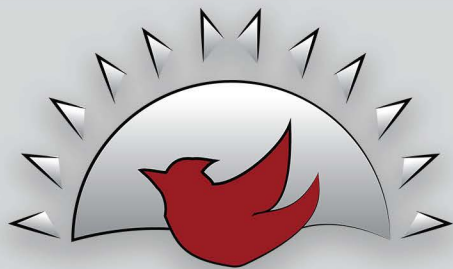


Winter 2020



Pine Grove Area School District

# EARLY BIRD

## NEWSLETTER



Cardinal Chronicle  
Achieves Gold  
Medal (page 9)



What's Inside:

Page 2: Letter  
from the Su-  
perintendant

Page 3 - 5:  
Building Prin-  
cipal Updates

Page 7: Infor-  
mation Tech-  
nology Update

Page 6,8,9: New  
Members of  
Administration

# Letter from the Superintendent

Hello Pine Grove Area Community,

It is always a pleasure to recognize nine volunteers who work hard for our students, staff, families, and community - our elected school board members: Dave Lukasewicz, Donald E Brown Jr., Dave Frew, Steve Brill, Attorney J.T. Herber, Wes Ney, Walter Stump, Dr. Alethea Wessner, and Genavieve Moyer. The Board meets regularly to support and enable our educational mission and vision, and they advocate for continuous improvement in student achievement.

Again this year, with potential budget concerns on the horizon, The Board faces complex and demanding challenges and choices. Many do not fully understand their responsibilities.

Members participate in endless board, committee, negotiation, and other meetings; members make various appearances at school functions; and spend countless hours reviewing reports, agendas, proposals, and other information they receive from the Superintendent and District Officials.

Time spent in board meetings represents only a small portion of the countless hours that school board members spend being involved in our district. They also work to keep informed about the latest in the field of education. They must consider all regulations, budget concerns, changes to student testing, and they regularly communicate with our district leadership team. Whether examining policies, discussing budgetary concerns, hiring staff, or listening to public concerns, our board members work hard.

Though our school board members come from varied backgrounds, it has been wonderful over the past three years as superintendent to see them come together as a collective voice to get down to the business of leading our district. The group brings different perspectives on issues, but they work toward the common goals of helping our students achieve and enabling our staff to provide a quality education.

In acknowledgement of this dedicated service, January is designated School Director Recognition Month. This is a time for us to show our appreciation to the seven men and two women who provide direction for Pine Grove Area. Forced to make complex and sometimes difficult decisions, they support the successful achievement of our students. Thank you, Board Members, for your dedication. I look forward working with you in 2020 and beyond.

With gratitude,

Heath W. Renninger, Superintendent



Photographer: Early Bird



# Elementary Update

This year in the elementary school we have created a new special area class that rotates through our six day cycle. Our computer class has merged into our STEAM class to provide the opportunity for students to problem solve during interactive team building activities. Once a cycle students attend STEAM class and take part in hands on activities which promote systematic problem solving and creativity. The students work together and learn how to help each other and use their different strengths and skill sets to complete the tasks in non-linear ways.

During STEAM class with Mrs. Hitz, all students work through the Engineer By Design process when completing classroom tasks.



Photographer: Mrs. Burns

Olivia Langkam working on the Osmo Tangram. This helps students with spatial relationships and problem solving.

When building something such as a parachute in 1st grade and learning about air resistance, they are given the opportunity to first try, improve, and then try again. Our kindergarten students recently completed a STEAM challenge of building a clothesline. They read a story about lost mittens that ended up in the snow. They discussed electricity and energy. Students were introduced to Solar Power and its many benefits. They used the Engineer by Design process to create clotheslines to hang their mittens to dry using solar energy.

Older grade levels have been working on and discussing Green Screens and animations. The students were introduced to different careers that involve the use of green screens. Students started very basic with how the green screen works and advantages that using a green screen can give companies, newscasts and entertainment

industries. The students then were able to use their creativity to create a picture in which they were able to look like they belonged as a part of the background. They are now ready to move on to animation and stop motion to bring their knowledge of Science habitats, ecosystems and meteorology to create movies.

