Pocantico Hills Central School District

Final Report for Administrative Restructuring

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Overview

The Pocantico Hills Central School District is small Pre K – 8 school system with a current enrollment of 270 students. The district serves students from parts of the towns of Mt. Pleasant and Greenburgh. Pocantico Hills CSD has three partner schools which serve the needs of students in grades 9 – 12. The partner schools include Briarcliff, Pleasantville, and Sleepy Hollow. The district is well resourced with a combined wealth ratio of 4.557 and a current board approved budget for 2014-15 of $29,755,371.

Purpose of the study

In December of 2014, the Capital Area School Development Association (CASDA) responded to a Request for Proposals (RFP) initiated by the Pocantico Hills Central School District Board of Education. The RFP requested a study of the district's administrative structure and asked that the following areas be addressed:

1. To identify the short and long term administrative structure to provide leadership within the district.

2. To determine if the current staffing level within the district is sufficient to effectively carry out its tasks and responsibilities.

3. To assess the degree to which the current allocation of tasks within the administrative structure is effective.

4. To review and analyze district/school assessments.

5. To assess the opportunities for sharing educational programs with Middle Schools associated with the 3 receiving districts of tuition based students.

Methodology

CASDA faculty members Mr. Terrance Brewer and Dr. Jerome Steele conducted a qualitative review based upon the five areas indicated above. An initial meeting was held on January 6, 2015 with the Board of Education and Superintendent, Dr. Valencia Douglas, to review the Scope of Work for the study (Appendix A). It was at this meeting that the scope of work expanded from three areas of concern to five. As part of this process, the Board of Education asked that we reach out to all segments of the community to ensure that all constituent groups were heard. The Board insisted on complete transparency in all aspects of this project. The scope of work was then adjusted.

Mr. Brewer and Dr. Steele developed a set of questions to elicit information from several focus groups, and conducted individual interviews with administrators and board members. Additionally, a number of documents were requested for review. Documents included but were not limited to the following: an organizational chart of the district, duties and responsibilities for each administrator, administrator contracts, the teacher contract, non-instructional contracts, enrollment data, and academic performance data. All comments and responses to the questions are confidential in the sense that no one would be identified specifically with any statements made during the focus groups or interviews.

Participants included all members of the Board of Education, all administrators, approximately 20 teachers, 15 students, and 70 community members. An open invitation was sent by the Board of Education for all stakeholders to participate. The total number of participants was approximately 114 individuals. Additionally, all interview questions were

posted on the district website, allowing anyone who was unable to attend one of the scheduled sessions the opportunity to have their voice heard.

Once all the data was collected, Mr. Brewer and Dr. Steele reviewed responses from the focus groups, interviews and additional comments emailed to them from parents and the community. After their review, they identified emergent themes that resonated across all groups and individuals. To validate the data, they employed a method of triangulation to insure the validity of their conclusions.

Current Findings and Emergent Themes

The document reviews, focus groups and individual interviews provided great insight into the current state of the Pocantico Hills CSD, its rich history and its profound impact beyond the school itself. It is clear that while Pocantico Hills is a small school, it is a cornerstone of the local community.

Areas of Strength

Pocantico Hills is a well resourced district with a strong budget that is overwhelmingly supported by the community. Parents and community stakeholders take great pride in the school and are passionately invested in both its rich history and future potential. Increasing cultural and socioeconomic diversity in the student population is being embraced by parents, students and teachers. Small class sizes offer definite instructional advantages. After school and summer programs are ardently supported and offer further evidence of the strong relationship between the district and the community. Many participants in the focus groups described Pocantico Hills as "nurturing." The district is supported by a strong Parent Teacher Association as well as the Pocantico Hills School Foundation.

Community organizations such as the Rockefeller Brothers Foundation offer a wide variety of opportunities for the children of Pocantico Hills. Businesses such as Regeneron, provide the school with opportunities to connect with organizations that apply Science, Technology, Engineering and Math (STEM), allowing students to connect what they learn in the classroom with the broader world beyond.

Areas of Concern

While Pocantico Hills has a history of academic success, the introduction of the Common Core Learning Standards (CCLS) and New York State testing has proven to be a substantial challenge for the district. Several areas of concern regarding the curriculum emerged during our interviews and focus groups. These issues need to be addressed in a thoughtful and timely manner. The superintendent, working in collaboration with the building leadership team, needs to develop a strategic plan, during July and August of 2015, that establishes clear goals regarding curriculum mapping and professional development to support their implementation. Curricula, at all levels starting with English Language Arts and Mathematics must be aligned to the CCLS. Comprehensive and consistent curriculum mapping must be a foremost priority. The need to strengthen curriculum mapping is evidenced by the fact that several parents feel compelled to pay for math tutors outside of school.

