

Pelham FOCUS

A PUBLICATION OF THE PELHAM BOARD OF EDUCATION

WINTER 2017



Dear Residents,

Our schools are busy places and we derive a lot of good energy from that. Our work around the four pillars of the Strategic Plan has helped keep us on a path of continuous improvement.

As a learning community we have embraced the concept that social-emotional learning is as important as academic achievement, and this edition of FOCUS seeks to highlight our progress in that area. When our students are engaged, connected and confident, their window of opportunity for academic achievement is elevated. Mindfulness is a term that describes a state that enables us to focus deeply on our thoughts and emotions within a given moment in time. By teaching these skills directly, we are equipping our students with skills and strategies that will better enable them to self-regulate, problem-solve more efficiently, and deal with the ups and downs of their academic, social, and physical growth and development. There is no doubt that in addition to social pressures, there are stressors resulting from our commitments

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An Update on Social-Emotional Development



Hutchinson third graders in Ms. Joanne Ragosta's class practice mindfulness techniques as part of the School Yoga Project.

Over the last several years, the District, under the leadership of Assistant Superintendent for Pupil Personnel Services Rosemary Matthews, has worked hard to systemically implement the action steps of Pillar 3 in the five-year Strategic Plan, which focuses on the social-emotional development and wellness of the whole child.

While there remains much work to do, we are pleased to report that there is some very real progress evident this school year.

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within school, work, home, and outside interests. We can't absolve ourselves or our students from all of our stressors, but we can certainly build skills and strategies to manage them in healthy, productive ways.

I recently presented the Board of Education with my preliminary budget for the 2017-2018 academic year. The budget maintains all of our current programs and preserves favorable class sizes across the District. For many years, the Pelham Schools have discussed ways to incorporate foreign language instruction into the elementary program. I'm pleased to report that, upon the recommendation of the World Language Task Force, this budget would introduce the instruction of Spanish in grade 2 next year. We would then seek to expand through grade 5 over several years. In addition, I'm excited about the proposed expansion of the academic program in mathematics and Mandarin Chinese to level 3 at PMHS, the addition of AP Computer Science, the continuation and extension of the School Yoga Project, and the addition of boys' varsity swimming.

Pelham Middle School is poised to become authorized as an International Baccalaureate World School in the fall and PMHS continues to study and build their capacity for implementation in grades 9 and 10. I extend my gratitude to our faculty and staff for their very fine work.

Finally, as many of you know, I have submitted my resignation from Pelham, effective August 16, 2017 and have accepted a position as Superintendent for the North Shore Schools on Long Island. While I'm excited for the opportunity, I'm admittedly sad to leave the Pelham Schools. We will remain proud Pelham residents and parents and I look forward to sharing in our future successes as a community with all of you. I have assured the Board a smooth and productive transition and look forward to closing the year with the same strength with which we opened. On behalf of the entire administration, faculty, and staff, I thank you for providing us this incredible opportunity to share in this partnership for the sole benefit of the children we serve.



Sincerely,
Peter Giarrizzo, Ed. D.
Superintendent of Schools

We would like to highlight two specific initiatives that are very exciting for the District:

★ The School Yoga Project

★ Identifying a Trusted Adult

Thanks to a grant from the Pelham Education Foundation, we are piloting the School Yoga Project in our special education classes and in our first and third grade general education classes. Our teachers have attended professional development sessions with Mayuri Gonzalez, Director of the School Yoga Project, and are incorporating these exercises into their classrooms. This innovative program uses yoga and mindfulness practices to help students regulate their physical, mental and emotional stress. While we will continue to monitor how the project unfolds over the rest of the year, we are already seeing positive results such as students suggesting calming techniques to their peers and teachers showing enthusiasm for new techniques. We are hopeful that we can expand this program in the coming years and have proposed funding in the 2017-18 budget to do just that.

