

PELLA MIDDLE SCHOOL

January Newsletter

“Together”

Dear Parents/Guardians:

When you think back to your own graduating class, as a whole, what were you known for? Did your class have a label? Maybe yours was the ‘smart’ class, or the ‘athletic’ class, or the ‘wild’ class. It is almost inevitable that each class gets labeled, and maybe it’s earned to a certain extent. However, I do try to avoid labeling a large group of people, especially kids for that matter. When I think about all the individuals who comprise our 8th and 7th grade classes, I could not be more proud of the students we serve. The 8th graders continue to lead the way for our student body; there are outstanding leaders regularly demonstrating character and a strong desire to excel in all aspects of their education. We are also very proud of our 7th grade students. It is fun to watch how they interact with one another. Many of the 7th graders give each other high fives in the halls; they seem close, like they really enjoy one another and want to be supportive. We are proud of all of our students’ efforts, and it helps make the middle school a great place to teach and learn.

8th Grade Specific

- **February 16th Excellence in Electives**
 - This is for 8th grade students and parents. The informational session will be held from 7:00 - 8:00 PM in the high school auditorium.

- **8th Grade Party**
 - Saturday, April 18, from 6:00 - 10:00 PM
 - Planning meetings will be held in the middle school commons or new learning street:
 - Thursday, February 5, from 6:30 - 8:30
 - Monday, February 23, from 6:30 - 8:30
 - If you are unable to attend and would like to contribute, please feel free to contact the 8th grade party facilitator:
 - Carrie Valster: carrie.valster@gmail.com

All Students

- **Iowa Assessments - February 9, 10, and 12**
 - Iowa Assessments are important as they allow each student, parent, teacher and administrator to assess individual, as well as grade-level and district-level, academic progress. The test results also enable us to evaluate how our students compare to students from across the state and nation. In addition, scores from these tests are considered when students are selected for special programs such as gifted and talented, enrichment/remedial level core classes, intervention courses, and special education. ***Please discuss the importance of these assessments with your student and assist him/her in approaching the tests with a positive and optimistic attitude.***
 - Continue to make sure your child has plenty of rest and a good breakfast daily.

- Some would argue that test-day attendance at school is the most important factor in determining success. Students who make up missed tests tend to score lower than if they would have taken the tests on schedule with their peers.
- **Parent Teacher Conferences - February 16, from 4:30-8:30 PM**
 - Parent/teacher conferences will be held Monday, February 16, from 4:30 PM to 8:30 PM. School will be dismissed 90 minutes early at 1:45 PM on Tuesday, February 17, and on Thursday, February 19. School will not be in session on Friday, February 20.
 - We welcome and encourage you all to come in and join us for conferences. Schedules will be posted on all teachers' doors. You may sign up during the days of conferences on a vacant time slot, or feel free to email any teacher with whom you wish to meet. This is an opportunity to best meet students' needs and answer your questions.
- **Middle School Renovation Open House - February 16, from 6:00 - 8:00 PM**
 - We welcome all students and families to come in and see our newly renovated spaces. All staff will be on-hand to answer any questions you have, and there will be a public dedication for the project at a later date.
- **Student Appreciation Day is Coming**
 - Stay tuned! We would like to do a student appreciation day for their ability to maintain focus and demonstrate respect and responsibility this Fall as we worked through our construction project. Construction personnel commended our students for their outstanding character and behavior on multiple occasions.
- **New Teacher - Orchestra/Band Instructor**
 - Gabe Schott is our new middle school and Jefferson Intermediate orchestra and band instructor. He is full-time, and he came from the University of Northern Iowa. Gabe graduated in December, and he most recently student-taught at Southeast Polk with their band program. Gabe replaced Patrice Madison; unfortunately, Ms. Madison had to resign due to health reasons.
- **Check In and Check Out of the office**
 - Please remind your student to check in and check out of the office before and after all appointments or departures from the building. We keep track of every period's attendance during our academic day. If you have an appointment scheduled for your child, please have them bring in a note to the office, and we will get them a pass for when they depart.
- **Mike Smith Assembly - <http://mikesmithlive.com/>**
 - Students had the opportunity to listen to Mike Smith on January 20. Mike calls himself a "professional teenager." He spoke about common teenage concerns to which many of our students could relate.
 - If you have not asked your student about this assembly yet, please do, because we had great response from our students during our brainstorming sessions after we heard him speak.

- We are currently working with students and student council to determine what are actionable/doable changes at the middle school to improve our culture and climate.
- Picture below of all high school and middle school students during the presentation.



- **Avoid Texting/Calling your student while in school:**

- Students can have messages left in the office for them at any time.
- Students can call or text their parents from the office if they must communicate with them.
- When students receive texts from parents during the day, they feel obligated to reply, which pressures them to break our school expectations and/or policies.

