



THE STRING THEORY SPOTLIGHT

Highlighting teacher, staff, and student stories.
Connecting the String Theory Schools Community.

ISSUE 1 • JANUARY 19, 2023



ATHLETICS

PPA, VINE STREET CAMPUS

Over Winter Break, The Philadelphia Performing Arts Boys Basketball team captured the Collingswood Holiday Basketball Tournament held yearly at Collingswood High School. The boys defeated the host, Collingswood, by a score of 44-32, and then defeated Winslow Township in a defensive battle 39-37 in the championship game. Congratulations to Justus Robertson and Zaire Desseso, who were named to the All Tournament team. Justus Robertson averaged 10 points for the tournament and Zaire Desseso played great defense including a game saving steal in the final minute of the championship game.

Continued on page 6

STRING THEORY SCHOOLS
MONTHLY NEWSLETTER

FEATURED THIS WEEK

Happening Now • P. 2

Staff Shoutouts • P. 3

Ask About the Arts • P. 5

Project Invent • P. 7

A MESSAGE FROM THE FOUNDER

Angela Corosanite
Founder & CEO
String Theory Schools

To our students, staff, and school community; welcome back! I hope that your new year is off to a fantastic start, and that you are settling back into classes and school activities after a restful winter break. We at String Theory Schools are starting off the year with a new monthly newsletter, The String Theory Spotlight. Our goal is to share just some of the wonderful things happening at our schools, Philadelphia Performing Arts and Arts and Sciences, and at our organization, String Theory Schools. We ended 2022 with wonderful performances, concerts, and events and look forward to the learning and creating that our scholar artists will accomplish over the remainder of the school year. We hope that you enjoy reading about our remarkable staff and students, and enjoy this glimpse into the classroom!



Dr. Thomas Mosca
Director of Teaching and Learning
String Theory Schools

HAPPENING NOW AT STRING THEORY SCHOOLS

Congratulations to our Temple Teacher Residents who completed their first semester of classes at Temple in December 2022. Special thank you to our mentors for fostering the vision and mission of String Theory Schools' educational philosophy design and framework, as evident in the STS Design Elements. Over the next semester, our residents will further their curriculum planning and facilitation of lessons. These talented future educators will graduate with a Masters Degree in Teaching and Learning this coming June. Thank you to all staff and administration for the continual support of our residents.

Residents

Daniel Emery
Joshua Morris
Jared Krieger

Mentors

Cherith Harkness
Bobby Davis
Heather Weiss-Dembek

Subject/Certification Area

Middle Grades Math
Middle Grades Science
Biology



Mrs. Christina Monaghan

Philadelphia Performing Arts - East Campus

Mrs. Monaghan has been a first grade teacher at Philadelphia Performing Arts for twelve years. She is dedicated to her students and creates lessons that are engaging and thoughtful. Mrs. Monaghan always puts her students first, and welcomes them each day with a beautiful smile. Fellow teachers know Mrs. Monaghan is someone who is always willing to help and is a teacher the first grade team can count on!



Ms. Allegra George

Philadelphia Performing Arts - East Campus & West Campus

Ms. George is the K-1 Art Teacher and the 5th grade Design Major Teacher. She is an Arts Team Lead and has done a fabulous job unifying the Arts Team with her leadership, direction, and guidance. Ms. George leads the 5th Grade Ambassadors Program and is involved in the selection process, weekly meetings, and assignments. Her initiative and creativity drive meaningful projects and experiences for our students.



Ms. Andrea Long

Philadelphia Performing Arts - Vine Street Campus, Middle School

Ms. Long brings experience and passion to her job as the middle school STEM Department Chair and teacher. She is always looking for projects that will challenge and empower her students. In pursuit of such, Ms. Long has worked to bring the club, Future for Her, to PPA. Ms. Long has also worked in partnership with Project Invent, developing a project where students invent an assistive device for a child and adult with vision impairments.



