner each Monday and Friday morning at West High School – and of course free smiles accompany each order.

Bringing special morning treats to the staff at West High School is not new for WHS special education teacher Ms. Pamela Wrubel, her paraprofessionals, and her students. According to Ms. Wrubel, her students first ran a coffee cart in 2019 as a way to assist the PRIDE Action Committee and for her students to learn and practice employability skills.

In January 2023, West Coffee Corner opened to customers in their new space on the corner of Main Street and West Hall, and Ms. Wrubel shared that they plan to have a grand opening celebration this coming school year when the coffee shop is fully complete. She is hoping to have some of our artistic WHS students paint the permanent “store front” for West Coffee Corner.

Staff can pre-order items for pick up or delivery each Monday and Friday morning through a Google Sheet. Student baristas then serve and deliver the menu items to the customers. Staff members can also stop by the coffee shop or call to place their orders as well. In addition to the delicious hot beverages, staff can also enjoy baked treats – some of which are generously donated, such as WHS health and physical education teacher Ms. Brianna Palazzi’s “famous” homemade biscotti and an assortment of bakery items from Pocono Dessert Company. According to Ms. Wrubel, Tracey Eisler is one of the owners of Pocono Dessert Company and a PMSD alumnus who learned about West Coffee Corner through the school’s Facebook page and reached out wanting to help. Now each Monday morning, Pocono Dessert Company donates their delicacies for our students to sell and for staff to enjoy.

Mr. Wrubel explained that the proceeds from West Coffee Corner help restock the shop and will help with future learning opportunities. Additionally, West Coffee Corner donated to Big Brothers, Big Sisters Bowl for Kids’ Sake and the WHS Student Council’s Make-A-Wish fundraiser last year.



Paraprofessionals **Thaidy Guerra** and **Sandra Nurse** assist WHS Junior **Rebekah Frutchey**, WHS Sophomores **Shane Bucello** and **Brianna Szmak**, and 2023 WHS graduate **Justin Waldron** as they prepare customer orders at West Coffee Corner.

Mr. Jonathan Reifer, WHS’s Supervisor of Special Education is pleased with the success of West Coffee Corner and said, “it’s a great vocational activity for the kids and gives them an opportunity to provide a service and practice their functional Math and English skills.” Kaden McCue is one of Ms. Wrubel’s students who worked in the coffee shop last year. He said, “it’s actually pretty fun once you get used to it. Sometimes I get to drive the cart around to make deliveries. Sometimes I get to work with my friends in the coffee shop which makes it fun while still getting the job done.”

Staff members at WHS have been enjoying West Coffee Corner. Ms. Amanda Petrillo is an administrative assistant for our building principal and often orders a regular coffee and gets the kids’ recommendations on which creamer to use that week. She enjoys having the students deliver the coffee because it allows her to interact with students that she doesn’t always get to see. Ms. Petrillo said that the students take their jobs in the Coffee Corner very seriously and get to develop a sense of what it’s like to work in a store environment. Ms. Brianna Sarnoski is a special education teacher at WHS who said, “I think it’s great that they deliver the coffee to us because sometimes we can’t leave our rooms. The treats that they offer are yummy and something to look forward to.”



Paraprofessionals **Thaidy Guerra** and **Sandra Nurse** assist WHS Junior **Rebekah Frutchey**, WHS Sophomores **Shane Bucello** and **Brianna Szmak**, and 2023 WHS graduate **Justin Waldron** as they prepare customer orders at West Coffee Corner.



Paraprofessionals **Jerusalem Strickland** and **Thaidy Guerra** assist WHS graduate **Patrick Purser** and Junior **Ryan Vierra** as they prepare for their customers at West Coffee Corner.

Ms. Wrubel and her students are looking forward to offering these morning treats to staff again this year. She stated that working in the West Coffee Corner has, “taught the students many skills: the importance of following directions and working carefully, how to communicate and work cooperatively with others, and time management, money, and organizational skills.” “In addition,” she explained, “the students have made new friends and built positive relationships with staff members throughout the building.”

# Swiftwater Intermediate connections with students

By Kristine Kunsman, Principal  
& Daniel Higgins, Assistant Principal  
Swiftwater Intermediate School

A new program at the Swiftwater Intermediate School looks to support those students most in need. Check & Connect is an intervention which assigns a specific student to a trained staff member who builds a strong relationship based on mutual trust and open communication.

