



Young Woods Elementary School students made ornaments for the White House Christmas Tree.

# CONNECTIONS

DECEMBER 16, 2022

## SUPERINTENDENT'S CORNER

Welcome to the latest edition of the Providence Public School District (PPSD) bi-weekly newsletter! If you or someone you know misses any of our newsletters, you can find past editions on the [District's website](#) in multiple languages.

This week the Providence Public School District (PPSD) and the Rhode Island Department of Education (RIDE) announced the [next phase of an historic plan to rebuild the capital city's schools](#). One of our major Turnaround Action Plan pillars is Efficient District Systems, and these buildings will help lead the way to create 21st century learning communities for our children. Based on years of community, student, and staff engagement on the condition of the public school buildings and [resounding calls for major improvements](#), the next phase of PSD's facilities plan will prioritize a "newer and fewer" approach that has helped maximize school construction dollars and build 21st century learning facilities in communities across Rhode Island.

This approach helps put an end to expensive and inefficient "Band Aid" fixes by replacing old, crumbling buildings with fewer new ones. Shrinking the District's footprint also addresses the national and local trend of declining school enrollment, with PSD serving 3,350 fewer students than it did five years ago. Lastly, the "newer and fewer" approach allows for a foundational shift to more schools that provide Pre-Kindergarten through eighth grade (PreK-8) services, in response to community feedback and research on the educational benefits of PreK-8 schools.

Many Providence schools were built over 100 years ago, and roughly half were built before World War II and suffer from wide-ranging deficiencies. With investments already underway in several schools, the next phase of construction will result in at least 10 new or like-new school buildings across the District, dramatically increasing the number of students and educators in modern, welcoming facilities.

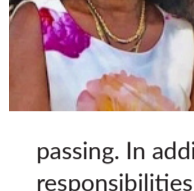
Though we are sad to see some of our iconic buildings close, I like to remember that it is the teachers, support staff, and students that truly "make" these buildings - not the structure itself. Staff at these schools will be offered new positions in Providence Public Schools and all will have a safer, more innovative setting to call their home away from home.

After decades of neglect and systematic failure, we are finally getting our students and educators out of century-old schools and into the modern buildings they deserve. This historic \$500 million investment will truly rebuild our schools and the way students learn. We are proud to continue meeting the goals of the community's Turnaround Action Plan and transform our schools, and education system, from the ground up.

You can learn more about our new and like-new facilities and plan highlights by visiting our [website here](#) and we encourage you to stay up-to-date on the progress by visiting [rebuildpvdschools.com](#). Thank you as always for your partnership in your students' education. I look forward to working together to create new learning spaces for our students, staff, and families.

## DISTRICT UPDATES

### REMEMBERING VALRIE RANGLIN-BROWN



The Providence Public School District is mourning the loss of longtime educator Valrie Ranglin-Brown. At the time of her death, she was a teacher at Central High School, but was well-known across the District.

She joined the Providence Public School system in 1996, when she taught at Roger Williams Middle School. From there, she would go on to teach for 15 years at Mount Pleasant, before moving over to Central High School, where she taught up until her passing. In addition to teaching, Valrie was known for taking on other responsibilities as well. In 2021, she served as the lead writer during Central High School's accreditation process through the New England Association of Schools and Colleges (NEASC). She was named New Teacher Ambassador at Central High School, where her primary role was to help mentor new teachers. Additionally, she served as the Instructional Team Leader for the English Language Arts department at Central.

Above all, Valrie loved her students, and saw potential in each one. She called them her "Stars," and wanted them to succeed in everything they did. She frequently went to after-school sporting

events to show support for the students. Valrie touched the lives of everyone she worked with, and she will be truly missed. You can learn more about Valrie's life [here](#).

### COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT SESSIONS

Since the passage of school construction bonds by voters in Providence and statewide last month, Providence Public Schools conducted six community engagement events related to school facilities. Two of these community engagement events were held virtually to make them more accessible to families. If you were unable to attend, these virtual events were recorded and have been posted online at <https://www.rebuildpvdschools.com/> where you can also learn more about the historic changes coming to our school buildings. You can also sign up for email updates and use the Community Feedback section to provide your thoughts.

