



Portland Estates Elementary School

January Newsletter 2025

Happy New Year!

Dear Portland Estates Families,

We hope everyone had a healthy, safe and relaxing holiday season! We are feeling rested, rejuvenated and ready for an exciting 2026! We are ready to start the New Year fresh and with a focus on learning and well-being.

It was amazing to see so many families at our Cookies with Santa event as well as at the Winter Concerts. Thank you to all of you for supporting Schools Plus and our local Food Bank with your donations. A big thank you to our teachers, Ms. Rhonda Corrigan and Ms. Megan Chandler for volunteering their time to organize the concerts and our PTO members for organizing the Cookies with Santa event and the Raffle baskets. We appreciate all the volunteer hours that they put in to make such successful and festive events.

A reminder that we do spend time outside for learning and recess & lunch each day, even when it may seem cold. The HRCE has a wind chill protocol that we follow. We keep an eye on temperature, sunshine, and wind, and if we can get out, we go out. Please remember to send your child(ren) with warm layers, winter boots, extra gloves and extra socks (these can get quite wet).

The month of January brings an opportunity for us to re-set, to look at our goals and re-evaluate our plans of action. As we know learning takes place everywhere and we thank our parents for all that you do at home to support learning and making learning part of your day, from talking about the weather and nature to reading a book at night with your child. As we step into the new year, let us collectively commit to fostering an environment that promotes curiosity, kindness, and a love of learning. Together, we will continue to provide our students with a well-rounded education that prepares them for the success in an ever-changing world.

We wish Mr. Scott, Pre-Primary Lead, the best of luck in his new position. We welcome Karlyn O'Hanley who is joining us as a new lead in Pre-primary until May. As well, we welcome Ms. Renshaw who will be subbing in Music for the month of January and then will be the new Learning Centre Teacher from January 26 to June 30 while Ms. Chase is out on leave. We welcome Brandon Walker, who is a student teacher in Two/Three Johnson until April.

Open communication is vital for the success of our school community. If you have any questions, concerns, or suggestions, please feel free to reach out to us. We value your input and are committed to working together to ensure the success and well-being of every PEES student. Reminder as well that Ameena Sait is the Pre-Primary lead for our school. Pre-primary leads and supervisors are not housed at our site but can be easily contacted if you have an issue that a pre-primary staff member can not resolve for you.

Thank you to all our families who updated their Demographics in Powerschool in the Fall. This is very important to have all the information correct in the system. Reminder that February is registration month for new students.

May the new year bring each of you new learning and joy as we continue to work together to make PEES a great place to grow and work. Best wishes for a healthy and prosperous new year!

Louise Henman-Poirier

Principal

Milk Orders- You can order milk from the school. A small white milk is on .40 cents.

Dates to Remember:

January 8, 2026 – PTO meeting – 7 pm in the library – We hope to see you there!

January 16, 2026- Backwards Day

January 19, 2026 – Martin Luther King Jr Day

Monday, January 27 – Family Literacy Day

International Holocaust Remembrance Day

February 1- 28- Registration Month

Picking Up Students- A reminder that if parents are picking child(ren) up from school early please notify the classroom teacher and the school office ahead of time. When you arrive at the school, please call the office at 902-433-7100 and we will send students out to meet families.

Attendance Matters!

Please ensure your child gets to school each day and on time (prior to 8:50 am) unless they are feeling unwell.

Volunteers!

We are always looking for more volunteers to help us with **reading** with students, Breakfast program and chaperoning on field trips. Volunteers must have a Criminal records check (with vulnerable sector check) and a Child Abuse Registry check completed and on file at the school.

Lunch Monitors

We continue to need more lunch monitors – if you can work one or more lunch hours per week. Please reach out to Ms. Broussard at JBroussard@hrce.ca

Power Outage Information for Families

As we move into the winter months, we want to share how decisions are made when a school experiences a power outage.

Our priority is always to keep schools open safely when possible. A power outage does **not** automatically mean classes are cancelled – even if it happens

during the school day. The decision depends on when power is expected to be restored.

Here's what happens:

- When a school loses power, HRCE's Operations Team contacts Nova Scotia Power to gather available details on the cause and an estimated restoration time.
- Once we have this information, we consider:
 - **Before school starts:** Have buses begun their routes? If so, we wait until students arrive before making a decision. If classes are cancelled, elementary families will be contacted before dismissal.
 - **During the school day:** How close is dismissal? What is the temperature in the building? Does the school rely on power for water or septic systems? These factors, among others, help us decide whether to stay open or close. Often, power returns faster than we could safely send students home.

If classes are cancelled:

- HRCE will notify families by email and text.
- Families of elementary students will also receive a phone call before dismissal.

