

PMSD CONNECT ON

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

2024-25: Issue 1

New instructional coaches expand teacher support for greater student achievement

By Dr. Catherine Sweeney
Assistant Superintendent for
Curriculum & Instruction

Starting with the 2024-2025 school year, the instructional coaching model will be utilized at all elementary/intermediate buildings in the Pocono Mountain School District. Ten instructional coaches in the core content areas of ELA (5), Mathematics/Science (5) will build capacity to improve student outcomes by facilitating the professional growth of teachers through collaborative decision-making, targeted use of data, and teacher reflection.

The core beliefs of instructional coaching are the following:

- The teacher is the single most important variable in student achievement and growth.
- Instructional Coaching maximizes teacher efficacy in all four Danielson Domains.

Job-embedded instructional coaching is:

- focused on student outcomes
- evidence based just-in-time
- collaborative
- and non-evaluative

Decision-making is informed by high-quality

student and teacher data.

Instructional Coaching thrives in a learning culture that values continuous growth and improvement.

Schools have reached a critical period of need. Faced with the demand to provide accelerated learning, differentiation, and social-emotional learning supports after years of pandemic learning, teachers (and school leaders) need more support than ever.

Numerous schools have experienced unprecedented turnover, resulting in a much higher percentage of new teachers to support than in the past.

Although many midcareer and veteran teachers have persevered through this period of their careers, they are seeking professional invigoration and more agency regarding their professional learning and teaching practice. Supporting these teacher leaders in ways that help them continue to grow, while also being respected for the important contributions they make, is essential.

With so much variation in needs, traditional approaches to professional learning and support yield limited results. One of the best methods for supporting these various needs is through sustained, personalized, and collaborative partnerships between teachers and instructional coaches.



Clear Run Elementary Center (CREC) Summer School soon-to-be Kindergarten students enjoy a sweet treat when the district arranged for the Ice Cream Truck to visit schools hosting the K-8 Summer School Program. The students will attend Kindergarten at CREC in Teacher Jessica Frantz's class. Students studied English Language Arts and Mathematics during the 6-week program. More than 900 students attended Summer School this year.

Free breakfast & lunch program includes all students for 2024-25

All Pocono Mountain School District (PMSD) students who attend district schools are eligible to receive free breakfast and lunch when attending school on school days throughout the 2024-25 school year.

District students in Kindergarten through Grade 12 are eligible for the free breakfasts and lunches as part of the Community Eligibility Provision (CEP) program the Pennsylvania Department of Education approved for PMSD last school year.

Under the CEP program, 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 again for



(Left to Right) Elias Rodriguez, who will be entering 4th Grade at Swiftwater Intermediate School at the start of school, received a coloring contest award last school year from Monique Mazaika, Resident Dietician, as part of Chartwells K-12 Foodservice PA Harvest of the Month Grant program at Pocono Mountain School District.

the 2024-25 school year," 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."

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 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

See FREE MEALS...Page 5

From the Superintendent...

By Dr. Elizabeth Robison
Superintendent of Schools

I am so excited to welcome our students back to school for the start of the 2024-25 school year on Monday, August 26th.

Throughout the summer break, our Pocono Mountain School District (PMSD) team has been working hard to prepare our schools and campuses for the first day of school. Construction projects are being completed, classrooms have been cleaned and sanitized, floors have been scrubbed, polished and buffed, lockers were cleaned, sports fields were mowed and relined – all in preparation for the start of school.

The 2024-25 school year will offer students challenging educational opportunities throughout each school day and a wide range of co-curricular and intramural clubs, activities and athletic for students to explore their interests. PMSD will also continue to offer students a large array of supports to help them achieve their maximum potential.

I am pleased to announce that our district will offer a new level of support to students during the 2024-25 school year through the Communities in Schools for Eastern Pennsylvania Program. PMSD and the Pocono Mountains United Way have been strong partners for many years on programs that support and benefit our students and their families. Beginning this school year, we have expanded that partnership with Pocono Mountains United Way to include the Communities in Schools for Eastern Pennsylvania Program at Clear Run Elementary Center, Clear Run Intermediate School, Pocono Mountain West Junior High School, and Pocono Mountain West High School. We hope to expand the program to our other schools in the future.

Communities in Schools’ mission is to surround



Dr. Elizabeth Robison, Superintendent of Schools, visited a classroom of the Pre-K Summer Program at Swiftwater Elementary Center (SEC). Pictured here (row 1, left to right) Maci and Riley Scolo, new students will be attending kindergarten; (Row 2, left to right) Ms. Karen Doughton, Co-Principal at SEC, and Dr. Robison; (Row 3, left to right) Ms. Amy Berman, Reading Support Teacher, and Stephanie Rocha, paraprofessional.

students with a community of support, which in turn empowers our students to stay in school and achieve in school and at life.

The program focuses on connecting students and their families with the necessary individualized

supports and services to keep students engaged in school and on the path to success. PMSD will have a site coordinator who will work to connect students and their families to school and community-based resources, and will provide direct services to students. Each district school will have an individualized school support plan based on the needs of the students attending the school.

Communities in Schools will provide Tier 1 supports (widely available services designed to foster a positive school climate and address school-level risk factors and goals), Tier 2 supports (targeted services typically provided in a group setting to students with a common need; and Tier 3 supports (intensive, individualized services typically provide in a one-on-one setting to students with highly specific needs).

I also want to assure parents that we will continue our strong focus on school safety and security throughout the 2024-25 school year. Over summer break, we conducted school safety-related professional development, attended safety conferences to learn more about best practices for school safety, reviewed our district and school safety protocols and emergency response plans, and made some additions to our district and school safety measures. Some of those improvements you will be able to see when you enter our campuses and schools, such as the new lobby configurations at some of our schools.

Other safety measures are layers that we have added that are not visible to you, but are important when it comes to keeping our students, staff and schools safe on a daily basis. I ask that parents please take a few minutes to read about the school safety articles in this newsletter and to read the school safety letters that will be sent home with your children the first day of school.

Please enjoy the remainder of the summer break. We will be excited and ready to greet your children as they get off of their buses on the first day of school.

Bus Stop Safety

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.

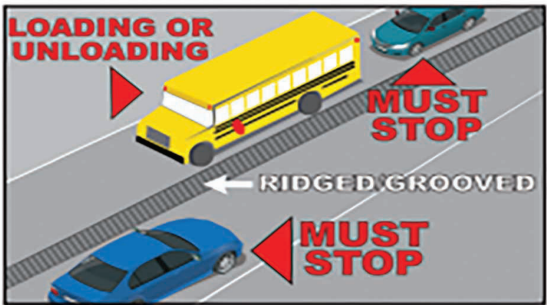
East Transportation
570-839-7121
ext. 30430 or 30437
West Transportation
570-839-7121,
ext. 31424 or 31422



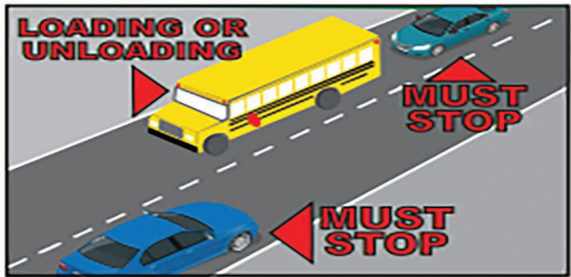
What can parents do to help ensure their children’s safety?

- 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.



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



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



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

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 Marion Pyzik, who also serves as the Board President, Bert Rinehimer and Patty Rinehimer.

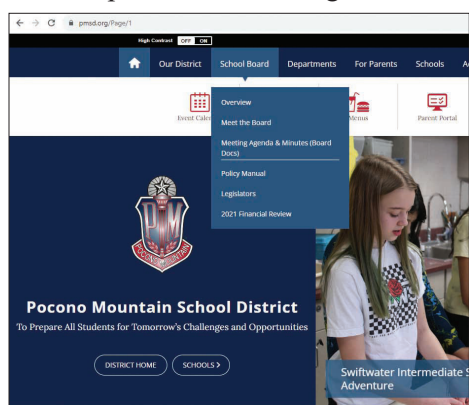
Region 3 (Coolbaugh Township and the Borough of Mount Pocono) directors are Ronnie Byrd, Anna Lopez and Michael Stern.

PMSD School Board meetings are normally held on the first and third Wednesday of each month at 6 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 prior the meeting.

Upcoming School Board meetings are as follows:

- August 14, 2024
- August 21, 2024
- September 18, 2024
- October 2, 2024
- October 16, 2024
- November 6, 2024
- November 20, 2024
- December 4, 2024
- December 18, 2024

Note: Meeting dates are subject to change. Any change in meeting dates will be announced and advertised in the local newspaper and on the district website prior to the meeting.



Region 1 School Board Directors



Christina Grape-Garvey



Nathan Strunk
Board Vice President



Stephen Watto

Region 2 School Board Directors



Marion Pyzik
Board President



Albert (Bert) Rinehimer



Patricia (Patty) Rinehimer

Region 3 School Board Directors



Ronnie Byrd



Anna Lopez



Michael Stern

PMSD adopts new literacy program for grades K-6

By Dr. Bethann McCain
Director of Reading
& English Language Arts

Pocono Mountain School District is adopting a new literacy program called Amplify/CKLA starting this school year. This program is for grades K to 6 and is aligned with the latest research in the Science of Reading.

Amplify/CKLA emphasizes the importance of phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension. By focusing on these key components, we aim to build a strong foundation for lifelong reading success for our students.

This initiative is part of our ongoing commitment to provide the highest quality education and support for every student. CKLA stands for “core knowledge” and “language arts.” Amplify/CKLA is in line with our commitment to inclusivity and as such we are moving to a full inclusion model for literacy. This means that students of all abilities will learn together in the same classroom, with the necessary support, and differentiated instruction to meet each child’s unique needs. We believe that this model not only promotes academic success but fosters a supportive and diverse



learning community.

The decision to adopt this curriculum is driven by our dedication to ensuring that every student has the opportunity to develop proficient reading skills. Research shows that a structured, systematic approach to reading instruction benefits all students, especially those who struggle with traditional methods.

