

The Penguin Periodical

September 2026



Hello Pioneer Families!

Welcome to this month's edition of the Penguin Periodical! We're excited to share the latest happenings and updates from our school community to keep you informed and engaged.



Principal's Message

Can you believe it? We've already made it through our first whole month of school. For our 3- and 4-year-olds, that's actually a huge deal. A whole month of learning new routines, making new friends, figuring out how to share and take turns, and doing more and more on their own every day. That's a lot for a little person!

Right now, our kiddos are forming the habits that will stick with them for years to come. These early years matter so much because our littles are like sponges, soaking up everything around them. That's exactly why this is the moment to start building great habits around showing up, behaving well, and giving school their best effort.

Here's where we need you: help your little one get to school every day, on time, ready to make good choices and try their hardest. When we team up on this early, we're setting them up to thrive, not just this year, but for all the years ahead.

Keep reading to see what your little learners have been up to in class, plus what's coming up around our school!

Sincerely,

Mr. Dan Guerrero
Principal



Pyramid Model Expectations

The Pyramid Model is how we teach our little ones to manage their feelings, get along with others, and make good choices. Instead of just telling kids what not to do, we focus on teaching them what to do instead, through kindness, encouragement, and lots of practice.

At our school, this looks like three simple expectations that we talk about every day:

- **We are safe.**
- **We are kind.**
- **We work together.**

We use these three phrases throughout the day to help children understand how to treat themselves, their friends, and their classroom. You can use them at home too! The more we repeat the same message at school and at home, the faster our little ones will make these habits their own.

Tracking Progress & Setting Goals

This year, we are using a new assessment tool, Teaching Strategies GOLD, to set goals for student growth and achievement. We have been hard at work during our initial Professional Development Days to dive deep into the assessment tool as we begin to utilize it in the coming months to gather baseline data to inform our instruction.

Teaching Strategies GOLD is an observation-based assessment tool that helps teachers track how children are growing and learning across many areas, including literacy, math, social-emotional skills, and more. Instead of relying on a single test, teachers observe children during everyday classroom activities and use those observations to understand each child's strengths and identify areas for continued growth. This gives us a well-rounded picture of your child's development and helps us plan instruction that meets them right where they are.

Our School Goals with Teaching Strategies GOLD are as follows:

Reading: By Spring 2027, 80% of P5 students will show grade-level performance on Objective 16a (Identifies names and letters), as measured by Teaching Strategies GOLD from the fall 2026 baseline.

Math: By Spring 2027, 80% of P5 students will show grade-level performance on Objective 20a (Counts), as measured by Teaching Strategies GOLD from the fall 2026 baseline.

SEL: By Spring 2027, 80% of P5 students will show grade-level performance on Objective 2c (Interacts with Peers), as measured by Teaching Strategies GOLD from the fall 2026 baseline.

Culture: In addition to Teaching Strategies GOLD, we will be monitoring our Collaborative Practices as adults, as measured by the 5 Essentials Survey. Our goal is: By Spring 2027, the score on the Collaborative Practices category of the 5 Essentials Survey will increase to a score of 60 from a Spring 2026 score of 49.



What's Happening Around Pioneer?



Half-Day Highlights

It has been a busy and exciting first month for our Half-Day friends! Early weeks focused on learning classroom routines, expectations, and getting to know friends' and teachers' names, with students quickly settling into favorites like playing and eating with friends, sitting for circle and story time, and safely exploring our classroom centers. As routines took hold, our focus shifted to kindness and safety, with students learning about "Stop and Go" choices to help them make safe, kind decisions during play, both inside the classroom and out on the playground. Some classrooms took this a step further, exploring how we are all different, whether in the language we speak, the color of our hair, or the things we wear, and learning that being kind means accepting and respecting everyone. Students practiced these lessons through small group activities, social stories, songs, and hands-on play, including helping a classroom puppet friend and working on safe choices together as a class. At home, families can help reinforce these lessons by reading together for 10 minutes each day, talking with your child about the differences we see in others, and practicing kindness through everyday moments, like helping to clean up, giving hugs, taking turns, and using "please" and "thank you."

Full-Day Focus

It has been a wonderful first month across our Full-Day classrooms, all centered around one big theme: kindness! Our little ones have been learning what it means to be a good friend, practicing kind words, and exploring how to build welcoming, accepting relationships with their classmates. Through read-alouds, cooperative games, and small group discussions, students have been identifying "stop" and "go" choices, learning to recognize emotions like happy, sad, worried, and excited, and discovering how kindness can be shown in the classroom, on the playground, and beyond. Some classrooms have introduced fun ways to celebrate this growth, like filling up a Kindness Jar, caring for a classroom Plant Pal, or playing turn-taking games to build patience and cooperation. Favorite books this month included *The Little Blue Truck* by Alice Schertle, *A Small Kindness* by Stacy McAnulty, *My Friends* by Taro Gomi, *Kind* by Alison Green, *Be Polite and Kind* by Cheri J. Meiners, *Can I Play Too?* by Mo Willems, and *Kindness Starts with You* by J. Stagg, alongside songs like "Red Light Green Light" and "Who Took the Cookie from the Cookie Jar." At home, families can help reinforce these lessons by keeping morning routines consistent, practicing coughing and sneezing into elbows, reading together for 10 minutes each day, and praising specific kind choices when they see them. Together, we are off to a great start building the habits and friendships that will carry our little ones through the rest of the year!





