

CONNECTIONS

PPSD High School students participate in the R.E.S.P.E.C.T. Conference Thursday, February 2 at the Marriott.

FEBRUARY 3, 2023

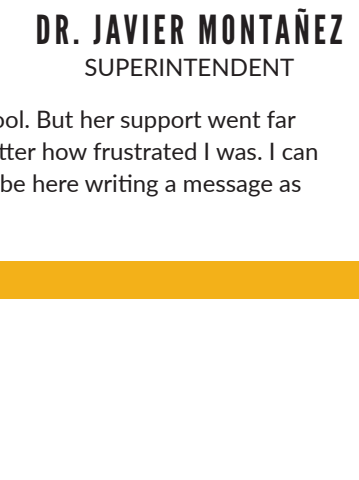
SUPERINTENDENT'S CORNER

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](#).

February is of course **Black History Month**, when we honor the too-often overlooked accomplishments of Black Americans throughout our history. It's incredibly important to remember and celebrate well-known leaders like Frederick Douglass, Rosa Parks, Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., Harriet Tubman, and so many others. They created a better future for generations to come, and they remain an inspiration to our students to this day.

I also think this is an opportunity for each of us to remember that we should appreciate and respect the positive impact our African American friends, colleagues, educators, and neighbors have on our lives year-round. For me, I know I wouldn't be where I am today without a wonderful and supportive African American educator from Public School 250 in Brooklyn, New York.

Mrs. Washington would come to my elementary classroom to give me extra help because I was struggling in school. But her support went far beyond academics. The warmth and love she showed me helped me know that everything would be okay, no matter how frustrated I was. I can still hear her slippers in the hallway outside the classroom and her voice calling my name to this day. I would not be here writing a message as superintendent today if it weren't for Mrs. Washington's love and dedication. And for that I'll always be grateful.



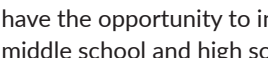
DR. JAVIER MONTAÑEZ
SUPERINTENDENT

DISTRICT UPDATES

EARLY RELEASE DAY FEBRUARY 8

This is a friendly reminder that all schools will have their next monthly two-hour early dismissal on **Wednesday, February 8**, for teacher professional development. Middle school families should note that this is different from the regular Wednesday dismissal time for middle school students. This allows buses to run on time for other schools that are also dismissed early that day. Families should also remember to double check the schedules at local recreation centers, as some may not open until 3 p.m. because of staffing.

NATIONAL SCHOOL COUNSELING WEEK FEBRUARY 6-10



February 6th - 10th is **National School Counseling Week**, helping to highlight the tremendous impact school counselors can have in helping students achieve school success and plan for a career.

This year's theme is **School Counselors: Helping Students Dream Big**. We want to acknowledge the amazing work that school counselors across PPSD do to help our students, staff, and families in the District each and every day.

SCHOOL CHOICE REGISTRATION DEADLINE

A reminder to incoming middle school students and families, and incoming high school students and families that school choice registration forms are to be submitted no later than **Friday, February 10**. Families of current fifth grade and eighth grade students have the opportunity to indicate their top four preferences for middle school and high school next fall. For more information about school choice and how to submit the lottery choices, visit www.providenceschools.org/schoolchoice.

WINTER RECESS

A reminder to students that winter recess is **Monday, February 20 - Friday, February 24**. Classes will resume again on Monday, February 27.

EARN UP TO \$1K FOR STAFF REFERRALS

PPSD is committed to hiring the highest quality team members that represent the students and communities we serve. We want to make it easy for our team to share opportunities and information with your networks – and to reward you for doing so! Providence Public Schools has increased the **referral bonus to any current employee** who refers a permanent teacher, school leader, TA, Clerk, or Crossing Guard candidate that is subsequently employed within the school system, full-time, as a result of that introduction provided all of the terms of this policy are met. Find [more details here](#).

DRIVERS WANTED: PROVIDENCE PUBLIC SCHOOLS

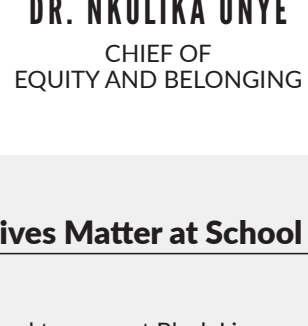


First Student, PPSD's contracted bus drivers, are an integral part of the communities they serve and are looking for **part-time drivers** here in Providence! They are committed to safety, customer service and have genuine, caring attitudes for children. They help you prepare for your written DMV tests and obtain your CDL permit with a variety of bonuses and paid training. [Learn more here](#).

