

---

# Principal Newsletter

---

---

## Palmer Ridge High School Principal Newsletter

---



### Story #1

**Bear Time**

### Story #2

**Academic  
Testing  
Results**

### Story #3

**Attention-  
Span**

---

# Principal Newsletter

---

## Story #1: **Bear Time**

The inaugural implementation of PRHS' new advisory program, *Bear Time*, is now approaching the one-month mark. As someone who has been through numerous change initiatives, I know that change is never easy. However, when done with care and communication, and when stakeholders are listened to, combined with a willingness to make appropriate pivots and/or adjustments, change can bring about better circumstances.

Last year, I heard numerous students share concerns that dealt with the following topics: wanting more ways to feel a sense of belonging (especially if they aren't in a sport or in the arts); mental health; and academic stress. Also, as an educator, I know that schools need to do a better job of intervening with students based on their individual learning needs. As someone who values listening and basing future decisions on what people are talking about and asking for, *Bear Time* was a "doable" program to make a "dent" in these areas needing improvement. Without taking action, there is a fear that some of these concerns won't be addressed.

*Bear Time*, nor any program, is perfect. But, with every program and decision, we want to see improvement. We want to see things moving forward. We are aware that students are still becoming accustomed to *Bear Time*. Again, it entails change.

However, it is exciting to see how many students are taking advantage of the

opportunity to use a "Bear Pass" to visit various teachers for academic help. Every pass used represents an opportunity to learn and receive intervention that otherwise may not have occurred!

Also, it's fun to walk into *Bear Time* classrooms and see relationships beginning to be formed – not only with a new mentor teacher, but with a group of students who otherwise may have never met. This includes students being around students from all four grade levels.

*Bear Time* also provides students with opportunities to visit with their counselor or our social worker. It creates time during the school day to take care of such needs. If a student is preoccupied with a mental health crisis or some kind of trauma, how can they focus on learning?

The reduction of time between class periods has also been a change. But, I can share that our tardies have been significantly less than they were last year. Students are getting to class on time!

We've made some adjustments to *Bear Time* based on student feedback. We've created a "library-like" environment in terms of noise level, so students can study, receive help from teachers, while also allowing time for students to get to know each other and to feel comfortable. We've allowed students to use regular hall passes for restroom needs and

# Principal Newsletter

## Bear Time (continued)

other building tasks. Also, we've allowed students to obtain a "Bear Pass" the day of their visit to another classroom instead of having to secure the pass a day in advance.

## Story #2: Academic Testing Results

After a two-year pause, CDE has released the Preliminary Transitional Performance Framework results for schools and districts in Colorado. D38 is once again "Accredited with Distinction!" Also, PRHS earned the highest rating attainable, "Performance Plan!" Yeah, I don't love the name either – but it is the highest rating! Below are several impressive results in PRHS' report:

### Evidence-Based Reading & Writing:

- All Students: 89th percentile (Exceeds Standards)
- Minority Students: 84th percentile (Meets Standards)

### Math:

- All Students: 85th percentile (Exceeds Standards)
- Minority Students: 77th percentile (Meets Standards)

These results are directly linked to the outstanding work done by our teachers, our staff, the environment and support that comes from the home, and the effort and preparation given by our students!

## Story #3: Attention-Span

Attention-span is an interesting topic and one that is important for educators to understand. The topic involves developmental ranges that are impacted by a person's age and maturation. Also, attention-span can vary based on a person's unique personality. Some students have a shorter attention-span, but are highly creative. Others may have a longer attention-span, but struggle with holistic, conceptual thinking. Also, this topic is impacted by levels of interest and motivation.

I'd like to share that this is a topic that we as a staff are talking about at PRHS – especially with having block periods. Student engagement is an instructional area that we must continually seek to perfect.

As a staff, we are digging into strategies that can increase student engagement. To be clear, student engagement doesn't merely equate to student movement or continual group activities – although each have merit as particular methods. Rather, student engagement involves authentic learning – learning that is stimulating and that activates the mind of the learner. Ideally, this learning process increases from basic knowledge to higher level thinking, such as analysis and creation/synthesis.

I'm proud of the PRHS staff, that although our test scores are among the highest percentiles, they continue to embrace the desire to become even better at the craft of teaching!