A place where everyone is welcome...

On Opening Day we heard Mike, Amy, and Dwayne all talk about the same theme of inclusivity. We were encouraged to think about the uniqueness that each individual child brings to the classroom and the importance of connecting with each child and showing them that we care. We were invited to find ways to celebrate and welcome differences as we strive for an ever more inclusive environment where everyone can be their authentic selves.

Sometimes, when we think about “differences” our minds tend to go to the differences amongst us that are obvious, differences that we can see. We often overlook the powerful impact of the things that we cannot see and lose sight of how those “invisible differences” influence a student’s experience in school. So how do you tap into all of the uniqueness—visible and invisible—of the students in your care?

One way is to be very thoughtful about the questions you ask of your students as you get to know them in the first few days of the school year. Asking your students to respond to questions such as:

- What are you passionate about?
- What will success look like and feel like for you this year?
- What are you worried about as you start the new school year?
- What do you see as your greatest strength?
- How can I help you be your best self and your best learner?

sends the message that you care about each of them as an individual human being with hopes, dreams, and fears.

Honoring and tapping into the different life, cultural, and linguistic experiences that students bring to the classroom is an important part of establishing a culture of learning. Seeing differences not as a deficit, or as something that needs to be “overcome”, but rather as an asset that you can build upon to extend each child’s learning is a critical part of being a responsive teacher.

Each of you has the power to make a difference in the life of a child. Use that power to create a learning environment that allows every child to feel safe, secure, welcome, challenged, and celebrated. Create a culture for learning that causes each child to feel important and valued, not “in spite of” their differences, but because of their differences.

Happy New Year!

Melanie

Mission Statement

The PCSD community works collaboratively to inspire and prepare our students to be their best, do their best, and make a difference in the lives of others.
**Elementary Grade Level Release meetings**

The dates for our fall, 2018 Elementary Grade Level Release meetings have been set. Elementary teachers should take care to put these dates on their calendars now in order to avoid the scheduling of field trips or other conflicts.

The Grade Level Release meetings will be held on the following dates/times:

October 16, 2018

8:30 – 11:00: Grade 2  
12:30 – 3:00: Grade 5

October 17, 2018

8:30 – 11:00: Grade 1  
12:30 – 3:00: Grade 4

October 24, 2018

8:30 – 11:00: Grade K  
12:30 – 3:00: Grade 3

The focus of these meetings for teachers in first through fifth grade will be new writing units which all teachers are expected to be implementing with their students this year. Teachers are asked to administer the on-demand pre-assessment for their first writing unit PRIOR to their grade level release meeting. We will then be able to spend time together looking at samples of student work, and discussing the instructional moves that are informed by the student work. Kindergarten teachers will have a different focus for their time together, including on-going discussions about their revised report card.

**Welcome to Pittsford!**

What an amazing group of new-to-Pittsford teachers we have joining us this year. There are thirty-seven members of this year's Induction class, making it the largest group of new hires that we have had in quite a number of years. Our new teachers come to us with a range of experience from, “this is my first teaching job ever”, to over twenty years in the classroom. They will be teaching every grade at the elementary level, as well as art, math, home and careers, science, reading, English, French, and special education. We also have new Speech/Language pathologists, new SSTs, new counselors, a school psychologist, and a new Chairperson for Preschool Special Education. Every building will be welcoming one or more new teachers this year.

During the seven days that new-to-Pittsford teachers spend in Induction before the start of the school year, they learn about, and hopefully experience, the supportive and collaborative culture of the Pittsford School District. They have an opportunity to work with a number of different teachers and administrators who come in to facilitate various aspects of the learning. They meet their mentors, get their laptops, and learn about the Danielson Framework for Effective Teaching. Most importantly, perhaps, they bond with each other and become a true cohort of professionals, supporting each other as they begin what we all hope will be a long and successful career in Pittsford.

Please make it a point to seek out and welcome the new teachers to your building in the coming days. They are a remarkable group of educators, each bringing their own strengths and talents to the classroom and the district. We are so glad that they have chosen to teach and work in Pittsford.
**It takes a village...**

Wednesday, September 5th will be an historic day for the Pittsford Central School District. That is the day that our first class of Full Day Kindergarten students will walk through the doors of their school to begin their educational journey with us. Getting ready for this day has truly been a collaborative effort between staff members of every department and every elementary school.