As the elementary school has incorporated our new STEAM program into our six day cycle, collaboration among the special area team has taken place to incorporate STEAM activities into art, library, physical education and music class. Our little Cardinals are excited about the new activities they are completing that incorporate many computer science state standards and engaging problem solving strategies. 🐦



Photographer: Mrs. Burns

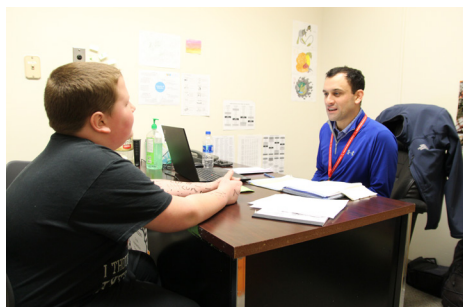
Ava Zimmerman, Ava Heffner, Declan Sonon, Rachael Schaeffer learning to code the Dash robot. They worked on adding sound, light and movements using the Blockly app to navigate the robot around obstacles in the room.



Photographer: Early Bird

# Middle School Update

This year the Middle School has put a strong emphasis on creating a positive school climate by focusing our attention on encouraging and maintaining respectful, trusting, and caring relationships throughout the school community. New to the building this year is “Monday Morning Mash-Ups”. This is an advisory program created to build meaningful relationships with an adult and a group of peers across grade levels. Monday Morning Mash-Up facilitates these relationships and provides the structure that creates “connectedness” in a middle school. Studies show that students who have meaningful relationships with adults in the school are engaged and feel a sense of belonging to the school. School connectedness is linked to higher grades, higher test scores, and lower dropout rates, regardless of students’ socioeconomic status.



Photographer: Keith Koppenhaver

New Crisis Intervention Counselor, Jason Albon, works with a variety of students to help make the PGA Middle School a better and easier environment for students to learn. Mr. Albon explains to a student what he can do better during classes to make his learning experience better.

We also added a new staff member, Mr. Albon, who serves as our Crisis Intervention counselor for grades K – 8. Mr. Albon is a graduate of Kutztown University with a Master’s in Mental Health Counseling. His undergraduate degree is in Elementary and Kindergarten Education from Penn State University. He has also been working the past three years to become a Licensed Professional Counselor through the state of Pennsylvania. Before coming to Pine Grove Area, he worked as a mental health counselor doing individual, group, and family counseling. He has two sons: Liam (4) and Brody (1). Some of Mr. Albon’s duties include counseling support to at-risk students, handling crisis situations and keeping students safe, individual and group counseling, Tier 3 interventions, mediating conflicts between students and teachers, serving as a support person directed by the school social worker, performing casework services, coordinating BHRS for all students (Behavioral Specialists, Mobile Therapists, Therapeutic Support Staff), and is a Student Assistance Program (SAP) member.

The Middle School Shine Girl Program is also new this year and focuses on building strong, healthy friendships. This program is open to any middle school girl. The girls learn about their worth, build self-confidence, and learn that it is alright to be “perfectly imperfect”. Our Shine Girls are able to reflect, discuss, and share their feelings and thoughts in a safe and understanding environment. Dreams are always within their reach and we stress that during our sessions. The girls learn to respect each other and, in turn, respect themselves. The girls have amazing strength and flourish each week.