Black History Month 2023 National Theme: **Black Resistance**

WHAT DOES BLACK HISTORY MONTH MEAN TO YOU?

As a first generation Nigerian-American woman, I often recollect the stories that my parents shared with us regarding their experiences when they arrived to the states in the '60s. Despite the hardships and racism they endured, they always made it clear that their experience was insignificant compared to the ordeals of enslaved Africans who fought heroically for their rights and freedom in this country. For it was those efforts that afforded my parents, and others like them, the ability to come to the states and study and raise a family. In fact, although things are not perfect, Africans and African Americans today, owe a lifetime of gratitude to those who paved the way in the pursuit of freedom, fairness, and liberation. What does Black History Month mean to me? Black History Month signifies the endurance, strength, passion, brilliance, freedom, creativity, resilience, ingenuity of a people who continue to pursue the realization of the tangible dream, of those past and present – the attainment of true justice, validation, liberation, access, affirmation, equality, equity and love for ALL. **What does Black History Month mean to you?** Send us your essays and those of your students, and we will post them on our website during the month of February, in honor of Black History Month 2023.



DR. NKOLIKA ONYE
CHIEF OF EQUITY AND BELONGING

February 6-10 is the Black Lives Matter at School Week of Action (National)

The Office of Equity & Belonging is proud to support Black Lives Matter in School Week of Action. We ask and encourage educators to infuse lessons with resources and activities based on the week's themes, and that our school leaders uplift this important work in their buildings. This is an opportunity to build on other Black History Month initiatives. The theme for Black History Month this year is "Black Resistance" which centers how African Americans have fought repression from America's earliest days. Please see the resources provided for more information. The lessons that educators teach during this week of action correspond to the thirteen guiding principles of Black Lives Matter using the schedule below.

- **Monday:** Restorative Justice, Empathy and Loving Engagement
- **Tuesday:** Diversity and Globalism
- **Wednesday:** Trans-Affirming, Queer Affirming and Collective Value
- **Thursday:** Intergenerational, Black Families and Black Villages
- **Friday:** Black Women and Unapologetically Black

Below are additional resources that educators, who wish to take part in this week of action, can use. Additionally, see PD opportunity below for those who want additional support to participate in the Black Lives Matter at School Week of Action.

- [Teaching for Black Lives](https://centralschools.org/resources/black-history-month-resource-guide-for-educators-and-families/)
- Black Lives Matter at School - <https://blacklivesmatterschool.com/>
- BLM Week of Action in DC - <https://www.dcaeaeducators4socialjustice.org/black-lives-matter-week-action>
- NEA Black Lives Matter at School Resources - <https://neaedjustice.org/black-lives-matter-school-resources/>