### DISTRICT NEWSLETTER SCHEDULE

Please note that the next edition of the PSDS bi-weekly newsletter will be released on January 6, 2023, to allow our team time off for the holidays later this month. We'll see you in the new year!

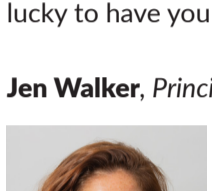
## EQUITY IN PROVIDENCE PUBLIC SCHOOLS

### ADVISORY BOARD

The Office of Equity & Belonging was proud to host our first meeting of The PPSD Equity Advisory Council. The Council is a group of education and community leaders dedicated to centering racial and social equity. Composed of students, teachers, parents and community partners, the Board will thoughtfully collaborate to elevate the voices of our diverse communities by advising District staff, providing input, and helping to prioritize district-wide equity efforts, policies, strategies and investments. Thank you to all for joining the Council and please see the [Advisory Board members here](#). If you are interested in taking part in this work, please email [equity@ppsd.org](mailto:equity@ppsd.org). Interpretation is available.

### SHOUT OUTS- EDUCATORS MAKING MOVES IN EQUITY

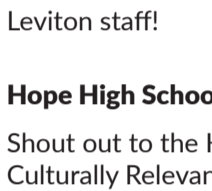
**Jaime David, Assistant Principal, Nathanael Greene Middle School**



The Office of Equity and Belonging wants to give a shout out to Assistant Principal Jaime David for her commitment to learning and engaging about Title IX procedures at PPSD. Assistant Principal David attended two training sessions and has communicated effectively to ensure her students are learning about their resources and has worked with the E&B team

effectively throughout the last four weeks. Thank you Assistant Principal David for your commitment to this work. We are so lucky to have you as a member of the PPSD team!

**Jen Walker, Principal, Leviton Dual Language School**



Shout out to Jen Walker and her team at Leviton Dual Language School for their efforts to improve gender diversity visibility and inclusion. Leviton staff engaged in grade-level PLC discussions with our office to deepen their understanding of gender identity and gender diversity. Teams discussed strategies to integrate responsive practices that foster a safe and welcoming school for gender diverse students which benefit all children and families. Thank you Ms. Walker and Leviton staff!

### Hope High School ILT

Shout out to the Hope High School ILT for their focus on Culturally Relevant Practices in their instructional priority for the school year. Through this focus, teachers are growing strategies to implement the 4 Rs of these practices: Relevance, Relationships and Rigor. As a result, Hope aims for its students to be challenged, engaged, self-reflective and to have equitable access to their learning. Go Blue Wave!

### WORDS MATTER

Words impact people and relationships. Regardless of intention, our words can quickly affirm or harm others. When working with young people, being mindful of our language can go a long way. Below are two pieces of guidance to mindfully engage and speak with young people and community members.

### TRAUMA INFORMED CARE & LANGUAGE.

Trauma-informed care is the idea that we will provide a welcoming, reliable, and encouraging space for our community members that may be impacted by trauma. We may not always know when a student, employee, or community member has been affected by trauma. Therefore, we should seek to ask questions that allow for the person to tell their story rather than labeling or implying something is "wrong with them." For example, experiencing a traumatic event (e.g. family abuse, sexual assault, death of a family member, etc.) may cause someone to not remember full details of an incident. Rather than assuming the person is lying or making their story up, we should remember that the traumatic event could have real impacts on their brain chemistry and memory. More information on how trauma affects the brain and body can be found [here](#). The [following resource](#) can help continue the conversation regarding trauma informed care and language.

