



Mount Pleasant Food Pantry Ribbon Cutting

CONNECTIONS

SEPTEMBER 30, 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.

When I talk with students, families, educators, and community members about our [Turnaround Action Plan for Providence Public Schools](#), I try to remind them that it took several decades of neglect for the District to end up in a state intervention. And there is no one solution that is going to immediately create the school system we know our students deserve. It took time to get where we are, and it will take time to get where we're going.

We have to stack up small improvement after small improvement, and pretty soon we'll look back and see how far we've come. These past few weeks alone, we have stacked up several of those improvements. They may seem small on their own, but they will have a big impact for years to come. For example, our outstanding Human Resources team hosted a job fair at PCTA and managed to hire nearly 80 people in a single day for roles like substitute teachers, clerks, and teacher assistants.

I was also thrilled to host the first meeting of our new Superintendent's Teacher Cabinet. This diverse group of educators from all different grade levels, schools, and backgrounds will play a key role in making sure our teachers have the voice they deserve in PPSD. This week we also opened our District's second food pantry for students and their families at Mount Pleasant High School. Providing access to fresh and shelf-stable foods will ease the stress associated with food insecurity, so students can show up for school well-nourished and ready to learn.

Will any of these improvements turn around PPSD on their own? Of course not. But they are several more important steps forward that, over time, will stack up to make a big difference.



Dr. Javier Montañez, Superintendent, greets students on the first day of school.

DISTRICT UPDATES

Calling Community Partners

Attention community partners! Providence Public Schools is inviting community-based organizations to submit their qualifications to partner with the District in designing, planning, coordinating, and operating effective and high quality programs that support PPSD's goals. Does your group provide services like academic support, college and career training, mental health and social/emotional services, or recreation activities? Find out more on how you can partner with PPSD to support our students by [following this link](#). Proposals must be submitted by November 3rd at 1 p.m. Thank you!

Emergency Communications Reminder

Providence Public Schools is committed to keeping families informed if there is ever an emergency at a school. This summer, the District created an Emergency Communications Protocol (available on our [School Safety page in English and Spanish](#)) to create a shared set of expectations among families, students, and staff in the case of an emergency, so that everyone involved is able to stay informed and perform their duties more efficiently. All families should have received this information via Kinvo text message in late August prior to the start of school, along with a reminder message this week. Any parent who did not receive these messages should contact the main office at their child's school.

Monthly Early Dismissal for Professional Development

This is a friendly reminder that all schools will have their next monthly two-hour early dismissal on Wednesday, October 19, for teacher professional development. Middle school families should note that this is different than the regular Wednesday

dismissal time for middle school students. Middle schools will be dismissed at 12:40 p.m. on October 19 to allow 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.

Glenbridge Avenue Bridge Closure

Beginning at 9 p.m. on Friday, September 30, RIDOT will close the Glenbridge Avenue Bridge through Friday, October 7. This may affect the commute for families and staff at the following schools:

- » Anthony Carnevale Elementary School
- » DelSesto Middle School
- » Frank D. Spaziano Elementary School
- » George J. West Elementary School
- » Mount Pleasant High School
- » **flyer** provides information on detours in the area to navigate the closure. This flyer was sent to all families at affected schools via Kinvo text message this week, and hard copies are available in schools as well.

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RIPTA Reminders

High school families, a reminder that you can find details on any service disruptions to Rhode Island Public Transit Authority (RIPTA) bus routes at: <https://www.ripta.com/alerts/>. High school families can also now request WAVE cards from RIPTA by completing the [form located here](#). If you already filled out the form, you do not need to fill it out again.

EQUITY IN PROVIDENCE PUBLIC SCHOOLS

By Dr. Nkolika E. Onye, Chief of Equity and Belonging

One of the latest trends in education that will continue to have major impact on federal, state, and district policies, is equity in education. But, what is equity? How does it differ from equality? Can both coexist harmoniously, in education? What does this mean for our students? In general, when groups focus on equality, the goal is to ensure that everyone has the same rights, opportunities, and materials, supplies, and/or resources (Minnow, 2021). However, in education, when we focus solely on equality, we don't always address the specific needs of the student.

An equal approach may not be a good fit for a student who may be differently abled, new to the country, a multilingual learner and/or a refugee. This approach may not be enough to support students experiencing homelessness, poverty, poor or no healthcare, mental health challenges, family crises, and/or hunger (OECD, 2008). So, even if a school or district provides equal resources and opportunities to all students, some students may still struggle. This is why a focus on equity as well as equality, is crucial (NSHSS, 2021).

