

2023-2024

BACK TO SCHOOL



August 2023 | A Special Supplement to
Palatka Daily News

Back to School

Graduation requirements

Graduation requirements provided by the state Department of Education for students who entered ninth grade during the 2020-2021 school year.

What are the diploma options?

Students must successfully complete one of the following diploma options:

- 24-credit standard diploma
- 18-credit Academically Challenging Curriculum to Enhance Learning option
- Advanced International Certificate of Education curriculum
- Career and Technical Education Pathway

Requirements for the 24-credit standard diploma option:

- Four credits English language arts — English language arts I, II, III, IV.
- Honors, advanced placement, AICE, IB and dual enrollment courses may satisfy this requirement.
- Four credits mathematics
- One credit must be Algebra I and one must be geometry.
- Industry certifications that lead to college credits may substitute for up to two math credits, except Algebra I and geometry.
- Three credits science
- One credit must be Biology I, and two must be equally rigorous science courses.
- Two of the three required credits must have a laboratory component.
- Industry certifications that lead to college credits may substitute for up to one science credit, except for Biology I.
- An identified rigorous computer science course with a related industry certification substitutes for up to one science credit, except for Biology I.
- Three credits social studies
- One credit in World History
- One credit in U.S. History
- 0.5 credit in U.S. Government
- 0.5 credit in economics
- One credit fine and performing arts, speech and debate or practical arts
- One credit physical education — to include the integration of health
- Eligible courses and course substitutions are specified in the Florida Course Code Directory at www.fldoe.org
- Eight elective credits
- Students must earn a 2.0 grade point average on a 4.0 scale.

What are the state assessment requirements?

Students must pass the following statewide assessments:

- Grade 10 ELA or concordant score
- Algebra I end-of-course or a comparative score

Students must participate in the EOC assessments, and the results constitute 30 percent of the final course grade.*

These assessments are in the following subjects:

- Biology I
- U.S. History
- Geometry
- Algebra I (if enrolled)

* Special note: 30 percent not applicable if not enrolled in the course but passed the EOC.

What is the Credit Acceleration Program?

This program allows a student to earn high school credit if the student passes an advanced placement examination, a College Level Examination Program or a statewide course assessment without enrollment in the course.

The courses include the following subjects:

- Algebra I
- Biology I
- U.S. History
- Geometry

What are the graduation requirements for students with disabilities?

Two options are available only to students with disabilities. Both require the 24 credits listed and both allow students to substitute a career and technical course with related content for one credit in English language arts IV, mathematics, science and social studies (excluding Algebra I, geometry, Biology I and U.S. History).

Students with significant cognitive disabilities may earn credits via access courses.

Students who choose the academic and employment option must earn at least 0.5 credit via paid employment.

IMMUNIZATIONS

2023 - 2024 School Entry Requirements

Before attending school in Florida (kindergarten through 12th grade), each child must provide a Form DH 680, Florida Certification of Immunization, documenting the following vaccinations:



Public/Non-Public Schools Kindergarten through 12th Grade:

- Four or five doses of diphtheria-tetanus-pertussis (DTaP) vaccine[‡]
- Three doses of hepatitis B (Hep B) vaccine
- Three, four or five doses of polio (IPV) vaccine^{*}
- Two doses of measles-mumps-rubella (MMR) vaccine
- Two doses of varicella vaccine[†]

Seventh Grade Requirements:

In addition to kindergarten through 12th grade vaccines, students entering or attending seventh grade need following vaccinations:

- One dose of tetanus-diphtheria-pertussis (Tdap) vaccine in grades seven through 12
- An updated DH 680 form to include Tdap, must be obtained for submission to the school

[‡]The fifth dose of DTaP vaccine is not necessary if the fourth dose was administered at age 4 years or older.

^{*}If four or more doses are administered before age 4 years, an additional dose should be administered at age 4 through 6 years and at least six months after the previous dose. A fourth dose is not necessary if the third dose was administered at 4 years or older and at least six months after the previous dose.

[†]Varicella vaccine is not required if varicella disease is documented by the healthcare provider.

Other immunizations that are available but are not mandatory

The HPV- Human Papillomavirus vaccine

- This vaccine is recommended for girls and women 13 to 26 years of age. It is given as a three dose series. The HPV vaccine prevents certain types of cervical cancer in women.

The Menactra vaccine - This vaccine helps prevent meningococcal disease and is available free for school age children 11 and older.

Hepatitis A vaccine — This vaccine helps to prevent Hepatitis A, which is a serious liver disease. It is a two dose series. Recommended age to start is one year old.

Physical Examinations

Along with the immunizations (Blue Cards) to start school, all students need a Physical Examination form, only one in their school career, within a year of entering school for

the first time. Currently this is a gold form and only available from your physician at the time of the examination. There is also a section for the parent to complete regarding medical history.

In the registration packets, each year, there is a Health Information Form (PCDSB Form: E-43) that must be completed and returned to the school health room. Also in the registration packet is the Pupil Information sheet and on the back side, parents need to sign consents for their student to have health screenings, vision, hearing, scoliosis, and weight/heights done.

Routine Eye Exams are also required.

