

# PLYMOUTH-CANTON

## COMMUNITY SCHOOLS PRESS

Official Publication of P-CCS

Fall 2024



PLYMOUTH-CANTON  
COMMUNITY SCHOOLS  
GLOBALLY FOCUSED. LOCALLY CONNECTED.

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# P-CCS is helping students LEARN, PREPARE and THRIVE

**P-CCS Dynamic Plan 2021-27** is the roadmap to best serve all students and staff in both the near- and long-term future. The plan looks to capture the desire of our school community to invest in innovative educational programming

that will attract students and families to our district. The strategic goals and objectives embedded within the plan are designed to lead our students to accelerate their academic, social, and emotional growth to thrive in this new educational world and beyond. Read more about the P-CCS Dynamic Plan at [pccsk12.com](http://pccsk12.com) and go to "About P-CCS."

**The Learner Profile** is an agreed-upon list of skills and characteristics P-CCS pledges to deliver to every district student before they graduate. Our district developed the learner profile in collaboration with Dell Technologies and Advanced Learning Partnerships, which have nationally recognized expertise in this area.

*"The P-CCS Dynamic Plan is the result of our belief that all students can achieve their full potential if we strive to provide a complete educational experience that is relevant and rigorous and meets the academic needs of all students."*

*- Dr. Monica L. Merritt, P-CCS Superintendent of Schools*

## Message from the Board of Education

The Board of Education at Plymouth-Canton Community Schools is thrilled to welcome our returning students, new ones and their families to the new 2024-2025 school year.

At P-CCS, we celebrate a learning environment that ignites curiosity, creates opportunities for deeper learning, and fosters a true love of learning. We are excited to embrace the new school year with courage and an open heart. We are so grateful to be on this journey with each and every one of you.

Recently, the board voted in support of putting a millage renewal on the November ballot that is essential to supporting vital academic programs and classes. The Wayne County RESA millage is a renewal that communities in Wayne County, including ours, generously approved twice, in 2016 and 2022. In this magazine, you can find more information about how this millage helps our students learn and achieve.

The P-CCS board is excited to welcome a new trustee, Aamina Ahmed, to fill a vacancy on the board with the resignation of Shawn Wilson, our past president. Shawn has been a tireless advocate for P-CCS, and a champion for educational excellence in our classrooms and beyond. We thank him for his service and wish him all the best.

Our board is fully committed to serving you. To our families and district staff, please let us know if you would like us to attend an event in our district. We welcome your feedback, input and ideas, and strongly encourage everyone to attend our full board meetings as well as our



**Seated, from left:** Anupam Chugh Sidhu, Patrick Kehoe, and Sheryl Picard. **Standing, from left:** Judy Westra, Aamina Ahmed, Lauren Christenson, and Patti McCoin.

subcommittee meetings. All meetings are at the E.J. McClendon Educational Center at 454 S. Harvey in Plymouth.

- ✓ Full board meets the second and fourth Tuesdays of each month, at 7 p.m.
- ✓ Finance & Operations Committee, first and third Thursdays, 5 p.m.
- ✓ Policy Advisory Committee, fourth Tuesdays, 5:30 p.m.
- ✓ Student Performance and Achievement Committee, first Wednesdays, 5 p.m.
- ✓ Student Voice in Action Committee, first Mondays, 4:30 p.m. (This committee is made up of P-CCS students and Board members.)

**Learn more about the Board: [www.pccsk12.com](http://www.pccsk12.com), go to "About P-CCS" and click on "Board of Education."**



## **Dr. Monica L. Merritt, Superintendent**

Welcome back to another exciting school year at Plymouth-Canton Community Schools!

I am thrilled to welcome our students and families back after the summer break. We look forward to helping our students find their passion this school year and excel in doing what they love. At P-CCS, we strive to prepare our students to succeed as globally focused and locally connected citizens.

We have our largest group of kindergarten students in recent years and look forward to nurturing their social and emotional development as well as introducing them to critical thinking and problem solving.

This school year, we are launching our first cohort of students in our Early Middle College program, which is designed to give students a great start in science, technology, engineering, arts and math at an advanced level.

