

PMSD CONNECT ON

Our Mission: To Prepare All Students for Tomorrow's Challenges and Opportunities

2026-27: Issue 1

PMSD Open Houses

Monday, August 17, 2026
3 p.m. to 7 p.m.

- East Junior High School
- West Junior High School

Tuesday, August 18, 2026
6:30 p.m.

- West High School - Grade 9 & New Student Orientation

Wednesday, August 19, 2026
10 a.m. to Noon

- PMSD Cyber - All Grades

Friday, August 21, 2026
11 a.m. to 1 p.m.

- West High School – Grades 9 to 12

Tuesday, August 25, 2026
6:30 p.m.

- East High School – Grade 9 & New Student Orientation

Wednesday, August 26, 2026
4 p.m. to 6 p.m.

- Clear Run Intermediate School
- PMSD Cyber – All Grades
- Swiftwater Elementary Center – Grade K only
- Swiftwater Intermediate School – Grades 4 to 6

Thursday, August 27, 2026
4 p.m. to 6 p.m.

- Clear Run Elementary Center – Grades K to 2
- Tobyhanna Elementary Center – Grades 3 to 6
- Swiftwater Elementary Center – Grades 1 to 3

Thursday, August 27, 2026
5 p.m. to 7 p.m.

- Tobyhanna Elementary Center – Grades K to 2

Friday, August 28, 2026
11 a.m. to 1 p.m.

- East High School – Grades 9 to 12

PM East Jr High Odyssey team places 1st at World Finals

The Pocono Mountain East Junior High School Odyssey of the Mind team returned home triumphantly after placing first at the Odyssey of the Mind World Finals at Iowa State University.

The team competed against 33 other teams to earn the top place in the world and the prestigious Ranatra Fusca Award for outstanding creativity in the Taller Tales of John Jivery Division II competition of the World Finals.

Seventh graders Jonathan Garcia and Alyssa Lantigua, and eighth graders Neylan Cox, Savannah VanAuken, Amir Ward, Annalise Steinmetz, and Penelope Hecht practiced throughout the school year to create their award-winning solution to the Taller Tales of John Jivery problem. The team was coached by teachers Ms. Jennifer Fiore and Mr. Galen Smith.

Pocono Mountain School District also sent two additional East Junior High School teams to the World Finals to represent the district and Pennsylvania. Those teams placed fifth and 28th in their respective competitions.



The Pocono Mountain East Junior High School team of (left to right) Ms. Jennifer Fiore, team advisor/coach, and students Jonathan Garcia, Savannah VanAuken, Amir Ward, Annalise Steinmetz, Penelope Hecht, Alyssa Lantigua, and Neylan Cox was named the top team in the world in their problem and division at Odyssey of the Mind World Finals. Not pictured is Mr. Galen Smith, team advisor/coach.

To get to the world finals, the teams had to compete and advance at the Northeast PA Regional and State Odyssey of the Mind Competitions.

The teams received an honorary

escort from the Pocono Township Volunteer Fire Company on their return home to the Swiftwater Campus from the World Finals on May 31, 2026.

PMSD Board approves resolution for 2026 property tax relief

The Pocono Mountain School District (PMSD) Board of Education approved a 2026 Homestead & Farmstead Exclusion Resolution at the June 17, 2026 public School Board Meeting that outlined the amount approved district property owners will receive in property tax relief on their 2026 property tax bills.

The Homestead Farmstead Real Estate Tax reduction is part of Pennsylvania's broad-based property tax relief provided from gaming funds through the Taxpayer Relief Act, also known as Special Session Act 1 of 2006.

The Pennsylvania Department of Education (PDE) notified district officials that PDE will provide the district with \$10,797,257.00 in

gaming tax funds to use for property tax reduction for 12,747 approved homesteads and six approved farmsteads for a total of 12,753 approved homestead / farmsteads in the district for 2026. This is an increase of \$71,765.00 in the property tax reduction allocation for PMSD qualifying homesteads / farmsteads from 2025.

"PMSD acts as a pass through for gaming tax relief funds," said Joseph Colozza, Chief Financial Officer. "The funds allocated to the district are then reallocated to qualified property owners to reduce their school property taxes."

The property tax relief for approved property owners in the district for 2026 will be \$852.27 per homestead

or farmstead within the district's boundaries, an increase from last year's \$598.13 of property tax relief from gaming tax funds.

Checks will not be issued directly to approved property owners. Homeowners with an approved Homestead/Farmstead Exclusion will see the exclusion amount deducted from their property taxes on their 2026 property tax bills.

Gaming funds dedicated to property tax relief also pay for a Philadelphia Wage Tax reduction, Philadelphia Senior Citizen Property Tax reduction, allocation to school districts for the Philadelphia Wage Credit, expanded Senior Citizen Property Tax &

From the Superintendent's Desk:

New school year offers students exciting new opportunities

Dear Families and Community Members,

I hope you and your family are enjoying a wonderful summer filled with laughter, relaxation, and special memories. As summer begins to wind down, there is a growing sense of excitement across the Pocono Mountain School District as we prepare to welcome our students back for another incredible year of learning, discovery, and achievement.

A new school year represents so much more than the first day of classes. It is a fresh beginning filled with new friendships, new opportunities, and new possibilities. Every student enters our schools with unlimited potential, and every member of our staff is committed to creating a safe, supportive, and engaging environment where each child can thrive.

We are excited to welcome our new teachers during orientation on August 24, 2026, and all faculty and staff back on August 25 as they prepare classrooms and schools for another outstanding year. Most importantly, we cannot wait to welcome our students back on Monday, August 31, for the first day of the 2026–2027 school year. Our halls are ready to once again be filled with smiling faces, curious minds, and the energy that makes our schools such special places.

Preparing for a Successful Start

School open houses will be held between August 17 and August 28. Please review the open house schedules included in this newsletter or visit our district website at www.pmsd.org for the dates and times. I encourage every family to attend their child's open house. These visits provide students with an opportunity to become familiar with their classrooms, and feel more comfortable and confident when they return on the first day of school.

Every Day Matters

Each new school year provides students with a fresh opportunity to learn, grow, and succeed. One of the most important factors in student success is simply being in school each day.

Research consistently shows that students who attend school regularly are more likely to stay on track academically, develop stronger relationships with peers and teachers, and feel connected to their school community. Students who miss 10 percent or more of the school



Dr. Elizabeth Robison, Superintendent of Schools, stopped by to visit with incoming kindergarten students in Mrs. Hannah Baker's class at Clear Run Elementary Center. The students attended the Kindergarten Readiness Program, which was held at Clear Run, Swiftwater and Tobyhanna Elementary Centers, July 13 to 16, to help familiarize students with their schools. Pictured with Dr. Robison are new kindergarten students, Mrs. Baker, and co-principals Mrs. Donohue and Dr. Loverdi.

year (approximately 18 days) are considered chronically absent and are at greater risk of falling behind academically.

School attendance is also one of the single strongest predictors of whether a student will read at grade level, particularly by the pivotal milestone of third grade. The impact of attendance on reading is cumulative. This same cumulative effect of missed instructional time is evident in student proficiency across all subjects. Every day of instruction provides students with opportunities to build skills, develop confidence, and stay connected with their teachers and classmates. Missed instructional time can have a lasting impact on learning across all grade levels and subject areas.

We understand that families may face challenges that make regular attendance difficult. If your child is struggling to attend school consistently, please know that support is available. Our schools are here to work with families, identify barriers, and connect students with the resources they need to be successful.

Supporting Our Students & Families

Pocono Mountain School District recognizes that families may experience challenges that impact attendance and student success. That is why we have developed a network of supports designed to help students

overcome barriers and remain connected to school.

Our supports include:

- Truancy Consultants who work with families through early intervention, problem-solving, and connection to resources.
- Student Assistance Program (SAP) Teams in every school that identify barriers to learning and coordinate support.
- School Counselors and Social Workers who assist students with academic planning, mental health needs, family challenges, food insecurity, housing concerns, and crisis support.
- Behavioral Health Specialists who provide support for emotional and behavioral needs that may impact student success.
- Communities In Schools Site Coordinators who connect students and families with resources such as mentoring, clothing, food assistance, and community services.
- Our partnership with St. Luke's Hospital, which provides valuable health resources, outreach, and wellness support for our students and families.
- The YESS (Your Emotional Strength Supported) Program, which provides school-based mental health counseling from licensed professionals during the school day.

Together, these services allow us to support the whole child - academically, socially, emotionally, and physically.

Keeping Our Schools Safe

School safety remains our highest priority. Throughout the school year, students in grades K-12 will participate in safety training and practice emergency procedures, so they understand how to respond if an emergency occurs.

Parents and students are important partners in maintaining safe schools. If you hear or observe information that could pose a threat to our students, staff, or schools, please report it immediately to your child's school principal. After hours, concerns can be reported through the Safe2Say Something system at www.safe2saypa.org or by calling 1-844-723-2729 or 717-678-5504.

Supporting Every Student

Pocono Mountain School District will continue to provide free breakfast and lunch for all students attending school in person during the 2026-2027 school year.

In addition, every school has a food pantry available for students in need. Some schools also provide weekend and holiday backpack programs. If your family needs assistance for students, please contact your school principal, so we can connect you with available resources.

Each school also maintains a clothing closet with school standardized dress items to support students and families.

Please Update Emergency Contact Information

As we prepare for the new school year, families will be asked to update their emergency contact information. Please make sure your child's records include accurate phone numbers and emergency contacts. If information changes during the school year, please notify your school immediately.

In an emergency, seconds matter. Having current contact information helps us communicate quickly and effectively when your child needs us most.

Families Are Our Greatest Partners

The partnership between home and school is one of the strongest predictors of student success. Parents and caregivers are a child's first teachers, and together we can inspire students to dream big, work hard, and achieve great things.

You can help your child have a

See SUPERINTENDENT'S...Page 3

PMSD welcomes new School Board director, thanks outgoing director

With the start of the new school year, Pocono Mountain School District's (PMSD) Board of Education wanted to make sure community members are familiar with their elected representatives on the board.

PMSD has three regions covering its 304 square miles.

Region 1 (Barrett Township, Paradise Township and Pocono Township) directors are Christina Grape-Garvey, Nathan Strunk, who also serves as the Board Vice President, and Stephen Watto.

Region 2 (Jackson Township, Tobyhanna Township and Tunkhannock Township) directors are Marion Pyzik, who also serves as the Board President, Elyse Nehring, and Patty Rinehimer.

Region 3 (Coolbaugh Township and the Borough of Mount Pocono) directors are Ronnie Byrd, Anna Lopez and Michael Stern.