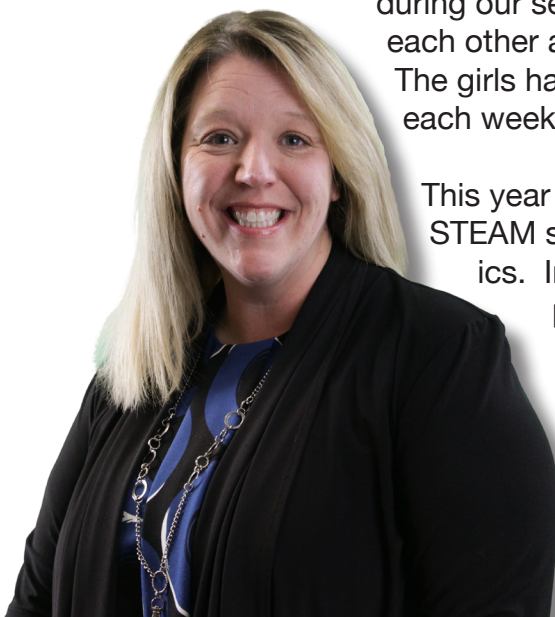
Photographer: Hallie Wolfe

Ann Wolfe talks to the Shine Girls at a Friday morning Shine meeting.

This year STEAM class has been added to the special rotation for grades 5-8. STEAM stands for Science, Technology, Engineering, Art, and Mathematics. In the MS STEAM class, the students use the Engineering by Design process to research topics and problem solve different projects that allow them to be very creative when working in groups. STEAM activities allow the students the freedom to come up with their own ideas for projects to solve problems given to them. Many computer

Photographer: Early Bird

Melissa Mekosh, Middle School Principal





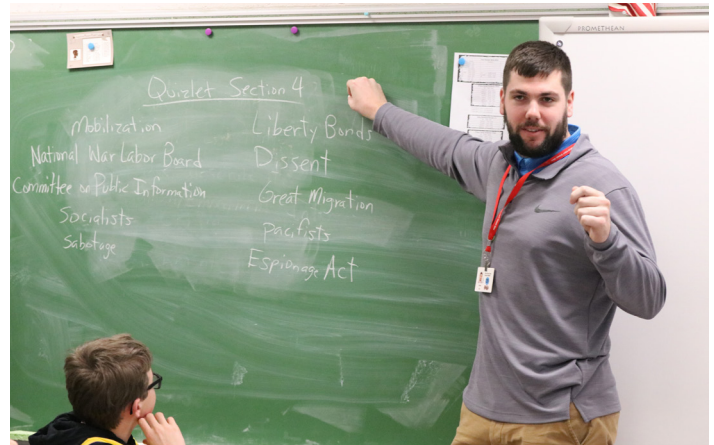
## Middle School Update (cont.)

science concepts are covered in class such as coding and website design. In class, students also research different careers that they would like to do when they get older and how STEAM is related to each one of them. Every student enjoys some aspect of STEAM and by having a class that incorporates all 5 of these areas, the students have really enjoyed the new class by learning about new topics. 🍁

## High School Update

As we transition into the second semester, we reflect on the first half of the 2019-2020 school year and look forward to what the remainder of the school year holds for the Pine Grove Area High School.

During the first semester, the High School welcomed several new faculty members to the staff, including Katie Deegan in Math, Kyler Burke in Social Studies, and Travis Mumma in Physical Education and Drivers Education in addition to Katie Rogers in English, who joined the Pine Grove faculty midway through the last school year. We are very fortunate to continue to strengthen our staff with quality teachers who have a positive impact on our students both inside the classroom and in extracurricular endeavors. For example, Mr. Mumma may be found in the weight room after school enhancing the strength and conditioning of our student-athletes. Ms. Deegan has partnered with Mrs. Shanahan and Mrs. Brown in co-advising the Math 24 team and has been actively involved with the off-season workouts for our



Photographer: Meghan Sarge

Kyler Burke, Class of 2012, returns to Pine Grove Area as a Social Studies teacher and Head Coach for the Girls Basketball team.

softball team, as she looks forward to joining the coaching staff this upcoming season. Ms. Rogers joined with Mrs. Hughes to co-advise the Student Council while Mr. Burke assumed responsibilities as the advisor for the History Club while also continuing the Lady Cardinal basketball tradition as their new head coach. The start of the school year also saw Mr. Rich Dunkelberger transition to a new position as High School Assistant Principal. In this role, Mr. Dunkelberger will continue to build relationships with students as he collaborates with faculty



Photographer: Bradly Fessler

Sterling Kohr, Kailen Felty test a Giant Connect 4 game during the 9th Grade STEAM class. The Giant Connect 4 and Plinko games were created by Angel Small, Shon Shutt, and Breanna Funk as part of their effort to create a community events program to help bring community members together.

and staff in supporting the High School's vision and goals.