This research supported intervention

is designed to improve attendance and academic performance while reducing the drop-out rate.

The process begins with a referral from the building Student Assistance Program. Students who have been introduced to interventions but have yet to yield results may be considered for Check & Connect.

A mentor/coach would then be assigned to meet this student.

Systematic monitoring of student performance variables (such as attendance, grades, and behavior referrals) using data readily available to school personnel would be used to ‘check’ in on the student.

Timely, personalized, data-based interventions designed to provide support tailored to individual student needs, based on the student’s level of engagement with

school associated influences of home and school, and leveraging of local resources would establish the ‘connect’.

Mentors would also establish a relationship with the parents/families of these students for the two-year commitment, functioning as a liaison between home and school.

The first team of staff was trained over the summer with another group scheduled to receive training in the fall. This program has already been implemented at other grade levels across the district with positive results.





# CRIS Parents: There's still time for students to avoid the summer slide

By Amy Haynes, Principal  
Clear Run Intermediate School

You know summer is coming to an end when you can walk into almost any store and see their back to school display front and center. Who doesn't love buying a new pack of crayons, pencils, or a notebook or two?

Getting ready for school means having the right tools, but before the school bell rings there are some things you can do at home this summer to get ready for a successful year.

- Read for 15-20 minutes every day. Challenge the whole family, for example: read with a flashlight, read in your pajamas, read outside, read to someone else, read in another state/on vacation, etc.
- Practice basic math facts. The website, We Are Teachers, wrote an article sharing a number of games to play with a deck of cards, but be creative. Make up your own games! If you are



**Clear Run Intermediate School Readers and Leaders set a great example for their classmates and help encourage other students to read more books. Summer reading can help students prepare for the start of the next school year.**

interested in reading that article, please go to <https://www.weareteachers.com/math-card-games/>

- Journal! If you can't write for long stretches of time, sketch, make a list, or jot down some ideas

to go back to later, but setting aside time to write and record your thoughts is a great way to get ready for school, and it will be fun to look back on later.

- Cook or bake with help. There are so many essential skills that you will need to use to make a tasty treat, like measuring ingredients, following directions, and sequencing.
- Visit your local library. Many of our libraries have engaging and free events throughout the summer that help our students develop a love for learning and reading.
- Log in to your Clever account or go to our school district's webpage for Academic Resources to play educational games on rainy days.

Whether you are just starting kindergarten or getting ready for your senior year, spending a few minutes a day doing something academic during the summer will help ease everyone back into a wonderful and successful 2023-2024 school year.

We are looking forward to seeing you all again soon!



## Attendance is key to success

By Kristine Kunsman, Principal  
& Daniel Higgins, Assistant Principal  
Swiftwater Intermediate School

Student attendance plays an important role in reaching academic success in school. At the Swiftwater Intermediate School, several supports are in place to assist parents and students in maintaining good attendance and creating a priority to get students to school every day. Parents receive notice about absences via Parentlink calls. They also receive letters once the students have three unexcused absences, six unexcused absences, and/or ten total absences. If a student reaches eighteen total absences, a doctor's note is needed to excuse the absence.

When the building attendance team determines a pattern of student absences, parents are invited into the building to create a student attendance improvement plan. This plan provides suggestions and policy details in order to garner parental support for improved attendance.

The guidance counselors also create attendance groups. Students can earn incentives for regular, on-time attendance at school. In addition, this year the Pocono Mountain School District has the support of the Colonial IU20 with a School Attendance Improvement Consultant. The consultant has supported the school's efforts with additional parent contact and has served as a liaison with Monroe County Children & Youth. Interventions such as Children & Youth and the local magistrate are reserved for those students who can be defined as habitually truant, which is six or more unexcused absences.

# Meet the new staff members at SIS

By Kristine Kunsman, Principal  
& Daniel Higgins, Assistant Principal  
Swiftwater Intermediate School

When school opens for students on August 28th, 2023 four additions to the Pocono Mountain School district staff will join the Swiftwater Intermediate family. These additions are possible through filling teacher retirements and vacancies which occurred over the summer. We are very excited to welcome these new members to the building while utilizing their skills and talents so our students can grow.

