



CONNECTIONS

April 14, 2022

SUPERINTENDENT'S CORNER

Hello PPSD community, and welcome to the second edition of our bi-weekly newsletter. If you miss any editions of this newsletter, you can [find them here](#) on the District's website in multiple languages. Our goal is to provide you with consistent updates on PPSD news, celebrate student successes, introduce you to some of our terrific staff members, and make you aware of upcoming meetings and events.

We're only a few weeks into April and it's already been quite a month! As you may have heard, last week I had the honor of being named permanent superintendent by Governor McKee and Commissioner Infante-Green. Please know that our students will come first in every decision I make, and the [Turnaround Action Plan](#) developed by our community will be my North Star as we work together to turn Providence into the destination for education.

As a former principal and assistant principal here in PPSD, I know that we must have a strong, two-way connection between our central office and our schools. This is a team effort to help our students succeed! So over the past several weeks I have made it my mission to visit every single school personally to speak with students, staff, and principals to learn how we can better support each other. I encourage anyone reading this newsletter to engage in that conversation by reaching out to communications@ppsd.org. Your voices matter, and they will always be respected in my office!



DR. JAVIER MONTAÑEZ
Superintendent

DISTRICT UPDATES

SCHOOL MASK POLICY

Masks are now optional for students and staff in Providence Schools. This decision was reached after extensive conversation with the Department of Health and RIDE, and thorough examination of COVID case rates across the District. Over the past several weeks, the PPSD has averaged fewer than ten positive cases per day across a district of over 20,000 students.

Please note that masks are just one layer of the District's COVID mitigation strategy. The District will continue to provide [free vaccination clinics](#), free rapid testing, increased air purification in schools, and increased sanitation. Masks may once again be required in some or all schools if there is a spike in cases. Negative comments about anyone's mask choice will not be tolerated.

Please click here for the [full guidelines on masking](#) that were announced on April 6.



APRIL VACATION

All students and staff will return from April vacation on Monday, April 25. There will not be a staggered return from break as there had been following previous school vacations. April break runs from April 18 to 22.

The normal return from April vacation reflects a decrease in COVID-19 cases across the District, and will ensure minimal disruption to preparations for annual Rhode Island Comprehensive Assessment System (RICAS) testing.

COVID TESTING

The District will once again provide all students and staff with a kit of two free at-home COVID-19 tests prior to school vacation. At-home tests will be distributed to students and parents on April 13 and 14. Families should follow instructions included in each box to conduct at-home testing the day before their student(s) return to school from vacation. Students who test positive must isolate for five days and parents and guardians should report that information to their child's school. All students with consent forms will be also tested upon returning to school on Monday, April 25.

CELEBRATING STUDENTS

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



SKILLS USA

Congratulations to all who participated in **SkillsUSA 2022 State Championships** this year! PPSD students received **18 gold medals** in contests such as Television Production, Prepared Speech, Sheet Metal, Culinary Arts, and more. Their skills competitions occurred from March 4 to March 30th with students competing against other Rhode Island schools. The gold medal winners will go on to the national competition in Atlanta.

Left photo: PCTA student Fritz Heitmueller, left, a Silver winner, teacher David Santos, and Naomi Felix Monanci, a gold medal winner in Industrial Motors and Controls.

Right Photo: PCTA student Melvin Coc Orellana, a Gold medal winner in Culinary, center, with Culinary Instructors Krista Taft and Johandry Rodriguez.



BIO MED AT HOSA

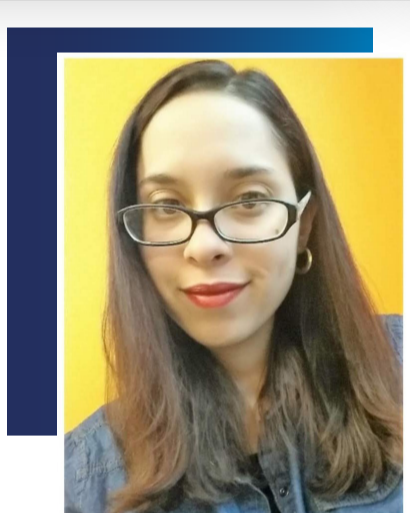
JSEC 9th grade BIOMED teams shined at **Rhode Island HOSA State Leadership Conference** as they competed against 150 RI teams. Congratulations to all our participating students and a huge shout out the team that placed third.