What to Expect

1. Enhanced Instruction: Teachers will use evidence-based practices to deliver reading instruction that is explicit, systematic, and engaging.

2. Differentiated Learning: Each student will receive personalized support to ensure they are progressing at their own pace.

3. Regular Assessments: Frequent assessments will help us monitor each student’s progress and adjust instruction as needed.

4. Professional Development: Our teachers are receiving ongoing training to effectively implement this new curriculum and inclusion model.

How You Can Support Your Child

• **Read Together:** Spend time reading with your child daily. Discuss the stories and ask questions to enhance comprehension.

• **Communicate:** Stay in touch with your child’s teacher about their progress and any concerns you might have.

• **Encourage:** Foster a love of reading by providing access to a variety of books at home.

Partnering with parents on this program is critical to its success. We look forward to working together with parents to ensure the best possible outcomes for every student.

This new curriculum and inclusive approach will provide a richer, more supportive learning environment for all students.

Facility improvements underway at schools during summer break

The start of summer break marked the beginning of major capital improvement projects throughout Pocono Mountain School District, as district officials race to make sure all of the schools and campuses are ready for the start of a new school year.

It’s not unusual to have a few capital improvement projects underway during the summer break; however, this summer is different. Keeping up with facility improvements is not only an important aspect of maintaining student and staff health, wellbeing and safety; it also extends the lifespan of each school. When you consider that Pocono Mountain’s oldest school was built in 1961 and the newest building was built in 2008 and is already 16 years old, it isn’t surprising this summer’s project list of facility improvements is quite extensive and touches every campus and school within the district.

Some of the school improvements underway include:

Sidewalk Replacements: Clear Run Elementary Center, Swiftwater Elementary Center and Clear Run Intermediate School will have sidewalks replaced that are cracked and crumbling due to extensive wear and tear and damage from harsh winter weather.

Heating, Ventilation and Cooling (HVAC) Replacement Projects: The East High School unit ventilation project is underway to replace units in

need of frequent repairs and obsolete units that no longer have spare parts available. The East Junior High School is having a new HVAC system installed for the gymnasium. An HVAC system was not installed in the gym when the school was built in 1979 or when the building was previously upgraded.

Boiler Replacement Project: Swiftwater Intermediate School is having its boiler replaced to ensure the school has reliable heat and hot water available throughout the school year.

Carpet and Lighting Replacement: The West Junior High School is replacing old carpeting and lighting fixtures are being upgraded to energy efficient LED lighting.

Signage: The outdoor signage on all Pocono Mountain School District campuses is being replaced with new signage that is easier to read and to make navigating the campuses easier for parents and visitors.

Outdoor Fencing: New fencing will be installed this summer at Tobyhanna Elementary Center’s (TEC) playground to improve the safety of students while they are on the playground. TEC will also receive new wall pads in the multi-purpose room.

Auditorium Improvements: Several school auditoriums will receive upgraded lighting and sound systems to replace older systems that need technological upgrades.

Gym Floor Replacement: The East



Pocono Mountain East Junior High School got a facelift. These window coverings not only look great and help brand the school as a great place to learn, but they are a layer of the district’s school safety and security measures.

High School gym floor is being replaced due to safety concerns. The wall pads at the East High School will also be replaced, along with the bleachers. The bleachers have greatly exceeded their expected life usage span.

Wellness Building: A Wellness Building is being constructed at the West High School multi-purpose field that will offer a concession stand for football and other athletic events taking place on the synthetic turf multi-purpose field. In addition, the Wellness Building will offer expanded health and wellness activities and opportunities for students.

Building Exterior Restorations: The exteriors of Clear Run Elementary

Center, Clear Run Intermediate School, Swiftwater Intermediate School, and West Junior High School are undergoing restoration, along with improvements to the flashing on the schools to prevent erosion of the façade.

School Lobby Improvement Project: Several school lobbies will have a new look for the 2024-25 school year, to give the schools a greater ability to keep the lobbies safe and secure throughout the school day.

In addition to the projects outlined above, there are other smaller capital improvement projects underway throughout the district. District officials hope to see as many of these projects completed before the **first day of school on Monday, August 26, 2024.**

School safety toolkit includes threat assessments to keep schools safe

By Dr. Jeremy Sawicki

Director of Technology,

PMSD School Safety & Security Coordinator

As we prepare for the start of the 2024-25 school year Pocono Mountain School District (PMSD) officials want to remind parents of the district's school-based threat assessment process used 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 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 legislation going into effect. The district formed its threat assessment teams in 2019. The district has one team at each school and at the district level to assess, manage and mitigate possible threats made against district schools.

When threat assessment team members are appointed, they complete an intensive threat assessment training course. After the initial training, threat assessment team members complete annual refresher training at the start of each school year.

Additional online training is available through the PCCD's online Threat Assessment resources. These training modules are used by the district and school threat assessment teams to stay current on the state-model threat assessment process and to 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 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

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

(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.



(Left to Right) Karina Bezinyan, who will be entering grade 3 at Clear Run Intermediate School at the start of school, received a coloring contest award winner certificate last school year from Chef John Kelly as part of Chartwells K-12 Foodservice PA Harvest of the Month Grant program at Pocono Mountain School District.

Free Meals for students for 2024-25 SY...continued from Page 1

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.

Who can participate?

Schools and LEAs with a minimum Identified Student Percentage (≥25 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:

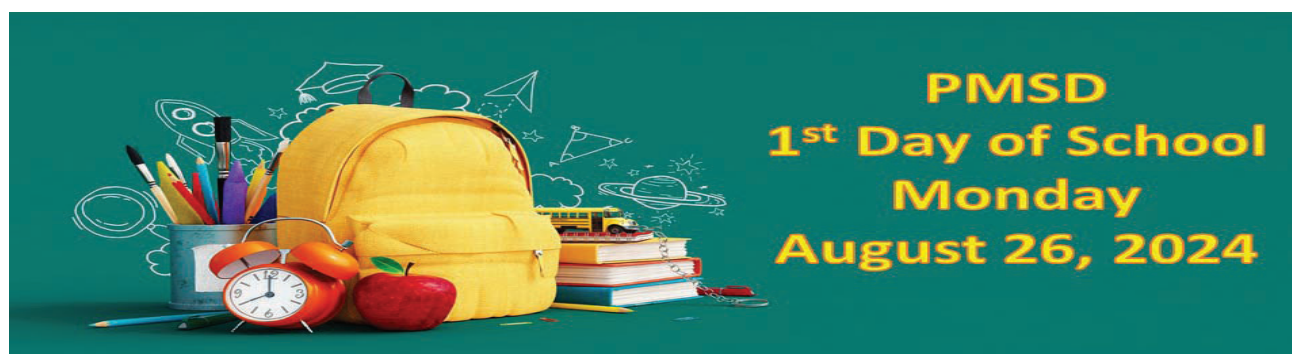
- All schools in an LEA
- A group of schools in an LEA
- An individual school in an LEA

(Article includes information compiled from the U.S. Department of Agriculture website - <https://www.fns.usda.gov/cn/community-eligibility-provision>)

School Closures

Sign up
for
Text
Alerts

Go to the
PMSD Website
under Helpful Links
to sign up!



Better Together at Swiftwater Elementary Center

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

Each year, Swiftwater Elementary Center chooses a theme for the school year. For the 2024-2025 school year, our theme is: “Better Together at SEC.” This theme describes our overall positive school climate and our goal to work together to meet the needs of our students in our school.

We have found that our staff being in constant communication with one another, with students and their families allows for all to focus on growth and achievement for ALL students. Each year, our staff members become part of one or more of our twenty-eight Swiftwater Elementary Center committees that support our school programming. Some of these include: SWPBS, Attendance, Disability Awareness, SAFE TEAM, Police Appreciation, Pre-school Partnership and an array of Fun Family Nights.

Each committee meets throughout the school year and focuses on one part of our school culture that is often aligned



Swiftwater Elementary Center Instructional Coaches: Mrs. Valerie Szulborski, Mrs. Robin Greeley and Mrs. Amy Berman.

with family nights, philanthropic efforts and celebration of our school community.

In addition, three of our dynamic teachers have been chosen to act as District Instructional Coaches for the 2024-2025 school year! Congratulations to Swiftwater Elementary Center

teachers who will serve as instructional coaches: Mrs. Valerie Szulborski, Mrs. Robin Greeley and Mrs. Amy Berman. The district instructional coaches will be working with PMSD teachers throughout the school year to improve upon effective instruction.

One group that embraces our school



PTO Officers for the 2024-2025: From left to right: Vice President Catherine Florio; President Michelle Farda; Secretary Meghan Burch; and Treasurer Alexandra Mephram.

theme each year is our outstanding SEC PTO.

Our SEC PTO believes in being “Better Together at SEC” by creating strong relationships with our staff, students, families and community as a whole.

We are pleased to continue this growing partnership with our SEC PTO!

Clear Run has new outdoor classroom



Students get to experience a living, breathing textbook while utilizing the outdoor classroom at our Clear Run Campus.

By Dr. Jessica Loverdi, Principal
Mrs. Heidi Donohue, Principal
Clear Run Elementary Center

The Clear Run Campus outdoor classroom is nature's textbook. In the early 2000s, Mr. Donald Miller, a retired PMSD technology teacher and environmental enthusiast, created an innovative outdoor learning space on the Clear Run campus. For years, the cleared, wooded area between Clear Run Elementary Center and Clear Run Intermediate School served as a natural classroom - a place for students to engage in the environment directly and learn from nature's living textbook. Unfortunately, two decades later, the outdoor learning space had succumbed to natural wear and tear, with benches in need of significant restoration.

