

PELLA MIDDLE SCHOOL

December 2014 Newsletter

“Together”

Dear Parents/Guardians:

We have a lot to be thankful for and a lot to celebrate! Encourage your student(s) to dress festively next week; Monday and Tuesday, they can don their favorite Christmas sweaters and/or Christmas hats!

- **What do 7-12 grade staff do on Wednesday Professional Development time?**
 - Some parents have asked, “What do teachers do on these early dismissals, and why do some teachers leave their buildings right at the end of the day?”
 - Some rush out of their buildings to travel to other buildings in order to collaborate with other content/discipline-alike teacher experts.
 - We score student assignments, teacher lessons, and teacher instruction in discipline-alike groups as well as interdisciplinary groups, and we use rubrics with clear guidelines in order to have consistent expectations and parameters.
 - We work to enhance the construction of knowledge performed by the students. This means we want students to build and construct their own knowledge and understanding rather than telling them what they need to know. They do not have to think when we simply tell them. We want to create complex thinkers with the ability to solve problems with unpredictable solutions, and that does not happen if we simply tell them what they need to know.
 - We also work to add relevance and value beyond school to our lessons, so students can see and better understand the disciplinary processes that professionals in the field may use.
 - We are working hard to build conceptual understanding around our content areas as well, so the problem solving and learning for the students can be deeper and more meaningful.
 - There are also teacher leaders working with one another in order to stay one year ahead of this learning process. They typically stay two or three times a month beyond the expected 90 minutes of professional development.
 - There are grades 7-12 department sessions once every five weeks to ensure we have the appropriate sequences established for learners.
 - We are aligning curriculum, instruction, and assessments for grades 7-12.
 - These are only a few of the things we do, and I would be glad to better explain if you were ever wishing to construct your own knowledge around the way we work to better serve your student(s) and create a system of continual improvement.

- **Final Semester 1 Grades**

- Final grades will be published for quarter two and semester one on January 8th. Double check with your student to ensure they have everything turned in and/or revised if possible.

- **Celebration**

- There was not one student ineligible first semester for any extra-curricular activities! Outstanding job to our students, teachers, and to Mrs. Blommers for all her support during iStudy. What a great team effort!

- **Pella Middle School Student Climate Survey Results (12/2014)**

- We wanted to know what your student(s) think(s) about our school, so we created a student climate survey to better understand. The information from the survey will help us understand what they think about their middle school experience. At Pella Middle School, we value our students' opinions, and we need their input on what they believe are positives as well as the areas needing to be improved. Their answers are confidential, and their answers will be combined with those of other students. No one will know how they answered unless they chose to put their name on the survey, which was optional. We appreciated the students taking this seriously and completing the survey, and we believe we can utilize the information to enhance their educational experiences at Pella Middle School.
- RESULTS:
<https://docs.google.com/a/pella.k12.ia.us/document/d/1UMx1ccELMVRkqtHC70rPRrIw1CVKCFD-8Q7wqUn6Jwg/edit>

- **2nd Semester Schedules**

- Remind your student(s) to double and triple check their schedules to ensure their exploratory periods are correct and filled up for the remainder of the year.

- **New Teacher - Orchestra/Band Instructor**

- Please help us welcome Gabe Schott as our middle school and Jefferson Intermediate orchestra and band instructor. He will be full-time after break, and he is coming to us from the University of Northern Iowa. Gabe graduates this week, and he was most recently student teaching at Southeast Polk with their band program. Gabe will be replacing Patrice Madison. Unfortunately, Patrice had to resign due to health reasons.