Ms. Heather Weiss-Dembek

Philadelphia Performing Arts - Vine Street Campus, High School

Ms. Weiss-Dembek teaches grades 9 - 11 in Anatomy & Physiology and Environmental Science. She is the Science Teacher Leader and onboards new staff, coaches teachers, and leads bi-weekly PLCs and Science Department PD sessions. Ms. Weiss-Dembek plans trips, labs, and is even a part of the Nutcracker "Costume Crew"! She is an exceptional educator who deeply believes in her students' potential.



Nurse Stephen Notarfrancesco

Arts and Sciences

Nurse Notarfrancesco has been at Arts and Sciences for the past three years and has been instrumental in helping the school navigate the pandemic. He takes great pride in his work, and goes the extra mile to stay up to date on the latest health and safety protocols. He is known for putting students first, and being both attentive and organized in his work. He always takes the time to listen to and answer health questions from staff, students, and families. The school is grateful to his professionalism and thoughtfulness in caring for our school community!

APPLE DISTINGUISHED SCHOOLS UPDATE

PPA, VINE STREET CAMPUS

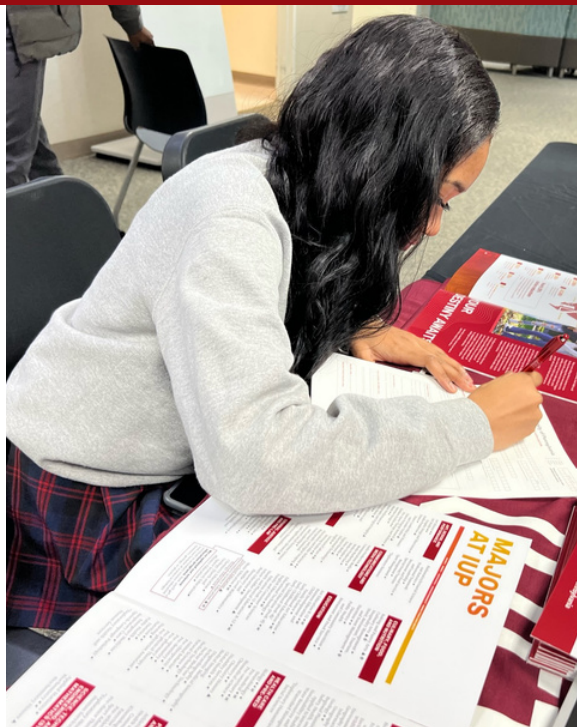
We are proud to announce that Philadelphia Performing Arts, Vine Street Campus, has earned the title of Apple Distinguished School 2023-2025. This is the fifth time our school has earned this distinction. Apple Distinguished Schools is a prestigious program that recognizes a small number of institutions that, "...use iPad and Mac products to inspire student creativity, collaboration, and critical thinking. And...cultivate environments in which students are excited and curious about learning".

PPA, Vine Street Campus, is one of 638 schools in 36 countries that have been awarded this honor. This is a direct reflection of the incredible work that teachers and students do on a daily basis. Membership gives Vine Street access to school visits, exclusive professional development opportunities, and a global community to collaborate with.



COLLEGE CORNER

PPA, VINE STREET CAMPUS



College Fair and Instant Decision Day

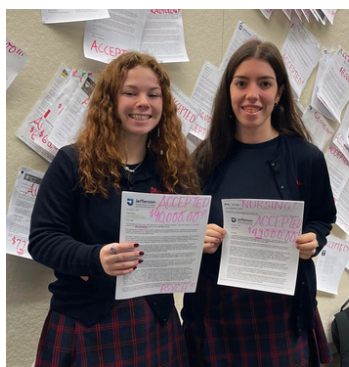
High School students had a unique opportunity to not only learn more about local colleges and universities, but also interview, provide transcripts, and be awarded acceptances into some of these institutions on the spot! Colleges and Universities in attendance included Edinboro, Clarion, Lock Haven, East Stroudsburg, Shippensburg, West Chester, Kutztown, Millersville, Cheyney, California University of Pennsylvania, Eastern, and Slippery Rock, Mansfield, Bloomsburg, and Indiana University of Pennsylvania.

Acceptance Wall

The acceptance wall in front of Mrs. Thomas's office is growing each day! Although it is only January, the wall is already covered in acceptance and scholarship offers for high school seniors.