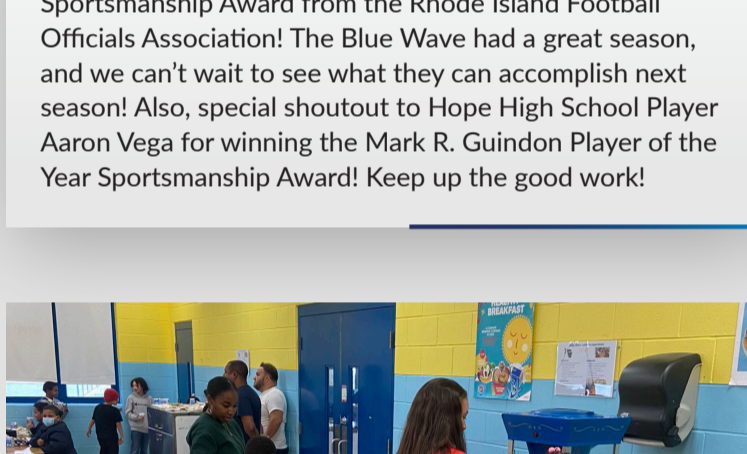
### IDENTITY-AFFIRMING LANGUAGE.

Correctly pronouncing someone's name is a direct way to affirm someone's identity. When meeting a student or community member, ask the person to repeat their name slowly so you can carefully hear their pronunciation. If their name is unfamiliar to you, avoid saying things like, "I'm not going to be able to pronounce your name;" rather, consider saying something like, "I'll practice your name so I can get it right." Namecoach is a helpful website that allows users to create a [personal name badge](#) by recording their name, and teachers and staff could consider having students each create a name badge. Model and pronounce your own name to "normalize" the practice and reduce stigma students may experience.

Similar to names, using a person's correct personal pronouns is another way to affirm identity, recognizing gender identity. [Why are pronouns important?](#) Specifying someone's personal pronouns is a simple matter of the respect we all seek, and for transgender and gender diverse people, personal pronouns may hold more weight in affirming gender identity. "What pronouns do you use?" Another option is to set the expectation by introducing yourself with your pronouns, making space for the other person to share their pronouns too. Being a good ally to gender diverse people can be as simple as saying gently, "Carrie uses they/them pronouns," if you hear someone misgendering them with incorrect pronouns. With name pronunciation and pronouns, you may make mistakes. If that happens, apologize and move on, taking care not to repeat the mistake in the future and not dwelling on it. Instead, take time to practice.

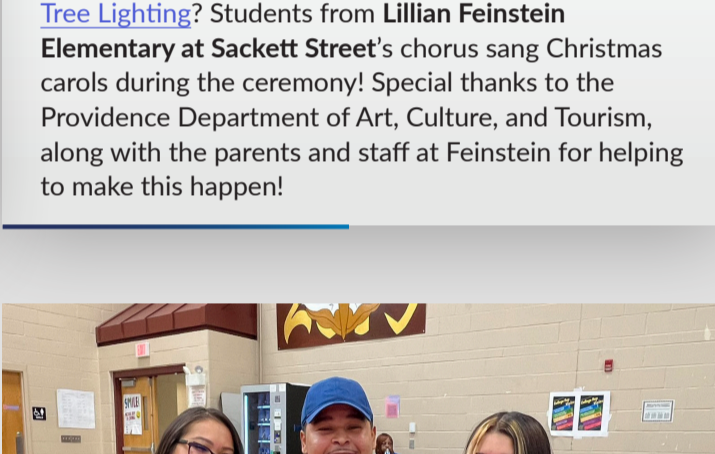
## CELEBRATING STUDENTS

Our hardworking, talented students are doing amazing things every day. Here are just a few examples.



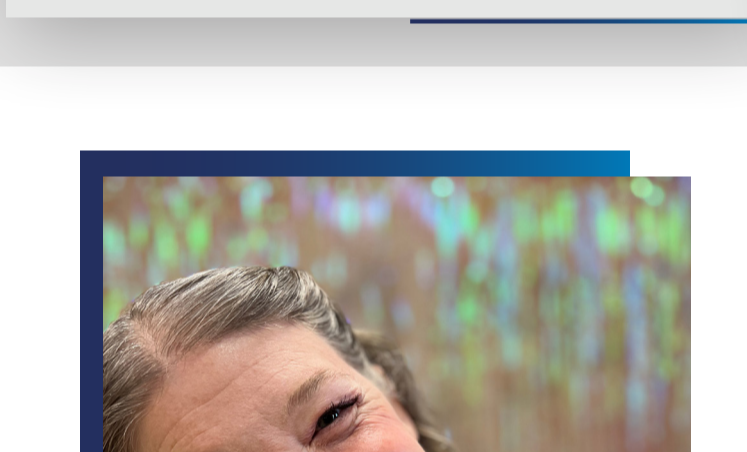
### BLUE WAVE FOOTBALL WINS SPORTSMANSHIP AWARD

