



THE Powell G R O W L

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Your source for Powell
Middle School news,
sports, events, and more.

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Eighth Grade Special Edition



A LETTER FROM YOUR PRINCIPAL

Mr. Dye bids eighth grade Panthers farewell

Powell's administration would like to take a minute to congratulate this year's eighth grade students who will be moving onward in their educational journey. This unique and diverse group of students have faced a journey like no other class to move on from Powell Middle School.

As sixth grade students, you were faced with a worldwide pandemic that interrupted conventional learning and forced you to learn from home on Zoom and Canvas.

When seventh grade began, the pandemic continued, and you were faced with the challenge of remaining in online learning or returning to school and learning in the traditional setting. This included wearing masks, social distancing, and many other measures that kept learning far from traditional.

Eighth grade did provide somewhat of a return to normalcy to the learning environment as you now prepare to complete your time in middle school.

Through all of these challenges, you have excelled in the classroom. You have participated in the state History Fair, received Industry Certifications in our CTE programs, maintained the district's highest pass rate on the Civics EOC, and finished middle school with high school credits already on your transcripts.

You have performed well on the athletic fields and courts and brought home championships in several sports. Powell was competitive each and every time you took the field. You have amazed students, staff, parents, and large audiences in the performing arts and made us very proud in the process.

We hope you are leaving Powell Middle School with fond memories, interesting stories, and friendships that last a lifetime. We wish you the very best in your future endeavors and will always remember your time here with us. Best of luck in the years to come. We look forward to hearing great success stories from the graduating class of 2026.

Mr. Thomas B. Dye
Principal



WHERE WE'RE HEADED...

Powell students will be attending a variety of high schools



By Anjalyna Fitzgerald
G•R•O•W•L News Editor

As the departure of the eighth grade Powell Middle School students comes closer, the schools that most of these students will be attending come into focus as well.

While a few will make their way to various schools like Hernando High School, Weeki Wachee High School, and others, most departing Panthers will be on campus next year at Central High School, Nature Coast Technical High School, or F.W. Springstead High School.

Springstead is most popular for providing two college prep tracks, including the Advanced Placement (AP) Capstone program and the International Baccalaureate Programme (IB). They are both free programs that allow access to college credits. With the 700 AP exams issued annually, the average pass rate of the past three years is 73 percent.

To obtain any credit, AP exams should be scored with a minimum score of 3. On top of this, IB students must also get a score of 4 or higher on IB exams.

AP Capstone is a diploma you can earn through the AP Seminar and Research courses that teaches critical thinking, research, collaboration, time management and presentation skills needed for college level work.

"I applied for IB because it will help me get the Bright Futures scholarship," Kelsey Dancsak, who is headed to Springstead, said.

Springstead is also known for their Air Force Junior Reserve Officer Training Corps (AFJROTC), which is a junior military science elective. This class is the high school version of the ROTC programs offered at most colleges.

Nature Coast is well known for their career clusters that give certifications for career interests you may have.

Among the clusters offered are Commercial Art Technology and Digital Cinema, Culinary Arts, Solar Energy Technology and Energy Technician, Applied Energy Technology, Automotive Maintenance, Light Repair, Allied Health Assisting, and Criminal Justice Operations.

These programs can have students on track to become police officers, medical assistants, car mechanics, chefs, electricians, and many other occupations once they graduate high school.

Elliot Alba is planning on entering the Culinary Arts cluster at Nature Coast.

"I want to take the Culinary [Arts] courses," Elliot said. "It will help me to learn how to cook, and

eventually, help me get a job."

Central's most successful program is its Naval Junior Reserve Officer Training Corps (NJROTC). Much like Springstead's AFJROTC, Central boasts a program that helps high school students get into colleges with other NROTC programs like the University of Florida in Gainesville, University of North Florida in Jacksonville, University of South Florida in Tampa, Florida A&M University in Tallahassee, and Auburn University in Alabama.