PMSD School Board meetings are normally held on the first and third Wednesday of each month at 6 p.m., except during the summer, when meetings are held once a month.

Meetings are held in the Administration Building Board Room. Meetings are also currently being live streamed for community members who cannot physically attend the meeting. A notice and link to register to attend the live-streamed board meeting is posted to the PMSD website at www.pmsd.org prior to each meeting.

Upcoming School Board meetings are as follows:

- August 12, 2026
- September 16, 2026
- October 7, 2026
- October 21, 2026
- November 4, 2026
- November 18, 2026
- December 9, 2026
- December 16, 2026

Note: Meeting dates are subject to change. Changes to meeting dates/locations will be advertised in the local newspaper and on the district website prior to the meeting.



Region 1
Christina
Grape-Garvey



Region 1
Nathan Strunk
Vice President



Region 1
Stephen
Watto



Region 2
Elyse
Nehring



Region 2
Marion Pyzik
President



Region 2
Patricia (Patty)
Rinehimer



Region 3
Ronnie
Byrd



Region 3
Anna
Lopez



Region 3
Michael
Stern

Property tax exclusion rate announced (continued from Page 1)

Rent Rebate Program, and the state allocation to the remaining school districts.

The amount of gaming funds dedicated to property tax relief varies each year, which means the amount of property tax relief for approved property owners will also vary each year.

Who will receive the tax relief: Generally, most owner-occupied homes and farms are eligible for property tax reduction. Only a primary residence is eligible for property tax relief. For property owners to receive this tax relief they would have had to file a Homestead/Farmstead Exclusion application with the Monroe County Assessment Office by March 1, 2024, and received a notice back that their application was approved. Any property owner who

received property tax relief last year will still qualify. They do not have to reapply each year.

What happens to property owners who didn't apply for the Homestead/Farmstead Exclusion:

For those property owners who have not filed their Homestead/Farmstead Exclusion application, district officials encourage them to do so in order to be eligible for tax relief the next time funding is available. If they apply today and their application is approved, they will not qualify for this year's tax relief, but will qualify for any future tax relief when available.

The applications and information on how to apply are located on the District web site at www.pmsd.org under the Departments, select Business Office and the PA Homestead/Farmstead Exclusion page.

BILL# 000001			ACCOUNT#		RETAIN THIS PORTION FOR YOUR RECORDS			
LAND	17,420	BUILDING	64,490	TOTAL	81,910	CLASS	9	PARCEL NUMBER
ASSESSMENT	BASE ASSESSMENT	LESS EXCLUSION	NET BASE ASSEMT	TAX LIABILITY	BASE AMOUNT	LESS EXCLUSION	NET BASE AMOUNT	
HOMESTEAD	81,910	35,976	45,934	HOMESTEAD	1,940.45	➡ 852.27	1,088.18	
FARMSTEAD	0	0	0	FARMSTEAD	0.00	0.00	0.00	
TOTAL	81,910		45,934	TOTAL	1,940.45		1,088.18	
Type Tax		Mills	2% Discount		Net Base Amt		10% Penalty	
SCH		23.69	1,066.42		1,088.18		1,197.00	
AMOUNT IF PAID BY				09/30/26	11/30/26	12/31/26		
PAY THIS AMOUNT				1,066.42	1,088.18	1,197.00		
RETURN BOTH PAYMENT STUBS WITH A SELF-ADDRESSED STAMPED ENVELOPE FOR A RETURN RECEIPT. IF PROPERTY WAS SOLD, OR TAXES PAID BY A MORTGAGE CO. FORWARD BILL TO APPROPRIATE PARTY. CASHIER'S CHECK OR MONEY ORDER ONLY AFTER DEC 15.								

Sample tax notice with Homestead Exclusion highlighted in yellow.

From the Superintendent's Desk

(continued from Page 2)

successful year by establishing consistent bedtime and morning routines, scheduling appointments outside of school whenever possible, maintaining open communication with your child's school, and reinforcing the importance of attending school every day.

As we begin this exciting new chapter together, I want to thank you for your continued trust, partnership, and support of the Pocono Mountain School District. We are honored to work with your children each day and remain committed to providing an exceptional educational experience

where every student feels valued, challenged, and inspired.

The countdown to the first day of school has begun, and we cannot wait to welcome everyone back on August 31. Together, let's make the 2026–2027 school year one filled with learning, achievement, kindness, and unforgettable memories.

Enjoy the remainder of your summer, and we'll see you very soon!

Warmest Regards,

Dr. Elizabeth Robison
Superintendent of Schools



The PMSD Select Band with student musicians Isabella Oliver, grade 8 Pocono Mountain West Junior High School, and Khloe Newlander and Liliana Mann, West High School sophomores, were joined by West High School Band Director Jeffery Mark to perform the National Anthem at a Naturalization Oath Ceremony in Historic Courtroom No. 1 of the Monroe County Courthouse on July 1st. At the ceremony, 26 qualified candidates from 16 different counties, all of whom reside in Monroe County, took the oath to become United States Citizens. Pocono Mountain's ensemble was honored to perform for such an important ceremony.

A fresh look for the SEC gym

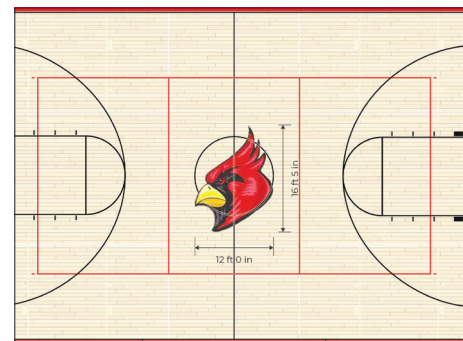
By Dr. Karen Doughton,
Principal

Swiftwater Elementary Center

This fall, our students will return to a gymnasium that has been completely transformed, and we cannot wait to welcome them inside.

Over the summer, the Swiftwater Elementary Center gym received a complete makeover. Freshly painted walls, a beautiful new gym floor, and a striking Cardinal mascot at center court have transformed the space into one that reflects the pride, spirit, and sense of community that make Swiftwater Elementary Center such a special place.

At SEC, our gym is much more than a place for physical education. It is a gathering place where our youngest learners come together for schoolwide events, special programs, and celebrations throughout the year. From the excitement of the first days of school to memorable moments shared as a Cardinal family, our gym



helps create experiences that our students will remember long after they leave SEC.

These improvements are more than a renovation. They are an investment in our students. A welcoming, vibrant environment helps foster school pride and creates opportunities for children to learn, grow, and make memories that will last a lifetime.

We are excited for our students to experience this beautiful new space and create many new memories within its walls. We know the SEC gym will continue to be a place filled with smiles, celebration, teamwork, and Cardinal pride for years to come.

Pocono Mountain School District welcomes new Athletic Directors

Pocono Mountain School District is pleased to welcome two new athletic directors for the 2026-2027 school year to lead the Cardinal and Panther athletic programs.

Adam Holtzer has been named Athletic Director at Pocono Mountain East High School, succeeding Jessica Johnson, while Stephen Tomaszewski has been named Athletic Director at Pocono Mountain West High School, succeeding Michael DelGrosso. Ms. Johnson and Mr. DelGrosso requested to return to the classroom as full-time mathematics teachers after years of successfully leading the district's Cardinal and Panther athletic programs.

Meet the East Athletic Director

"I am incredibly honored to join the Pocono Mountain East community as the new Athletic Director," said Mr. Holtzer. "My goal is to cultivate an environment where student-athletes are empowered to excel not only in their respective sports but also in their academic and personal pursuits. Athletics play a vital role in building character, leadership, and a sense of belonging, and I am committed to supporting our coaches and students as we strive for excellence in every program. GO CARDINALS!!"

Mr. Holtzer brings 17 years of experience as a physical education teacher and more than 20 years of experience coaching and managing athletic programs. He also served for four years as a park director, where he created, implemented, and supervised more than 50 athletic and recreational events and programs for participants of all ages.

A former collegiate basketball player, Mr. Holtzer competed at both Lock Haven University and Misericordia University. He holds a B.S. in Sport Management, an M.Ed in Health and Physical Education, and an M.S. in Exercise Science. Additionally, he holds an Administrative Certificate

from the Pennsylvania Department of Education, as well as RAA and RMSAA certifications from the NIAAA. He is currently completing his Ph.D. in Sport Management from Troy University.

Meet the West Athletic Director

"I am beyond excited to be named the next Athletic Director at Pocono Mountain West High School," said Mr. Tomaszewski. "The staff and coaches have truly been an honor to meet and I look forward to meeting each and all of them day by day. I cannot wait to serve all of the stakeholders in the Pocono Mountain West community.

"I have extremely large shoes to fill in both Mr. DelGrosso and Mr. Pensyl, who have navigated the West Athletic Department on a successful course over the last 25 years. I am also privileged to be taking over this journey 25 years into the making of West High School in the Pocono Mountain School District. I know that I am a steward for the vision that was laid prior to my undertaking of this role. My initial goals are to chart a steady course moving forward and assess what is needed to meet the challenges that will lay forth for the next decades to come.

"Educational Athletics is an extension of the classroom in my opinion and that is how I view my philosophy. It should also be the most meaningful and rewarding part of the student-athletes' day when they are competing in games and practices throughout the course of their seasons and cherish the opportunity to learn and grow in lifelong skills such as resiliency, confidence, and fortitude. These are lifelong Panther attributes that will carry one far in life. GO PANTHERS!!"

Mr. Tomaszewski brings 15 years of experience as a history teacher at Bethlehem Catholic High School. During that time, he served as Assistant

Athletic Director for three years before becoming Director of Athletics for the past two years.

Prior to his career in education, Mr. Tomaszewski worked as a Probation Officer and in Juvenile Justice in Northampton County. A former collegiate baseball player for Moravian College (now University), where he later served as the Head Pitching Coach for six seasons. He also coached at the high school varsity baseball level.

Thank You

The district extends its sincere appreciation to outgoing East Athletic Director Jessica Johnson for her dedicated leadership of the Cardinal athletic program. After serving as athletic director for 3 years and coaching for many years before that, Ms. Johnson will return to the classroom as a mathematics teacher at East High School. Ms. Johnson has been a mathematics teachers at Pocono Mountain since 2003.

The district also extends its sincere appreciation to outgoing West Athletic Director Michael DelGrosso for his years of dedicated service to Panther athletics. Mr. DelGrosso served as West Athletic Director for 9 years after serving as an Assistant Athletic Director and Head Boys Basketball Team Coach. He will return to the classroom as a mathematics teacher at Pocono Mountain West High School. Mr. DelGrosso has been a mathematics teachers at Pocono Mountain since 1993.

