

FALL 2022



SUMMER OF Learning

Our Summer School programs brought PSD students across the district enhanced educational opportunities and enrichment.

Students at all grade levels worked hard not only on course work, but in immersive learning experiences that provided well-rounded, hands-on experiences they will take with them throughout the remainder of their school years and into their careers.

The launch of the Oakland Community College and Pontiac Collective Impact's Cradle to Career Readiness Program brought 19 PHS students into OCC's College Success Skills course which earned them two college credits.

The Lomas Brown Foundation's LEAP Camp (Learn, Earn and Play) not only brought students face to face with an NFL legend, but it also gave them real world skills on financial literacy, nutrition and more in a fun filled environment.

Our younger students also enjoyed incredible experiences such as learning about the importance and science of water firsthand with the Great Lakes Water Department and fifth grade students even created, wrote, and produced their very own podcasts both in front of and behind the microphone.

These are just a few of the many amazing educational experiences our summer program students had this summer. We can't wait to see how they apply these great skills in their futures!





Greetings

from Superintendent Williams

Hello Pontiac School District Family,

The 2022-2023 school year is in swing and it's going to be a great one! Each year you've spent in the Pontiac School District has brought new and exciting developments for our schools. Yes, we've been faced with vast challenges too, but despite all that these past few years have opened a world of opportunities for our students, staff, and community.

Through the collaboration and unity of all involved in the district we have watched the Phoenix not only rise but fly, and it's flying high! We have become a district that is sought out for the achievements of our students and staff. In fact, we were recently named a **2022 National Education Equity Lab School of Excellence**. This nationwide recognition is just one of many accolades our

district and individual students and staff have received, and we know it's just the beginning.

From these accomplishments we have realized it is time to let the world know who we are and how far we've come. We are no longer "on the rise."

It is my pleasure to share with you that we have launched brand new messaging for our district. Messaging that embodies where we are now and where we are going.

"The Phoenix is flying high, transforming minds for a greater tomorrow."

Be a part of it.

Every person who touches this district has brought us to this moment and now is the time for each of us to continue this journey together to even greater things. Thank you all. Be proud.

Yes, we still have hurdles to face. I know the start of this year brought more unexpected upheaval due to construction supply shortages causing delays and the national transportation shortage that still looms across the country. I am grateful to the grace and resourcefulness of our families and staff who have had to adjust schedules with the understanding that these issues are temporary and are leading to a greater tomorrow too.

Together we can face anything and continue to fly. This community has proven that time and again.

As we head into the fall, I look forward to seeing many of our alumni and current students interacting and sharing insights with one another at our homecoming festivities. Bringing together wisdom, experience, and fresh perspectives together will continue to strengthen the character and success of all of us.

Once again, I honor each of you for making Pontiac School District the place it is today and eagerly look forward to what's next. Let's continue to fly together.

Kelley Williams, Superintendent

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Trustee Marcus Terry

Trustee Carol Turpin



Greetings

from
President Garrett

Greetings Phoenix Nation:

As I see many of you out in the community, I can feel the excitement building in each of you around our district. The energy is real and it is infectious!

We are positioned and ready to put Pontiac School District on the map, not only as the district to watch, but as a district to model.

We are paving the way on groundbreaking initiatives. Our partnership with Davenport University, which provides scholarships to our students, staff and parents who want to pursue teaching degrees, is one of the first programs of its kind. This collaboration will provide the opportunity for us to “grow our own” teachers while minimizing the financial strains associated with pursuing an education

degree. This is game changing for education as a whole and we can’t wait to take the journey with our first group of recipients in this coming school year.

Our Career Pathways program continues to grow with additional new paths launching this fall. Pontiac School District students can kickstart their careers while they’re still in high school through exploration and experience in some of the most competitive fields, working with mentors from some of the most respected companies in the world. They will graduate with real experience ready for college, trade school or immediate placement in the workforce. They won’t miss a beat and the competition won’t even be close.

