



PIPESTONE AREA SCHOOLS District No. 2689

Sonja Ortman, MS/HS Principal
Scott Boomgaarden, Dean of Students
Tanya Schroyer, MS Counselor

Ellen Dulas, HS Counselor
Kaysee Slaba, Social Worker
Rick Zollner, Activities Director

MS/HS Principal Report: August 2025

New SchoolLinks Portal:

SchoolLinks is a college and career readiness platform that many school districts use to support middle and high school students with academic planning, postsecondary exploration, and workforce readiness.

Here's what it offers:

- Course Planning & Graduation Tracking – Students can plan their courses, check graduation requirements, and align them with career goals.
- College Exploration & Applications – Research colleges, track applications, request transcripts, and manage letters of recommendation.
- Career Exploration – Career interest inventories, aptitude tests, and career pathway resources (this starts in sixth grade).
- Scholarship & Financial Aid Tools – Database of scholarships, FAFSA tracking, and financial literacy resources (all in one place in one portal).
- Internships & Work-Based Learning – Connections to local opportunities, resume builders, and mock interview tools.
- Parent & Counselor Dashboards – So families and staff can monitor progress and provide guidance (*parents will receive log ins so they are kept in the loop with everything in their child's portal*).

It's designed to be more student-friendly and modern!



"Inspire life-long learners. Build Character. Prepare them for their future."

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Senior Privileges:

We typically start senior privileges within the first few weeks of school. All seniors (with a signed parent permission slip) are eligible for privileges right away. This includes being able to leave the building for lunch. Also, if students are taking a PSEO opposite lunch, they are allowed to stay home during that time for an extended lunch. Benefits:

Motivation & Morale – Kicks off senior year with excitement and recognition.

Leadership – Gives seniors more time to model maturity for younger students.

School Spirit – Strengthens pride and traditions throughout the whole year.

Accountability – Encourages good behavior when privileges are tied to performance (students lose privileges if they fall below a C in any class, have tardies, or have a discipline referral).

Fairness – Ensures all seniors, including early graduates or interns, benefit.

Recognition – Acknowledges seniors' earned status as leaders in the school.

New Staff at MS/HS:

Maggie Wertish: AG/FFA

Lhyra Leonardo: MS Math/ Algebra

Canali Pit-Oy: MS/HS Special Education

We hired two teachers from Philippines (Lhyra and Canali) in July. We are "in process" and unfortunately, we do not yet have an estimated date of arrival for them. Tentatively, they will arrive within the month of September. The reason for the delay is that the teachers have to go through a rigorous process of approval via visas, their country's Dept. of Education, etc. We have a substitute for Mathematics (Kristen Brockberg) until Lhyra arrives, and I am currently searching for a substitute for Canali.

*****The next page is the introductory letter from Lhyra to her students.***

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New Salad Bar in the MS/HS Cafeteria:

We are excited to announce that our cafeteria now features an expanded salad bar! This upgrade provides more space and a wider variety of fresh ingredients, giving students the opportunity to create custom salads that fit their taste and nutrition goals.

Looking ahead to the fall, our Taher food service staff plans to introduce a soup and bread station, offering a warm, hearty option during the cooler months.

Thank you to our Taher team for continuing to make our meal options more fresh, healthy, and student-friendly. We look forward to seeing everyone try out the new salad bar and, soon, the soups!

Upcoming Professional Development for MS/HS Teachers:

I am pleased to inform you that our middle and high school teaching staff will participate in a series of three professional development sessions on Artificial Intelligence (AI), beginning this October.

These sessions are designed to help teachers:

- Understand the fundamentals of AI and its educational applications.
- Explore classroom tools that enhance instruction and student engagement.
- Develop strategies for integrating AI responsibly and effectively.

The three-part series will be led by a qualified trainer and will include hands-on activities to ensure staff can apply their learning immediately. We believe this training will support our commitment to innovation, preparing both teachers and students for the rapidly evolving digital landscape.



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