Jack Dunlap, a Pocono Mountain School District student and member of Scout Troop 89, chose to breathe new life into this outdoor learning space as his Eagle Scout project. His restoration effort included: Re-stoning the entire area and walkway, constructing six large picnic tables to accommodate two classes simultaneously, creating two large flower beds, installing tree markers to identify different species, and donating a bench for the teacher. The project's dedication sign aptly captures the spirit of this outdoor classroom: “The best lessons are often taught by the great outdoors, where the world becomes a living, breathing textbook.” Thank you, Jack Dunlap! Your initiative not only honors Mr. Miller's original vision, but also ensures that future generations of Pocono Mountain students will continue to benefit from hands-on, outdoor learning experiences.



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Req ID: 1320647
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Mental health initiatives at West High School

By Ms. Michele Connors,
Assistant Principal
PM West High School

Now more than ever there seems to be a global focus on raising awareness for mental health and wellness. Resources and agencies are abundant, and some organizations even offer 24-hour virtual support if needed. The Pocono Mountain School District values mental health and wellness as well and maintains a directory of community resources available to students and families and incorporates mental health and wellness throughout the curriculum and in extracurricular activities and events.

West High School will continue to promote mental health awareness in the upcoming school year. Thanks to our district's partnership with St. Luke's University Health Network, we will continue with our weekly Mental Health Monday posts for all teachers' Google Classrooms and all of our school's social media pages. The posts were created by St. Luke's and highlight strategies and information related to mental health and wellness. Some of the topics include: self esteem and positive affirmations, signs your mental health is improving, a five-minute mental health check, and four core strategies for managing stress and anxiety.

Our West High School students also assist with promoting mental health awareness – especially through our Aavidum organization. Aavidum is a national organization that promotes mental health awareness and suicide prevention, and our West High School Aavidum club is advised by one of our guidance counselors, Mrs. Madison Below. The club meets about twice per month to discuss mental health topics of concern in our school community, plan activities, and create resources which are distributed throughout West High School.

During the 2023-2024 school year, our WHS Aavidum club put together de-stressing care packages for students which included items like journals, coloring pages, colored pencils and pens, Aavidum bracelets, fidgets, modeling clay, and more. The kits were distributed to the guidance counselors, administrators, and secretaries to give to students experiencing heightened stress as a way to help them de-escalate or just to brighten their day.

Several times throughout the year, our Aavidum club also posted positive and encouraging messages throughout our school and with sidewalk chalk outside as part of a "chalk about mental health activity". A few of Mrs. Below's students also created Mental Health Monday posts to include on our social media pages and on teachers' Google Classrooms. Our Aavidum club members also network with other Aavidum chapters and attend events to learn more about promoting and supporting mental health and wellness in our school community.

One of our West High School seniors helped promote mental health and wellness on a state level this past year. Kayla Frary participated in the 2024 Prevent Suicide PA PSA Contest which she learned about through her WHS art teacher, Mrs. Miele-Beatty. Kayla created a digital poster which included the messages "you are loved" and "you matter" and



Students in the West High School Aavidum club participated in a youth mental health summit held at SteelStacks in Bethlehem, Pa.



West High School senior Kayla Frary won first place in the 2024 Prevent Suicide PA PSA Contest. Kayla was honored at the Philadelphia Phillies game on April 12, 2024.



won first place among all of the poster entries in Pennsylvania. Kayla was honored at the Philadelphia Phillies game on April 12th.

A new way West High School is helping students focus on mental health and wellness for the 2024-2025 school year is through a new physical education elective titled "Mindful Moments". According to our district's program of studies, Mindful Moments, "will encompass multiple areas of wellness including yoga, self-esteem, confidence and character building, nutrition, as well as aspects of physical fitness. Students will be equipped with tools and a variety of practices that foster physical health and mental wellness, in addition to providing an environment of peer-to-peer support and cooperative learning activities.

The course will introduce the benefits of Yoga poses, mindfulness and stress reduction activities." Mindful Moments will be offered at both East and West High Schools this year, and according to Dr. Beth DeLay, Director of Health, Physical Education, Guidance, and Nursing Services, "the course came out of a need for additional tools for students to use as calming techniques, coping mechanisms and supportive techniques to alleviate stress, as well as a lifetime fitness via yoga and mindfulness."

Mrs. Kelsey Pietrafesa is a WHS health and physical

education teacher who helped design the course and will be teaching it this year. She shared that she is excited to teach the Mindful Moments class and that she plans to incorporate journaling, nutrition lessons, and different physical activities that help students reduce stress and work on their mental health. Mrs. Pietrafesa said, "I want students to understand the correlation of how the body naturally releases your 'feel good chemicals' when exercising. We will also be working on meditation techniques and breathing exercises and ways to build up our self-esteem and confidence."

Additionally, the district's Panther and Cardinal Periods in both West and East High Schools will continue to include strategies to help students positively manage their mental health.

For more information about any of our initiatives or activities, or if you are interested in local resources related to mental health and wellness, please contact the West High School Guidance Office.

The National Suicide Prevention Lifeline is now...
988 Suicide and Crisis Lifeline



Clear Run Intermediate School preparing students for a successful school year

By Ms. Amy Haynes, Principal
Clear Run Intermediate School

Attendance Counts!

Showing up for school has a huge impact on a student's academic success. Even as children grow older and more independent, families play a key role in making sure students get to school every day and understand why attendance is so important for success in school.

According to research provided by [attendanceworks.org](https://www.attendanceworks.org), did you know that missing 10% (or 2 days per month) over the course of a school year can affect a student's academic success? By 6th Grade, absenteeism is one of three signs that a student may drop out of high school.

As a Clear Run community, we want to work together to make school attendance a priority. Some helpful tips include: talking with your child about the importance of coming to school everyday, help your child maintain daily routines such as finishing homework and getting a good night's sleep, developing back up plans for getting to school if something comes up such as calling on a family member, neighbor, or other parent you may be friendly with, and doing your best to schedule non-urgent medical and dental appointments or extended trips when school is on break or not in session. If your child must stay home due to illness, please make sure to communicate with your child's teachers and/or guidance counselor for materials to make up for the missed learning time in the classroom and a note is submitted within three days of your child's return to school.

Additional information pertaining to compulsory school attendance and the PMSD attendance policy



(Policy 204) can be found by visiting the PMSD website <https://www.pmsd.org>, clicking on the School Board tab across the top, and accessing Board Docs.

Attending school regularly helps students feel better about school - and themselves! Please do not hesitate to seek help from school staff or community agencies if you need support.

Social-Emotional Skill Success

For the upcoming 2024-2025 school year, CRIS students will be met with social-emotional skill success each day. Every morning when students come into school, students will continue to utilize their chrome books to log in and complete a daily social-emotional check in where they will rate themselves based on a 1-5 scale of emotion. Daily check-ins will be reviewed by administration, guidance counselors, teachers and student responses remain confidential. The purpose of the daily social-emotional check-in is to allow CRIS staff to better identify students who need support, resources, additional check-ins while providing a positive, safe manner for students to identify emotions and advocate for themselves. The data from daily check-ins will be analyzed to determine overall trends with students, behaviors, and their emotions to help them better self-regulate, develop self-control and awareness.



Mrs. Laura Gonzalez, former Sixth Grade teacher, will now be serving in the role of Restorative Interventionist and will be working closely with administration, guidance counselors, students and staff, to help facilitate restorative conversations within and among our school community. Restorative conversations are short, intentional dialogues that aim to resolve conflict, repair harm, and heal relationships. They can be used in a variety of settings, such as between students and their peers, teachers and students, and can help people develop social and emotional competencies.

Furthermore, CRIS houses an action room that is utilized by students when they need short breaks to decompress with additional physical stimulation. New this year, a "calming corner" has been added to the action room to better suit student needs and allow for students to have the choice of either physical stimulation or calming items. This room consists of flexible seating, sensory items / fidgets, calm lighting, swings, a small trampoline, etc. Our West High School Honors Art students are also in the process of making their mark on this space by painting calming murals on its walls to include hidden objects - seek and find. Students will be able to utilize this room as needed to practice regulating emotions through access to action room items, while strengthening positive coping skills.



2024-2025

Elementary

Open House Dates



<p>Clear Run Elementary Center Wednesday, August 21, 2024 4:00 p.m. – 6:00 (Grades 1 and 2)</p> <p>Thursday, August 22, 2024 4:00 p.m. – 6:00 p.m. (Kindergarten Only)</p>	<p>Swiftwater Elementary Center Wednesday, August 21, 2024 4:00 p.m. – 6:00 p.m. (Kindergarten Only)</p> <p>Thursday, August 22, 2024 4:00 p.m. – 6:00 p.m. (Grades 1-3)</p>
<p>PMSD Cyber Wednesday August 21, 2024 4:00 p.m. – 6:00 p.m. (K-12)</p>	<p>Tobyhanna Elementary Center Thursday, August 22, 2024 4:00 p.m. – 6:00 p.m. (Grades K-2)</p> <p>5:00 p.m. – 7:00 p.m. (Grades 3-6)</p>
<p>Clear Run Intermediate School Wednesday, August 21, 2024 4:00 p.m. – 6:00 p.m.</p>	<p>Swiftwater Intermediate School Wednesday, August 21, 2024 5:00 p.m. – 7:00 p.m.</p>




Marching forward in Summer Band Camp

By Ms. Amy Buffington
Director of Social Studies & Humanities

As the summer heat climbs upward on the thermometer, so does the interest of students playing musical instruments at PMSD.

This is the third consecutive year PMSD students grades 5-12 have been able to participate in a free band camp offered through grant funding.

The first-year numbers were moderate, but last year climbed to 88 and this year exceeded 200 students.

Students, who played instruments or had interest in playing an instrument, were able to be actively engaged in a two-week band camp experience taught by PMSD music teachers at our West Junior High School.

They were able to have small and large group experiences with musicians from the East and West sides to unite in their efforts to make music together. Panthers and Cardinals came together to make new friendships and music



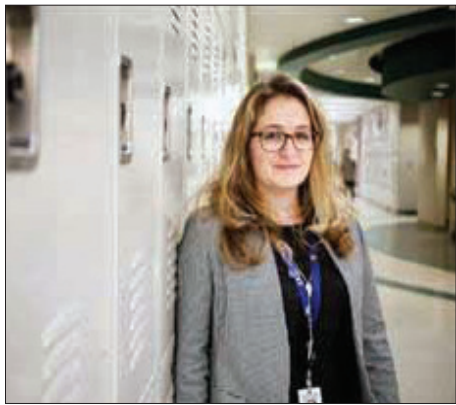
More than 200 students in grades 5 to 12 participated in this year's summer music and band camp.

along the way.