The district thanks both Jessica Johnson and Michael DelGrosso for their commitment to student-athletes and wishes them continued success as they return to teaching. At the same time, Pocono Mountain School District welcomes Adam Holtzer and Stephen Tomaszewski and looks forward to the leadership, experience, and enthusiasm they will bring to the district's athletic programs.

Understanding PMSD's emergency response protocol

At the start of each school year, students participate in safety drills and emergency preparedness activities. As a result, parents may hear their children talk about Hold, Secure, Lockdown, Evacuate, Shelter, or Run, Hide, Fight.

To help ensure a consistent response to emergencies, Pocono Mountain School District (PMSD) adopted the Standard Response Protocol (SRP) developed by the I Love U Guys Foundation. Staff and students in all PMSD schools are trained to use the protocol as part of the district's comprehensive school safety program.

The SRP uses simple, clear language that helps students, staff, first responders, and families understand what actions need to be taken during an emergency. Depending on the situation, schools may implement one or more of the following actions:

Hold: Students remain in their classrooms while hallways are cleared. A Hold may be used for a medical emergency, to locate a student, or for another situation that requires limited movement within the building. Instruction typically continues.



Secure: Students and staff are brought inside and exterior doors are locked. A Secure may be used when there is police activity, a fire, severe weather, or another concern in the area surrounding the school. Instruction typically continues.

Lockdown: Students and staff move into secure locations behind locked doors when there is a potential threat inside the school or an immediate threat to the school. Instruction stops while the situation is addressed.

Evacuate: Students and staff leave the building and move to a designated safe location. Fire drills are the most common example of an evacuation,

but this action may be used for many types of emergencies.

Shelter: Students and staff move to designated shelter areas inside the building and remain there until conditions are safe. Shelter may be used during severe weather, hazardous material incidents, or other environmental emergencies.

In addition to these response actions, PMSD trains students and staff on specific actions to take during an immediate life-threatening emergency.

Run, Hide, Fight – Students and staff are taught to use this response

only as a last resort when faced with an immediate threat, such as an armed intruder. The protocol emphasizes escaping danger when possible, hiding if escape is not possible, and defending oneself only if necessary to preserve life.

Drop, Cover, and Hold On – Students and staff may use this response during certain weather-related emergencies or other incidents involving falling debris. Participants drop to the ground, take cover, and protect themselves until the danger passes.

PMSD staff regularly train and practice emergency procedures throughout the school year to prepare for a wide range of situations. These efforts help ensure students and staff can respond quickly, calmly, and appropriately during an emergency.

During an emergency, parents will receive information through ParentLink notifications, the PMSD website, and other official district communication channels. Working together, we can help maintain safe and secure learning environments for all students and staff.

West Junior High implements a House System for the new school year

By Mr. Walter Pawlowski, Assistant Principal

PM West Junior High School

When students join the West Junior High School (WJHS) in the 2026-27 school, they will also be joining a family consisting of five different Houses!

House systems are a structural strategy used to break the large student body into smaller, supportive learning communities.

The House creates a bond between staff members, teachers and students in 7th and 8th grade. They provide camaraderie, a sense of belonging and healthy competition.

The layout of the West Junior High School lends itself to a House system with pods in each hallway. The pods all have their own Math, Science, Social Studies and English Language Arts classrooms. They also have their own restroom. This allows smooth transitions and increased instructional time.

Within the pods teachers plan incentives, teach school PRIDE lessons and promote involvement in school events.

Students earn PRIDE Tickets for being Prepared, Respectful, Involved, Dependable and Empathetic as part of school Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports system.

During seasonal pep rallies Houses compete against each other in diverse contests including

homerun derby, soccer scoring, three point shooting and karaoke. New contests are added every season.

The Houses also compete in Empathy challenges throughout the school year. Each homeroom participates by supporting a positive cause that helps to build the WJHS community.

Past contests included writing teacher appreciation cards, letters to the elderly, clothing collections and pantry donations. The WJHS PRIDE Paw hangs proudly in the pod of the leading House.



West Junior High School received Pennsylvania Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PaPBS) recognition across all tiers last school year. This means they were evaluated and recognized for their implementation fidelity across: Universal Promotion (Tier 1), Targeted Supports (Tier 2), and Intensive Intervention (Tier 3).

For the 2026-27 school year West Junior High will be looking to expand by adding two new components. Each homeroom will have a student representative that will serve in the Student Administration Council to help plan the PRIDE House events.

WJHS will also be looking to create a Parent PRIDE Advisory Committee that will give parents a formal voice in positive events. Interested parents should reach out to assistant principal, Mr. Walter Pawlowski at wpawlowski@pmsd.org or sign up during WJHS Open House.

WJHS Minor Violation Consequences 2026-2027 Discipline Referrals

Electronics Violation:

Student phones must be in a locker. If you are found with a phone you must turn over the phone to be placed in the cellphone jail in the main office. Refusal will be a referral for defiance. You will receive the tiered consequences.

Dress Code Violations:

Out of compliance upon entry into homeroom your teacher will direct you to fix issue. If you cannot fix the issue you will be referred to the office. After homeroom you will receive the tiered consequences with a referral.

Tardy to Class Violations:

Follow the tiered consequences with a referral.

Tiered Consequences:

- First Violation – 1 Lunch Detention
- Second Violation – 2 Lunch Detentions
- Third Violation – 1 After School Detention
- Fourth Violation – 2 After School Detentions
- Fifth Violation – Referral to Administration

Clear Run Elementary Center creates West Best Bus program

By Mrs. Heidi Donohue, Co-Principal
& Dr. Jessica Loverdi, Co-Principal
Clear Run Elementary Center

A new initiative aimed at promoting safe and respectful behavior among young students is rolling out this fall at Clear Run Elementary Center.

The “West Best” Bus Program is designed specifically for early elementary riders. The program introduces simple, memorable expectations to help children understand how to behave safely on the school bus.

At the heart of the program is the acronym “BEST,” which outlines four key behavior guidelines. “B” stands for “Be Safe,” reminding students to keep their hands, feet, and objects to themselves at all times. “E” represents “Eyes Forward,” encouraging children to pay attention and follow directions from the bus driver. “S” means “Stay



Seated,” reinforcing the importance of remaining seated while the bus is moving. Finally, “T” stands for “Talk Kindly,” promoting respectful language and a quiet voice to maintain

a calm environment.

Working closely with Community in Schools Liaison, Mr. Josh Gurin, CREC principals say the “West Best” Bus Program was created to make

expectations easy to remember while reinforcing habits that protect both students and drivers. When children understand clear, simple rules, they feel more confident and safer. This program helps build those habits early.

Mrs. Donohue, Dr. Loverdi, Mr. Gurin, and bus drivers will work together to introduce and reinforce the BEST expectations through daily reminders, modeling, and positive reinforcement. The goal is not only to improve safety, but also to create a more positive and supportive bus experience for all students.

Families are encouraged to review the BEST guidelines with their children at home to help strengthen consistency between school and home expectations.

With the launch of the Best Bus Program, Clear Run Elementary Center hopes to ensure that every bus ride is safe, respectful, and ready for learning—before students even step into the classroom.

CREC launches innovative family calendar

By Mrs. Heidi Donohue, Co-Principal
& Dr. Jessica Loverdi, Co-Principal
Clear Run Elementary Center

Clear Run Elementary Center (CREC) families will stay informed and engaged in the upcoming academic year with the help of a new “traditional” calendar that will be shared with all CREC staff and families. Designed with both organization and connection in mind, the 2026–2027 traditional school calendar introduces a comprehensive, interactive approach to keeping families up to date on school life.

Developed by school staff, the calendar goes far beyond listing holidays and marking the first and last days of school. It provides a detailed overview of key events throughout the year, including spirit weeks, field trips, assemblies, special programs, and scheduled days off. The goal is to give families a clear, easy-to-follow roadmap of the school year, helping them plan ahead and stay involved.

What sets this calendar apart is its integration of technology. Each month includes QR codes that families can scan to access fun and educational activities. These links connect students and parents to engaging math challenges, read aloud libraries, and interactive learning opportunities that can be enjoyed at home, reinforcing classroom skills in an accessible way.

The calendar also serves as a celebration of the school community. It features photographs of students and staff, highlighting everyday moments as well as special events from the past year. In addition, select QR codes link to videos capturing memorable highlights from the previous school year, allowing families to revisit performances, celebrations, and classroom experiences.

School administrators say the project was



created to strengthen communication and deepen the connection between school and home. By combining essential information with interactive and visual elements, the calendar aims to make school involvement easier and more enjoyable for families.

This calendar is more than just a schedule—it’s a way to bring our school community closer together in a way that not only informs but also celebrates and supports our students and families.

The new calendar will be distributed to families before the start of the school year. Early feedback from staff and families suggests it will quickly become a valued resource for staying organized, engaged, and connected throughout the year.



Building School Pride One Cheer at a Time

Swiftwater Elementary Center (SEC) is proud to offer a Cheerleading Club that has grown to include more than 115 students in grades K–3. Established during the 2023–2024 school year, the club provides students with a fun and engaging opportunity to build school spirit while developing teamwork, confidence, and leadership skills.

The Cheerleading Club meets one hour before the start of the school day, where students learn age-appropriate cheerleading techniques, spirited chants, and energetic routines that celebrate pride in our school community. Throughout the year, our cheerleaders enthusiastically support school events and help foster a positive, welcoming atmosphere for students and staff alike.

This year, the club expanded its resources with the addition of cheer signs and pom-poms, allowing students to further enhance their performances and school spirit activities. Members also received SEC Cheerleading Club T-shirts, giving them another opportunity to proudly represent their school and celebrate their involvement in this special program.

The SEC Cheerleading Club continues to be a meaningful experience that encourages school pride, promotes positive relationships, and gives our youngest learners the opportunity to shine as ambassadors of the SEC community.

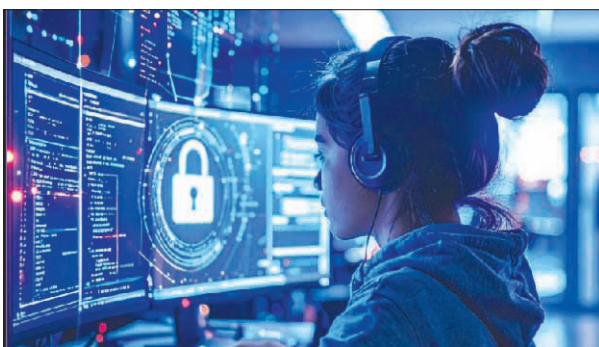
Shaping the Future: PMSD unveils exciting Career-Ready electives

By: Ms. Amy L. Buffington
Director of Social Studies and Humanities

The modern job market is evolving rapidly, and Pocono Mountain School District is making sure our students are steps ahead.