Another important aspect of Pillar 3 is ensuring that each student can identify at least one adult in their building whom they feel they can trust. While the premise sounds simple, putting this plan into action is anything but. Each of the school principals is approaching this work in different ways and all are making progress. For children across our school system, the pressure can be difficult and come from a variety of places, such as homework, social-life and anxiety, and managing those pressures can be very difficult. It is common for our children to be over-stimulated, over-structured, and over-scheduled. By making sure that every student has someone they can talk to, we can find ways to help students deal with their stress and promote more positive outcomes. We believe that this work will also help ensure that all students feel comfortable and welcome within their schools, which in turn will make them better equipped to learn.

The School Yoga Project and Trusted Adult initiatives are consistent with our approach of teaching lifelong skills that students can use to help relieve stress not only during their time in the Pelham schools, but for the remainder of their lives.

On the Web

You may have noticed that in the fall, we launched a new and improved District website (pelhamschools.org). Over the past several months, we have been working to refine and reorganize the site to better communicate and be more open and transparent with the community. Here are some highlights to check out:

- ◆ A reorganized page for Board of Education documents and reports (pelhamschools.org/board_of_education_reports)
- ◆ A one-stop shop to review our budgets and financial reports (pelhamschools.org/budgets_finance)
- ◆ The latest information about the Hutchinson School Façade project (pelhamschools.org/hutchinson_school_facade)

Throughout the course of the year, we will continue to make updates and improvements. We also encourage you to check out our Facebook page (search: Pelham School District), and follow Dr. Giarrizzo on Twitter: @PeterGiarrizzo.

2017-18 Proposed Budget at a Glance

On Feb. 7, Superintendent Dr. Peter Giarrizzo presented his preliminary 2017-18 budget to the Board of Education. Over the next several weeks, the Board will review and revise the budget in preparation for the community-wide budget referendum on May 16. Below are some highlights of the budget and a schedule of budget meetings. Please note that the budget is subject to change throughout the review process.

CLASS SIZE:

- ✓ Maintains favorable class sizes by adding staff to address growing enrollment at PMHS
- ✓ Includes funds for 11 sections of Kindergarten (same as 2016-17)

NEW PROGRAMMING:

- ✓ Adds Spanish to elementary curriculum starting in Grade 2
- ✓ Expands Mandarin Chinese program by offering Mandarin 3 at PMHS
- ✓ Funds continuation of School Yoga Project & other projects recommended by the Wellness Oversight Committee
- ✓ Offers new high school courses in Integrated Algebra, Applied Statistics, AP Computer Science and Calculus
- ✓ Supports addition of boys' varsity swimming team and JV cross country coach

TOTAL
\$72,794,000
STATE MANDATED TAX
CAP
2.14 %
TAX LEVY INCREASE
1.98%

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT:

- ✓ Provides funds for International Baccalaureate training for middle and high school staff

FACILITIES:

- ✓ Targets critical infrastructure projects through \$750,000 allocation in budget
- ✓ Addresses upgrades to Friendship Field through Capital Reserve
- ✓ Purchases new science lab equipment for middle school.

BUDGET SCHEDULE

Budget Review:
Community Services,
General Support,
Transportation,
Instruction, Special
Ed., Guidance and
Athletics

March 28

Budget Review:
Facilities, Benefits,
Fund Balance and
Debt Service

April 4

April 18 Board of Education
Budget Adoption

May 2 Public Hearing on
Adopted Budget

**Annual Budget
Referendum and
Board of Education
Elections**

May 16

All meetings are open to the public and begin at 8:15 pm in the PMS Library, located on the second floor of Pelham Middle School, 28 Franklin Place, Pelham, NY 10803. To view live or archived meetings, please visit pelhamschools.org and click the 'Viewing School Board Meetings' link under 'Board of Education' and 'Meetings.'

AN UPDATE FROM THE WORLD LANGUAGE TASK FORCE

Board of Education Liaison: Madeline Smith

Task Force Co-Chairs: Assistant Superintendent Dr. Steven M. Garcia and **World Language Supervisor:** Angela Calvelli

After careful study and review over the past two years, the World Language Task Force recommended that Spanish should be added to the elementary school curriculum.

Research has shown that beginning instruction of a world language at an early age helps students to better retain their language skills, develop empathy, and obtain a better understanding of foreign cultures and ideas. It also fosters more creativity, better problem-solving skills and promotes greater cognitive flexibility.