A performance was held at the end of the camp to show the impact a few short weeks of music can make on our students. Teachers and students were able to share their talents with families and the community.

The PMSD music department has been working hard to build their program bigger and better each year. This is just one example of their hard work and dedication.

Please be sure to come out and support all of our PMSD music programs throughout the school year and see how impactful it can be!



Dr. Ann Marie Vaughn, Principal of PM West Junior High School, encourages parents to partner with the school.



Mr. Walter Pawlowski is the Assistant Principal of PM West Junior High School.



Mr. Kristopher Ludka is the Dean of Students at PM West Junior High School.



Mr. Kenneth Hassenbein is a Guidance Counselor at PM West Junior High School.



Ms. Benzi and Ms. Tolerico are Guidance Counselors at PM West Junior High School.

Communication is key to success at West Junior High School

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

Administration and staff are very excited for the upcoming 2024 - 2025 school year. We strongly believe that education is a SHARED responsibility between our families, the community, and our schools. One very important factor in that shared responsibility is communication. There are a number of different ways we will be communicating with our families and the community throughout the school year:

- TalkingPoints - Parents and Guardians will receive text messages from the school. You are also able to download the Family app, available for free for both Apple and Android Devices. Through TalkingPoints you will be able to send and receive messages with your student's administrators, guidance counselors, teachers, the school nurse, and more! TalkingPoints will also translate all messages and documents to your native language. If you need that language to be changed, please message Dr. Vaughn.
- ParentLink - ParentLink is a program which sends voice messages directly to your phone. Be sure to listen to these messages in their entirety as the often include important information from the school and/or the school district.



- Instagram - You will regularly see updates on important events, pictures of students, staff and our certified therapy dogs, and reminders on Instagram. Be sure to follow us @pmwestjh. We look forward to meeting with our new families at our Open House which is scheduled for Tuesday, August 30, 2024 from 3:00 p.m. – 7:00 p.m.

Office Staff at WJHS

There are a number of ways you can get in touch with Administration and Staff here at WJHS, but sometimes, you don't know who to reach out to. Here is a breakdown of people who can help you:

Administration

- Dr. Ann Marie Vaughn - Dr. Vaughn serves as the building principal. She handles 7th grade discipline, building-wide attendance and truancy, building schedules and more! She can be reached at (570) 839-7121 ext. 51412, by email at avaughn@pmsd.org, or via TalkingPoints.
- Mr. Walter Pawlowski - Mr. Pawlowski serves as the building assistant principal. He handles the 8th grade discipline, oversees our PRIDE committee, and more! He can be reached at (570)

839-7121 ext. 51420, by email at wpawlowski@pmsd.org, or via TalkingPoints.

- Mr. Kristopher Ludka - Mr. Ludka serves as our dean of students. Mr. Ludka handles bus discipline, dress code, tardies, and more! He can be reached at (570) 839-7121 ext. 51400, by email at kludka@pmsd.org, or via TalkingPoints.

Guidance Counselors

Our guidance counselors work diligently with students and staff and will regularly reach out to parents and guardians regarding their students.

However, should you feel the need to reach out to your student's guidance counselor, they are broken up by the student's last name and they can be reached via email, TalkingPoints, or through our Guidance Office (570) 839 - 7121 ext. 51460.

- Mr. Kenneth Hassenbein - Last Names A through F, khassenbein@pmsd.org
- Ms. Nicole Benzie - Last Names G through O, nbenzie@pmsd.org
- Mrs. Christina Tolerico - Last Names P through Z, ctolerico@pmsd.org.



2024-2025 Secondary Schools Open House Dates



East Junior High School
Monday, August 19, 2024
3:00 p.m. – 7:00 p.m.



West Junior High School
Tuesday, August 20, 2024
3:00 p.m. – 7:00 p.m.



PMSD Cyber
Wednesday
August 21, 2024
4:00 p.m. – 6:00 p.m.
(K-12)



East High School
Tuesday, August 13, 2024
6:30 p.m.
(Grade 9 & New Student Orientation)
Friday, August 16, 2024
11:00 a.m. – 1:00 p.m.
(Grades 9-12)



West High School
Monday, August 19, 2024
6:30 p.m.
(Grade 9 & New Student Orientation)
Friday, August 23, 2024
11:00 a.m. – 1:00 p.m.
(Grades 9-12)



West Junior High School
Tuesday, August 20, 2024
3:00 p.m. – 7:00 p.m.



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

CALL 570-839-7121 EXT. 51432 IF YOU HAVE ANY QUESTIONS

Importance of Mental health awareness at PMSD

By Dr. Beth DeLay, Director
Curriculum and Instruction

Being mentally healthy during childhood means reaching developmental and emotional milestones and learning healthy social skills and how to cope when there are problems. Mentally healthy children have a positive quality of life and can function well at home, in school, and in their communities. (<https://www.cdc.gov/childrensmentalhealth/>)

Adolescent Mental Health Continues to Worsen

CDC's Youth Risk Behavior Surveillance Data Summary & Trends Report: 2011-2021 [PDF – 10 MB] highlights concerning trends about the mental health of U.S. high school students.

- In 2021, more than 4 in 10 (42%) students felt persistently sad or hopeless and nearly one-third (29%) experienced poor mental health.
- In 2021, more than 1 in 5 (22%) students seriously considered attempting suicide and 1 in 10 (10%) attempted suicide.

This data brings into focus the level of distress many students are experiencing.

Why Is This a Big Deal?

- Poor mental health in adolescence is more than feeling blue. It can impact many areas of a teen's life.
- Youth with poor mental health may struggle with school and grades, decision making, and their health.
- Mental health problems in youth often go hand-in-hand with other health and behavioral risks like increased risk of drug use,

experiencing violence, and higher risk sexual behaviors that can lead to HIV, STDs, and unintended pregnancy.

Because many health behaviors and habits are established in adolescence that will carry over into adult years, it is very important to help youth develop good mental health.

Need Support Now? Call or text 988 Chat with Lifeline.

The Good News

The good news is that teens are resilient, and we know what works to support their mental health: **feeling connected to school and family.**

- Fortunately, the same prevention strategies that promote mental health — like helping students feel connected to school/family — help prevent a range of negative experiences, like drug use and violence.
- Building strong bonds and relationships with adults and friends at school, at home and in the community provides youth with a sense of connectedness.
- This feeling of connectedness is important and can protect adolescents from poor mental health, and other risks like drug use and violence.
- Youth need to know someone cares about them. Connections can be made virtually or in person.

There is a Role for Everyone in Supporting Teen Mental Health

As we've learned nationally during the COVID-19 pandemic, schools are critical in our communities to supporting children and families. While the expectation is that schools provide education, they also provide opportunities for youth to engage in physical activity, and academic, social, mental health, and physical



health services, all of which can relieve stress and help protect against negative outcomes.

However, the pandemic disrupted many school-based services, increasing the burden on parents, increasing stress on families, and potentially affecting long-term health outcomes for parents and children alike, especially among families already at risk for negative health outcomes from social and environmental factors. (<https://www.cdc.gov/healthyyouth/mental-health/index.htm>)

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

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.

How parents can assist PMSD 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.

Please check the PMSD website at 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.

Please 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 though the district website (www.pmsd.org) to receive these messages.

Please 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.

For questions or concerns regarding PMSD emergency operations procedures, please contact your child's school principal or the the district Safety and Security Coordinator at (570) 839-7121, ext. 10151.

AthLife academic athletic coaches are supporting our students

*By Mr. John Richards, Assistant Principal
PM East High School*

There is an exciting program that provides opportunities for East High School student-athletes. Through a grant-matching program with the AthLife Foundation, East student-athletes are being provided support from a team of Academic Athletic Coaches.

This program is beginning the third year of existence at East High School and works with members of the football, field hockey, girls' basketball, and baseball teams. The Academic Athletic Coaches support students in a large number of ways on the field, in the classroom, as well as in the community.

Academic Athletic Coaches communicate with teachers to determine the needs of student-athletes in order to engage with student-athletes after the school day concludes. Academic Athletic Coaches use the information, specific to each student-athlete, to facilitate guided study sessions, as well as referral to content-area tutoring services.

In addition, Academic Athletic Coaches serve as a connection between



AthLife Foundation in conjunction with St. Luke's University Health Network held a leadership workshop in Whitehall, Pa.

the student-athlete and the coaching staff for individual sports. Academic Athletic Coaches collaborate with the coaching staff to develop a schedule that includes academic time to meet with students to help student-athletes maintain a focus on academic excellence.

Academic Athletic Coaches also open and maintain active communication with the parents of student-athletes, to ensure that there is an understanding of what needs to be accomplished

at home for the student-athlete to be academically successful.

Academic Athletic Coaches work in collaboration with school counselors, recruiters, and colleges in order to address the needs associated with student-athletes that demonstrate the ability and desire to study and compete at the collegiate level.

Academic Athletic Coaches are familiar with the SAT/ACT registration process, NCAA Clearinghouse

standards, as well as the process for promoting student-athletes through film-sharing and social media. The assistance of Academic Athletic Coaches provides an extra layer of support for student-athletes in order to help coordinate the recruitment and college application process between student-athlete, high school coach, college recruiter/coach, teachers, guidance counselors, and families.

In addition to working with students in reference to academic performance and athletic eligibility, Academic Athletic Coaches also provide support to students with other areas that impact academic and athletic performance such as mental health and nutritional services.

Academic Athletic Coaches also provide opportunities for community outreach and service projects, such as High Five Fridays in conjunction with Swiftwater Elementary School and Swiftwater Intermediate School.

A quarterly newsletter is also published by one of the Academic Athletic Coaches in order to celebrate athletic achievements, promote programs, as well as inform students about available academic and athletic opportunities.