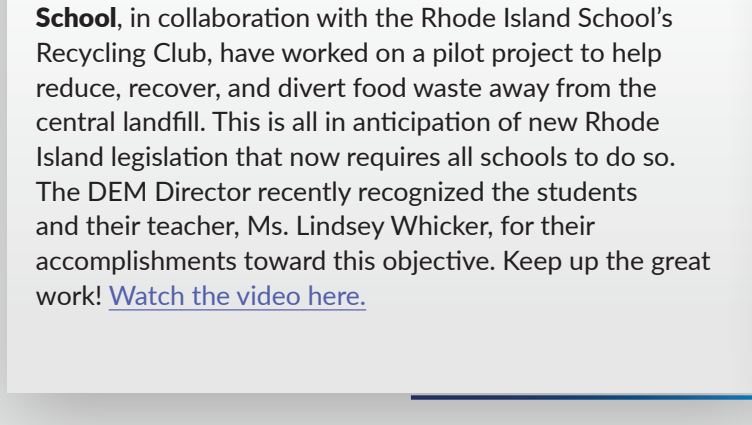
CELEBRATING STUDENTS

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



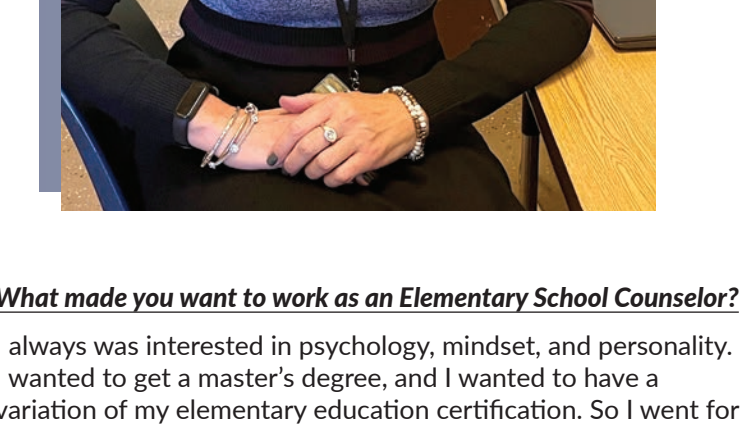
PATRIOTS RETURN TO YOUNG WOODS

The New England Patriots and the Kraft Foundation returned to **Young Woods Elementary School** to congratulate the students on great attendance for the first quarter of the school year. The Patriots and Kraft Foundation visited the school earlier in the year to talk about the importance of attendance in school, as part of the District's attendance initiative. According to Dr. Reilly, principal of Young Woods, attendance was at roughly 78% for the first quarter last year. This year attendance has improved remarkably to nearly 90%. We're so proud of the Young Woods community for focusing on this attendance initiative and helping set students up for success!



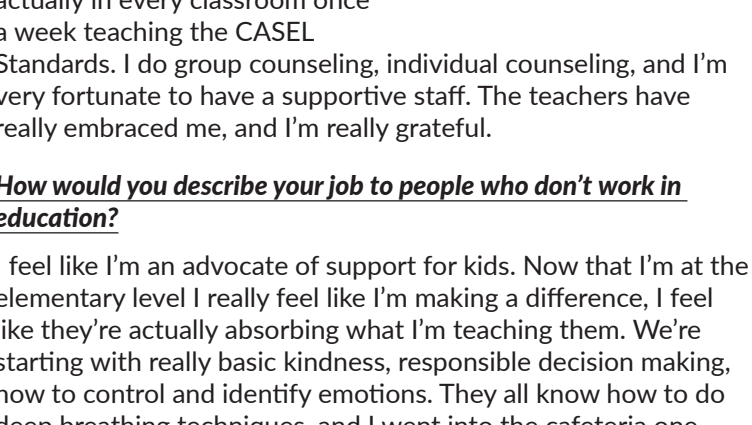
SIXTH GRADE RECYCLING HEROES

Sixth grade science students at **Nathan Bishop Middle School**, in collaboration with the Rhode Island School's Recycling Club, have worked on a pilot project to help reduce, recover, and divert food waste away from the central landfill. This is all in anticipation of new Rhode Island legislation that now requires all schools to do so. The DEM Director recently recognized the students and their teacher, Ms. Lindsey Whicker, for their accomplishments toward this objective. Keep up the great work! [Watch the video here](#).



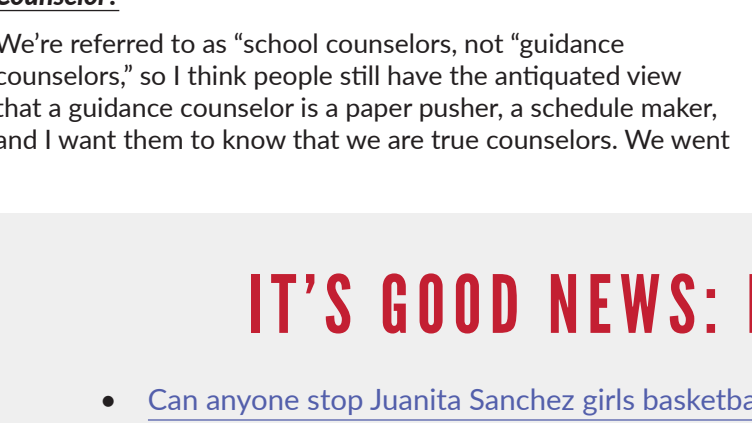
ALL STATE SOCCER HONORS

Congratulations to **Central High School Knights'** senior Anderson Abarca-Barillas, above, for being named Division I first team All-State by the state's coaches and first team All-State for boys soccer. Congratulations also to **Classical High School Purple's** Chris Vargas, right, for being named Division I second team All-State for boys soccer. Well done!



GTE STUDENTS AT NEW ENGLAND TECH

Fourteen students from **A-Venture & Central High School** are participating in our first "Boat for Next Gen" cohort with Electric Boat! The students are attending six evening programs over a period of three weeks at New England Tech and the Westerly Education Center. Each night, they are introduced to a different trade including Welding, Ship-fitting, Pipefitting, Electrical, Sheet Metal, and Machining. Shout out to A-Venture OAUAC Coordinator Fred Krapf for recruiting students and chaperoning this program! Watch this space - there will be a PPSD application day here in Providence for graduating seniors on March 7th for careers at Electric Boat!