After much consideration, including site visits to neighboring school districts, the Task Force decided that the Foreign Language Elementary School (FLES) program is best suited for Pelham. The curriculum can be seamlessly integrated into current programming and does not cut into learning time for other subjects. Instead, students would work with both a Spanish teacher and their regular classroom teacher for 30-minute sessions three times each cycle.

This method allows Spanish instruction to complement the normal curriculum. For example, students may practice counting, addition and subtraction in both Spanish and English.

Following the recommendation of the Task Force, Superintendent Dr. Peter Giarrizzo included funds in his preliminary budget to hire one FLES teacher for the 2017-18 school year. The program would begin for all second graders next year with the anticipation that additional teachers will be hired in subsequent years to expand the program through fifth grade.

If additional funds become available, Dr. Giarrizzo and the Board of Education have discussed the possibility of adding a second teacher into the budget for the 2017-18 school year that would allow the program to begin in both second and third grades next year.

¡excelencia!

A NOTE REGARDING DR. GIARRIZZO'S RESIGNATION

The Board of Education was saddened to learn that Superintendent Dr. Peter Giarrizzo has resigned effective August 16 to take a position with the North Shore Central School District on Long Island.

We are grateful to Dr. Giarrizzo for his hard work and strong leadership during his six years with the District, four of which he served as superintendent. His vision, and the dedication of our teachers, staff and administration, has helped make Pelham one of the highest achieving districts in the state and the nation. As a result of these efforts, we are well positioned to carry on our tradition of academic excellence for all students.

The Board is in the initial stages of the search process and has requested proposals from professional search firms to partner with us in recruiting superintendent candidates. We anticipate selecting a firm within the next few weeks and will then share more details about the search process. We look forward to engaging with the community about this important decision throughout the search process.

Hiring a superintendent is one of the most important tasks charged to the Board of Education and it is important that we choose not only a highly-qualified candidate, but one that is a strong match for the community. To that end, the Board is prepared to appoint an interim superintendent should the search extend beyond the start of the next school year.

Throughout the transition we will continue conducting the work of the District and are confident in our experienced administrative team, including our Assistant Superintendents Steven Garcia and Rosemary Matthews, our Interim Business Official Linda Purvis and our building principals and program directors. Together, we will continue striving to provide the best possible education for our students.

Sincerely,
The Board of Education

BOND UPDATE

The Board of Education is planning a bond referendum for fall 2017 to replace the Hutchinson School brick façade, which is estimated to cost about \$8.5 million. Additionally, the Board is discussing other capital improvements that could be included in the bond, such as:

- Replacing the portables at Hutchinson School with permanent classrooms
- Increasing handicapped accessibility to our elementary schools
- Installing new boilers at the elementary and high schools
- Replacing aging air conditioning units at the Middle School
- Building cafeterias/ multi-purpose space at our elementary schools
- Improving school-owned athletic and recreational facilities
- Adding air conditioning to the elementary schools and high school

Before deciding which projects to include, the Board will obtain detailed cost estimates and seek input from our administration, building principals, facilities staff and the community at large.

The Board is conscious of the potential tax impact on our residents and will carefully weigh the benefits of any possible capital improvements before settling on a final proposal. We look forward to sharing more details with the community in the coming weeks.

Jump Rope for Heart



Fourth and fifth graders across all four elementary schools raised more than \$23,000 for the American Heart Association through the annual Jump Rope for Heart fundraiser. Each year, the schools' physical education teachers organize the event, in which students collect sponsors and donations before jumping rope to raise funds and awareness. The money that is raised goes to help children with heart-health issues. In addition to the fundraiser, the students develop healthy habits and learn about the value of community service.

WISHING YOU FAREWELL

Four respected members of the Pelham Public Schools Staff will retire at the end of this school year. They and their respective supervisors share their fondest memories and thoughts on their careers in Pelham.

Custodian Bob Benkwitt: "Once, there was a set of twins who were very active in sports, theater and academically excellent. I mentioned to the one brother how much I admired him for being so involved and doing so well. He responded, 'Mr. Benkwitt I admire you for what you do day in and day out to keep this place running. You truly care and are passionate in what you do.' Those words will never be forgotten and keep me inspired to do for the children."



