

TOGETHER PCS

KEEPING PACE WITH PINELLAS COUNTY SCHOOLS

Welcome to TogetherPCS, the district's monthly newsletter, featuring students, staff, alumni, coaches, curriculum, community partners, and so much more!

In this issue, we celebrate a mentor/mentee relationship rekindled 20 years after they were first paired at Lakewood High School. We also speak with Countryside High School alum Dr. Stephanie Sarkis, a best-selling author, licensed mental health counselor, and ADHD expert. And we meet a College and Career Coordinator from Clearwater High School who has recently earned two professional learning certificates and will be the keynote speaker at an upcoming district celebration.

Know someone who should be featured in TogetherPCS? Please click the "Nominate Here" button below. Let's do this TOGETHER!

[NOMINATE HERE](#)



On Oct. 2, Pinellas County Schools celebrated the official opening of the Dr. Michael A. Grego Leadership Institute with a ceremony and ribbon cutting. The event featured speeches from Superintendent Hendrick, School Board Chair Laura Hine, School Board Vice Chairperson Caprice Edmonds, Rowe Architects, Skanska, and Dr. Grego.

[Read full story and watch video here](#)

WHAT'S INSIDE



**District Application Program
(DAP) Application Period:**
Jan. 6-16, 2026
[Learn More](#)



Magnet, Fundamental, and

Career program events:

All-County DAP Fair

Oct. 25, 2025: 9-11:30 a.m. at
Pinellas Park High

South County DAP Fair

Oct. 29, 2025: 6-7:30 p.m. at
Boca Ciega High

North County DAP Fair

Nov. 5, 2025: 6-7:30 p.m. at
Countryside High

Oct. 7, 2025 - Jan. 16, 2026
DAP Discovery Nights

January 5, 2026: 5:30 p.m.
How to Apply for a District
Application Program
YouTube Live Event

[Learn More](#)

Jessica Carson plays Uno with her mentee at Ridgecrest Elementary School. Carson was part of the Doorways program while she attended Lakewood High School and says she graduated because of her mentor.

Former mentee has full-circle moment after becoming a mentor

It's been 20 years since Patricia Peak, homemade Chex Mix in hand, would show up for her weekly mentoring sessions with Jessica Carson in the Lakewood High School auditorium.

Today, Carson says without hesitation: she wouldn't be where she is now without those conversations.

"I didn't really have any adults in my life at that time," said Carson, who is now a mother of four and has a successful career in oncology. "Patricia just gave me that little sprinkle of hope that I needed to get through everything and go on to graduate."

The two were initially paired together as part of the Doorways scholarship program, now called Take Stock in Children. To earn a scholarship, the student must meet with his or her mentor consistently throughout middle and high school.

[Watch the video and read the full article](#)

ACHIEVE TOGETHER

ALUMNI SPOTLIGHT



Stephanie Sarkis graduated from Countryside High School in 1991 and has enjoyed a successful psychiatry career.

While many remember high school for its final exams, pep rallies, early mornings and unique cafeteria meals, Dr. Stephanie Sarkis remembers the moments that inspired her to pursue a career in mental health.

Sarkis, a 1991 graduate of Countryside High School, psychotherapist, and best-selling author, credits much of her success to the strong educational foundation and supportive relationships she built during high school. Now an internationally recognized expert in ADHD, gaslighting, and toxic relationships, Sarkis can fully appreciate her foundation.

[Read the full article](#)



Are You a PCS Alumni?

We would love to hear what you've been up to! Share updates about family, career and life using the link below - you could be featured in TogetherPCS!

Submit your update to be featured



Andrea Ewing-Watson: A Journey of Growth, Grit, and Giving Back

For Andrea Ewing-Watson, growth isn't just professional — it's personal.



2025-26 FAFSA is open

Need Money for College or Career School?

We encourage all our students to complete the Free Application for Federal Student Aid, or FAFSA. This application can help unlock free money from grants and scholarships, work-study

As College and Career Coordinator at Clearwater High School, Ewing-Watson brings compassion, leadership, and a deep understanding of perseverance to her role, which was shaped by her own life journey.

"I spent several years in a group home in Connecticut," she said. "I didn't have the parental support that many others take for granted."

Read the full article

(earned) funds and low-rate loans.

Which FAFSA Application do you need?

Students planning to start college or career school in fall 2026 should complete the 2026-2027 FAFSA. Those who plan to start college in the summer term 2026 may also need to fill out the 2025-2026 FAFSA. The FAFSA you complete is for the academic year you are seeking funds.

Get all the information



Wednesday was #NationalWalkToSchoolDay, and San Jose Elementary went all out! Students were joined by Dunedin Mayor Freaney, Superintendent Hendrick, DJay from the Dunedin Blue Jays and Dunedin Fire and Police departments. This event emphasizes the importance of safe, walkable routes to school and encourages children to be more active. Thank you to the staff and community who joined our students in getting to school safely!



The Superintendent Says...

"At Pinellas County Schools, we are excited to offer nearly 100 educational opportunities to meet your child's specific interests and your family's needs. From neighborhood schools to **District Application Programs** and Career Academies, the possibilities will help "unlock potential." We can't wait to see you soon at one of our upcoming informational events!"



To help spread the word, please forward this newsletter to community members who are interested in public education. Sign up by clicking the button below.

SIGN UP HERE



VISION: 100% STUDENT SUCCESS

MISSION: EDUCATE AND PREPARE EACH STUDENT FOR COLLEGE, CAREER AND LIFE

PCS Compliance Statement