# **A MESSAGE FROM DR. MONICA L. MERRITT**

## **SUPERINTENDENT OF PLYMOUTH-CANTON COMMUNITY SCHOOLS**

Across our district, each of our school buildings will see updates, upgrades and, in many cases, all new facilities, such as our state-of-the-art natatorium and athletic facilities at the Plymouth-Canton Education Park.

We're also excited to inaugurate our Innovation Hub. It's a one-of-a-kind facility designed for all our students, partners and community members to tackle challenges through collaboration, innovation and teamwork with cutting-edge technology and methods.

Our career and technical education program is among the best in Michigan. It offers unique opportunities to excel in the skilled trades for all students and opportunities for strong partnerships, such as those we have fostered with manufacturing and technology powerhouses such as Ford Motor Co., Bosch and others.

Last year, our students and staff received more accolades, awards and recognitions than I can remember in

recent years. From winning chess and math competitions to scoring gold at skilled trades contests to reaching the finals for statewide sports awards, P-CCS truly excelled in 2023-24. And our Plymouth-Canton Educational Park high schools ranked in the top 5% of all high schools in the nation and the Top 50 in Michigan, according to a U.S. News and World Report ranking released in April.

Progress by P-CCS across many areas reflects our commitment to keeping our promises. Our new facilities, programs and partnerships illustrate our dedication to helping every student learn, prepare and thrive.

In this magazine, you'll read about some of the exciting things happening at P-CCS. As superintendent, I also want you to know my door is always open, and I welcome any feedback to make our schools even better. We are looking forward to another great year ahead!

Yours in education,

**Dr. Monica L. Merritt,  
Superintendent**

Plymouth-Canton Community Schools



# P-CCS promotes Michigan fruits, veggies with free Summer Packs



This summer through mid-October, Plymouth-Canton Community Schools handed out free fresh fruits and vegetables to local families every week. The Summer Harvest Packs were part of our effort to make nutritious local produce easily available to students.

To highlight the district’s continuing focus on nutritious Michigan-based products, P-CCS is also the first school district in Michigan to successfully source affordable,

nutritious organic dry edible beans from a Michigan grower and processor through a partnership with the Michigan Bean Commission.

Families received a range of seasonal options, including tomatoes, peppers, cucumbers, eggplant, zucchini, summer squash, carrots, beets, onions, herbs, cabbage, kohlrabi, snap peas and other fruits and vegetables.

The produce was sourced directly from Gateway Farm, a U.S. Department of Agriculture-certified organic, permaculture-inspired farm, as well as neighboring certified organic farms, including its sister farm, Plymouth Orchards & Cider Mill. Gateway and Plymouth Orchards are located in the district. In addition to produce, Summer Harvest packs included whole grain cookies from Troy-based Dick & Jane Baking Co.

## GET THE FACTS: WAYNE COUNTY REGIONAL ENHANCEMENT MILLAGE RENEWAL



The Wayne County Regional Enhancement Millage **renewal** will appear on your Nov. 5 ballot. The Plymouth-Canton Community Schools Board of Education voted to place this renewal on the ballot.

This renewal helps Wayne County students – including those who attend P-CCS – achieve, succeed, and prepare for in-demand careers. This millage was originally

approved by voters in 2016 and renewed in 2020. Details about this millage:

- ✓ By law, 100% of the millage goes directly to local Wayne County school districts and eligible public school academies.
- ✓ Funds are distributed equally per student.
- ✓ The millage includes strong accountability and transparency measures that are monitored to ensure it produces results for our students.

## Wayne County Enhancement Millage funding can be used to:

<b>Reduce Class Sizes</b>	<b>Hire Additional Teachers &amp; Staff</b>	<b>Stabilize District Budget</b>
<b>Enhance Student Wellness Services</b>	<b>Retain Substitute Teachers</b>	<b>Update Technology &amp; Instructional Materials</b>
<b>Support Career Technical Education Opportunities</b>	<b>Increase Teacher Salaries</b>	<b>Maintain School Bus Fleet</b>
<b>Improve Safety &amp; Security</b>	<b>Provide Professional Development</b>	<b>Renovate and Maintain Facilities</b>

- ✓ If renewed, this millage will continue the less than 2-mill property tax each year for six years, beginning in 2028. A homeowner whose home is valued at \$100,000 (taxable value \$50,000) would continue paying about \$8 per month with the approval of this renewal.