Mr. Dustin Thomas will be joining fifth grade as a Mathematics and Science teacher. Mr. Thomas originally is from Southern New Jersey. He went to college at Villanova, where he played quarterback. He transferred to Northern Michigan to finish his Bachelor's Degree. He spent time in California working for the San Diego Padres and running football camps before returning to the Northeast. He has teaching experience at both the Delaware Valley School District and the Allentown School District. Mr. Thomas' experiences will inspire his students and complement his instruction.

Ms. Mackenzie Byers will be joining the guidance

department as the 4th grade Guidance Counselor at the Swiftwater Intermediate School. Ms. Byers graduated from Misericordia University with a Bachelor's Degree in Psychology, specializing in child and adult mental health interventions. She then graduated from Marywood University with a Master's Degree in Counselor Education. Ms. Byers will join a very motivated guidance department to address our student's needs outside the classroom.

Ms. Meghan Snyder is a Pocono Mountain graduate. She studied journalism at Penn State University and Special Education at Marywood University. Ms. Snyder has been teaching special education for the past five years, focusing on behavior and social-emotional learning. She brings her experiences to the emotional support classroom at the Swiftwater Intermediate School.

Ms. Amanda Palmer is also a Pocono Mountain graduate. She studied education at East Stroudsburg University, holding teaching certificates for both Middle Level education as well as Special Education. She comes to us from the Easton Area School district and she will be teaching grade 4. Ms. Palmer enjoys camping, baking and spending time with friends and family.

## EJHS Guidance helps students...continued from Page 11

challenge: academic or social. Each day, our students are faced with all types of situations that attempt to take the focus away from learning, and we don't want that! Issues with friends, problems on social media, feelings of depression or anxiety, and peer pressure are a few things that might try to steal your focus.

In the same way it is hard to concentrate on your school work if you are hungry, it is extremely difficult to stay focused if there is something going on outside the classroom that has you upset.

The counselors are not here to solve problems for you, but rather to teach you how to approach solving them on your own as you change from children into

young adults.

Some counseling will happen individually, and some in small groups. The counselors will also guide you toward thinking about careers.

Some students already have an idea of what they want to do after high school, others aren't there yet, and that is perfectly natural. The counselors will get everyone thinking about it and the ways in which your junior high and high school experiences can help you find your passion.

As you go through this year, make visiting the Guidance Office a regular part of your week, even if it is just stopping in on your way to lunch to say hello!



# Understanding school safety drills & procedures

By Wendy Frable  
Director of Public Relations &  
Safety Compliance

Early in the school year Pocono Mountain School District (PMSD) parents should hear their school-aged children talk about Run, Hide, Fight, evacuating their schools for fire drills, or the steps they are taught to take when practicing lockdown drills.

All of these actions are part of the school safety measures taken to prepare students, faculty, staff and administrators on how to respond in emergency situations. These actions and safety measures are part of the district's comprehensive Emergency Operations Plan for All Hazards, that outlines the procedures for the superintendent, central administration team, school administrators, faculty and staff to follow to help keep Pocono Mountain students and schools safe.

The plan is confidential, so parents won't find a copy of it on the district's website. The plan includes procedures for district employees and students to follow during many potential hazards from severe weather and hazardous chemical spills to a lost student or violent act against a school. The plan includes easy-to-follow checklists to help district employees ensure that in an emergency they know what steps to take to help safeguard students and each other.

As part of the district's emergency preparedness procedures, all PMSD schools practice lockdown drills. When a school is placed in a lockdown, whether for a drill or potential threat, the school remains locked down until the drill ends, or in the case of a perceived threat, the threat or hazard has been cleared. If the situation warrants it, the district may also lockdown an entire



campus or all campuses during an emergency.

When a building is locked down, it's important for parents and community members to know that no one except emergency responders will be allowed into the school. Local and state police in Pennsylvania are trained to immediately enter the school and stop and remove the threat without delay.

PMSD has highly-trained armed School Resource Officers from the Pocono Mountain Regional Police Department and contracted armed security officers assigned to each of its schools to respond immediately to a possible threat at the school while addition law enforcement officers are called on to respond and assist with the emergency.

The district, law enforcement, and other emergency responders in Monroe County are trained to utilize the Incident Command System (ICS) during emergencies to ensure an immediate and effective response to an emergency at any PMSD school. By activating the ICS during an emergency, PMSD and law enforcement will ensure they immediately establish a command

structure to provide the necessary leadership to take control of the situation and keep the response focused on eliminating the threat as quickly as possible, rendering emergency first aid and medical assistance to anyone injured, and evacuating students and staff to a safe area for parents to be reunited with their children.

