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PTO Monthly Meetings:
2nd Wed each month

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COLFAX COMMUNICATOR

THE NEWSLETTER OF THE COLFAX K-8
VOLUME 13, NO. 1

November
2019

Quality Supplemental Education • Fundraising • Parent-Teacher Collaboration • Community Communication & Support

A Letter from the President

Dear Colfax K-8 families,

Back on a sunny day in September after school, I was busy being a parent waiting as my kids played outside of Colfax. My parenting was interrupted by what sounded like the arrival of Taylor Swift. Indeed, a mob of swarming children, including my youngest, ran down the hill in front of Colfax and then alongside the fence waving frantically to get the attention of one of Colfax's many celebrity teachers: "Mrs. X! Mrs. X!" After Mrs. X completed her primary task of helping other students onto their school bus on Beechwood Boulevard, she ascended Colfax's front steps to greet her fans with hugs all-around.

Colfax is great because of our celebrity teachers and parents. I am inspired by the creative approach of our mid-level science teachers and their obvious chemistry (yes, pun intended) they share with each other. I love that my kids want to play rock-paper-scissors with Mr. Jeff every time they see him. I am so impressed by the revamped Colfax PTO website that Jason Dancisin has been rolling out. I am dazzled by Cara Donohue (BoxTops), Leslie Grodin (Colfax Directory), and Anne Marie Kuchera (Run Shadyside 5K "Team Colfax" Fundraiser) for their self-driven and self-coordinated efforts to help our Colfax

community. I am grateful for all of the parents who have volunteered their time to serve as Homeroom Reps for our teachers--they help make our big school feel a bit smaller.

We are also fortunate (especially me!) to have such a dedicated, talented, and passionate cast of PTO officers: Amanda Cline (secretary, Party-4-Play Fundraiser Coordinator), Mitch Franzos (treasury and many general operations), Sarah Grubb (Back to School Night, Fiesta Pot-Luck, Movie Night, Community Events), Carol Smith (treasury), Jeanine Weiss (emails, FaceBook, newsletters), Tiffany Stuckey (Homeroom Rep Coordinator, Kindergarten Playdate Event), and Zauyah Waite (SpiritWear Fundraiser).

The Colfax PTO sponsors many extracurricular activities throughout the year to bring our community together and provide unique opportunities for our children. Your time (volunteers needed!) and resources (\$100 per child) are essential to our continued success. The "Ask-Drive" Fundraiser (donations from you!) will be conducted during November and December and we are targeting to raise \$30,000 for the first time in Ask-Drive history:

please give what you can so that all of our children continue having opportunities for their own celebrity-inspired "Mrs. X!" moments.

Sincerely,

Ross Ingram, 2019-2020 PTO President
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Tea for Tears

Submitted by: Amanda Cline

The PTO hosted a new community event this year that focused on welcoming new parents and supporting kindergarten families, called Tea for Tears. Whether this is your first or fifth child starting this new life event, it can be an emotional time for all. We wanted to reach and offer a friendly ear, some coffee / tea, something to nosh on and, of course, tissues on the first morning of kindergarten. It was a beautiful sunny morning and many new and old faces stopped by and chatted for awhile. It was a great success and we are definitely planning to continue next year.



Kindergarten Playdate

Submitted by: Tiffany Coffee Stuckey

I would like to send out a big thank you to our kindergarten families who came to Colfax's kindergarten playdate. It was a great success!

We had an amazing turnout. Our kindergarten students were able to meet their classmates prior to their first day of school, and get those pre-jitters out. It was such a pleasure meeting new families and reacquainting with old families.



A Letter from the Principal

I hope this edition of the Colfax Communicator finds you and your family well. The Autumn season is officially amongst us and we have many new arrivals, activities, and a classroom addition to announce. Mrs. Bartels welcomed a baby Eleanor on October 3 and Baby Johnston (Lindsey) should have made her arrival at the time of distribution.

Our Middle Level Science teachers have been creating opportunities for students to engage in Science activities and competitions to not only enrich the district curriculum; but to give all students access to STEM learning. Mrs. Davis and Mrs. Koloshinski gave a thorough presentation of the programs during our October PSCC meeting. In addition, our entire Middle Level team has been busy creating and organizing Middle Level Clubs to build culture with our middle level students. Each student will be able to select and join a club of their interest. MLCs (Middle Level Clubs) will meet every half-day Fridays. Please see the following pages for the upcoming Science events and details of the Middle Level Clubs.