Additionally, your bond dollars continue to allow us to create exceptional new spaces and resources for our students and staff to thrive in. I know you have seen the many construction vehicles throughout the district tearing up parking lots, replacing roofs and countless other updates inside and out of our buildings. We cannot wait to unveil some of the most recent finished products for you. Look for invitations to some of those reveals in the coming months. And this is only the first phase of what’s to come!

Remember this is your district and we are here to serve you. We are pleased to now livestream our board meetings on Facebook Live and YouTube. This allows additional real time viewing for our community who may not be able to attend our meetings in person. I encourage you to tune in. If you don’t utilize these channels, the meetings are also available the next day on our website and PSD-TV22. Please check them out and learn even more about how we are working together to build an exceptional future for our students.

I look forward to continuing to engage in dialogue with each of you now and throughout the school year.

Sincerely,

***Gill Garrett, President,
Pontiac School District Board of Education***

Board of Trustees

President Gill Garrett

Vice President Kenyada Bowman

Treasurer ShaQuana Davis-Smith

Secretary Kevin Gross

Trustee Anisha Hannah

Trustee Marcus Terry

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STUDENT SPOTLIGHT

Honoring our 2022 Kennedy Graduates



Mihlan Randle, 26

We are excited and proud to celebrate our three graduates from Kennedy Center this year. Each of these students has diligently worked hard to accomplish this important milestone achievement. We look forward to seeing what's next as they each share their unique talents with the world!

What are you most excited about as a graduate? Mihlan is happy that she is still in contact with her friends.

What's next for you? Mihlan will be working at a salon, cleaning.

What was your favorite thing about Kennedy? She loved doing Math.

What will you miss the most? Mihlan will miss her friends the most.

Do you have a school memory that you would like to share? Dancing at the proms from years past.

When you are not in school, what are your favorite things to do and why? Playing basketball is Mihlan's favorite thing to do at school. Basketball is fun.

What advice would you give students that are still in school? Trust the teachers.

What else would you like people to know about you? Mihlan loves being around people.

STUDENT SPOTLIGHT

Honoring our 2022 Kennedy Graduates



Ophelia Johnson, 26

What are you most excited about as a graduate? The most exciting thing for Ophelia is finding a job at a salon assisting wherever she is needed.

What's next for you? Ophelia would like to get her own place.

What was your favorite thing about Kennedy? Ophelia really appreciated helping people.

What will you miss the most? Ophelia will miss her friends the most.

Do you have a school memory that you would like to share? Ophelia enjoyed reading to the students in first grade.

When you are not in school, what are your favorite things to do and why? Ophelia enjoys playing basketball.

What advice would you give students that are still in school? Ophelia wants people to be nice to everyone.

What else would you like people to know about you?

Ophelia likes to go to the mall and she likes being outside. Ophelia received a certificate from Oakland Schools Technical Center for Janitorial Services



Alejandro Lopez, 26

Alejandro was not available for an interview at this time.

*Congrats
Grads!*

Growing Our Own Teachers



Davenport University and PSD recently came together to launch a game-changing scholarship program to support staff, students and parents from our community that want to pursue a degree in education.

This innovative partnership enhances the opportunity to pursue a teaching certificate by eliminating many of the financial barriers that often prevent individuals from gaining their teaching degree. Scholarship recipients will complete their teaching degree through Davenport and graduate with jobs right here in the Pontiac School District.

Pontiac is the first school district to participate in this program on the east side of the state and the second in Michigan. This partnership is producing 75 scholarships; up to 25 for current students, up to 25 for school employees, and up to 25 for parents of students currently enrolled in the school district. Individuals are eligible for a scholarship if they have not attended Davenport University as a student in the past 12 months.

If you are interested in learning more about this program, please contact our human resources department at: 248.451.6865

Familiar Faces New Roles



We kicked off the 2022-2023 school year with some familiar faces in new roles here in the district. We caught up with them this summer to find out a bit more about each of them and what they have planned for the new year!