- **Digital Learning BLOG**

- Pella High School students are going to start blogging on the [DLE Blog Site](#) and working from the Student Help Center at the high school.
 - targeted group will be students, parents, and teachers
 - January will be the first student post

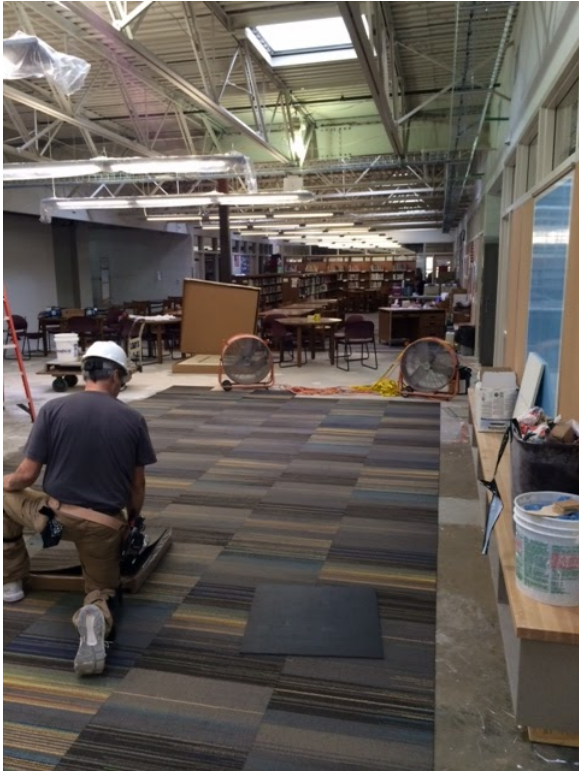
- **Pella Middle School Construction/Renovation Updates**

- We are near the end, and we are very excited for what the renovated spaces are going to offer us.

The spaces should be completely finished by the end of January, and the furniture should be in sometime in February.

- Phase 4 - N end of the Learning Street and Language Arts Classrooms
 - Finished and waiting for the fire marshall to grant us occupancy.
 - There is a picture of what the classrooms will look like.
- Phase 5 - Library
 - See the pictures below.
 - There will be a ceiling, lights, and all the counters and cabinets will be in by the time you read this.
- Furniture
 - We have finalized our furniture order for the new spaces, and delivery will be towards the later part of February.





Library Circulation Desk and Library Office Space

2014 - 2015 Calendars

2014 - 2015 Approved District Calendar

<http://www.pellaschools.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/02/14-15District-Calendar.pdf>

Activities/School Calendar - has ALL 2014 - 2015 district activities updated on it

http://www.littlehawkeyeconference.com/g5-bin/client.cgi?G5genie=206&school_id=4

Links for Resources (may have to copy and paste links)

Middle School Specific Site: <http://www.pellaschools.org/schools/middle-school/>

Middle School Handbook:

https://docs.google.com/a/pella.k12.ia.us/document/d/1JuW6bmJiBZ9Mm9dhi-Xt_edIeW_AyeOL8LxE7sc2S4I/edit

Pella 1:1 Handbook:

https://docs.google.com/a/pella.k12.ia.us/document/d/1QyO3_S4OmTFuauYwSz6IXl5SsjYh68y-h9K8qZ6M5VM/edit

Middle School Band: <https://sites.google.com/a/pella.k12.ia.us/pella-middle-school-band/>

Pella Digital Learning Environment (DLE) Link: <http://pcsd-dle.blogspot.com/>

Dates to Remember for the 2014-2015 School Year

December 23	90 Minute Early Dismissal - Christmas Break 2nd Quarter/1st Semester Ends
December 24 - January 6	Christmas Break
January 5	Teacher Work Day
January 6	Classes Resume - 3rd Quarter/Semester 2 Begins
January 8	Quarter 2/Semester 1 Grades Published
January 14	90 Minute Early Dismissal - Teacher Professional Development
January 19	No Classes - Teacher Professional Development School Improvement Advisory Council (SIAC) Meeting 7:00-8:30 at PHS
January 21	90 Minute Early Dismissal - Teacher Professional Development
January 28	90 Minute Early Dismissal - Teacher Professional Development
February 5	8th Grade Orientation at Pella HS
February 9-12	Iowa Assessments
February 16	Parent Teacher Conferences 4:30-8:30
February 17	90 Minute Early Dismissal - Parent Teacher Conferences
February 19	90 Minute Early Dismissal - Parent Teacher Conferences
February 20	No Classes

As always, we appreciate your partnership with us in our journey to fulfill our mission of *Maximizing Life's Opportunities for Every Child.*

Respectfully in Education,

Joshua A. Manning

Josh Manning
Principal, Pella Middle School

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