

## Independent play supports well-being in young people



**Think back to your own childhood and teen years.** Did you enjoy independent play, perhaps in a special place outdoors, in your room, exploring your neighborhood or town, or with siblings and/or friends? How did your child self feel when you played games that you and your friends made-up, and explored on your own? For most children, independent play—defined as play directed by children without input or direction from adults—is a joyful and magical experience. As it turns out, it's also an essential part of childhood and the teen years because it fosters well-being and self confidence in children. Unfortunately, independent play is less common now than it was a generation ago, and this decline in independent play is harmful to our children and teens.

School aged children and teens are experiencing an all-time high rate of anxiety and depression. Psychologists believe that many factors have led to this crisis, including social media and the pandemic. Another cause they cite is the decline in independent play. The silver lining is that independent play is easy to foster. Simply encouraging your child to play outdoors, or in a space away from adults is a great start. Provide materials for open ended play such as blocks, dolls, dress-up clothes, and craft supplies and encourage device free time. For more information, read our [blog post](#).

**Have a question, thought or idea and are unsure who to contact? [Check here](#).**

### IMPORTANT DATES & ITEMS TO NOTE

- 13 Dec: [Pioneer 101](#)
- 15 Dec: HS Winter Ball
- 18 Dec: [Board Meeting](#)
- 20 Dec: Read in your PJs Day
- 21 Dec–2 Jan: Winter Break
- 3 Jan: Staff Development – NO SCHOOL for students
- 9–10 Jan: HS Final Exams
- 10 Jan: End of Semester 1, HS
- 11 Jan: [HS Whitewater Center Trip](#)
- 12 Jan: K–12 [World Heritage Day](#)
- Fridays at 10 AM: [Admin Open Office Hours](#)

# You are invited to The Power of the Parent: Pioneer Springs 101 Q&A Session, from 6-7 pm on Wednesday, December 13

Research shows that when families and schools have a strong partnership, students benefit.

What do you need to know in order to have a stronger partnership with Pioneer Springs? Submit your questions and topic suggestions by December 11.

Topics that are already on the agenda include:

- Review of our communication plan
- Overview of learning materials including iReady and Magnetic Reading
- Plans for academic and intellectually gifted students
- Discussion of discipline policies and how they are applied
- Insights about Bob Beatty Road
- An exploration of how we bring our mission to life

Students and younger siblings are welcome to join us. Childcare will be provided for children ages 5-10.

Please fill out this form by December 11 to RSVP, submit your questions, and to sign-up for childcare. We hope to see you there!

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## Rosenwald Schools

During the early 1900s, over 5,300 Rosenwald Schools dotted the American south. Now many people aren't even familiar with the name. While foreign to most, these unassuming school buildings played a vital role in not only education, but the long and continuous road to racial equality in America. Influenced by African American civil rights activists of the time, two influential men, Booker T. Washington, an Alabamian black educator, and Julius Rosenwald, the CEO of Sears, came together to construct these schoolhouses, with the intent to mend the gaping inequality dividing black and white schools.

Their mission was successful as these schools would later become the place where over 700,000 black school children received their education. Washington was the proponent of the idea, coaching and instructing Rosenwald. Rosenwald was a philanthropist, donating 25,000 dollars to the cause in 1912 with the request that his donation be matched by members of the black and white community. The community members delivered on this request, donating funds, resources, and labor, resulting in the schools popping up all over, especially in North Carolina. More of these school houses were built in our state than any other of the 15 others, with 26 being built in Mecklenburg County alone. Ten of these remain. The construction of these schools was a large step in the evolution of black America, with the illiteracy levels of the country lowering from 30% to 5% between the years of 1900 and 1950, while the number of black kids in school rose to 70%. Today, only 500 of these schools remain, as many fell into disrepair following the integration of schools. However, extensive efforts exist in preserving those left. In fact, even Pioneer Springs has a connection in their preservation. President of the board and co-founder of the school, Abigail Jennings, has played a role, working with the Cornelius Historic Preservation Commission to preserve a small Rosenwald school located in the historic African American community of Smithville, located in Cornelius. In their time, these schools were looked down upon, but in addition to the simple academics offered, they were also responsible for bestowing countless black students with practical skills, as well as a sense of self worth, which, at the time, was difficult to come by.