As many of you are aware, our kindergarten numbers have been growing each year. This increase has led to a higher than usual number of students in our kindergarten classes. Based upon those classroom numbers, Colfax has opened another kindergarten room. Please join me in welcoming Briona Robinson to our Colfax Team. Ms. Robinson's previous role as a 1st grade teacher at Langley, our experienced Literacy Coach, and the amazing Colfax K-team will work collaboratively in making the transition a positive one for her students and families.

A reminder for all students and families: It is important that all students arrive before the late bell to prevent loss of instructional time, to decrease classroom disruptions, and to ensure that student attendance is actively monitored. Our schoolwide intervention period begins at 8:15. Students entering the building after 8:15 a.m. must get a late slip from the front desk before reporting to class.

In closing, I encourage you all that during this upcoming season of "thanks" and "giving" you find opportunities to express gratitude, model kindness in all your interactions, and give to others whenever and wherever possible.

Warm Regards,

Dr. Sanders-Woods



Welcome New Teachers & Staff



Katelyn Marano

Hello, I'm Mrs. Marano! This is my first year at Colfax and fourth year working for Pittsburgh Public Schools. I attended Duquesne University for my bachelor's degree in Early Childhood Education and my Master's Degree in Instructional Technology. I teach 5th Grade Math and will be coaching Middle School Girls' Basketball in the winter. My husband and I along with our cat, Elby, live in the North Hills. I enjoy biking on the GAP trail, cooking dinner, and reading. I am very excited to teach math, because it's my favorite subject!



Brandon Payne

I am very excited to be starting my experience at Colfax. I received my Bachelor's degree in 2007 from Mansfield University of Pennsylvania in the areas of Elementary Education and Special Education. I received my master's degree in 2014 from California University of Pennsylvania in the area of Technology Education.

As an educator, I taught at the Homer-Center School District in Homer City, PA, as a learning support teacher for Kindergarten and 1st Grade. While at Homer-Center, I had fun coaching the varsity track and cross country teams for 4 years. In my spare time I enjoy running, hiking, playing guitar, and being with my dog - Hendrix the pug/beagle mix.



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Tuesday-Friday 7am-6pm / Saturday 8am-5pm / Sunday 8am-2pm



Welcome New Teachers & Staff



Meredith Adams

My name is Meredith Adams. I graduated from the University of Pittsburgh with a bachelor's degree in English Literature and a minor in Children's Literature. I also received my master's equivalency and teaching certificate at Pitt's Professional Year Program. I have been teaching for 12 years in the Pittsburgh Public School District. I currently live in Oakmont with my two children, Corina (9 years old) and Carter (7 years old). Outside of school, I enjoy baking and cooking, crafting/creating, riding bikes with my fiancé, traveling, and of course, reading!



Lindsey Johnston

Hello! My name is Lindsey Johnston! This is my second year teaching at Colfax, and my first year in first grade. I have an undergraduate degree in Early Childhood Education PreK-4, and a Master's in Special Education K-8 both from Duquesne University. I love to be with family, and friends during my free time, and we will be welcoming a baby girl at the end of October! I am so excited for another great year with my 1st graders, staff, and parents at Colfax!



Kiera Mallet

My name is Kiera Mallett and I was born and raised in Chicago Illinois. I am a graduate of Southern Illinois University Carbondale and moved to Pittsburgh to attend the School of Social Work at The University of Pittsburgh Master program with a focus on Mental Health. Over the years I have gained experience with working with children with autism in different settings such as in homes and in schools. I have served in partnership with Allegheny County Juvenile Courts in different capacities such as: case management, advocacy, and direct counseling. I am thrilled to be at Colfax with the beautiful diverse population and look forward to serving the community.



Amber Garrett

Amber Garrett has been in the field of education for over 5 years. Prior to coming into the field of education she received a Bachelors Degree in Political Science from Edinboro University. After college she worked as a substitute teacher for the Pittsburgh Public School District. In June of 2016 she received her Masters Degree in Elementary Education from Grand Canyon University. In 2017 she joined Urban Pathways as a third grade teacher. In 2019 she returned back to Pittsburgh Public Schools as a first grade teacher. She loves teaching the students at Pittsburgh Colfax and keeping them engaged in their learning.



