

Classical High School's Racial Equity Committee

(REC) organized a joyful social event to celebrate Black Excellence showcasing student talent and facilitating discussion.

CONNECTIONS

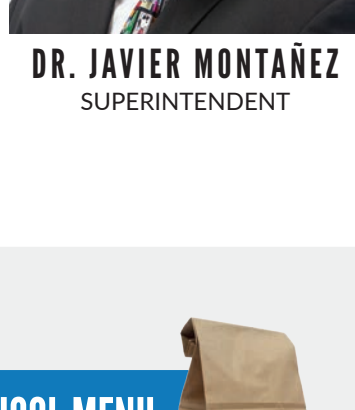
MARCH 3, 2023

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](#).

It's hard to believe we're in March already! Warmer weather is (hopefully) right around the corner, and we're gearing up for a strong finish to the school year across PPSD. March is also **Women's History Month**, a chance for us to commemorate and appreciate the vital role of women in American history. This year, the National Women's History Alliance has chosen the theme of Celebrating Women Who Tell Stories. So take time to celebrate women who have inspired you in any form of media or storytelling, including print, radio, TV, stage, podcasts, or news!

March is also the final month for all parents in Rhode Island to fill out the annual SurveyWorks feedback form. We want to hear from you! Please visit www.RIDE.nj.gov/SurveyWorks before March 31. It takes just 20 minutes to complete the survey on a computer, tablet, or mobile device. Parents of PPSD students can visit the link above, or look for text messages from your school and from the District with a QR code that you can scan. Your voice matters to us and we appreciate your feedback!

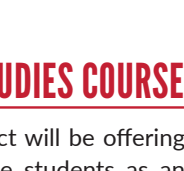


DR. JAVIER MONTAÑEZ
SUPERINTENDENT

MARK YOUR CALENDARS!

- Middle School & High School Lottery Announced Tuesday, March 7
- EARLY RELEASE DAY Wednesday, March 15

MARCH SCHOOL MENU



DISTRICT UPDATES

MIDDLE & HIGH SCHOOL LOTTERY

The school choice lottery for incoming middle school and high school students will take place on Tuesday, March 7. The school choice lottery placement announcements will be sent home to families via Skyward followed by a letter in the mail. Thank you to all our fifth and eighth grade families for turning in your school choice forms and participating in the process!

EARLY RELEASE DAY MARCH 15

This is a friendly reminder that all schools will have their next monthly two-hour early dismissal on Wednesday, March 15, 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.

FIRST-EVER PPSD AFRICAN AMERICAN STUDIES COURSE

Starting next school year, high schools in the District will be offering an African American Studies course for 12th grade students as an elective course. The course will cover centuries of content, including Ancient Africa, Africans in the Atlantic World, Role of African Americans in the Civil War, the Harlem Renaissance, Barack Obama Presidency, and much more. Juniors who are currently choosing classes for next year are eligible to sign up for the class for next year.

AFFORDABLE CONNECTIVITY PROGRAM

PPSD Community, the Affordable Connectivity Program helps families afford the cost of internet service at home. Click on the link below to see if you qualify! <https://fb.me/e/3kSOLBOz>

Women's History Month 2023 National Theme:

CELEBRATING WOMEN WHO TELL OUR STORIES

March is National Women's History Month! The National Women's History Month theme for 2023 is "Celebrating Women Who Tell Our Stories." Who are the women in your life, past and present, who have been active in all forms of storytelling and media including print, radio, TV, stage, video, audiotape, screen, blogs, podcasts, and more? Send us a paragraph about this person or persons, and a picture, so that we can highlight her or them in the next newsletter. Email us at Equity@ppsd.org.



Del Sesto Middle School in the citywide "Youth Dance Competition" at John Hope Settlement House.