Congratulations to the Hope High School Blue Wave football team for winning the 2022 Dick Reynolds Sportsmanship Award from the Rhode Island Football Officials Association! The Blue Wave had a great season, and we can't wait to see what they can accomplish next season! Also, special shoutout to Hope High School Player Aaron Vega for winning the Mark R. Guindon Player of the Year Sportsmanship Award! Keep up the good work!



### STUDENTS SING AT PROVIDENCE CHRISTMAS TREE LIGHTING

Did you catch these stars at the [Providence Christmas Tree Lighting](#)? Students from **Lillian Feinstein Elementary** at Sackett Street's chorus sang Christmas carols during the ceremony! Special thanks to the Providence Department of Art, Culture, and Tourism, along with the Parents and Staff at Feinstein for helping to make this happen!



### A COOL CELEBRATION FOR PERFECT ATTENDANCE

Students at Bailey Elementary with perfect attendance for the months of October and November were awarded with a special treat at lunch this month - snow cones! Special thanks to City Year Providence for all their support in ensuring all of the students were recognized and appreciated for coming to school every day. Keep up the great work!



### HONORS BREAKFAST AT ALVAREZ

This month, Dr. Jorge Alvarez High School hosted an honors breakfast who made the honor roll. Certificates were handed out during the breakfast, and a great time was had by all! A big thank you to the staff for making the breakfast a huge success, for the parents and family members that came, and of course to the students for all of their amazing work over the past few months!



## STAFF SPOTLIGHT

Get to know the amazing people who work with our students every day!

### Maura Keating

Library Media Specialist

Located in: Classical High School

Joined PPSD in: 2021

### What made you want to be a library media specialist?

I came to Classical of Instruction in an Academic Library where I was Coordinator of Instruction in an academic library. I loved my job, but I was missing a student component. In the college experience we are mostly collaborating with faculty and administration. There's also a big piece of literacy that's missing from college librarianship where the focus is on reference and teaching students how to access, evaluate, and find sources, but not as much on a love of reading. When I saw the job at Classical, it just seemed like a great opportunity to work with a smaller, vibrant student body, and I jumped at it. I have not looked back. It's been amazing.

### How do you describe your job to people who don't work in education?

When people hear the word "librarian" they assume books, and that is certainly an essential, key piece of my job. I teach students to love reading and how to access books, but I'm also collaborating with faculty, so I'm working with different teachers, going into the classroom, teaching students how to use databases, how to find sources, how to evaluate sources, how to use them effectively, how to use them ethically, how to cite sources, those sorts of things. We also have a lot of technology in the library. I was fortunate enough to win the PPSD Cares grant, so we were able to purchase additional technology. The technology is open and accessible to many more people than it would be if it were in a classroom. We have a 3D printer, cameras, podcasting tools, and laptops that students, faculty, and clubs can check out, or use in the library space. I'm often helping students use technology to amplify their voice.

In many circles, the library is known as a "brave space," where it's not just a safe space but a place where students can see books that reflect them and visit a space that is community focused, and a space where students can be active participants. I also teach 2 credit-bearing sections of a research class for 11th graders. In the class, students write formal research paper, which is great preparation for college, and an argumentative presentation. All students need to know, not only how to find information, but when you've got three billion results on Google, how do you know which source to choose, how do you know which source to trust? Those are essential skills that librarians focus on.

We have a community group called the Classical High School Community Association (CHSCA), and we're also in the process of creating an opportunity to teach families how to use technology so that they can also help direct students and even themselves to get the best kinds of information sources.