Felicia Geeter

New Position: Literacy and Social Studies Supervisor

Previous Position: I have been a Literacy Coach for the district for six years.

What are you most excited about within your new role in the district? I am excited to collaborate and learn with and from everyone. As well as be part of the extraordinary growth in Pontiac.

How has your previous role prepared you for this job? As a coach, I supported teachers with instruction, met with district partners, facilitated professional learning, developed

programs, and helped select curriculum programs. I believe participating in these things helped me to prepare for this Position.

What are you most proud of during your time here? The two things I am most proud of are my relationships with staff and students and my personal growth. I have grown a lot during my time here and can say it was for the better.

What would you like families, who may not know you, to know about you? Families may not know that I was born and raised in Pontiac, and I am still a member of the Pontiac community. So, if they don't know me, they may know one of my many siblings.



Karen Robinson

New Position: Dean of Students Supervisor, Pontiac Middle School

Previous Position: Principal of Owen Elementary, Assistant Principal of Pontiac High School, and Math Teacher for the district.

What are you most excited about within your new role in the district?

This new role will provide the opportunity to discuss, integrate and promote diversity, equity, social emotional learning, and inclusion with the students, staff and parents of Pontiac Middle School. Being a part of developing an inclusive culture and climate that supports student success will require systems and structures that

Familiar Faces New Roles

provide equity. My doctoral work focuses on culturally responsive school leadership practices and it will be exciting to see the components of this framework come to life at PMS.

How has your previous role prepared you for this job? Serving the community of Pontiac as both a teacher and administrator has afforded me the opportunity to develop relationships that have enriched my life personally and professionally. My previous roles served to educate and guide me on how to build equitable systems and structures affording our students opportunities to reach their potential.

What are you most proud of during your time here?

Serving the School District of the City of Pontiac and being a part of various students' success stories has been a great source of pride. Hugging students as they walk across the stage at graduation, attending sporting events, seeing former students who have become positive members of the Pontiac community and working each day with students all fill me with an amazing feeling of accomplishment and pride.

What would you like families, who may not know you, to know about you?

I have been an educator for over 30 years and feel fortunate to have been called to this work. I value our community's rich diverse cultures and view them as an essential part of our students' education. Each student is a precious gift entrusted to us by families; this is a charge I take seriously. It is an honor to assist each student and their family in engaging in a high quality education supporting their emotional, mental and physical development. Students make important decisions about themselves during the middle school years and I look forward to being a positive impact on our students.



Suzanne Kavanaugh

Position: Principal, Owen Elementary

Previous Position: Principal, Pontiac High School

What are you most excited about within new role in the district? I am most excited to meet my new community of learners and their families. I will know some families from my previous positions at ITA and PHS, but I will have the chance to work with families from the northernmost area of Pontiac. I look forward to building new relationships and partnerships to

support students and families in the school community.

How has your previous role prepared you for this job? As the Principal of PHS I saw how important it was for students to have a good foundational education. I am looking forward to working with staff and students to ensure students receive this strong foundation at Owen so they are able to reach their highest potential in middle and high school.

Familiar Faces New Roles

What are you most proud of during your time here? I have been in the Pontiac School District for eleven years now and have served in many different roles: Assistant and Principal at PHS, Assistant Principal at WHRC Elementary, Assistant and Principal at ITA. At each of those positions I have had the opportunity to connect with families and local community partners to build programs for students that are well-rounded and engaging. I have been able to build strong academic programs and support students with their social-emotional needs.

What would you like families, who may not know you, to know about you? I think the most important thing for families and staff to know about me is that I am a very straightforward and transparent person. It is very important to me to keep the lines of communication between school and home open. My number one priority is the students and their growth as a whole person. I believe that the only way to ensure success for the students is to have everyone on the same page, working together and always communicating.



Lee Montgomery

Position: Principal, Pontiac High School

Previous Position: District Athletic Director Pontiac High School/ PHS Assistant Principal

What are you most excited about within your new role in the district?