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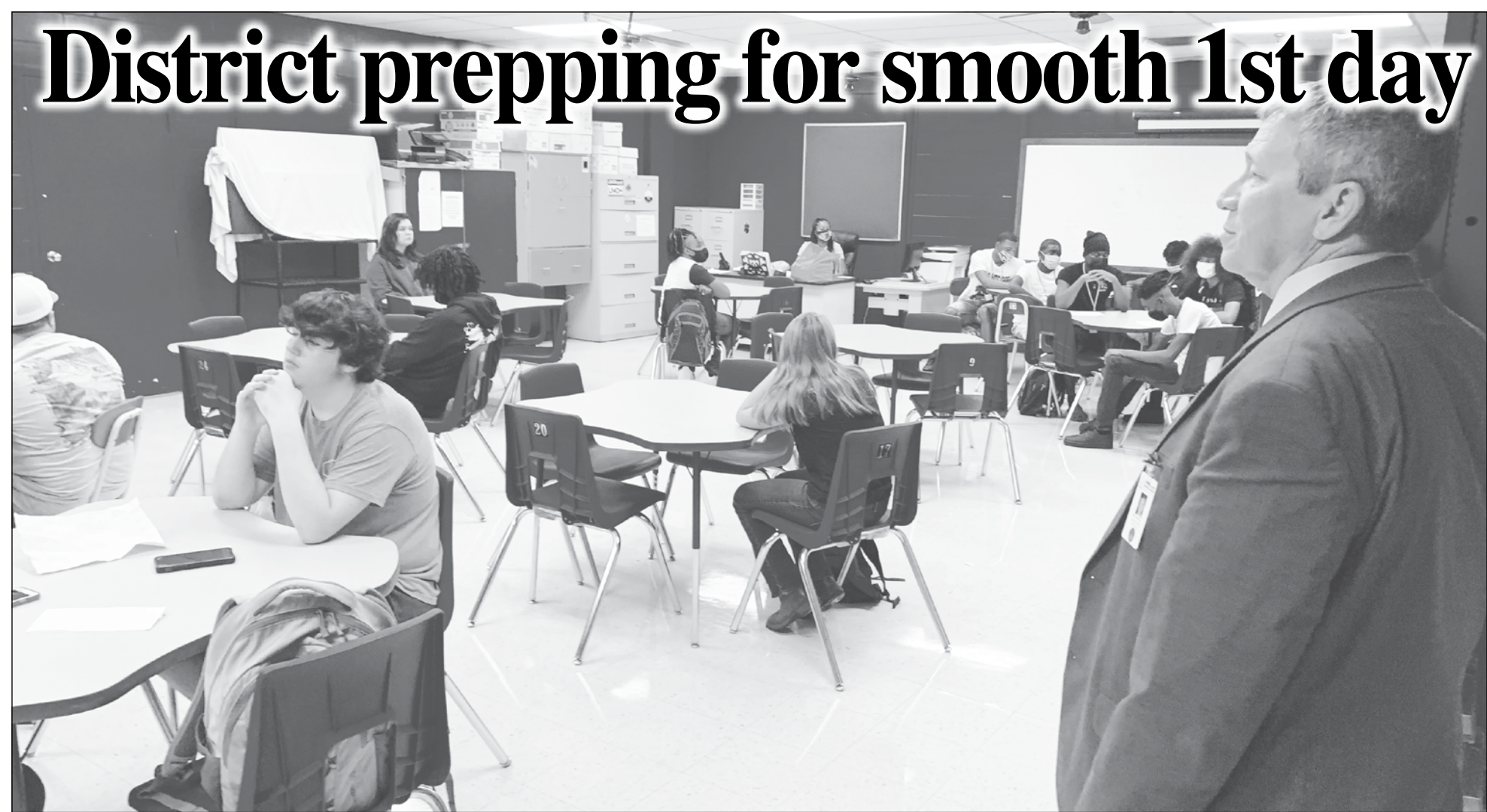


WELCOME BACK!

Let this school year be a canvas for your creativity, a stage for your talents, and a platform for your dreams. Embrace every opportunity and make them count!



District prepping for smooth 1st day



File photos

ABOVE: Superintendent Rick Surrency observes a class in session at Palatka Junior-Senior High School on the first day of the 2021-2022 academic year. **BELOW:** Elementary school students start their first day back to school with a smile.

Superintendent suggests checking school district website for vital info

BY BRANDON D. OLIVER
Palatka Daily News
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The phrase “nothing lasts forever” is a true statement, but given the scenario, people may or may not take comfort in knowing a particular thing ends.

No matter how local students, school employees and parents feel about it, summer break is ending, and Putnam County School District classes will begin in five days.

The first day of class is Aug. 10, and district officials have been spending the summer – and even parts of the previous academic year – getting things in order to ensure a seamless first day for students who will be attending 13 traditional district schools, Putnam Virtual School and two charter schools.

About two weeks ago, Superintendent Rick Surrency said he would be meeting with principals, who would converse with their teachers about how they will go about the upcoming school year.

ing school year.

He said the goal is to make sure everyone in the district is as prepared as possible and to surpass the accomplishments of the previous school year.

“Starting a new school year, we’re just looking forward to this being better than the last year,” Surrency said July 24. “We’ll be meeting with principals next week. The principals will, of course, meet with their teachers on (their) first day.”

The first day of school can be hectic, Surrency said, which is why he is encouraging parents to get their kids registered and meet their teachers at open house events before school begins. He recommended visiting putnamschools.org, especially the “parent information” tab in the menu, to view the school calendar, bus routes, student registration details and other vital information.

“That would just make school run so much smoother,” Surrency said. “These first few days are extremely important.



See 1ST, Page 5

“That would just make school run so much smoother. These first few days are extremely important. That kind of sets the tone for the entire year.”

~ Superintendent Rick Surrency, advising parents to check the district’s website for information before school begins

A Putnam County Sheriff’s Office youth resource officer welcomes children to school on the first day of the 2022-2023 academic year.



Submitted photo

1st

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 4

That kind of sets the tone for the entire year.”

He said the first day of the next school year will involve going over the rules and expectations of the upcoming year. One of the biggest things that will be reviewed, Surrency said, is social media usage.

Earlier this year, the Legislature approved a bill to protect minors on social media. One of the biggest mandates in that law, Surrency said, is that no one is allowed to use TikTok on the school district’s network.

No matter what happens on the first day of school, Surrency just wants everyone to be safe and have a great start to the year. He

knows there could be hiccups during the first day of school – maybe even the first few days – but is confident in school district employees’ ability to handle whatever occurs.

He reiterated the importance of parents checking the school district’s website to make sure they have everything they need before the first bell rings.

He also recommended going to the website of their child’s school to get more specific information.

Surrency said his mission for the first day sounds like a simple one, but it takes astounding coordination between many people to make it happen.