PMSD in the 2026-2027 school year is thrilled to introduce some new dynamic, hands-on elective courses designed to spark creativity, build high-demand skills, and prepare students for tomorrow's hottest careers. By blending real-world training with interactive projects, these new offerings allow students to test-drive exciting industries before graduation.

In **Sports Marketing**, students dive into the fast-paced world of advertising, tourism, and public relations. Moving beyond textbooks, they explore everything from social media strategy and product endorsements to theme park marketing, culminating in a hands-on project where they plan and implement them at actual school events using



The above image was created through the use of Magic School, an AI program used at Pocono Mountain School District to enhance lesson planning and student and parent engagement.

our own PMSD digital scoreboards. This provides the perfect canvas for future marketing executives and event coordinators.

Meanwhile, the **Fundamentals of Cybersecurity** course opens the door to one of tech's highest-paying fields with absolutely no prior computer

experience required. Students learn how hardware, software, and networks interact, while mastering cryptography and encryption strategies to identify and defend against real-world hackers and network attacks.

Finally, for the creatives, **Music Production** bridges the gap between artistic passion and modern audio engineering. Through immersive composition and digital audio mixing software, students learn professional studio techniques, ultimately graduating from the course as digital composers with original song portfolios to share.

These are just some of our new innovative courses that provide an incredible edge for college and other future career paths.

While some of our course offerings are pilots, we offer many other existing courses that are just as exciting for students to explore some potential career fields that await them. PMSD is always looking for ways "to prepare all students for tomorrow's challenges and opportunities."

PMSD Cyber Program - Always Open for Learning

By: Ms. Nora Wandalowski,
Director
PMSD Cyber Program

As we head into the 2026-2027 school year, the PMSD Cyber Program has moved to a new location. The PMSD Cyber Program will now be located at Pocono Elementary Center (PEC) in Tannersville. This move gives the PMSD Cyber Program staff additional room within their instructional spaces and the grounds at PEC offer new areas for all annual events. We are excited to settle into the new space and start to welcome PMSD Cyber Program students and parents to visit us.

This school year, utilizing the Accelerate Ed and Imagine Edgenuity Learning Management Systems, the PMSD Cyber Program will offer district aligned, rigorous and engaging instruction on all academic and ability levels. The Imagine Edgenuity LMS allows for course content to be accommodated to meet student specific academic needs, while keeping in step with district curriculum initiatives.

The PMSD Cyber Program continues to offer a variety of learning environments for students in grades Kindergarten through 12th grade.

Working with students, parents, teachers, administrators and the greater Pocono community, the PMSD Cyber Program is here to provide online learning opportunities for all students from full-time cyber learning to hybrid part-time virtual courses, and credit recovery classes

for high school students.

Following the District approved curriculum, providing opportunities for enhancement and remediation, and providing live instruction for all Cyber students sets the PMSD Cyber Program apart from any other online learning program. The PMSD Cyber Program is the best option for parents and students seeking online education because we keep students engaged in the PMSD school community and throughout the year students are invited to participate in social activities to make connections with peers.

Making connections with teachers and peers is a benefit to enrollment in the PMSD Cyber Program. Abiding by PA Act 47 of 2025, in an effort to combat truancy and support student success, all students who attend the PMSD Cyber Program are required to attend live instruction throughout the school day. The live instruction facilitates not only connection with peers but enhances academic experience and increases student success. Every school day, students will have a set schedule of class times to attend live instruction with PMSD Cyber Program teachers. We continue to advance technology that creates a safe and engaging online learning environment for all PMSD students.

The PMSD Cyber Program students can take all elementary core courses, and secondary academic, advanced and AP courses in Math, Science, English, Social Studies and electives. The PMSD Cyber Program students have the option to work at their own pace to complete coursework, often



accelerating through requirements, while working through daily live instruction with PMSD Cyber teachers.

Many high school students opt to participate in Cyber for the flexibility to work part-time jobs during traditional school day hours and complete course assignments in the evening; similarly, a number of EHS and WHS students choose PMSD Cyber Program to complete the core course requirements while studying at MCTI. Additionally, families select the The PMSD Cyber Program over all other cyber schools because the families enjoy having the option for students to participate with their peers in school sports, activities and events.

Students on all grade levels who do not want to participate in a full-time cyber program but still need a flexible schedule can participate in a hybrid schedule with the PMSD Cyber Program and the traditional brick-and-mortar building. Selecting the correct subjects for online study and for participation in the traditional building will be a team decision with the student, parents, a PMSD

Cyber teacher, and building level staff meeting together to develop the best program for each individual student. Most elementary students participate in core courses at the traditional brick-and-mortar building; while many secondary students choose to participate in the many Art, Music and Technology programming that Pocono Mountain has to offer. Students who choose the PMSD Cyber Program experience the independence and flexibility of full-time cyberlearning, or can benefit from hybrid learning options which blend virtual and in-person traditional learning.

Any student who is enrolled in the Pocono Mountain School District and is interested in competing in college sports will be able to select and participate in the PMSD Cyber Program core courses from the list of requirements in the NCAA Eligibility Center.

In order to meet amateurism standards and demonstrate academic preparedness, an athlete must complete all core courses and meet all PMSD graduation requirements and PMSD Cyber Program is here to provide options for those students. The PMSD Cyber Program currently offers more than 50 courses that meet all NCAA requirements for eligibility.

Students participate in daily live lessons with PMSD Cyber Program teachers. Working with teachers that are now located at Pocono Elementary Center allows the PMSD Cyber Program to offer the personal connection that sets it apart from other

See PMSD CYBER...Page 10

PMSD announces Annual Public Notice on Special Education

Special Education (CHAPTER 14)

The Pocono Mountain School District, either directly or through various other education agencies including Colonial Intermediate Unit #20, provides special education services which may be required by children with special needs.

In compliance with state and federal law, notice is hereby given by the Pocono Mountain School District that it conducts ongoing identification activities as a part of its school program for the purpose of identifying students who may be in need of special education and related services (eligible students).

If your child is identified by the school district as possibly in need of such services, you will be notified of applicable procedures. Individualized services and programs are available for children who are determined to need specially designed instruction due to the following conditions:

1. Autism
2. Deaf-blindness
3. Deafness
4. Emotional disturbance
5. Hearing impairment
6. Intellectual disabilities
7. Multiple disabilities
8. Orthopedic impairment
9. Other health impairment
10. Specific learning disability
11. Speech or language impairment
12. Traumatic brain injury
13. Visual impairment, including blindness

Evaluation Process

Pocono Mountain School District has a procedure in place by which parents can request an evaluation. If you believe that your school-age child may be in need of special education services and related programs, you may request screening and evaluation at any time whether or not your child is enrolled in the district's public school program. Child Find federal regulations also apply to highly mobile children, including migrant children. Requests for evaluation and screening are to be made in writing to the building principal or to Dr. Mark Wade, Assistant Superintendent for Special Education for the Pocono Mountain School District, at 570-839-7121 ext. 10181.

Consent

School entities cannot proceed with an evaluation, or with the initial provision of special education and related services, without the written consent of the parents.

For additional information related to consent, please refer to the Procedural Safeguards Notice which can be found at the PaTTAN website, www.pattan.net or the Pocono Mountain School District website, www.pmsd.org. Once written parental consent is obtained, the district will proceed with the evaluation process.

If the parent disagrees with the evaluation, the parent can request an Independent Education Evaluation (IEE) at public expense.

Program Development

Once the evaluation process is completed, a team of qualified professionals and parents determine whether the child is eligible.

If the child is eligible, the individualized education program team meets, develops the program, and determines the educational placement. Once the IEP team develops the program and determines the educational placement, a Notice of Recommended Educational Placement (NOREP)/ prior written notice is issued. Written consent is required before initial services can be provided. The parent has the right to revoke consent after initial placement.

Preschool Children with Special Needs (Age 3 to School Age)

Parents whose child has a developmental delay or one or more conditions as listed in the Special Education (Chapter 14) Notice above, and/or who have questions regarding their child's seeing, hearing, learning, talking, moving about, manipulating objects, understanding, showing emotions, getting along with others, playing with toys, taking care of himself/herself, should telephone Colonial Intermediate Unit #20 (CIU #20) at 610-252-5550, which offers Early Intervention, a preschool program for children with special needs. CIU #20 can provide information, screening, evaluation, programs, therapy, parent support, and referral to community agencies at no cost to the parent.

For further information, call CIU #20 at 610-252-5550 or Dr. Wade at 570-839-7121 Ext. 10181.

Protected Handicapped Students (CHAPTER 15)

In compliance with state and federal law, the Pocono Mountain School District will provide to each protected handicapped student, without discrimination or cost to the student or family, those related aids, services or accommodations which are needed to provide equal

opportunity to participate in and obtain the benefits of the school program and extracurricular activities to the maximum extent appropriate to the student's abilities.

In order to qualify as a protected handicapped student, the child must be school age with a physical or mental disability that substantially limits or prohibits participation in or access to an aspect of the school program. These services and protections for "protected handicapped students" are distinct from those applicable to all eligible or exceptional students enrolled (or seeking enrollment) in special education programs.

For further information on the rights of parents and children, provision of services, evaluation and screening, and rights to due process procedures regarding protected handicapped students, you may contact, in writing or by telephone, Dr. Wade at 570-839-7121 Ext. 10181 or any building principal.

Gifted Education (CHAPTER 16)

The Pocono Mountain School District provides gifted education services to school-age students identified as gifted who require these services to reach their potential. In compliance with state and federal law, notice is hereby given by the Pocono Mountain School District that it conducts ongoing identification activities as a part of its school program for the purpose of identifying students who may be in need of gifted education services.

If your child is identified by the school district as possibly in need of such services, you will be notified of applicable procedures.

If you believe that your school-age child may be in need of gifted education services, you may request screening and evaluation at any time, whether or not your child is enrolled in the school district's public school

program.

Requests for evaluation and screening are to be made in writing to the building principal or Dr. Wade at 570-839-7121 Ext. 10181.

Confidentiality

All information gathered about your child is subject to the confidentiality provisions contained in federal and state law. The school district has policies and procedures in effect governing the collection, maintenance, destruction and disclosure to third parties of this information. Parents have the right to see and obtain a copy of their child's records. Personally identifiable information relative to an exceptional student will only be released with the permission of the parent and/or in accordance with the Family Education Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) and the Pennsylvania Rules, Regulations, and Standards.

For information about policies and procedures, as well as rights of confidentiality and access to educational records, you may contact in writing or by telephone, Dr. Wade, at 570-839-7121 Ext. 10181 or any building principal.