I'm very excited to be a part of an educational institution that I know has the potential to be great. This comes with creating a climate and culture that's conducive to learning. A place where staff, students, and parents are excited to be a part of the change.

How has your previous role prepared you for this job?

I have been in education for 24 years and have learned from my roles as a teacher, coach, Dean of Students, District Athletic Director, Assistant Principal, and Assistant Chief Administrative Officer. These jobs have prepared me to be an effective leader that knows how to drive instruction and create an environment that is safe, fun, engaging, and focused on learning. My previous roles have taught me patience, how to motivate teachers, maximize students and staff to their full potential, and given me a better understanding of how to lead. Lastly, they taught me how to best serve the community and environment that I work in.

What are you most proud of during your time here?

I started with PSD in 2013, when the school district was in a \$30 million deficit. I'm very proud to say that since then the district has:

Familiar Faces New Roles

- ▶ Passed a \$147 million bond
- ▶ PSD is out of the “red” and is giving concessions back to its members
- ▶ PHS test scores have improved
- ▶ Improved graduation rates
- ▶ PHS climate and culture has improved

What would you like families to know about you that may not know you?

I have been in Education for 24 years and in Pontiac for 10 of those years. I graduated from Central Michigan University with a Masters degree in Education and a concentration in Educational Leadership. I'm a proud father of two beautiful girls. My oldest is a nurse, and my youngest will be starting nursing school in the fall. I'm also a grandfather of four beautiful granddaughters. Yes, I'm a girl dad and I love my girls. I treat my students like they are my own kids and my staff like they are my family. I'm passionate about my students' education and I'm going to do the best I can to provide an environment that's aligned to the mission and vision of Pontiac High School.

One to One Devices for All Students

Coming back and forth to school each day with backpacks full of books, laptops and supplies can be a challenge for students.

In an effort to alleviate some of the weight, we are pleased to announce our plan to provide an in-school device and at home device for every student.

This means all students will have a device onsite in school for use during school hours and one at home for homework and studying after hours.

These devices were made possible through a grant from the Emergency Connectivity Fund.

We are excited for this initiative and look forward to providing these second devices for all students throughout the 2022-2023 school year. Each grade level will be informed as their at-home devices arrive and how best to collect them.



It's Easy Being *Green!*

PONTIAC SCHOOL DISTRICT IS TAKING ANOTHER STEP TOWARDS ENVIRONMENTAL EFFICIENCY AND SUSTAINABLE ENERGY!

Pontiac School District is taking another step towards environmental efficiency and sustainable energy with the addition of EV charging stations around the district.

The first two stations are installed at the Odell Nails Administration Building and are available for staff, students, and community members to use to charge their electric vehicles. These two units are the first publicly accessible charging stations in downtown Pontiac. Units are currently available for charging for a nominal fee of \$0.10/ kWh

Two more sets are scheduled for the high school and one for the middle school. All are anticipated to be installed within the next few months upon parking lot renovations completion.

We recently received approval for reimbursement from DTE of \$2000 per port. This will help offset costs of the units.

We are proud to be able to provide these important units for our community and look forward to sharing another big green announcement in the very near future.



SOARING IN PONTIAC



Alcott Kindergarten
Graduates Shine



Accent Pontiac Rocks the
House at Staff Appreciation



Cinco de Mayo Fun
and History at ILA



Friends from GM Cares
Bring Science to Life for
Kennedy Students



Cheering On Our
Owen Grads



Celebrating our
ITA kindergartners
as they head to
first grade

SOARING IN PONTIAC

Governor Whitmer Meets
with PSD Students, Staff
and Community Members

Janine Hender
Pontiac High School

Darlan Law

PHS Seniors
Decision Day
Declaration
Celebration

Herrington Students
Learn Building from
the Pros and Create
Their Own Birdhouses
from Scratch