# Students get head start on college in new program

P-CCS students who want to get an early start on college or a career can now do so at Plymouth-Canton Community Schools. Our Early Middle College program welcomed its first cohort of 25 students this fall. The program allows students to earn a high school diploma along with one of the following:

- ✓ 60 transferable college credits;
- ✓ An associate degree; or
- ✓ A professional certification.

Student Layelle Kassim enrolled in the program so she could complete high school and get a business degree



From left: Harhukam Aulakh, Samanjas Atre, Layelle Kassim, Aliana Lara-Valerio and Amanda Pelukas.

at the same time. Aliana Lara-Valerio said she transferred from a charter school specifically because of the high quality of P-CCS' Early Middle College program.

Starting in 10th or 11th grade, students have several options with our partner colleges, Schoolcraft College and Washtenaw Community College, including blending high school and college classes into a five-year plan.

## To apply to Early Middle College

The application window opens after the first semester. Interested students can apply starting in ninth grade. Informational meetings will take place before the applications open. Email Amanda Pelukas, P-CCS Early Middle College Coordinator at [amanda.pelukas@pccsk12.com](mailto:amanda.pelukas@pccsk12.com)

# Excellence, opportunities await in Career and Technical Education

At Plymouth-Canton Community Schools, Career and Technical Education programs allow students to explore their passions and gain valuable skills that will prepare them for college, jobs and rewarding careers. Here are just a few of our notable programs:

## Engineering CAD (computer aided design)

Providing a solid foundation in manufacturing, engineering, construction and related fields, CAD students take lessons from math, science and civics and apply them in hands-on, project-based settings. They'll learn everything from 3D design and additive manufacturing to industry approved software and tools. Students will experience manufacturing, architecture, and mechanical, electrical and civil engineering.

## Culinary arts

P-CCS' Restaurant Operations Class (ROC) is a fully licensed, full-service restaurant that is open to the public. Students



create a 40-plus item menu from scratch each day, learning in a real-world hands-on environment.

In the Culinary and Hospitality Explorations class, students can create a food business, forming teams that create concepts, a mission, a demographic outline and a menu. The team then prepares a small plated item that is displayed in April.

## DECA

P-CCS students in advanced marketing, business academy marketing, and marketing sales and services explore entrepreneurship and business development through their participation in DECA, a cocurricular business organization with more than 260,000 members across the United States and other countries. P-CCS students have developed many interesting entrepreneurial and charitable projects through DECA. Students learn to set goals, develop plans, implement those plans and work as a team to achieve their objectives. DECA prepares our students to be professionally prepared, gives them experience to compete, and connect with businesses.

# P-CCS elementary students surpass peers in U.S.

Elementary students in Plymouth-Canton Community Schools scored well above their peers nationwide in reading and math, according to national 2023-24 data compiled and analyzed by the Northwest Evaluation Association, a nonprofit organization that assesses student achievement.

Compared with other students nationwide, students in kindergarten through eighth grade in a P-CCS school also met or exceeded predicted growth from fall to winter in reading and math, the NWEA data showed.

In every grade from kindergarten to eighth grade, P-CCS students outperformed the nation in reading and math.



Grade-level achievement among P-CCS students in math and reading also ranked high, ranging from the 71st percentile to the 86th percentile. The national norm fell within the 40th to 60th percentile.

P-CCS' success stems from several strategies, including:

- ✓ Rigorous support from instructional coaches and dedicated specialists at the elementary, middle school and high school levels
- ✓ Student teamwork in pre-K to the fifth-grade work to enhance literacy skills
- ✓ Support and resources targeted to site-based needs, which are identified early and closely monitored
- ✓ Highly qualified teaching staff

## Canton HS grads take gold at national culinary contest

In the food and hospitality arena, Plymouth-Canton Community Schools continues to serve up national champions. **Charlie Salowich** and **Madeleine White** took top prizes at the National SkillsUSA Championship in the culinary and fine dining restaurant service categories. Charlie and Madeleine graduated from Canton High School in June.

As part of his SkillsUSA gold medal, Salowich received a full scholarship to both the **Culinary Institute of America** and **Johnson and Wales University**. Madeleine also won a full tuition scholarship to the **Culinary Institute of America**, as well as numerous prizes.

