

How will you show your heart?

On Wednesday, February 14, Show Your Heart Day, students will show their gratitude for their classroom and campus communities. What makes Pioneer Springs special for your family: great teachers? Good friends? Time outside? Awesome athletics or Pioneer Plus programs? We'd like to encourage you to show your gratitude by writing a short Standing O or note of thanks to the staff that make your student's education awesome!

Benchmark results are in, and our students are growing academically! Here's how you can help your student reach their full potential

In January we performed benchmark assessments in all grade levels to check-in on our students' learning and to analyze how well they are growing academically. The January K-8 benchmarks showed that our median student has grown 75% towards their reading goal and 61% towards their math goal. At midyear, students are expected to have grown 50% towards the annual goal, which means that many students are ahead of both their reading and math growth goals for the school year. This is wonderful news!



Teachers and staff are digging into the data to plan instruction for the second half of the school year with the goal of building on this momentum and helping every student meet their full potential.



You can help your student meet their full academic potential by taking a few simple steps at home. In their weekly newsletters teachers are sharing discussion questions and family activities. Set aside time to ask your students these questions and participate in these activities. Make reading part of your family routine by setting aside time for reading aloud daily, and by taking time to read a good book yourself. Adults are powerful models!

Play games that incorporate math. If you attend the **February 29th math night**, you will get a packet of math games to take home. Finally, continue to support your student in doing their weekly iReady and Mathia pathways at home.

IMPORTANT DATES & ITEMS TO NOTE

- 13 Feb: WINGS Staff Appreciation
- 14 Feb: Show Your Heart Day
- 19 Feb: President's Day - **NO SCHOOL** for staff & students
- 20 Feb: Staff workday - **NO SCHOOL** for students
- 23 Feb: K-5 End of Trimester Celebration
- 23 Feb: Under the Snow Moon, 7pm-9pm
- Register here for Summer Camps!
- Fridays at 10 AM: Admin Open Office Hours

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Another important step to support your student's learning is understanding how they are growing academically. We'd like to encourage you to reach out to your teacher to check-in on their growth. If your student is in grades K-8, you can also dig into your student's i-Ready data online. To view your student's middle of the year benchmark data:

- Go to <https://login.i-ready.com/> Sign in using the usernames and passwords that your teacher emailed at the beginning of the year. If you need it sent again, please reach out to them. Your child may also have it memorized if you ask them.
- Once you are logged in you should see "For Families" in the upper right corner. When you click on that you should see "For Families Report". Our school code is **Y83Z4F**. Remember to make sure that the pop up blocker is turned off. This will give you your child's benchmark results.
- If you have any questions about your student's results, please reach out to their teacher.
- Your student's teacher can also provide you with a more detailed report that includes their "Next Steps" for instruction and ways to practice these skills at home.

Some families have asked questions about how i-Ready assessments work. In particular, they have wondered why students encounter questions that appear to be above grade level, or above the abilities of their students. i-Ready is an adaptive test designed to identify a student's precise skill level. In adaptive tests, questions vary based on each student's answer to the previous question. Generally students only get about 50% of the questions correct, and they may see content they have not yet been taught. When i-Ready gives questions that are too challenging for students, it is looking for their maximum capability—even if that capability is beyond grade-level expectations, or what a particular student has been formally taught. This enables teachers to know what level of challenge each student is ready for, and allows i-Ready to accurately place students in their personalized on-line pathway. When we know exactly what students are capable of, we are best able to meet their learning needs, and to help them reach their full potential.



