

PARENT NEWSLETTER

October 2018

Dear Pinnacle Families,

Please see the information below. We hope that these newsletters keep you informed about what is going on at the school.

Dates

- October 2-4 Fall Pictures at the 3-12 Campus
- October 9 PEAK Meeting at the 3-12 Campus
- October 10 PSAT 9 Administration
- October 11 Dr. Bradley Thompson Lecture for High School Students
- October 12 Middle School Dance
- October 19 Fall Festival at K-2 Campus
- October 25 End of First Quarter
- October 26 National Honor Society Inductions
- October 29 Begin Book Fair at K-2 Campus
- October 29 PEAK Board Meeting at K-2 Campus

Helping Those In Need

Charter Day School is a fellow charter school located in Leland, NC. Hurricane Florence and the resultant flooding have had a devastating effect on the school's students and families. The Charter Day administration has reached out to their community in efforts to help the families that are in need. The Pinnacle Classical Academy community has never failed to pitch in and help those that need it. At the end of this newsletter is a list of needed items. These will be picked up on Friday afternoon and delivered to Charter Day School over the weekend for distribution. Thank you for helping those in need!

Associate in Science Degree Program

A couple of years ago we announced the partnership with CCC to offer our students the opportunity to earn an Associate in Science degree along with their high school diploma. That partnership has born fruit this year and our students are taking their first college courses at this time.

The degree program provides our students and parents with a tremendous opportunity. Students not only can earn their Associate degree in high school, but also end up with their undergraduate degree about half completed before leaving PCA. In educational terms this is huge. Much of the required coursework (such as foreign language, English, Math, etc.) will be complete before the student steps foot on a university



campus as a student. This will allow students more time at the university level to explore courses in their major as well as courses outside of their major in which they have an interest. The degree program will also allow students to complete their undergraduate degree in a much shorter period of time than is traditionally possible. This puts our students on a fast track for earning advanced degrees and entering the workforce. Finally, the degree program provides tremendous cost savings. While figures at individual universities vary, successfully completing the Associate in Science degree program results in a cost savings of roughly \$50,000 when you factor in tuition, fees, books, room and board, etc.

All of that is something that we could not even imagine in education as recently as ten years ago. However with great opportunity comes requirements, and we need to keep these in mind as students move closer to and even through the program. One of the requirements is that our students must test into the program through a test called NC DAP. This is not a PCA requirement or a CCC requirement, but a state requirement. As you can imagine, the state does not want students in classes that they are unprepared to take. There are definite cutoff scores and we have to get our students ready to meet and exceed those scores. The coursework and expectations that our students work with in middle school and early high school is designed to prepare them for the entrance testing and coursework of the degree program. That means accelerated high school credit courses in middle school, taking Math I in the 8th grade, increased academic expectations, and an understanding that students have to be responsible for completing their work on time. In college courses the students must balance their time, work independently, and take responsibility for their learning process. The transition is not easy, so the steps we take in middle and high school are designed to help with that.

As your student moves into upper elementary, middle, and high school please be aware that the changes they experience are designed to get them to be able to take advantage of our Associate in Science degree program.

Math Curriculum

There has been some discussion throughout the greater school community about the change from Singapore Math to Curriculum Associates' Ready Math. It seems that there are two schools of thought, people either love it or they hate it. That is to be expected when a key curriculum component is radically changed. President Woodrow Wilson in 1917 said, "*It is easier to move a cemetery than to change a school curriculum.*" After 24 years in education I think he may be right.

The move away from Singapore Math was not made in haste, but rather after several years of analysis and modification in an attempt to make it meet our needs as a school. Over a period of several years we consistently saw the same problems rear their head. We contracted with Singapore-recommended consultants, brought in multiple rounds of professional development, and wrote and re-wrote pacing guides, curriculum maps, and lesson designs in an effort to align Singapore Math with what we needed. The results were spotty at best and did not provide the math education that students in a college preparatory school needed. In consulting with other charter school instructional leaders we found out that many had originally adopted Singapore but like us had eventually found it inoperable for what they needed.