How PPSD Educators & Students Honored Black History Month

February was Black History Month and this year's theme was Black Resistance: "African-Americans have resisted all forms of historic and ongoing oppression, in all forms since their arrival to these shores." (Association for the Study of African-American Life and History) This year, we honor and celebrate their ongoing resilience, strength, and quest to be seen and to achieve justice and equity. We are highlighting some of the members of the PPSD family who celebrated the month in unique ways! Here are just a few!

Classical Students Host a Black Excellence Event, Racial Equity Committee



Students from **Classical High School's Racial Equity Committee (REC)** organized a joyful social event to celebrate Black Excellence. The event was also part of Classical's participation in the RESPECT Youth Leadership Conference,

a District-wide equity initiative. The event highlighted student voices and presented various artistic expressions through singing, poetry, and step dance. In addition, a panel of students and District-wide equity leaders discussed how race is perceived within society, defined and imagined equity within education, and offered insight into current structures supporting racial equity.

Youth Dance Competition

Ivan Brooks, teacher at **Del Sesto Middle School** proclaimed February 18, 2023 as Youth Day and held a citywide "Youth Dance Competition" at John Hope Settlement House. The winning dancers were students Prince De'nyis, Princess Fallon & Lyrical. After their win, each student walked away with a \$500 cash prize. Ivan says, "These young talented individuals showed up and showed out with a crowd decision win. It was a pleasure witnessing families come together for an all event full of food, fun, games, prizes, and included a bouncy house. I want to use my brand to focus on the community and to bring people together to stay resilient in life. I want our youth to be motivated to stay in school and never give up on their dreams and passion."

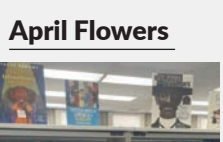
STAFF SHOUTOUTS

Christina Toro



Ms. Toro has been a dynamic English teacher at **Classical High School** since 2015, and has led exemplary equity work alongside her students throughout her tenure in the District. A co-founder and advisor to the Classical High School Racial Equity Committee (REC) and staff representative at the Office of Equity and Belonging RESPECT Student Leadership Conference, Ms. Toro's passion for her students and dedication to social justice has been celebrated by students, staff, and administrators as a resource and supporter of student activism.

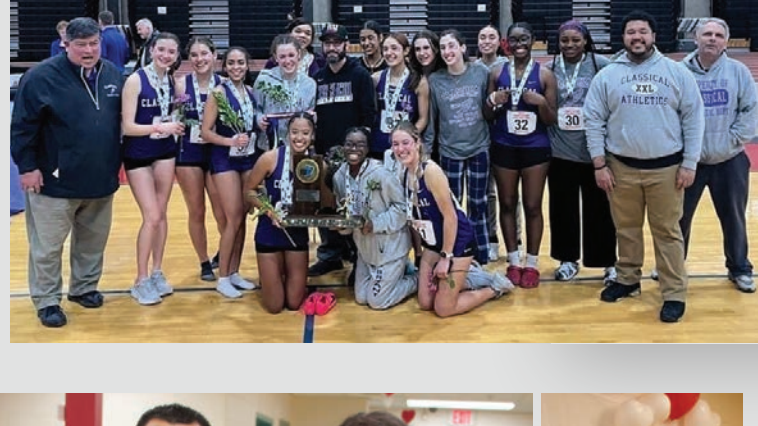
April Flowers



April Flowers, an Instructional Support Leader honored Black History Month through literacy. Ms. Flowers displayed numerous books at her desk that celebrate Black Resistance through literacy. Among those books were *The Undeclared*, *Thirteen Ways of Looking at a Black Boy*, *Little Leaders*, and *Sulwe*.