Also, in accordance with 34 CFR § 300.624, please be advised of the following retention/destruction schedule for the Pennsylvania Alternate System of Assessment (PASA), Pennsylvania System of School Assessment (PSSA), and Keystone Exam related materials:

- PSSA, Keystone Exam, and PASA test booklets will be destroyed one year after student reports are delivered for the administration associated with the test booklets.
- PSSA and Keystone Exam answer booklets and PASA media recordings will be destroyed three years after completion of the assessment.

PMSD Address: PMSD Department of Special Education, PO Box 200, Swiftwater, PA 18370-0200.



Secondary Meet the Teacher Night

East Junior High School

- Tuesday, September 8, 2026 – 6 to 8 p.m.

West Junior High School

- Tuesday, September 8, 2026 – 6 to 8 p.m.

PMSD Cyber Program

- Wednesday, September 9, 2026 – 6 to 8 p.m.

West High School

- Thursday, September 10, 2026 – 6 to 8 p.m.

East High School

- Thursday, September 17, 2026 – 6 to 8 p.m.

Attendance Matters: How Parents Can Support Student Success at Swiftwater Intermediate School

By Kristine Kunsman, Principal
Swiftwater Intermediate School

As we enter into another great school year, we wanted to highlight how important student attendance is for academic and social-emotional growth in each and every student at Swiftwater Intermediate School. Parents can play a significant role in improving their child's school attendance.

5 Ways Parents Can Boost & Maintain Good Attendance

Help Your Child Succeed in School—Every Day Counts!

1. Establish a Consistent Routine
 - Set regular bedtimes and wake-up times
 - Prepare clothes, lunch, and backpacks the night before
 - Leave the house with time to spare—no morning stress!
2. Prioritize Health & Wellness
 - Ensure a balanced diet and enough sleep
 - Stay up to date with doctor visits
 - Only keep kids home for real illness—avoid unnecessary absences
3. Talk About Attendance
 - Let your child know school is a top priority
 - Avoid scheduling trips or appointments during school hours
 - Praise good or improved attendance
4. Watch for Barriers
 - Pay attention to missed days and patterns
 - Solve issues like transportation, anxiety, or bullying early
 - Reach out to the school for support and resources
5. Stay Involved with the School
 - Keep in touch with teachers and staff
 - Attend parent-teacher conferences and school events
 - Encourage participation in school activities and clubs

Remember: Good Attendance Builds Good Habits for Life! Every day in school helps your child learn, grow, and succeed.

The Impact of Tardiness and Leaving School Early

We want to take a moment to reflect on an important issue that affects our students' academic success at Swiftwater Intermediate School: the impact of tardiness and leaving school early.

Why Tardiness Matters

Being on time is essential for setting up students for success. When students arrive late to school, they miss valuable instruction time that can't always be easily caught up. The beginning of the school day often includes important lessons, announcements, and opportunities to engage with classmates, all of which help students feel prepared and connected for the rest of their day.

While one or two instances of tardiness may



seem minor, repeated lateness can add up to significant instructional time missed. Studies have shown that students who frequently arrive late may experience gaps in their understanding, which can affect their academic progress and participation in class.

Students are considered tardy if they arrive after **9:05 AM**.

Leaving School Early: The Impact

In the same way, leaving school early disrupts a student's ability to fully participate in the day's learning. The final portion of the school day is just as critical as the first, with important lessons, homework assignments, and often collaborative activities that contribute to a student's academic and social growth.

When students leave early, they miss out on these opportunities and can feel disconnected from their peers. In addition, it can also make it harder for students to stay on top of homework, classwork, and assessments, leading to unnecessary stress. The last class of the day ends at 3:30 PM.

The Cumulative Effect

Both tardiness and early departures, when they become habitual, can have a cumulative effect on a student's academic achievement. Even small amounts of missed time each week add up, and over the course of the year, it can result in significant learning loss. Consistent attendance and punctuality play a key role in setting students up for success in school and in life.

How You Can Help

We understand that there are times when lateness or early departures are unavoidable. However, we encourage families to make every effort to ensure that students arrive on time and stay for the full school day whenever possible. Here are a few tips to help minimize tardies and early leave times:

- **Plan ahead:** Try to schedule appointments and errands outside of school hours whenever possible.
- **Set routines:** Establish a consistent morning routine to help your child get to school on time and prepare for the day.
- **Communicate with us:** If there are circumstances making it difficult for your child to arrive on time or stay the full day, please reach out to us. We're here to help and can often work together to find solutions.



Reading Together, Growing Together

Strong readers become strong learners. During the 2026–2027 school year, our K–6 reading goals are to help every student read more independently, speak in complete sentences, and confidently share their thinking about what they read.

By Dr. Bethann McCain,
Director of English Language Arts and Reading

Reading is much more than recognizing words on a page. When students talk in complete sentences, they build vocabulary, strengthen comprehension, develop critical thinking skills, and become more effective communicators.

Students need to be able to speak in complete sentences to be able to write in complete sentences. As students grow into independent readers, they learn to choose books they enjoy, apply reading strategies on their own, and develop the confidence to read for both learning and pleasure.

Families play an essential role in helping children become lifelong readers. One of the most valuable things you can do is simply spend time talking together. Reading a book, sharing stories from your day, asking questions, and listening to one another help children build language skills that support success in every subject.

Research consistently shows that children benefit most from back-and-forth conversations with caring adults during and after reading. These conversations strengthen vocabulary, comprehension, and oral language development while also building meaningful family connections.

In today's busy world, it can be tempting to spend free time on phones, tablets, or computers.

While technology certainly has its place, setting aside even 15–20 minutes each day to read together, enjoy independent reading, or simply talk as a family can have a lasting impact. Studies have found that shared reading and face-to-face conversation provide important language and literacy benefits that screen time alone cannot replace.

Together, we can help our children discover the joy of reading, become thoughtful communicators, and develop habits that will benefit them for years to come.

If you would like additional information, please reach out to me, or your child's teacher.



PMSD Cyber celebrates the its Kindergarten program "graduates" who will move up to 1st grade in 2026-2027.

PMSD Cyber: Enrollment open for 2026-27 SY (continued from Page 7)

cyber schools.

All teachers have live instruction scheduled throughout the day to guide students through the Accelerate Ed LMS (grades K through 5th) and the Imagine Edgenuity LMS (grades 6th through 12th).

All students can schedule an appointment to come into the PMSD Cyber Program building and meet with a member of the Cyber Staff to receive face-to-face support. Live daily instruction is presented through online Google Meet links, and additional support

instruction can be scheduled by appointment with teachers or guidance counselors.

If you are a district resident looking for the best Cyber Program for your student, or want to learn more about the full-day and hybrid programs for students in Kindergarten through 12th grade offered by the PMSD Cyber Program, please contact Nora Wandalowski at nwandalowski@pmsd.org, 570-839-7121 extension 75400 to schedule an appointment.

PMSD Cyber Program is Always Open For Learning!

Message to parents about student lockers

By Ms. Kristine Kunsman,
Principal

Swiftwater Intermediate School

At Swiftwater Intermediate School students use lockers to store books and supplies. We receive many questions about items that can be kept in or on student lockers.

What's NOT Allowed in or on Lockers

- Aerosol colognes, body sprays, or aerosol deodorants
- Stickers or decorative decals on the exterior or interior
- Perishable food or beverages of any kind

Why These Policies Matter

- Aerosol products can trigger respiratory issues and allergies; they create air quality concerns in enclosed spaces
- Stickers and decals damage locker surfaces and create maintenance issues

- Food and beverages attract pests, create odors, and can spoil - creating unsanitary conditions. Students may bring water to school, and we have several water bottle filling stations in the school

What We're Asking

- Do: Use solid deodorant sticks or non-aerosol alternatives at home
- Do: Keep lockers clean and free of decorations
- Do: Store only school materials and personal items (books, folders, jackets)
- Do: Eat and drink in designated areas like the cafeteria

Questions?

If your student has specific needs or concerns, please contact us. We're happy to work with families to find solutions.

Thank you for your partnership in keeping our school clean, safe, and healthy for everyone!

Supporting children's & teens' mental health

By Dr. Beth DeLay
Director of Health, Physical Education, Guidance & Nursing Services

Being mentally healthy during childhood means reaching developmental and emotional milestones, learning healthy social skills, and developing positive coping strategies. Mentally healthy children are better able to succeed at home, at school, and in their communities.

Why Mental Health Matters

Recent national data show that adolescent mental health continues to be a significant concern.

Youth Mental Health by the Numbers

- 40% of high school students reported feeling persistently sad or hopeless.
- 26% reported experiencing poor mental health.
- 20% seriously considered attempting suicide.
- 9% reported attempting suicide.

Source: CDC Youth Risk Behavior Survey (YRBS), 2023

These numbers remind us that many young people are struggling and need support.

The Impact of Poor Mental Health

Mental health challenges can affect every aspect of a child's life, including:

- Academic performance
- Attendance and school engagement
- Relationships with family and friends
- Decision-making and problem-solving
- Physical health
- Increased risk of substance use, violence, and other risky behaviors

The earlier concerns are recognized and addressed, the better the outcomes.

The Good News

Young people are resilient, and supportive relationships make a difference.

Research shows that students who feel connected to their families, schools, and communities are more likely to:

- Experience better mental health
- Develop healthy coping skills
- Avoid risky behaviors
- Feel safe, valued, and supported



Every caring adult can make a positive impact by listening, encouraging, and being present.

How to Talk with Your Child

Starting a conversation may feel difficult, but open communication is one of the best ways to support your child.

Consider asking:

- "Can you tell me what's been going on?"
- "How have you been feeling lately?"
- "Have you felt this way before?"
- "How can I help?"
- "Would talking with another trusted adult be helpful?"
- "I'm concerned about your safety. Have you had thoughts about hurting yourself or someone else?"

Helpful Tips

- Stay calm and listen without judgment.
- Speak honestly and in age-appropriate language.
- Choose a time when your child feels safe and comfortable.
- Let your child know they are loved and supported.
- Seek professional help if concerns persist.

When to Seek Immediate Help

If you believe your child is at immediate risk of harming themselves or someone else:

- Call or text 988
- Contact the 988 Suicide & Crisis Lifeline immediately.

You are not alone, and help is available 24 hours a day.

Remember

Every child deserves to feel safe, connected, supported, and hopeful. Working together—families, schools, and communities—we can help children and teens build resilience and thrive.

Additional Resources

- Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC)
- Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA)
- 988 Suicide & Crisis Lifeline

PM East students will see new spaces and new faces this school year

By Ms. Jamie Bowman,
Principal
PM East High School

If you've visited the Swiftwater Campus this summer, you may have noticed some exciting projects. These exciting developments are taking place at East High with the support of the School Board and greater community.