Opportunities for our students continue to expand with the addition of several new course offerings this school year. Students

Photographer: Early Bird

Mike Janicelli, High School Principal



## High School Update (cont.)

are now able to pursue their interests in Agriculture Mechanics, Children's Book Illustrations, Holocaust and Genocide, and Exploring Careers in Science and Technology. Additionally, all freshmen are completing a sequence of modules exposing them to various topics through the new STEAM Pathways course. Currently, the staff is developing the 2020-2021 Course of Studies, which will initiate the course selection process for next school year. Our staff is proud of the quality of our core courses, the diversity of our elective offerings, and our ability to offer eleven Advanced Placement courses through the College Board. The extensive variety of our course offerings is only possible due to the dedication of our staff and the continued support of our Board of Education.



Photographer: Autumn Behrent

Travis Anderson capped off his cross country career with a Schuylkill League Championship and qualified for the PIAA State Championships for the third time in his career. Travis was also awarded Senior of the Month.

Athletically, Pine Grove Area enjoyed another successful fall sports season with all of our athletic teams qualifying for the District XI playoffs. The opening of the winter season welcomed two Pine Grove Area alums to new roles as head coaches. Mr. Ken Newswanger has taken the helm of the wrestling program while Mr. Kyler Burke now leads the girls' basketball program.

As the year progresses, we will continue to evaluate our programs in order to provide opportunities and experiences for our students that prepare them for success in 2020 and beyond. Thank you for continuing to support the Pine Grove Area High School. 🍀

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## From Gym Shorts to Suits

By: Lyndsey Kemmerling & Keith Koppenhaver

"I am both thankful and humbled for the opportunity to be an assistant principal at Pine Grove Area High School," says Rich Dunkelberger. "I was ready for an opportunity to move into a leadership role. It just happened to be my time."

Mr. Dunkelberger, or "Dunk" as many know him, was the high school's PE and Driver's Education teacher for eleven years, as well as a football coach for the Cardinals early in his career. "Most of the kids in the building who have had me before are not used to seeing me in the shirt and tie."

Dunkelberger's new responsibilities include promoting the overall school vision and climate with a primary focus on holding students accountable. "I still am able to maintain relationships with the students I had built in the gym, but now I continue to work with them in a different capacity." He compares his role to being a coach. In this role, while collaborating with students and faculty, Dunkelberger sets goals in order to raise the expectations of our student body. 🍀

Photographer: Early Bird

Rich Dunkelberger, Assistant High School Principal





# Information Technology Update

It has been another exciting year for the Information Technology (IT) Department at PGASD as we continue to improve technology across the district. A special thanks goes out to James Wolfe and Todd Lengle, for their continuous dedication and hard work within the IT Department. Listed below are a few of this year's initiatives, but keep an eye out for future updates!

## New PGASD Website – July 2019

In July 2019, the PGASD IT Department worked closely with our new vendor, Blackboard Inc., to design and implement a new district website. The new website features an enhanced user friendly interface, improved calendar viewing, and is now connected with our notification system for special alerting of events and emergencies. We are continuing to evolve the layout and build departmental webpages, so check back often for new content!

## New PGASD Notification System – July 2019

In an effort to improve communication to the community, the IT Department has partnered with Blackboard, Inc., to implement a new notification system. This new system has enhanced features for communicating through text or email and also connects seamlessly to our website and the district Facebook account to display the alert message.

