



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 get to know 2024 Olympian, East Lake High School graduate and professional runner Parker Valby. We also learn more about our Student Leadership Summits through the eyes of Journeys in Journalism students who helped cover the four-day event started by Mr. Hendrick three years ago. And we meet student-athlete Nijuan Harris, who averages almost 30 points per game and as a freshman guard, is one of the highest ranked basketball players in the nation.

If you know someone who should be featured in TogetherPCS, please click the "Nominate Here" button below. Let's do this TOGETHER!!

[NOMINATE HERE](#)



Dennis Zuercher is the 2025 PCS Teacher of the Year

A third-generation educator and teacher for more than 30 years, Mr. Zuercher is a social studies teacher at Gibbs High School. In addition to his courseload, Mr. Zuercher is the head of the school's social studies department, runs the school's history museum, and is the National Honor Society sponsor. He arrives at school at 5:40 a.m. daily to ensure adequate preparation and even facilitates Exceptional Student Education book studies to ensure he and his colleagues meet the needs of students with exceptionalities. Congratulations Mr. Zuercher!

WHAT'S INSIDE



Feb. 12-21, 2025
DAP Acceptance period.



Nijuan Harris averages almost 30 points per game as a freshman.

Nijuan Harris dominates the district

Nijuan Harris may be just a freshman, but with an average of almost 30 points per game and multiple Division 1 offers already on the table, he is anything but *JUST* a freshman.

Harris has taken the Pinellas County basketball community by storm this season. Standing 6'5" at 15 years old, this 215-pound guard can do it all. He shoots from the outside, he battles in the paint and he is always one of the toughest defenders on the court.

Read the full article and watch the video

"I just have to be the person I am and play the game I can play."



For questions about the Application Process, contact the Student Assignment Office at **StudentAssignment@pcsb.org** or by phone at 727.588.6210.

Feb. 19, 2025 - March 7, 2025
Summer Camp application period
[pcsb.org/summercamps](https://www.pcsb.org/summercamps)

Feb. 28, 2025
Superintendent's Academic Challenge
Conference Hall

March 1, 2025
Pinellas History Day
Largo High School

March 17-21, 2025
Spring Break for Students



If your child will be 5 years old on or before Sept. 1, 2025, it's time to get ready for kindergarten. Kindergarten enrollment is open now and is easy with Pinellas County Schools! Follow the three simple steps below:

- Get a PCS user ID and password (Focus Parent Portal Account).
- Reserve a seat.
- Complete enrollment at your child's school.

For information, contact your school or call the Early Childhood Education office at 727-588-6513. Get more details by visiting **<https://www.pcsb.org/kg>**

ACHIEVE TOGETHER

ALUMNI SPOTLIGHT

From the moment Parker Valby entered high school, she had it all figured out.

She would play varsity lacrosse for four years and then attend the University of Florida on a lacrosse scholarship.

She ended up being right about one of the two.

After graduating from East Lake High School in 2020, Parker went on to attend UF, however, over the course of her high school career, she had morphed into a track star rather than a lacrosse standout.



Parker Valby, a 2020 graduate of East Lake High School, ran in the Paris Olympics last summer and made her professional debut on Feb. 3, 2025.

[Read the full article and watch the video](#)



Are You a PCS Alumni?

What are you up to now? Use the link below to update Pinellas County Schools on family, career and life for a chance to be featured in



TogetherPCS! Tell us more here.



Thank you to all of our schools and programs that participated in the 38th Annual MLK Dream Big Parade through downtown St. Petersburg as well as the City of Tarpon Springs MLK Parade last month:



- 5,000 Role Models
- Boca Ciega High band, basketball and football teams and JROTC
- Fitzgerald Middle dance and cheer team
- Girlfriends
- Gibbs High band
- Lakewood High band
- Northeast High band
- Osceola High band
- School Board vice-chair Caprice Edmond
- St. Pete High band
- Transportation department





Park Allen finishes fourth in Regional Spelling Bee

When Kristine Allen found out her son Park would be competing in the regional spelling bee with a chance to go to nationals, she hoped for one thing - that he would make it past the first round.

"I was very proud, and I was surprised as well because I didn't think I would make it past the school stage," said Park, who is a seventh grader at East Lake Middle School. "It was definitely stressful, but I was excited."

The 2025 Regional Spelling Bee, sponsored by the Rays and Rowdies Foundation, took place on Saturday, Feb. 8 at the Lealman Exchange. Pinellas County Schools had a total of 18 participants in elementary and middle school who won their school-based bees to advance to the regional competition.

Read the full article



Applications for Pinellas County Schools Summer Camps will open in mid-February. Families can choose from more than 50 summer camp offerings, ranging from STEM to the arts to fitness activities. The district is expanding camp opportunities and providing options in June and July. This year, camps will have a cost of \$75 per session and a rate of \$25 per session for students eligible for free- or reduced-price meals.

Due to changes to this year's Summer Bridge program, summer camps may be an appealing opportunity for more families. Elementary Summer Bridge will be for students who have demonstrated a need for extra support in reading based on state reading criteria. Middle School Summer Bridge will focus on credit recovery. Schools will be reaching out to parents whose children are eligible in the coming weeks. Registration for Summer Bridge will begin after spring break.



Third annual summits engage student leaders

Superintendent Hendrick hosted the third annual Student Leadership Summits Jan. 29-Feb. 3 on the University of South Florida St. Petersburg campus. Students at all levels learned about strong and effective leadership and had opportunities to share their ideas as well as develop leadership and advocacy skills through breakout sessions and activities.



This year, student journalists in the Journeys in Journalism programs at Melrose Elementary, John Hopkins Middle and Lakewood High schools covered the events and produced both print and multimedia stories.

Watch the PCS multimedia story

Watch the Melrose video produced by Reginae



Curry, 5th grade, and Mikalya Hubbard, 4th grade.

Read the John Hopkins story and watch the video written by Emma Payne and produced by Emma Payne, Liam Payne, and Maily Nguyen.

Watch the Lakewood story produced by Myles Sayles, videographer, Carlson Gooding anchor, Savannah Ruckdeshel, manager, and Nyla Snead, photographer.

The Superintendent Says...

"One of the qualities that makes Mr. Zuercher a standout teacher is his ability to see immense potential in every student. He inspires his students to strive for excellence and does whatever it takes to help them learn the skills they need to solve real-world problems and navigate life. This is a priority for him because he believes every child is worth that commitment. Mr. Zuercher represents thousands of teachers across our district who make it their life's mission to meaningfully contribute to the academic success and general well-being of our students."



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](#)