Two of the most notable projects will serve aesthetic, functional, and safety initiatives.

A major facelift of the EHS façade and entrance will greet visitors with a renewed first impression. In addition, the EHS Library is being reimagined with new furniture, calming colors, and access to resources that are more fitting for the digital age.

In addition, last spring, Cardinal Baseball and Softball played their first seasons on the new turf fields. This amazing upgrade to facilities allowed teams to practice and compete during unpredictable spring weather conditions. On June 3, administration, the Board of Directors, coaches, and players celebrated a successful first season on the turf with a ribbon cutting ceremony.

East High School is also excited to welcome several new faculty members for the 2026-2027 school year.

Our new Athletic Director, Mr. Holtzer, brings a wide range of teaching and athletics experience from Wallenpaupack Area School District.

In the new Library, you'll notice East High School's "new" Librarian, Ms. Yukna, who comes to us from East Junior High School.

In the Guidance office, Counselor Ms. Melton will be working with students with last names beginning with the letters E-K. Ms. Melton joins East High School after serving as a Guidance Counselor at Clear Run Intermediate School.

Ms. Daniels is also trading navy for red as she moves from West High School to join the East High School team of Special Education teachers.

East High School administration would also like to share some important information to ensure a smooth start to the new school year.

- **12th grade** - Don't forget, the meningococcal conjugate vaccine (MCV) is required for all incoming senior students. New this school year, all seniors must complete the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) or an Opt-Out Form prior to graduation. This law was enacted by the Pennsylvania General Assembly and will be monitored by the Guidance Department.



The Pocono Mountain Board of Education, Superintendent of Schools and Administrative Cabinet, Pocono Mountain East High School Administrative Team, coaches and Cardinal student athletes held a ribbon cutting ceremony for the newly installed artificial turf Cardinal baseball and softball fields on the Swiftwater Campus on June 3, 2026. Picture here are the East Administrative Team, Cardinal Coaches and East Student Athletes.

- **11th grade** - A physical examination is required for all students entering 11th grade. Please ensure that this is completed by your student's primary healthcare provider prior to the first day of school.
- **10th grade** - Sophomore year is the time for Keystone Exams! If your student has not already taken the keystones, all 10th graders will complete the Algebra,

Biology, and Literature Keystone Exams. Testing begins on May 17.

- **9th grade** - As students navigate the transition from the Junior High to the High School, we would like to offer an important reminder regarding headphones. Headphones/earbuds are not permitted in the East High School hallways. Please remind your students of this important safety rule as we begin the school year.

Threat Assessment Teams work to keep PMSD schools safe

By Dr. Jeremy Sawicki
Assistant Superintendent for Technology
and Security Operations &
PMSD School Safety & Security Coordinator

As we prepare for the start of the 2026-27 school year, Pocono Mountain School District (PMSD) would like to remind parents and community members about the district's school-based threat assessment process, an important part of our ongoing commitment to school safety.

In 2019, Pennsylvania enacted legislation requiring schools to establish Threat Assessment Teams to help identify and address potential threats before they escalate into acts of violence. According to the Pennsylvania Commission on Crime and Delinquency (PCCD), threat assessment is a prevention strategy designed to identify, assess, and address possible threats before harm occurs.

Recognizing the value of this approach, PMSD established Threat Assessment Teams in all district schools in 2019. Each school has its own team, supported by a district-level team, that works to assess, manage, and mitigate potential threats involving students, staff, or school facilities.

Threat Assessment Team members complete specialized training before serving on a team and participate in annual refresher training each school year. Team members also utilize additional training



resources provided by PCCD to remain current with state guidelines and best practices.

Threat assessment is a fact-based process used to evaluate behaviors or communications that may indicate a risk to the safety of students, staff, schools, or the community. Threats may be communicated verbally, in writing, electronically, visually, or through behavior.

The goal of the threat assessment process is not only to protect the school community, but also to identify students who may need support and connect them with appropriate interventions and services. In many cases, concerns can be addressed through existing school support systems before a situation escalates.

PMSD's Student Assistance Program (SAP) teams play an important role in this process by

helping connect students and families with resources and support services when needed.

Parents, students, and community members are important partners in maintaining safe schools. If you become aware of a potential threat or safety concern, please report it to your child's principal, a teacher, coach, school administrator, law enforcement, or through the Safe2Say Something anonymous reporting system.

Working together, we can continue to maintain safe, supportive learning environments for all PMSD students and staff.

YOU AREN'T ALONE

Help is available

Visit safe2saypa.org to report
or call the hotline at 1-844-723-2729.
Safe2Say Something teaches youth and adults how to recognize warning signs and signals, especially within social media, from individuals who may be a threat to themselves or others.

Welcome back to Tobyhanna Elementary Center

**Dr. John Kevra, Principal
& Ms. Jessica Grebb, Assistant Principal**
Tobyhanna Elementary Center

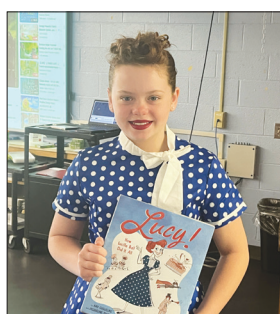
As the long, sun-filled days of summer begin to soften into the familiar rhythm of a new school year, the staff of Tobyhanna Elementary Center is filled with excitement and anticipation to once again welcome students and families back through our doors. A new school year always carries with it a sense of renewal—a fresh beginning filled with promise, possibility, and opportunity—and this year is no exception.

There is a special kind of energy that only a school can hold in early September. The hallways, once quiet and still for the summer, begin to come alive again with the sound of footsteps, laughter, and conversation. Bulletin boards are freshly decorated, classrooms are thoughtfully arranged, and teachers return with dedication and care, ready to create meaningful learning experiences for every child who walks into their room. It is a season of preparation, hope, and excitement as we look forward to another year of growth together.

This year, our school community reflects both meaningful transitions and enduring traditions. We extend our heartfelt gratitude to six valued teachers who have retired after long and highly esteemed careers in education. They are: Ms. Amadio, Ms. Vân Louvender, Ms. Scovil, Ms. Dalton, Ms. Hollar, and Ms. Schaumlöffel. Their dedication to students, their professionalism, and their unwavering commitment to the mission of Tobyhanna Elementary Center have left an indelible mark on our school community. Over the years, they have shaped young minds, encouraged curiosity, and provided countless moments of guidance, kindness, and inspiration. While their presence in our building will be deeply missed, their legacy remains woven into the very fabric of our school and will continue to influence generations of learners to come.

At the same time, we are delighted to welcome four brand new faculty members into the Tobyhanna Elementary Center team of teachers. They are: Ms. Sarah Jones, Ms. Courtney Carter, Ms. Noemy Rivas Angeles, and Ms. Emily Hahn. They arrive with enthusiasm, energy, and a genuine eagerness to learn from the experienced educators around them, while also contributing fresh ideas and perspectives of their own. Their readiness to grow alongside their colleagues, combined with their positive spirit and dedication, brings a renewed sense of excitement to our school community. We are confident that their presence will be of tremendous benefit to our students, enriching classrooms with creativity, encouragement, and a strong commitment to helping every child succeed. Finally, we are welcoming back Ms. Christine Kelly as our math support teacher. Previously, she was temporarily part of the TEC team of professionals so we are excited to be welcoming her as a permanent member of our teaching staff.

As with any new school year, students and families will notice a few additional changes throughout the building. Some staff members are settling into new roles, others are transitioning into



Tobyhanna Elementary Center students thrive in an environment that encourages creativity. A favorite project for students is where they research historical figures, celebrities and pop culture icons and then dress up as their character to present their projects. The school also held a fun celebration for America's 250th Birthday that included Minute to Win it and other activities.



new classrooms, and a few updates have been made to forms and procedures as we continue to refine and improve our systems. While these adjustments are part of our ongoing effort to better serve families and strengthen communication, they do not change the heart of who we are as a school. They simply reflect our continued commitment to growth and excellence.

One especially exciting highlight this year can be found in our library, where new furniture and a fresh coat of paint has transformed the space into an even more inviting and comfortable environment for students. The library has always been a treasured part of TEC—a place where imagination is sparked, curiosity is nurtured, and a lifelong love of reading begins to take root. With its updated furnishings, the space now offers even more opportunities for students to gather, explore, collaborate, and enjoy quiet moments immersed in books. In an effort to keep our programs up to date and addressing the challenges of tomorrow, we are integrating a STEAM curriculum into library classes. Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts, and Math continue to play a huge role in our ever-changing world and we want our students to be part of those positive changes. Whether students are diving into scientific research projects, discovering new favorite authors, or simply enjoying the peaceful joy of reading, the refreshed library environment enhances every experience within its walls.

Even as these visible changes take place, what remains unchanged is our unwavering commitment to creating a safe, supportive, and positive learning environment for every student. At Tobyhanna Elementary, we believe that children thrive when they feel respected, valued, and encouraged. Our school is built on relationships—between teachers and students, among peers, and in partnership



with families and the local community. These connections form the foundation of everything we do and guide our daily efforts to support student success.

Equally important is our belief that every child is unique. We remain deeply committed to recognizing and addressing the individual needs of each learner. Education is never a one-size-fits-all experience, and we take great care in understanding the strengths, challenges, interests, and learning styles of every student. Rather than viewing children simply as members of a classroom or grade level, we strive to know them as individuals—each with their own story, their own potential, and their own path to success. It is our responsibility and privilege to support that journey in meaningful and responsive ways. Consequently, we will continue to explore more meaningful curriculum programs such as Amplify for ELA and Journeys for math. We will also continue to provide a quality education that emphasizes a participation and appreciation for the arts and physical education. At TEC we know that Music, art, chorus, band, gym class, and field day are equally as important as traditional academics to becoming a well-rounded adult.

From our youngest kindergarten students stepping into formal education for the very first time to our sixth graders preparing for the important transition to middle school, each child plays an essential role in the life of our school community. Every grade level brings its own milestones, memories, and moments of growth. We are honored to guide students through these formative years, helping them build confidence, develop skills, and discover the joy of learning.

As we begin this new school year together, we

See TEC...Page 14



CRIS students have PRIDE in their stride

As we welcome students, families, and staff back for the 2026-2027 school year, our school community is excited to continue our commitment to fostering a safe, respectful, and engaging learning environment through PRIDE, our SWPBIS— School-Wide Positive Behavioral Interventions and Support system.