The Bears' JROTC has gained national recognition over the years, and the commanding officer at the school, Lt. Cmdr. Christian Cruz, was named the Hernando County Teacher of the Year for 2022.

"The NJROTC will discipline me while giving me a chance to impact the school," Central-bound eighth grader Leah Ferrall said.

Much like Nature Coast, Central also provides vocational programs for its students. Central offers Health Science, Culinary Arts, and Hospitality clusters. In addition to those, the Architecture, Construction, Welding, and Air Conditioning, Refrigeration and Heating Technologies (HVAC) clusters are specific to Central.

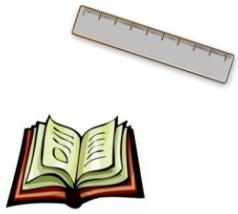
In addition to all of these reasons why students can and will thrive at whatever high school they plan on attending, every high school in the area has a history of success in other extracurricular arenas, such as sports, community service, and other clubs.

This year alone, a junior at Springstead gained recognition for being the first female individual state champion in school history when she took home the state title in girls' weightlifting. At Central, the boys' basketball team wowed the Bears community with a run into the Elite 8 of the state playoffs.

Nature Coast, Central, and Springstead all qualified for the state playoffs in baseball, and the Sharks, who reached the Final Four in baseball last season, came away with another district title. The Eagles won a district title in softball this month, leading the way as both they and Nature Coast prepare for postseason runs.

Someday, former Powell students will find their way into organizations like National Honor Society, Spanish National Honor Society, Beta Club, and Interact Club. They will win scholarships and head off to college, all the while representing Powell like those who came before them.

Although Powell Middle School will miss the eighth graders that are leaving, the world is looking forward to seeing what these talented young men and women will accomplish in high school and beyond.



Curriculum Corner with Ms. Reidinger

• Culinary Arts •



By Sophia Buchanan
G•R•O•W•L Features Editor

When Powell Middle School decided to go to seven periods this school year, a flurry of new electives were added to the schedule. Culinary is one of these electives.

Students had the opportunity to learn how to cook while showing off their skills in the kitchen.

Ms. Reidinger, who teaches science and two periods of culinary, was excited to start the class.

Nearing the end of this first year, eighth grader Parker Fasciglione summed the class up: "I think culinary was fun."

To get certified for their work this year, the students took an exam. The first round of testing ended on April 19 with the second group scheduled for May 17. Due to district guidelines, only 14 students could test at a time.

On the written portion, there were 90 questions, and the new chefs-to-be had to manage their time well. The test consisted of questions regarding cooking times and temperatures for a wide range of foods as well as food safety and contamination.

"We didn't know if students would pass or not, since no one has taken it before," Ms. Reidinger said.

When the results came back, 13 out of 14 students passed. They scored at a high school level.

The culinary class's kitchen was remodeled the day of the Powell Spring Carnival, so the students and Ms. Reidinger were not able to do as much cooking as they wanted prior to that. Now everything is brand new and ready to be used.

"I loved culinary but I just wish we were able to do more hands-on activities," Ariel Delaine said.



Mrs. Reidinger teaches her Culinary students a lesson. [Falyn Dorsey]

Now that everything is new, that should change.

Some students would like to take culinary in high school if given the chance. While it may not be a career choice, the course was still enriching.

"Culinary is more of a hobby for me," Parker said, "but if I had a choice, I would take it again in high school."

Next year, with the new kitchen and more, expanded interest should help the program flourish. In the meantime, students will have the chance to make a few more dishes before the end of the year.

THANK YOU

In our first year presenting *The Powell G•R•O•W•L* on campus, there are so many people to thank, but foremost among them are the dedicated students who put in all the work to give us these four issues.

Eighth graders Mia Feigen, Ava Butterfield, Anjalyna Fitzgerald, Sophia Buchanan, and Taliyah Owens had no idea when they walked onto campus this year how big a part of their school life being an editor on the newspaper would be. The inaugural editions of our paper would not have happened without each of their efforts.