CCP Scholarship Workshop

Navigating college financial aid can be tricky for first time applicants. Mrs. Thomas not only walks families through the process step-by-step, but also brings in outside organizations to assist students in person with applying for scholarships, such as the CCP Scholarship Workshop pictured below.

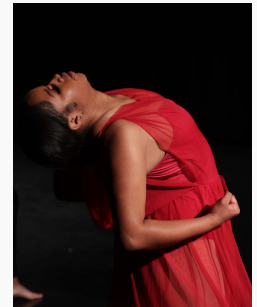


ASK ABOUT THE ARTS

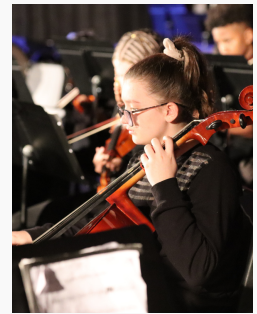
WINTER PERFORMANCES RECAP

Visit [flickr.com/photos/ppacs/](https://www.flickr.com/photos/ppacs/) to see more photos from these performances!
Recordings of shows (including vocal and instrumental!) will be uploaded to our
YouTube channel: [youtube.com/@PPACSLIVE](https://www.youtube.com/@PPACSLIVE)

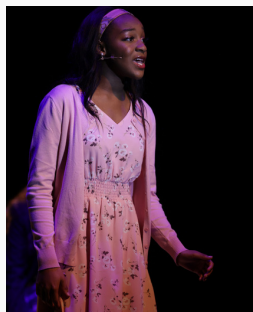
CONTEMPORARY DANCE CONCERT, PPA VINE STREET



WINTER CONCERT, ARTS AND SCIENCES



MATILDA, STRING THEORY PLAYERS



THE NUTCRACKER, PPA WEST AND VINE STREET



UPCOMING FUNDRAISER!

If you like popcorn, then you're going to love this! Arts and Sciences will be having a Double Good popcorn fundraiser to support their return to the Kimmel Center this year. **The fundraiser will run from January 24th - January 28th.** All orders are placed online and delivered right to your door! Check out the String Theory Schools Facebook page January 24th when the link to the fundraiser goes live.

TOP OF THE CLASS



Athletics

Continued from the cover

After last season's division championship, the boys basketball team moved up to the Liberty Division and have been very competitive despite some close losses to top tier teams, such as Frankford and Paul Robeson. Coach Funaro is looking toward to the playoffs and hopes that the team will be playing its best basketball in early February. The team is led by the division's leading scorer, Senior Jajuan Nelson. Jajuan averages 22 points per game and has been actively recruited by a number of Division 3 schools including Alvernia, Arcadia and Penn State Abington. His brother, Senior Javon Nelson, is the starting point guard and a true floor leader. Senior Chris Valerio (also an All Public baseball player) provides 7 points per game and 6 rebounds per game, while Dawud Jones and Nashon Devose give the team valuable minutes off the bench.

The team has a great deal of talented underclassmen, including starters Justus Robertson, and Jason Pezzetti, 6th man Luca Varillo, and all tournament team selection Zaire Dessesso. The future for the Philadelphia Performing Arts boys basketball team is bright with these great scholar athletes.

For current schedules and game photos, please visit PPAAthletics.org



MLK School Service Project

ARTS & SCIENCES

In honor of Martin Luther King Day, third graders at Arts and Sciences volunteered to pick up and tidy up the school grounds. The school is very fortunate to have ample outdoor space, including a large school yard, grassy side yards, a garden, and even a courtyard in the center of the 100 year old building! We thank our students for taking the initiative to help maintain our beautiful school as an act of giving back on MLK Day.



5th Grade Field Trip

PPA, WEST CAMPUS

After returning from Winter Break, the fifth grade went on a fantastic field trip to the Academy of Natural Sciences. The archaeologists at the museum guided the students in conducting an investigation to identify fossils of long extinct animals. Fifth graders were able to explore exhibits about the animals that live in different areas of the world, including Asia, Africa, and North America. A fun and fascinating way to start the new year!

