PONTIAC SCHOOL DISTRICT NEWS

FALL 2021



WELCOME BACK!



PATHS TO SUCCESS

Pontiac School District is paving the way for career opportunities for students thanks to the expansion of our NAF Career Pathways programs.

Career Pathways gives high schools students across the district real world education and workplace experience that will prepare them to head into exciting and popular fields of employment after school. We have already seen wonderful success with our programs designed to help train future Manufacturing Assistants, Patient Care Technicians and Certified Nursing Assistants.

These programs allow students to explore the possibilities of a career in these fields, while still in school and give them a head start. Pontiac School District Superintendent Kelley Williams says of the program, "Providing our students with opportunities to explore and work within their chosen field, while still in high school, puts them in the driver's seat for success upon graduation." We were honored to receive a \$1.4 million grant from the Ballmer Group last spring to expand our Pathways offerings onsite at Pontiac High School. The grant, distributed to the district over three years, will make it possible for schools to build comprehensive programs to train students for additional industries. This school



year we will be offering information technology and manufacturing engineering pathways. Starting in the 2022-2023 school year, students will be able to join programs focused on biomedical science and business.

"Education coupled with opportunity is at the heart of improving economic mobility, and workforce development programs pave the way for young people to have a seamless pathway from school into a career by learning industry specific skills for in-demand job opportunities," said Kylee Mitchell Wells, Executive Director, Ballmer Group – Southeast Michigan. "We are thrilled that high school students in Pontiac will graduate prepared for careers with local employers."

We are excited to see the amazing things our students do in the world in their chosen fields!

HOMECOMING





This year, Homecoming will look a little different. The celebration will be spread across the whole city and will last for a whole week!

The Pontiac Central, Pontiac Northern and Pontiac High alumni are all invited to join together for the first annual 'Come Home' gathering, celebrating all three schools and the achievements of their alumni. The Pontiac Collective Impact Organization together with fellow community leaders have put together a week of festivities you won't want to miss.

The celebration will begin on Sunday, October 3rd, with a prayer and memorial service, to pray for our teachers, school administrators and students. At the same time, we will also pause to remember those alumni who have passed on.

Monday, October 4th, we'll put your Pontiac memories to the test with the 'In the City' scavenger hunt. Gather your team and download the clues from www.pontiaccollectiveimpact.org. (The submission deadline is 8pm.)

Tuesday, everyone is invited to tune in on-line for

a showcase of new and existing opportunities in the Oakland Historical Society, live on Facebook.

Wednesday, October 6th, head down memory lane on Facebook, where you can share your stories and photos of your school days with fellow alumni and family. On Wednesday, you'll also be able to tour the Pontiac Transportation Museum from 5-7pm. (The museum is located at 250 W. Pike St, Pontiac, MI)

On Thursday, we're celebrating "Throw Back Thursday" Pontiac style, inviting you to take a tour of some of the city's most iconic locations and learn some of the city's history at the Governor Wisner House. (The Wisner House is at 405 Cesar E Chavez Ave, Pontiac, MI and is open from 11am-3pm.)

And on Friday, October 8th, represent your school as we invite all alumni from Pontiac Central, Pontiac Northern and Pontiac High to don their school colors and join together for the grand opening of Pontiac High's new football field.

Tailgating will start at 4pm with the ribbon cutting for the new Pontiac High School Athletics Field scheduled for 5:45pm.

This year's celebration is designed to bring together all alumni to recognize their school's history and reunite with former classmates. And, of course, to cheer on the football team to victory.

For more information visit:

www.pontiaccollectiveimpact.org

Go Phoenix!



Greetings

Welcome Back!

We are so excited to welcome everyone back for the 2021-2022 school year. Seeing students and staff reunited and welcoming our newest Phoenixes is such an exciting time. Not even the ongoing pandemic and frequently

rainy weather can dampen the excitement of the new year.

There are so many wonderful things happening in our district and I am excited to watch our students experience new opportunities for learning from Career Pathways to wellness to exciting added curriculum and so much more. Our partners continue to offer us amazing opportunities and resources for our students including our new attendance incentive from Joe Lunghamer Chevrolet. More details on this can be found in this newsletter.

The work on our bond projects is in full force and progress is coming along. In the very near future, you will begin to see many of these projects come to life and be ready for our students, staff, and community.

We know there are still challenges in our midst, but just as you always do, the PSD community shows up and shows out to rally together for the good of our kids.





Greetings Phoenix Nation, My hope is that you had a great summer and that you took full advantage of your time off. As we start the new school year, I'm excited about all the great things that are happening around the school district.