PONTIAC
GO! ★
PHOENIX

ALONJANA
Alonjane pl
cosmetol

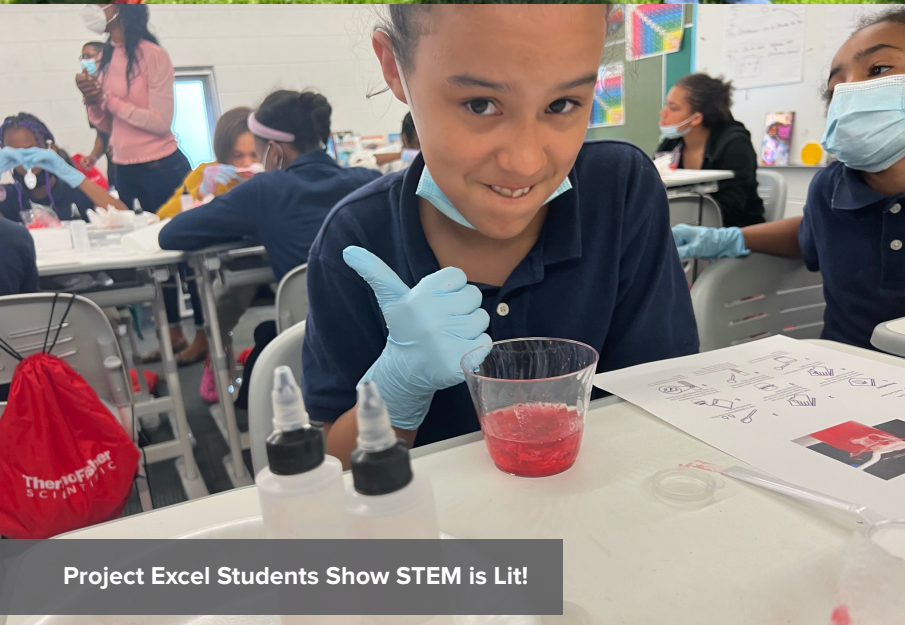
Kaleo Kids Bring the Joy of
Song to Staff Appreciation

Joe Lunghamer Captivated
PEACE Students During
March is Reading Month

Our Special Olympics Team Brought
Home the Silver at USA Games



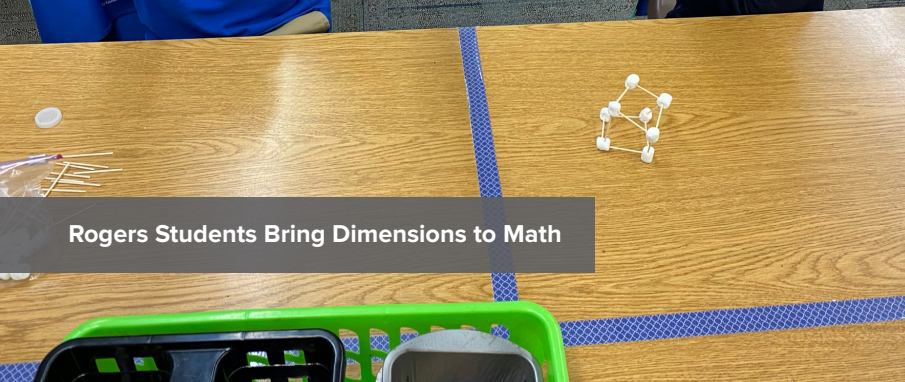
PMS Optimist Club Beautifies Our City



Project Excel Students Show STEM is Lit!