During an emergency, district officials will need parents' assistance in keeping local roadways and school campuses as free from other traffic as possible, so emergency responders (police, fire fighters, emergency medical personnel, ambulances, etc.) can get to the impacted school campus in question as quickly as possible.

It will be very hard for emergency responders to get to district campuses and assist with an emergency if parents all rush to their child's school to see what is happening.

## Parent's role in an emergency

Parents can best assist the district Administration and Emergency Responders if they try to refrain from immediately calling their child's school or rushing to their child's school when a lockdown is initiated. Keeping the

telephone lines open for emergency use is critical to the district's ability to respond quickly and effectively to the emergency.

Check the PMSD website at [www.pmsd.org](http://www.pmsd.org) or the PMSD Facebook page at [Facebook.com/Poconoeast.west](https://www.facebook.com/Poconoeast.west) for information. Information and updates will be posted to the PMSD website and Facebook page during an emergency.

Stay by the phone where you normally receive your ParentLink phone calls. District officials will use ParentLink phone calls and ParentLink alert emails and text messages to provide information and updates to parents. If you don't receive alert emails and text messages regarding snow closures, school delays and early dismissals, you may want to sign up to receive alert emails and text messages.

Monitor local media outlets for updates, because the district will ask for the media's help to get information out to parents and the community. The district will send advisories to local television, print and radio news outlets to keep parents informed.

Due to the unpredictable nature of any emergency, the location of the evacuation and parent reunification sites will be announced by district officials following the incident. Depending on the emergency conditions, students may be released to parents at a designated location that is not at their school or campus. Designated reunification locations will be determined based on the nature and location of the emergency.

For questions or concerns regarding PMSD emergency operations procedures, please contact your child's school principal, the district Safety and Security Coordinator at (570) 839-7121, ext. 10151 or Public Relations by email at [wfrable@pmsd.org](mailto:wfrable@pmsd.org).



August 23, 2023

▲ Kindergarten - Sixth Grade  
**VIRTUAL INFO SESSION:**  
August 23rd at 10 am

▲ Seventh - Twelfth Grade  
**VIRTUAL INFO SESSION:**  
August 23rd at 1 pm

▲ Kindergarten - Twelfth Grade  
**IN-PERSON at PMSD CYBER (West Jr High)**  
August 23rd from 4 pm to 6 pm \*

\* Students will be able to pick-up materials, exchange Chromebooks, or pick up new computers. PMSD CYBER students will receive new computer for 2023-24 school year.



**QUESTIONS? JOIN A VIRTUAL INFO SESSION?**

Contact Director Nora Wandalowski  
Phone: (570) 839-7121 EXT: 75400 Email: [nwandalowski@pmsd.org](mailto:nwandalowski@pmsd.org)



# PMSD announces Annual Public Notice on Special Education

## Special Education (CHAPTER 14)

The Pocono Mountain School District, either directly or through various other education agencies including Colonial Intermediate Unit #20, provides special education services which may be required by children with special needs.

In compliance with state and federal law, notice is hereby given by the Pocono Mountain School District that it conducts ongoing identification activities as a part of its school program for the purpose of identifying students who may be in need of special education and related services (eligible students).

If your child is identified by the school district as possibly in need of such services, you will be notified of applicable procedures. Individualized services and programs are available for children who are determined to need specially designed instruction due to the following conditions:

1. Autism
2. Deaf-blindness
3. Deafness
4. Emotional disturbance
5. Hearing impairment
6. Intellectual disabilities
7. Multiple disabilities
8. Orthopedic impairment
9. Other health impairment
10. Specific learning disability
11. Speech or language impairment
12. Traumatic brain injury
13. Visual impairment, including blindness

### Evaluation Process

Pocono Mountain School District has a procedure in place by which parents can request an evaluation. If you believe that your school-age child may be in need of special education services and related programs, you may request screening and evaluation at any time whether or not your child is enrolled in the district's public school program. Child Find federal regulations also apply to highly mobile children, including migrant children. Requests for evaluation and screening are to be made in writing to the building principal or to Dr. Mark Wade, Assistant Superintendent for Special Education for the Pocono Mountain School District, at 570-839-7121 ext. 10181.

### Consent

School entities cannot proceed with an evaluation, or with the initial provision of special education and related services, without the written consent of the parents.

