



Hope High School at the Bryant Women's Summit 2023

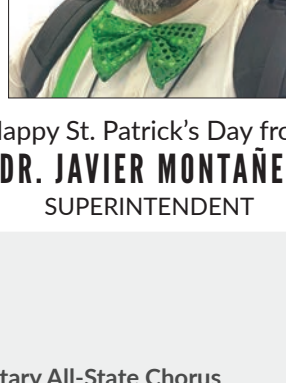
CONNECTIONS

MARCH 17, 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](#).

A friendly reminder to all of our families that March is the final month to complete this year's SurveyWorks feedback form. Please visit www.RIDE.ri.gov/SurveyWorks before March 31. It only takes about 20 minutes, and your feedback is incredibly important. You can also visit the PPSD website for the SurveyWorks link, and schools are also sending the link directly to parents as well via Kinvo text message. And please encourage other parents to fill out the survey if they have not already done so - every voice matters as we work together to build the Providence Public School District that our students deserve!



Happy St. Patrick's Day from
DR. JAVIER MONTAÑEZ
SUPERINTENDENT

MARK YOUR CALENDARS!

- Sodexo Providence Future Chef Competition
Saturday, March 18
PCTA
- RIMEA Band/Orchestra/Chorus Concert
Sunday, March 26 at 11 a.m.
The VETS
- 10th Annual RIMEA All-State Guitar Concert
Sunday, March 19 at 7 p.m.
Providence College
- Middle School & High School Placements
Monday, March 27 - Friday, March 31
- RIMEA Elementary All-State Chorus Concert
Saturday, March 25 at 4 p.m.
The VETS
- emPOWER Meet Up for Educators of Color
Thursday, March 30 from
4:30 p.m. to 6:30 p.m.
BonBon Nutrition

MARCH SCHOOL MENU

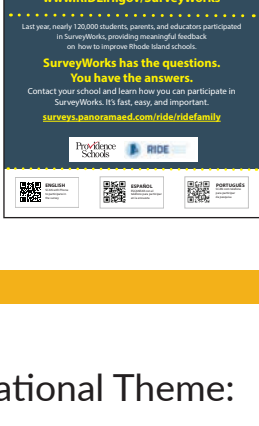
DISTRICT UPDATES

PARENT TEACHER CONFERENCES

Parent teacher conferences are in full swing this month, and the final dates for many schools are coming up next week. If your school's conferences were rescheduled because of recent winter weather, please check with your student's teacher and/or the main office at your school for updated dates and times.

SURVEYWORKS

This is the final month for all parents in Rhode Island to fill out the annual SurveyWorks feedback form. Please visit www.RIDE.ri.gov/SurveyWorks before March 31. The survey takes just 20 minutes to complete 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!



REIMAGINING PROVIDENCE SCHOOLS

Millions of dollars are being invested in renovating and rebuilding Providence Public Schools, so students can come to school and learn in buildings that are up-to-date and safe. Click on the video below to learn how these facility improvements will not only benefit the students, but the families, staff, and administration of PPSD as well. <https://youtu.be/HH4-Cuj2LHM>.

SPRING RECESS REMINDER

A reminder to all PPSD students and their families that spring recess will begin on **Monday, April 10**. Classes will resume again on **Monday, April 17**. We hope you all have a wonderful and relaxing April break!

MAY 17TH CALENDAR UPDATE

Please note in your calendars that **May 17th** has been changed to a full school day instead of an early release day. There will be no early release day for professional development during the month of May.

Women's History Month 2023 National Theme:

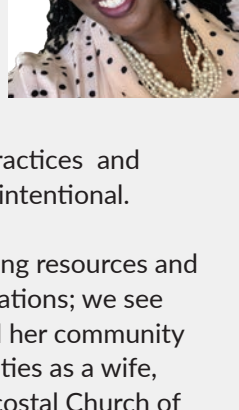
CELEBRATING WOMEN WHO TELL OUR STORIES

March is National Women's History Month! The National Women's History Month theme for 2023 is "Celebrating Women Who Tell Our Stories."