The G•R•O•W•L is left in the capable hands of the younger students, and hopefully with time, these students can take the newspaper to new and greater heights.

As a former journalist, I could not be more grateful to this first group of students, along with the faculty, administration, and staff here at Powell for all they have done to contribute to our work. Thank you!

Mr. Derek J. LaRiviere
G•R•O•W•L Sponsor

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Newspaper Sponsor

Mr. Derek J. LaRiviere

Editor-in-Chief

Mia Feigen

Assistant Editor

Ava Butterfield

News Editor

Anjalyna Fitzgerald

Features Editor

Sophia Buchanan

Photography Editor

Liberty Weinstein

Sports Editor

Taliyah Owens

Contributing Staff

Emma Ortiz

Kylee Kosanke

Falyn Dorsey

Cadi Perry

Logan Kepner

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For helping every step of the way.

Dear Panthers...

Teachers' advice to high school-bound students

By Mia Feigen
G•R•O•W•L Editor-in-Chief

Over the course of three years, students have formed a bond with their teachers. Although teachers bring in new students each year, they care about what happens to their students after middle school. We gathered advice from multiple teachers and faculty about how to successfully navigate this next chapter in their lives.

"Work hard, have a goal, and don't wait until your junior and senior years to get it together."

Mr. McCarthy • Band Teacher

"The harder you work, the more options you'll have down the road."

Mr. Burns • Math Teacher

"Make sure you're there everyday because you can't learn if you aren't there. Also, avoid drama."

Mrs. Turnbull • World History Teacher

"Make sure that you're making connections with the right people, like a school administrator or a friend in 10th grade. Get in with them so they can show you the ropes."

Mr. Franz • Dean of Students

"Worry about your [grade point average]. Your GPA is like your résumé as a high school student, and it speaks for you. You open so many more doors by working your butt off."

Mr. Beall • ELA Teacher

"Keep your head down, and fly under the radar."

Mr. Pletincks • Choir Director and Yearbook Adviser

"Don't underestimate your social life."

Mr. LaRiviere • World History Teacher, Girls' Basketball Coach, and Newspaper Sponsor

"Each teacher gave you a lot of different types of advice and strategies. Try to remember those even more than just the curriculum they taught."

Mr. Carlson • Science Teacher

"Stay true to yourself. Don't be a follower. Always be a leader."

Coach Blackwell • P.E. Teacher and Softball Coach

"Find something to be involved with, learn as much about that as you can, and apply that to the future as you grow as a person."

Mr. Smith • Assistant Principal

"Do not fall behind. Most schools offer study halls and tutoring. On the fun side, get involved. Try clubs you normally wouldn't try, sports you normally wouldn't do."

Mrs. Rastatter • Assistant Principal

"Be yourself."

Coach Dixon • P.E. Teacher and Boys' Basketball Coach

"Stay true to yourself. Don't change for anybody."

Ms. Danner • Bookkeeper

"Be you, stay humbled, and don't give into peer pressure. You got this."

Miss Bre • Media Center

"One true friend is better than 10 fake ones."

Mrs. LaRiviere • ELA Teacher

QUOTABLE

Eighth grade shares its most inspiring and motivational quotes

Ashlynn Pasquince

"People will forget what you said. People will forget what you did. But people will never forget how you made them feel."
- Maya Angelou



Edgar Avila

"Some people want it to happen. Some people wish it to happen. And others make it happen."
- Michael Jordan



Alfredo Gutierrez

"With great power comes great responsibility."
- "Uncle Ben Parker," *Spider-Man*



Sophia Buchanan

"Driver picks the music. Shotgun shuts his cakehole."
- "Dean Winchester," *Supernatural*



Payton Clift

"Life is like riding a bicycle. To keep your balance, you must keep going."
- Albert Einstein



Brodee Haas

"I am ready to face any challenge that is foolish enough to face me."
- "Dwight Schrute," *The Office*