Our team of Kindergarten teachers have participated in up to five full days of professional learning over the summer specifically designed to support the implementation of the program and curricular resources. That professional learning was designed, arranged for, and facilitated by our team of elementary core standards leaders. I know that the teachers have all, also, spent countless hours at home and in their classrooms preparing for this new adventure. Elementary art, music, and physical education teachers worked with their standards leaders to develop curriculum to meet the needs of kindergarten students. Members of the Technology Department ordered, tracked, and prepared equipment including lightspeed sound systems and iPads for each of our Kindergarten classrooms. My assistant, Laurie Hummel, along with Karen Houston and others in the Business Office, worked with building assistants regarding the ordering and delivery of furniture, supplies, and curriculum resources. Shana Cutaia, Principal at Barker Road, and Kevin O’Connor, Barker Road Head Custodian, donated the use of a classroom for us to store, sort, prepare, and label all of the curriculum resources that were ordered for each Kindergarten classroom. Joan Reynolds and members of the maintenance department worked with us to get all of those resources delivered to the buildings where the building custodians were busy setting up classrooms with new furniture and supplies. Classrooms were painted, and in some cases underwent significant renovations, to make things right for our incoming FDKers. Building principals met with their team of Kindergarten teachers to plan for the myriad of “new to kindergarten logistics” including lunch and recess. The Communications Department has been engaged with local media and we look forward to lots of positive coverage in the news and on social media on the first day of school!

This list of things accomplished by a large and diverse team of staff members this summer, all working together to make Full Day Kindergarten a success, could go on and on. This work, alone, would have been an impressive list of accomplishments for one summer, but it is even more impressive when you consider that this was all IN ADDITION TO the work that happens every summer by every building and department to prepare for a new school year.

Words can barely express the gratitude I feel for working in the kind of organization where everyone pitches in to work towards a common goal. It was a busy, stressful, sometimes dirty, summer of planning, sorting, stacking, facilitating, reminding, negotiating, discussing, distributing, and supporting. We are truly a village of professional and passionate individuals who, working together, can accomplish just about anything! Thank you to everyone who had a hand in this work.

And now, for the most important part - let’s bring on the kids!
**Curriculum updates...**

Summer is always a busy and productive time for curriculum writing and this summer was no exception. Standards Leaders worked with teams of teachers to work on curriculum projects in the following areas:

- **Art** - curriculum was written for kindergarten
- **Business** - curriculum was written for the new Cyber Security course
- **ELA** - at the elementary level, new writing units were developed; at the secondary level work was done on revisions to both the 10th and 12th grade curriculum
- **Health** - cornerstone tasks for grades 6, 8 and 10 were developed
- **Library** - elementary librarians worked to identify their shared essential learnings based on their new National Standards. This work will inform future curriculum writing at the unit level.
- **Math** - high school teachers worked on curriculum to align and focus the “non-Common Core” level math courses at both high schools
- **Music** - curriculum was revised to accommodate the full day kindergarten program
- **Physical Education** - elementary teachers revised their kindergarten curriculum while middle school teachers worked to revise curriculum for students in grades 6-8.
- **Science** - Benchmark assessments for Biology and Earth Science were revised after being piloted last year. In addition, teachers worked on curriculum to align and focus the curriculum for several high school science elective courses.
- **Social Studies** - middle school teachers worked together to revise their benchmark assessments while teachers of Global Studies worked on their common midterm and final exam.

Curriculum, along with district common assessments, should all be housed in, and accessed through, NYLearns. You can find a link to NYLearns on the “for staff” portion of the PCSD website. Logging in to NYLearns is easy as long as you remember a few key ingredients: last name SPACE first-name@pcsd.monroe.edu. Use the same password as the one you use to log in to your computer every day. Teachers are strongly encouraged to visit NYLearns frequently as this is where the most up-to-date versions of Pittsford’s curriculum materials will always be found.

Many thanks to the Standards Leaders and teams of teachers who worked so hard this summer, on behalf of their entire department or grade level, to develop high quality curriculum for Pittsford teachers and students. We are all so fortunate to be in a place where our curriculum is written by our teachers, for our teachers, reflecting what we most value for our students.

**October Superintendent’s Conference Day**

Our fall Superintendent’s Conference Day is scheduled for Friday, October 5th, from 8:00—1:00. On that day, most teachers and SRPs will be working at their buildings on plans developed by their building administrators working in partnership with their Instructional Leadership Teams. Exceptions to this building based plan are as follows:

- Elementary Art, Music, and Physical Education teachers will be together in Barker Road Meeting Room 1 working on revisions to their elementary report card.

- Elementary SRPs will be invited to spend a portion of the day learning together at a central location. Details about this will follow.

We always look forward to this day as an opportunity to connect deeply with colleagues around important district and building initiatives. Stay tuned for more details as we get closer to that time.
As part of our collaborative professional learning community, the opportunity for all members of a discipline to periodically come together and build shared knowledge of curriculum, assessments, and discipline-specific pedagogy becomes increasingly important. Active participation in District Standards meetings, grades 6-12, and full department meetings is an important part of our shared responsibility in achieving this effort.

To support this, Standards Leaders have been asked to share with you the dates for these meetings at the start of the school year so that you can plan for them on your calendar. Please avoid scheduling other obligations that would conflict with these meetings. Of course emergencies may arise. If they do please let your Standards Leader know, as often times the meeting activities are planned around the anticipated attendance of all members.

Your contribution to the work of your standards area is critical and appreciated. Please make regular active attendance at your district-wide Standards meetings a priority as we continue our shared mission, vision and values as a community of learners.