

Some positive tests, scheduling for next fall and more



For Thursday, February 25

Hit the GLIC!

The [Grade-Level Information Center](#) has information that is relevant for each class.

An archives for this year's weekly [Mustang Minutes](#)

And to make it easier to find things, check out the [Mustang Minutes Index](#).

Our Daily Announcements to our students

[Our website](#)

[Our YouTube channel](#)

When you are sick, stay home. And thank you for maintaining social distancing!

One of our colleagues tested positive for the virus on Friday. As we talked with many colleagues and then many moms and dads, it was wonderful to see how well kids and colleagues are working to stay six feet away from one another and, if they do have to get closer, they do so for a minute or two -- not the 15 minutes that defines a close contact. So when we had a colleague test positive last week, our kids and colleagues did not have to go into quarantine. And our parents were awesome, will keep their eyes on their kids for the days ahead and, at even a small sign of a symptom, were willing to get their kids in for a test. We followed the rules, and they worked -- we could continue to teach and learn. And we here are so grateful.

This will be even more important in the 4th quarter, as we perceive we will have more students whose families will be comfortable with them returning to the classroom. Classrooms, hallways and the Commons for lunch will be fuller, so we all will need to be more vigilant. So please, if your daughter or son has any cold or flu symptoms, don't take a chance: keep them home and

have them engage in their classes online. Working together, thinking about the needs of our entire community, we will keep all our kids safe.

Besides the colleague I mentioned above...

We had six students and another colleague test positive for the virus

We also have three students who are presumed positive. (These are students who were in close contact with others who did test positive, and then later they had symptoms associated with the virus, like loss of taste or smell.) These cases led to quarantines for another 47 students and colleagues. And, I am so appreciative of the parents and the students contacting me right away after the positive tests, and the same goes for the colleague: they both let me know within minutes. That thoughtful and responsible behavior allowed us to get with the county health department right away so that we could start on contact tracing and to stop the potential spread as fast as we could. Like we always talk about around here, communication is essential in normal times -- and it is even more important during unsteady times like these. As a community that is what we are doing to protect all our kids, and I am so grateful.

Please don't forget!

Instructional mode change window for the 4th marking period opening soon

It's hard to believe that we are already over half way through the 3rd marking period. As a family, that means that it is time for you to begin considering whether your son or daughter should remain an online student in the 4th marking period, or if they would like to change to face-to-face instruction for the fourth marking period. Next week Thursday, March 4, we will be sending a decision form to the parents of students who are currently learning virtually. The form will only be sent to the parent listed as "Family 1, Guardian 1" in Skyward to prevent duplicate submissions. If you are a parent of a face-to-face learner and wish to change your student's learning mode for 4th quarter, reach out to us at 323-5200 and we will make the change for you. The window to make a change will be open from Thursday, March 4 through Friday, March 12.

Looking toward the fall, figuring out what role online learning will still play then

As our winter starts to turn to spring, we need to look to the next school year, to think and to plan, and that is starting right now as counselors will start meeting with our students to choose classes for next year. To be clear, next fall I want our kids to be here together, in this place that our community built for all of us. For nearly 100 years now, we at PC have learned in the classroom, on the court, on the fields and on the stage -- preparing for our kids' futures both in their academic skills and their abilities to work effectively and thoughtfully with other human beings. We have learned over these 100 years that we succeed in gaining all of these attributes best by working side by side, together.

But we have learned some other things this year as well. We have learned that our teachers could create high-quality, synchronous, online learning. We have learned that while this year has been hard for many of our kids, some of them have thrived in the online-learning world. And, we

have learned that there are many reasons for families wanting online courses next year: from health concerns, to learning style, to a family's schedule or living arrangements. In fact, in our recent survey, more than 350 families from Portage Central and Portage Northern made clear that they were highly or somewhat interested in an online component for next school year.