Cayden Coen

"No one looks back in life and says, 'I wish I tried less.'"
- Mr. Gary Burns



Erick Avila

"You don't lose if you get knocked down; you lose if you stay down."
- Muhammad Ali



Autumn Garren

"He's not standing at the top because he was born smart. He worked incredibly hard to get to that point."
- "Izuku Midoriya," *My Hero Academia*



Mia Feigen

"There's no mountain I can't climb, no tower too high, no plane I can't learn how to fly."
- Eminem, "My Dad's Gone Crazy"



Ava Butterfield

"You never think that the last time is the last time. You think there will be more. You think you have forever, but you don't."
- "Meredith Grey," *Grey's Anatomy*



Olivia Frazer

"The first rule of truly living is doing what you're most afraid of."
- "Rebekah Mikaelson," *The Vampire Diaries*



Before we go...

ADVICE FROM DEPARTING EIGHTH GRADERS

By Ava Butterfield

G•R•O•W•L Assistant Editor

As the eighth graders leave for high school, the sixth and seventh graders are stepping up into a higher grade levels and could use some advice as they take the lead as the most experienced students on Powell's campus.

A flurry of graduating students volunteered their wisdom before they leave.

Amber Bates is heading to Springstead High School later this year and knows sixth and seventh graders could hear something she wishes she had heard when she first came into middle school.

Coming into middle school, Amber did not think some things would be as difficult as they have been. Now that she is graduating eighth grade, she realized she was wrong. Some things have been very difficult, but you should never give up. Every year of middle school is very important, so make them count.

"Don't ever expect everything to be easy because it's not," she said.

Ciera Foreback is also off to high school in the fall, and she is prepared to attend Springstead as well. From her past experiences, she knows staying away from gossip and conflict in social situations is definitely something you want to do. She wishes she had someone to give her that advice.

"Don't start drama," she said. "It's not worth it. It will only cause [more] problems."

Another big piece of advice Ciera has is about focusing on schoolwork. Even Ciera did not want to do work, and she regretted it.

"Do your best in your classes because if you don't, your grades will start to slip," she said, "and you will lose opportunities."

Ciera refers to opportunities such as extra curricular fun that happens at school. From PBIS to field trips, there are things that break up the routine

of going to school every day and make it all worth it.

It is definitely important to try your best in class and stay out of trouble so you can thrive more in school.

Isaiah Rivera, who is going to Nature Coast Technical High School next school year, believes it is very important to respect your teachers. They are a very big part in how you do in school, both with your grades and behaviorally.

"Teachers are the people deciding your future, so respect them," he said.

Isaiah also believes that while having friendships is very important, your work in class is too. If you slack off, you might be held back while your friends move on.

"Your work is just as important, if not more than most of your friendships," he said.

Learning to respect boundaries is really important. If you do not do that, you can lose a lot of friends. Respecting people's wishes is key to having a healthy social life in school, which is really important to succeed as well.

Patricia Heinemann, on her way to Nature Coast, recommends students try to involve themselves in extracurricular activities in middle school because it will help you get more involved. It will also help you meet more people.

"Try to get into the right crowds by getting involved in sports, because it will help you keep yourself in check," Patricia said. "It will also help you make amazing friends."

Patricia has been a cheerleader and a member of Student Government, so she speaks from experience.

From their time here, all of these eighth graders know that these are all important pieces of advice. They look back and realize how grateful they would have been to have heard these words before they were pressing down on high school.

The best students will take these words and understand just how helpful they can be.



Members of Powell Chorus, directed by Mr. Pletincks, perform at the Spring Concert. [Falyn Dorsey]

Powell Finale: Band, dance, and chorus have Spring performances

Contributed by G•R•O•W•L Staff

The Powell Middle School band, chorus, and dance programs capped an impressive 2021-22 school year full of award-winning performances by putting on one last show for the Powell families this month.

Led by Band Director Mr. Ross McCarthy, the Powell Band held their Spring Concert on Friday, May 6. The group played a variety of music from all different genres. Eighth grader ElleAnn Cephus was selected to act as student conductor for one of the pieces, "Remember Me" from the Disney/Pixar film *Coco*.