“The first day of school is about getting them to school, getting them fed and getting them back home,” he said. “We don’t want anybody to have a negative experience.”

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WELCOME BACK STUDENTS AND STAFF!

"See you on August 10th!"



On behalf of the Putnam County School District,
I would like to welcome back all of our students
and staff for the 2023-24 School Year.
We are looking forward to a great year!

- Superintendent, Dr. Richard M. Surrency



Metro Creative Graphics

Officials: Online apps pose safety risks to students

By SARAH CAVACINI
Palatka Daily News
scavacini@palatkadailynews.com

Authorities are warning parents about cyber predators targeting young and vulnerable age groups in Putnam County.

As students prepare to head back to school, local officials said parents should not only monitor apps on personal technological devices but also be aware school-related apps can be bad news if misused.



“You don’t need to be your child’s friend,” said

“You don’t need to be your child’s friend. You need to be their parent.”

~ Allison Waters-Merritt, Putnam County Sheriff’s Office spokeswoman

Allison Waters-Merritt, spokeswoman for the Putnam County Sheriff’s Office. “You need to be their parent.”

The law enforcement agency arrested an Interlachen man accused of traveling to Palatka in July after allegedly befriending a 15-year-old

girl on Facebook. He showed up at a Palatka household believing he would meet the 15-year-old only to be stopped by authorities, according to a sheriff’s office incident report.

The top three apps to monitor, Waters-Merritt said, are Facebook, Facebook

Messenger and Snapchat. Other apps to look for are Instagram, TikTok, Discord, Twitter, Reddit and Wattpad.



These apps can be great for sharing artwork or keeping people connected, but private chats can also take place. So don’t allow a child to have their phone or iPad in their room at night, Waters-Merritt suggested.

“They’re not looking at the (phone’s) clock,” she said. “They’re not setting an alarm. Buy an old-fashioned alarm clock if that’s going to

See APPS, Page 8

Apps

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 7

work for you.”

Any time a child has a phone, iPad or laptop behind closed doors, predators could contact them, she added. People can pose as a child or interact as themselves, as agency officials said they saw with the Interlachen suspect.

“One of the biggest things is ... kids just think that they’re in control and if this person says that’s who they are, that’s who they are,” Waters-Merritt said. “Nine times out of 10, they’re not.”

Kids of any age are at risk, she said, adding that she’s seen children as young as 4 watching YouTube on an iPad. She’s also seen young kids on TikTok doing provocative dances even though those kids don’t know they’re provocative.

She suggested using parental controls for devices and designating areas, like a living room or kitchen, for children to use technology.



Sometimes students use technology to communicate for school clubs, sports or homework assignments, but Waters-Merritt suggests par-



ents monitor those groups to know who their children’s friends are.

Putnam County School District Superintendent Rick

Surrency advised parents of young children to not let them on social media sites. He said school officials are limiting the time allowed for phone use so it does not take away from learning.

He also advised students to take caution with what they post on social media.

“Students need to remember that anything they communicate on their device never goes away,” he stated. “Students who plan to go to college or apply for a career position may have their social media reviewed for admission or hiring.”

Surrency is also aware cyberbullying is an alarming trend.

He wants students being bullied and students who know about the bullying to report it to a trusted adult at their school.

“Students who use technology to bully other

students may face criminal charges, especially if they threaten another student,” he stated. “Schools have consequences as well.”

