





# Breaking Barriers Again

Tammy Koppendryer, Cindy Lewis, David Barber, Jennifer Gertson, Rachell Gotto and Leslie Wonderlich accept the Breaking Barriers Award.

For the third year in a row, the State Board of Education is recognizing Riverdale Heights Elementary for work to raise achievement among groups of students who traditionally face challenges in the classroom. In 2015 and 2016, the school won the Breaking Barriers Award for Latino students' achievement. This year, faculty and staff are being recognized for work with African American students.

The Breaking Barriers Award goes to schools with the highest proficiency rates statewide in reading and math among specific groups of students, such as those whose first language is not English or are from low-income backgrounds. At Riverdale Heights, 73% of African American students were proficient in reading and math, compared to the statewide average of 54%.

"As a district, we value the importance of each and every child, regardless of race, educational needs or socioeconomic status," Riverdale Heights Principal, Jennifer Gertson said. "I cannot say we target any one group of students. Our building is becoming increasingly diverse. We have 13

different languages spoken in the building.

"We look at data within subgroups to make sure learning is accessible and expectations are high for every student. WIN (What I Need) time is built into each grade level's schedule and teachers collaborate with reading specialists, special education teachers, ELL teachers, specials teachers, the counselor, the Instructional Coach and administration to analyze data and determine interventions."

The Pleasant Valley Community School District believes success for all students is based on data-driven decisions, curricular rigor, relationships and instructional excellence.

"It really does take everyone working together for a common goal," Gertson said. "If we continue to know our kids, what they need, and work together to give them the supports they require, we can make a difference and will close achievement gaps. We don't let anything become a barrier for that work to happen."



# Iowa School Report Card

The State of Iowa has released the 2016 Iowa School Report Card, which provides a snapshot of how all Iowa public schools and districts are performing in certain measurable areas. Schools are compared to other elementary, middle and high schools and given an over all rating: Exceptional, High-Performing, Commendable, Acceptable, Needs Improvement, and Priority.

The Iowa School Report Card rates schools on the following educational measures:

- **Proficiency:** The percentage of students scoring proficient or better on reading and mathematics assessments.
- **Closing Achievement Gap:** A statewide goal of narrowing the gap in achievement for students with disabilities, who are eligible for free and reduced-price meals, English Language Learners, and/or are minorities.
- **College and Career-Ready Growth:** The percentage of students who are making the year-to-year growth necessary to be ready for college and career training by the end of high school.
- **Annual Expected Growth:** The percentage of students making a year of academic growth in a year's time on reading or math assessments.
- **College and Career Readiness:** The percentage of students who score at or above a level of performance in reading and math that predicts a higher probability of postsecondary success. (Middle/high schools only)
- **Graduation Rate:** The percentage of ninth-grade students who finished high school within five years. (High schools only)
- **Attendance:** The average daily attendance of students, which is the total number of days students were enrolled and present divided by the total number of possible attendance days.
- **Staff Retention:** The percentage of teachers, school administrators and other licensed staff members who remained employed over consecutive school years.

Pleasant Valley Schools rank among the top in the state, according to this data. However, student performance data only tells part of the story about how our schools are doing. We do believe this information can be helpful in our goal of having the finest academic and extra-curricular programs in the state. Not in some things but in everything. Not for some kids but for every kid.

## PV's Report Card

Exceptional

Hopewell, PVJH

High Performing

Bridgeview, Cody, Riverdale Heights, PVHS

Commendable

Pleasant View

Needs Improvement

No PV Schools

Acceptable

No PV Schools

Priority

No PV Schools



Scan this QR Code to see the full Iowa School Report Card.



# MAJOR EXPANSION PVHS RENOVATES AND GROWS

The Pleasant Valley Community School Board has approved a major expansion and renovation at the high school. Currently the two largest classes in the district (and in the history of the district) are the 4th and 5th grade classes. In addition, the 6th, 7th and 8th grades are larger than every class at the high school except the current junior class. This current project is the first step in the creation of the "separate but connected" approach the district is taking to address expected growth. The design of the addition allows expansion for current growth and ultimately to serve as the center for an entire grade (for example, the freshman class). The first phase of the expansion is to create the first of what will eventually be four towers. Each tower will house 10 - 12 classrooms.

In order to create connectivity to the main portion of the building with these east wing classrooms, a repurposing of the original high school gym (D gym) was necessary. About 20 - 25% of the existing D gym will be used to extend the buildings main corridor through the gym and a portion of the boys' locker room and connect it with the current east athletic entrance. The first tower is being built just north of this entrance and this corridor will directly connect the new classroom spaces to this east/west corridor. Of the remaining portion of D gym, the westerly half will be used to create an additional music rehearsal room. The existing cardio room will be used for music uniform and equipment storage. The remaining portion of the

gym will be used for physical education and athletic programming.

The repurposing of D gym creates the need for a new auxiliary gym. The design expands locker room space, the weight training center, cardio space, and replaces and expands gym space. The design of the new auxiliary gym will allow for expansion should the community and district exhibit the need for a larger capacity space in the future.