Pontiac Schools' career pathways are one of the ways to ensure our students are ready for today's workforce and growing industries. Pontiac Schools' career pathways will prepare students to meet the high demand for highly trained and certified skilled workers.

The Board of Education was elated to approve the new Career Pathways Curriculum. This curriculum will provide courses that will lead to high-paying jobs. These Career Pathways will provide local businesses with employees that have the skills and training needed.

By the end of the 2023 school year, we will have implemented Biomedical Sciences, Hospitality and Tourism, Education and Social Services, Information Technology, and a Business Department that will be NAF Certified. Providing a strong curriculum relative to today's workforce is essential to the success of our students.

from Superintendent Williams

We will continue to do everything in our power to keep our students, staff, and community safe and healthy. We remain in contact with the Oakland County Health Division regarding proper safety protocols.

The national transportation driver shortage has caused a wave of issues for districts across the country. We know this has been difficult for many families in getting our students to school. We continue to work diligently with our transportation partner to find solutions and are pleased to see that with each passing day the issues begin to lessen. We are grateful to our parents and neighbors who have worked together to help ensure our students make it to school during this time. That is exactly what our community is made of, and we are proud!

Speaking of Pontiac Pride, we are excited to celebrate a Homecoming like we've never seen! Honoring the legacies of Pontiac Central, Pontiac Northern and Pontiac High, the Pontiac Collective Impact and fellow community leaders have a week of events you won't want to miss. It all culminates with the big game and ribbon cutting of our new stadium on October 8. I can't wait to see you all there!

There's no place like Pontiac and no matter what comes our way we will continue to rise together! Let's make it a great year.

Kelley Williams, Superintendent

from President Garrett

The Career Pathways support the board's goals of successful teaching and learning and strong community relations. Our students deserve to have the opportunity to compete at any level they choose and having a solid education is the foundation for them to do just that!

I'm also excited to announce the continuation of the President's Corner show. This show will air on the PSD cable network. The show will give community members and board members an uplifting space to discuss relative community issues surrounding the PSD community. You will be introduced to some great men and women who engage and support our staff and students and have dedicated their resources to the success of our school district. Stay tuned for more information on the first season of the President's Corner.

I would like to end my message by thanking everyone who has contributed to the resurgence of the Pontiac School District. The community is the foundation of the Pontiac School District. I look forward to a successful school year and the opportunities that will follow. I appreciate the opportunity to serve alongside some great trustees and I ensure you that we, the trustees of the Pontiac School District, are committed to the vision, goals, and core values of the Pontiac School District

Gill Garrett, President, Pontiac School Board

Board of Trustees

Vice President Kenyada Bowman Treasurer Caroll Turpin Secretary Michael McGuinness **Trustee** William Carrington **Trustee** Kevin Gross **Trustee** ShaQuana Davis-Smith

President Gill Garrett

MEET THE PRINCIPAL

Carlita Earl, Herrington Elementary

The newest principal to join the Pontiac School District Family joins us from Detroit Public Schools Community District. Principal Earl brings a wealth of experience in educational leadership ranging from instructional coach to assistant principal as well as 12 years of teaching at the elementary school level.

She continues to advance her own education and is currently a PhD candidate of Educational Leadership and Policy Studies from Wayne State University.

Principal Earl looks forward to working with the many talented teachers and students at Herrington. Her goal is to provide a supportive climate and culture that is conducive to teaching and learning so that each individual can experience growth to their highest potential.

Welcome Principal Earl! We're excited to have you here!





Come to Class to Win Some Cash PSD Students! Our partner, Joe Lunghamer Chevrolet, is giving away 10 \$1,000 prizes to Pontiac School District students who have exceptional attendance for the 2021-2022 school year.

All Pontiac School District students are eligible. All you need to do is show perfect attendance each semester (this means no more than 5 excused absences and no unexcused absences) and you are entered to win. Students receive one entry into the drawing for each semester they meet the criteria.

Joe Lunghamer Chevrolet has celebrated our students' commitment to their education for several years through its Strive and Drive program. This year they're taking it up a notch by offering more opportunities for students to be rewarded.

The winners will be drawn and announced at our 2022-2023 Back to School Rally in August 2022.

If you have questions or need additional information, contact student.services@pontiacschools.org

STUDENT SPOTLIGHT

Honoring Hispanic Heritage Through Art

The exquisite art pieces you see on these pages are the work of Pontiac School District students. These students were honored for their creativity and homage to Hispanic Heritage in the Hispanic Heritage K-12 Art Contest.

Students had the opportunity to work with celebrated Chicano visual artist and illustrator Tony Ortega to find inspiration for their visual expressions.