Women's History Month Feature

Christina Robinson Nard Student Support Academy Advisor

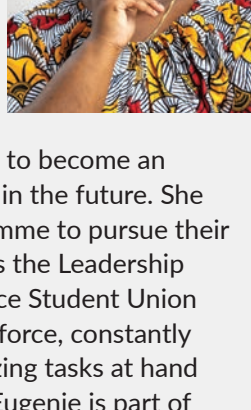
Christina is an accomplished professional educator. She is a former teacher and founding Principal of two schools. Originally from North Carolina, Christina is passionate about youth advocacy, leadership, and community building. Her educational philosophy includes the belief that education serves to provide students with the skills and knowledge necessary to be activists for anti-racist practices and models for justice that are inclusive and intentional.



Ms. Nard has a special interest in providing resources and support for those navigating difficult situations; we see this in her dedication to her students and her community outside of PPSD. Despite her responsibilities as a wife, new mother, and First Lady of the Pentecostal Church of God in Christ, Christina is a committed and passionate member of the PPSD Equity Advisory Council. She provides invaluable feedback and support to the Equity Office, and to all members of the Council.

Eugenie Belony 12th Grade Student at PCTA

Eugenie Rose Belony is a current senior at the **Providence Career & Technical Academy** in the Pre-Engineering pathway. Leading change in her community, she is an activist, community organizer, poet, dancer, and the former 20-22 Rhode Island Youth Deputy Poetry Ambassador and, most recently, elected the PCTA Student Body President. She has hopes to become an Astrophysicist and Aerospace engineer in the future. She truly hopes to build up other BIPOC femme to pursue their careers in the STEM field. She serves as the Leadership Team Co-Director over at the Providence Student Union and is a member of the RIDE civic task force, constantly excited to work with everyone on amazing tasks at hand and is hopeful for the future of PPSD. Eugenie is part of the PPSD Equity Advisory Council, representing PPSD students and amplifying their voice.



Send us your stories/spotlights so that we can honor these women during women's history month, email equity@ppsd.org.

Grants for Equity Projects:

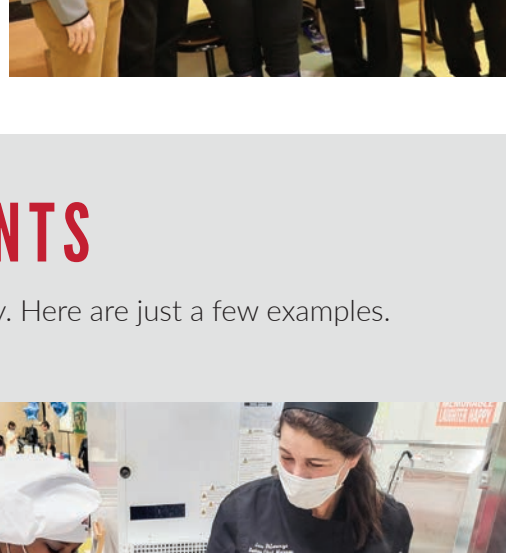
School grants are available for equity related projects. Please contact equity@ppsd.org for more information.

2023 RWU RACIAL JUSTICE CHALLENGE. Roger Williams University School of Law's Pro Bono Collaborative provides pro bono legal service using a three-way partnership model involving law firms and individual attorneys, law students, and community organizations. This year, in addition to continuing their pro bono work in the community, they are launching an education and awareness campaign centered around racial justice issues with a focus on housing. The Equity and Belonging Office will join this challenge and we are hoping that individuals, groups and schools in PPSD will as well. There are a multitude of ways to engage. Please click [here](#) to read all about it. If you decide to join the challenge, please email us at Equity@ppsd.org. We want to celebrate all who choose to join at the end of March!

R.E.S.P.E.C.T. ATTENDS 2023 SOCIAL JUSTICE WEEK IN FARMINGTON, CT. Farmington High School located in Farmington, CT, hosts an annual Social Justice Week in which student groups present and participate in a series of social justice-related discussions. Students from Farmington presented some of their work during the February RESPECT Student Conference held at the Providence Marriott downtown. On Thursday, March 16, 2023, 30 students attended the **2023 Social Justice Week** to observe the student presentations and to learn how the Farmington students have organized this effort at the high school. This opportunity was exclusive to PPSD middle and high school students who have participated in the RESPECT Student Leadership Conference all year. The students rode in style in a coach bus. The free trip included breakfast, lunch, and dinner.