How to help your teen experience gratitude



Over the past few weeks, we have shared the [benefits of practicing gratitude](#), along with ideas for how to integrate mindful gratitude into your family life. Because gratitude strengthens social relationships, increases self esteem and decreases symptoms of anxiety and depression, helps improve sleep, and more, teens may benefit from regular gratitude practice even more than anyone else. Here are some simple things you can do as a family to help your teen cultivate gratitude:

- Create a gratitude journal or jar and record what you're grateful for daily
- Share what you are grateful for daily, perhaps at dinner
- Check-in for a few minutes before your teen goes to bed and share small celebrations
- Find more ideas [here](#)

Join us in person or virtually for our art auction fundraiser on February 23

Support Pioneer Springs at our first annual art social and auction, Under the Snow Moon. Funds raised will support the improvement of our athletic fields. The evening will include live music, socializing, heavy hors d'oeuvres, a selection of local wines and beers, and an exhibit of student art. You will have a chance to bid on the art works, and to enter raffles for fabulous prizes. This over 21 event is exclusive to Pioneer Springs families, and will be hosted at Cedar Grove, a historic house in Huntersville. Space is limited, so reserve your space today by [buying tickets here](#).

Unable to make it to the event? You can still bid on art (coming soon) and enter the raffles! [Entries for our 50/50 Raffle tickets, a Scotch tasting experience, and \\$500 Amazon gift card are available now.](#)

If you have questions, or are interested in volunteering for the event, contact Heidi (heidm@pioneerpsrings.org). We hope to see you there!



Please note, when you purchase event tickets, raffle tickets, or bid on auction items RallyUp, the website that is hosting the fundraiser, will ask you to leave a "tip" for the website. This tip is optional, and goes directly to the RallyUp. Pioneer Springs does not receive money from the tip, nor is Pioneer Springs charged money if you choose not to leave a tip. To avoid paying the tip, choose the "Enter custom tip" option, and then enter \$0.00.

NEW DATE for Family Education Holistic Tea: Learning math through play & WINGS (PTO) meeting Thursday, February 29 at 5 pm

A strong understanding of math is essential to success. When we were growing up, most of us were taught math through drills and rote memorization. The good news is that we now know that children learn math best through real-world, hands-on engagement and play!

Join us for our first evening Holistic Tea of the school year as Margaret Bonds, long time Pioneer Springs teacher, Instructional Data Analyst, and math education expert shares ideas for how you can support your child's growth as a mathematician through fun, engaging activities. Play with other Pioneer Springs families as we explore games, activities, and more! Tea will be provided, so bring your own mug and a pastry to share. **RSVP here.** Questions? Email Heidi (heidim@pioneersprings.org).



5:00-5:45, Holistic Tea; WINGS (our homegrown PTO meeting) from 5:45-6:15.

Help WINGS show our love to our staff



Our next all staff appreciation event, "Spread the Love", is slated for Tuesday, February 13th. Spread the Love is sponsored by the 4th and 5th Grade! We would like to ask families of 4th and 5th graders- and any other families who would like to join the fun- to volunteer their time, resources or skills to make this day a success.

Spread the Love will include a yogurt bar with a variety of toppings, and fresh cut mini bouquets for staff to take home. This will take place in the Castle (admin building) kitchen area. If the weather is nice, we can use the patio behind the Castle.

Sign-up to help here!

You could win fabulous art, a Scotch tasting, a 50/50 raffle or a \$500 Amazon gift card!



Bid on student artwork, enter our 50/50 Raffle, win a \$500 Amazon gift card and more by participating in our Under the Snow Moon art auction and raffle. You don't have to be present at the event to win. **Learn more here.**

Places in nature, by Bam, 9th grade Journalism student



Charlotte, North Carolina, offers various nature spots for exploration. One such place is the McDowell Nature Center and Preserve, which features hiking trails, fishing areas, and beautiful views of Lake Wylie. Additionally, the Reedy Creek Nature Center provides opportunities for hiking and learning about local wildlife through educational programs. For those interested in gardens, the UNC Charlotte Botanical Gardens offer a diverse range of plants and ecosystems to explore.



10th grade PSCS students Ella Marsh and Emerson Chenalloy ice-skating at the Whitewater Center during a recent PSCS high school semester celebration on January 11, 2024



Dean of Students, Jose Martinez, shows off his figure skating moves.