The contest was facilitated by Oakland Schools and yielded four winners and four honorable mentions for our talented students.

We are so proud of all of the many talented artists

in our district and love seeing their creative spirits soar. Honoring the beautifully diverse cultural makeup of our district is also something we, as a district, are always proud to celebrate.

A special thank you to Mrs. Nieske, Mr. Vandermark, Mrs. Bowen, and Mrs. LaSala for their work with our students on this project.

A pop-up gallery of the original winning pieces was on display in the administration building this summer. We are excited to be able to share photos of them here with you.

K-5 Winning Submission: Owen Elementary Zenari Dunn & Sophia

This art piece is about a human who was born, and when she got older she passed away and turned into a skeleton. She is half of a person, because later, she is a skeleton and you can see her bones. The movie Coco inspired us. When he played the guitar in the movie, he went to the skeleton world and saw people turn into skeletons. That's what made us draw this picture.



Zenari Dunn & Sophia, Owen Elementary Students





PHS Winning Submission SelinaTiscareno-Campos

My artwork represents my culture and religion. Mr.Ortega challenged me to think differently about creating art. The art that he created opened a door for me to explore, and because of that, I opened a door that tells a story through art.

Art is a way I use to express myself, and a big part of my art comes from my culture and religion. One of

Honoring Hispanic Heritage Through Art

the pieces of art was "La Virgen De Guadalupe," In my religion, we believe that she is the mother of Jesus. In my family and in Mexico, our religion is Catholicism. I enjoyed drawing and giving my own artistic touch to "La Virgen De Guadalupe." The second drawing was based on my culture which is very important to me. Las Calaveras represents El Dia de los Muertos (the Day of the Dead), which is a very popular holiday celebrated in Mexico. Both of these paintings gave me a chance to show a little about my culture, my religion, and where I come from.

Selina Tiscareno-Campos, Pontiac High School student

ITA Winning Submission:

Betsy Becerra-Alvarado

When the theme "Be proud of your past and embrace your future" was introduced, I immediately thought of my family. This drawing is of my cousins and I, with my grandparents and uncle, at a local park. My uncle and grandpa would always play songs for us. In a way, I embraced my past and future. Tony Ortega's work was an influence in my work. He had skeletons dancing and children gathering while someone was storytelling. It influenced me to have my grandpa and uncle play music while we watched, because it was something that they would always do when our family got together.



Betsy Becerra-Alvarado, ITA student



For this project, I drew myself in a field. Around me are memories that still connect with me today, of things I grew up with. This artwork shows that I can use the style

ITA Winning Submission: Jennifer Lopez-Martinez

of impressionism and create within a theme to be proud of my past and embrace my future.

First, I thought of a good memory I had as a child. I looked up images of a girl going through a field, and started from there. I thought about my Mexican culture and began to sketch those memories along with the girl in the field. The materials I used were rough sketch paper, pencil, black paper for final draft, pen, white colored pencil, and pastels. I used impressionism to capture moments in time from my memories. I also added colors for light and shadow. This artwork means a lot to me because I grew up in a Mexican household and it shows cultural memories that have influenced my identity.

Jennifer Lopez-Martinez, ITA Student

ITA Honorable Mention

Wei Wei Hang

This project was about my cultural heritage. I wasn't really taught about mine, but this was the one thing we did as a family growing up. This picture is of my dad at the cemetery, burning paper boats and giving food to his parents. When I started brainstorming about this, I knew exactly how I wanted it to look: the perspective, the boats acting as the ashes that flew, and how my grandma was there to get the money. The only problem was that I had never used oil pastels or worked in an impressionist style.

Since this is really the only cultural thing that I did when I was younger, I'm very fond of it. This is something I would like to do for my parents when they die. My dad told me he had to make 50 boats for each parent, so he had us help him. I don't know if that's just how it's supposed to be, but 50 boats is a lot to do by yourself either way. Then when we burn



the paper boats, it turns into money in the sky. I've looked it up and others burn it either for luck or their ancestors.

Wei Wei Hang, ITA student



ITA Honorable Mention Alejandro Esparza-Villareal

When we talked about cultural heritage and identity and looked at the artwork of Tony Ortega in art class, it reminded me of when I went to Mexico to visit my grandma. I drew a picture of a pueblo in Mexico with oil pastels. I was inspired by my grandma's neighborhood, so I researched some pueblos and landscapes. Then I brainstormed other symbols that would represent Mexico. I never used oil pastels before, but I liked how I could blend colors together using a napkin.