## Wireless Infrastructure Upgrade – Fall 2019

As part of our district wide technology infrastructure revitalization, the IT department upgraded the district wireless network. After researching and reviewing bids, it was decided to stay with our previous vendor, Ruckus, for their solid reputation for providing an enterprise-grade solution to school districts. With this upgrade, we now have more reliable Wi-Fi coverage throughout the district, especially within classrooms, and are benefiting from an increase in network speeds. We are actively monitoring and making adjustments to continually improve the wireless network.

## Classroom Technology Upgrades - Fall 2019

One of our oldest computer labs, the HS Business lab, received a technology upgrade for this academic year. As part of the upgrade, the lab was outfitted with new Dell All-In-One student computers and is piloting a new Promethean ActivPanel display.

The Middle School computer lab was converted into a STEAM room, while receiving new student laptops to facilitate mobility within the classroom. This new STEAM room will also be piloting the same Promethean ActivPanel display as in the High School Business Lab.

## District Wide Internet

We are actively collaborating with the local Schuylkill IU29 consortium on securing a new Internet provider contract. One of the major benefits will be a sizeable increase in bandwidth to facilitate the growing use of the Internet within the district.

## District Technology Revitalization

After completing several major technology infrastructure upgrades and continuing with our district wide technology revitalization initiative, we will be researching classroom technology across the district. This will provide an opportunity for teachers and students to test and pilot new technology within the classroom, to ensure we are utilizing the most appropriate technology for our district. 🐦

Photographer: Early Bird

Andrew Diehl, Director of Technology



## PGA Alumna Becomes Director of Special Education

By: Alyssa Zerbe

"I knew since elementary school I wanted to be a teacher," says Mrs. Jill Hlavaty, "I switched my major to Special Education and decided this is the direction I wanted to go." Hlavaty is the new Director of Special Education and is a 1996 alumna of Pine Grove Area.

Mrs. Hlavaty's role as Special Education Director is to oversee the Special Education and Gifted programs across the District.

Hlavaty's first priority is looking at the programs in Kindergarten through 12th grades and implementing trainings, improving education, and growth within those areas. "Change is always difficult for anybody, but generally our staff welcomes the training, strategies, and conversations knowing the goal is to help students achieve," she explains, "In terms of students, with some of the new programs we are doing, there are more job shadowings, investigating careers, things like that, and they [the students] seem generally to be pretty excited about that."

Additional focuses and goals are to challenge students with disabilities to be integrated into a regular education classroom as much as they can be. She would like to see them performing on the same level as their other peers and if they can't, focus on preparing them to be as independent as possible in terms of employment and living independently.

"This year we had quite a number of students with an IEP (Individualized Education Plan) who enrolled in our District within the first two weeks of school," Hlavaty says, "We have a good reputation within our community, and actually in the county for having a good special education program." 🍀



Photographer: Early Bird  
Jill Hlavaty, Director of Special Education

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## Budget and the Brain

By: Bryce Delp

"The main goal of budgeting is to give the maximum benefit to the maximum amount of students," says Jodie Dermo, the Business Administrator of Pine Grove Area School District. "It's just trying to find a good balance of everything."

Dermo's job at PGASD is among the most important — keeping the school financially secure. As Business Administrator, she handles the district's payroll, fund accounting, overseeing subsidies and grants, as well as "anything that involves any kind of dollar amount."

She tends to start her day by checking the district's bank accounts and takes note of any funds that have come in, but this is one of the few tasks that is constant. "There's no really set thing every day when you work in school business finance."