Finally, the US National Whitewater Center offers outdoor activities such as whitewater rafting, zip-lining, and mountain biking, making it a thrilling destination for nature enthusiasts. These nature spots in Charlotte provide opportunities for outdoor adventure, and our students here at Pioneer Springs learn about the environment.

Want to learn more about these places? Explore the links below:

[McDowell Nature Center and Preserve](#)

[Reedy Creek Nature Center](#)

[US National Whitewater Center](#)

Senior Spotlight

Nick Marsh

Interviewed by Christian Mayer, 12th grade Journalism student

“When the power of love takes over the love for power, the world will know peace.” - Jimi Hendrix

In today’s fast-paced world, where power struggles often dominate the narrative, meeting people like Nick Marsh, who believe in the transformative power of love, is refreshing. In his interview, he shares his insights on his plans in welding and the importance of love, which deeply resonates with him as it reflects his philosophy. According to him, love has the potential to bring about positive change in the world, transcending the barriers created by the pursuit of power. This perspective guides his actions and interactions in his personal life and the school community. Looking ahead, Nick is excited about pursuing a career in welding.

His interest in welding stems from a desire to work with their hands and create tangible objects. He envisions himself contributing to society by using his skills to build structures that benefit his community. With a strong work ethic and a passion for craftsmanship, he is well-prepared to embark on this fulfilling career path.

Reflecting on his journey, Nick offers valuable advice to underclassmen: “It gets better. Don’t give up!” This advice is rooted in his experiences of overcoming challenges and persevering through difficult times. He emphasizes the importance of resilience and optimism, encouraging others to stay focused on their goals despite adversity. Nick is interested in music outside of his academic pursuits, mainly in playing the guitar. He has been honing his skills for over a year, finding solace and joy in creating music. Additionally, he holds a special memory of their first day at Pioneer Springs. He recalls feeling a sense of belonging and warmth as they were welcomed by the school community, an experience that has stayed with them throughout his time at the school.