Schools and districts that also focus on equity, are committed to providing students with resources that fit their individual needs. Schools that prioritize equity have analyzed their school data thoroughly and understand their students' individual needs. Although difficult, the staff in these schools make conscious and strategic decisions and work to provide resources based on individual student needs, to help them overcome their specific challenges and excel (Gooden et al., 2021; Catapano, 2016).

A focus on equity can have a huge pay off for school communities. [Click here to read our latest bulletin](#) from the Office of Equity and Belonging to learn how equity impacts test scores, students' physical and social-emotional health, and school culture.

DR. NKOLIKA E. ONYE
Chief of Equity and Belonging

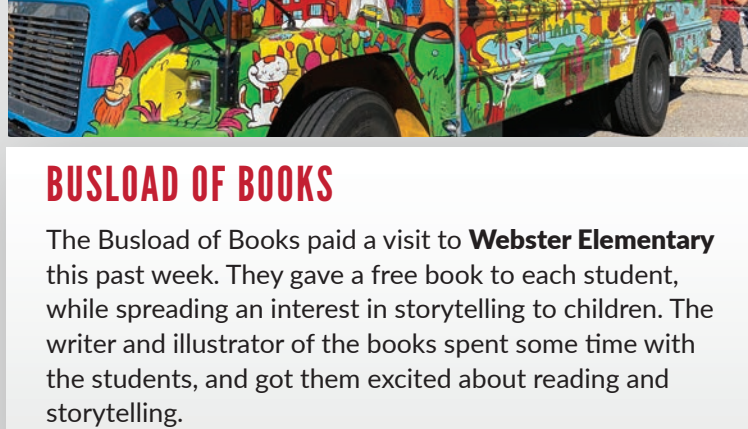
CELEBRATING STUDENTS

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



THE IMPORTANCE OF ATTENDANCE

Students at [Young Woods Elementary](#) got a visit from [New England Patriots cornerback Jalen Mills](#) last week, along with Patriots Cheerleaders and Pat the Patriot! Jalen talked with students about the importance of attendance in being successful, and many students even got to get on the microphone and ask Jalen their questions.



BUSLOAD OF BOOKS

The Busload of Books paid a visit to [Webster Elementary](#) this past week. They gave a free book to each student, while spreading an interest in storytelling to children. The writer and illustrator of the books spent some time with the students, and got them excited about reading and storytelling.



HAT DAY HIJINKS

Students made their school spirit look good on Hat Day at [Kizirian Elementary](#) last week! Dozens participated, showing off their style by wearing all different types of hats to school as part of a fundraiser put on by the elementary school.



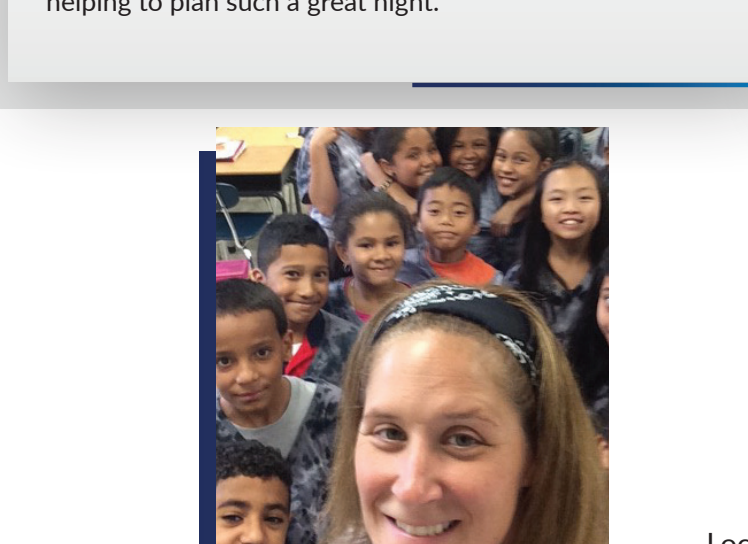
AWESOME OPEN HOUSE

So many [Fogarty](#) families came out to meet teachers and staff at the school's 2022 Open House. Students were excited to bring their parents to their classrooms and show them the activities they've been working on. Special thanks to Fogarty's new Family Engagement Chairs for helping to plan such a great night.



SPORTS-FILLED WEEKEND

It was a busy weekend for sports for [Central High School](#). Girls' tennis, boys' and girls' soccer, football, and e-sports all completed this weekend. Fall sports are off to a great start for the Knights, and we can't wait to see how the rest of their season goes!