HOSA is a global student-led organization recognized by the U.S. Department of Education and the Department of Health and Human Services and several federal and state agencies. Their mission is to empower HOSA-Future Health Professionals to become leaders in the global health community, through education, collaboration, and experience.



FUTURE CHEFS

Sodexo's 10th Anniversary Future Chefs competition took place Saturday, April 2 at Providence Career and Technical Academy! The 5th grade finalists presented their creations to the judges including School Board member TyRelle Stephens, PPSD Chief of Operations Salvador Pellerano, and Chef Derek Wagner of Nick's on Broadway. Congratulations to Future Chef winner, Jenaya, pictured above, of **Veazie Street Elementary School!**



STAFF SPOTLIGHT

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

Katherine Gonzalez, M.Ed

Trainee at the Sherlock Center on Disabilities at RIC

Special Education ECS Teacher

Located in: Mount Pleasant High School

Joined PPSD in: 2012

How would you describe your job to a friend who doesn't know a lot about education?

I start by explaining that all of us have the ability to learn – some of us just do it differently. And my job is helping students find the ways in which they learn best. I currently work with a special education class of 11 sophomores at Mount Pleasant, and I provide support to an additional 11 students outside of that class. The students have a range of needs including intellectual disabilities, autism, and cerebral palsy. So my job is to be mindful of their needs, motivate them, and show compassion.

What's the best part of your job?

My students! They are my pride and joy. And the connections I build with them are not only wonderful on a personal level – they have real results in the classroom. I've been studying Social Emotional Learning for the past several years, and I can absolutely tell you that building relationships and taking time to listen to students sets the stage for everything else. I have far fewer disruptions in the classroom now, and kids who used to struggle are thriving.

What's a challenge that you or one of your students has overcome this year?

Last year when I met this group of kids, the biggest challenge was their Social Emotional needs and building relationships after being out of school for so long because of COVID. But now they do

much better caring about each other. Some students have made real leaps in Social Emotional health, and that helps bring other students along too. They ask about their friends if they miss a day of class, and they support each other in getting their work done.

My students...are my pride and joy. And the connections I build with them are not only wonderful on a personal level – they have real results in the classroom.

IT'S GOOD NEWS: PPSD IN THE PRESS

- [School Recycling Club: 'Saving the environment one piece of food at a time'](#)
The Providence Journal, April 4, 2022
- [D'Abate Elementary School to get \\$21 million renovation this summer](#)
The Providence Journal, April 1, 2022
- [Providence students address mask-wearing in letters to acting superintendent](#)
NBC 10 NEWS, April 1, 2022
- [Escuelas Públicas de Providence buscan conocer opinión de padres sobre el uso de mascarillas](#)
Telemundo, March 30, 2022
- [Providence High School Student Wins State Poetry Contest](#)
Patch, March 31, 2022

MARK YOUR CALENDARS!

REPORT CARDS

posted in Skyward
Thursday, April 14, 2022

GOOD FRIDAY

Friday, April 15, 2022
No School

SPRING BREAK

April 18, 2022 - April 22, 2022

SCHOOL BOARD MEETING

Wednesday, April 27, 2022
6:30 p.m.

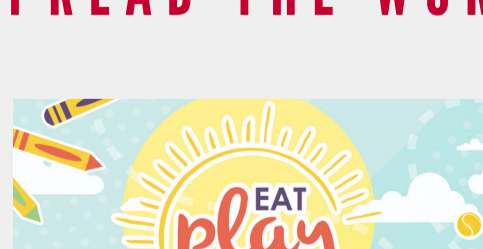
797 Westminster Street, 3rd fl, Providence

SPREAD THE WORD



PVDFEST

PVDFest is hosting a **Youth Stage** for youth performers at this year's festival! Applications are OPEN! Visit <https://pvdfest.com/perform/> to submit your application.



YOUTH JOBS

Applications for **youth job opportunities** with the City's Parks and Recreation Departments are now open → learn more: <http://pvdspringjobs.com>



RI PRE-K

The **2022-2023 RI Pre-K program lottery** has opened. RI Pre-K, provides free, high-quality Pre-K education to eligible 4-year-old children across Rhode Island. Find more information on how to apply: <http://www3.ride.ri.gov/pklottery>

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.