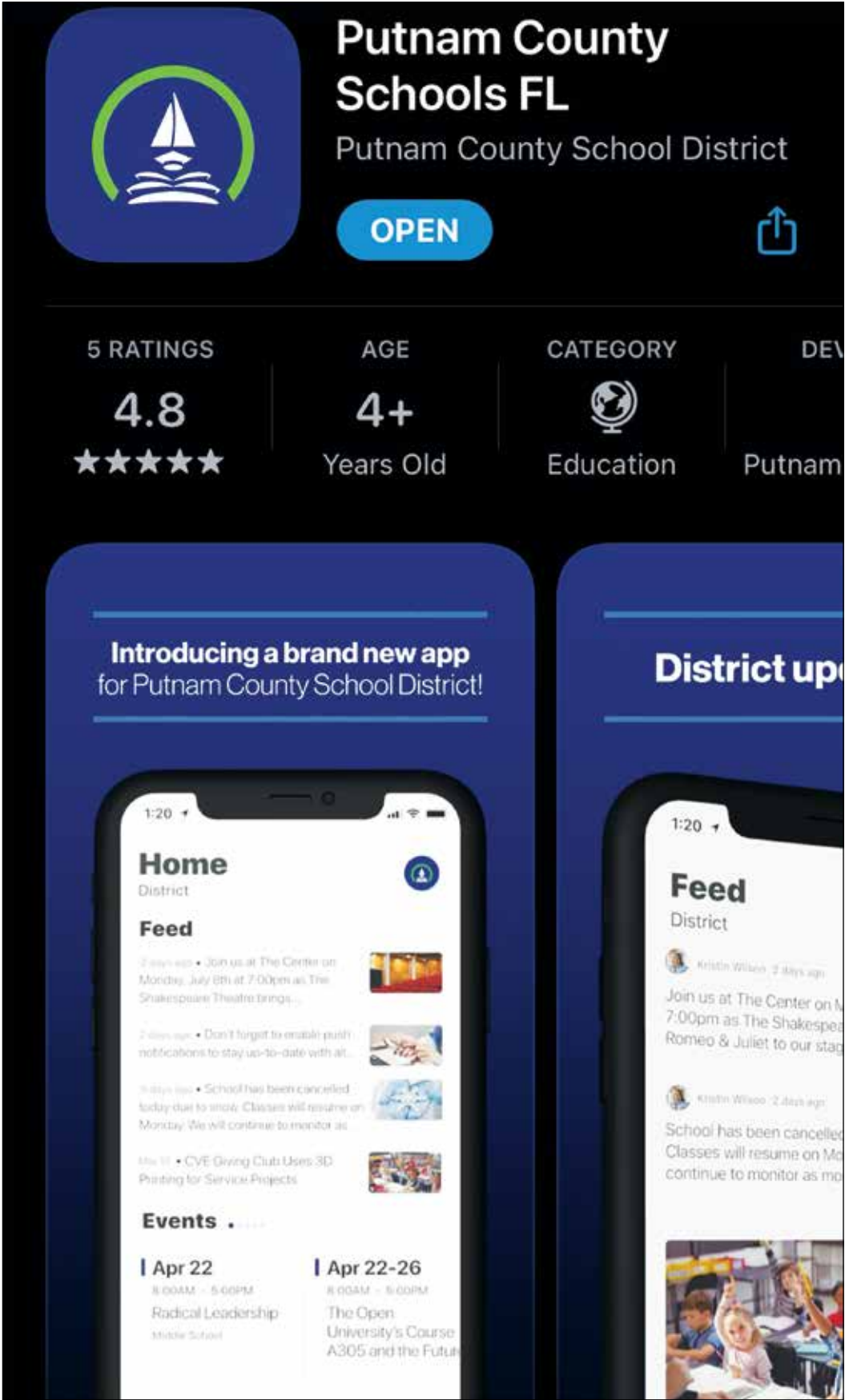


BIG 3 APPS TO MONITOR

- Facebook: App to connect with friends and family as well as join groups related to personal interests. Also a website.
- Facebook Messenger: A messenger app to talk to people from Facebook.
- Snapchat: An app to send pictures to friends. Features 24-hour disappearing conversation and image feature.

Other apps to watch:

- Instagram: Used for posting photos. Side conversations can happen.
- TikTok: Used for posting videos.
- Discord: Primarily for video gamers. Sidebar chats have become more popular.
- Twitter: For sharing thoughts that cannot be edited.
- Wattpad: Used to read books and poetry. Most content is unedited and some can be inappropriate.
- Reddit: Used to discuss hobbies or topics anonymously.



The Putnam County Schools FL mobile app is available to students, parents and school district employees. Safeguards are in place to ensure safe activity on this and other apps needed for scholastic purposes, officials said.

File photo



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All Under One Roof



BRANDON D. OLIVER/Palatka Daily News

Interlachen Junior-Senior High School will house all of its students in one building during the 2023-2024 school year. Despite merging in the 2021-2022 academic year like the other middle and high schools in Putnam County, Interlachen High's seventh and eighth grade students had been attending class in the former Price Middle School building, which sits next door to the high school.

Interlachen students finally combining in one building

By SARAH CAVACINI
Palatka Daily News
scavacini@palatkadailynews.com

Two years after junior and senior high schools merged, Interlachen's seventh and eighth graders will finally attend classes in the same building as their ninth-through-12th counterparts.

After the closure of middle schools throughout Putnam County, students who would have attended Price Middle School have been attending Interlachen Junior-Senior High School.

While Crescent City and Palatka have merged middle and high schools, Interlachen had merged schools in name only, with seventh and eighth graders still attending classes in the Price building and ninth through 12th graders learning in the

Interlachen High building.

Putnam County School District officials say the change will bring unity, but the younger students will still have their own areas in the school.

"We'll have more eyes on the students," said Amber Symonds, Interlachen High's new principal.

In 2021, Superintendent Rick Surrency announced the district's revitalization plan, which called for the shuttering and construction of numerous schools. Starting in the 2021-2022 academic year, elementary schools began teaching kindergarten through sixth grade and the junior-senior high schools housed seventh through 12th grade.

Bryan Helms, the former Interlachen High principal, had to travel back and forth between both campuses, Symonds said. She also said she received feedback from teachers and school employees who believed both schools lacked unity.

"Combining the schools will create that consistency," she said.

Surrency said he's confident Symonds can handle the transition because of her experience working at the district level as well as in elementary and middle schools. Before being named principal in Interlachen, she was employed as an assistant principal at Moseley



File photo

Interlachen Junior-Senior High School graduates stand in anticipation of receiving their diplomas during their commencement ceremony in May.

See **BUILDING**, Page 11



File photo

LEFT: Interlachen Junior-Senior High School JROTC cadets flip tires during a fitness test during the previous school year.

RIGHT: The former Price Middle School building in Interlachen has been where Interlachen High's seventh and eighth graders have been learning for the past two academic years.



BRANDON D. OLIVER/Palatka Daily News

Building

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 10

Elementary School in Palatka.

“Amber has a wealth of experience,” he said. Middle school-age students will experience what high school is like, but there will still be a separation. Seventh and eighth graders will take their

core classes in two hallways separate from their older schoolmates, Symonds said. The school will also use a staggered end-of-day dismissal, she said, and the younger students will have their own lunch period. Leading the last school to combine, Symonds has learned from some of the challenges other Putnam junior-senior high schools have faced. The Interlachen High layout is similar to that of Crescent City Junior-Senior High School, and Symonds said she walked the South Putnam

school with Principal Tim Adams to plan the upcoming year in Interlachen. The Price Middle School campus will still be used for staff meetings, and the gym will be used for school sports, she added. Parents can meet teachers at 4 p.m. Aug. 8 at Interlachen High, 126 County Road 315. Schedule pickup will immediately follow. Symonds said teachers and district officials have been on-campus almost every day this summer in preparation for the upcoming

school year. Teachers from the Price campus are moving next door with excitement, said Symonds, who hopes parents and students share in that excitement as the new year begins. She also would like parents to stay involved and reach out to school employees to help. Surrency thinks the change will open up doors to younger students. Symonds is just ready for them to come back. “Be ready to learn,” she said. “That’s why we’re here.”



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VISIT
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Snapshots From Across the County



File photos

Students, standing with event sponsors, hold certificates and trophies immediately after the Putnam County Spelling Bee in January.



ABOVE and BELOW: Sixth graders at Browning-Pearce Elementary School stomps on an Unruly Splats pad during a STEM program.



Q.I. Roberts Junior-Senior High School students listen to a speaker in the campus library to celebrate the school's 20th anniversary in March.