Fifth grade can be a pivotal year for students. What's your approach to getting them ready for middle school?

I say to my kids every day to have to be an active participant in your own education. I can't follow them to middle school, high school, or college. So you try to help them be their own advocate. Your mission as a teacher is to make sure they all reach level so that they are ready for 6th grade. So you have to instill in them the importance of school. Is it hard some days? Absolutely. But it's worth it. Maybe I'm not going to change the world myself, but what if I can spark one kid to go out there who could change it? That's why we do what we do every day.

What's it like years later when you run into students you've helped?

I was dropping off library applications one day and a student I had, Godwin, was behind me. I turned around and he asked, 'do you remember me?' He was currently attending URI and he said he never forgot the importance of reading.

I also ran into a young lady at the store, and she asked, 'do you remember me?' She talked about how she was working and going to school and how she remembered that I told her she could break the cycle of bad things that were going on in her life at one point. I also had a former 5th grader who found me on Facebook, and she was in the pharmaceutical program at URI. They find a way to come back to you. When you're in it day in day out, you don't realize you're making the impact. It's when they come back or find you somehow. That's when that you know they were listening and want you to celebrate their success with them.

You were recently nominated for a National LifeChanger of the Year Award. What did that feel like?

It was a surprise! I was overwhelmed to find out that somebody took the time to nominate me and put the thought into writing up the entry. You don't do this job for the pat on the back. You do it because it makes your school and your community a

"Maybe I'm not going to change the world myself, but what if I can spark one kid to go out there who could change it? That's why we do what we do every day."

STAFF SPOTLIGHT

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

Donna Marcaccio
Fifth Grade Teacher

Located in: Lillian Feinstein Elementary at Sackett Street

Joined PPSD in: 2003

better place. It's nice to see that people notice those things that educators in our district are doing, going above and beyond. You don't come out of college ready to teach. You observe and learn, so I always made sure to thank everyone that I interacted with over the years. I learned and thrived because of all of them.

Your work at school goes beyond the classroom. What else are you involved in?

I seem to do a little bit of everything. A while back we didn't have a basketball coach and we weren't going to have a team. I hadn't coached basketball before, but I got some support and figured it out. This past year we won the championship! We have a garden club that I help run so kids are getting out in nature and seeing new things and learning about having sustainable food. I also put together the yearbook, which drives me bananas every year, but love to see the faces of the kids when they turn the pages to look back at all the memories that were captured. I try to attend every event we have at school, and also help out

at them. I also co-chair the safety patrol, where we have fifth graders get sworn in by the Providence Police. These patrollers help with the safety of our younger students. They get to school 15 minutes early and instill SHARK behaviors at their post during arrival and dismissal.

What are you looking forward to this year?

I'm excited to take these fifth graders on a field trip for the first time in a long time! There is so much learning that can be done outside of the classroom that kids have missed out on during COVID. When I told them about it the first day of school, they were so excited. And that gets me excited. We're going to go to Roger Williams Zoo, Kettle Pond and we're also trying to go to Save the Bay. How do you know we don't have the next marine biologist in front of us unless we spark that interest young? That interest could possibly carry them through middle and high school, so I can't wait!

IT'S GOOD NEWS: PPSD IN THE PRESS

- [Providence Public School District career fair fills 77 job openings](#)
WJAR, September 27
- [Pats' Jalen Mills visits Providence school, talks to students about importance of education](#)
ABC6, September 21
- [On the Job: Providence schools hiring various positions](#)
WPRI, September 12
- [Providence superintendent lays out top goals for school year](#)
WPRI, September 8