To win his gold medal, Salowich prepared a five-hour, five-course meal consisting of an appetizer, soup, two entrées and a dessert. He also completed a written assessment and demonstrated knife and butchery skills. For her gold medal, White demonstrated exceptional table setting, napkin folding and fine dining service; excelled in a written technical assessment on terminology and best practices; and prepared a Caesar salad tableside.

SkillsUSA is the nation's foremost career tech and skilled trades education competition.



# Making A Paw-sitive Impact



At Plymouth-Canton Community Schools, a few special schoolmates are helping students and staff stay ahead of the pack. With their puppy eyes and dogged determination, P-CCS' certified therapy dogs roam the hallways and visit classrooms to bring comfort, joy, a sense of security and more than a few smiles. Studies show therapy dogs in schools can help address students social and emotional needs: A 2019 National Institutes of Health study found that a therapy dog promotes positive feelings in a classroom. A University of California study linked therapy dogs in a classroom with higher rates of reading fluency. At P-CCS, our four-legged friends are part of the family – and a crucial member of our learning environment.

## Meet Acey

At 6 months old, Acey is the newest addition to P-CCS' team of therapy dogs. An American-Lab mix, Acey is currently working on her Good Citizen Certification and will soon be a certified therapy dog. Hulsing Elementary Principal Jennifer Chambers is Acey's "person." At the moment, Acey will be at Hulsing one day a week. Thank you to the Plymouth Community United Way for providing grant funding to purchase and train Acey.



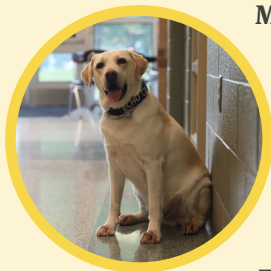
## Meet Lulabelle

Lulabelle is a Cavalier King Charles Spaniel and certified with the Alliance of Therapy Dogs. The 4-year-old dog first began coming to Canton High School three years ago. Now, she attends school every day. During lunch and lunch passing, Lulabelle can often be found walking around the P-CEP campus with her person, Canton High School Spanish teacher Lisa Niemiec.



## Meet Echo

Echo is a 3-and-a-half-year-old yellow Lab certified in obedience as well as firearm and explosive detection. Echo visits every school in the district and loves every outing. Echo's handler is Scott Hughesdon.



Echo was born in Croatia, entered the United States through Germany and has been working at P-CCS since 2023. Thank you to the Kiwanis Club of Colonial Plymouth for a generous donation that enabled P-CCS to get Echo. (Read more about Echo and the security support he provides, Page 10.)

## Meet Dani

Dani is a 6-year-old labradoodle and a registered therapy dog. Dani came to Canton High School in 2022. Her human is Canton HS counselor Erin Demarest. Dani spends Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays with Canton HS students.



## Meet Rue

Rue is a shepherd-Collie-Lab mix certified through the Therapy Dog Alliance. She is also an American Kennel Club certified Good Citizen. Rue, 4, has been at Liberty Middle School since 2022 and can be



found there every school day. While

she spends most of her time with her human, Liberty Science Department Chair Tracy Stop, in their science classroom, Rue also takes walks throughout the school and even attends sports events.

## Happy retirement, Leon!

Leon, a chocolate Lab that has been roaming the halls of West Middle School and providing comfort, retired in October. Also retiring with Leon is his human, West MS teacher Bill Wooster. Congratulations to Bill and Leon!



# An update on P-CCS bond projects

Plymouth-Canton Community Schools is excited to announce the completion of several projects related to the bond that voters generously supported in 2020. Adding to dozens of upgrades that have been completed in the past year, these new projects will further enhance our students' learning and educational environment. Throughout our district, students, families and visitors will experience new gym and play areas, academic resources, athletic facilities and more. P-CCS is grateful for our community's support and we look forward to continue serving as good stewards of our resources, keeping the promises we have made to our community.

- ✓ The Plymouth Natatorium and multi-purpose room addition is a 35,000-square-foot facility



that makes our district stand out in Michigan. The addition consists of an 8-lane swimming pool with a diving well, a gymnasium, and a 2-story grand corridor.