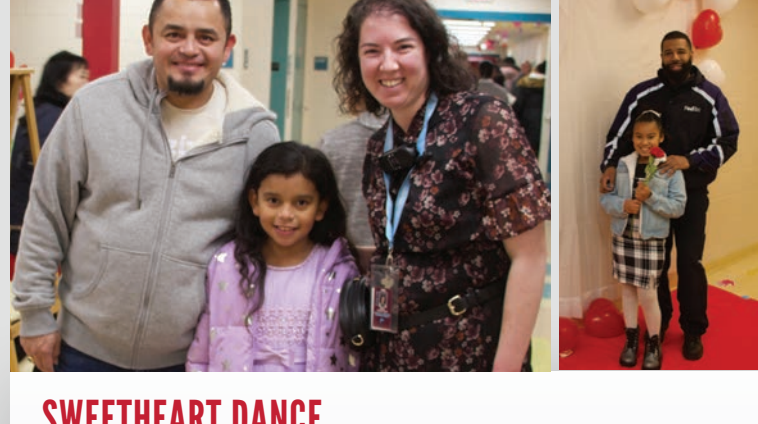
CELEBRATING STUDENTS

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



CLASSICAL INDOOR TRACK AND FIELD STATE CHAMPS

Congratulations to **Classical High School's Girls Indoor Track and Field team** on winning the Division I State Championship! This is the first time in the school's history that they have won the title, after tying with another team for the top spot in a past season. Congratulations to all, and go Purple!



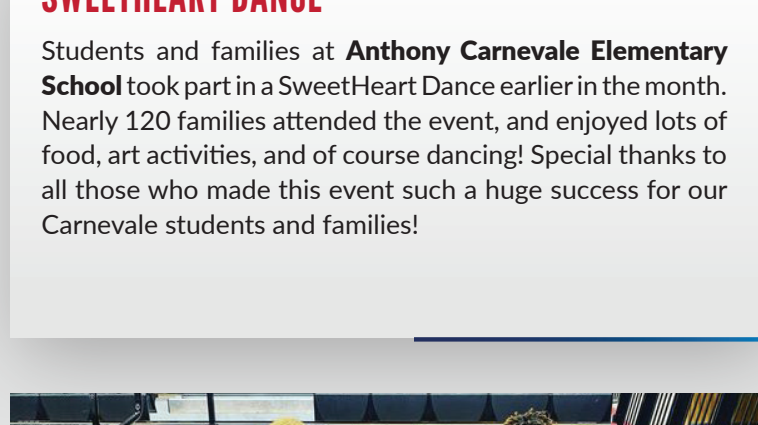
SWEETHEART DANCE

Students and families at **Anthony Carnevale Elementary School** took part in a Sweet-Heart Dance earlier in the month. Nearly 120 families attended the event, and enjoyed lots of food, art activities, and of course dancing! Special thanks to all those who made this event such a huge success for our Carnevale students and families!



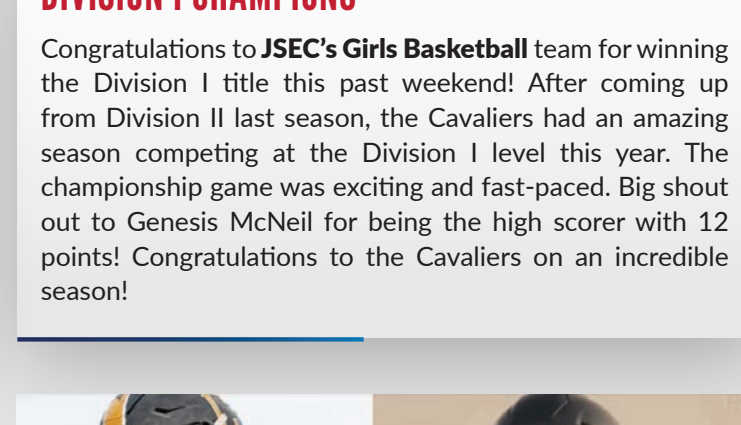
DIVISION I CHAMPIONS

Congratulations to **JSEC's Girls Basketball team** for winning the Division I title this past weekend! After coming up from Division II last season, the Cavaliers had an amazing season competing at the Division I level this year. The championship game was exciting and fast-paced. Big shout out to Genesis McNeil for being the high scorer with 12 points! Congratulations to the Cavaliers on an incredible season!