## HS Winter Ball



Pioneer Springs High School students are cordially invited to join us at the Winter Ball, a semi-formal event, on December 15th from 6:30-9 pm. Tickets are \$25 each and can be purchased [here](#). Volunteer set up/ break down, [click here](#) to sign up. Additionally, please sign up [here](#) to receive important information from the HS families committee.

Location: The Ivory Barn  
14418 NC-73, Huntersville, NC 28078

## 'Tis the season to show your gratitude

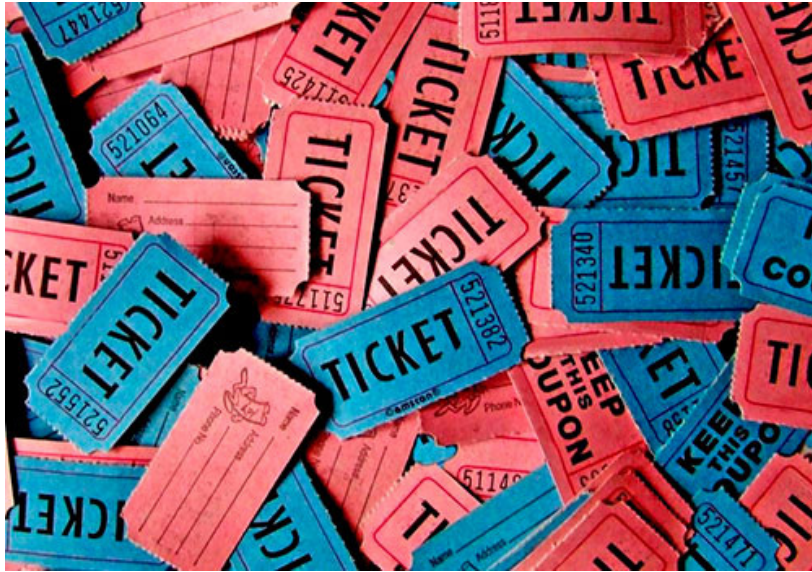


We cannot believe how quickly 2023 is coming to a close and how the holiday season will be upon us before we know it! WINGS, our homegrown PTA, will be collecting contributions for staff gifts for ALL teachers, administrators and support staff. We will pool the money collected to distribute a cash gift evenly amongst our amazing staff! You can [make your contribution on-line](#), or stop by the office with cash or a check.

On Tuesday, December 19th the Second and Third Grade families will show our support and appreciation for our wonderful staff with a Winter Cookie exchange. If you'd like to donate cookies, cocoa or decor, or to volunteer [sign-up here](#).

Jen Nourse made an excellent venison chili for our fall staff appreciation event. [Here's the recipe](#).

## 50/50 Raffle



Play our 50/50 raffle! Tickets are \$1 each and the winner will split the proceeds with the school. Tickets will be sold in the car line (cash only) on and at the front office (cash or check). When you buy your ticket, hang on to the portion that says "KEEP THIS COUPON". The winning ticket will be drawn on January 4 and announced in the Coop Scoop. You will need to turn in your ticket with the winning number to collect your prize. Good luck, everyone! For questions, email [heidime@pioneersprings.org](mailto:heidime@pioneersprings.org).

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## Kitchen Thank you



A huge thank you to WINGS, and Erin Sciechl for their refresh of the Staff Kitchen in the Castle. Thanks to Erin and WINGS, the kitchen is clean, organized, well-stocked, and beautiful! Staff is very grateful for the coffee, tea, and chocolate. It's making everyone feel appreciated and valued. Would you like to help keep the kitchen stocked and lovely? [Sign-up here.](#)

# Classroom Happenings



High School students played Loan Type Musical Chairs in Alex Oxendine's Economics and Personal Finance class.



Log drama in after school!



Ms. Jill and Ms. Susan's third graders are studying the muscular-skeletal system. They used playdough to make models of skeletons.

# Classroom Happenings



Winter Solstice won't arrive until December 21, but it's already snowing in Ms. Susan's third grade art class!



**Athletics: Jingle Jog 5K reflection by Arlowe Hazard, 9th grader.** The Hellbenders had a really fun time at the race! Although it was cold in the morning, we warmed up quickly when we started running. It was surprising how long the course felt like even though it was just a 5k. It was exhilarating yet nerve-wracking but I knew I wasn't alone because my friends were with me and Coach Tosha was really supportive. I will do cross-country again in the future, and I'm proud to be a Hellbender.