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Dear Parents and Guardians:

Winter is arriving and 2017 is drawing to a close. The school year will soon be half complete. Every year it feels like things move faster than ever, and this year is no exception.

The students have been equally busy with their academics and their activities. We have just completed the second session of STAR testing at

the high school. We continue to improve Panther Hour to ensure students have time embedded into the school day to meet with teachers. Thank you for your support and feedback as we move through the year. We are working to do what it takes to help the students succeed along the way and strengthen their skills.

This newsletter has information regarding Panther Hour, STAR testing, homework help time, and an upcoming assembly in January. Please take the time to read through them. Contact the teachers or me directly with any questions you may have.

May this December find you filled with hope and peace for the fast-approaching new year,

*Carey Johnson*

PPHS Principal

#### **7-12 Student Assembly January 8, 2018: 2:00 p.m. West Gym**

Cory Greenwood, Minnesota father and motivational speaker, will be speaking with students on January 8, 2018 at 2:00 p.m. in the large gym. Cory's message is one of hope and possibility. Cory will tell his story of becoming a father at a very young age and enduring the gut-wrenching pain of losing his father to suicide, both happening in a short amount of time. Through these difficult life changes, Cory struggled to make positive, appropriate choices for himself all while dealing with panic attacks and anxiety. He will speak about how he made it through the most difficult time of his life, the skills he obtained, and will push students to believe in themselves when times are the toughest. Parents are welcome to join us for this moving and important assembly. This assembly is made possible through a grant by the James McKnight Suicide Awareness Group. For further information regarding Cory Greenwood and his program, you can read his story at [www.corygreenwood.com](http://www.corygreenwood.com)

#### **Parent Assembly January 8, 2018: PPHS Media Center 6:30 p.m.**

Cory Greenwood will be speaking to students during the school day on January 8, 2018. He will also bring his story to PPHS for a community conversation in the PPHS Media Center that evening. He will be telling his story and discussing student and family mental health. All parents, guardians, and community members are invited to attend the open dialogue. You may bring your students, grades 7-12. This conversation is made possible through a grant by the James McKnight Suicide Awareness Group.

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<sup>1</sup> Image Credit <http://mzayat.com/clipart/december-clipart.html>

### **STAR Testing Update**

Initial results of the most recent STAR testing for reading and math have been positive and encouraging. Students are showing growth in both areas. In fact, as a school, all but one class experienced growth in both areas. This is very exciting.

Students will take the STAR tests three different times during the school year. Staff utilize the data to determine needs for individual students, groups of students, and whole classes. As a staff, we are working all year to ensure our instruction meets the students where they are and brings positive growth for each student. At the time of this writing, we still have a few students to test for Reading, Math, or both tests. Make up for these tests will be during 4th hour on Tuesday, December 5 in the Media Center.

### **Panther Hour, Homework Help, Saturday School**

We have several ways to help students with coursework. If your students have needs regarding a specific course, the best and most efficient way is to insist that the students connect with the course teacher directly. This is the main purpose of Panther Hour. Students are given time each day during Panther Hour to reach out to the teacher and complete their work. Teachers are not teaching at this time to ensure they are available.

Outside of Panther Hour, teachers are willing to meet with students before or after school by appointment. Additionally, after school Monday-Thursday, we offer a homework help room from 3:10-4:00 or 4:30, depending on the needs of the students. No appointment is necessary. Students are welcome to go to the homework help room (109) after school. Finally, Saturday School is offered on select Saturdays throughout the year. All students needing a quiet place to study, access to a teacher, access to the internet, and/or school supplies are welcome. Please take advantage of our programs. It is our utmost goal to help each student be successful in their courses.

### **New and Noteworthy at PPHS**

This school year marks the first year of the Robotics course, under the direction of Career and Technical Education instructor, Mr. Jon Oestreich. On December 2, 2017, The team went to its first competition in St. Cloud. The regional competition included 40 teams. PPHS teams placed 38th and 16th. The team placing 16th advanced to the second round, where they lost to a team ranked 12th in the world. Team members include: Christopher Ahlers, Nicholas Aldrich, Ethan Carruth, Kaylee Esterberg, Matthew Jirik, Graham Larson, Hunter Penrose, and Tanner Shaw. Mr. Oestreich said the competition was, "Pretty exciting for their first contest!" Congratulations to our Panther Robotics Team!

### **Upcoming Dates to Remember**

- Monday, December 11: 7-12 Holiday Music Concert
- Saturday, December 16: Saturday School 8-Noon, open to all students
- Friday, December 22: Monday January 1: Winter Break
- January 8: Speaker Cory Greenwood, 2 p.m. and 6:30 p.m.
- January 19: Last Day of Semester 1
- January 22: Teacher workshop: No School
- January 23: First Day of Semester 2- Check for Semester 2 schedules ahead of time