BLUE WAVE WRESTLING

Congratulations to **Hope High School Wrestling** for an impressive performance placing second in last weekend's Interscholastic League State Championship at PCTA! The Blue Wave earned three gold medals including Most Outstanding Match by Isael Perez who had a come-from-behind win, and wins by Denzel Monteiro and Imanol Taveras. Congratulations Blue Wave!



DECISION DAY

Two **Central High School football players** have made [decisions about where they will be attending college](#) for the next four years and playing football. Senior wide receiver Jaiden Newman Lee will be continuing his academic and athletic career at Kentucky State University in the fall, after being awarded an athletic scholarship from the university. Senior running back Armase Edouard will be continuing his academic and athletic career at Bentley University in the fall, after he was also awarded an athletic scholarship from the university. Congratulations to both Jaiden and Armase for an incredible four years at Central, and we can't wait to see what you both accomplish on and off the field in college.



STAFF SPOTLIGHT

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

Laurie McKenna-Therrian

First Grade Dual Language English Teacher

Located in: Leviton Dual Language School

Joined PPSD in: 1987

"I saw this as an opportunity for children to keep not only their language and their cultures, but to affirm their cultures and affirm their languages while being able to learn English."

What made you want to be a Dual Language English teacher?

I started in Providence as a long-term substitute in 1987, and I was hired permanently in 1991. I was in a first grade classroom at Gilbert Stuart, which was an elementary school at the time, and it's actually the only position I've held. I feel it's the year where kids really learn more such as reading, writing, and the social skills they have to learn.

Dual Language was not around at all at that time, and at Gilbert Stuart, we had Meredith Costa as our principal, and she was a pretty far-thinking principal. The District had come to her with interest in establishing a Dual Language program, similar to what was being done in Massachusetts. She came to me and asked if I would be interested in partnering up with the bilingual teacher. At the time we had five English first grade classes and one bilingual first grade class. So I said yes, I thought it was a great idea, I loved the idea, and I've been there ever since.

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

I explain to them that we are teaching English, but we're also enabling the children to keep their first language, their home language, and instructing them academically in that language, and what a bonus that is for them. People are really amazed when they stop to really think about what we're doing. It's a very challenging job for the children, for their families, and for the teachers, and really people stop and think about what the children are doing, it when amazes them.

I saw this as an opportunity for children to keep not only their language and their cultures, but affirm their cultures and affirm their languages while being able to learn English, and really utilize that as they get older and go out into the workforce.

What do you wish more people knew about being a Dual Language teacher?

I think people are afraid of being a Dual Language teacher because they're afraid that it's going to be a lot of work, and I'm not going to say that it's not a lot of work because it is. But I wish people knew the excitement you feel, the satisfaction that you feel when you see a child who may be a Newcomer, and see them acquiring English at such a rapid rate. But they're still able to hold onto their native language, and vice versa, to have a child who comes in that is monolingual in English and to hear them start to speak in Spanish. Then as the years go on, we're very lucky at Leviton that we have a very stable student body, they really stay with us from kindergarten to fifth grade, and to see fifth graders who came to me as Newcomers, you would never know that English was their second language or that Spanish was their second language.

The way our program is set up, my partner and I share two classrooms of children. If we were full 26 and 26, I would see 52

children in the day. It's not just 26 first graders, it's 52 that you're managing. We split the day in half, half the day is in English, half the day is in Spanish and we do that for a five day cycle. Then we flip-flop. So then the children who did literacy in English will do literacy in Spanish for five days.

As a teacher, I wish I could tell more teachers that what you're doing really matters and it really counts. To have parents and families come to you when their children are leaving fifth grade and say how much they appreciated all that our school has done for them, that's really special.

What have been some highlights this year so far?