### What do you wish more people knew about being a library media specialist?

A lot of people think that because Google exists, what's the purpose of libraries? And Google is great, it provides a lot of access to information, but librarians provide context, we provide training, we provide safe spaces, we provide a friendly face because sometimes that's what my students need as well.

Having that human connection is really essential. I don't think people understand all of the roles a librarian has. I think all we kind of just think of them as keeper of the books, and not realizing that we're partnering with students, we're partnering with faculty and staff, we're partnering with administration, and we're partnering with families to celebrate reading and help our communities find, evaluate, and use information effectively.

### What have been some highlights of the year so far?

One of the absolute highlights is working with our Alumni Association. I was fortunate enough to get two grants from the Association this year, so we got a book subscription, and every month now our students get new books, which is so exciting - you haven't seen pure joy until you see a kid who sees new books on the shelf, they'll go, "Oh my gosh, I saw this on BookTok!" Having new books helps us be relevant and capture and keep our student's attention. Something I'm really looking forward to in January 2023, is a grant to take our students to Kismet Improv in Pawtucket. A Classical alumnus is going to lead an improv class with my students to help improve public speaking and manage stage fright to prepare for upcoming presentations.

### What are you looking forward to for the rest of the year?

In addition to my classes, I advise a book club. I'm also part of the Reading Across Rhode Island Education Committee. In January the new Reading Across Rhode Island book will be announced and I'm really looking forward to sharing it with my book club and my students. We're hoping to get the author to come to Rhode Island. Last year, it was Angeline Bouley, author of Firekeeper's Daughter, and it was just an absolutely amazing opportunity. Last year through the PPSD Cares Grant, all of the PPSD high school librarians collaborated to bring author Elizabeth Acevedo to Providence, and students from all the different PPSD high schools converged to meet the author. This year, the PPSD Librarians are hoping to collaborate with the art teachers and other members of the community to create a diverse and engaging opportunity to talk about books and art. It all works because of the collaboration between librarians, staff and students. I couldn't do half of what I do if I didn't have the support of my principal, Mr. Barr, and my assistant principals, that's essential, as well as the teachers in the Classical High School community, and our Library Assistant, Jannean Norman. The entirety of the library staff here at PPSD is really amazing. I'm just so grateful for all of them.

## IT'S GOOD NEWS: PPSD IN THE PRESS

- [Providence students make ornaments for White House Christmas tree](#)  
WPRI, December 8
- [Local teacher shares her experience aboard URI's Endeavor](#)  
WPRI, December 8
- [Providence schools hosting job fair Thursday night](#)  
WPRI, December 1
- [Providence honors World Series MVP, Classical alum Jeremy Peña](#)  
WJAR, November 26
- [Providence student wins \\$40K college scholarship](#)  
WPRI, November 21

## AROUND THE DISTRICT



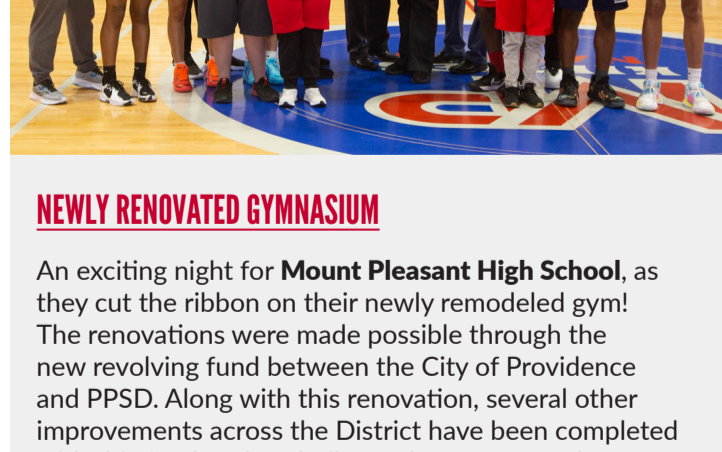
### POETRY WORKSHOP

Rhode Island Poet Laureate Tina Kane was back at Lauro Elementary School this month to kick off a six-week poetry workshop. She worked with the students on how to write poetry, and also conducted several writing exercises with them. Students were able to get creative during the activities and wrote some amazing poems together. We can't wait until she visits again!