Alejandro Esparza-Villareal, ITA Student

ITA Honorable Mention Emily Vue

The artwork I made was an oil pastel drawing on a black sheet paper with multiple colors with the theme of "Be proud of your past, embrace your future," in the style of impression.

This artwork is of a woman in modern Hmong clothes with dyed hair, holding a traditional paper umbrella in a large field of grass with the sun shining down on them. The girl can be seen wearing a modern Hmong hat and wearing a hmong outfit that is mostly black with pink being on the bottom of the dress and the top of the dress. There was also a silver belt with many coins. There are usually fake coins surrounding the belt, and a silver traditional Hmong necklace.

The way that my artwork contributes to the theme is that it has a relationship to my



culture in the Hmong community. The reason why is that every year Hmong people have festivals to celebrate the "Hmong new year." I incorporated the aspects of the past and future by adding modern hmong clothes and hair styles with some of the traditional symbols of our culture like the umbrella and accessories.

My first step was researching modern Hmong clothes, and using references from the people I know to make a connection to the future. After researching, I started to brainstorm how I wanted to draw the character by looking at references and searching google. After I found a pose I liked, I made multiple sketches and after some time, picked one I liked. Then I moved to the final draft. I used a white pencil to outline the drawing to know what part I wanted to color. Lastly, I looked at references to draw my final draft, using multiple colors to finish it.

While drawing, there was a special meaning or sentiment attached to this work, which was that we will always be connected to our past. I became the person I am because I grew up surrounded by my culture. Starry Night, by Vincent Van Gogh, inspired my work by the way he drew his background of the night and the coloring technique he used to shade the light and stars.

Emily Vue, ITA Student

PARTNER PROFILE KENSINGTON CHURCH

For 10 years, Kensington Church has been a valuable partner to everyone in the Pontiac School District. But Linda Leinius, who works with Kensington doesn't see it like that. "We're neighbors. It's just neighbors helping neighbors," she said. So, in that spirit, we'd like to thank and celebrate our neighbors at Kensington Church.

"This past year forced us to adapt like most other organizations and schools to find creative ways to support all that the district is doing," said Leinius. She also highlighted the fact that one of the key elements to the relationship was listening. "Every school is different, every school has its own personality and needs, and we try to listen to what that need is," she said.

Some of the bigger things that Kensington did was put together care packages to send out to students across the district. After everything was successfully distributed, they found that some kids didn't have an at-home collection of books to help them with both their reading and imagination skills, so, they sprang into action, putting together a collection of books so every kindergarten and first grade student would have an at-home library. They were also able to give each student a stuffed animal to be there for the student while they learned to read. Each 'study buddy' had a handwritten note tied to it, to encourage the students to do their best.

And the help the church has given doesn't just stop at the students. "When you're on empty, you have nothing

to give," notes Leinius. So, the church also works to help teachers, by providing school supplies so they don't have to dig into their own pockets to cover the shortfall. Kristie Hayes, another member of the church, resumed sending out monthly pick-me-up emails to the principals which they then would share with both teachers and staff.

They also donated hand-made cards for teachers to write to their students, to try and make up for the lack of one-onone interaction that was lacking while studying from home.

And when the students returned to school, there was a large Welcome Back table along with little bottles of hand sanitizer for everyone.

Inside the schools, Kensington is helping fund vital renovations to school buildings, as well as helping with programs like a Kindness initiative, the Kaleo Kids program to encourage an interest in music and IMAGine is a new program designed to help Pontiac High School students.

And, amazingly, for all the things that Kensington does to help the Pontiac Schools, they see themselves getting as much out of it as anyone. "It's always nice to do some huge thing," said Leinius, "but I'm finding more and more all the small things really matter; the little touches that let students and staff know that they are all cared about and that they matter."

Thank you very much, neighbor!

Bringing Back the Wave!

SOARING IN PONTIAC

MIL NUUL

Backpacks and Ice Cream Thanks to

ALT WHITMAN

Mike Morse & Huron Wholesale

NIL

Another Successful Back to School Rally

Community Leaders Clap in PMS

A Great Year Lies Ahead

Classroom Safety Protocols In Place

Our Littlest Phoenixes Were Greeted By Legends



Our Partners Are Superheroes Everyday



Delicious Treats to Start the Semester



Our 2021 Grillmaster Champ Mr. Montgomery

Ready to Take the Year by Storm



EICONE

PHS Brought the Beat to Amazon's Celebration

Ready for an Amazing Year!