Getting connected at East High School

*By Ms. Jamie Marra, Assistant Principal
PM East High School*

At East High School, connections matter! In addition to a wide variety of athletics, clubs, and activities, EHS implements programs to encourage students to connect with classmates, teachers, and staff to help ensure that their high school experiences are memorable.

As part of the Positive Behavior Interventions and Supports framework, the EHS PRIDE initiative encourages students to exhibit the following principles in school and beyond: Preparedness, Responsibility, Involvement, Dependability, and Empathy. By displaying PRIDE, students can earn PRIDE Points to purchase school supplies, participate in special privileges, and enter raffles.

Students are also recognized with incentives each marking period for achievements in academics, attendance, and behavior. The fun continues all year long, with numerous senior drivers painting their assigned parking spaces in July and members of EPIC - the student PRIDE committee - creating informative videos for the start of the school year.

Through the PRIDE and EPIC committees, staff and students work together to plan and implement special activities and events. Both committees are always welcoming students, staff, and community members.



Twelve East High School student athletes participating in our student group, East Athletics Red Nation (EARN), volunteered their time to assist with Toys for Tots project.

EHS students are also forming connections through "Check & Connect," a mentorship program that fosters student success and school engagement. Trained faculty and staff mentors are assigned student mentees with whom they will work for the duration of the student's time at EHS. Mentors conduct regular check-ins with their mentees to discuss students' achievements and needs and to work together to problem-solve.

Senior Emily Kresge recognizes the value of the program, as it "allows students to build relationships

with staff members who they can rely on when they are in need of advice or support."

In addition to meetings, there are plenty of other fun opportunities to connect, like Check & Connect Family Night, where mentors enjoy dinner with their mentees and their families.

We are looking forward to another year of making connections at East High School! For more information or to get involved in PRIDE or Check & Connect, please contact Jamie Marra, EHS Assistant Principal, at jmarra@pmsd.org.

Understanding how district schools respond in an emergency

By Wendy Frable

Director of Public Relations &
Safety Compliance

At the start of school, parents may hear their children talking about Hold, Secure, Lockdown, Evacuate or Shelter. Children may also want to explain to their parents about Run, Hide, Fight.

Pocono Mountain School District (PMSD) partnered with the “I Love U Guys” Foundation in 2023 and adopted their Standard Response Protocol (SRP) to follow during emergencies. Staff and students at all schools are trained to use this model as part of the district’s emergency response procedures.

The SRP provides the flexibility the district needs for it to be effective in any type of emergency the district or its schools could face.

It is easy for students and staff to follow the SRP action steps during an emergency, because SRP emphasizes using common, easy to understand language and directions during an emergency. The SRP stresses avoiding the use of jargon or code words that could easily be confusing or misunderstood during an emergency.

Since the SRP is similar to the response protocol the district was already using, it was easy to transition to it and embed the SRP into the district’s and schools’ existing emergency operations plans and supporting annexes.

There are five specific actions PMSD implements in an emergency. Those actions are:

- Hold



- Secure
- Lockdown
- Evacuate
- Shelter

Your child’s school or the district as a whole can implement any of the Action steps needed for the emergency situation, and the Actions are not required to be used sequentially.

When hearing that a school has been placed in a Hold, Secure, Lockdown, Evacuate or Shelter response most likely causes instant concern for parents, especially if parents do not understand what those Action steps mean and how they may be used in their children’s schools.

Hold: the purpose of Hold is to clear the hallways and have students remain in their classrooms until the Hold is canceled or another Action is announced. Holds may be used for medical emergencies, to locate a child or adult who did not make it to their next class, etc. During Hold, teaching usually continues.

Secure: the purpose of Secure is to get everyone inside of the school and lock the doors. This may be used

due to a law enforcement activity or a fire taking place in the area near the school, or due to a weather concern or emergency. During Secure, teaching usually continues as usual.

Lockdown: the purpose of a Lockdown is to clear the hallways, get students and staff safely secured inside of a locked school and behind locked doors in the school, and to account for all students and staff. During Lockdown, teaching is stopped.

Evacuate: during an evacuation, students and staff leave the building, go to a meeting point and then account for all students. The most common Evacuate action practiced in PMSD school is fire drills, but Evacuate may be used for many types of emergencies.

Shelter: the purpose of Shelter is to get everyone inside the school, keep students and staff safe, and account for all students and staff. The district has used Shelter to keep students and staff safe during extreme weather situations, such as severe thunderstorms and tornado warnings, but Shelter would also be very effective if there was a

chemical spill on the roadways near a school or heavy smoke from a nearby fire.

Another part of PMSD Standard Response Protocol includes the specific actions the district needs students and staff to take in response to an imminent threat at a school. PMSD trains students and staff to take the following immediate actions in response to an emergency unfolding in its schools or other facilities:

- **Run, Hide, Fight:** Staff and students are trained on the Run, Hide, Fight protocol to respond to an immediate threat, such as an active shooter or armed school intruder.
- **Drop, cover and hold:** Students and staff drop low, take cover under furniture, cover eyes and protect internal organs may be used to respond to a weather- or seismic-related emergency.

The district and school safety teams work hard throughout the year on planning and preparing for the many types of things that could go wrong on any given day and on preparing the entire PMSD team on how to deal with a variety of hazards and emergencies, from natural hazards, such as tornadoes and flooding, to technological hazards, such as fires, loss of power or water, etc., to school specific hazards or violence.

The district strives to keep PMSD schools, students and staff safe from harm while mitigating the impact of hazards and emergencies.

EHS offers Mindful Moments elective

By Rich Ludka,

Health & Physical Education
PM East High School

A very exciting new elective class within our Physical Education course catalog will be debuting this fall here at Pocono Mountain East High School. The course is called Mindful Moments, and it will give our students an amazing opportunity to do things that so many people say they want to try but, for many reasons, never do.

Students will have a chance to unlock the power of peace, presence, and movement with Mindful Moments, a beginner yoga and mindfulness class designed to introduce them to the fundamentals of yoga and the practice of mindfulness.

This class is perfect for those new to yoga or anyone looking to cultivate a deeper sense of awareness and calm in their daily life. Through gentle yoga poses, guided meditation, and breathing exercises, our students will learn how to reconnect with their body and mind, finding tranquility in the present moment.



An added benefit of this class is that it will give our students a chance to reset and calm their minds before returning to their classes. It is a relaxing, safe space that offers a non-judgmental environment, providing them with much-needed time to refocus and handle the rest of their day.

No prior experience is necessary; our welcoming community and skilled instructor will support our students every step of the way.

2024 - 2025

KINDERGARTEN REGISTRATION

Child must be age 5 on or before Sept. 1st

Register Online
or in person!

Cyber school
available for all
grade levels!

570-839-7121 x40400

111 Center Court, Swiftwater

www.pmsd.org

SCAN HERE

Register NOW!

Swiftwater Intermediate School welcomes students and parents

By Ms. Kristine Kunsman, Principal
Mr. Daniel Higgins, Assistant Principal
Swiftwater Intermediate School

We welcome back our Swiftwater Intermediate School returning students and their families and extend a special welcome to our new students and families. We are pleased to have you as partners this educational year.

Tips for a Successful School Year

Project a positive attitude about school and confidence that your children will experience success and happiness. Communicate to your children through words and body language that you are excited about the new school year and confident they will enjoy it. Children pick up on the messages we send, so make sure these messages are optimistic and helpful.

Establish supportive home routines. The school year calls for renewed attention to home routines, such as those surrounding bedtime, morning, and meals. Children appreciate and thrive on the routines that parents establish. It gives them comfort and security and better prepares them for the routines and expectations of the school day.

Remember that homework is a contract between the teacher and the student, not between the teacher and the parent. Homework is the child's responsibility. Help your child establish healthy homework routines. Encourage them to keep an academic planner and stay up to date on important events (testing, homework assignments, etc.).

Establish family rules, related to TV, computer, and video game usage. There's a place for electronic learning (and playing), but every minute in front of a monitor is a minute away from family communication. No one forms a healthy relationship with a monitor; we only form relationships with real people, and home is where those relationships and the skills surrounding them are born and developed.

The Importance of Good Attendance Habits

The Administration and Guidance Counselors at SIS would also like to remind parents of the importance of creating good attendance habits with students. Studies have proven that students with chronic absenteeism (10% or more days missed), for any reason, leads to students not achieving their full potential academically



and socially. When students don't value attending school every day at the elementary and intermediate level, significant deficits can be created when moving into the secondary level, as academic rigor increases.

When students do miss school, the stress associated with making up missed assignments can be attributed to additional absences as a means of avoidance. If your child is too sick to attend school, be sure to submit an excuse from either a parent or doctor within three school days of the absence. Absence notes may be submitted electronically by emailing SISattendance@pmsd.org.

Utilizing the student information system Powerschool Parent Portal gives parents access to attendance information, so excusals and total absences can be monitored. Parents should do their best to schedule non-emergency medical appointments outside of school hours and family travel and vacations when school is not in session. District policy limits the number of days which can be excused with a parent note. Unfortunately, this limit is often reached late in the school year and could have been avoided with better planning throughout the school year.

When you send your child to school and then later need to pick them up for an appointment, please understand children must be in attendance for over half of the school day in order to be counted present for the day. Please refer to the Pocono Mountain School District Policy# 204 on the district website for answers to many questions and a list of what constitutes an excused absence.

The website attendanceworks.org can provide suggestions to improve your child's attendance. If you have any additional questions or need assistance with your child's attendance, please contact the

guidance office.

Developing Effective Homework and Study Habits

Many parents ask how they can help their children improve their grades. At Swiftwater Intermediate School, we encourage all parents to have access to the PowerSchool Parent Portal. You will be able to access your child's assignments, grades, and attendance. If you need assistance connecting to the PowerSchool Parent Portal, please call Swiftwater Intermediate School at 570-839-7121, ext. 60400.

