

# HIGHLANDER HILLTOP 6/14

Dear Highlander Families,

So sorry for the Monday Newsletter, as opposed to my typical Friday one, but I wanted to make sure I got to include some the video link and some photos from our 8<sup>th</sup> Grade Promotion Ceremony and Send Off from this past Friday.

We have two more wake-ups to go. Tomorrow, students will be getting their yearbooks, and get a chance to sign one another's behind the school, while we have an Ice Cream Truck, and some music along with them. All students from PVLA are welcome to come in. We also have a Digital Yearbook Signing option, which can be accessed [here](#) along with a "how to" video [here](#) (Please note that students under the age of 13 MUST use a parent email when they sign up, all others may use their school email).

Wednesday, will be a half day schedule, and we will be waving goodbye to our students for the 20-21 school year. I'll be sending out another year's end wrap up newsletter this Thursday, where I will reflect a bit more on what a year it has been.

-Chuck Hershon



[Link](#) to the Promotion Ceremony Recording



*Photos Courtesy of My Hubby's Photography*

*View more at: <https://myhubbysphotography.pixieset.com/portlandmiddleschoolsendoff/>*

*Password: portlandproud2021      Download Pin: 8307*

## **FROM THE NURSES OFFICE:**

This is a reminder that all medication must be picked up by a parent/guardian by noon on Wednesday, June 16th. This includes prescription and over the counter medication. Medication that is not picked up by June 16th will be disposed of in accordance with the State of Connecticut statute 10-212a-5.

Attached is a medication authorization form for the new school year. Medication orders need to be renewed at the beginning of every school year. Completed forms and medication (in original containers with a prescription label) should be given to the school nurse prior to the beginning of the school year. **Forms must be completed by a physician and signed by the parent.** Teachers and secretaries are not allowed to accept medication. The school nurse will be available 2 days prior to the start of the school year to accept medications, orders, and go over any concerns.

[Med Authorization Form.pdf](#)

**Students planning to participate in sports next year will need to have an updated physical exam within the 13 months prior to the season.** You may send hard copies or electronic ones; there will be no response from the nurse until after August 25.

## **Grade 8 News:**

It's been a busy end of the school year! Students are finishing up work in each class and wrapping up their middle school career. We are proud of the work and dedication students have shown throughout this school year. We are confident that these new skills learned and honed under these unusual circumstances will transfer to their lives outside of school as well. Time management and computer-based communication are two areas we've seen students excel throughout the year. We have truly enjoyed teaching the class of 2025 and wish them all the best! Have a great summer!!



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## **Grade 7 News:**

"Great is the art of beginning, but greater is the art of ending."  
~ Henry Wadsworth Longfellow

As we come to the close of the 2020-2021 school year, we say goodbye to a year like none other, one that opened with challenges that caused us to reimagine what the first year of middle school would be for our seventh grade students. Now at its close, we feel deeply gratified in how we all were able to come together -- students and staff-- to make this a memorable and productive seventh grade experience for the class of 2026!

Typically when we close our classroom doors on the last day of school, it's with the knowledge that it is just for those several weeks of the summer; then we are back with our colleagues learning about a new set of students who are finding their way as seventh graders. But this year has been anything but typical, and so the seventh grade team finds itself saying goodbye to several of our members who have dedicated their lives to the "art" of teaching. Their skilled teaching practices and their very presence will be truly missed.

### **Mrs. Tait**

The Brownstone is fortunate to be welcoming Mrs. Dayna Tait on their staff as she transitions from our middle school to the role of sixth grade ELA teacher. For the past fifteen years of Mrs. Tait's twenty-six year teaching career, she has shared her enthusiasm for literature and writing with our seventh grade students. Always young at heart and expressing a free spirit, further coupled with her impeccable professionalism, Mrs. Tait certainly will make a positive impression on those very fortunate incoming sixth grade students next year. We on the seventh grade team will look forward to the rewards.