Deciding to close schools during a power outage is never simple, but safety is always our top priority. We understand that cancellations can be inconvenient, and our goal is to keep students learning in class whenever possible.

More information about school cancellations for any reason can be found [here](#).

Learn About the Influenza Vaccine

Learn about the Influenza vaccine

FAST FACTS ABOUT THE FLU VACCINE

- Influenza (the flu) is virus that peaks in transmission in the fall and winter months
- Most people are mildly ill when they contract the flu but sometimes the flu can be serious and require admission to the hospital
- Children under 6 years are at the highest risk of serious complications from the flu
- The flu and RSV can occur at the same time making children more at risk of needing hospitalization
- The flu vaccine is recommended yearly for children 6 months and older to protect against serious complications of the flu

Scan to book



FLU VACCINE SAFETY

- The flu vaccine cannot cause the flu
- Serious side effects are rare, affecting less than 1 in 1000 people
- Common side effects include pain and swelling at the insertion site



HOW TO BOOK YOUR VACCINE

- In Nova Scotia, flu vaccines can be booked online and are free of cost
- You can also call to book at 1-833-797-7772. If you or your child does not have a health card, please call rather than booking online



Fast Facts about the Flu Vaccine

- Influenza (the flu) is virus that peaks in transmission in the fall and winter months
- Most people are mildly ill when they contract the flu but sometimes the flu can be serious and require admission to the hospital
- Children under 6 years are at the highest risk of serious complications from the flu
- The flu and RSV can occur at the same time making children more at risk of needing hospitalization
- The flu vaccine is recommended yearly for children 6 months and older to protect against serious complications of the flu

For more information, [click here](#).

Online Platform Risks From Unplugged Canada

APPS EVERY PARENT SHOULD BE AWARE OF

unplugged
Canada



SNAPCHAT

- Disappearing messages
- Snap Map location sharing
- Addictive features (streaks)
- Sexting & adult contact



INSTAGRAM

- Body-image pressure
- Hidden DM requests
- Teens use secret "Finstas"
- Exposure to adult content



ROBLOX

- Inappropriate games
- Unmoderated private servers
- Chat with strangers
- Pressure to buy Robux



TIKTOK

- Highly addictive feed
- Harmful viral trends
- Attention fragmentation
- Frequent adult content



DISCORD

- High grooming risk
- Adult/NSFW content
- Harassment & cyberbullying
- Unmoderated servers



YOUTUBE

- Inappropriate content
- High risk of grooming
- Addictive short form content
- Attention fragmentation



CHARACTER AI

- Sexualized roleplay bots
- High grooming-style risk
- Fake "AI relationships" with kids
- Encourages secrecy from parents



TELEGRAM

- Encrypted hidden content
- Large, risky group chats
- Minimal moderation
- Hard for parents to monitor



REDDIT

- Unfiltered communities
- Adult/disturbing content
- Harmful topics easily found
- Anonymous users & predators



CHATGPT

- Kids may overshare personal info
- Mature themes can appear
- Emotional dependence on AI
- Hard for parents to monitor use

Before you let your child use a platform, create an account using their age and explore it yourself to see the content and interactions they'll be exposed to.

Sharing on behalf of Unplugged Canada

Many digital platforms today, including social media, online gaming and AI chat tools, are designed to keep kids scrolling and engaged, often exposing them to addictive features, adult content, and interactions they may not be developmentally ready to handle.

Below is a resource that outlines some of the most common social media, gaming, and AI chat platforms, helping families better understand the risks, start meaningful conversations at home, and consider delaying smartphones and access to these apps until kids are more developmentally ready.

You can access the full resource [here](#).

Unplugged Canada is a parent-led, national movement advocating for healthier childhoods by delaying smartphones and social media until kids are more developmentally ready. Join thousands of Canadian families choosing to delay by taking the Unplugged Canada Pledge at unpluggedcanada.com/sign-pledge.

Planning for Inclement Weather

Did you know? HRCE takes great care when making the decision to alter the regular operations of schools and school buses in the event of severe or inclement weather.

It is HRCE's goal to communicate any changes to the regular operations of schools and/or buses as close to 6:00 a.m. as possible. **A 6:00 a.m. announcement could be:**

- All schools are delayed in opening by two hours and bus pickups are delayed by two hours; or

- All schools are open, but some or all busses are not operating for the day; or
- Some schools (either individually or by family) are closed for the day; or
- All schools are closed for the day.

If weather deteriorates, or is forecasted to worsen throughout the morning, **an 11:00 a.m. announcement could be:**

- Bussed students will be picked up two hours earlier than their regular dismissal time; and
- Walking students will be dismissed at their regularly scheduled lunch hour.