Director of Facilities Anthony Mandile (on Mr. Benkwitt): "Bob Benkwitt has been a loyal and exceptional worker, even more, he is a true friend and a wonderful human being."

Colonial School Principal Tonya Wilson: "Mr. Benkwitt is the best of the best - he is caring, organized and a team player. He will be so missed by his Colonial family. We love Bob!"

Prospect Hill Principal Dr. Richard Limato: "Every moment that I spent with our children is my most cherished memory. It has been both humbling and deeply rewarding to be a part of their formation along with their families and our staff."



Superintendent Dr. Peter Giarrizzo (on Dr. Limato):

"Dr. Limato's ability to forge meaningful relationships with teachers and staff is truly remarkable. I have always admired his dedication to the Prospect Hill community and his commitment to public education. I will miss his enthusiasm, sense of humor, and commitment to the Pelham schools."

PMS Teaching Assistant Catherine Morgan: "My fondest memory is seeing how the students grow from year to year, as they acquire more skills, more confidence and become independent thinkers. I have been fortunate to work with such wonderful students, teachers and staff in Pelham's warm and caring atmosphere."



PMS Principal Dr. Rob Roelle (on Catherine Morgan):

"Kate is a wonderful person who always acts in the best interests of her students. She is thoughtful, kind, flexible, dependable and adored by many. She has proven to be a very special member of the Pelham Middle School family. She will truly be missed."

PMHS Art Teacher Gail Orfei: "As an artist and art teacher, it has always given me great pleasure to share the love of the fine arts with my art and yearbook students. I will always remember the day one of my AP Studio Art students emailed me and said WE received a 5! She thanked me for critiquing her work and making her challenge herself. I truly felt appreciated and knew I made a difference."



PMHS Principal Jeannine Clark (on Mrs. Orfei): "Gail Orfei has been a dedicated and inspiring teacher for the past 30 years. Mrs. Orfei exemplifies a strong work ethic and has spent endless hours, nights and weekends assisting students with deadlines for their art portfolios or with the editors of our award winning yearbook. She will be sorely missed and we wish her well in her next adventure in life."

AN UPDATE ON PERSONNEL

The District and Board of Education are working to fill key vacancies as we head into next school year. Below are updates on the search for a new Prospect Hill Principal, Business Official, and Director of Technology.

Prospect Hill Principal More than 120 candidates applied to replace Dr. Richard Limato, who is retiring at the end of June. The resumes have been screened and a slate of the most promising candidates is being interviewed by Superintendent Dr. Peter Giarrizzo, Assistant Superintendent for Curriculum, Instruction and Personnel Dr. Steven Garcia and Assistant Superintendent for Pupil Personnel Services Rosemary Matthews. The top candidates will then meet separately with a committee of teachers, parents and community members, and administrators before finalists are interviewed by Dr. Giarrizzo, who will recommend a candidate to the Board of Education. It is anticipated that the new principal will be announced by early May and will have time to transition with Dr. Limato.

Business Official The District is currently reviewing eligible candidates to assume leadership of the business office. Dr. Giarrizzo will soon begin interviewing candidates and is hopeful to have the position filled by the end of the school year. In the meantime, the business department is being led by Interim Business Official Linda Purvis. Mrs. Purvis, along with Treasurer Jackie Vigil, have effectively led the department through the budget development process and will continue to do so until the vacant position is filled.

Director of Technology Michael Tromblee's last day as technology director was March 10 and he has taken a similar position with the New Rochelle School District. It is expected that an interim director will be named to carry the District through the remainder of the year, and that candidate will likely come from BOCES. We look forward to filling the position before the start of the next school year.

TELL US WHAT YOU LIKE ABOUT THE MAKERSPACE!

"I was building a sailboat out of soft blocks and I had to put them into water to see if it floats and sails. I liked it because it made your brain work harder to figure things out."

– Craig Hertwig, Prospect Hill, Gr. 2

"I like just sitting there thinking about how I can make it all better and what else I can do. We need to make the space bigger so more people can do the activities at once and talk about it together. I like working on it together most because it gives me more ideas."

