

## Welcome Back to School!



*"...as we let our light shine, we unconsciously give other people permission to do the same."*

-quoted by Nelson Mandela



Nelson Mandela is one of our heroes, the namesake of one of our 7<sup>th</sup> grade teams, and an enduring figure of inspiration and guidance. The spirit of his life, example, strength, and courage is embedded in our school's mission, values, and core beliefs.

The symbolism of light as a positive life force encompasses ideas and feelings associated with energy, purification, direction, passion, and perseverance. As a faculty and staff, we commit to working hard to support the growth of our school community in our practice of our core values of peace, respect, integrity, determination, and empathy. We all play an integral role in creating a structured learning community where all students are expected to practice leadership, volunteer service for others, and achieve academic excellence.

We need every parent and guardian to commit to supporting us in our growth this year and in keeping the light of our mission and of our children strong and productive. There is powerful potential within each and every one of us to make a difference, to stand tall, and be proud of who we are and who we are becoming.

We are honored and grateful that you have chosen to be part of our PRIDE community and look forward to getting to know you and developing strong partnerships for success.

### Save the Dates!

- **Back to School Night:** Wed. 9-13 at 5:30PM
- **Kids Stuff Fundraiser:** Begins on Wed. 9-13. Every family is asked to buy or sell two books.
- **Board Meeting:** Wed. 9-20 6:00PM
- **High School Night:** Thurs. 9-28 5:30PM

### LOOKING AHEAD

#### NEXT MONTH

**Healthy Kids Walk in Elmwood Park on Friday 10/6 at 10:30-12:30PM. It will be half day dismissal. Parents and families are invited to join us for a day of good, healthy fun!**



**Hispanic Heritage Month  
Sept. 15<sup>th</sup>-Oct. 15<sup>th</sup>**

Suggestions, comments, questions: please contact us at  
Phone: (973) 672-3200  
<http://www.prideacs.org>

## Ribbon Cutting! by Ms Dumenigo

In September 2008, Pride Academy opened its doors to 240 students in a rented newly renovated school building. Now, almost 10 years later, we are opening our doors to 288 students and a newly built wing that we officially opened on Wednesday August 30<sup>th</sup>.

Our Ribbon Cutting event marked the official opening of our New Classroom Wing on the second floor and our vestibule and Great Room area. This space will provide our students and families with greater opportunities to gather and celebrate as a community. East Orange Mayor Lester E Taylor III and city council members joined school staff, students, parents and friends and benefactors of Pride at the event.

The additional wing provides our school and its students with six larger classrooms, three offices, and a larger multi-purpose room, which we call the Great Room. This larger air conditioned space will now serve as our gym and key gathering area where we will assemble each day for Morning Assembly as a whole community to greet, motivate and celebrate each other's accomplishments and contributions.





## NEW BREAKFAST TIME!

### When will breakfast be served?

Breakfast will be served from 7:00AM to 7:45AM

### Where will breakfast be served?

Breakfast will be served in our Common Room. Upon arrival to school, all students will enter school through the Main Lobby doors and walk through the Common Room on their way to the Great Room for Morning Assembly. Students who have ordered breakfast or brought breakfast from home will remain in the Common Room to eat and as soon as staff supervision arrives in the Great Room, students who are not eating breakfast will proceed to the Great Room to wait for Morning Assembly.

### How will the breakfast dining experience be more enjoyable?

Students who choose to eat breakfast at school between 7:00-7:45AM will enjoy the following:

- Music will be playing
- Students may sit with their friends as they eat
- The eating areas will be spaciouly arranged

### What if students arrive between 7:45AM and 8:15AM and need to eat breakfast?

At 7:45AM, the music will be turned off and the dining environment will become a silent space where the only activity will be eating/finishing breakfast in order to then proceed to the Great Room.

Students will not be permitted to socialize, sit or visit with friends or have a choice in where they sit to eat their breakfast.

Students who arrive at or after 8:00AM will be marked late and if they ordered or brought a breakfast from home, they will be permitted to eat in silence without distraction or delay. Accountability for lateness will be considered depending on circumstances and frequency.

## Attendance Counts!

Our goal this year is to ensure that every student attends school regularly.

Showing up for school has a huge impact on a student's academic success starting in kindergarten and continuing through high school. Even as children grow older and more independent, families play a key role in making sure students get to school safely every day and understand why attendance is so important for success in school and in life.

We realize some absences are unavoidable due to health problems or other circumstances. But, we also know that when students miss too much school— regardless of the reason – it can cause them to fall behind academically. Your child is less likely to succeed if he or she is chronically absent—which means missing **18 or more days** over the course of an entire school year. Research shows:

- Children chronically absent in kindergarten and 1<sup>st</sup> grade are much less likely to read at grade level by the end of 3<sup>rd</sup> grade.
- By 6<sup>th</sup> grade, chronic absence is a proven early warning sign for students at risk for dropping out of school.
- By 9<sup>th</sup> grade good attendance can predict graduation rates even better than 8<sup>th</sup> grade test scores.