"Budget's always a big thing, right now we're in budget season," says Dermo, "Usually about six months out of the year we're working on constructing the budget. The other half of the year we're monitoring the budget and making sure everything looks good." 🍀



Photographer: Early Bird  
Jodie Dermo, Business Administrator

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## Welcoming a New Cardinal to the Administrative Team

By: Erik Dubbs

“Everyone is important- our teachers, our school board members, our principals, and most importantly, our students. I hope that I can lead and build a narrative of leadership in the area of instruction for Pine Grove Area,” says Vince Hoover our new Director of Curriculum and Instruction. Hoover has worked in education for the past sixteen years and joins the PGA Administrative Team from Schuylkill Intermediate Unit 29 where he served as Supervisor of Mathematics and District Support Consultant.

“The main goal that I have for Pine Grove Area is to focus our education solely around the development of the students. We’re here as educators to lead them and most importantly engage them in learning, and my job is to make that environment happen,” says Hoover.

To really understand the needs of our students, Hoover plans to visit the district classrooms to gauge where the students’ needs lie. Hoover’s department is responsible for not only curriculum, but also educational grants that enable PGASD academic programs to succeed and progress. One grant that Hoover recently worked on and was awarded was the PAsmart Targeted Grant that will bring \$35,000 to the district to focus on computer science.

Hoover adds, “We’re already taking steps to engage the community; we hold parent meetings and conferences to give them an insight on what their children are learning. Parent meetings also raise awareness for different areas such as financial security and mental health.” On a related note, the Department of Curriculum and Instruction has begun to host After School Parent Program Information Sessions. Please see the calendar on the back of the newsletter for session dates. 🍁



Scan this QR Code with your smart phone to be take to the PAsmart web-site.

Photographer: Early Bird

Vincent Hoover, Director of Curriculum and Instruction



## Cardinal Chronicle Achieves Gold Medalist Honor and All-Columbian Honors First Year of Publication

“I was definitely surprised and not expecting the honor. We came a long way in winning this for only starting to publish on-line last year. We’ve been working really hard to get to this point and to get there is amazing,” says Alyssa Zerbe, Features Editor and senior.

The Cardinal Chronicle editors and staffers have



**GOLD MEDALIST  
2019**

Photographer: Cardinal Chronicle

## Cardinal Chronicle Achieves Gold Medalist Honor and All-Columbian Honors First Year of Publication (cont.)

been putting in many hours both inside and outside the classroom to create Pine Grove Area's on-line student news publication. You may have seen them around with cameras and notebooks in hand interviewing and reporting on the latest occurrences in the district. Their work, recently, has been awarded Columbia Scholastic Press Association's (CSPA) Gold Medalist Honor and All-Columbian Honors.



Photographer: Cardinal Chronicle

The students reacting as they found out they just won the 2019 Scholastic Press Gold Medal for their website.

"I am so proud of the Cardinal Chronicle and what it has achieved so far. The Columbia Gold Medal is an amazing achievement that our program has been able to reach, and it would not have been possible without the dedicated students and teachers helping with the publication. As a past editor, I'm so happy for our program! I feel like I've seen this paper grow from nothing to already a trophy-winning program. On to many more awards and medals for the Chronicle," says Ben Brosius, Class of 2019.

CSPA, which has been in existence since 1925, judges news publications from across the country. "To be awarded these honors within our first year of publication is absolutely wonderful! The students have put in so much work with reporting, writing, and incorporating visual elements. Hard-working does not even begin to describe the students in this program," says Andrea Hatter, co-adviser. 🐦



Scan this QR Code with your smart phone to be taken to the Cardinal Chronicle's website.



Photographer: Cardinal Chronicle

Cardinal Chronicle staff members attend Columbia Scholastic Press Association's Fall Conference at Columbia University in NYC.

## Around the District



Photographer: Cardinal Chronicle

Ken Newswanger being introduced at the Winter High School Pep Rally for the Teachers vs. Student basketball

Elementary school students talk about what PGA means, at the Pep Rally, promote safety, accept responsibility, and give respect.



Photographer: Cardinal Chronicle



## Around the District (cont)



Photographer: Gene Kreitzer

FFA members (left to right) Bryce Shollenberger and Eli Holden, receive their FFA jackets at the Pennsylvania Farm Show in Harrisburg, PA. Allison Butler earned her Keystone Degree, the highest degree that a student can receive by the Pennsylvania FFA Association.