Building Upscares

SOARING IN PONTIAC

SOARING IN PONTIAC

Ready for a Great Day in Class



R



The Competition was Fierce - Fun at the Brotherly Love Grilling Event



The Disney Princesses Welcomed Students at Herrington

Phoenix Football Drumline Welcome Amazon to the Neighborhood



JOIN OUR TEAM

Job Interviews

30 minute open interviews

EVERY THURSDAY 12-4

Contact **Regina Nicholas:** regina.nicholas@pontiacschools.org



COMMUNICATION IS KEY!



We strive to continually improve our ability to connect with our families on important updates and information.

We are excited to announce our brand-new website has launched. The new layout and design provide much smoother usability, easier access on both desktop and mobile and a beautiful new look. We know what an important tool our website is for our community and wanted to ensure we could provide a site that served all our users.

We are also excited to share that QCommunications

is evolving to a new communication platform called Parent Square this fall. Parent Square provides the opportunity to continue to connect by call, text or e-mail, but also provides a much more comprehensive ability to share flyers, letters, updates and other media in a way that is easy to access. Please make sure to connect with your school to make sure they have all your current contact information so that you are receiving messages.

And, don't forget to follow us on Facebook, Instagram and Twitter!



All of our staff have truly rallied to support our families and each other during the constant challenges faced through the pandemic. We want to take a moment in this season's newsletter to honor our food service team and their efforts to ensure our students were fed.

This team of 45 workers gathered together every day to make sure that students across the district had food to eat in spite of shutdowns. At the height of the pandemic, they were serving roughly 1,500- 2,200 people per day with three meals per day.

Food service, working closely with our transportation partner, offered pick-up meal options and even had delivery for people who weren't able to make it to the schools. Food Services Assistant General Manager Janice Thomas praised the work of so many of these employees. "You have people who have been in the district and worked for so many years; they kept on working because they were committed to these kids," said Thomas.

Jarvis Richardson, the General Manager and Thomas both celebrated the work of people like Shanna Burrows, Margaret Caldwell, Angela Cummings, Dee Brummage, Davina Green, Charmaine Haynes, Frankie Holsey, Loretta Jones, Deborah Milton, Rose Meyers, Jannie Pickett, Versie Roberts, Kelly Wilson and Nancy Zepeda. "They were the ones that, no matter what, I don't care if there was a snowstorm, they were here and they were ready to work," said Thomas. Richardson and Thomas both highlighted a team member who came to work every day, even though she was also undergoing chemotherapy at



the same time. "Through the thick and the thin, they were all dedicated to seeing the process through from beginning to end," said Thomas.

Richardson, who only joined the team in April as General Manager was incredibly grateful for the work performed during such a difficult time. "I have such a phenomenal team" he said, "I can't take credit for the team; they just came in and did what they did. I'm fortunate enough to lead a team that cares so much about the community."

Richardson and Thomas were both recently honored by SFE for their work in the district.

ON-SITE TECHNOLOGY - O SUPPORT

WEDNESDAYS

Our technology team will be onsite each week to assist families and staff with their school district assigned devices. This includes repairs, replacements and other troubleshooting.

Odell Nails Administration Building 47200 Woodward Ave Pontiac, MI

ENROLL TODAY!

Pontiac School District is enrolling Pre-K-12th grade students now for the 2021-2022 school year. It's an incredible time to be a part of the PSD family. Our schools offer outstanding paths to success for all students. Our district is experiencing a renaissance. Across the district, our buildings, technology and other resources are being upgraded to state-of-the-art status thanks to the passage of the \$147 million bond.

WE INVITE YOU TO JOIN THE PONTIAC SCHOOL DISTRICT FAMILY.

- Chromebooks/Tablets provided for all students from Pre K thru 12th grade
- Patient Care Technician Certification Pathway
- New NAF pathways for high school students
- Manufacturing pathway for high school students
- Unrivaled Scholarship Opportunities

Contact (248) 451-7527 or student.services@pontiacschools.org

2111 Pontiac Lake Road Waterford, MI 48328-2736

Non-Profit Organization U.S. Postage **PAID** Royal Oak, MI Permit No. 869



KEEP IN TOUCH WITH US!

47200 Woodward Ave, Pontiac, MI 48342

248.451.6800

pontiacschools.org

PSD- TV22

FIND US ON SOCIAL MEDIA





The Pontiac School District does not discriminate on the basis of sex, race, color, national origin, religion, height, weight, marital status, sexual orientation (subject to the limits of applicable law), age, genetic information, or disability in its programs, services, activities or employment opportunities. Inquiries related to employment discrimination should be directed to the Director of Human Resources at 248.451.6865. 47200 Wodward Ave, Pontiac, MI 48342. For all other inquiries related to discrimination, contact the Director of Legal Affairs at 248.451.6802.