Absences can add up quickly. A child is chronically absent if he or she misses **just two days every month!!**

### GOING TO SCHOOL REGULARLY MATTERS!

We don't want your child to fall behind in school and get discouraged. Please ensure that your child attends school every day and arrives on time. Here are a few practical tips to help support regular attendance:

- Make sure your children keep a regular bedtime and establish a morning routine.
- Lay out clothes and pack backpacks the night before.
- Ensure your children go to school every day unless they are truly sick
- Avoid scheduling vacations or doctor's appointments when school is in session.
- Talk to our teachers and Ms Rucker, our School Counselor for advice if your children feel anxious about going to school.
- Develop back up plans for getting to school if something comes up. Call on a family member, neighbor, or another parent to take your child to school.

Let us know how we can best support you and your children so that they can show up for school on time every day. We want your child to be successful in school! If you have any questions or need more information please contact Mrs. Thomas at 973-672-3200 ext. 201.



**Back to School Night**  
**Wednesday, 9-13**  
**5:30PM**

# Take a Minute, Save a Life!

-by Mrs. Mack, School Social Worker



Many people are not aware that suicide is the 2<sup>nd</sup> leading cause of death for our middle and high school aged students (age 12-18). It is also one of the leading causes of preventable death. Four out of five teens who attempt suicide have given clear warning signs. At Pride, we firmly believe that as a community, we have an important role to play in supporting our children who are vulnerable to this silent epidemic.

September is marked as *National Suicide Prevention Awareness Month*. Goals of Suicide Prevention Awareness Month include: helping individuals come together as a community to discuss a difficult topic in an effort to shed light on and to advocate the prevention of this terrible tragedy and to help prepare individuals to listen to those at risk in non-judgmental ways. As members of our Pride community, it is all of our responsibility to look out for those who may be struggling, check-in with them, and encourage them to communicate. If as a whole family, we learn to recognize the warning signs of suicide and how to respond appropriately to our at risk teens, we have the opportunity to support our teens that are contemplating suicide.

Below, some warning signs, risk factors and resources have been listed for your reference. If a child you know is/has persistently exhibited some of the behaviors listed over a period of time, if several of the signs appear at the same time, and/or if the behavior is out of character for the child, then closer attention is warranted. Be proactive, have a conversation with the child and seek professional support if necessary.

## Know the Warning Signs

--Suicide Threats: Either direct or indirect statements- "I'd be better off dead," "I won't be bothering you much longer," "You'll be better off without me around," "I hate my life," "I'm going to kill myself." Suicide threats are not always verbal; they can come as Text messages, social networks, twitter, etc.

--Previous Suicide Attempts

--Preoccupation or Obsession with death or suicide expressed in essays, poems, artwork about death or depicting death

--Depression: Sudden and abrupt changes in personality: Expression of hopelessness and despair; Declining grades and school performance; Lack of interest in activities once enjoyed; Increased irritability and aggressiveness; Withdrawal from family, friends and relationships; Changes in eating and sleeping habits

--Final Arrangements: Giving away of prized possessions, saying goodbye to family and friends, making funeral arrangements.

## Risk Factors for Suicide

A number of other things may put a person at risk of suicide, including: A family history of suicide; Substance abuse. Drugs and alcohol can result in mental highs and lows that exacerbate suicidal thoughts; Access to firearms; A serious or chronic medical illness; A history of trauma or abuse; Prolonged stress; Isolation; Age. People **under** age 24 or above age 65 are at a higher risk for suicide; A recent tragedy or loss; Agitation and sleep deprivation

## Parents Do's and Don'ts (If your child has expressed suicidal thoughts)

Remain Calm- By remaining calm, you create a comfortable and safe atmosphere for the child to reach out for help. Do not leave the child alone. Be prepared to talk about suicide- By discussing it, you can help to decrease some of the anxiety experienced by suicidal youth. Do not minimize or dismiss their problems. Provide them with reassurance. Acknowledge their fear, sadness, and other emotions and tell them you care about them and want to help. Be prepared to act- Try to get help immediately.

## Resources

--*The National Suicide Prevention Lifeline* is a national network of local crisis centers that provides free and confidential emotional support to people in suicidal crisis or emotional distress 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. They are committed to improving crisis services and advancing suicide prevention by empowering individuals, advancing professional best practices, and building awareness.- **Call: 1-800-273-TALK (8255)**

--Emergency Support: 911

--Crisis Text Line- Text TALK to 741-741 to text with a trained crisis counselor from the Crisis Text Line for free, 24/7.