Welcome New Teachers & Staff



Brandon Pezzelle

Brandon Pezzelle and this is my second year with PPS. My wife Tierra and I have been in each other's lives for 20 years and have 4 sons (Brandon 15, Triston 12, Benjamin 8, Thorin 3). We've been part of the Colfax community for nine years. I received a Bachelor's in Business Administration and played college football for California University of Pa. I coach both football and baseball at Taylor Allerdice High and have also been coaching baseball for 14th Ward for the past six years. I'm the president and coach for the Brookline Knights Youth Football and Cheerleading Organization. In my free-time I love to fish, hike, hangout with family, and train athletes thru my Non-Profit organization SOAR Training.



Caranina Koloshinsky

Hello! Thanks for the warm welcome!

I am excited to join to Colfax family! I have a Bachelor's in Education and a Master's Degree in Teaching Science, K-8. I also have over 15 years of experience in teaching Middle School Science. I have always had a passion for science, starting at a young age and I hope to pass this passion on to my students.

I am married and have two children, Colby who is 11, and Mabel, who is nine. We also have a Miniature Schnauzer, Maggie. In my free time, I spend time with my children, family and friends. I also enjoy reading and listening to music. I enjoy being a life-long learner and feel that learning is never done.

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Boys & Girls Cross Country Take Championship

A Letter from Coach Lydon

What a season! With 50 + runners on this year's boys' and the girls' teams, we had such a great, fun and talented group! We never know what weather we will be in for and for the most part this year we were very lucky. Then on championship day, when we were about one minute from getting on the bus, on a cold, damp and very rainy day, we were told it was cancelled. What a bummer. Well we were rescheduled for Oct. 25th and hoped for a good day. Wow was it ever. Cloudy and a little cool, but perfect for running. And did they ever run! Both the girls' team and the boys' teams brought home the championships this year! And even though the trophies are nice, it is not all about that. The kids have worked so hard and I love that so many of the kids persevered-- even with doubts they could do it. I also love that the kids worked so hard to keep improving their times every week. That is what cross country is all about--make your self better when ever you can. The kids learn that in order to make yourself better you must be willing to put in the work. As always, thank you to the teachers that adjust to the kids missing some classes on meet days, the amazing parents for the support, help and patience they show; and of course to the runners who through blood (literally unfortunately on occasion), sweat, and (I don't think too many) tears kept showing up because they know they are making them selves better. They have made me so proud. Thank you for another great season. Keep running.

Coach Lydon



Congratulations Cobras !!!



Another Successful Fiesta

Submitted by: Sarah Grubb

Members of the Colfax community gathered on the evening of September 25th to celebrate our annual start of the school year Fiesta. Each year, our students, parents, families, teachers, and staff gather to sample new foods, catch up with old friends, and make new ones during our communal pot-luck meal. This year's Fiesta was a huge success, with a pot-luck buffet covering two large tables in the gym. The food was as diverse and wonderful as our school community. We were lucky enough to have fantastic weather and lots of kids were able to burn energy on the playground, and simply enjoy the glorious cool weather that finally found its way back to Pittsburgh. A big thank you to the many teacher and parent volunteers who worked hard to make this event a great success! It was a great start to the many exciting events that we have planned throughout the year.





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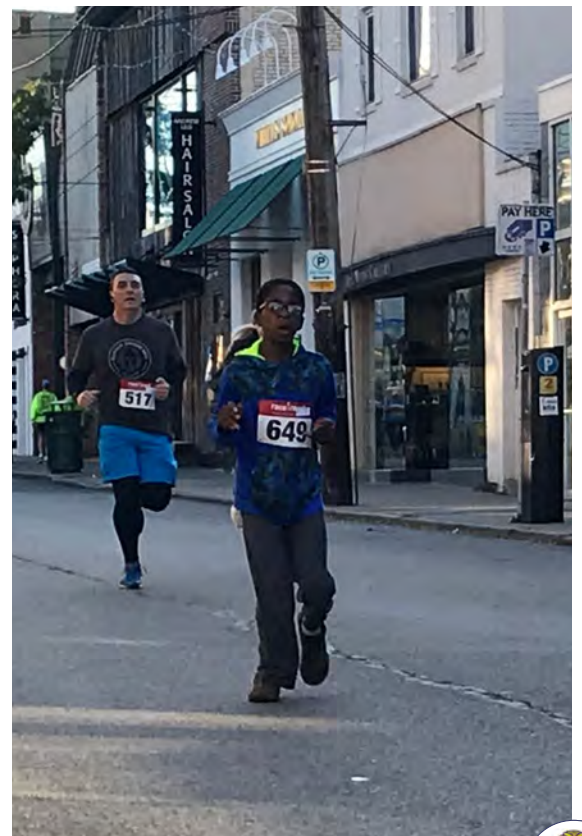
Run Shadyside: 8 Years & Counting!