EQUITY ADVISORY COUNCIL SUMMARY OF WORK. The PPSD Equity Advisory Council meets every second Thursday from 4:30-6:30 p.m., at 797 Westminster Street Providence. Refreshments are always served and the work is intense, but rewarding. [Click here](#) to review a summary of the work. Note that this is a collaborative working group and their recommendations are vital to our daily work. Email equity@ppsd.org if you are interested in serving.

#LUNCHBAG. The Office of Equity and Belonging was one of the major sponsors of the community event called #Lunchbag which occurred on Saturday, March 11. Present were Mayor Brett Smiley, Stephen Grace, Director of Recreation for the City of Providence, Dr. Nkolika Onye, Chief of Equity and Belonging, Reuben A. Shelton III, Esq, President of Lambda XI Chapter of Kappa Alpha Psi Fraternity Inc., and Dr. Lillian Montañez, Superintendent of Providence Schools. Over 100 members of Lambda XI Chapter of Kappa Alpha Psi Fraternity Inc., from all over the country, were in attendance. Over 100 bags filled with fresh food and produce were distributed to families in the community and members of the community temporarily housed at the Armory. Food scarcity and homelessness are major contributors to racial and economic disparities. Both fuel disparities in healthcare and all add to the growing disparities in education, especially for black and brown children.



EmPOWER Meetup for Educators of Color Meets March 30.

Judge Melissa DuBose and Akeem Hill will be our guest speakers. [March 30 Registration and Save the Date.](#)

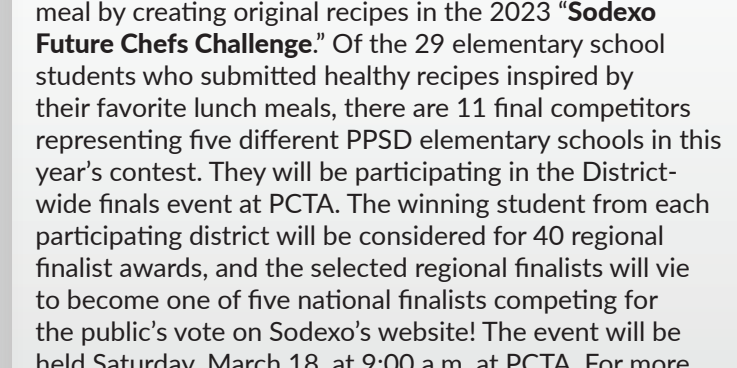
CELEBRATING STUDENTS

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



RIMEA ALL-STATE CONCERTS WITH PPSD STUDENTS

Sunday, March 19, at 7 p.m. is the **10th Annual Rhode Music Education Association (RIMEA) All-State Guitar Concert** at Providence College. Out of 23 PPSD students featured in the event, four are alumni from **Lillian Feinstein Elementary School at Sackett**, with three of them being current **Classical High School** students. Also on Saturday, March 25, at 4 p.m. the RIMEA Elementary All-State Chorus Concert will take place at The VETS. The event features 150 of the best singers from grades four through eight all over Rhode Island, with students from **Harry Kizirian Elementary School, Lillian Feinstein Elementary School at Sackett, Esek Hopkins Middle School, Mary Fogarty Elementary School, and Pleasant View Elementary School** all participating in the concert. Both events are free and open to the public. Congratulations to all of our terrific musicians!



SODEXO PROVIDENCE FUTURE CHEF COMPETITION

Elementary school students in the District will be able to use their culinary skills to reimagine their favorite lunch meal by creating original recipes in the 2023 "Sodexo Future Chefs Challenge." Of the 29 elementary school students who submitted healthy recipes inspired by their favorite lunch meals, there are 11 final competitors representing five different PPSD elementary schools in this year's contest. They will be participating in the District-wide finals event at PCTA. The winning student from each participating district will be considered for 40 regional finalist awards, and the selected regional finalists will vie to become one of five national finalists competing for the public's vote on Sodexo's website! The event will be held Saturday, March 18, at 9:00 a.m. at PCTA. For more information, [click on the flier!](#)



