



Panther Pride News

Fall Issue



Principal's Message

Greetings,

We are off to a great start of the new school year! We are glad to have our students back in school and online to embark on such an incredible journey of fun and learning...We have missed them! Students have been busy engaged in academics and building new friendships. Our students are excited for learning and we are committed to making every effort to build on their positive energy as we progress through the school year.

Currently, teachers and staff are busy assessing students to identify strengths and areas where improvement is necessary. These assessments such as Measures of Academic Progress (MAP), Istation's monthly ISIP, and Running Records used for evaluating reading levels, will help target enrichment and gaps in learning to be strategically addressed through differentiation during core instruction and research-based interventions.

In the absence of school grades, we march on with our **C** grade from the previous year. Our audacious goal for the year is to have 55% of students at or above expectations in ELA, and 60% in Mathematics and Science.

Our belief and theme this school year is that we are **Stronger Together**, and we are truly stronger with you! If you need anything or have questions and/or concerns, please feel free to contact the school to receive assistance. We are here for you!

Educationally yours,

Principal Smith

Ponce de Leon Elementary School Vision:

We are dedicated to building a community of successful problem solvers who are prepared to be responsible citizens and celebrate diversity.

Ponce de Leon Elementary School Mission:

We are committed to:

- Develop tolerance in all students
- Provide a structured, safe learning environment
- Instill the belief that all students can learn
- Link standard-based instruction to real-world application
- Teach students to persevere when faced with challenges
- Ensure continuous learning for all.

Things to Know

need to know



Important Dates:

Friday, October 23rd: **END OF THE FIRST QUARTER**

Monday, October 26th, 2020: **NO SCHOOL**

Saturday, November 21st - Sunday, November 29th : **THANKSGIVING BREAK**

2020-21 School Improvement Plan Goals (SIP): Big Rocks!

Our 3 Major Areas of Focus:

1. **Standard-based Planning:** Intentional planning around the academic standards. Planning at the level of rigor of the standard, with engaging and rigorous tasks.
2. **Monitoring for Learning with Constructive Feedback – MWF:** What do students need to know, understand and be able to do? How will we know that they know? What’s the evidence?
3. **Conditions for Learning-** Continue to reinforce processes, routines and a culture that encourages collaboration, team talk, and valuing errors as a part of the learning process.

Guidelines for Success

- **Positive Relationships**
- **Responsibility**
- **Integrity**
- **Dedication to Safety**
- **Engagement in Learning**

Pinellas County Schools' Referendum benefits teachers and students

The Pinellas County Schools Referendum is up for renewal. The Referendum boosts reading, art and music programs, provides up-to-date technology and textbooks, and helps recruit and retain quality teachers. Voters have supported the Referendum every four years since its initial approval in 2004. An independent citizens' committee oversees Referendum spending to ensure money is spent as voters intended. Every penny of the funding benefits Pinellas teachers and students. For more information, please visit www.pcsb.org/referendum.

MASK AND SOCIAL DISTANCING

All students and staff will be required to wear a mask where social distancing is not possible. Masks will not need to be worn during recess and PE because students will be outside and can easily social distance. At the beginning of the school year, each student was provided with 5 reusable cloth (washable) masks. It would be a great idea to have your child's name written somewhere on the outside of the mask. We know wearing a mask is a challenge for some students, but with training and consistency, we hope it becomes a routine for our Panther students.

All classrooms, including Music and Art, as well as the cafeteria, have been arranged to maximize distance from one student to another. We have incorporated signage to help students and staff follow directional paths and to maintain a safe distance when walking in line, waiting for the restroom, waiting in the lunch line, and sitting at a cafeteria table.

CLEANING

We have developed a cleaning schedule that allows for daily cleaning/disinfecting of the school building/classrooms. Restrooms will be cleaned throughout the day and supplies will be provided in each classroom to allow for the cleaning of workspace.