You cannot change something as important as math just to change it. The administrative team began a yearlong search for the strongest math curriculum that we could find. It is truly amazing how many different companies market math curriculum that they say is simultaneously aligned to NC standards while also is advanced and appropriate for a college preparatory school. That is until you complete the research and gather samples and find out that things are not always what they say they are. The one math program that consistently got the highest marks from impartial educational think tanks and classroom



teachers was Ready Math. It is directly and explicitly aligned with NC standards. The curriculum is properly spiraled so that concepts and skills build upon each other throughout the year and across school years. The curriculum provides a solid mix of traditional and word-based problems so students are comfortable and familiar with these on EOG tests and beyond (NC DAP, ACT, SAT, etc.) The program provides students with a variety of practice opportunities to gain mastery of a concept or skill. Teachers are provided with a wide array of support materials that help with enrichment and acceleration so students of all levels are given the appropriate level of rigor. Lastly, Ready Math often requires students to explain their answers in writing. This forces students to know why they solved the problem the way that they did and to become mathematical thinkers. In short, Ready Math has the tangible pieces that were sorely missing with Singapore Math no matter how much effort went into modifying it.

Of course there will be some struggles as we complete the transition to Ready Math. Struggles are never fun, but sometimes they are inescapable and are often quite productive. In this case knowing that the math curriculum is more appropriate for what we are trying to do, will better prepare students for their future, and will help them be much better mathematical thinkers makes the struggles worth it. Our teachers really like Ready Math and are excited about its potential with our students.

iReady and NC Check-In Testing

For the past five years, PCA has used NWEA's Measure of Academic Progress (MAP) test three times per year. Beginning this year we will use the iReady Diagnostic for Math and Reading three times per year in grades K-8. This instrument provides teachers and parents with useful user-friendly data showing what a student can do, what a student cannot do, where they are in relation to the standards, and what the student needs to do to improve. In addition, in grades 3-8 the state has developed short benchmark tests called NC Check-Ins in Reading and Math. These assessments are designed to show teachers where their classes are in comparison to that point in the year, areas to work on, etc. Between iReady diagnostics and NC Check-Ins we will have more information than ever about student needs and how to meet them. As a school this is truly exciting as we work to help all students meet their academic potential.

Coaches and Club Sponsors

THANK YOU to our coaches and club sponsors. These people are volunteers and give of their time to coach and help our students succeed. If you see one of them on campus or "out and about" please let them know how much they are appreciated. Without them we could not offer the experiences that are afforded to our students.

Drop Off and Pick Up

Students must not be dropped off before 7:30am each day at both campuses. Over the past week a few students have been dropped off earlier than 7:30am – and that cannot continue. There is no teacher or staff supervision prior to 7:30am at either campus. If K-2 parents are getting students between 2:30 and 3:30 they need to park in the spaces, go in and sign out their child, and proceed around the back to the parking lot to exit (not cut through the grass or exit through the entrance.) At the 3-12 Campus parents need to be in the pickup line by 3:30pm each day. There have been a number of students who have not been picked up in the office until 4:15pm. Thank you for your understanding.

Athletics

Please be sure to check the PCA Athletics Facebook page for up to date information about games and matches, practices, and cancellations.

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Charter Day School

Yesterday at 12:53 PM · 🌐

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CDS Families,

We have several families that have been displaced due to Hurricane Florence. We want to provide support to these students and their families. Below is a list of items that can be donated. Please bring all items to the elementary school office, where it will be sorted and dispersed to the families.

Thank you!
CDS Administration

Student Needs:

1. Socks
2. Underwear
3. Clothing (uniforms and everyday clothing all sizes)

Food Supply:

1. Cereal/granola/oatmeal
2. Peanut Butter and Jelly
3. Canned Pasta with Meat (Ravioli)
4. Beef Stew
5. Soup
6. Tuna or Chicken
7. Pudding Cups
8. Fruit Cups
9. Cliff Bars, Kind Bars, Kashi Bars, Granola Bars
10. Mac n Cheese
11. Canned Chili with beans
12. Individual citrus or fruit cups
13. Juice boxes
14. Cheese Itz
15. Crackers
16. Fruit Snacks
17. Baby Food
18. Infant Formula
19. Gallon Zip Lock Bags
20. Disposable cups, plates, utensels
21. Trash bags