Additionally, parents will ask how they know if their child has homework. SIS students have an agenda planner. They should copy nightly homework into the agenda planner and take that home with them. Please ask your child to see that nightly. Many teachers email about homework or post homework on ClassDojo. Here are some strategies to help your child develop good study habits:

- Create an environment that will allow you to be productive and efficient when completing your homework.
- Students need a consistent work space in their bedroom or another part of the home that is quiet, without distractions and promotes study.
- Schedule ample time for homework, keep in mind any participation in extracurricular activities.
- Establish a household rule that the TV and other electronic distractions stay off during homework time.
- Monitor how much time you are spending off task.
- Take steps to help alleviate eye fatigue and brain fatigue while studying. It may be helpful to close the books or walk away for a few minutes, stretch and take a break periodically when it will not be too disruptive.
- If you are struggling with a particular subject, speak with your teacher for recommendations on how you can improve your study habits for that particular subject.
- Talk to your teacher about tutoring opportunities.

Stay organized! Keep your homework and study items in an organized manner. Prioritize your work! Create a checklist to keep track of your assignments and make sure that you are being productive and prioritizing what you need to be working on. Don't give up! Keep a positive attitude and do your best.

New Buddy Benches on the Clear Run Campus

By Dr. Jessica Loverdi, Principal
Mrs. Heidi Donohue, Principal
Clear Run Elementary Center

The Rotary Club of Mt. Pocono donated new buddy benches to Clear Run Elementary Center and Clear Run Intermediate School. With the goal of fostering kindness and inclusion among all students, these benches are meant to serve as special outside seating to help children who are feeling lonely, isolated, or in need of a friend. How it works . . .

- If a child is feeling lonely or in need of company, he/she can sit on the buddy bench.
- Other children and staff members will recognize this as a signal that the child needs support,

companionship, or someone to talk to.

- Upon noticing a child on the buddy bench, other students are encouraged to approach them, start a conversation, or invite them to join in play activities.

The buddy bench serves several important purposes: It combats social anxiety, isolation, and bullying by providing a visible way for children to seek support without having to verbalize their feelings.

- It teaches empathy and social skills to other children by encouraging them to recognize when a peer needs help and take action.
- It promotes healthy coping mechanisms and mental well-being by showing children it's okay to ask for help when they need it.



Clear Run Elementary Center students Lillian Campanella and Nathaniel Seide sit on one of the campus's new Buddy Benches.

Clear Run Campus partners with Communities in Schools

Communities in Schools (CIS) is a national nonprofit organization dedicated to empowering students to stay in school and achieve success in life.

CIS of Eastern Pennsylvania currently serves 45 schools within 13 school districts in Lehigh, Northampton, Berks, and Chester counties. This year, their services will extend into Monroe County, to combine efforts with four schools in the Pocono Mountain School District - Clear Run Elementary Center and Clear Run Intermediate School, as well as the West Junior High School and the West High School.

Kristy Montero will be working with Clear Run Intermediate School. Ms. Montero brings over 30 years of experience as a former educator and supervisor to the CRIS students and families.

Josh Gurin will be working with Clear Run Elementary Center. He brings 13 years of experience in the field of mental health, primarily working in family therapy and outpatient care. In addition to being the proud father of two little ones (Brendan - 7 years old and Abigail - 10 months old), he has two cats (Gmork and Jerome) that demand his attention.

Mr. Gurin describes himself as being a chronic history buff. In his free time, he enjoys reading, playing drums, and practicing martial arts.

During the 2024-2025 school year, Ms. Montero and Mr. Gurin will focus on working alongside parents, educators, community-based organizations, and district leaders to boost family engagement while helping students overcome obstacles to improve student attendance.



Mr. Josh Gurin, Community in Schools Site Coordinator.

PMSD Cyber program is always open for learning

By Ms. Nora Wandalowski,
Director
PMSD Cyber Program

As we head into the 2024-2025 school year, parents and students alike might be considering alternative educational options. The Pocono Mountain School District offers diverse educational opportunities for all students in grades Kindergarten through 12th grade.

Working with students, parents, teachers, administrators and the greater Pocono community, The PMSD Cyber Program is here to provide options for all students.

Following the District approved curriculum, providing opportunities for enhancement and remediation, and keeping students engaged and included with the PMSD community is why The PMSD Cyber Program is the best option for parents and students seeking online education.

The PMSD Cyber Program is the virtual, cyber, program open to students who live within the Pocono Mountain School District. Residents of Pocono Mountain School District are welcome to enroll in the program and experience the independence of cyber learning.

PMSD Cyber Program students can take all elementary core courses, and secondary academic, advanced and AP courses in Math, Science, English, Social Studies and electives. 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



Pocono Mountain School District (PMSD) Cyber program students in kindergarten to grade 2 took a field trip to Kettle Creek as part of the educational activities offered to students attending the district's online learning program.

participate with their peers in school sports, activities and events, is why families select the PMSD Cyber Program over all other cyber schools

Students who choose the PMSD Cyber Program experience the independence and flexibility of full-time cyberlearning, or can benefit from hybrid learning options which blend virtual and in-person traditional learning. Cyber offers options beyond the traditional classroom for all PMSD students.

Flexible schedules are offered to support students who participate in 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.

Students on all grade levels who do not want to participate in a full-



PMSD Cyber students take educational field trips as part of their classes throughout the school year, just as students who attend the district's brick and mortar schools. Parents and students considering cyber school, are encouraged to first check out the PMSD Cyber program.

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.

The PMSD Cyber Program is here to offer the best option for all students residing within the Pocono Mountain School District.

Any student who is enrolled in the Pocono Mountain School District and is 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. The PMSD Cyber Program currently offers more than 50 courses that meet all NCAA requirements for eligibility.

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

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, 570-839-7121 extension 75400 to schedule an appointment. PMSD Cyber Program is Always Open For Learning!

The PMSD Cyber Program currently offers more than 50 courses that meet all NCAA requirements for eligibility.

Restorative Practices at SIS

By Ms. Kristine Kunsman, Principal
Mr. Daniel Higgins, Assistant Principal
Swiftwater Intermediate School

Mr. Matthew Pero, will now be serving in the role of Restorative Interventionist at Swiftwater Intermediate School and will be working closely with administration, guidance counselors, students and staff. Mr. Pero most recently was a math support teacher at SIS. In his new role, Mr. Pero will meet with students to discuss behavior incidents. He will lead restorative conversations with members of the school community.

Restorative conversations are short, focused conversations to help resolve conflict, repair harm, and heal relationships. Restorative practices in schools continue to grow and create fair ways to reduce repeat discipline infractions, combat poor attendance and prevent bullying. There are many benefits to restorative practices:

- Help students take responsibility. When students take ownership of the conflicts they created, they develop self-awareness of how their actions can negatively affect someone. Instead of blame-shifting, students realize where they went wrong and find positive ways to repair their mistakes. They'll become productive members of society who understand the difference between right and wrong.
- Make students aware of consequences. For every negative action, there is a consequence. When students discover what they could lose, they might think twice about their actions and reactions. They should be told about the school district's zero-tolerance policy for bullying and violence.
- Teach students conflict resolution. Solve problems through communication, patience and understanding instead of fighting. Encourage them to talk about their feelings, brainstorm good solutions and set goals to maintain peace. Other good resolutions include remaining calm and apologizing.
- Build emotional skills. Make students feel heard and emotionally validated by cultivating social-emotional learning skills. Focus on self and social awareness, emotional management, relationship skills and responsibility.
- Help students practice empathy. Show kids empathy and teach them to restore peace to frayed relationships. Students learn by observing, so why not demonstrate empathy to your class by showing them you care? Give them examples of what it's like to feel another person's emotions.
- Teach students to embrace forgiveness. How many times have you heard that forgiveness isn't about condoning someone's wrongdoing, but learning to let go of its harmful emotional impact? Explain to your class that forgiveness involves releasing their anger toward the person who wronged them. Reinforce in their mind that it takes time to learn how to forgive and that holding a grudge harms them more than the



person who hurt them.

- Show the importance of communication. Demonstrate how to have pleasant conversations. Show students how to take turns during conversations. They need to understand it is polite to listen without interruptions. Model appropriate behavior and use role-playing activities to help show students the difference between acceptable and negative behavior.
- Build strong relationships. Restorative justice is crucial for improving relationships between students, teachers, and school administrators. Social and emotional learning (SEL) strategies can help educators to foster good relationships with their students. Show students that you genuinely care about them, work toward building trust and spend time getting to know their parents. It's fundamental to their education and well-being to have consistent open communication and support from teachers.
- Teach students how to respect different cultures and beliefs. Use photos, videos and current events to develop culturally responsive teaching strategies. It's vital for kids to learn respect for other cultures and understand that nearly everyone has different practices and beliefs. Encourage students to make friends from a variety of cultures to help them appreciate how other people live their lives.
- Help community building. Restorative circles play an important role in addressing challenges that students face. Begin by creating a safe space for students to learn empathy, patience, and compassion for others. Use student input to decide which topics of discussion they want to address, such as mutual respect. Help students build community through restorative circles and make them more proactive when it comes to developing meaningful connections and promote healing.
- Encourage students to face fears. Let students know everyone has fears and concerns. Help students overcome their fears through distracting physical or mental activities and conversation. Explain that there are ways to arrive at a solution for every problem. They can write a shortlist of solutions and how to implement a plan to execute one or more of those solutions.



Dr. Eric Vogt, Principal and Ms. Jamie Snyder, Assistant Principal East Junior High School.

EJHS welcomes Ms. Snyder

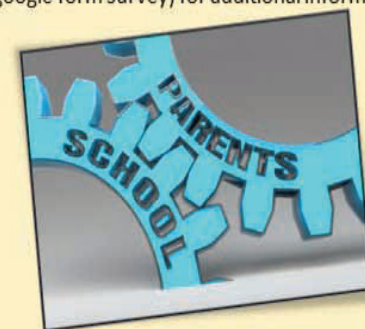
Welcome Ms. Jamie Snyder to Pocono Mountain East Junior High School serving as an Assistant Principal for the building.