The highlights for me are just seeing the students grow. The students we have in first grade this year were particularly hit strong by COVID. Before they came to kindergarten, 99.9% of them had no exposure outside of their homes, and to see how they've grown socially first, and emotionally, to watch that growth is really exciting for me. Those are the real highlights, and adding in the academics, the lightbulb goes off and somebody's starting to read, somebody feels confident about writing, that's special too. But the real highlight is to see how these children are coming out of COVID and starting to function in the world, and feeling good about it, you know, not being afraid to come into the building, and not being afraid to be with other kids, and playing, and learning to share.

What are little looking forward to for the rest of the year?

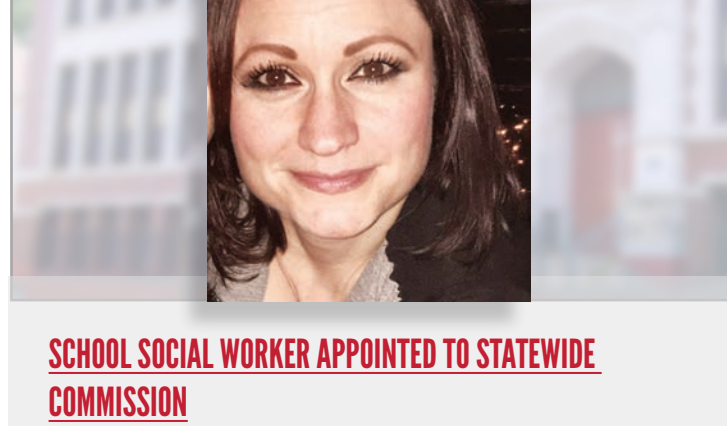
It's a really bittersweet for me, as I'm retiring at the end of the school year. Every time I do an activity or something I've done successfully for a lot of years, in the back of my mind it's, "oh, this is the last time I'm going to do this, the last time I'm going to do that." But I'm looking forward to seeing how far I can take these students, and preparing them for second grade, and preparing them for being out in the real world. We do a lot of fun things, we have a garden and I'm looking forward to planting the garden again in the spring, and we always try to catch the leprechaun in March. The things that kids remember are what I'm looking forward to. I have lots of kids come back from middle school, high school, and even from college in their cap and gown.

I'm really honored to say that I was a teacher in Providence for pretty much my entire career. We have wonderful students, wonderful families. I teach with the best colleagues that I could have ever asked for. My daughter began teaching in Providence this year. She grew up her entire life coming to school with me, and when she was in high school, she did a practicum in a special needs classroom that we had at Leviton at the time, and that's where she got her passion for working with kids with special needs, and she's come full circle. I just want people to know how proud I am of being a part of a wonderful group of families, students, and colleagues.

IT'S GOOD NEWS: PPSD IN THE PRESS

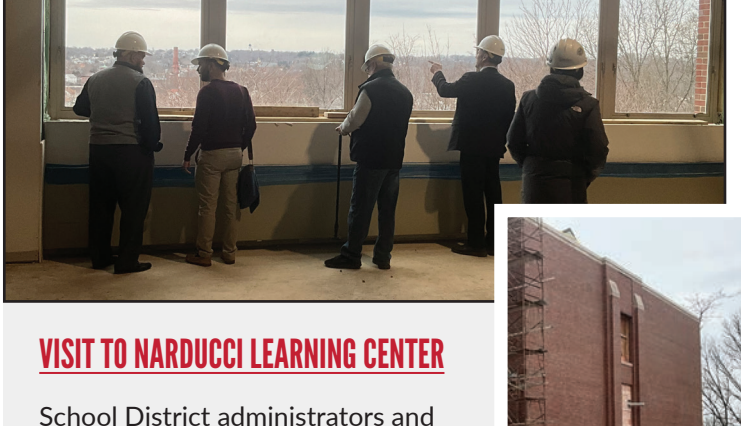
- [Defense leads Juanita Sanchez to D1 girls basketball title](#) WPRI, February 25
- [Hope High's Isael Perez beats Ponaganset's Nick Baccala in OT](#) Providence Journal, February 25
- [Brown University offering Providence students pre-college program scholarships](#) Providence Journal, February 22
- [Providence School Board elects new president](#) WJAR, February 15