The Powell Chorus followed with their Spring Concert on Monday, May 9. Under the guidance of Choir Director Mr. David Pletincks, the ensemble sang pieces they had been working on throughout the year, including selections from multiple Disney soundtracks. Jayden Sandberg, Lillie Garrett, Trisha Nguyen, Sidney Larson, Ashlynn Pasquince, Darianna Judd, and Chloe Genalo each had solo performances.

The Powell Dance program completed their year with the Spring Recital on Monday, May 16. Under the watchful mentorship of Mrs. Serena Young, the dancers impressed with jazz and contemporary ensembles as well as a duo (Kallie Shutt and McKenzie Frattiani) and trio performance (Skyler Young, Lindsey Holmes, and Isabelle Johnson).

As always seems to be the case, Powell Performing Arts were terrific. Each student showcased brought a level of brilliance to their effort. The dance, chorus, and band programs are all prepared to continue this measure of excellence going into next year and into the future.



Student conductor ElleAnn Cephus leads a rendition of "Remember Me." [Liberty Weinstein]

SPORTS

FEMALE ATHLETE OF THE YEAR

Xamara Pastrana: Making an impact in every sport she plays

By Taliyah Owens
G•R•O•W•L Sports Editor

Once Xamara Pastrana has graduated from Powell Middle School, she will be headed to F.W. Springstead High School in Spring Hill to carry on her athletic legacy. She will do so as the 2022 Powell Female Athlete of the Year.

Xamara has always had a love for sports, and she continues that as a tri-athlete, playing basketball, volleyball, and running track.

"I started to play sports in sixth grade," she said. "I tried out for all three but only made the track team."

In basketball, she started at guard as both a seventh grader on junior varsity and as an eighth grader on varsity. In volleyball, she was a key member of the rotation the past two years.

In track, she has separated herself as a solid mid-distance runner, competing in the 400-meter run. She finished seventh in the first meet this season, against Challenger K-8 and Parrott Middle School.

Even though she did not make the basketball or volleyball teams at first, Xamara worked hard to make sure that did not happen again in her seventh or eighth grade years.

"I practiced extremely hard to make sure I made those teams," she said.

Being at Powell has made a significant impact on Xamara.

"It has affected me by pushing me to become better," she said. "The coaches and teachers motivate you to keep going and never give up."

Xamara hopes to play all three sports she played in middle school when she gets to Springstead as well. If all goes well, she aims to do so in college too.

"I really want to be able to go to the University

of South Florida and compete in all three sports," she said.

She is quick to point out that these goals would not be possible if not for the people around her. Xamara's parents are both very supportive, and she points to her coaches throughout her time at Powell as guides along the way. One individual specifically had huge impact on her.

"I look up to [Coach] LaRiviere because of the goals he has and the person he is," Xamara said. "He pushes me and everyone he cares about to be better."

Coach Derek LaRiviere has been coaching girls' basketball at Powell for the past two years, and during that time, has helped Xamara both on and off the court.

"Xamara's work ethic is terrific," LaRiviere said. "She distinguished herself in basketball with her defense and hustle. No one tried harder than Xamara when she was out there."

During a game late in the season during Xamara's seventh grade year, she was forced to be the team's point guard after two players in front of her both suffered injuries. Without complaint, she pushed and fought as the Panthers nearly won the game.

"It was then that I realized what kind of drive she has inside her," LaRiviere said.

Xamara has a strong passion for sports, and she just wants to show what she is capable of to everyone when she gets the opportunity.

"I want to prove that I am a good role model," she said, "and I do not want to fall in with the wrong crowd."

Even though Xamara has been playing sports for a while, she relies on a schedule to keep everything in balance.

"My parents help me maintain a schedule that keeps me on track with both the sports I play and the work I need to do for school," she said.