For additional information related to consent, please refer to the Procedural

Safeguards Notice which can be found at the PaTTAN website, [www.pattan.net](http://www.pattan.net) or the Pocono Mountain School District website, [www.pmsd.org](http://www.pmsd.org). Once written parental consent is obtained, the district will proceed with the evaluation process.

If the parent disagrees with the evaluation, the parent can request an Independent Education Evaluation (IEE) at public expense.

### Program Development

Once the evaluation process is completed, a team of qualified professionals and parents determine whether the child is eligible.

If the child is eligible, the individualized education program team meets, develops the program, and determines the educational placement. Once the IEP team develops the program and determines the educational placement, a Notice of Recommended Educational Placement (NOREP)/prior written notice is issued. Written consent is required before initial services can be provided. The parent has the right to revoke consent after initial placement.

### Preschool Children with Special Needs (Age 3 to School Age)

Parents whose child has a developmental delay or one or more conditions as listed in the Special Education (Chapter 14) Notice above, and/or who have questions regarding their child's seeing, hearing, learning, talking, moving about, manipulating objects, understanding, showing emotions, getting along with others, playing with toys, taking care of himself/herself, should telephone Colonial Intermediate Unit #20 (CIU #20) at 610-252-5550, which offers Early Intervention, a preschool program for children with special needs. CIU #20 can provide information, screening, evaluation, programs, therapy, parent support, and referral to community agencies at no cost to the parent.

For further information, call CIU #20 at 610-252-5550 or Dr. Wade at 570-839-7121 Ext. 10181.

### Protected Handicapped Students (CHAPTER 15)

In compliance with state and federal law, the Pocono Mountain School District will provide to each protected handicapped student, without discrimination or cost to the student or family, those related aids, services or accommodations which are needed to provide equal opportunity to participate in and obtain the benefits of the school program and extracurricular activities to the maximum extent appropriate to the student's abilities.

In order to qualify as a protected handicapped student, the child must be school age with a physical or mental disability that substantially limits or prohibits participation in or access to an aspect of the school program. These services and protections for "protected handicapped students" are distinct from those applicable to all eligible or exceptional students enrolled (or seeking enrollment) in special education programs.

For further information on the rights of parents and children, provision of services, evaluation and screening, and rights to due process procedures regarding protected handicapped students, you may contact, in writing or by telephone, Dr. Wade at 570-839-7121 Ext. 10181 or any building principal.

### Gifted Education (CHAPTER 16)

The Pocono Mountain School District provides gifted education services to school-age students identified as gifted who require these services to reach their potential. In compliance with state and federal law, notice is hereby given by the Pocono Mountain School District that it conducts ongoing identification activities as a part of its school program for the purpose of identifying students who may be in need of gifted education services.

If your child is identified by the school district as possibly in need of such services, you will be notified of applicable procedures.

If you believe that your school-age child may be in need of gifted education services, you may request screening and evaluation at any time, whether or not your child is enrolled in the school district's public school program.

Requests for evaluation and screening are to be made in writing to the building principal or Dr. Wade at 570-839-7121

Ext. 10181.

### Confidentiality

All information gathered about your child is subject to the confidentiality provisions contained in federal and state law. The school district has policies and procedures in effect governing the collection, maintenance, destruction and disclosure to third parties of this information. Parents have the right to see and obtain a copy of their child's records. Personally identifiable information relative to an exceptional student will only be released with the permission of the parent and/or in accordance with the Family Education Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) and the Pennsylvania Rules, Regulations, and Standards.

For information about policies and procedures, as well as rights of confidentiality and access to educational records, you may contact in writing or by telephone, Dr. Wade, at 570-839-7121 Ext. 10181 or any building principal.

Also, in accordance with 34 CFR § 300.624, please be advised of the following retention/destruction schedule for the Pennsylvania Alternate System of Assessment (PASA), Pennsylvania System of School Assessment (PSSA), and Keystone Exam related materials:

- PSSA, Keystone Exam, and PASA test booklets will be destroyed one year after student reports are delivered for the administration associated with the test booklets.
- PSSA and Keystone Exam answer booklets and PASA media recordings will be destroyed three years after completion of the assessment.

This amendment to the Annual Notice went into effect at the start of the 2018-19 school year.

**PMSD Address:** PMSD Department of Special Education, PO Box 200, Swiftwater, PA 18370-0200.

JOIN OUR  
TEAM



Scan the QR Code to see all that Pocono Mountain School District has to offer!