AROUND THE DISTRICT



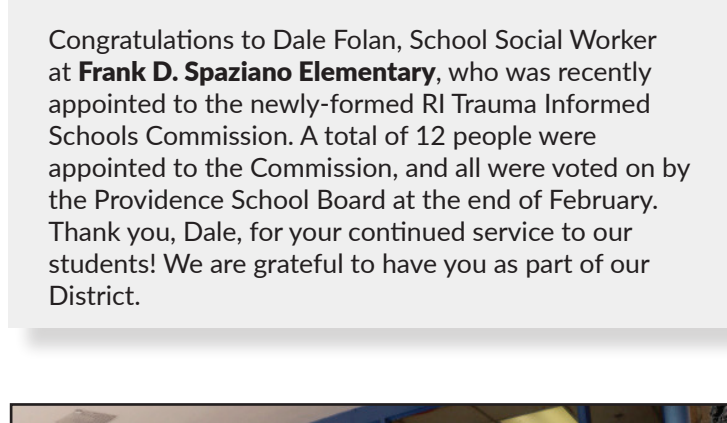
SCHOOL SOCIAL WORKER APPOINTED TO STATEWIDE COMMISSION

Congratulations to Dale Folan, School Social Worker at **Frank D. Spaziano Elementary**, who was recently appointed to the newly-formed RI Trauma Informed Schools Commission. A total of 12 people were appointed to the Commission, and all were voted on by the Providence School Board at the end of February. Thank you, Dale, for your continued service to our students! We are grateful to have you as part of our District.



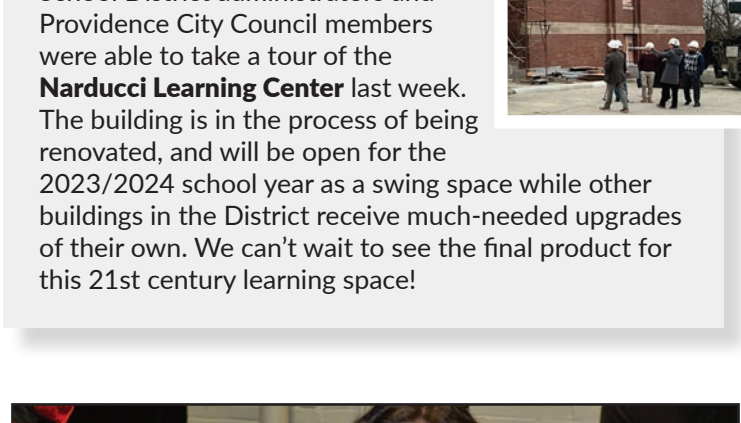
VISIT TO NARDUCCI LEARNING CENTER

School District administrators and Providence City Council members were able to take a tour of the **Narducci Learning Center** last week. The building is in the process of being renovated, and will be open for the 2023/2024 school year as a swing space while other buildings in the District receive much-needed upgrades of their own. We can't wait to see the final product for this 21st century learning space!



LOCAL SPECIAL EDUCATION ADVISORY COMMITTEE

The Local Special Education Advisory Committee is made up of PPSD parents and guardians of students who have Individualized Educational Plans (IEP). Parent involvement and parent professional collaboration are key components in improving outcomes for students with disabilities. For more information on how you or someone you know can contribute, [click on the flier here](#).



CITY YEAR RECRUITS WANTED

City Year Providence is looking for dedicated young adults to mentor and support local students. [Click here](#) or [visit their website](#) to learn more about this amazing opportunity, the impact it can have on our students here in PPSD, and the life skills and benefits that go along with it. Please share this information with any young adults who may be interested!

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.