Her time at Powell has been full of memorable events, from being part of the Hernando County



Xamara hustling in a Panthers basketball win over Fox Chapel. [Courtesy of Xamara Pastrana]

Championship Girls Basketball team this season to running track alongside her brother Xylus, who is now a freshman at Springstead, playing multiple sports himself.

Another specific moment also sticks out.

"I scored my first [varsity basket] in the championship game [against Explorer K-8]," she said, "and I fouled out too, which was a big goal of mine."

While some may consider fouling out of a game as a negative, Xamara saw it as a badge of honor to show just how hard she was playing on defense. There was not a player on the offensive side in the county that she could not guard.

The best part of Xamara's success is that, as a middle school student, she is just getting started. The future is bright, and she has so much ahead.

MALE ATHLETE OF THE YEAR

Aveion Jackson: Big goals for Powell's standout hoops star

By Taliyah Owens
G•R•O•W•L Sports Editor

In his time at Powell Middle School, Aveion Jackson proved himself to be one of the best on the court that the school has ever seen.

Known for his ball handling skills and shooting ability, Aveion had a great run during his three years at Powell. He is attending Nature Coast Technical High School later this year as a freshman and hopes to continue to be a star player there as well.

"I can't wait to play basketball at Nature Coast," Aveion said.

At Nature Coast, Aveion hopes to play for veteran basketball coach David Pisarcik, Hernando

County's all-time winningest high school coach. Aveion is familiar with Pisarcik because he has been playing in the Nature Coast Basketball League during the offseason the past few years.

Aveion first started playing basketball at Powell during his sixth-grade year. He was one of the main reasons why the junior varsity team went undefeated that season. Some may be surprised to find out that great performance was his first time playing organized basketball.

"I learned a lot that season," he said. "It taught me how to get to the next level and play with others."

Basketball has always been in Aveion's family. His cousin and uncle both played the sport. He looks up to his cousin, and he has been a great role model to Aveion. His uncle taught him the game when he was very young.

"I've always looked up to my family when it comes to basketball," Aveion said.

Eventually, Aveion hopes to make it all the way to the NBA, a goal that is not out of the question considering the ability he has shown in such a short time.

Talent alone is not enough to make it to the pros, and Aveion is aware that there are certain other qualities that are necessary to put him on the right track. These qualities can make him a player that separates himself from others.

"I try to be a great playmaker," Aveion said. "It's always my goal to help my teammates and be a leader."

His selflessness is not just limited to his teammates. Foremost on his mind when it comes to success is his mother. While making it big on the court may be a personal goal, it is not the dream of fame that drives him.

"I am so passionate about the game of basketball

because one day I hope to buy my mom a brand new house," he said.

Participating in sports and going to school can be incredibly stressful to some students, but Aveion has found a way to manage.

"I just stick to a schedule, go to school, and try to have as much fun as possible while playing basketball," he said.

Aveion had plenty of great plays and accomplishments during this year's basketball season, but there was one that was more memorable to him than the rest.

During a close victory over Winding Waters K-8, the home crowd at Powell was wild with anticipation as the Yellow Jackets closed in on the lead. After his teammates missed a couple of shots, Aveion took matters into his own hands, driving to the basket and making a reverse layup while also being fouled. Everyone in Powell's gymnasium cheered him on after the amazing play.

"After the 'and-one,' my teammates were hyping me up," he said. "It was a great feeling."

In addition to basketball, Aveion also shows glimpses of athletic greatness on the gridiron. He separated himself as one of the best players on Powell's football team, playing both wide receiver and defensive back.

In both basketball and football, the Panthers struggled at points during the season, but one of the most consistent forces on both squads was Aveion. His sense of pride pushed him to compete at a high level even when the score was not in Powell's favor.

It was his stellar play in these two sports that earned him the 2022 Powell Male Athlete of the Year, an honor that will carry him into high school as he makes his fellow Panthers proud.



Aveion with his mother at Powell Middle School's 8th Grade Night. [Courtesy of Mrs. LaRiviere]