RISCA'S POETRY OUT LOUD COMPETITION

For the second year in a row, **Classical High School** and **Central High School** finished in first and second place, respectively, in the Rhode Island State Council of the Arts (RISCA) Statewide Poetry Out Loud Competition. A total of 12 schools took part in the competition at The Greenwich Odeum. Special shout out to first place winner **Natasha Connolly of Classical**, who memorized and recited three poems. She will compete in the national competition in Washington, D.C. in April! She will also receive a traveling trophy to be displayed in Classical for one year, a \$200 award, a \$500 stipend to the school for the purchase of poetry books, and an all-expense paid trip to Washington, D.C. to compete in the national competition. Congratulations as well to runner-up **Jephte Pinthiere of Central**, who also memorized and recited three poems. Jephte will receive a \$100 award, as well as \$200 to the school for the purchase of poetry books. Great job and congratulations!



PCTA STUDENTS SHINE IN COMPETITION

Congratulations to **PCTA's Welding and Art** program for being selected as a State Winner in the 2022-2023 Samsung Solve for Tomorrow Contest! Each year, Samsung hosts a \$2 million national competition for public schools in grades 6-12 in which students are asked to consider how STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math) can be used to create change in their communities. Students in PCTA's Welding and Art CTE program will be competing against students from 49 other schools in the national competition. Special thanks to the students and staff who helped to make this possible. Congratulations to all involved, and good luck in the competition!



Editor's note: For this week's Staff Spotlight, we decided to do something a little different and hopefully fun. Fred, an 11-year-old Labrador retriever, has been faithfully coming to Central High School every Friday for five years with his guardian, Gina Vessella, LICSW. Ms. Vessella is also a School Social Worker at Central and a 14-year veteran of PPSD.

Fred is a certified therapy dog, and he and Ms. Vessella have gone through extensive training and credentialing through the Windwalker Professional Pet Assisted Therapy program. Dogs go through temperament testing and live training at a nursing home for both the guardian and the animal. Fred also has professional liability insurance.

According to the American Kennel Club, "therapy dogs provide relief to those in anxiety-provoking situations, bring comfort to those who are grieving or lonely, and offer affection to humans who are in institutions such as schools." So, we thought it would be fun to hear about Fred's job from his point of view, with a little help from his "mom," Ms. Vessella!

STAFF SPOTLIGHT

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

Fred the Therapy Dog

Located in: Central High School

Joined PPSD in: 2018

What made you want to be a therapy dog?

My love of people and good food is what peaked my interest in being a therapy dog at Central High School. I like to help people. My mom says it is hard work. I think it is the best work out there. My favorite day of the week is Friday when I am parking the lot. I cannot contain my excitement when we hit the visiting lot. Mom laughs at me. The students, who, let's face it, are pretty great, make the day even better. They work hard all week writing lots of things on paper and typing into machines. It seems to stress them out sometimes. I love to help calm them. I get to just stop by and say good job to all my friends. I mean, it, they really do hard work. My job is the best job in the world.

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

I like to say that I am an assistant to the assistant of the smartest people in the school. You see, if a kid is having a rough day and can't seem to catch a break, I kind of just nudge my nose into their hand for a pet. It is therapeutic for me to get the pets and it is therapeutic to my human friend. You see, the distraction away from the here and now is calming to them. I am not 100% certain as to how I make my magic but they tell me it works. That makes me proud. It gets me a treat here and there too.

What do you wish more people knew about being a therapy dog?

I do not want to let any other dogs know about it but your presence makes such a difference in a person's day. It is an important job and can be hard work. You see, people do not

know they need you around sometimes. They are sad, mad, angry, frustrated. All the emotions. They forget to stop and smell the roses. They do not see what good they did that day before that bad thing happened. I help them see the good. I help ease their anxiety.

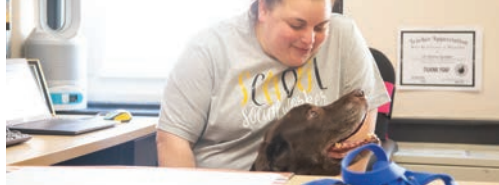
What have been some highlights this year so far?

Breakfast. The best part of the day is having breakfast with my friends. Sometimes they share. Oh and the other highlight, visiting my best friend. He lives in the guidance office. He has the best treats. He is always as excited to see me as I am to see him. It is a great feeling.