AROUND THE DISTRICT



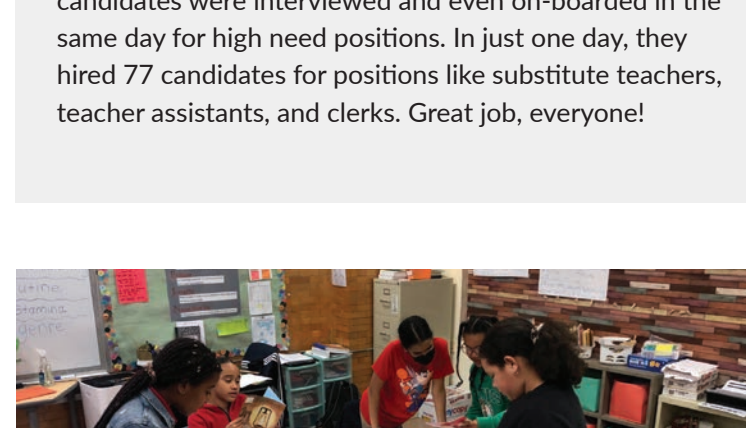
SUPERINTENDENT'S TEACHER CABINET

This week marked the very first meeting of the new **Superintendent's Teacher Cabinet**. Teachers from diverse schools, grade levels, subjects, and backgrounds will meet with Superintendent Dr. Javier Montañez each month to make sure their voices are heard and respected in Providence Schools. The cabinet was chosen from dozens of nominations made by PPSD teachers. Thank you to everyone who nominated a colleague and to the teachers serving on the cabinet!



A JOB FAIR WELL DONE

Kudos to the PPSD **Human Resources team** for hosting the largest and most successful job fair that the District has seen in years! This week, the team welcomed dozens of applicants to an event in the PCTA field house where candidates were interviewed and even on-boarded in the same day for high need positions. In just one day, they hired 77 candidates for positions like substitute teachers, teacher assistants, and clerks. Great job, everyone!



BOOK DONATION AT RESERVOIR AVE ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

Reservoir Avenue Elementary students got loads of new books last week, thanks to donations from Amazon and Reading is Fundamental. Students were very excited about all the books that were donated, and they can't wait to start reading them all! A big thank you to Amazon and Reading is Fundamental for your generosity.



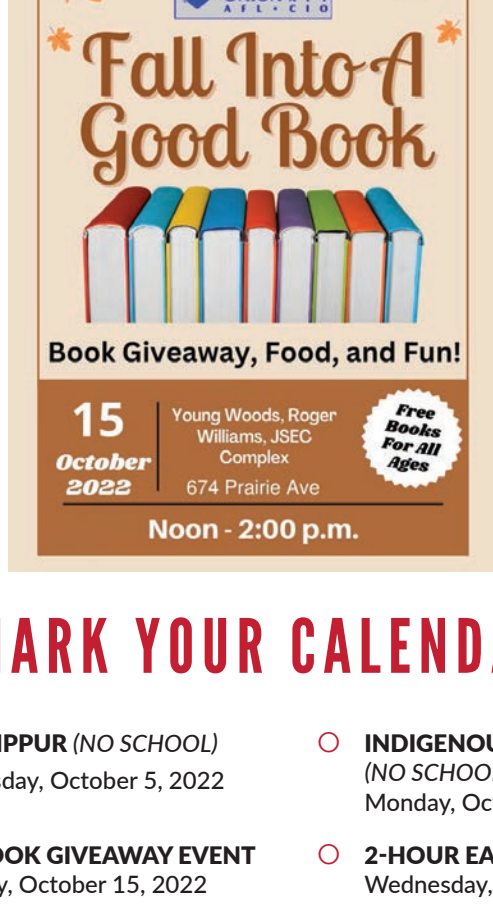
COLLEGE FAIR AT PCTA

Last week, 74 colleges and universities came to the Providence Career and Technical Academy to give 11th and 12th grade students at **PCTA, Classical, and Central High School** the opportunity to explore what each institution has to offer once they graduate. This was the first year PCTA collaborated with Classical and Central for the event.

"Starting early, you're a step forward; preparation is really important," said Central High School senior Angelica. "Having different colleges here is really good because people can make a list about what caught their attention."

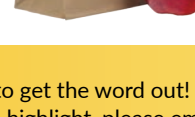
Daniel, a junior at Classical High School, said coming to the College Fair was very beneficial for him. "I'm a junior, so this is a good start for me. I'm interested in engineering, so I picked up a couple fliers and was able to see what different places had to offer."

"The opportunity is right in front of me," said PCTA seniors Viveonna and Yazmin. "Rather than communicating with them through email, you get to ask them questions face-to-face. It's a good opportunity to see what kinds of scholarships they have to offer, and if credits will transfer over for us, since we're taking some college-level courses. We're both interested in pastry arts, so we want to be able to go to a school with a strong program."



MARK YOUR CALENDARS!

- **YOM KIPPUR (NO SCHOOL)**
Wednesday, October 5, 2022
- **INDIGENOUS PEOPLES DAY (NO SCHOOL)**
Monday, October 10, 2022
- **PTU BOOK GIVEAWAY EVENT**
Saturday, October 15, 2022
- **2-HOUR EARLY DISMISSAL**
Wednesday, October 19, 2022



OCTOBER 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.