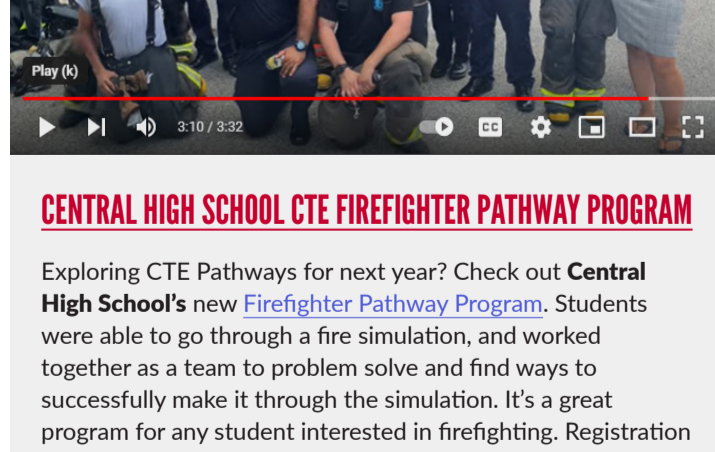
### WEATHER WITH TJ DEL SANTO

WPRI 12 meteorologist TJ Del Santo came to Lauro Elementary School to speak with a third grade science class during their unit on meteorology. He spoke about his job as a meteorologist, and taught the students more about tools of the trade, different types of storm systems, and how the weather works. The class was very engaged and asked a lot of questions. Thank you for visiting!



### NEWLY RENOVATED GYMNASIUM

An exciting night for Mount Pleasant High School, as they cut the ribbon on their newly remodeled gym! The renovations were made possible through the new revolving fund between the City of Providence and PPSD. Along with this renovation, several other improvements across the District have been completed with this fund such as boiler replacements, and more renovations will be made in the future. The boys, girls, and unified basketball teams had a scrimmage in the newly renovated gym during the ribbon cutting.



### CENTRAL HIGH SCHOOL CTE FIREFIGHTER PATHWAY PROGRAM

Exploring CTE Pathways for next year? Check out Central High School's new Firefighter Pathway Program. Students were able to go through a fire simulation, and worked together as a team to problem solve and find ways to successfully make it through the simulation. It's a great program for any student interested in firefighting. Registration for the CTE Programs begin in January 2023. You can learn more at [www.providenceschools.org](http://www.providenceschools.org).



### SECOND ANNUAL HOUR OF CODE

Students at **Vartan Gregorian Elementary School** participated in their second annual Hour of Code as part of National Computer Science Week, which took place December 5-11. As part of the national event, students engaged in one hour of coding during class. They were all very excited to participate in the activity, and learned a lot about coding and computer science. Like the image to the left to watch [a video on the Hour of Code!](#)

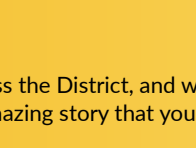
## MARK YOUR CALENDARS!

• **LILLIAN FEINSTEIN WINTER CONCERT**  
December 20

• **HOLIDAY BREAK (NO SCHOOL)**  
December 23 - January 2

• **MLK DAY (NO SCHOOL)**  
Monday, January 16

### DECEMBER SCHOOL MENU



**Lillian Feinstein**  
MUSIC  
Elementary School  
26th Annual Winter Concert

Chorus  
Guitar Ensemble  
Bell Choir

Where: In the cafeteria

When: Tuesday, December 20, 2022  
First program at 9:45 a.m. (for grades K-2/indoor)  
Program to repeat at approx. 10:45 a.m. (for grades 3-5/indoor)

Parents, family & friends welcome!  
Performers should wear black pants.

**Mr. K will give the students shirts!**

twitter.com/LFMusicPVD

Terrific things are happening across the District, and we want to get the word out! If you have a program, event, staff member, or student with an amazing story that you'd like to highlight, please email [communications@ppsd.org](mailto:communications@ppsd.org).