Submitted by: Anne Marie Kuchera



For the eighth year, the Colfax community, aka Team Colfax, made a strong showing at RunShadyside, the Shadyside Boys & Girls Club's annual fundraising event that took place on October 5th. It was a beautiful morning for the race with the perfect temperature for personal record run times. This year, more than 150 runners and walkers representing Colfax made their way to the finish line in support of Colfax and the Boys & Girls Club of Shadyside.

Nearly 100 Colfax students ranging from kindergarteners to eighth graders crossed the finish line to cheers from friends and family and high-fives from Coach Lydon. Even Colfax grads joined in this year with a robust presence from the Allderdice cross-country team! Several Colfax students sported their blue and gold with top-place finishes across the finish line. It was a sunny and celebratory morning in support of our school and our community partner. THANK YOU to everyone who signed up, and showed up to run, walk and cheer. We look forward to doing it again next year!



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Fall Fun at Frick Park

Submitted by: Casey Weiss



Fall time is always a unique time in nature. At the Frick Environmental Center, we observed the changes this magnificent season brings. We used magnifying glasses to make observations. We sketched in our nature journals and wondered about our surroundings.



New Middle Level CLUBS

Calling All Poets!

Are you ready to create, analyze, listen, and innovate? Do you have what it takes? Can you make our seasoned judges scream WOW? Let the war of words and wisdom begin. And may the best poet win!!!

Brain Games

Students will have the opportunity to learn about different puzzles, including one that is math-related, and play Challenge 24. On the last day we may have competitions, with prizes to the champions.

Boardgame Bonanza

Board games are making a major comeback. If you want to be a part of a fun group that will explore past and present boardgames, join us. It will help you make new friends and build a stronger relationship with your current friends. You're welcome to bring in your own boardgames too.

Debate Club

Students will learn how to structure arguments, counter viewpoints of others and provide clear reasoning for arguments centered around a variety of topics including US history, world events and current events. Other activities include researching topics, formulation of arguments, predictive analysis, applications of logic, and individual/team debates.

Shakespeare

Students in the club will choose a monologue and/or scene to compete with. Students will have time during the school day (lunch, other designated times) to rehearse their monologues/scenes. There will also be time offered after school, as the competition gets closer, for students to rehearse.

Students will be competing in the Shakespeare Competition in February 2020.

Get Crafty Cafe

We will be doing various coloring and craft projects such as 3-D names, string art, DIY decorations, and others in a relaxing environment. You will get to relax and create something to take home, sometimes we will have cafe snacks too!

Colfax Cooks

In this club, you will learn to cook and bake, discover the flavor and culture of new recipes, and gain confidence to cook for your family and friends. We will cook together, eat together, and clean up together. Don't miss out on this fun experience and cause your friends who joined to say, "Whisk you were here!!"

Word Processing Can Be Lots of Font

Students will explore some of the basic functions of word processing using word, excel, PowerPoint, and Prezi programs. They will practice using those functions and complete an animated PowerPoint or Prezi to share during Community Time.

Stop Motion Animation

Use Legos to design scenes and create a Stop-Motion Animation movie of your own. Participants will use I-pad apps and cameras to make a short film. The finished products will be shared during Community Time.

The Art of Characters

Learn tricks and tips for drawing a cartoon or anime character of your choosing. POW! BAM! ZAP!"



Ballroom Dancing

Students will review the steps of the Fox Trot, Rumba, Tango, and Swing. We will use modern music to be creative and spice up the dances. We will learn about teamwork and kindness to all during all classes.

Walking Club

Walking club is for 6-8th grade students to get out in the community and see the surroundings and neighborhoods that they go to school in. At the same time the students are exercising, getting their heart rates up and getting fresh air to start their day. We track the amount that we walk every time we meet and will add the total up at the end of the year! On average the students walk about 1.25 plus miles a time! We walk regardless of temperature so bundle up!