Cell Phones & Electronic Devices Handbook Policy

Cell phones should remain OFF except for before school, at lunch, or after the final bell unless cleared through the office or their teacher. Teachers may ask to hold a student's cell phone while a student uses the restroom. Students are encouraged not to bring radios, CD's, iPods, laser lights, games, and other electronic devices, etc. to school. Use of these items is prohibited at school unless cleared through the office or their teacher. Exceptions to this rule include iPods, cell phones, or other similar devices used for classroom learning purposes. Detentions will be issued for repeated offenses, or if these items create a classroom disruption (i.e. cell phones ringing or vibrating in class). The school is not liable for lost, stolen, or damaged electronic devices.

Permissible technology use at lunch:

- playing games
- listening to music
- surfing the web

Nonpermissible technology use at lunch: (not limited to the following)

- text messaging, facebooking, social networking, emailing, snap chatting, tweeting, etc.
- phone calls
- taking photos of classmates, teachers, or staff without permission

Steps for dealing with technological devices misuse:

- 1st incident: Staff will confiscate, give to the office, and it will be given back after final bell by the office.
- 2nd incident: Student will pick-up the item from the principal, dean, or counselor.
- 3rd incident: Parents will pick up phone after the third incident from the principal. If the student brings the phone back to school after the third incident, the phone will spend minimally three school days in the principal's office. The student may be asked to leave the phone at home or in the principal's office daily if the problem persists.

**Detention may be issued if deemed necessary.

- **1:1 Laptops**

- **Help your student(s) with a few of these “Care” items:**

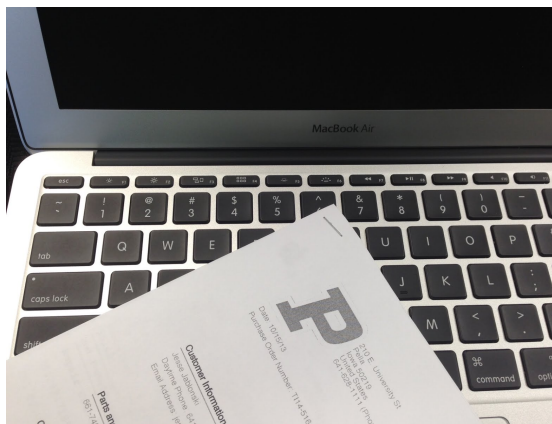
- Remind your students of the appropriate way to carry their device..
- Remind your students to properly care for the device. It is very expensive.
- Remind them to always leave the laptop in the protective case.
- Remind them to shut the lid and zip the case when not in use.
- Remind them to shut down the machine when it is not in use.
- Remind them to make certain there are no items on their keyboard when they close the lid. (see examples below)
- Avoid storing/leaving in the car or garage during cold or hot weather.
- Maintain parameters on when and where your student uses their devices.
- If ever concerned of your student’s usage, have your student’s screens facing you when they are using the device.
- Always sit with your child if they are setting up new social media bios, so you know their passwords.
- Encourage your students to avoid having multiple items on the desk when they are using the device.

- **Avoid Laptop Screen Breakage**

- Remind your student about ways to avoid spending \$350.00 to replace his/her screen.
 - avoid leaving the charger tip on the keyboard when shutting the lid

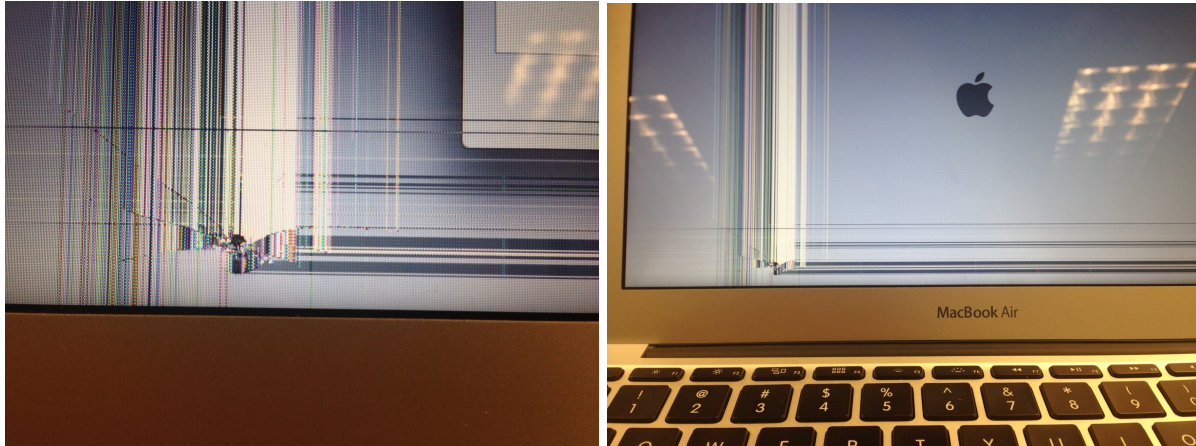


- avoid leaving headphones on the keyboard when shutting the lid
- avoid leaving pens/pencils on the keyboard when shutting the lid
- avoid leaving papers with paper clips or staples on them when shutting the lid.