Photographer: Hallie Wolfe

David Evans, a volunteer, plays guitar for the kids at the Open Door Project.



Photographer: Keith Koppenhaver

Veterans fire the 21 Gun Salute for Veterans Day Program sponsored by the Pine Grove American Legion Post 374.



Photographer: Cardinal Chronicle

Homecoming Queen Court with their escorts after crowning Tessa Olt, queen. Court members (left to right) Toby Herring, Meghan Sarge, Dami-on Williams, Autumn Behrent, Ethan Hindman, Tessa Olt, Angela DiFalco, Aedan Crochunis, Kathleen Eanes-Stump, and Corby Lewis



Photographer: Keith Koppenhaver

Middle School Art teacher, Ms. Ryan guides her 7th grade student, Aiden Zerbe (left) to completing his pottery project, while fellow student, Ethan Flemming (right), looks to help.



# Students of the Month

## Middle School Students



Photographer: Autumn Behrent

**Back Row:** Left to right: Paul Schaeffer, Hunter McConnell, Tyler Sleva, Evan Karenda, and Brett Zimmerman

**Front Row:** Left to right: Willow Albuquerque, Samantha Scheibley, Ella Fasnacht, Skyler Shanahan, and Bailey Drake

## High School Students



Photographer: Early Bird

**Front Row:** Left to right: Karli Boyer, Valerie Sleva, Tia Rittenbaugh, and Alison Butler

**Back Row:** Left to right: Travis Anderson, Miah Turner, Keith Koppenhaver, Carter Tobias, and Isaiah Dietrich

## District Calendar

Note: Dates and events maybe subject to change.

Wed., Feb. 12, 2020	After School Parent Program: Strategies to Support Students on the Autism Spectrum - 4:00PM to 5:00PM in the High School Library
Fri., Feb. 14, 2020	School Closed (2nd Snow Make-up)
Mon., Feb. 17, 2020	Presidents' Day School Closed (3rd Snow Make-up Day)
Wed., Feb. 19, 2020	Progress Report #3 due
Tues., Mar. 10, 2020	After School Parent Program: Vaping Awareness - 4:00PM to 5:00PM in the Middle School Library
Wed, Mar 18, 2020	Early Dismissal 11:00 HS & MS, 11:45 ES Students Only
Mon., Mar. 23, 2020	End of 3rd Marking Period
Thu., Apr. 2, 2020	After School Parent Program: Social Emotional Learning (SEL) Presentation - 4:00PM to 5:00PM in Michelle Brand's Classroom (Elementary School)
Wed., Apr. 8, 2020	Early Dismissal 11:00 HS & MS, 11:45 ES
April 9 thru April 15, 2020	Spring Break - 4th snow Make-up(15th), 5th (14th), 6th (9th)
Weds., Apr. 29, 2020	Progress Report #4 due
Fri., May 1, 2020	In-Service Day -Teachers Only 7th Snow Make-up Day
Tue., May 5, 2020	After School Parent Program: STEAM Presentation - 4:00PM to 5:00PM in the Elementary STEAM lab
Mon., May 25, 2020	Memorial Day School Closed
Wed., Jun. 3, 2020	Last Day of School - Early Dismissal - Graduation
Thu., Jun. 4, 2020	In-Service Day - Teachers Only

**Cover Photo Credit:** Ayden Ney, #22, celebrates after the first touchdown at football's home opener against Millersburg. The Cards won 61-7.

**Photographer:** Autumn Behrent



**Pine Grove Area School District**  
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**Phone: (570) 345-2731**

**Website: [www.pgasd.com](http://www.pgasd.com)**



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New China 3

Open Door Project

Pine Grove Borough

Pine Grove Diner Truckstop

Pine Grove Township Municipal Building

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