Out of the Box Crafts

We will go beyond a box of crayons and into hands-on crafts-like crocheting, oil pastels, watercolors etc.....

Yoga / Meditation

Students have a chance to learn and practice yoga together and learn about mindfulness. It is a chance to slow down and learn the basic yoga poses, which help reduce stress and increase flexibility and strength, and work on developing a more positive mindset.

Music Jam Sessions

Do you like to play music? Have you ever thought of being a member of a band? Well, your chance is here. If you play a musical instrument and always wanted to learn how to play pop, jazz, blues or rock songs you can join Ms. Mitchell and jam. Bring your instruments and amps.

Instruments including bass guitar, electric and acoustic guitar, keyboards and drums are all welcomed. Other string and horn instruments are also welcome. Students who would like to sing and rap to live music are also encouraged to join. Students who sign up must be willing to perform and show their talents to the school and community.

Nailed It! Latino Edition

Do you want to learn how to make delicious dishes and treats from all over Latin America? We will learn how to follow simple recipes, and how to safely navigate the kitchen. Bring your taste buds and be ready to roll up your sleeves and get cooking!

Coding

We will use the resources available on code.org to learn how to code. The Express Course allows students to learn the basics of computer science and internet safety. At the end of the course, students can create their very own game or story that they can share. More advanced students can work on the App Lab section. Students will create their own apps in JavaScript using block-based programming or take their skills to the next level with text-based programming.



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Summary of Community Feedback on Colfax K-8 Education

Prepared by: 2019-2020 Colfax K-8 PTO Executive Board

The 2019-2020 Colfax Parent-Teacher Organization (PTO) Executive Board solicited feedback from the Colfax community (families, teachers, and staff). In total, 127 members of the Colfax community submitted feedback between August 26 and September 4, 2019. The Colfax PTO's Executive Board's purpose for soliciting this feedback was to 1) provide members of the Colfax community a controlled forum to share their perspectives on their Colfax experience and 2) develop a written summary (this write-up) to help facilitate ongoing communications between Colfax families and the Pittsburgh Public Schools (PPS) Administration.

The feedback from the community was overwhelmingly positive.

Colfax has a distinguished reputation: Colfax is a neighborhood school with a diverse student population, well-rounded educational opportunities, and high-quality teachers. Colfax families love their Colfax teachers!

Colfax is a highly collaborative community: Families, teachers, and staff work together for our students.

That said, the majority of community member responses highlight concerns about overcrowding within Colfax.

Colfax is overcrowded: Families want to establish a reasonable number of students for the building.

The Colfax community is generally frustrated with the management of Colfax's increasing student population as it impacts student services, student well-being, and overall engagement of the Colfax community. Respondents to the feedback-request generally requested the following improvements:

Facilities: Reserve rooms for specialized instructional areas (science, art, music, physical education, etc.).

Provide more medical care space, especially to assist students in lower grades. Establish common space to accommodate Colfax's population: especially, more cafeteria space for students and space for students to play.

Processes: Establish longer productive lunch and recess time for students. Improve school access for families. Improve school administration and District responsiveness to family questions, concerns, feedback.

Staffing: Reduce student-to-teacher ratios and classroom sizes.

The PPS District has requested separate feedback as part of a District-wide initiative. Please take time to consider what makes Colfax great now and what is essential to make Colfax and all of PPS great going forward into the future. **You can provide your feedback to the District by contributing your specific feedback to their survey:**

<http://www.pghschools.org/PPSColfaxParentSurvey>



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ROSS INGRAM
President
president@colfaxpto.org

AMANDA CLINE
Executive VP
vicepresident@colfaxpto.org
Secretary
secretary@colfaxpto.org

SARAH GRUBB
VP Special Events
events@colfaxpto.org

ZAUYAH WHITE
VP Fundraising
fundraising@colfaxpto.org

JEANINE WEISS
VP Communications
communications@colfaxpto.org

MITCH FRANZOS
Treasurer
treasurer@colfaxpto.org

CAROL SMITH
Assistant Treasurer
treasurer@colfaxpto.org

TIFFANY STUCKEY
VP Volunteer Coordinator
volunteers@colfaxpto.org

DR. TAMARA SANDERS-WOODS
Principal, Colfax K-8
tsanderswoods1@pghschools.org

FACE COORDINATORS
Amanda Olshenske
aolshense1@pghschools.org
Rebecca Bachman
rbachman1@pghschools.org