– Sydney Comerico, Prospect Hill, Gr. 2

"I used littleBits to make a signal for people that lived in a valley. It warned them about avalanches. It was fun and interesting."

– Noah Miyake, Colonial, Gr. 3

"I liked making a warning system with electronics for people to warn them about flooding if they lived near the Three Gorges Dam in China."

– Sean McGovern, Colonial, Gr. 3

"Personally, my favorite activity in the MakerSpace that I have done this year is when we were with another class and we were told to make a superhero and show its power. We made a horse shapeshifter. It would not stand, so we made it smaller so it would balance. I liked this activity because we got to choose what we created, the materials we used, and we got to work with kids from other classes."

– Kate Boyce, Siwanoy, Gr. 4

"I like using Keva blocks to make a huge tower. It is fun to work with friends. Our tower was taller than we are. I like that there is no specific way to use them. With Keva blocks you can build towers, stations, ramps, anything."

– Olivia Oguz, Siwanoy, Gr. 4

"I like that in the MakerSpace you can express yourself through creativity. The MakerSpace is a great way to try new things or games. In the MakerSpace you can build, create, or make whatever you want. The MakerSpace teaches people that there is always another way because if what you are trying to build or make does not work, you can try different ways. The MakerSpace is not only fun but it is a great way to find out what you like such as science, engineering, and math. I love the MakerSpace!"

– Ava Gatti, Hutchinson, Gr. 5

"I like the MakerSpace because I really like to build. When I build, it makes me concentrate and it makes me think about how I have to build the structure and how my creation will come out."

– Dalajah Griffith, Hutchinson, Gr. 5

"Right now I'm working on using the 3-D printer to make a cell phone stand. I like all the different things you can do in the MakerSpace that you don't really get to do in school."

– Emiliano Caltenco, Gr. 7

"My favorite thing is being with my friends. I worked on quite a few coding projects. I made an interactive adventure where you make your own story."

– Hank Banks, Gr. 6

"I like 3-D printing and I 3-D printed a battleship. It's fun because you can do whatever you want and be really creative."

– Jack DeVivo, Gr. 6

"The catapult challenge was my favorite project that I've done in the MakerSpace this year because we were able to use the tools provided to create a functional device of our own design."

– Ben Hofflich, Gr. 11

"I liked to play with the multi-colored glitter and hot/spray glue to make cards for teachers, friends and family. I like to put the glitter on the hot glue and sometimes add beads. It's a good way to spend my frees."

– Pilar Vigil, Gr. 11

"My favorite thing that I have made in the MakerSpace this year was the leaderboard for the Maker Challenge. I enjoyed this because I was able to use the drill. Additionally using the materials from DIY (paint/paintbrushes and the wood burner) and the materials from the MakerSpace (nails, drill, wood) I was able to create something really cool."

– Anais Leon-Kelly, Gr. 11

PELICAN NATION

Soaring High



National Merit Finalist: Senior Jonathan Salama was named a National Merit Finalist in the 2017 Scholarship competition. Jonathan is now being considered along with 15,000 finalists from across the nation for one of 7,500 Merit Scholarships!

Con Edison Award Winner:

Senior captain Ben Hurd received the prestigious award in January for his outstanding prowess playing for the varsity hockey team and for his academic work off the ice.



Geographic Bee Finalist: Eighth grader Vikram Jallepalli advanced to the National Geographic New York State Bee to be held on March 31! Vikram earned one of the top 100 scores on a qualifying test given to students across New York State to make it to the state competition. Good luck!



PMHS Science Research: The competition season is now in full swing and five students have already qualified for the state tournament: James Chandler (Biology), Megan Ploch (Environmental Science), Sarah Jacobson (Medicine and Health), Ehsan Ahmed (Cell and Molecular Biology/ Biochemistry) and Rachel Radvany (Cell and Molecular Biology/ Biochemistry).