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Metro Creative Graphics

Transfer students can work with their guidance counselors to make the transition to a new school go smoothly.

Strategies to help transfer students adjust to a new school

A new school year presents a wealth of opportunities for incoming students. Students returning to the same school can build upon the previous year's successes, while students transitioning from elementary school to middle school or middle school to high school can embrace the excitement and accept the challenges posed by continuing on their academic journeys.

It's not uncommon for all students to experience some first day jitters, but that nervous excitement might be especially pronounced for transfer students. The transition to a new school is made simpler for many students because they make it alongside classmates they've known for years. Transfer students have

no such security blanket, but can embrace the following strategies as they prepare to begin the school year in a whole new environment.

■ **Attend student orientation sessions.** Orientation sessions can benefit any student, but may be especially useful for transfer students. Orientation sessions typically include a campus tour, a rundown of both academic and social activities and a chance to meet the school staff, including teachers and coaches. Transfer students who attend these sessions also may meet fellow classmates, who typically serve as guides on campus tours or in other capacities which requires them to interact with session attendees. This can be a great opportunity to connect with individuals who could serve as a

familiar face come the first day of school.

■ **Schedule a visit with a guidance counselor.** Guidance counselors can be invaluable resources for transfer students. Parents can come along and discuss the student's interests in a direct conversation with a counselor, who can fill the family in on all that's available on campus. That can include academics and extracurricular activities.

■ **Dive in socially.** Though it's not always easy to transfer to a new school that already has its own social networks, the best way to meet new people is to make a concerted effort to engage socially. Student-athletes may have an advantage because the team atmosphere provides a ready-made social network. However, extracurricular clubs also provide that benefit

and do so without the added pressure of competing for a spot on a team.

■ **Don't go it alone.** Students should recognize that the transition is not something they need to do on their own. If students transferred because their family moved, then others in the family, including parents, are likely to experience their own ups and downs as well. Speak with parents and siblings if the transition does not get off to a smooth start. Such openness can open the door to new strategies and help to alleviate some of the stress that can accompany a transition to a new school.

A new school year can be a nervous time for transfer students. However, various strategies can help to make the transition go more smoothly.

PITCHING IN FOR A GOOD CAUSE



Boxes of school supplies were collected in the summer of 2022 to donate to schools throughout Putnam County.

Putnam County School District Calendar 2023-2024

Aug. 10, 2023	First Day for Students
Sept. 4, 2023	Labor Day
	Student/Teacher Holiday
Sept. 26, 2023	2-Hour Early Release**
Oct. 9 – 13, 2023	FTE Week for Student Attendance
Oct. 13, 2023	End of First Nine Weeks
Oct. 16, 2023	District In-Service / Student Holiday
Oct. 17, 2023	Planning Day/Student Holiday
Oct. 24, 2023	2-Hour Early Release**
Nov. 10, 2023	Veterans Day
	Student/Teacher Holiday
Nov. 18 – 26, 2023	Thanksgiving Holidays
	Student/Teacher Holidays
Nov. 28, 2023	2-Hour Early Release**
Dec. 21, 2023	2-Hour Early Release**
Dec. 22, 2023 – Jan. 7, 2024	Winter Holidays
	Student/Teacher Holiday
Jan. 8, 2024	Teacher Planning Day / Student Holiday
Jan. 9, 2024	District In-Service / Student Holiday
Jan. 10, 2024	School Resumes
Jan. 12, 2024	End of Second Nine Weeks/End of First Semester
Jan. 15, 2024	Martin Luther King Jr. Birthday
	Student/Teacher Holiday
Jan. 23, 2024	2-Hour Early Release**
Feb. 5 – 9, 2024	FTE Week for Student Attendance
Feb. 19, 2024	Presidents' Day
	Student/Teacher Holiday
Feb. 27, 2024	2-Hour Early Release**
March 16 - 24, 2024	Spring Break Holiday
	Student/Teacher Holiday
March 21, 2024	School Resumes
March 26, 2024	2-Hour Early Release**
March 27, 2024	End of Third Nine Weeks
March 28, 2024	Planning Day/Student Holiday
March 29, 2024	Good Friday, Student /Teacher Holiday
April 23, 2024	2-Hour Early Release**
May 27, 2024	Memorial Day
	Student/Teacher Holiday
May 30, 2024	1/2 Day/Early Release Day
May 31, 2024	Last Day for Students/Early Release Day

1st Nine Weeks - Ending Oct. 13, 2023	2nd Nine Weeks - Ending Jan. 12, 2024
Posting of Grades - Oct. 18, 2023	Posting of Grades - Jan. 18, 2024
Report Cards Distributed - Oct. 20, 2023	Report Cards Distributed - Jan. 22, 2024
3rd Nine Weeks - Ending March 27, 2024	** 2-hour Early release time will be used to make up time needed in case of school closures.
Posting of Grades - April 02, 2024	If more time is needed, those days will be determined at that time.
Report Cards Distributed -April 04, 2024	

Putnam County School District Early Release Times 2023-2024

	Opening	2 Hour Monthly Early Release	Half Day Early Release (5/30 -5/31)
PALATKA AREA			
Browning-Pearce Elementary	7:50 a.m.	12:35 p.m.	11:20 a.m.
James A. Long Elementary	7:50 a.m.	12:35 p.m.	11:20 a.m.
Mellon Learning Center	7:35 a.m.	12:20 p.m.	11:00 a.m.
Pre-K	7:35 a.m.	12:20 p.m.	11:00 a.m.
Moseley Elementary	7:50 a.m.	12:35 p.m.	11:20 a.m.
Kelley Smith Elementary	7:50 a.m.	12:35 p.m.	11:20 a.m.
Palatka Jr-Sr High	9:00 a.m.	1:45 p.m.	12:30 p.m.
Children's Reading Center Charter School	8:30 a.m.	12:45 p.m.	11:30 a.m.
Putnam Academy of Arts & Sciences	9:00 a.m.	1:30 p.m.	12:15 p.m.
WEST PUTNAM AREA			
Robert H. Jenkins, Jr Elementary	7:50 a.m.	12:35 p.m.	11:20 p.m.
Ochwilla Elementary	7:50 a.m.	12:35 p.m.	11:20 p.m.
Melrose Elementary	7:50 a.m.	12:35 p.m.	11:20 p.m.
Q.I. Roberts Jr-Sr High	9:00 a.m.	1:45 p.m.	12:30 p.m.
Interlachen Jr-Sr High	9:00 a.m.	1:45 p.m.	12:30 p.m.
SOUTH PUTNAM AREA			
Middleton-Burney Elementary	7:50 a.m.	12:35 p.m.	11:20 a.m.
Crescent City Jr-Sr High	9:00 a.m.	1:45 p.m.	12:30 p.m.

