

Pemberton Pride

The Newsletter of Pemberton Township Schools

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PEMBERTON TOWNSHIP SCHOOLS INTRODUCES UNIFIED SPORTS PROGRAM

Pemberton Township Schools recently introduced unified sports for students in grades 6 through 12.

Unified basketball, a form of basketball designed to bring together players with

“Our district has talked about having unified sports for so long,” Johnson said. “I was a part of the conversation and it took a lot of organizing from our admins to bring it to our schools.

Last year we started with just unified basketball. This year we opened up to unified bowling and E-sports. Now, we can play 5-on-5 basketball here.”

The team currently holds practices every other week at Newcomb.

“We have a lot more volunteers and a great group of kids,” Johnson said. “It was something I wanted to be a part of and see it take off.”

The unified basketball team has yet to participate in games with opposing schools, but recently hosted a joint practice with Burlington Township Middle School. Both unified basketball teams participated in stretches and warmups together before a scrimmage between the two teams.

PTHS senior Zachary Meade, a mentor, learned about the program through school nurse Bailey Downs.

“Ms. Downs was in our classroom helping a student with a presentation and she said she was looking for help,” Meade said. “I just felt like it seemed like a really nice program to help out with and be involved.”

Mentors from the middle school and high school level attend practices to help athletes develop their basketball skills. Beyond the inclusivity aspect of unified basketball, practices also benefit participants in terms of physical health with cardiovascular exercise, in addition to confidence building and social development.

“It’s really fulfilling,” Meade said. “Helping these kids out and helping them play basketball. They’re really happy playing basketball.”



The district’s unified basketball team poses for a photo before the scrimmage against Burlington Township Middle School in Helen Fort’s gym.

and without intellectual disabilities on the same team, has experienced a surge in participation in Pemberton. The team consists of athletes and mentors. The objective is to promote social inclusion and increase community engagement through the sport of basketball.

The unified sports program began with a unified basketball team during the 2024-25 school year, and has taken major strides during the current school year.

Helen Fort Middle School teacher Julie Johnson has helped develop the unified basketball program.



The district’s unified basketball team competes in a scrimmage against Burlington Township Middle School.

The program has already proven to be impactful as athletes are enjoying their experiences and feeling a sense of purpose.

“I love staying after school to play basketball with my friends,” Javon Bell, a seventh-grade athlete at Helen Fort, said. “I like my coaches. The coaches and the high school students help me with my dribbling. I get called “LeBron” and it makes me laugh.”



HELEN FORT NAMED NATIONAL SCHOOL OF CHARACTER



Helen A. Fort Middle School proudly announced it has been certified as a National School of Character. All nine schools in Pemberton Township are now designated as National Schools of Character. The Fort Dix Road campus, which is home to the district's seventh and eighth grade students, was among 94 schools throughout the United States to receive the distinct designation. Only 13 schools in New Jersey received national recognition this year.

Formerly identified as the Character Education Partnership, Character.org was established in 1993 and certifies schools and districts each year at the national level that have met the rigorous standards articulated in Character.org's 11 Principles Framework for Schools. An updated review process was incorporated to provide consistency and high-quality feedback for candidates this year. Applications underwent initial reviews by an Expert Reader, who is a highly experienced educator and evaluator trained in the Schools of Character process, to determine sufficient evidence of implementation for advancement in the evaluation process.

National Schools of Character are expected to exemplify the 11 Principles and serve as models of excellence



Helen A. Fort Middle School was one of only 13 schools in the state of New Jersey to be named a National School of Character in 2026.

through character development in academics and community involvement.

The designation is valid for five years before the schools must go through the comprehensive evaluation process to apply for the designation again.

"This national recognition is a reflection of what our school represents," principal Aaron Eyler said. "The collective, consistent efforts of our entire staff create opportunities for our students and help build a school culture rooted in character. Our students are continually leading with empathy, showing grit, and approaching learning with curiosity and optimism."

CELEBRATING MONTH OF THE MILITARY CHILD!



Pemberton Township Schools celebrated Month of the Military Child in April. Eight schools hosted Military Family Breakfasts and Fort Dix Elementary School held its annual Month of the Military Child Assembly.

Students and staff at each school also participated in National Purple Up Day. The color purple represents each branch of the United States Armed Forces. Our district remains committed to serving military students and their families!



PTHS STUDENTS RECEIVE HIGH HONORS FROM NJ SKILLSUSA

Pemberton Township High School junior Marc Williams became the first student in school history to record a first place finish in a New Jersey SkillsUSA competition. Williams won the Power Equipment Technology competition at Universal Technical Institute in Bloomfield, New Jersey. NJ SkillsUSA rewarded him with a gold medal. Williams also received multiple scholarships and will compete in SkillsUSA's national competition.

SkillsUSA is a workforce development organization for students. Competitions are designed as showcases for highly skilled career and technical education students. Williams excelled in a competition created to represent tasks that may be encountered in an automotive dealership's service department. Congratulations, Marc!



The PTHS TV News Team recorded a 2nd place finish at the NJ SkillsUSA Video News Production competition at Donald M. Payne, Sr. School of Technology in Newark, New Jersey. Television production students Mason Vickers (news anchor), Ashley Mullings (news anchor), Ian Mosquera (technical director) and Tristan Carpenter (floor director) worked collectively to perform a three-minute newscast in front of a panel of judges. The group received silver medals in recognition of their accomplishment. The team will also advance to compete in SkillsUSA's national competition. Students had a fantastic experience showcasing their skills and Pemberton Pride!



PTHS INDOOR PERCUSSION MAKES HISTORY AT REGIONALS

Pemberton Township High School's Indoor Percussion team won its first regional championship in program history. Students were crowned the Region 1 Scholastic Champion in the Percussion Novice Class at Eastern Regional High School in Voorhees, New Jersey on April 26th. They outscored Pennsauken High School to capture a first place finish and move up to second place in the Atlantic Coast Ranking!

The Region 1 tournament was part of the Tournament of Bands (TOB). This non-profit educational organization hosts tournaments throughout nine states located in the mid-Atlantic and northeast portions of the United States. The Tournament of Bands works in conjunction with the Tournament Indoor Association (TIA). The National Judges Association (NJA) evaluates each team's performance. The Marching Hornets wowed the judges with a 77.900 score!



Celebrating Decision Day at PTHS!

PTHS hosted a celebration for Decision Day on Friday, May 1st. College Decision Day is an annual occurrence across the nation. May 1st is the deadline for high school seniors to decide which college or university they will attend. Students gathered in the auditorium lobby to display their achievements! Students gathered in the auditorium lobby to display their achievements!



Pemberton Pride is a publication of Pemberton Township Schools

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DENBO-CRICHTON CELEBRATES EARTH DAY!



Third-grade students at Denbo-Crichton Elementary School celebrated Earth Day with a cleanup of school grounds on April 22nd. Cleaning materials such as gloves and trash bags were generously donated for students and staff to use.

The Burlington County Recycling Program, which is operated by the Occupational Training Center, visited students to emphasize the importance of recycling!