- ✓ Isbister Elementary now has a new gym and two additional classrooms, thanks to a 9,333-square-foot addition. Isbister also has a new playground.
- ✓ East, Pioneer and West middle schools recently completed upgrades that added to the schools' welcoming environment, as well as enhancing security and safety.
- ✓ Pardon the dust as work ramps up on a third stadium at Plymouth-Canton Educational Park, which includes a new field, bleachers and running track. The work will also include a new 17,000-square-foot addition featuring a multi-purpose room and concessions.

## Building for the future with Bosch STEM grant

Plymouth-Canton Community Schools (P-CCS) was awarded a \$48,000 grant from



# BOSCH

longtime community partner Bosch Community Fund to further strengthen science, technology, engineering and math education for students in kindergarten through fifth grade. The grant will enable P-CCS to implement and integrate STEM lessons for students using LEGO kits designed to boost students' knowledge of and confidence in skills such as coding, robotics and computer science. The kits also help foster collaborative work among students and promote critical thinking and problem-solving skills. The program will be added into the Innovation Period.





# Community dials up support for award-winning student radio station

## Rotary Club of Plymouth donates \$200,000; Relentless Care Foundation by Community Financial Credit Union donates \$10,000 toward matching fund

Plymouth-Canton Community Schools' community partners continue to step up to generously support our students and their amazing work. The Rotary Club of Plymouth announced over the summer that it is donating \$200,000 to support upgrades to the station that will benefit students and listeners for years to come.

And just before the start of the 2024-25 school year, Relentless Care Foundation by Community Financial Credit Union announced a contribution of \$10,000 toward a matching fund. The generous donations bring P-CCS a step closer toward raising more than \$500,000 for the studio upgrades.

Rotary Club of Plymouth President **Chris Porman** said the donation reflects the organization's core mission of investing in education.

"By supporting the student radio station, we are providing a platform for students to gain hands-on experience in broadcasting,

journalism, communication and media production," Porman said. "The student radio station serves as a vital medium for fostering dialogue, promoting diverse perspectives, and amplifying voices that may otherwise go unheard. In an era when media consolidation can limit access to alternative viewpoints, supporting independent and student-run media outlets is crucial."

"Our world is changing rapidly. We need young people to find their voices and lead," said **Tansley Stearns**, Community Financial Credit Union president/CEO and RCF board member. "Community Financial is deeply committed to our partnership with P-CCS and helping 88.1 The Park expand its physical space. Allowing more students to find their voices in this important programming is core to our commitment to teachers, their students, and shaping the future of Michigan as a place the next generation wants to call home for years to come."



### Tuned in to excellence

For the seventh year in a row, the Michigan Association of Broadcasters recognized The Park as Michigan's top student-run high school radio station in 2024. The Park has been named Michigan's best student radio station every year since the 2017-18 school year. The award is the station's 13th since 2001.

Working at the radio station is an extracurricular activity for students and the skills they learn can inform them about future career options. Students ranging from high school freshmen to seniors work at 88.1 The Park doing everything from acting as department directors, on-air personalities, and working as news anchors and reporters.

The radio station, including regular podcasts, can be heard at [881thepark.com](http://881thepark.com).



"The ability to tell stories that balance voices on different sides of an issue is an imperative skill for young minds. Radio is the perfect canvas for this learning," said **Matt Nahan**, RCF executive director. "We are incredibly proud to support 88.1 The Park's expansion plans."

The donations will help the station raise \$517,000 for upgrades to its studio at Salem High School. The project will include three new production studios, an interview studio, student workspace, and storage space. The upgraded studio will also improve access for people with disabilities.

# STATE-OF-THE-ART SECURITY AT OUR SCHOOLS

At Plymouth-Canton Community Schools, we are committed to helping ensure all students and staff are physically, psychologically, and emotionally safe and represented at school. P-CCS has made robust investments in state-of-the-art security measures, strategies and resources. Our Security Operations Center, established in 2021, continues to grow, with new capabilities added every year. Currently, the SOC can monitor building entries and other key areas, access building control remotely and monitor all visitors, building lockdowns and area 911, among other capabilities.

Recent enhancements include:

- ✓ Weapons detections technology
- ✓ Armed assailant monitoring systems
- ✓ Communications integration with law enforcement and first responders



- ✓ Emergency call boxes throughout the P-CEP campus
- ✓ Lockdown emergency lights
- ✓ Threat assessment guidelines
- ✓ Training hundreds of P-CCS employees, including new hires, and providing refresher courses

Future projects include additional enhancements to security integrations and efforts to incorporate new technology into P-CCS emergency operations plans, additional radio and communications tools, and more.