Celebrating the Class of 2023



File photos

Putnam Virtual School graduates prepare to receive their diplomas during their graduation ceremony in May at the Putnam County School District headquarters in Palatka.



Interlachen Junior-Senior High School graduates wave to their families and friends sitting in the audience during the school's commencement ceremony in May.



A Crescent City Junior-Senior High School graduate talks with one of the school's administrators after receiving his diploma at his commencement ceremony in May.



A woman cheers enthusiastically as one of her loved ones marches onto the field at the Palatka Junior-Senior High School graduation ceremony in May.

PARENT GUIDE

Apps to Watch



TOP TWO CONCERNS FOR KIDS/TEENS

1. FACEBOOK MESSENGER
2. SNAPCHAT

Facebook Messenger and Snapchat are the **primary methods** sex solicitation occurs among **minors** in **Putnam** County. Snapchat “promises” that photos disappear, but there are always screen-shots.

THE REST OF THE LIST

INSTAGRAM, DISCORD, TIK TOK, KIK, YOUTUBE, REDDIT, FACEBOOK, TWITTER AND MORE!

The list grows every day as new apps become available. Most of the ones listed have **limited privacy controls**, no filters or limited filters on **inappropriate** content, the ability to **hide** content from parents, may allow video sharing and can create **bullying** issues, **suicidal** ideation and **hate speech**. There are new variations being created as well such as Threads that we don't know the implications yet. However, all of the apps listed our detectives have investigated in **local cases**.

WHAT CAN YOU DO?

1. Monitor you student's social media accounts.
2. Know who they are talking to online.
3. Do not allow phones, tablets, computers in rooms at night!
4. For younger children, have a designated area in the house for computers and social media.
5. IF SOMETHING FEELS SUSPICIOUS, LET US KNOW!

Non-emergency line - 386-329-0800

Working together to keep our kids safe!



File photos

A weightlifter from Palatka Junior-Senior High School participates in a meet in 2022.

How to help student-athletes balance academics and athletics

The rigors of academia demand every student's utmost devotion. For some, the challenges in the classroom are accompanied by the thrill of competition on the playing fields. Multi-tasking may be most associated with modern professionals, but many might have learned how to balance multiple responsibilities at once during their days as student-athletes.

Student-athletes typically have a lot on their plates. Managing multiple priorities at once can overwhelm anyone, especially young student-athletes without much experience handling such a juggling act. As a new school year begins, student-athletes can consider these strategies as they try to do their best in the classroom and on the competitive playing fields.

■ Practice time management over the summer. Summer vacation provides a much-needed respite for all students, but it also can serve as a time management trial run for student-athletes. Over the course of summer break, create a schedule of activities and allot a certain amount of time to devote to each. In the spirit of summer vacation, these activities need not be rigorous, but the schedule can lay the foundation for the

hopefully successful management of time that will be necessary when the school year begins.

■ Take steps to avoid burnout. Burnout can affect student-athletes in the classroom and on the field. Work with parents, coaches and school staff, including a nutritionist if one works for the school's athletic department, to devise a meal plan that will help to energize the body and reduce injury risk. In addition, follow a consistent sleep schedule that helps to overcome mental and physical fatigue. According to guidelines from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, teenagers between the ages of 13 and 18 should sleep eight to 10 hours each night.

■ Avoid distractions. Student-athletes who are finding it hard to get at least eight hours of sleep each night might be too distracted during the day to get everything done so they can go to bed at a reasonable hour. Smartphones ensure distractions are never too far away, but student-athletes can take a proactive approach and turn off app notifications once a new



A wrestler from Interlachen Junior-Senior High School gets the upper hand on an opponent in January.

See **ATHLETICS**, Page 20



Apple 10.2" 9th Gen iPad

122935

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SAMSUNG

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123281

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\$349



HP 15.6" Touch Laptop

124141

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\$699



Acer 17.3" Laptop

123279

Intel i3 Processor, 8GB RAM/1 TB HDD. Windows 11 Home, Webcam w/mic, Bluetooth / WI-FI, Up to 7 hr battery life, HD + 1600 x 900 resolution, HDMI, 3 USB, headphone/speaker jack/LAN, High-brightness LED backlight display, Intel UHD Graphics, Ultra-Slim design/Narrow bezel

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104659

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What parents can do to be more involved at school

Parents can make every effort to encourage children to make the most of the school experience, including academics and extracurricular activities. Though students' level of engagement is ultimately up to them, parental involvement at school can be crucial for students' success.

According to the National Education Council, when parents get involved in their children's education, those children are more likely to do better in school and be more positive about the school experience. They also may be well-behaved. Parents wondering what they can do to assist at the school level can consider these possibilities.

ATTEND SCHOOL BOARD MEETINGS

Many community school boards are comprised entirely of volunteers who work with superintendents and other personnel to advocate for policies and procedures for students. Decisions typically are up for vote, and parents can run for school board positions or simply attend meetings each month and let their voices be heard about various issues.

ATTEND OPEN HOUSES AND CONFERENCES

Parents can make every effort to get to know teachers and other staff. Putting faces to names can help parents develop a connection to teachers and vice versa. Most schools have back to school nights, meet the coaches

opportunities, open houses, and parent-teacher conferences. Parents can take part in these events.