Rogers Students Bring Dimensions to Math



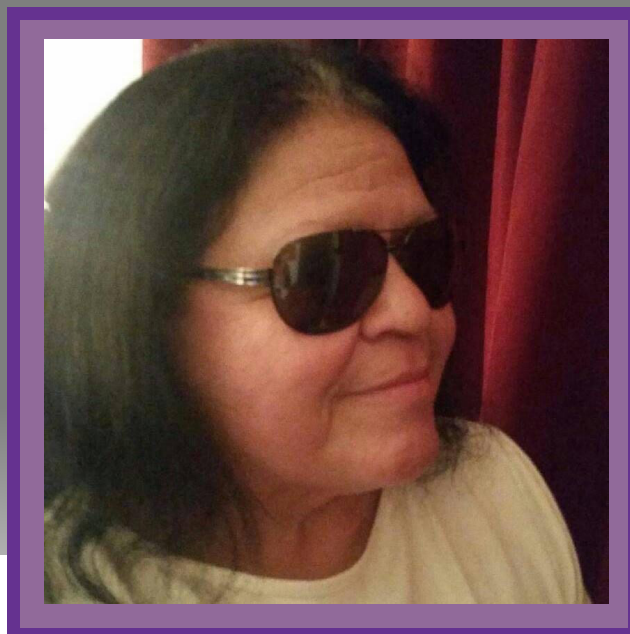
Special Thanks to Crystal Lake for Providing Coats to Our Students



Whitman Staff Are Ready to Welcome a New Class of Kindergartners at Kindergarten Round Up

SOARING IN PONTIAC

CELEBRATING OUR Staff



ROSANNE MARKS

42 Years Driving Students for PSD!

Rosanne Marks dedicated four decades to ensuring our students got to and from school safely. She's driven generations of families and seen the district evolve. It is an honor to have had her play an important role in the education of our students and we wish her joy in her retirement.

Name: Rosanne Marks

How long were you a bus driver?

42 years 4 months

How does it feel to be retired?

It's too soon to tell, but I believe I'm going to enjoy it.

What brought you here to PSD?

I'm a lifelong resident of Pontiac.

It was such an honor that you chose our district for so long, what made you stay here? My family and my ties to the community.

What got you into bus driving?

I lived up the street from a woman named Mrs. Schweitzer, I cleaned her house everyday and she told me they were hiring bus drivers where she worked, so I went down and put in an application and got hired. I had to tell her I couldn't clean her house anymore because I got the job. I started February 4, 1980 and continued until June 16, 2022.

What was your favorite moment from driving?

There are so many to choose from, but I'll always remember the time a little boy was walking home from Alcott Elementary by himself and I stopped and asked him where he was going and he said, "I don't know." So, I brought him on the bus and returned to his school. I went into the office and spoke to the principal, who thanked me because this child was a kindergartener and also called my boss, Kathy Powers, to thank her for having such an aware driver. She wrote me a letter of thanks personally.

Is there anything else that you would like to share with us that we didn't ask?

I enjoyed seeing all of the new faces each new school year and watching them grow through the years. I enjoyed working with my fellow drivers creating lifelong friendships and even fueled the buses for five years on top of driving along with many other skills. People asked why I stayed so long, I was healthy and able to do the job and most of all I loved my job.

SCHOOL SHOUTOUTS

OUR SCHOOLS ROCK!

We are so proud of the achievements of each of our schools over the past year! Please join us in celebrating some of the key highlights shared from each school around the district.

ALCOTT

- ▶ Alcott Elementary School students read over 1, 800 books from March 1st to March 24th, and participated in an all school Read-A-Thon.
- ▶ Alcott students met the school's B.I.G goal for attendance growth.
- ▶ A significant number of Alcott students were celebrated monthly for their outstanding character traits throughout the entire school year.

HERRINGTON

- ▶ Herrington students have an amazing outside garden that students plant and harvest. Their vegetables have been used in school lunches and given to local veterans in need.
- ▶ Herrington 3rd graders are learning about construction trades with their building project creating bird houses.
- ▶ Herrington is also the proud recipient of the United Way Grant which helps meet the needs of our community.

ILA

- ▶ In the month of December all classes engaged in the ILA Generosity Project. For example, 5th graders assisted kindergarteners in writing their letters to Santa.
- ▶ Our Spelling Bee Winner, Emanuel Rosario-Lopez represented us at the Regional Spelling Bee at the Strand Theatre.
- ▶ Mrs. Paulson's 4th grade class spent an average of thirteen hours per student on i-Ready for the month of January and was awarded a Jimmy John's lunch!