The final component of the project is to remodel the existing guidance area to create additional special needs instructional spaces. The guidance and support services for the building will take over the existing main office area, which will be remodeled, making way for a new main office and commons area. This new addition will enhance building security and provide a gathering space for students as enrollment continues to grow.

High school principal Mike Zimmer indicates that this project will come on line just in time: "Three of the four new science classrooms will be filled immediately by moving from current modified science classrooms to those specifically designed for science instruction. We have been diligent in our remodeling efforts to use every square foot of existing space to accommodate our growth. We are simply out of space and these new classrooms will come just in time."

# "WE ARE SIMPLY OUT OF SPACE AND THESE NEW CLASSROOMS WILL COME JUST IN TIME."

- MIKE ZIMMER  
PLEASANT VALLEY HIGH SCHOOL  
PRINCIPAL

## Auxiliary Gym

The gym is two stories, built into the ground. There will be new locker rooms, an expanded weight room, and a running track. The design allows for future expansion, which could be a 3,500-seat competition gym.

## Tower 1

The first tower will connect right outside of the current weight room. The building will include ten classrooms, including state-of-the-art science rooms. Further plans call for 3 additional towers built in the current east parking lot.

## Parking

Parking expansion is already underway. New lots will be built across from the Pleasant Valley Administration Center.





# HEALTHY BODIES & MINDS

Feeding a family is tough. Grocery shopping. Meal planning. Not to mention cooking. Now imagine doing it all every day for 4,600 hungry kids. A staff of 35 men and women shop, plan and cook thousands of meals every day for PV students at our seven schools. They do it so well, the USDA awarded PV with the *HealthierUS School Challenge: Smarter Lunchroom Bronze Award*. The award and certification recognizes all seven of our schools for improving food and beverage offerings, teaching students about nutritious food choices and being physically active. Each school will receive \$500 to put towards Physical Education or Nutrition Education.

"It's a community effort," Food Service Director Andrea Mahler said. "Food Service employees prep and serve the food. Aides and secretaries help monitor the lunchroom and check students out. PV's custodial staff drive meals to certain schools and help clean up before and after each meal."

Every day, PV serves around 2,800 lunches, along with an additional 2,500 items served a la carte. That's a lot of food! PV is a part of a co-op of Iowa schools that purchases food. All districts receive products through a state-paid program, as well. Depending on what's available, Mrs. Mahler plans lunch menus, sometimes up to a year in advance. Those meals must follow federal nutrition guidelines.

"The National School Lunch Program has come a long way," Mrs. Mahler said. "We work hard to make sure our students receive quality

and nutritious meals. We've added fresh fruits and vegetables every day along with whole grains, but it's also making sure the meals are fresh.

"At the High School, we cook to the line," Mrs. Mahler said. Cooks make fresh food throughout the lunch hour, using industrial ovens that steam, bake, and "fry" foods in a healthy way. Thanks to current renovations at the Junior High, cooks will be able to do the same thing there. There will also be more storage, so students will have more entrée choices.

So how do we pay for all these changes and upgrades? When a student pays for a lunch, that money goes directly back to the Food Service Department. It's a self-sufficient, non-profit program. All revenue is used to purchase food and equipment. The Federal Government also reimburses PV for students' meals if they qualify for the free or reduced meal program. About 12% of PV students qualify for free or reduced lunches.

The Food Service Department has embraced the latest technology to make it easier for parents to keep track of what their children eat every day. Through the Infinite Campus Parent Portal, parents can look to see what their students purchased for lunch each day. The Nutraslice app features lunch menus along with nutrition facts for each item served. Scan the QR Code to check out the app on your mobile device.



# Scholastic Booster Club

In the summer of 2016, Pleasant Valley parents came together to start a new effort to support students. The Pleasant Valley Scholastic Booster Club will function much like PV's other booster clubs, raising money to support, encourage and promote student opportunities.

So far, the PVSBC has raised money to help the PVHS Math Team compete at PUMaC, a prestigious math competition at Princeton University. PVSBC is also supporting the PV Iowa Girls Code team. The team is building an app about courses at PVHS and will present it at the Iowa Girls Code Spring Summit in March. The PVSBC also organized a new ACT prep course for PVHS Juniors. Working with Scott Community College, the PVSBC is offering a four-class course to help students get ready for the ACT. So many students signed up, they've had to add an additional class! Based on the success of this endeavor,

Scott Community College could offer more ACT prep courses in the future with the potential of opening them to other school districts, as well.

The PVSBC recognizes all student achievement. Before first semester finals, 30 PVHS students who raised their GPA 0.5 from spring semester to fall semester, (i.e. from a 2.5 to a 3.0) received a Whitey's Gift Certificate and a hand written note of encouragement from the PVSBC.

The Pleasant Valley Scholastic Booster Club is in its first year and is already making an impact. If you are interested in joining the PVSBC or donating to its cause, please contact Beth Marsoun at [marsounbeth@pleasval.k12.ia.us](mailto:marsounbeth@pleasval.k12.ia.us) or scan this QR Code.



## Math Team



## Iowa Girls Code