OPEN LINES OF COMMUNICATION

Parents can ask teachers and other staff how they prefer to communicate. Some teachers want students to take the lead and reach out first, with parents providing support if need be. Adults can be responsive when teachers reach out.

ATTEND SCHOOL EVENTS

Families can make it a point to support students in all endeavors. Whenever the opportunity to visit the school comes up — whether for a concert, sports game, trivia night, or fundraiser — parents can make an effort to attend.

VOLUNTEER

When parents want to be involved even further, they can head committees at school or volunteer with the PTA or PTO. They also can help out in the cafeteria, library or in the main office. Parents who have particular skills may volunteer to provide tutoring or mentoring as needed. Furthermore, parents can volunteer in school-sanctioned extracurriculars, such as Scouts BSA or as sports coaches.

Involvement in school is part of being an informed and supportive parent.



Metro Creative Graphics

File photo

A Palatka Junior-Senior High School tennis player prepares to hit a forehand during a match in 2022.

Athletics

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 18

school year and season begins. In addition, pick a quiet homework/study room in the house without distractions like a television or the hum of outside noise.

■ Set academic and athletic goals. Coaches typically establish goals for players before the season and then again during end-of-season exit interviews. Such goals can help athletes maintain their motivation, and a similar strategy can be employed in the classroom. Parents and student-athletes can meet with teachers to establish study goals to keep them striving toward academic achievement. Clearly defined goals can improve student-athletes' focus, and that can make it easier to balance their responsibilities.

Student-athletes face a balancing act once a new school year or season begins. Various strategies can help young people successfully juggle their academic and athletic obligations.

Essay-writing tips to assist students this year



Photos courtesy of Metro Creative Graphics



Students face a number of challenges during their academic careers. Those challenges are unique to each student, as some excel in certain subjects that their classmates find difficult, and vice versa.

At some point in their academic careers, students will be asked to write an essay. University applications typically feature student essay portions, but essays are even incorporated into elementary school curricula. Indeed, students of all ages are periodically asked to write essays, which underscores how useful some basic essay-writing tips can be.

■ **Identify the assignment.** Essays run the gamut from personal essays to papers on historical figures to precis on particular texts. Before students can write an effective, engrossing essay, they must first identify what's being asked of them. Does the instructor want students to argue a point? Is the idea to examine a meaningful personal experience? Is the essay similar to a book report? Once the ball gets rolling and writing begins, it's easy to lose track of the assignment. But an effective essay must follow the guidelines set forth in the assignment. Students can routinely read the assignment provided by the instructor so they stay the course.

■ **Identify the point of the essay.** Once students gain a firm grasp of what the instructor is looking for, they can then identify what their point of view or argument will be. This can require some research and should conclude with a thesis statement that will determine the rest of the essay.

■ **Write an outline.** Outlines can help frame the essay and keep writers on track. An outline also serves as a time for writers to determine what to keep and what to omit from an essay. Longer essays typically require ample research, and it's unlikely that all of that research will make it into the final essay. Writing an outline provides a chance to narrow the scope of the essay and cut it down, which should prove useful when sitting down to begin writing the composition.

■ **Engage readers early.** An engaging question or assertion at the beginning of an essay will entice readers to want to continue reading. The question should be one writers can answer while an assertion should be supported throughout the rest of the essay. But some engaging prose in the opening paragraphs can draw readers in and set the stage for a well-written essay.

■ **Begin each paragraph with a topic sentence.** Topic sentences

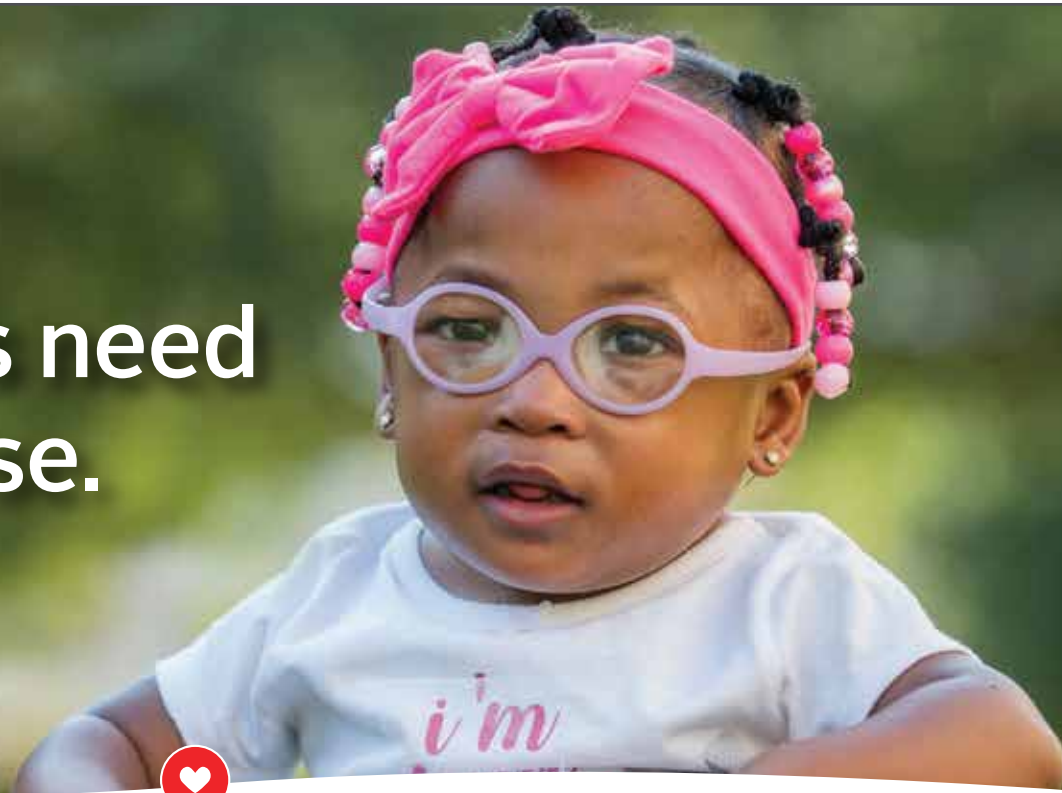
are similar to outlines because they establish the structure of a paragraph. Each new paragraph should include its own topic sentence. If a new topic needs to be addressed, then do so in a new paragraph. Paragraphs should flow into each other, but writers should avoid introducing more than one topic in a single paragraph.