As always around here, your feedback guides our work. So we are working and planning online courses for the students and families who believe this choice is best for them. And we have a great deal to share with you. Here is how we start:

- Take a look at this [introductory video](#), to get an overall view of our online program.
- You can also access directly the [Slides presentation](#) we used in the video.
- Parents and students have told us that our FAQs that we have developed since this summer have been an important resource for your decision making. So we have built an [FAQ for online learning](#), and we will be updating it in the weeks ahead.
- We have two parent and student informational sessions for online learning as well. Our hope is that you will look through the resources above before these sessions. The sessions really will be for questions and answers, a real conversation so that you can get the information and ideas you need to make the best decisions for your daughter or son and your family.
 - Wednesday evening, March 3 at 6:30 p.m. Please use this link to access the session: meet.google.com/uuv-ymiq-ybq
 - Thursday morning, March 4 at 7:30 a.m. Please use this link to access the session: meet.google.com/ajf-wdon-nub

Thank you, as always, for working alongside us, to navigate this very challenging time, and to do what is best for all our kids here.

Just a reminder...

A half day on March 3, no in-person learning on Thursday, March 4

- Wednesday, March 3
 - A half day, with all seven hours, so that colleagues can receive their second doses of the vaccine.
 - All students (both in-person and virtual) will be



This is the last week to guarantee yourself a yearbook.

We must give our yearbook printing company our final copy count this weekend.

While we may have some extra copies of the printed book to sell after they arrive, there is no way we can guarantee a copy for you if you don't get your order in by this Sunday, Feb. 28.

**Purchase your copy today at www.yearbookordercenter.com
school code: 3604
\$80/main yearbook
\$12/Senior Book**

The graphic features a blue and yellow color scheme. It includes an image of a yearbook cover with the word 'Back' on it. A large blue arrow points from the text 'Purchase your copy today...' towards the yearbook image. Another blue arrow points from the text 'While we may have some extra copies...' towards the yearbook image.

dismissed at 10:55 a.m.

- Thursday, March 4
 - An asynchronous day for teachers and students
 - Teachers will post their lessons or classwork March 3
 - Face-to-face students will not be in the building on that day; instead they will work on their asynchronous assignments from home
 - This asynchronous day was added to our schedule with the anticipation that some teachers would not be able to teach live because of side effects from receiving the vaccine.
 - Some folks seem to be experiencing negative reactions to the second dose than they did to the first dose. And because of the strange nature of this school year, we do not have enough substitute teachers to cover the need.

And another reminder...

Virtual Parent-Teacher Conferences on March 8 and 10 from 3:30 to 7:15pm

We're excited to see you again virtually at parent-teacher conferences on March 8 and 10 from 3:30 to 7:15 p.m. Like last semester, you will receive an email from each of your daughter's or son's teachers by next Thursday, March 4. From there, you will be able to sign up for a timeslot that fits your schedule. Here is a set of directions to help in case you get stuck:

https://docs.google.com/document/d/1aUTAE2a7Mlk1gmknSZ4chdGk1C_e6JEYZgtCPJxBHjA/edit?usp=sharing

Keep in mind -- the sooner you sign up once you get the invitations from teachers, the better chance you have of making it all work out for your schedule. We look forward to meeting with you!

Featured Club of the Week: Band

Portage Central is incredibly lucky to have the multitude of bands that we do. Not only do we have a Marching Band to keep our football team going during the Fall but we also have a Jazz Band, Winds & Percussion, and Percussion Ensemble. These bands have been working hard during these winter months to put together a performance in early March. They started out completely virtual but



have now moved to in person rehearsals. You can even take a band class during the school day if you can't get enough with just the extracurriculars! If you would like more information on any of

our bands, please contact Rennee Flynn at rfflynn@portageps.org or Bryan VanToll at bjvantoll@portageps.org.

In thanks and respect, as always,
Eric Alburtus
ealburtus@portageps.org

And if you want even more PC news...

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[Activities](#)