UPDATING YOUR CONTACT INFORMATION

We kindly ask that you ensure that your correct contact information is on file in order to stay informed about what's occurring at school and in the district. You can receive phone calls, as well as opt in for emails and text messages. The school district needs accurate contact information to send phone calls and emails about emergencies or severe weather, school or district events, and special application opportunities. To update your phone and email address, visit <https://www.pcsb.org/contactinfo>. Once there, you will log into the reservation system with your parent username and password. If you do not have a parent ID or forgot yours, you can get help at any public school. Please be sure to present a valid photo ID.

VISITORS ON CAMPUS

For the first 9 weeks of school, we are not permitting any visitors on campus that do not have essential business for the operation of the school. Unfortunately, this means that we cannot allow parents to walk their child to class, visit for lunch, or volunteer. These policies will be revisited after the first nine weeks.

Art at Ponce





Two Ponce de Leon Elementary students were included in the Pinellas County 2020 Youth Art Month Show. Samantha Bay and Kamilah Hernandez-Hernandez, grade 2, had their work chosen for the show that took place last March. The theme of the show was *Movement*. Congratulations to these artists!

Cortez's Counseling Corner



Helping Children Cope with “Big Feelings”

Children can have the same “big feelings” that adults do. The difference for adults, though, is that we have more life experiences to know how to deal with difficult emotions. The simplest problems or fears that seem easily conquered for adults, may be difficult for children to understand and act on appropriately. Therefore, when our children feel anger, fear, anxiety, or other strong emotions, they need our help to learn how to cope. Our school counselor is available to help address these needs at school, however caregivers can have a huge influence by teaching and modeling these skills at home. The following information can help you do just that!

Start by naming the feeling(s) Help your child figure out which feeling they are having or were having. Just like learning to read or solving a math problem, children need to practice putting words to their feelings. Putting a name to it can help validate their experience. Having a feelings visual (easily found online) or reading children’s books about feelings can be helpful to identify their own feeling.

Normalize the feeling(s) It can be confusing for a child whose feelings take over and lead to behaviors they may not usually have. It is not helpful to tell a child to, “stop, being angry” or “don’t worry about it”. Explain that all people have these feelings sometimes, and we all must learn how to manage them.

Talk about the brain Our brains and our bodies are connected, and our brains send out signals when we experience certain “big feelings.” Explain that we have a part of our brain (thinking brain) that’s in charge of making decisions, thinking things through, and managing our emotions. Explain that another part of our brain (emotional brain) oversees important functions like breathing, digesting food, and manages big feelings like anger or anxiety; this part of our brain also reacts to any threats, and can make us feel like we need to run (flight), fight back, or freeze. Sometimes this part of our brain overreacts, and

we need to try strategies to calm it down. If you would like resources on helpful strategies please contact Mrs. Cortez- School Counselor.

Practice self-regulation skills When children are calm, their thinking brain is on, and this is the best time to come up with a plan for when their emotional brain tries to take over. Encourage taking a break (not a timeout), deep breathing, releasing angry energy by exercising, and relaxation strategies such as progressive muscle relaxation, coloring, calm down jars, music, etc. Practice these repeatedly when they are calm. Helping your child begin to recognize their body's early signs of a big feeling (heart racing, clenched jaw, etc.) can help them learn when to employ their self-regulation skills.

Information adapted from: TheSchoolCounselorKind.wordpress.com

PTA NEWS



Welcome, Panther family, to a new school year. The beginning of each academic year always brings unique challenges and opportunities and, as all of us are keenly aware, this year more so than ever. Thank you, parents, for your flexibility and engagement as we face these together. The key to success is our ability to communicate and work together. Your PTA is eager to play a vital role in making this year a positive experience for Ponce's students, parents and dedicated staff. Please look for our various communications throughout the year and also plan on participating in our monthly meetings. Your involvement is paramount. The PTA starts with parents.

We also extend a warm welcome to Ponce's new Principal, Mr. Antonio Smith, and look forward to working with him for the academic enhancement of each of our students.

Go Panthers!