■ **Write a strong conclusion.** The thesis statement will help to

define the introductory paragraph, and it also can be utilized to establish the conclusion. Revisit the thesis in the conclusion and show how the points made throughout the body of the essay support that thesis. Conclude the essay with a statement that highlights the significance of the point the essay attempted to make.

Students of all ages write essays. Some basic writing tips can help students master those assignments.

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School List *and Hours*

ELEMENTARY SCHOOLS

Browning-Pearce Elementary School

7:50 a.m. – 2:35 p.m.

Grades K – 6

Yolanda Brady, Principal
Molly Jackson, Assistant Principal
100 Bear Blvd.
San Mateo, FL 32187
Phone: 386-329-0557

James A. Long Elementary School

7:50 a.m. – 2:35 p.m.

Grades K – 6

Beth Nelson, Principal
Jennifer Wilbur, Assistant Principal
1400 Old Jacksonville Highway
Palatka, FL 32177
Phone: 386-329-0575

Kelley Smith Elementary School

7:50 a.m. – 2:35 p.m.

Grades K – 6

Mike Tucker, Principal
Joni Burnett, Assistant Principal
141 Kelley Smith School Road
Palatka, FL 32177
Phone: 386-329-0568

Melrose Elementary School

7:50 a.m. – 2:35 p.m.

Grades Pre-K – 6

Leah Lundy, Principal
Tammie Valentine, Assistant Principal
401 State Road 26
Melrose, FL 32666
Phone: 352-475-2060

Middleton-Burney Elementary School

7:50 a.m. – 2:35 p.m.

Grades Pre-K – 6

Tiffany Scranton, Principal
Tina Gilyard, Assistant Principal
Stephanie Reed, Assistant Principal
1020 Huntington Road
Crescent City, FL 32112
Phone: 386-698-1238

Ochwilla Elementary School

7:50 a.m. – 2:35 p.m.

Grades Pre-K – 6

Beth Leary, Principal
Dr. John Shelby, Assistant Principal
299 North State Road 21
Hawthorne, FL 32640
Phone: 352-481-0204

Robert H. Jenkins, Jr. Elementary School

7:50 a.m. – 2:35 p.m.

Grades Pre-K – 6

Paula Adams, Principal
Vanessa Champion, Assistant Principal
251 South State Road 315
Interlachen, FL 32148
Phone: 386-684-2130

William D. Moseley Elementary School

7:50 a.m. – 2:35 p.m.

Grades K – 6

Chris Lee, Principal
Aeron McNeill, Assistant Principal
1100 Husson Ave.
Palatka, FL 32177
Phone: 386-329-0562

JUNIOR-SENIOR HIGH SCHOOLS

Crescent City Junior-Senior High School

9 a.m. – 3:45 p.m.

Grades 7 – 12

Tim Adams, Principal
Rodney Symonds, Vice Principal
Aaron Gieselman, Assistant Principal
Dr. Rachael Schofield, Assistant Principal
Belinda Taylor, Assistant Principal
2201 South Highway 17
Crescent City, FL 32112
Phone: 386-698-1629
Interlachen Junior-Senior

High School

9 a.m. – 3:45 p.m.

Grades 7 – 12

Amber Symonds, Principal
Ted Haengel, Vice Principal
John D. Thompson, Assistant Principal
Maeghan Morris, Assistant Principal
Tammie Thornton, Assistant Principal
126 North State Road 315
Interlachen, FL 32148
Phone: 386-684-2116

Palatka Junior-Senior High School

9 a.m. – 3:45 p.m.

Grades 7 – 12

Cathy Oyster, Principal
Michael Chaires, Assistant Principal
Joy Eubanks, Assistant Principal
Lamar Purifoy, Assistant Principal
Cindy Bellamy, Assistant Principal
302 Mellon Road
Palatka, FL 32177
Phone: 386-329-0577

Q.I. Roberts Junior-Senior High School

9 a.m. – 3:45 p.m.

Cambridge Advanced Studies
Grades 7 – 12

Joseph Theobald, Principal
Sharice Williams, Assistant Principal
901 State Road 100
Florahome, FL 32140
Phone: 386-659-1737

COMBINATION

Mellon Learning Center

7:35 a.m. – 2:20 p.m.

Grades Pre-K – 12

Tracy Taylor, Principal
Lucas Bennett, Assistant Principal
156 Horseman Club Road
Palatka, FL 32177
Phone: 386-329-0595



CHARTER SCHOOLS

Children's Reading Center Charter School

8:30 a.m. – 2:45 p.m.

Grades K – 6

Jacqueline England, Principal
7901 St. Johns Ave.
Palatka, FL 32177
Phone: 386-328-9990

Putnam Academy of Arts and Sciences

9 a.m. – 3:30 p.m.

Grades 6 – 8

Curtis Ellis, Director
301 South Palm Avenue
Palatka, FL 32177
Phone: 386-326-4212

VIRTUAL SCHOOL

Putnam Virtual School

200 Reid Street

Palatka, Florida 32177
386-329-0532
Mary Wood, Principal

PRIVATE SCHOOL

Peniel Academy

VPK-6 grade – 8 a.m.–2:35 p.m.

Grades 7-8 – 7:45 a.m.–2:40 p.m.

Grades 9-12 – 7:50 a.m.–2:50 p.m.

Bill Evans, Administrator
Rebecca Ellison, Assistant Principal
Joyce Wilson, Pre-K Administrator
110 Peniel Church Road, Palatka, FL 32177
Phone: 386-328-1707

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