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

I always like to sniff out new tricks. Like yesterday, this nice guy gave me part of his cheese stick. That was delicious. All kidding aside, I look forward to helping more kids with mom. I am so proud of the work these kids are doing. On graduation, I get to see all my friends in one place before the ceremony. They wear these shiny goggles and funny hats but the energy is something else. They are happy. Happy is my favorite emotion. Their human friends are happy too. All and all, it is the BEST day of the year.

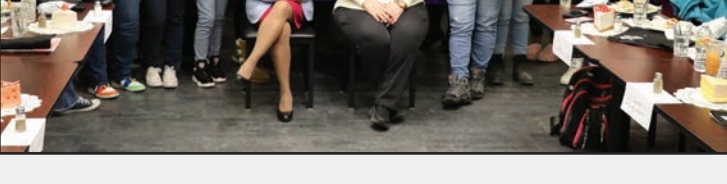
Do you know someone deserving recognition? We will be featuring seniors across the District until graduation. Please reach out to us at communications@ppsd.org and let us know why you think the student is pretty great.



IT'S GOOD NEWS: PPSD IN THE PRESS

- [Brown University offering Providence students pre-college program scholarships](#)
Providence Journal, February 22
- [Defense leads Juanita Sanchez to D1 girls basketball title](#)
WPRI, February 25
- [Providence technical academy celebrates future female trade workers](#)
WPRI, March 8
- [Hope High Honors Gloria Patterson In A Most Appropriate Tribute](#)
Yurview, March 13

AROUND THE DISTRICT



PCTA CELEBRATES FUTURE FEMALE TRADE WORKERS

PCTA celebrated the next generation of female trade workers last week, and even got featured on Channel 12! There are currently 14 junior and senior girls enrolled in the program. The young women were celebrated as part of **Women in Construction Week**, and were given the opportunity to explore what's next for them after high school including jobs, unions, and employment protections. Rhode Island Lieutenant Governor **Sabina Matos** was also in attendance, and she encouraged the students to pursue and follow their dreams.



HASHTAG LUNCHBAG LENDS A HELPING HAND

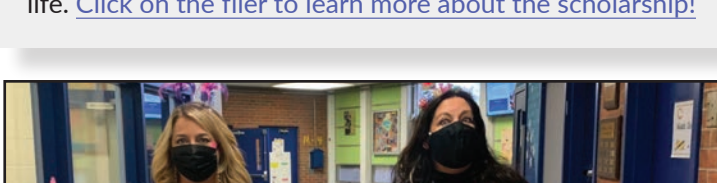
A big thank you to all the partners in the community who are helping to serve PPSD families by addressing food insecurity! This past weekend, dozens of partners including Mayor Smiley, the City of Providence Recreation Department, the Lambda XI Chapter of the Kappa Alpha Psi Fraternity, Sodexo, We Share Hope, the Providence Teachers Union, Brown University, Johnson and Wales University, Bryant University, and RISD gathered at Central High School to hand out care packages to our most needy as part of Hashtag Lunchbag. Your time and dedication is greatly appreciated!

Fogarty Elementary School closed off their winter ice skating season in style at the Providence rink at Kennedy Plaza. They have been doing this as an outdoor school team building event since last year.



TRANSFORM RI SCHOLARSHIP - EARN UP TO \$25,000

Students and families of PPSD have an opportunity to earn up to \$25,000 from the **Papitto Opportunity Connection (POC) scholarship program**, which gives a voice to young people of color in RI who have ideas on how to create community change. Students answer the question, "If you had a million dollars to better the lives of Rhode Island's people of color communities, how would you do it?" Students can answer in an essay of no more than 1,000 words, or with a 3-minute video/multimedia presentation. The top ten finalists win a one-time scholarship worth between \$5,000 and \$25,000 and POC invests \$1 million to make the top idea come to life. [Click on the flier to learn more about the scholarship!](#)



SOCIAL WORKER APPRECIATION WEEK

From Monday, March 6, through Friday, March 10, we celebrated **Social Worker Appreciation Week**. We want to take the opportunity to thank all of the amazing Social Workers we have here at PPSD. Thank you for all you do each and every day for thousands of students, families, staff, and administration. Check out some of the photos from **Mary Fogarty Elementary School**, as they celebrated their Social Worker, Mrs. Mattiucci, last week!

