



PARCC MADNESS!

Save the Dates

- **Board Meeting:** 4/19 at 6:00PM
- **Parent-Teacher Progress Report Conferences:** Thurs. 4/20 4:15-6:00PM
- **Graduation Retake and Spring Pictures:** Fri. 4/21
- **Looking Ahead in May**
- **5th and 8th Grade PARCC Assessments:** May 1-May 5th
- **6th and 7th Grade PARCC Assessments:** May 8-May 12
- **Generations Dance:** May 20th

Earlier this year, we shared the results of our 2015-2016 PARCC scores which showed that while New Jersey students as a whole grew from 2014-2015, Pride Academy students' scores demonstrated three times the growth. We are excited to have our students take their PARCC assessment this year and continue this upward trend of academic growth. We are also excited to reveal this year's PARCC T-Shirt emblem and slogan designed by our very own Mrs Brown!

Work in our classrooms this month at Pride will involve a strong focus on final steps to support your children in preparing for the annual PARCC assessment coming up at the beginning of May. Ways that you can support your children over the course of the next month are the following:

- Encourage your child to complete all homework practice assignments each night;
- Ensure that your child attends in-school and lunch time tutoring with their teachers;
- Ask your child questions about what they are learning and about their ideas and opinions about current events and matters that impact your family life. Don't forget to ask them to explain their answers and give examples to illustrate their ideas;
- Ensure that your child attends school every day and on time and if he/she leaves early for an appointment, make sure that class work is made up and homework completed;
- Closely supervise your child's use of online devices, especially during their completion of homework, and then later in the evening. Our scholars are expected to work hard during their academic classes and they need to complete quality homework to be prepared for their classes and be well rested in order to have stamina for the day;
- Check your child's Agenda every night, the quality of the homework they complete, and their Pride Scholar Charts. Please continue to encourage your child to make positive choices during the day and respect and honor the learning culture in our school.

Please reach out to Mr. Ofstad or Mrs. Wilson if you have any questions about our academic program or our upcoming PARCC assessment schedule. We look forward to continuing to partner with you and learn from you!

Progress Report Conferences

Please make every effort to come to school on Progress Report Conference afternoon on **Thursday, April 20** between **4:15 pm and 6:00 pm** to pick up your child's Progress Report and meet with teachers. Progress Reports will not be mailed or sent home with your child, so please arrange alternative times to meet with your child's teachers if you are unable to attend this Thursday. In order to ensure that your meetings with teachers are productive, please consider these tips:

- Let the teachers know what your concerns are and what you feel is important for them to know about how your child learns.
- Ask to look at your child's work.
- Be open-minded in working with the teacher to develop an action plan to help address any concerns that you may have.
- Share your expertise about your child to help the teachers understand how best to work with your child.
- Share any situations that may be going on at home that may be impacting your child's academic performance or behavior.
- Be prepared to hear good news as well as news that may be disappointing or surprising. Your children's teachers may have insights and knowledge about your child's learning that you may not have heard before. Be open to discussing these calmly and professionally.
- After the conference, be sure to take time to sit down with your child to discuss his/her report. Celebrate GREAT accomplishments and action-plan for improvement.



Attendance Counts! compiled by Mrs. Wilson

Attending school regularly helps children feel better about school and themselves! Your child can start building this habit in preschool so they learn right away that going to school on time, every day is important. Consistent attendance will help children do well in high school, college, and beyond in the work place.

DID YOU KNOW?

- *Starting in kindergarten, too many absences (excused and unexcused) can cause children to fall behind in school.
- *Missing 10 percent (or about 18 days) increases the chance that your child will not read or master math at the same level as their peers.
- *Students can still fall behind if they miss just a day or two days every few weeks.
- *Being late to school may lead to poor attendance.
- *Absences can affect the whole classroom if the teacher has to slow down learning to help children catch up.
- *By 6th grade, absenteeism is one of three signs that a student may drop out of high school.
- *By being present at school, your child learns valuable social skills and has the opportunity to develop meaningful relationships with other students and school staff.
- *Absences can be a sign that a student is losing interest in school, struggling with school work, dealing with a bully or facing some other potentially serious difficulty.
- *By 9th grade, regular and high attendance is a better predictor of graduation rates than 8th grade test scores.

We miss your children when they are absent from our community, and we value their contributions to our school. We would like you to help ensure that they attend regularly and are successful in school. We know that there are a wide variety of reasons that students may be absent or late to school, from health concerns to transportation challenges. There are many people in our building prepared to help you if you face challenges in getting to school regularly or on time. Please reach out to Mrs. Popinko or Mrs. Thomas if we can help!

WHAT YOU CAN DO TO SUPPORT CONSISTENT ATTENDANCE AND PUNCTUALITY

- Set a regular bed time and morning routine.
- Prepare for school the night before, finishing homework and getting a good night's sleep.
- Find out what day school starts and make sure your child has the required immunizations.
- Don't let your child stay home unless they are truly sick. Keep in mind complaints of a stomach ache or headache can be a sign of anxiety and not a reason to stay home.
- Avoid appointments and extended trips or vacations when school is in session.
- Develop back-up plans for getting to school if something comes up. Call on a family member, a neighbor, or another parent.
- Keep track of your student's attendance. Missing more than 18 days could put your student at risk of retention.
- Talk to your child about the importance of attendance.
- Talk to your child's teachers if you notice sudden changes in behavior. These could be tied to something going on at school.
- Encourage meaningful afterschool activities, including sports and clubs. Portions of this letter are attributable to Attendance Works



<http://www.attendanceworks.org/>

Generations Dance!