Extended Day Experiences

Our Extended-Day classrooms have been hard at work building routines, relationships, and independence this month. Students have been practicing transitions throughout the day, sitting for circle time and stations for increasing stretches of time, and playing alongside friends, all while getting to know their teachers and classmates by name. As routines take hold, our little ones are also rotating through stations, building tolerance for structured work time, and learning to work alongside their peers. Alongside these classroom routines, students are practicing key ASL signs, including more, help, thank you, and I want, to support communication throughout the day. Our classrooms have also been fortunate to welcome extra support and specialists into the mix, including music therapy, social work groups, speech, and occupational therapy, giving our kiddos wonderful opportunities to sing, dance, take turns, and build new skills with trusted adults each week. At home, families can help reinforce these lessons by reading together for at least 10 minutes each day and practicing turn-taking, such as sharing a toy with a family member.

School Safety Reminders

We are entering our school safety drill season. Each year, we are required by the state to practice several types of drills to make sure our systems and procedures work as they should in an emergency. We are required to complete all drills before November 1st. Here is a quick look at what each drill involves, along with our schedule:



Bus Evacuation Drill: Students board a bus stationed in our bus lane, where the bus driver reviews bus safety rules and shows children how to exit safely in case of an emergency.

 **Friday, September 25th**

Shelter/Tornado Drill: Students move to a central location in the building, away from exterior doors and windows, and practice the take cover position.

 **Wednesday, September 30th**

Evacuation/Fire Drills: Classes follow our exit plans and gather in predetermined spaces around the perimeter of the school property, where staff account for all children in a timely manner. We are required to hold three fire drills this season:

- **Wednesday, October 7th (morning)**, so our Half-Day AM classes have the opportunity to practice, in addition to our Full-Day and Extended-Day classes
- **Wednesday, October 14th (afternoon)**, so our Half-Day PM classes have the opportunity to practice, in addition to our Full-Day classes
- One additional, unannounced drill, scheduled by the West Chicago Fire Protection District sometime **between October 14th and November 1st**

Law Enforcement Drill: Students take cover in locked classrooms, out of sight, while law enforcement members check that doors are properly secured.

 **Friday, October 16th (morning)**

Ahead of each drill, teachers will review a social story with students to help them understand what to expect and feel prepared. These drills are mandated by the state and help us keep our safety systems and procedures current and effective. In the meantime, you can help your child prepare at home by explaining that drills are important for keeping everyone safe. This is also a great time to talk through your own family's home safety plan, so your child knows what to do in an emergency.



Reporting Absences and Requesting Daily Dismissal Changes

Reporting an Absence: If your student will be absent from school, please report the absence, preferably by 9:00 AM, by calling the attendance line at 630-293-6040, ext. 6300.

If there is no answer, please leave a voicemail with your student's name, their teacher's name, and the reason for the absence.

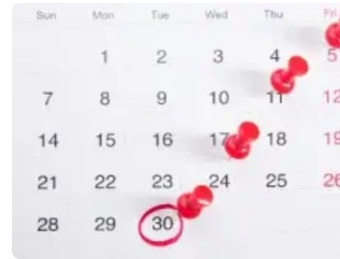
Changing to a Car Rider: If your bus rider needs to be a car rider for the day, please call the office at least **one hour before** their scheduled dismissal time (40 minutes for AM Dismissal) so we can notify the classroom teacher and plan for a safe and secure transition to car rider transportation.

- Half-Day AM: **Call before 10:30 AM**
- Extended Day: **Call before 12:30 PM**
- Full-Day/Half-Day PM: **Call before 1:30 PM**

Early Pickup: Please note that when a student is being picked up early from school, you will need to have a valid ID with you. Per district policy, and for the safety of our students, we will not release any student without seeing a valid ID.

Important Dates

- **September 25** - Bus Evacuation Drill
- **September 30** - Shelter/Tornado Drill
- **October 7** - Evacuation/Fire Drill (AM)
- **October 12** - NO SCHOOL - Indigenous People's Day (District)
- **October 14** - Evacuation/Fire Drill (PM)
- **October 16** - Law Enforcement Drill (AM)
- **October 20** - Fall Picture Day
- **October 22** - NO SCHOOL - Parent/Teacher Conferences (District)
- **October 23** - NO SCHOOL - School Improvement Day (District)
- **November 3** - NO SCHOOL - Professional Development Day (District)
- **November 16** - NO SCHOOL - Staff Training Day (Preschool Only)
- **November 23 - 27** - NO SCHOOL - Thanksgiving Break



September Photo Collage



Pioneer Preschool Spirit Wear