Travis Moore

PTA President 2020-2021

Meeting Dates:

October 12th 2020, 6:00 PM

November 9th 2020, 6:00 PM

Dec 7th 2020. 6:00 PM

P is for Positive



Hi Ponce Parents!

Welcome to an exciting new school year! At Ponce, we focus on a school wide Positive Behavior Intervention System (PBIS) to encourage our scholars to follow important school wide expectations. We have PRIDE, which stands for Positive relationships, Responsibility, Integrity, Dedication to Safety, and Engagement in learning. Our scholars are taught daily what it means to have Panther PRIDE, and are rewarded using a token system in their classrooms. These points, or tokens, can then be traded in for fun prizes, as a reward for their hard work. We are excited to work with our parents on teaching our scholars what each area of PRIDE looks like and sounds like, in each area of the school. Please continue to ask your students what they did to show PRIDE each day, and keep an eye out for positive behavior referrals to come home from your child's teacher!

Ms. Pezzo

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IMPORTANT....If your child is not feeling well, please keep them home.

We ask that you sincerely commit to doing this to help keep our students and staff healthy. All staff will complete a self-screening tool to affirm their wellness each day before entering our school building.

If a student gets sick during the school day, our nurse will assess the child and consult with the parent/guardian. If a student exhibits illness beyond the normal stomach ache or "boo-boo", we will

request that you pick your child up. I strongly encourage you to make back-up plans for pick up. Please provide the front office with several people for us to contact on your behalf.

Students who exhibit Covid-19 symptoms will be isolated in a designated area in our administration building until you arrive to pick them up. Pinellas County Schools has established a COVID-19 team that will work closely with the Pinellas County Health Department to assist schools with making Covid-19 health decisions.

Family & Community



TITLE I ANNUAL PARENT MEETING

Our virtual Title I Annual Parent Meeting was held on Wednesday, August 19, 2020. If you would like more information about our Title I Annual Parent Meeting, you can find the presentation on our school's website.

WE NEED YOU

Ponce de Leon Elementary belongs to the Clearwater community. Your involvement is critical to the success of our students and school. Are you in to do your part? Here's how you can help...

- Become a member of our School Advisory Council (SAC) which meets on the 2nd Monday of each month for 30 minutes. Joining the SAC committee gives you a voice in our school. You can participate in decision-making or provide input regarding budgets, curriculum, school data, family involvement, resources and so much more. SAC meetings will be virtual due the pandemic. The next SAC meeting will be held on **Monday, October 5th from 3:30 PM-6:00 PM**. Please contact Tricia Wheeldon at wheeldont@pcsb.org if you are interested in joining SAC.
- Consider becoming a member of the PTA which meets on the 2nd Monday of each month following the SAC meeting. PTA meetings are held virtually for 30 minutes. The cost of the membership is \$5.00 for the year. Your involvement and input helps our students and strengthen our school. The next PTA meeting will be held on **Monday, October 12th, from 6:00 PM-6:30 PM. As an incentive for attending a PTA meeting, your child will be invited to our Popsicle with Principals' event that occurs on the Friday following the PTA meeting!** Please contact Dawn Coleman at colemand@pcsb.org or wheeldont@pcsb.org if you are interested in joining PTA.

How to be a volunteer?

Step 1. Register at www.pcsb.org/volunteerregistration

Step 2. Contact Tricia Wheeldon at wheeldont@pcsb.org or 727-588-3573 ext 2316

Step 3. Have Fun & Welcome to the Panther family

A big "Thank You!" to all of our Community & Business Partners for the donations to help us get ready for the 2020-2021 school year. We are truly blessed to be apart of such an amazing community and we can't relay enough how much we appreciate your support. **#strongertogether**



Thank you so much!

Publix at LaBelle Plaza

St. Paul United Methodist Church

Peace Memorial Presbyterian Church

Backpack Lady

Ms. Laura

Dixon Family

Costco of Clearwater

Congratulations to Adrian. H for winning the Myon Summer Challenge.



CONGRATULATIONS!