STAFF SPOTLIGHT

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

Lynn Harrigan

Elementary School Counselor

Located in: Reservoir Avenue School

Joined PPSD in: 1996

What made you want to work as an Elementary School Counselor?

I always was interested in psychology, mindset, and personality. I wanted to get a master's degree, and I wanted to have a variation of my elementary education certification. So I went for my counseling degree, and when I graduated with my master's I was teaching elementary, and there were no elementary school counselors in buildings back then. However there was an opening at Hope High School. I ended up being there for 17 years as a high school counselor. I loved my time at Hope High School, but I felt ready for a change. This is a brand new position for me this year, so I'm coming full circle, and I love it. I started as an elementary school teacher, then I was at Hope, so I feel like I'm able to have the best of both worlds and take all my experience counseling high school, my experience with teaching elementary, and blend them together. I'm truly doing what an elementary school counselor is supposed to be doing. I'm so fortunate that I'm actually in every classroom once a week teaching the CASEL Standards. I do group counseling, individual counseling, and I'm very fortunate to have a supportive staff. The teachers have really embraced me, and I'm really grateful.

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

I feel like I'm an advocate of support for kids. Now that I'm at the elementary level I really feel like I'm making a difference, I feel like they're actually absorbing what I'm teaching them. We're starting with really basic kindness, responsible decision making, how to control and identify emotions. They all know how to do deep breathing techniques, and I went into the cafeteria one day and my little kindergartners, it was a really chaotic day, and I turned and I saw one of them going into a deep breathing pose, and then the whole class. It brought tears to my eyes honestly. And they're using it at home too, they've taught their parents techniques. We just learned a new technique called a Meta Moment - when you run into a problem situation, you take a moment to just stop, check in with your feelings and the emotion you're feeling. Is it anger, is it frustration? Identify that and take a few deep breaths to calm down and make a responsible decision. And then the third step is they see their best selves and they ask, "what would you best self do in this moment?" Then step four would be to make the best plan possible. We just started this, and kids are already saying, "I took a Meta Moment," and teachers are using it too! So I feel very grateful that the staff is also participating, it's great that they're really embracing it.

What do you wish more people knew about being a School Counselor?

We're referred to as "school counselors, not "guidance counselors," so I think people still have the antiquated view that a guidance counselor is a paper pusher, a schedule maker, and I want them to know that we are true counselors. We went

to school to be counselors, and that I am here to teach Social Emotional Learning and to be an advocate for students. I think at the elementary level they understand it more. So I think it's shifting, and people are understanding our roles more, but it still is a tricky thing where, especially at the secondary level, we're more thought of as administering, scheduling, which you do indeed do, but it's not a huge part of it.

Can you speak on the difference between School Counselors, School Social Workers, and School Psychologists? What is the difference between the three roles?

As a school counselor, so I'm considered Tier One, so I'm here to educate the whole building, implementing the CASEL Standards, teaching Social Emotional Learning lessons on a weekly basis. Then I also dip into Tier Two, where kids might have chronic social/emotional issues where they need help and I'll do small group or individual counseling interventions. But when it goes beyond my scope, the School Psychologist and the School Social Worker are more Tier Three, so they'll pick it up. I do work with parents as well, not just the students. I'm the 504 coordinator so I have parent meetings with that, and I participate in the school events, where I get to meet all of our wonderful families.

What have been some highlights this year so far?

Definitely the kindergartners practicing the breathing exercise in the lunchroom was a huge highlight. When I took the position, the administrators expressed the desire to implement some initiatives that they were excited to start. They said, "we have so many great initiatives, we've just never had the manpower." They had a counselor last year, but it was a part time position. This is the first year where they were able to have a full time counselor. During the beginning of the school year, the administrators expressed that they would love to get a fifth grade student council up and running, so I'm happy to say, we have a fifth grade student council, and I'm their advisor. They actually went to the School Choice Fair this year at PACTA, they got dressed up in their school uniforms, and they represented our school really well.

I'm just proud of the students themselves, the students here are the best. They're very grateful, they're very smart, we have good kids, and great teachers. This building has some of the most phenomenal staff I've ever met, very dedicated. The administrators are in the trenches every single day, whether it's lunch duty, bus duty, or something else, they work so hard, and I'm so fortunate to work with such an amazing group of people. I'm very excited about students actually picking up and actively enjoying my lessons. I run lunch bunches, it's the group counseling that I have to run during their lunch so I'm not pulling them from their academics, so I run three, six-week groups, then take new kids every four to six weeks, there's one for each grade span. Now the word has spread and every kid wants to be in a lunch bunch, I had no idea it would be that popular.