FLY, EAGLES FLY

PPA, EAST CAMPUS

The team at Performing Arts, East Campus, never misses an opportunity to showcase their students' artistic talents and their love for Philadelphia sports teams. When the two can happen simultaneously...even better! Check out this video of Mr. Ludington's vocal music students singing the Eagles' Victory Song on the school's YouTube channel, PPACS Live.



In the News

To see any and all news stories featuring our staff and students (like Mrs. Schneider's Senior Chorale performing on FOX29!) check out the "In the News" section of the website or head on over to our YouTube channel, youtube.com/@PPACSLIVE.

Follow Us on Social Media!

String Theory Schools:

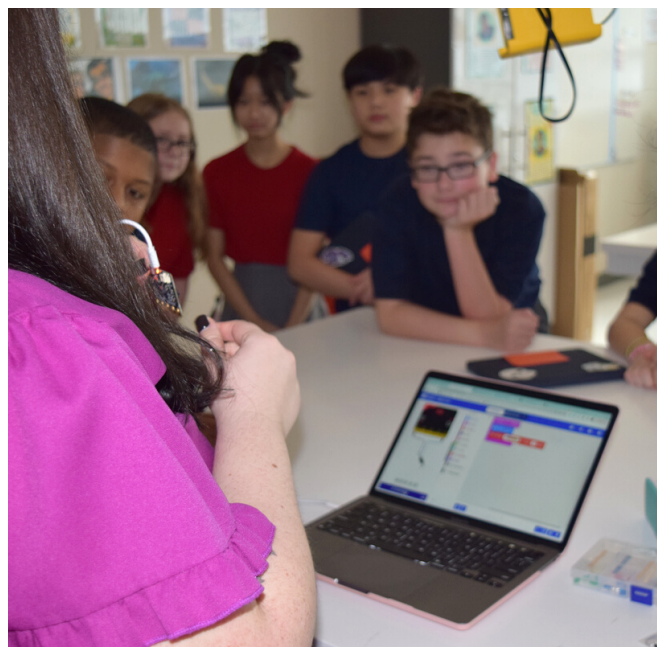
Facebook: String Theory Schools
Instagram: [stringtheorieschools](https://www.instagram.com/stringtheorieschools)

Arts and Sciences:

Instagram: [asphlspotlight](https://www.instagram.com/asphlspotlight)

Philadelphia Performing Arts:

Instagram: [vineathletics](https://www.instagram.com/vineathletics)
Youtube: PPACS Live



Project Invent: Inventing to Make a Difference PPA, VINE STREET CAMPUS

Ms. Andrea Long, middle school STEM Department Chair and teacher, has partnered with Project Invent to help her students gain 21st-century skills to make an impact in the community. During the partnership with Project Invent, students choose a "Community Partner" who plays a major role in helping students uncover impactful solutions to local and personalized challenges. Ms. Long's two eighth grade classes have asked a child (a sibling of one of the current students) and an adult (one of our very own middle school teachers) with vision impairments in the school community to be "Community Partners". Students will interview the Community Partners to discover their challenges and create a device to help them overcome them. Her students will follow the engineering design process to create their devices. Students will also develop hardware using Micro:bit, and will develop software to help the Community Partners overcome these challenges.

At the end of this project, Ms. Long and her students will be involved in a "Demo Day", where student teams pitch their ideas to real industry experts for a chance to fund their invention on a larger scale. Students will use the Micro:bit's funded by her DonorsChoose project to create a working assistive device. With this real-world technology, students will become experts in innovation while helping their community. Project Invent supports Ms. Long as an educator by providing intensive training, coaching, and a community of experts to implement innovation in her classroom. Throughout this project students will gain critical thinking skills, innovation skills, and leadership skills. These skills will only help to prepare students for college and beyond!

NEW THIS YEAR: Piano Lab ARTS & SCIENCES



Strings Director and teacher, Ms. Rachel Bodek, has created an after school piano program for students in 3rd-5th grades. The program allows students with an interest in piano to learn, take a beginner level class and practice playing music collectively in a group setting. Piano lab began with only a handful of students, but the club is now full at 22 piano students! As we head into spring, students will begin working on material to perform in the annual Spring Concert at the Kimmel Center.