Please email below for any assistance  
[mdunlap@pmsd.org](mailto:mdunlap@pmsd.org) (Support Staff)  
[astoner@pmsd.org](mailto:astoner@pmsd.org) (Professional Staff)



# Back to school: Parent involvement is key

By Dr. Catherine Sweeney  
Assistant Superintendent for Curriculum  
& Instruction

The school year brings opportunities for social connection. Learn how you can work to create a healthy and supportive school for your child.

Get involved! When parents are engaged in their children's school activities, they get better grades, choose healthier behaviors, and have better social skills.

Parent engagement is a key component of making schools a healthy and supportive place. It is a shared responsibility of both school staff and families:

School staff are committed to making families feel welcomed and engaged in a variety of ways to maintain their involvement, such as through emails, phone calls, or meetings to discuss grades, behavior, and accomplishments.

Families are committed to actively supporting their child's learning and development.

## What can parents do:

- Become part of the decision-making process in schools
- Ask the school to provide educational opportunities for parents
- Talk with your children about health-related behaviors
- Set goals with your child's school or teacher for building strong, positive relationships with peers and adults who can support their emotional well-being.

Back to school season is an ideal time for parents to reinforce behaviors that help to reduce the effects



*Thank you to Pocono Mountains United Way for donating 48 bookbags for students in the district's Life Skills Program. Todd Nemura, Director of Resources Development – PM United Way dropped off the bookbags with Dr. Cathy Sweeney, PMSD Assistant Superintendent for Curriculum & Instruction.*

of stressful life events and teach children the skills to overcome them so they can reach their full potential.

5 Things to know and do to Support your Child's Health and Emotional Well-being:

**KNOW:** Schools can use a variety of strategies to promote the health and emotional well-being of children and adolescents including:

- Setting goals with parents for building strong relationships with peers and adults.
- Providing education and opportunities to help

families become actively involved in their children's academic and school life.

- Using effective classroom management and teaching methods to foster a positive learning environment.
- Providing access to counseling, psychological, and social services.

**DO:** Get involved in the health decisions at school. Ask to be involved in parent organizations – such as the Parent Teacher Organization (PTO), school health councils, or school health action teams – to help improve the health and emotional well-being of children and adolescents.

**DO:** Make communication with school a two-way street. Read school newsletters and attend parent-teacher-student conferences to learn what is going on at school. Ask the school to provide educational opportunities for parents. Communicate regularly through emails, phone calls, or meetings to discuss your child's grades, behavior, and accomplishments. Ask how the school is supporting health and emotional well-being and what you can do at home to support their efforts.

**DO:** Implement simple strategies at home such as:

- Take time to talk to your child and be an active listener.
- Acknowledge and ask about your child's feelings to model empathy.
- Focus on your child's strengths before talking about things they can do to improve their confidence.
- Children learn what they see. Model positive coping skills to identify and manage stressful situations. For example, going for a walk or practicing deep breathing exercises can help.



## REGISTRATION NOW OPEN

School starts August 28, 2023!

**Register Online  
or in person!**

**Cyber school  
available for all  
grade levels!**

 570-839-7121 x40400

 111 Center Court, Swiftwater

 [www.pmsd.org](http://www.pmsd.org)



**SCAN HERE**





*STEAM team logo designed by a student at Pocono Mountain East High School.*

## Moving into the future with STEAM

By Amy L. Buffington  
Director of Social Studies and  
Humanities

STEAM encompasses many things these days. This holds true K-12 in the realm of Social Studies and Humanities. It can be seen in art, music, ESL, family and consumer science, world languages and social studies.

PMSD has established a STEAM team in each building to keep students and staff moving forward to keep everyone moving forward keeping them college and/or career ready.

Last year each building had a teacher representative who participated in different cohorts in a program called

“Launch into STEM Learning” organized by IU 21 and IU 20, which was paid for by a PA Smart grant.

It featured different paths of how to implement STEAM into classes in a variety of different ways. A focus was on Project Based Learning (PBL) to provide students with K-12 relevant real-world learning experiences.

This year, each team will continue to learn and grow on their STEAM journeys. Teacher lead teams will help provide resources to staff and lessons for students to keep PMSD moving forward in our preparation of students for tomorrow's challenges and opportunities. Please stay tuned for more STEAM in our schools.