PBIS is a proactive, school-wide framework designed to promote positive behavior and improve student outcomes. Rather than focusing solely on correcting misbehavior, PBIS emphasizes teaching and reinforcing expectations so that students know how to behave responsibly and respectfully in all areas of the school—from classrooms and hallways to the cafeteria, playground and buses.

At the heart of SWPBIS is the belief that positive behavior can be taught and celebrated. This year, we will continue teaching consistent expectations across all grade levels, have visual reminders posted throughout the building, and students will be recognized and rewarded with PRIDE tickets for demonstrating our school's core values—whether it's being prepared, showing respect, being involved, dependable, or empathetic. Students have the opportunity to “cash in” these tickets for a variety of items such as lunch bunch passes, dress down coupons, snacks and school supplies from our PRIDE cart, etc. There will also be special incentives and re-teaching opportunities held throughout the year.

Here's how families can support PBIS at home:

- Review behavior expectations with your child. Ask them what the school values are and how they can show those behaviors at home and in the community.
- Celebrate positive choices. Acknowledge and praise your child when they act respectfully, solve a problem peacefully, or show responsibility.
- Stay connected. Talk to your child's teacher or the building administrators about how SWPBIS is being used and how you can support it.

When schools, families, and communities work together to promote a shared vision of behavior, students thrive academically, socially, and emotionally. SWPBIS isn't just a program—it's a mindset that supports every child in learning how to be their best self.

We look forward to partnering with you to make this school year one filled with positive choices, strong relationships, and continued success. Here's to a great start and a school year rooted in positivity and growth!



Pocono Mountain School District hosted the PMSD Multicultural Night on April 28, 2026 at PM East High School. The event featured the America250PA Mobile Unit. (Left to Right) Dr. Cathy Sweeney, the Assistant Superintendent for Curriculum and Instruction, and Dr. Elizabeth Robison, Superintendent of Schools, were among the many attendees at the event honoring the many cultures of PMSD families and students. The event was sponsored by the PMSD ESL and World Language Departments, in partnership with the Monroe County America250PA Commission.

Cultivating a love for reading at home

By Ms. Amy Haynes, Principal
Clear Run Intermediate School

At Clear Run Intermediate School we strive to create a learning environment that promotes literacy and inspires students to gain a lifelong love for reading.

Finding time to read at this age can feel like an uphill battle but reading not just in school but at home will support a student's academic success in all subjects.

We want to provide some ideas that will make reading at home enjoyable and part of an everyday routine.

- If your student loves movies or shows, have them read the book first before watching the movie or show. This can create some good conversation on the similarities and differences between the book and movie or show.
- Keep reading to your student out loud. Try finding an article or novel to read together. Read this out loud or have your student read out loud to you.
- Dedicate time during the week or weekend where your house drops everything and reads for 15 minutes. Everyone in the house grabs something to read.
- Talk to your student about what they are reading. You do not need to be reading the same



book but you could ask questions like, “Who is the main character?” or “Is the main character facing a problem in the book?”

- No screen time. Before going to bed have your student read for 15 - 20 minutes to help unwind from the day. This also will help build a consistent reading habit and remove distractions from electronic devices.

If your student is struggling to connect with a particular book try finding a graphic novel, magazine article, illustrated novel, or an audiobook.

We encourage all students to read for 20 minutes a day outside of the school hours. This consistent reading habit will expose students to a wide range of vocabulary and support future academic success.

Thank you for your support in cultivating a love for reading at home!

Join PMSD's School Nutrition Advisory Board Meeting!

Pocono Mountain School District is seeking parents, teachers and students to participate in its School Nutrition Advisory Board Meeting. This will be a collaborative group that will review school meal programs and provide input on school menus. Your feedback and ideas are valuable in ensuring that school meals are nutritious, appealing and reflective of the preferences of our school community.

Individuals interested in attending PMSD's School Nutrition Advisory Board Meeting on October 14, 2026, please contact the Meals Administrator at 570-839-7121 ext. 10164 or email studentmeals@pmsd.org



Attendance Matters: Every day counts at the CRIS

By Ms. Amy Haynes, Principal
Clear Run Intermediate School

At the intermediate school level, regular attendance is one of the strongest predictors of student success. As students in grades 3–6 continue to develop academically, socially, and emotionally, being present at school each day provides them with valuable learning opportunities that cannot be fully replicated through make-up work alone.

Research consistently shows that students who attend school regularly are more engaged in learning, achieve higher academic outcomes, and develop stronger connections with their peers and teachers. Students who miss school frequently are at greater risk of falling behind in reading and mathematics, experiencing gaps in learning, and feeling disconnected from the school community.

Unfortunately missing just two days of school per month whether excused or unexcused, can result in a student being classified as chronically absent. Chronic absenteeism is generally



Clear Run Intermediate School (CRIS) students, who attend school regularly, experience a connection to their school and classmates that helps them achieve academically and socially. Tie Dye day is a fun activity for students at CRIS to help them feel connected.

defined as missing 10% or more of the school year.

At Clear Run Intermediate School, we believe that attendance is a shared responsibility among students, families,

and school staff. We understand that occasional absences due to illness or emergencies are unavoidable; however, establishing consistent attendance habits helps students build

routines, maintain academic progress, and strengthen relationships with teachers and classmates.

Families can support strong attendance habits by:

- Establishing consistent bedtime and morning routines.
- Scheduling appointments outside of school hours whenever possible.
- Communicating with the school regarding attendance concerns.
- Emphasizing the importance of attending school every day.

Our school is committed to partnering with families to support student attendance and remove barriers that may impact a child's ability to attend school regularly. Through attendance monitoring, family outreach, and student support services, we work together to ensure that every student has the opportunity to succeed.

Thank you for your continued partnership in making attendance a priority. Every day matters, every lesson counts, and every student benefits from being present and engaged in learning.

SEC welcomes new assistant principal

By Dr. Karen Doughton, Principal
Swiftwater Elementary Center

As we prepare for another wonderful school year at Swiftwater Elementary Center, we are excited to welcome Ms. Sarah Heidecker as our new assistant principal. We are thrilled to have her join our Cardinal family and look forward to the experience, energy, and dedication she will bring to our school community.

Following the retirement of Dr. Krislin Ofalt, Dr. Karen Doughton will continue to serve as principal of Swiftwater Elementary Center. For the past several years, Dr. Doughton and Dr. Ofalt worked together as co-principals, providing leadership, support, and dedication to the SEC community. As we begin this next chapter, Dr. Doughton is excited to continue serving students, families, and staff alongside Ms. Heidecker in her new role as assistant principal.

Ms. Heidecker brings a wealth of hands-on classroom experience and a strong commitment to supporting students, families, and educators. She has spent the past several years as a learning support teacher and has also taught in both early intervention and kindergarten settings. These experiences have provided her with a deep understanding of the importance of meeting the unique needs of every child and creating a learning environment where all students feel supported, valued, and successful.

Ms. Heidecker is eager to become part of the SEC community and looks forward to building meaningful relationships with our students, staff, and families. She brings a collaborative spirit, a passion for learning, and a commitment to continuing the



positive culture and strong traditions that make Swiftwater Elementary Center such a special place.

As we welcome Ms. Heidecker, we also take a moment to celebrate and thank Dr. Ofalt as she begins her well-deserved retirement. Dr. Ofalt has been an important part

of Swiftwater Elementary Center and has made a lasting impact through her leadership, dedication, and genuine care for students, families, and staff. Her commitment to our school community, along with the many memories and accomplishments she helped create, will always be appreciated.

Please join us in welcoming Ms. Sarah Heidecker as our new assistant principal and in wishing Dr. Ofalt a retirement filled with happiness, adventure, and cherished moments. We look forward to another incredible year at SEC as we continue to learn, grow, and celebrate together as Cardinals.

East High School bids farewell to Mrs. Tammy Toleno and thanks her for her years of dedicated service. East High School welcomes Ms. Jamie Bowman in her new role as the East High School Principal. Ms. Bowman is a 2007 EHS graduate, former teacher, and served as an EHS Assistant Principal for the past four years in preparation for her leadership position.

TEC prepares for another great year (continued from Page 12)

do so with optimism and enthusiasm for all that lies ahead. There will be new lessons to learn, friendships to form, challenges to overcome, and achievements to celebrate. There will be quiet moments of reflection and joyful moments of discovery. Through it all, the Tobyhanna Elementary Center community -students, staff, and families alike - will continue to move forward together with shared purpose and pride.

We are deeply grateful to our families for their ongoing trust, support, and partnership. Your involvement is a vital part of your child's success and of the strength of our school community. Together, we create an environment where children are encouraged to dream, to grow, and to achieve their very best. The same can be said for our incredible Parent Teacher Organization (PTO). Without the support and creativity of them TEC would not be the wonderful place it is. We encourage all families to become members and participate in a big way or a small way. Either way, it is always appreciated.

Welcome back to Tobyhanna Elementary Center. We are truly looking forward to a school year filled with learning, growth, connection, and countless memorable moments. May this year be one of joy, discovery, and success for all.

Here's to an outstanding school year ahead!

Celebrating academic success at West High School

By Mr. Michael Jones, Principal
PM West High School

Looking back on another successful school year, West High School is proud to share the tremendous academic growth taking place throughout our high school. Our students continue to demonstrate that when they are provided with meaningful opportunities, high expectations, and dedicated support, they rise to the challenge in remarkable ways.

One of the most exciting developments has been the significant increase in student participation and success in our Advanced Placement (AP) courses over the last several years.

Each year, more students enroll in these rigorous college-level classes, embracing academic challenges, and then earn qualifying scores on AP exams. Eligible students that complete these courses and earn a qualifying score on the exam are eligible to earn college credit(s) while they are attending high school.

There are nearly 30 of these courses available district-wide and they are available in Math, Science, Social Studies, English and Language Arts, Music, Art, Computer Science, and World Languages. Enrollment in AP

courses at West has risen significantly since returning from the pandemic with a 178% increase in the number of exams being taken since that time, proving that our students are eager to push their academic boundaries. More importantly, students opting to take these advanced courses aren't just completing them, they are excelling.

Our AP exam pass rates have reached an all-time high for the building with the vast majority of students earning an eligible passing score. These accomplishments not only reflect our students' hard work and determination, but also the commitment of our outstanding teachers who inspire them to reach their highest potential. As we approach the AP testing season each May, a dedicated staff of AP teachers organizes a pep assembly for these students to encourage their success and answer any outstanding questions.

The District also encourages students to take advantage of tutoring prior to the exams to help provide additional preparation for students.

In addition to Advanced Placement courses, we have also experienced growth in student membership in our academic and athletic honor societies. Membership has expanded across a variety of organizations that recognize student achievement, including the



Pocono Mountain West High School students participated in the 2026 Empower Teen: The Leadership Experience event at Kalahari on April 30, where they learned to use their strengths to guide college choices, career paths, and professional goals.