Ms. Snyder holds her certification in Administration PK-12, Masters in Reading PK-12, Elementary Education, and Special Education PK-8. She has experience as a 3rd grade teacher, 4th grade teacher, 7th grade ELA teacher, 6th grade Math intervention teacher, Special Education in grades 5th and 6th, Early Literacy Intervention Specialist, Reading Specialist, EdReports Review Team Member, and part-time employee at Lehigh University (Creative Inquiry Cohorts).

Ms. Snyder has a strong belief that in order to be a part of a successful organization, you need to make it a team effort and include internal and external stakeholders in important decisions. "I am inspired and proud to serve this amazing district," said Ms. Snyder. "I look forward to working with all of you in creating a positive learning environment for our students."

Family Engagement At East Junior High School

The Administrative Team at Pocono Mountain East Junior High School wants to make it a priority to build trusting, productive relationships with families and their children. We know that begins with getting to know our families needs and goals. Throughout the school year we plan to invite families to share what is important to them, will help you and our staff create proactive, respectful, and responsive connections with families, and pave the way for transparency and inclusive decision making throughout the year. We plan to foster highly effective home-school partnerships utilizing TalkingPoints. Look out for a family survey link (google form survey) for additional information.



We are looking forward to a year of making positive connections at East Junior High School! For more information or to get involved here at our school, please contact Eric Vogt evogt@pmsd.org Principal and/or Jamie Snyder EJHS Assistant Principal, at jsnyder@pmsd.org

An exciting new year at Tobyhanna Elementary Center

Dr. John Kevra, Principal
Ms. Jessica Grebb, Assistant Principal
Tobyhanna Elementary Center

No doubt the final days of summer bring a bit of sadness to all of us. Who won't miss the long hot days, swimming, fireworks, barbecues, vacations, amusement parks, and the freedom that comes with having lazy relaxing free time?

Although summer is quickly fading into fall, it doesn't mean we won't have exciting adventures to look forward to. Of course, the biggest event this time of any year is the start of the next school year. This year the Pocono Mountain School District will officially open to students on Monday, August 26th.

Although we bid fond farewell to two retirees, Ms. Wagner and Mr. Yoder, on the first day of school your children will still see all familiar faces, as well as one brand-new teacher, Ms. Megan Myer. Along with Ms. LaRose, Ms. Myer will be a second-grade special education teacher. Additionally, we have shifted some staff members so Mrs. Placek will be teaching first grade while Mrs. Gabriel and Mr. Hopkins will be fifth grade teachers. Mrs. MacDavitt and Ms. Yacoboski will also be joining the 5th grade staff as special education teachers. Finally, Danielle Schneider will be TEC's new Wilson teacher.

As parents and community members, the only thing that is more important to you than academics is knowing that your children are being educated in a secure school with proper safety procedures in place. In reaction to that concern, over the past summer, every door in TEC has been equipped with a door swipe that only allows access for predetermined individuals. The door swipes have always been necessary to enter the building from the outside but now they are located on every classroom door. Consequently, our students will be situated in locked classrooms at all times with limited access from outsiders.

To further ease any concerns for safety at TEC, we are installing fencing around a large part of our playground behind our building. The fencing will keep unwanted visitors out while ensuring all students stay within the confines of the premises. Furthermore, our entire staff continues to receive professional development such as Reunification and TACT 2 Training to be better prepared for the various situations that might arise throughout the school year.

The Pocono Mountain School District is constantly trying to improve everything about the academics we provide our students. One of the most fundamental decisions we make as professional educators, that directly impacts our students' learning, is the selection of reading and science curricula that are rigorous and relevant.

Consequently, TEC students in grades kindergarten through 6th grade will be receiving totally inclusive ELA instruction while utilizing the Amplify Reading Program. Since TEC piloted the program last year in two of our classrooms, our reading classes will be providing this cutting-edge curriculum as soon as school starts.

The same can be said for our new Science curriculum, McGraw Hill's Inspire Science. These



Tobyhanna Elementary Center held a very successful Summer School program for its students. Pictured here are Summer School attendees (left to right) Jason Harrison, Victoria Harrison and Noelle Amerman, who were taking a break from English Language Arts and Mathematics instruction for some outside fun.

programs are designed for hands-on learning in creative and innovative classrooms.

Additionally, to ensure the proper implementation of the programs, our teachers are receiving professional development training and the support of newly established instructional coaches.

We have always been pleased with our Pennsylvania State System of Assessment (PSSA) results in the past, but we feel confident our scores will continue to improve with the addition of these new programs.

In the upcoming 2024/2025 school year the teachers at TEC will continue to instill a love of books and reading that goes beyond the Amplify Program. Every student will have the benefit of our well stocked library class that offers them the opportunity to select books that appeal to their interests.

Our librarian encourages them to see books as an opportunity to meet historic people, travel to foreign lands, and experience life in the past and the future. A love of reading is a key component to lifelong learning and something we take very seriously at Tobyhanna Elementary Center. Furthermore, our other special area classes will continue to instill an appreciation for art and music through creative classes, chorus, and instrumental band lessons.

Additionally, our students will continue to learn the importance of a fit and strong physical body in our gym and health classes, as well as, extracurricular activities such as Field Day and Athletic Club. Future television and stage stars start their budding careers participating in our daily televised morning announcements and the ever-popular crowd-pleasing year-end play.

For students who like to improve their math and science skills, we will also offer a Robotics Club, a Math Club and an Imagine Math Club.

Additionally, budding professional educators can experience firsthand what it is truly like to be a teacher when they become members of our Future Teachers of America Club. Finally, aspiring leaders of industry and our country are honing in on the necessary skills as members of the Student Government.

In the upcoming school year, the teachers and staff at TEC will continue to take our students out of the classroom for even more memorable and enjoyable experiences. These events will include frequent trips to our nature trail, our outdoor classroom, and our neighbor, the Clymer Library.

They will also enjoy our Fall Festival, our various Celebration Weeks, and several assemblies and guest speakers. Students can look forward to venturing much farther than our neighborhood to places such as: Roba's Tree Farm, the Cranberry Bog, the Lackawanna Coal Mine, the Electric City Aquarium, Lost River Caverns, and even a Railriders baseball game.

No doubt the 2024/2025 school year will include numerous memorable experiences both in the classrooms and outside the classrooms.

Parents often ask us what they can do to ensure their children benefit from everything we have to offer at TEC. Our response is always the same. Please send your child to school every day ready to learn.

When children are well rested, properly dressed, and confident that they have completed all their homework and school projects, they feel more comfortable coming to school. Establishing an age appropriate bedtime, free of electronics and distractions, is one way to ensure your child will not be tired in school the following day. In fact, research consistently shows that all electronics should be curtailed about 2 hours before bedtime to promote a deep restful sleep.

Encourage your children to lay out their school approved clothing and shoes the night before so time is saved and frustration is minimized in the morning. Additionally, backpacks and Chromebook cases could be packed and situated near the same door nightly so they are not lost or forgotten. When a parent or guardian

institutes these routines into a child's daily activities at a young age, they become positive habits that make everyone's school experiences positive. Eventually, the children see the benefits of these routines and are able to complete them without the parents' or guardians' assistance. That is a win/win for everyone.

Finally, as summer draws to a close, and the school year commences, please know that your child is being educated in a safe environment staffed with teachers and administrators who are committed to excellence.

Also, remember that communication is the key to a positive relationship with your child's teacher. Therefore, all teachers are only a phone call, or an email or DOJO message away.

Do not hesitate to reach out with any questions or concerns at any time.



PMSD Title I Family Engagement Survey

Pocono Mountain School District (PMSD) would like parents to complete the 2024-2025 Title Parent Engagement/Comprehensive Assessment Survey. PMSD is a School-Wide Title I District. The survey results will help PMSD determine its most urgent educational needs. Thank you for your input.

Complete the survey online by scanning the QR code with your phone or by going to <https://forms.gle/rKcpANyxYvXy1qJg7>. Responses due by October 25, 2024.



Congratulations to Chrissy Wile, Pocono Mountain West High School AthLife Coach, who was named as an AthLife Coach of the Year at the 3Ace Conference. AthLife Coach Wile was recognized for her efforts as an Academic Athletic Coach to student athletes at West High School. Coach Wile and other AthLife Coaches at PM East and West High Schools create, develop and implement programming to promote academic achievement and strengthen life and leadership skills of district student athletes. They also help prepare student athletes for future careers beyond their sport. Way to go Coach Wile.

What parents need to know about PMSD's Family Reunification Process

Pocono Mountain School District (PMSD) has partnered with the "I Love U Guys" Foundation on developing a process to use to account for students during an emergency and to reunify students safely with their parents and/or guardians. This process is known as the Family Reunification Process.

The Family Reunification Process is an organized, orderly means to reunite students with their parents. This process may be used for extended power outages, weather related incidents, police activity or a fire nearby a school, a chemical spill on a roadway, acts of violence or other emergencies that would require the district to evacuate or relocate students from their home school to another, safer location. The reunification location could be another school or at an off-campus location.

For the past two summers, PMSD administrators and staff have attended 2-day training sessions on the "I Love U Guys" Standard Reunification Method, what the district refers to as its Family Reunification Process. The training includes one day of classroom type training, and the second day included practical training exercises to practice each step of planning, organization and executing the Family Reunification Process.

The summer training sessions and other school safety refresher discussions and training that take place across the district each school year are done to prepare district employees on how to implement the Family Reunification Process to ensure students and staff are accounted for during an emergency and



to minimize the chaos and anxiety that emergencies create.

It's important for parents to understand the district's Family Reunification Process and how they can navigate that process if it is implemented during an emergency.

If PMSD initiates the Family Reunification Process, the following will occur:

- Parents and guardians will be notified by the district that a reunification is needed, what time it will begin and the location of the Family Reunification.
- Parents and guardians are required to bring identification with them to the designated reunification site.
- Parents and guardians will proceed in an orderly fashion through the various stations set up at the reunification site.
- The reunification process will take some time, because the district must verify the identity of each parent/guardian and that they are listed in the student database as a custodial parent or emergency contact for the child with the authority to pick that child up.
- Once a parent/guardian's identification has been verified, their child or children will be brought out to them at the Reunification waiting area for parents.