### **Mr. Jensen**

It is difficult to calculate the weight of the many changes in store for next year, especially given that for all questions regarding "calculations" we have always deferred to Mr. Jensen, our "go-to math guy." However, this year we say goodbye to Mr. Alex Jensen as he retires after completing twenty years of teaching math to our Portland students, and his absence becomes part of that change we prepare ourselves for next year. From his Saturday Math Academy days during his early career, to currently teaching Illustrative Mathematics, then adding Pre-Algebra into the equation, Mr. Jensen has shared his knowledge of numbers in a way that makes sense to students. With his guidance, students have come to recognize that math matters! As he retires, we remind Mr. Jensen that he has mattered a great deal to students and staff alike. We wish him exponential happiness in his retirement, and we trust that he will continue filling his days with music playing (perhaps even blaring) in the background!

### **Mrs. Stolting**

No team functions well without a strong leader at the helm, and this year there was a great deal to navigate. The seventh grade team was fortunate to have Mrs. Diane Stolting steering us through this uncharted territory of the 2020-2021 school year! Having lead the seventh grade team since 2009, Mrs. Stolting is no stranger to knowing how to adapt to any new obstacle that might challenge a school day. In fact, Mrs. Stolting has been adapting since she first stepped into a classroom over thirty years ago. Having spent seven years as a substitute teacher, Mrs. Stolting decided to make it stick; and so her career as a science teacher evolved. She has taught Biology and Anatomy and Physiology at the high school level, and for these last twenty-three years Mrs. Stolting has dedicated her career to teaching seventh grade science to our Portland students. Beyond this, she had occasion to also teach math as well as language arts in addition to her science curriculum. Mrs. Stolting has had her hand in everything from co-chairing our NEASC Steering Committee to standing in to represent Portland Middle School at the Blue Ribbon Ceremony in Washington, D.C. She speaks of her passion in life as "wanting to make a positive difference in the lives of children, both in and out of the classroom." That she certainly has done. A favorite experience of many of our students over the past twenty-one years has been the opportunity to navigate the slopes as Mrs. Stolting braved acting as the Ski Club Advisor. Who better to steer them through those last minute maneuvers? We wish Mrs. Stolting all the best as she now adapts to a life of retirement, though we imagine she will still be hitting the slopes. Mrs. Stolting's career alone proves the theory that she understands the art of beginning, and the greater art of ending. Retirement is simply her door to yet another new beginning!

From the words of Malala Yousafzai, activist and youngest recipient of the Nobel Peace Prize: "One child, one teacher, one pen, one book can change the world." Our Portland Middle School family is saying goodbye to three such teachers whose dedication has made a positive change in the lives of the children in their care.

### **June is LGBTQ+ Pride Month**

As you may be aware, June is LGBTQ+ Pride month. All throughout the month of June, we remember the 1969 Stonewall Uprising in Manhattan as well as other all-too-frequent occurrences wherein individuals have been made to suffer as a result of their gender identities. In Portland, our mission remains constant: respect, learn from, and care for others. When we take the time to understand one another, divisions based on stereotypes, misunderstandings, and biases cannot exist. Where division doesn't exist, harmony and collective growth abounds. Throughout this month, we encourage all of our families to engage in conversations with your children around respect for others and the rights for all people of safety, opportunity, freedom, and dignity. To learn more about LGBTQ+ Pride Month, check out the [Library of Congress' dedicated website](#) as well as this [great parenting guide to Pride Month from Parents.com](#). In June and every day, we stand in constant support and community with our LGBTQ+ neighbors and friends.

**Reminder! - Portland's Annual Juneteenth Celebration** - The Chatham Children's Connection, Portland Social Justice Coalition, Portland's Task Force on Solidarity & the Town of Portland will be co-sponsoring a Juneteenth Celebration and Cultural Fair on **Saturday, June 19, 2021 from 11am - 2pm** at Riverfront Park right here in Portland. Juneteenth is celebrated to commemorate the anniversary of the Galveston, Texas announcement of the abolition of slavery in 1865, two and a half years after the Emancipation Proclamation. [Click here for more information!](#)