



PARTNERS POST

Our Schools • Our Communities • Our Future

Your Partners for Public Education Newsletter

www.partnersforpubliced.org



Meals at school well worth the effort

Experts and experience tell us that students learn better when they get enough to eat.

Offering breakfast or other meals in the classroom has clear benefits for students. What may not always be so clear is just how much additional work falls to educators and support professionals. Teachers and aides are sorting out breakfast options and opening milk cartons first thing in the morning, while custodial staffs have more crumbs, wrappers, and spills to clean up later on.

In the York City School District, the breakfast program is just one way to make sure students are getting enough to eat so that they can be at their best in the classroom. Students who participate in after-school programs at the district's K-8 schools also receive a nutritionally balanced dinner each evening.

The district partners with the YMCA of York to provide the after-school program, which began in 2014 at all York City K-8 schools. Students can also get help with their homework and participate in recreational activities.

Dana Hess, who teaches kindergarten at Ferguson K-8 School in York, said many kids in the district have a lot weighing on their shoulders that can impact their school work, and that offering meals at school, whether it is first thing in the morning or at 6 o'clock in the evening, is a great idea.

"It gets their brain working in the morning," Hess said, adding that when students arrive late to her classroom and miss the school-provided breakfast, it affects their ability to focus on class work.



What the 2015 PSSA scores mean (and what they don't)

In the spring of 2015, Pennsylvania students in grades 3-8 were the first to take a new set of PSSA exams, developed following the state's adoption of the PA Core Standards in fall 2013.

Preliminary reports show that student test scores on the new PSSA will be lower than the year before. Overall, the percent of students scoring "proficient" or "advanced" on the PSSA has dropped by more than 9 percent in English language arts and by more than 34 percent in mathematics. This has left many parents and educators with questions and concerns about what the scores mean.

Many school districts across Pennsylvania are still working to implement the PA Core Standards into classrooms, which means some students were tested on material that has not yet been covered in their classrooms. Replacing materials and realigning curriculum to align with the new standards is a costly, challenging process, which is even more challenging as districts continue to feel the effects of devastating state funding cuts passed in 2011.

Read more about what the PSSA scores mean in the August 2015 *Partners Post* online.

When your child needs to use an EpiPen at school

A growing number of students have allergies, and many of these students may need to be treated with an epinephrine auto-injector, known more commonly as an EpiPen, when they have an anaphylactic allergic reaction at school. Parents who know their children have an allergy that may need to be treated at school should take the following steps:

- Check the school's policy on administration of EpiPens. This policy may require that parents provide school officials with a written statement from the child's physician, nurse practitioner, or physician's assistant that includes the name of the medication, dose, instructions for administration, possible serious side effects, necessary emergency response, diagnosis, and a statement about whether the child is competent to possess and self-administer the medication. The policy may also mandate, among other things, that: (1) parents submit a written request to the school that officials comply with the order of a health care professional for administration of the EpiPen to the child; and (2) this written request include a statement that the school is not responsible for ensuring that the student takes the medication when he/she self-administers.
- Notify school officials about the student's condition, providing them, with a prescription, other information required under the school policy, and medication.
- Ask for an evaluation of the child pursuant to Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act which should ultimately result in the development of a Section 504 Plan known in Pennsylvania as a "Service Agreement." This document will provide procedures for the child's treatment at school. Parents should ask that school officials include staff training in the plan.
- Notify school officials if their child wants to possess and self-administer the EpiPen and has the parent's permission and permission from the health care provider (to the extent required under school policy) to do so. The school nurse will then determine whether the student is competent to perform these tasks.
- Ensure that if school officials determine that the student is not competent to possess and self-administer or if the student does not want to or does not have permission to do so, the school stores the EpiPen in a place which is in close proximity to the student. Parents can also ask that the Section 504 Plan address this issue.

If parents take these steps and maintain open communications with school officials when they feel adjustments are needed or when their child's condition or treatment changes, they will be in a good position to help school employees appropriately address the student's needs.

Partner spotlight: Fostering friendship with the 'Buddy Bench'

When his family was faced with the possibility of moving to Germany in 2013, first-grader Christian Bucks was checking out an international school online. There he saw a picture of a special bench where lonely students could go to sit on a playground.



Christian thought the bench would be a good idea to have on his playground at Roundtown Elementary in the Central York School District. He knew that some of his friends sometimes felt lonely at recess and thought the "buddy bench" would help to end that.

Read Christian's story in the August 2015 *Partners Post* online.

Partner Benefits Spotlight: Save money on back-to-school shopping

As a Partner for Public Education, you can save on back-to-school purchases at Sears, Kmart, Target.com, Gymboree, Super Shoes, OshKosh B'gosh, and more, including local stores in your community. Visit the **Partner Benefits** page and sign in to Access to get started.



About Partners for Public Education

Partners for Public Education is working to provide you with resources about public education in Pennsylvania because we are committed to the success of every child. It is brought to you by the *Pennsylvania State Education Association*, an organization made up of the dedicated employees in your Pennsylvania public schools.

August 2015



Learn more and enroll for free at www.partnersforpubliced.org