## K-9 Update

Echo and his handler, Scott Hughesdon, have been busy visiting schools while providing an added layer of safety through their detection work. Echo offers students comfort and can respond to any needs that arise. And he visits classrooms throughout the district and provides therapy to students and staff in need.

## A model of school security

Plymouth-Canton Community Schools is a model for school safety and security, with other districts often consulting with our security team for best practices. Motorola recently featured P-CCS in a case study highlighting our security measures, highlighting our integration of new technology and systems to enhance school safety.



**Read more:** [www.pccsk12.com](http://www.pccsk12.com)



# P-CCS welcomes community back to school

Plymouth-Canton Community Schools' Back to School Bash was a huge success, with over 1,000 attendees joining in the fun! Families enjoyed donuts, cider and hot dogs while creating friendship bracelets, exploring police cars, checking out firefighting vehicles and taking guided bus tours of the Plymouth-Canton Educational

Park (P-CEP) campus. Attendees also had the opportunity to meet district leaders and learn all about the many programs P-CCS offers. It was a fantastic evening filled with activities for all ages, making it the perfect way to kick off the school year!

## Native American foundation provides grant for new Canton HS mascot

Plymouth-Canton Community Schools was awarded a nearly \$146,000 grant from the Native American Heritage Fund to support the rebranding of Canton High School's new mascot, the Cobras. Funding from the grant will be used to support the estimated cost of updating uniforms, logos and other paraphernalia related to the mascot rebrand.

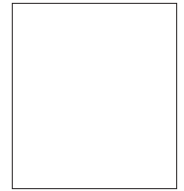
Canton High School students started the process of renaming the school's mascot last year. After the P-CCS board approved the rebranding, Canton High

School students conducted surveys of potential new names, before a majority of students chose Cobras in November. The NAHF is a Michigan public body that distributes grants to schools, colleges and universities, and local governments to support initiatives to improve curricula and resources related to Native American issues, and mascot or imagery revisions.



Paid for by Plymouth-Canton Community Schools

454 S Harvey St,  
Plymouth, MI 48170



# Learn. Prepare. Thrive.

## NOVEMBER

- 5** K-12 full day PD (No students)
- 13-14** K-12 students only, ½ day AM  
PM parent-teacher conferences
- 27-29** Thanksgiving Break

## DECEMBER

- 23-Jan 3** Winter Break

## JANUARY

- 6** Classes Resume
- 15-17** Grades 9-12, ½ day AM finals
- 16-17** Grades 6-8, students ½ day AM
- 20** MLK Day (No staff or students)

## FEBRUARY

- 14** Conference comp day  
(No staff or students)
- 17** Mid-winter break  
(No staff or students)

## MARCH

- 5** K-12 full day PD (No students)
- 11-12** K-5 students, ½ day AM
- 24-28** Spring Break  
(No staff or students)
- 31** Classes resume

## APRIL

- 10** Grades 6-12, ½ day AM

## MAY

- 26** Memorial Day  
(No staff or students)

## JUNE

- 9** Grades 9-12, ½ day AM Finals
- 11-12** K-12 students, ½ day AM  
Grades 6-8 finals

## School Day Start & End Times

### Elementary

Start: 8:55 a.m.  
Ends: 4:01 p.m.

### Middle School

Start: 8:15 a.m.  
Ends: 3:09 p.m.

### P-CEP

Start: 7:25 a.m.  
Ends: 2:22 p.m.

### Starkweather

Start: 9:00 a.m.  
Ends: 2:55 p.m.

## Half Day & High School Exam Day Start & End Times

### Elementary

Start: 8:55 a.m.  
Ends: 12:10 p.m.

### Middle School

Start: 8:15 a.m.  
Ends: 11:30 a.m.

### P-CEP (Half Day)

Start: 7:25 a.m.  
Ends: 10:35 a.m.

### P-CEP (Exam Day)

Start: 7:25 a.m.  
Ends: 10:40 a.m.

### Starkweather

Start: 9:00 a.m.  
Ends: 11:25 a.m.