IT'S GOOD NEWS: PPSD IN THE PRESS

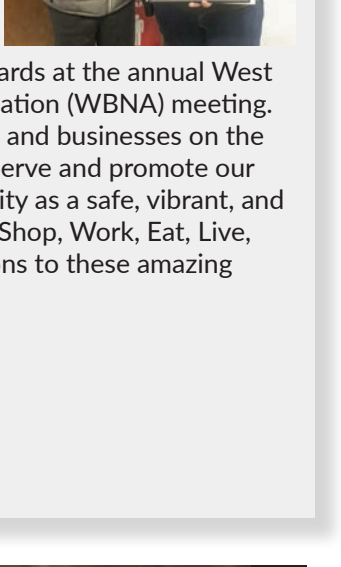
- [Can anyone stop Juanita Sanchez girls basketball from a trip to the finals?](#) Providence Journal, January 27
- [Patriots' Cole Strange visits Young Wood Elementary students](#) ABC6, January 25
- [On the wrestling mat, plenty of reasons for Hope](#) Providence Journal, January 20

AROUND THE DISTRICT



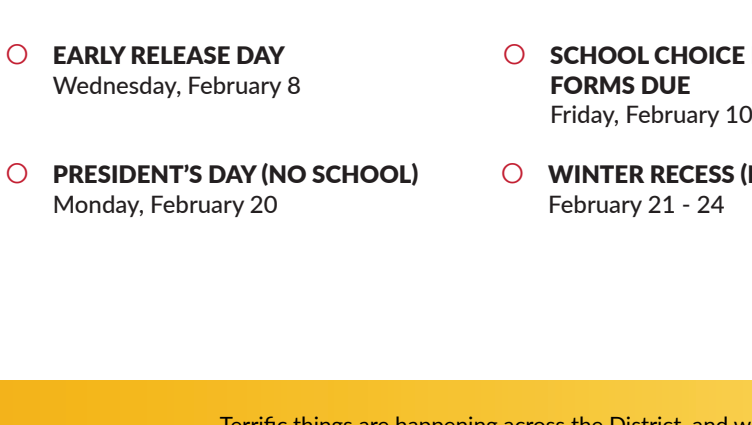
WBNA SCHOOL HERO AWARDS

Congratulations to **Carl Lauro** Elementary School clerk Rebecca Tetraault, **Asa Messer** Elementary School school counselor Elizabeth Heald, above, and **West Broadway Middle School** nurse Lynn Dubois, right, for being presented with School Hero Awards at the annual West Broadway Neighborhood Association (WBNA) meeting. The WBNA organizes neighbors and businesses on the West Side of Providence to preserve and promote our diverse, historic, urban community as a safe, vibrant, and sustainable place to be. SWELL (Shop, Work, Eat, Live, and Learn locally). Congratulations to these amazing educators on being recognized!



2023 RIAAA FEMALE COACH OF THE YEAR

Congratulations to **Central High School's** Head Girls and Boys Tennis coach **Melissa Cimini** for being selected as the 2023 Rhode Island Interscholastic Athletic Administrators' (RIAAA) Female Coach of the Year! Coach Cimini's dedicated work in education-based athletics teaches the lives of so many students - both inside and outside the classroom and in their extracurricular activities. Congratulations, Coach Cimini, and thank you for all that you do!



PCTA TEACHER AND CLASSICAL TEACHER GOING TO GUATEMALA

Congratulations to **PCTA** ESL teacher Olivia Sweet, and **Classical High School** World Language teacher Julie Polana for being selected by Rhode Island College to participate in a language program in Guatemala for the month of July! This is a wonderful opportunity for these teachers and will directly benefit many PPSD students and families, as the majority of our students come from Spanish-speaking homes. Congratulations on your acceptance to this competitive opportunity!

MARK YOUR CALENDARS!

- **EARLY RELEASE DAY**
Wednesday, February 8
- **SCHOOL CHOICE REGISTRATION FORMS DUE**
Friday, February 10
- **EARLY CONTRACT HIRING FAIR**
Wednesday, February 15
5:00 p.m. to 7:00 p.m.
Mount Pleasant High School
- **PRESIDENT'S DAY (NO SCHOOL)**
Monday, February 20
- **WINTER RECESS (NO SCHOOL)**
February 21 - 24

FEBRUARY SCHOOL MENU



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.