How will I find out?

- By email to the addresses in PowerSchool
- By text message, **if you have opted-in**. If you aren't sure if you have opted-in, text Y to the following number: **978338**
- [On the HRCE website](#)
- [On Instagram](#)

It's important to always have a plan in place for childcare in the event of any cancellation. Please remember: As a parent or guardian you always have the choice of whether or not to send your child to school.

For more information on how HRCE manages during inclement weather, visit hrce.ca/families/cancellations.



International Holocaust Remembrance Day

International Holocaust Remembrance Day, observed on January 27, serves as a crucial reminder of the Holocaust.

Through survivor stories, students learn empathy, compassion, and the importance of standing against antisemitism and prejudice. By observing this day, we ensure future generations uphold human rights and dignity, fostering a culture of respect and inclusion.



January 27 is Family Literacy Day

Did you know? January 27 is Family Literacy Day! This special day is meant to raise awareness about the importance of reading and engaging in other literacy-related activities as a family. The theme for Family Literacy Day 2026, celebrated on January 27th, is **"Make Mealttime Family Learning Time,"** focusing on turning everyday food-related activities like cooking, grocery shopping, and eating together into opportunities for reading, math, and sharing stories to build family literacy skills. Organizations like [ABC Life Literacy Canada](https://www.abclifeliteracy.ca/) encourage using mealtime to follow recipes, create shopping lists, and share experiences, with resources available on [FamilyLiteracyDay.ca](https://www.familyliteracyday.ca).



New year, new job? HRCE is hiring!

Did you know that there are multiple teaching and non-teaching roles across HRCE - all of which are vital to our students' success? Looking for a new opportunity? Know someone who would be a great fit?

We're currently in immediate need of substitutes to replace teachers, Pre-Primary staff, EPAs (Educational Program Assistants), custodians and administrative assistants. If you're interested, please contact careers@hrce.ca.

Visit myhrce.ca/jobs to view current job openings and sign up to apply today. Postings are updated every Wednesday at noon.

Outdoor Physical Education Fun!

Throughout the school year, students have been enjoying outdoor physical education classes, as well as walking the local trails and exploring our environment with their homeroom teachers this year. We are so fortunate to have such beautiful surroundings.

Winter Weather & Clothing

Please remember to send your child(ren) to school with appropriate clothing, as the weather is getting colder. Boots, hats, warm mittens and snow pants are a must. Please ensure that your child has a pair of indoor shoes as well. A change of clothes is always a good idea at the lower grades.

February is Registration Month- Registration will be online this year. More details will be released from the HRCE and DEECD in the upcoming weeks. If your child will be five before December 31, 2026, they will be able to attend Primary in September. If your child will be four before December 31, 2026, they will be eligible to attend Pre-primary in September.

Transition Planning:

While it may still feel like it is early in the school year to think about transitioning to the next school year, many plans are well underway to ensure that students have a successful transition from Grade to Grade and from school to school. For students who are changing schools, we will start planning visits at this time of the year. If you are moving out of the area and your child requires an individual transition meeting with their new school, please reach out as soon as possible.

PTO News

Thank you to our wonderful PTO and to all the PEES families who donated to our Theme baskets prior to the break. This was a very successful fundraiser for the PTO. The next PTO meeting will be **Thursday, January 8th at 7 pm** in the school library. We hope to see you there!

Literacy at PEES: We continue to think differently about the teaching of reading in our school. As part of our Student Success Plan (SSP), we have strategies that see our teachers implementing word study blocks in their instruction every day. In the lower elementary, teachers are using a phonological awareness and phonics instruction resources to help students with the decoding of words. In the Upper elementary, teachers use a combination of phonics and word study to build vocabulary and understand the word origins and English language rules. We have the support of the Elementary Literacy Support Specialist, Mrs. Dafoe as well as Resource teachers, Mrs. Banks and Mrs. Connors, who support strong Tier 1 instruction in the classrooms.

"FIX-UP-STRATEGIES for HARD WORDS"

As we kick off a new year, here are some simple reading tips when trying to decode a new or unfamiliar word:

Fix-up Strategies

- Look at every letter in the word
- Sound it out
- Look for parts you know
- Move on, then reread
- Make a good guess.

After a guess, ask...

- Does it look right?
- Does it sound right?
- Does it make sense?

Whenever reading with your child, instead of correcting them right away when he/she makes a mistake, always address the problem in the form of a question:

“How did you think that sounded?”

“What was the tricky part?”

“Where was the problem you found?”

This method will help your child match what he/she found difficult to your upcoming solution. What you’re looking for is for your child to take on the task of future decoding by linking what was noticed to be a problem first and then your solution.