SCHOOL SHOUTOUTS

OUR SCHOOLS ROCK!

ITA

- ▶ ITA is proud to keep track of many of their alumni through social media and school outreach. They offer help with college tutoring, ask for alumni support with our current students, and want them all to know they are always a part of ITA.
- ▶ ITA is the home of our FIRST Robotics Hall of Fame robotics team. We once again qualified for the State Championship in Saginaw and there we were able to qualify for the World Championship in Houston, Texas. In Houston, we competed against teams from all around the world and made the playoff round which placed us in the top 3% of all FIRST Robotics teams.
- ▶ At ITA we ask students to have multiple plans for their future. Students are to be accepted to at least five colleges/programs/or various internship opportunities. We work with each student to help them get the maximum amount of scholarships and grants possible each year. Our students are currently at colleges all over the country and bringing back degrees to Pontiac.

KENNEDY

- ▶ Kennedy students have had a lot of growth this year. Whether it's an older student becoming a mentor to a struggling, painfully shy younger student, a mostly non-verbal student finding a way to make sure their voice is heard or a severely impaired student finding joy and purpose in shredding documents, the students at Kennedy are truly champions.
- ▶ The vocational programs at Owen/Kennedy are helping our students find productive ways to be of service. Work Based Learning teaching communication, fine and gross motor skills, math, customer service and life skills happen constantly throughout the building and through programs such as A7 on Wheels, Kennedy Greenhouse, and Kennedy Snack Shack.

SCHOOL SHOUTOUTS

OUR SCHOOLS ROCK!

PEACE ACADEMY

- ▶ With the help of United Way, we were able to send 12 books home with each child enrolled in our program.
- ▶ During March is reading Month we were able to have a reader either here or virtually for every classroom every day.
- ▶ Successfully applied for and was granted a four-star rating by the Great Start To Quality and the Michigan Department of Education.

PONTIAC HIGH SCHOOL

- ▶ The exciting new Pathways programs here at Pontiac High School are providing students new avenues to a career beyond high school in many different fields of manufacturing, nursing, and hospitality. As well as internships to learn their craft during high school prior to graduation.
- ▶ The resilience of our students after two years of COVID-19. Despite these unprecedented challenges, they have not given up and proven their determination.
- ▶ The staff at Pontiac High School have chosen to go above and beyond to ensure academic success of students and providing social/emotional support beyond the scope of their responsibilities.

PONTIAC MIDDLE SCHOOL

- ▶ Some of our male athletes were invited to the SAAB conference in St. Louis where they were exposed to several educational opportunities.
- ▶ Started a young women's safe space mentoring, life skills, open discussion group including learning resume building, writing skills and more.
- ▶ Brought in a pizza and gaming truck to celebrate our students' grades and accomplishments.

SCHOOL SHOUTOUTS

OUR SCHOOLS ROCK!

OWEN ELEMENTARY

- ▶ The staff at Owen has done a phenomenal job supporting students' SEL needs. Through the use of the Mindfulness Room, calm down corners, and the Beaver Bucks Rewards System students learn how to deal with their emotions and manage behavior.
- ▶ The teachers at Owen's hard work have paid off. Every Instructional Walkthrough has shown trends of improvement in teaching skills and the instructional cycle.

ROGERS ELEMENTARY

- ▶ Is known for its strong Community Partnerships.
- ▶ Their Cohesive Staff works outstandingly well together and has exceptional attendance!
- ▶ The Cheetah Pride and PBIS rings strong at Rogers.
- ▶ Launched a school store managed and run by students with the help of amazing partners teaching them real world management and customer service skills.

WHITMAN ELEMENTARY

- ▶ Whitman is known for its partnerships with community volunteers and programs, they are an asset to our school and district.
- ▶ Whitman staff is known for showing up with smiles day in and day out.
- ▶ We work each day to ensure our students feel loved and appreciated and it shows through their success.

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