National History Day: Eighth graders held their annual "Night at the Museum" in which they transformed the Middle School Library into a museum with exhibits, presentations and essays about this year's theme "Taking a Stand." Congrats to winners: Dylan Lee, Jack D'Angelo, Emily Kalyvas, Ella Burns, Colin Healy, Katja Fair, Katherine D'Adamo, Graham Johnson, Juan Carlos Matos, Lilly Baxter, Jackson Sylver, Julia Corso, Nell Plunkett, Chapman Jones, Nevan Malwana, Aidan Kiernan, Caroline Spana, Sophia Leung, Giovanna Vitale, Emmett Doyle, Emmett McLaughlin, Rebecca Jacobson, Sara Almo, Marlen Singh, Jack Murphy, Harrison Sylver, Hannah Doka, Jasmine Zaman, Flynn Bryan, Jerry Reen and Caro Volpe!



Chinese New Year: Siwanoy School third graders in Alyssa Miro and Simona Ciolino's classes held a Chinese New Year celebration in February. With help from Ms. Daisy He and students from her PMHS and PMS Mandarin classes, the third grade students created traditional Chinese decorations. The event coincided with the classes' social studies unit on China.



Do you want to receive email updates from the school district?
Call or email Alex Wolff at 738-3434, ext. 1131 or awolff@pelhamschools.org.



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BOARD OF EDUCATION CORNER

DEAR PELHAM RESIDENTS,

As you have read in this edition of FOCUS, there is an incredible amount of important work facing the Board of Education this spring, and we are focused on ensuring that this work is done in an efficient and thoughtful manner. In addition to adopting our operating budget for the 2017-18 school year, we are considering an important bond initiative for next fall and searching for our next superintendent.

These are all initiatives that make serving on the Board of Education a rewarding experience and we hope that the community will join us in our discussions over the next few months. The work of the Board is always made easier when there is an open dialogue with our community. We invite you to join us at our meetings, attend our remaining Board of Education coffees and, as always, feel free to e-mail us at boe@pelhamschools.org with any comments, questions or concerns.

Sincerely,

MARIANNE L. GILLAND, BOE PRESIDENT

BOE COFFEES

Join Board members for one-on-one conversation. Bring your questions. All coffees begin at 9:00 am.

April 20 Bakery at Four Corners

May 26 J. Café



The Pelham Public Schools and the Board of Education would like to congratulate the PMHS varsity hockey team and Head Coach Ed Witz on winning the New York State Division 2 Championship. The Pelicans completed their outstanding season with a 7-1 victory over St. Lawrence in the state championship game held in Buffalo, NY on March 12. The team finished the year with a 25-1 record and 25 consecutive victories. Special congratulations to Ben Hurd, Stefan Miklakos, Gibson Smith, Will Case and Nat Heintz on being named to the All-State Team. Additionally, Smith was named the NYS Division 2 Player of the Year, Hurd was named the Section 1 Player of the Year, Miklakos was named the NYS Tournament MVP and Coach Witz was named the NYS Coach of the Year. Well done, Pelicans!

UP FOR TENURE

Parents and residents are invited to send comments regarding candidates under consideration for tenure by April 7. Please direct them to Dr. Peter Giarrizzo and the Board of Education via email at pgiarrizzo@pelhamschools.org and boe@pelhamschools.org or mail to 18 Franklin Place, Pelham, NY 10803.

2017

Teachers: Meryeme Gashi, Alaura Stivala (Imperioli), Tara Carmody.

2018

Teachers: Maureen Haberstroh, Nicole Giordano, Jeannette Golkowski, Madison Martineau, Rebecca Reina, Scott Avena, Laura Battema (Calabrese), Adrienne Flynn, Ariadne Livaditis, Neil Schleifer; **Psychologists:** Elizabeth Belanfante, Sarah DeSoye; **Administrators:** Judd Rothstein, Thomas Callahan.

2019

Teachers: Alicia Gallagher, Greg Kopstein, John LaGreca, Daniel (John) Horan, Kevin Miller.

2020

Teachers: Cristina Comacho, Ann Louise Glasser, Diana LaScalia, Lauren Stachan, Andrew Van Bochove, Kathryn Walker, Joshua Steinfeld; **Administrator:** Trisha Nugent Fitzgerald.



Transportation requests for private school students are due to the Business Office by April 1.