PMSD officials will do everything within their power to ensure a smooth efficient Family Reunification for students and their families. Parents and guardians can help ensure a smooth reunification process with their child/children by making sure their emergency contact information is always up to date with their schools.

The start of the new school year is a great time to make sure your parent/guardian and emergency contact information is current and that you can be reached by school officials in an emergency.

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 or the Pocono Mountain School District website, 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.

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

HOW IT WORKS

Step 1
Submit an anonymous tip

Call the tipline
 1-844-SAF2SAY

Use the Website
 www.safe2saypa.org

Use the mobile App
available for Apple and Android devices

SEEKING COMMUNITY MEMBERS INTERESTED IN

SUBSTITUTE SUPPORT STAFF JOBS

Are you looking for a flexible schedule? Do you like working with kids? Do you have strong secretarial skills? Love to clean? Subbing may be for you!

- Sub Administrative Assistant
- Sub Non-Teaching Assistant
- Sub Paraprofessional
- Sub Custodian

Interested Candidates please apply through our Applicant Tracker system located under "Employment" on the PMSD website

For questions, contact the
Human Resources Department
(570) 839-7121 x 10121

WWW.PMSD.ORG

SEC focuses on keeping kids in school

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

Swiftwater Elementary Center will focus on the importance of student attendance for the 2024-2025 School Year. Our School Counselors and our SEC Attendance Committee meets each school year to improve upon our student attendance data. This allows for our staff members to look closely at attendance data and analyze PA Compulsory Attendance Requirements that falls under State Law and Pocono Mountain School District Policy# 204.

Improving student attendance is a SHARED RESPONSIBILITY. In school, our staff members understand the importance of school attendance and its incredible impact on overall student growth. This growth is shown academically, socially, emotionally and behaviorally and is directly aligned with positive attendance. Coming to school in a consistent manner is very important to student progress.

Our SEC Attendance Committee builds upon and improves programming to allow for parents to be involved and informed on the importance of student attendance.

SEC welcomes our families to become AWARE and SUPPORTIVE of school policies and procedures. Here are some very simple tips for parents:

Developing daily routines and providing consistency for young learners is paramount for success. Consistent bedtime routines and morning routines allow for children to develop life long skills.

Become familiar with attendance procedures for your school. Please know that an excuse must be sent in within three days of a student absence.

To make it easier for our families, you may send an email to Secattendance@pmsd.org. Please visit our school website to learn more about accepted reasons

for student absences that are accepted by our District.

Communication is Key! Parents are asked to stay in close communication with your child's teachers, school counselors and administrators regarding school attendance.



**School Counselor
Christopher Lapore**



**School Counselor
Madison Below**



**School Counselor
Harry Amato**



**School Counselor
Kelly Bender**

SEC School Counselor Team

Our SEC School Counselor Team has grown for the 2024-2025 school year. We are pleased to welcome Mrs. Madison Below to Swiftwater Elementary Center. Mrs. Below will serve as the school counselor for our kindergarten students. Ms. Kelly Bender will serve our grade one students. Mr. Harry Amato will serve our grade 2 students and Mr. Christopher Lepore will serve our grade 3 students.

As always, our SEC Team of School Counselors will "loop" with each grade level to allow for our school counselors to know and appreciate the strengths of our students as they move through our Kindergarten through grade 3 building. This allows our staff to become very familiar with the families of our students as well. We are looking forward to an excellent school year!

PM East Junior HS promotes parent-school communication

*By Ms. Jamie Snyder, Assistant Principal
PM East Junior High School*

Parents and Guardians will receive text messages from the Pocono Mountain East Junior High School (EJHS). Parents are encouraged to download the Family app, available for free for both Apple and Android Devices. Through TalkingPoints parents will be able to send and receive messages with their student's administrators, guidance counselors, teachers, the school nurse, and more! TalkingPoints will also translate all messages and documents to native languages. If parents need the language to be changed, please message Ms. Snyder or Dr. Vogt.

Here is important contact information for the EJHS Office Staff:

Administration:

- Dr. Eric Vogt - Building principal. He handles 8th grade discipline, building schedules and more! He can be reached at (570) 839-7121 Ext. 50412 by email at evogt@pmsd.org, or via TalkingPoints.
- Administrative Support - Shameeka H. Lovaglio Ext. 50412
- Ms. Jamie Snyder - Building Assistant Principal. She handles the 7th grade discipline, scheduling, transportation discipline, oversees our PRIDE implementation, and more! She can be reached at (570) 839-7121 Ex: 50418, by email at jsnyder@pmsd.org or via TalkingPoints.
- Administrative Support - Linda Hamilton (570)839-7121 ext. 50400 or 50418

Guidance Counselors:

- Grade 7 - Mary Bradley - She can be reached at (570) 839-7121 Ex: 50463; by email at mbradley@pmsd.org or via TalkingPoints.
- Grade 8 - Nicole Kenney-Cetta She can be reached at (570) 839-7121 Ex: 50464; by email at ncetta@pmsd.org or via TalkingPoints.

Clear Run Elementary Center works to improve student attendance

The staff and faculty at Clear Run Elementary School are excited to welcome students to a new school year filled with opportunities to learn and engage. In order to learn, students must attend school. Every day counts!

Getting into the habit of daily attendance is more important than ever. It helps to:

- reduce stress
- make it easier to connect with friends and teachers
- support learning

Chronic absenteeism is defined as missing 10 percent or more of school days due to absence for any reason — excused absences or unexcused absences.

According to attendanceworks.org, this can translate into students having difficulty learning to read by the third-grade, achieving in middle school,

and graduating from high school.

Did you know that . . .

Absenteeism in the first month of school can predict poor attendance throughout the school year. Research shows that half of students who miss 2-4 days in September go on to miss nearly a month of school.

By 6th grade, chronic absence becomes a leading indicator that a student will drop out of high school.

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

The Attendance Improvement Team at Clear Run Elementary Center, made up of school administrators, counselors, and social workers, meets monthly to review daily attendance data. Students missing 10%

of school are identified and members of the team work with families to create Attendance Improvement Plans (SAIPs). Through this process, they identify barriers which might include: chronic illness, anxiety about school, poverty, or stressors at home. Strategies are put in place to help students and their families improve and maintain positive attendance. In situations involving 6 or more unexcused absences, a citation may be filed with the district magistrate. The Judge then becomes an integral member of the team.

During the summer months, the Attendance Improvement Team identified kindergarten and first grade students who were chronically absent during the 2023-2024. Personalized letters were mailed to those families and contact was made through phone calls and home visits to proactively seek improvement for the upcoming school year.

Cardinal baseball players make All-State team



Congratulations to Pocono Mountain East Varsity Baseball players, (left) Senior Adam Horvath, and (top) Junior Rocco DelGiudice, on earning All-State recognition for baseball. Adam and Rocco were both selected to the Class 5A All-State 2nd Team by the Pennsylvania Baseball Coaches Association, a team first for the Cardinals.

POCONO MOUNTAIN SCHOOL DISTRICT
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Substitute TEACHERS!

Requirements:

- ✓ Bachelor's Degree in any field OR 60 credits as an Education Major
- ✓ All Clearances as required by PMSD

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Apply Now!

Interested Candidates please apply through our Applicant Tracker system located under "Employment" on the PMSD website

For questions, contact the Human Resources Department
(570) 839-7121 x 10122 or x10121

Night of STEM at Pocono Mountain School District

By Ms. Corinne Long,
Secondary Science Department
Head
& Ms. Amy Catalano,
Director of Curriculum and
Instruction for Math and Science

On April 22nd, 2024, Pocono Mountain School District held its second annual Night of STEM at the West High School for everyone in the district. This was a joint collaboration between the West and East High School's Science National Honor Societies and National Math Honor Societies.

Students from the organizations designed, created, and ran educational tables that included demonstrations, hands-on-projects, mini experiments, make and take projects, and information on a variety of science, technology, engineering, and math related topics. Families could spend the evening by grabbing dinner and dessert from local food trucks before experiencing over 40 different STEM related tables.

Students demonstrated engineering practices and physics by building towers with spaghetti and marshmallows and building bridges with toothpicks and gumdrops. Students were able to get their hands dirty by making slime, silly putty, and oobleck. Density and buoyancy were tested by making clay boats that held gemstones and aluminum foil boats that held pennies. There was a demonstration on how fireworks obtain their colors. In



Adam Manowski teaches students physics and engineering by building bridges and towers out of gum drops, marshmallows, toothpicks, and spaghetti sticks.

addition to science concepts, students learned about fractions with different slices of pizza.

In addition to the student-run tables, many community partners attended the event which included Pocono Organics, Lehigh University's Choices Camp, Colonial IU 20, Wilkes Science in Motion, Lehigh Valley ACS, East Stroudsburg University, Kettle Creek and Northampton Community College. Students from around the district attended and participated in the various events and activities hosted during the Night of STEM.

Pocono Organics taught the



Ariana Maldonado demonstrates how fireworks obtain different colors based on the salts that are contained in them.



Students are laying out a track that a robot will travel over.

importance of farming where students sampled some muffins with zucchini and planted flowers.

DaVinci Science Center had students testing their engineering skills by building Keva plank towers and testing airplanes in the wind tunnel. Lehigh University taught students how to separate color markers with paper chromatography.

The Colonial IU had different robots that students could see travel in



High School students set up a fun, interactive boat station at STEM Night to teach younger students about buoyancy.

designated paths.

Families were able to tour the Wilkes Science in Motion's inflatable planetarium where families were able to travel to outer space.

Kettle Creek had aquatic life, animal pelts, and fossils that students could observe. East Stroudsburg University and Northampton Community College had various activities in addition to promoting STEM careers. Overall, the event was well attended where every family left excited and inspired for the STEM activities going on at Pocono Mountain School District.

Mark your calendars now because the third annual Night of STEM will be held Monday, April 14th from 5-8 pm at the West High School. We hope to see you there!