****These simple steps can help students reduce the likelihood of replacing their screens.**

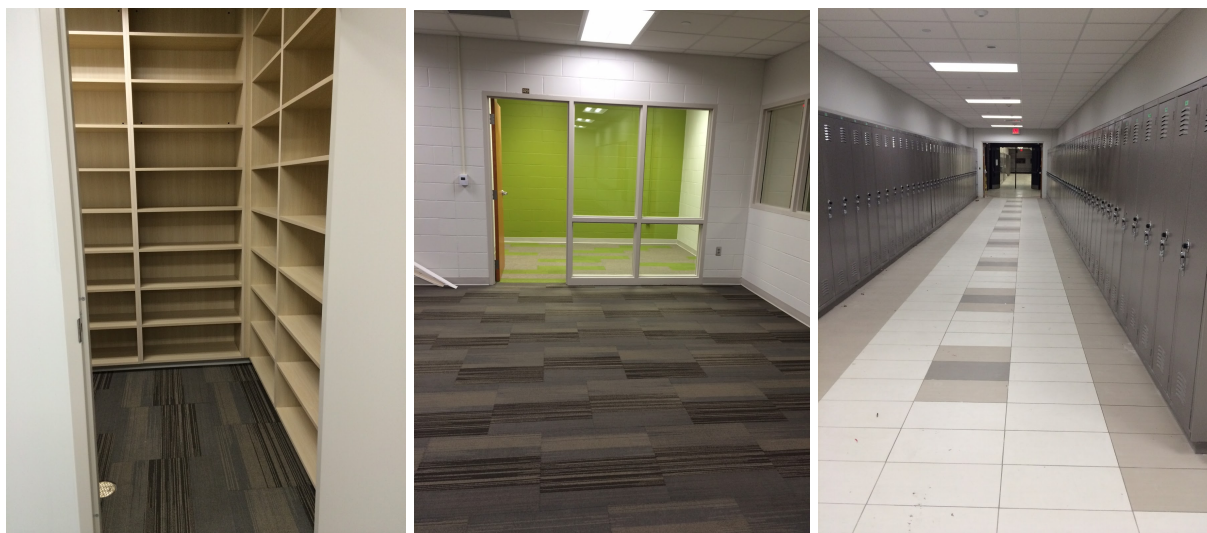
Samples of broken LCD screens on student laptops due to blunt force pressure:



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

- Nearly finished! We have to do some final touch ups and little projects and then wait patiently for the new furniture to arrive.
- Pictures of the new library and a hallway.





- **Independence and Self Confidence**

- Continue to find ways to encourage and build your student's independence and self-confidence. Finding solutions to problems independently and within a group or team is an area we continually work on with middle school students. Don't be afraid to let them learn the hard way and deal with natural consequences. At times, those types of consequences lead to the best life lessons! Encourage them to advocate for themselves and use their voice. This takes courage and personal communication skills, and it will enhance both independence and self-confidence.

- **Host a Student from Another Country**

- Want to experience what it's like to host a student from another country? Consider opening your home to a student from the Netherlands April 25-May 13. For more information, contact Kathy Jaarsma-Tripp at Tripp Kathy u5stripps@iowatelecom.net or Ann Visser at avisser@lisco.com.

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_S4OmTFuauYwSz6IXI5SsjYh68y-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

February 2	Wear RED - Heart Disease Awareness
February 3	Wear RED - Heart Disease Awareness
February 4	90 Minute Early Dismissal - Teacher Professional Development
February 5	8th Grade Orientation at Pella HS for students
February 9-12	Iowa Assessments
February 16	Parent Teacher Conferences 4:30-8:30
February 16	8th Grade Parent Meeting at Pella High from 7:00-8:00 “Excellence in Electives”
February 17	90 Minute Early Dismissal - Parent Teacher Conferences
February 19	90 Minute Early Dismissal - Parent Teacher Conferences
February 20	No Classes
March 13	End 3rd Quarter / 2nd Semester Midterm
March 16-20	Spring Break
March 23	Begin 4th Quarter
April 18	8th Grade Party from 6:00 - 10:00

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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