The excitement about this year's Generations Dance is brewing! Everyone wants to know, "What will the theme be this year?" **We are happy to announce that this year's Generations Dance will be on Saturday, May 20th, and the theme is "Caribbean Carnival!"** The Parent Council is already putting together decoration ideas and preparing the menu. We believe that this year's Generations Dance will be the best one yet!



For those who are new to the Pride community, the Generations Dance was our Parent Councils' answer to a Daddy & Daughter or Mommy & Son Dance. We decided to make it a big family celebration and welcome all members of the family to have fun together. We will have a DJ playing great music, delicious Caribbean food, and wonderful decorations to set the scene for a whole lot of fun. Ms. Dumenigo says, "It's my favorite event of the year, because it's all of us together. Scholars, parents, and staff. We are just having fun. It's like a big Pride wedding, but you don't have to buy anyone a gift."

The highlight of the evening is always the crowning of the "Most Stylish Pair." In addition to being celebrated and wearing their King & Queen Crowns, they also win a Pass to Great Adventure. This year we will be hosting the dance in a new venue – our new addition Common Room, which will provide us with more space to dance, as well as air conditioning. We hope to see you all there!

#20 Spotlight on Safety: Gangs

As the weather improves with the advent of Spring, our children spend a greater amount of time outdoors and in public spaces. In most instances, a great time is enjoyed by all. In some, however, conflict may arise with bystanders caught in the midst. It is critical that our children are equipped to prevent their involvement in violence and conflict as well as to respond appropriately if or when it occurs. One of the most important things for children is to make positive choices about how and with whom they spend time. It is important for educators, parents and guardians to know about children's/students' friends and warn them away from anyone involved in unsafe activities like gangs.

Gang Facts: A street gang can be described as a group of individuals who share a unique name or symbol, attempt to control certain territory ("turf") in a community and engage in a variety of violent or illegal behaviors that effect the general population (vandalism, drug dealing, assaults, drive-by shootings).

Gang Presence: People often assume gangs are a 'big city' problem. The truth is that gangs are present everywhere in America, from major urban areas to surrounding suburbs and rural communities. Gangs have been glorified through music videos, and movies, and have made their way onto the internet - hosting web sites, or creating profile pages on popular networking sites to lure recruits. They have even established a global presence. Gangs are breaking through racial, cultural and socio-economic barriers to grow their memberships. Young people from all economic and social backgrounds have been lured into gang life, from as early as age six or seven.

Gang Activity: Today's gangs participate in a number of destructive and violent behaviors that target rival gangs and impact innocent bystanders. According to the Los Angeles Police Department, gang members participate in "a variety of anti-social behaviors, including battery, mayhem, sexual assault, damage to property, larceny, murder, gang wars and other criminal activity". Gangs profit from criminal acts, such as narcotic sales, robberies and auto thefts. They vandalize property with gang graffiti. They may possess assault weapons and deadly firearms to use on the streets or in drive-by shootings. Gang-related crimes devastate our families and unravel the fabric of our communities.

The Three R's of Gang Life – Reputation, Respect, and Retaliation: Reputation is especially important for gangs and gang members. A reputation determines status within the gang and community. Respect is important to a gang's overall reputation. Gangs and gang members will demand respect from their own crew, their rivals, and the community at large. If gangs or gang members feel disrespected, retaliation is a guarantee. Disrespect may take the form of a verbal comment, or it can be an act, such as when a rival gang tags over another gang's graffiti. Retaliation can happen immediately, or it may occur later. Retaliation can range from a beating, vandalizing property, intimidation, extortion, and arson, all the way to murder of the rival, their family, friends, or loved ones.

Gang Names and Nicknames: Gangs use various names to represent their gang, crew, or clique. The gang name may have reference to a commonly-known gang ("Crips", "Vice Lords"), while the clique name may have a connection to the gang's neighborhood (street name, geographic location). Most gang members adopt nicknames when they are recruited to a gang. These nicknames might identify certain physical traits ("Shorty"), describe a skill or the recruit's personality. Two rival cliques or gangs of which we have recently become aware are DTH and Sheed Side (SS). These groups are geographically based and comprised, according to law enforcement officials, of both children and adults. Please be mindful of any references made to these groups or graffiti, and refer concerns to Ms. Brower, Mrs. Thomas or Mr. Ofstad immediately.

About a Most Important Letter! from Ms Dumenigo & Mr. Ofstad



For the past five years, we have worked hard to encourage and motivate our students during their State assessments. One of the things we did was to present each child with a letter of encouragement every day. These letters came from their teachers and staff, but the most important letter was the one they received from their parents and family members. Our students were truly inspired by these letters and they helped them to stay determined and work hard. We are asking that you take a moment to write a letter or card right now, which we will present to your child during their PARCC testing week coming up in late April and early May.

Some ideas about what you can write:

- ♥ Tell them how proud you are of them!
- ♥ Tell them you believe in them and know that they can achieve anything!
- ♥ Encourage them to focus and do their best on the PARCC test!
- ♥ Remind them and show examples of how they have grown academically or in maturity over the years!
- ♥ Push them not to give up, even if the questions are challenging!
- ♥ Tell them that you love them!

Here is a sample letter that one of our Dad's wrote to his daughter:

I am writing this important letter to you to express my unflinching support to you especially during this testing in your school.

I am very confident that as a good daughter, you are always very serious in your endeavors, you exude brilliance, excellence, as prepared as ever, never leaving a stone unturned, go for the test and come out in flying colours.

I am very proud of your achievements, your dexterity and kindness to your peers. I want you to know that with much favour, I will be behind you and in front to direct your steps to greatness.

There is so much to write but time will not permit. "Sharp spear, they say, needs no polish."

Go and excel girl!

Please reach out to Ms Dumenigo or Mr. Ofstad if you have any questions or if we can provide you with stationary or any other kind of support.