National Honor Society, each of our core subject honor societies in Math, Science, and English, the National Art Honor Society, Spanish, French, and German Honor societies, our Music Tri-M Honor Society, and the Athletic Honor Society. Each of these organizations provide students with opportunities to develop leadership skills, serve our community, collaborate with peers who share similar interests, and celebrate academic success. The increasing participation reflects a

school culture where scholarship, character, service, and leadership are valued and encouraged.

As we continue to expand access to advanced coursework, we remain focused on ensuring all students have the opportunity to pursue academic excellence. In this way, we are equally excited with the expansion of academic course offerings throughout the District that are designed to engage students' diverse interests and prepare them for future success.

In the past two years, we have introduced new classes that provide hands-on learning experiences, explore emerging career fields, encourage critical thinking and innovation, and appeal to evolving student interests. Among these new courses are Tabletop Role-Playing Game Creative Writing, Beyond the Controller, Sports Marketing, Panther Talk, and Music Production. Descriptions for these courses are available in the Pocono Mountain Program of Studies found on the District website under Academics and Secondary Curriculum.

These gains and opportunities are a product of the hard work and collaboration of dedicated educators, the determination of our students, and the support that families provide. We look forward to seeing continued growth this coming school year!

West High School celebrates 25 years of Homecomings

By Ms. Michele Connors, Assistant Principal
PM West High School

Mark your calendars, West Family! October 13th through the 16th is going to be PURE GOLD at West High School (WHS) as we celebrate our 25th annual homecoming! Our award-winning West High School Student Council has prepared a homecoming week full of festivities titled: "Homecoming Greatest Hits: 25 Years of Homecoming Pure Gold", and everyone is invited to join in on the fun!

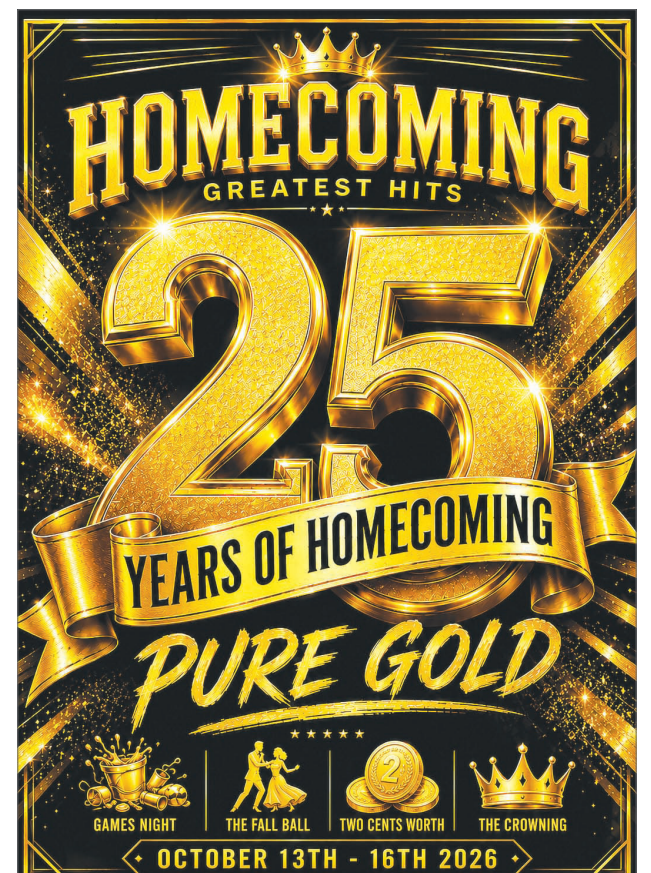
All WHS students and staff will be able to participate each day of the week with a special spirit day: October 13th will be Rock Star Day, October 14th will be Queen's Colors Day, October 15th will be Throw Back Thursday Day, and the spirit week will conclude on October 16th with a Gold Out Day. More details about what students and staff should wear each day will be forthcoming.

Our seniors who are accepted to be in the running to potentially be our 25th homecoming queen will compete throughout the week in our traditional homecoming activities. They'll each put together their own team for Games Night on October 14th to go head-to-head with the other queens' teams in a series of games and challenges and also try to impress the panel of judges by performing an original skit.

The queens will also compete in special challenges at the Fall Ball on October 15th and at the pep rally on October 16th. Throughout the entire week, the queens will work toward collecting money for this year's chosen charity - Gold Star Families (<https://americasgoldstarfamilies.org/>), in the Two Cents Worth competition. Finally, on Friday night, October 16th, our 25th West High School Homecoming Queen and her court will be crowned at halftime at our home football game.

Our community members surely won't want to miss out on all the fun! All are welcome to attend Games Night on October 14th – and be sure to bring your spare change to donate and vote for your favorite queen(s) in the Two Cents Worth competition that night. Also, please join us for the home football game on Friday, October 16th as our Panthers battle the Cavaliers from East Stroudsburg Area Senior High School South. We'll need you to help us cheer on the Panthers and our Homecoming Court as they are recognized at halftime.

We look forward to welcoming our West Family members at this homecoming tradition – in fact, all 24 of our past homecoming queens have been invited to attend the festivities! Be sure to join us on the Mountain as we celebrate and recognize 25 years of Homecoming at West High School!



WHS Homecoming Greatest Hits Flyer 2026 (created by WHS Student Council)

PMSD celebrates the East & West Class of 2026

Pocono Mountain School District celebrated its East and West Class of 2026 graduates during June graduation ceremonies.

The East Class of 2026 graduation ceremony took place on June 5, 2026, at the Cardinal Stadium on the Swiftwater Campus. East's Class of 2026 included 339 graduates.

The West Class of 2026 graduation ceremony was held on June 6, 2026, at the Panther Stadium on the Sullivan Trail Campus. West's Class of 2026 included 388 graduates.

East's Valedictorian was Julia Nish, whose parents are Allison and William Nish of Tannersville. Julia plans to major in Applied Psychology at New York University. East's Salutatorian was Mahi Patel, whose parents are Diptiben and Mayurbhai Patel of Mount Pocono. Mahi plans to major in Mechanical Engineering at Northeastern University.

West's Valedictorian was Parviz Eshonov, whose parents are Djamoliddin and Sanobar Nuritdinova



Congratulations to the Pocono Mountain East's 339 graduating seniors in it's Class of 2026.

of Albrightsville. Parviz plans to major in Finance at Western Governors University. West's Salutatorian was Addison Nat, whose parents are Ashley and Mark Nat of Long Pond. Addison plans to major in Photography at



Congratulations to Pocono Mountain West's 388 graduating seniors in it's Class of 2026.

Luzerne County Community College and also attend Ani Art Academies.

East's graduates of the Class of 2026 have exciting plans for their futures:

- 49% to attend 4-year colleges/universities
- 16% to attend 2-year colleges
- 6% to attend trade/technical schools

- Total College Enrollment is 71%
- 9% to enter the workforce
- 13 graduates to serve in the Armed Forces

East's Class of 2026 reported earning scholarships totaling \$3,465,223 and grants totaling \$859,281

Congratulations to the East Class of 2026.

West's graduates of the Class of 2026 have exciting plans for their futures:

- 38% to attend 4-year colleges/universities
- 12% to attend 2-year colleges
- 11% to attend trade/technical schools
- Total College Enrollment is 61%
- 23% entering the workforce
- 31 graduates to serve in the Armed Forces

West's Class of 2026 reported earning scholarships totaling \$1,186,581 and grants totaling \$584,440.

Congratulations to the West Class of 2026.

PMSD officials wish all East and West Class of 2026 graduates a bright and successful future.

School Safety information for district parents

Emergency Notifications

The safety of our students and staff is always Pocono Mountain School District's highest priority. During a school emergency, parents can play an important role in helping school officials and emergency responders manage the situation safely and effectively.

If a lockdown or other emergency situation occurs, please:

- Do not call or come directly to the school. Keeping telephone lines open allows school officials and emergency responders to communicate quickly and efficiently during the emergency.

- Monitor official district communication channels. Information and updates will be posted on the PMSD website and district Facebook page as they become available.

- Watch for ParentLink messages. The district will use ParentLink phone calls, emails, and text messages to provide important updates and instructions. If you do not currently receive ParentLink emails or text alerts regarding school delays, closures, or other notifications, please visit the district website to update your contact information and notification preferences.

- Follow local media outlets. The district may provide updates to local television, radio, and print news organizations to help keep parents and the community informed.

- Wait for reunification instructions. If students must be evacuated, the location of the parent reunification site will be announced by district officials following the incident. Because every emergency is different, reunification locations cannot be predetermined.

By following these guidelines, parents can help emergency personnel focus on protecting students

and resolving the situation as quickly and safely as possible.

For questions about PMSD emergency operations procedures, please contact your child's principal or the district Safety and Security Coordinator at (570) 839-7121, ext. 10151.

Reunifying Students with Their Families During an Emergency

Pocono Mountain School District (PMSD) has partnered with the I Love U Guys Foundation to implement a Family Reunification process designed to safely account for students and reunify them with their parents or guardians during an emergency.

The Family Reunification process may be used during situations such as extended power outages, severe weather incidents, police activity near a school, fires, chemical spills, acts of violence, or other emergencies that require students to be evacuated or relocated to a safer location.

If PMSD activates the Family Reunification, students will remain under the supervision of school staff until they are safely released to an authorized adult.

What Parents Can Expect

If reunification becomes necessary:

- Parents and guardians will be notified through district communication channels that reunification is required, along with the location and time of the reunification site.

- Parents and guardians must bring a valid photo ID to the reunification site.

- Upon arrival, parents and guardians will proceed through a series of check-in stations designed to verify their identity and confirm they are authorized to pick up the student.

- School officials will verify that the individual is listed in the district's student information system as a custodial parent, guardian, or approved emergency contact.

- Once verification is complete, students will be escorted to the reunification area and released to the authorized adult.

The reunification process may take time, especially when large numbers of students are involved. These procedures are in place to ensure every student is released safely and only to authorized individuals.

Parents can help ensure a smooth reunification process by keeping their contact information and emergency contacts current with their child's school. The start of a new school year is an excellent time to review and update this information.

By working together and maintaining accurate emergency contact information, we can help ensure students are reunited with their families as quickly and safely as possible during an emergency.

Swiftwater Intermediate receives new playground

The start of the 2026–2027 school year will include new playground spaces for our students, as daily recess has been extended to include all 5th and 6th grade students. This change reflects our commitment to supporting the physical, social, and emotional well-being of every child by providing additional opportunities for movement, play, and a much-needed brain break during the school day.