Senior Spotlight

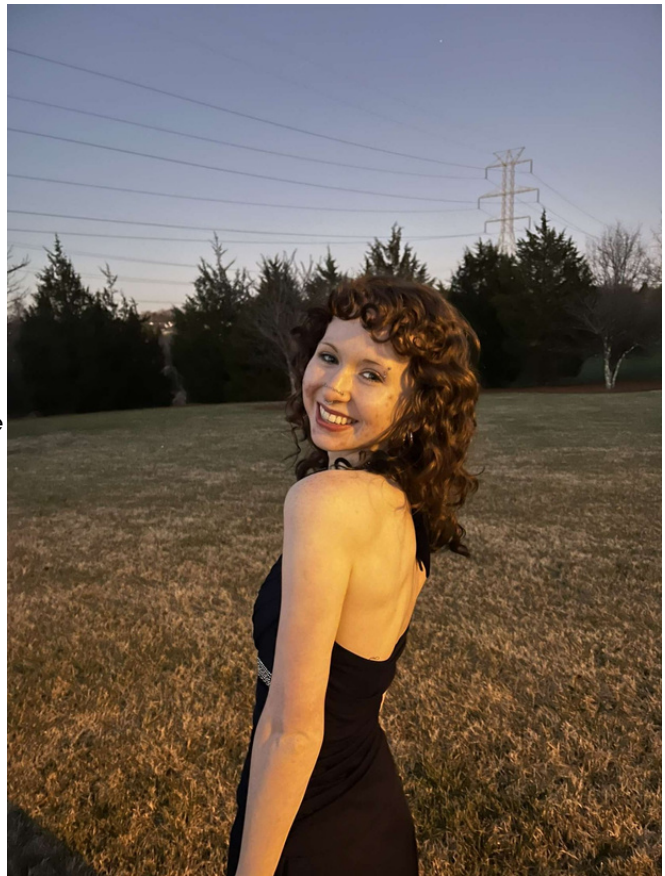
Jillian Townsend

Interviewed by Christian Mayer, 12th grade
Journalism student

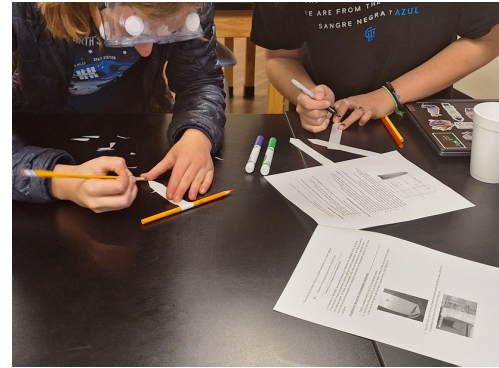
"You wanna know something about bodies? They don't define us, we aren't our bodies, they're just temporary." - Melanie Martinez

People often struggle between pursuing a traditional career path and following their passion for creativity. Jillian is navigating this balance as she embarks on her journey. With a clear vision of her future and a heart full of creativity, Jillian is an inspiring example of how one can pursue both academic and artistic endeavors—while cherishing the moments that make life truly special. Jillian's plans reflect her ambition and flexible interests. She aspires to earn an associate's degree at CPCC while cultivating her music career.

Jillian's advice for underclassmen emphasizes the importance of avoiding procrastination and not letting unnecessary drama affect one's well-being. Her advice serves as a reminder to focus on personal growth and not be sidetracked by trivial matters. Jillian's love for creativity is evident in her activities and hobbies. She finds joy in crocheting and anything that allows her to express her artistic side. This highlights her commitment to nurturing her creativity and finding fulfillment in artistic pursuits, showcasing her dedication to personal expression. One of Jillian's most cherished memories at Pioneer Springs Community School is the time she spent with her friends. The supportive and welcoming environment of the school has left a lasting impression on her. She mainly treasures the memories of school trips, especially the overnight field trips, which allowed her to bond with her peers and experience the beauty of nature.



Classroom Happenings



Shannon O'Connor's high school Honors Chemistry students investigated how to separate a homogeneous mixture (marker ink) using paper chromatography in 2 solvents: isopropyl alcohol and water. They compared permanent and washable markers and calculated Rf factors based on their data. Chromatography is a very broad field of analytical chemistry used to separate mixtures by passing them through in a medium in which the components move at different rates. You could recreate this lab at home—do markers that are the same color, but different brands, create the same chromatography patterns? Why/ why not?



Ms. Karen's Kindergarten students created a Dale Chihuly inspired art work for Under the Snow Moon.



2nd grade explored tap dance in Ms. Kristin's dance class.

Classroom Happenings



Update from last week-4th grade continues to work on beautifying the area surrounding the Little Free Library at Croft. Isn't their Kindness Rock Garden beautiful?



Blend students create a collaborative art project for Under the Snow Moon!

Thank you to everyone in the Pioneer Springs community who participated in the February 6 blood drive. One Blood collected 11 units of blood, which will benefit up to 33 lives!

Spring Camping Adventure Forms Due!

Thursday, February 15 is an important date for 6-7th grade and High School families.

This is the date that the Spring Into the Woods camping adventure registrations are due. The deadline is important as final numbers must be sent to camps. Registrations were sent home in December. In the event you have lost your registration you can get another one from the school website at:

<https://www.pioneersprings.org/permission-slips.html>

The Spring Adventure dates are:

6-7th Grade: Mountain Trail Outdoor School, March 27-29

9th Grade: Nantahala Outdoor Center Whitewater Rafting April 10-12

10th Grade: Introduction to Backpacking at Camp Henry April 22-24

11th Grade: Backpacking in Pisgah National Forest April 24-26

12th Grade: Lake James Paddle Camping April 17-19