As testing has become more prevalent in our public school systems, it is important to understand how to use this testing to improve student performance. Increasingly, teachers and principals are turning to the use of data driven instruction (DDI). DDI relies on the ability of teachers and principals to identify and analyze gaps in student learning. Teachers review test data to better understand what students know and what they need to learn. Using test data is the best way to gather these critical insights. Teachers are then able to adjust learning objectives to help students fill in the gaps. Focus group sessions expressed a desire for greater professional development in DDI to ensure that all teachers and administrators are equipped to effectively utilize data to improve student outcomes.

The needs of students with disabilities must also be considered to ensure that consistent protocols are being followed with both internal and external placements. Parents voiced concerns that this was not always the case in the past, but has improved more recently. While there are several special education classes housed within the school, most placements occur outside the district. Similarly, the gifted and talented program has diminished over the past few years. While there are several clubs and activities after school, future consideration should be given to this area.

The use of technology also emerged as a concern. The district has provided computers, smart boards and other instructional technology software, but there is a perception that it is not being optimally utilized. While observing technology classrooms, it was noted that there is a robust robotics curriculum. However, the extent to which instructional technology is integrated into all other classrooms must be addressed. Therefore, the district needs to provide technology training on the equipment that is currently available within the school, such as the Virtual Field Trip technology. A schedule of professional development should be created for the 2015-2016 school year – this should be coordinated by the principal and technology

committee. Additionally, the technology committee should investigate opportunities available through BOCES. Career and Technical Education (CTE) opportunities should also be integrated into a cohesive curriculum Teachers would welcome more professional development with technology

Pocantico Hills engages in multiple forms of communication with parents and community members, but a belief exists that communication is limited and not transparent. Listening to parents, stakeholders, community members, students, and teachers helps to maintain a vibrant organization. The district itself should be the first and best source of information regarding all school matters. Parent and community engagement have been strengths for Pocantico Hills. It is important that reciprocal communication protocols are used to maintain and strengthen that dynamic. The Board of Education, working with the Superintendent and school administrators, should survey the school population and greater Pocantico Hills community regarding the most effective means of communication; i.e. Facebook, Twitter, school website, student and parent portals. An updated and improved school website that allows for more reciprocal communication between the community and the district must be the foremost priority.

Focus groups articulated a desire for broader communication with the partner schools of Briarcliff, Pleasantville and Sleepy Hollow. Each partner school offers a slightly different approach to their high school offerings and the sequence in which they are offered. Parents are granted the opportunity to visit these schools and meet with administrators and school counselors and determine the best option for their children. Some parents indicated that their children transitioning to Briarcliff had a more difficult time with mathematics. Parents suggested that more administrative communication regarding curriculum concerns between Pocantico Hills and its partner schools is necessary to ensure that their children are better prepared to meet the challenges of high school. In this regard, the Principal, Director of Student Services and School Counselor should develop a comprehensive plan for coordinating the transition of students from 8th grade to 9th grade in the partner schools. Students should visit the partner schools not later than October prior to their transition. Students from partner schools should be encouraged to visit to get a sense of the culture and learning environment of the smaller Pocantico Hills School.

One of the questions asked during our interviews and focus groups addressed the possibility of sharing programs and/or activities with the partner schools. When this was raised during the focus group sessions, many participants were concerned that sharing programs could lead to consolidation or merger with neighboring districts. It was clear to CASDA that consolidation was not a topic that the community wanted to explore. Nevertheless, as

Pocantico Hills has developed relationships with the three partner schools, we believe that there may be many opportunities to share academic programs, student activities, and professional development for teachers. It is incumbent upon the Superintendent and building leadership team to pursue these ideas.

CASDA has witnessed the expansion of Distance Learning opportunities for students in the Capital District Region. This has been explored successfully by many small rural districts who do not want to consolidate, but wish to provide greater learning opportunities for their students. The Superintendent and administrative team should begin a conversation with the partner schools by exploring areas of common interest to expand upon professional development and student related programs.

The Rockefeller Brothers Foundation and organizations such as Regeneron are significant assets for the school district. In recent years these resources have been underutilized, particularly in the area of STEM instruction. The Superintendent and school administrators must nurture relationships with community and business organizations as they provide a vital supplement to the instructional program.

One of the greatest strengths of Pocantico Hills was the recent articulation of the following guiding principles:

1. The Common Core Standards are only the first step toward academic achievement and student growth.
2. Technology should be a tool that supports the growth of reasoning skills and critical thinking.
3. Joyful and passionate teaching and learning should set the tone for our school environment.
4. Collaborative teams must promote personal accountability, broad skill exposure, and cohort understanding and acceptance.
5. Perseverance and determination are essential characteristics of student growth and should be fostered thoughtfully and with support.
6. Community partnerships provide opportunities to promote communication and global awareness.
7. A strong sense of ethics must ultimately come from within, and we must develop and nurture that growth.

Throughout the focus group sessions, many parents and teachers expressed their support of these principles. However, they were concerned there were not clear goals and strategies to realize this vision. It is the role of the Superintendent and building administrators, working collaboratively with teachers, to evaluate the current needs of the district and develop

SMART Goals for the 2015 – 2016 school year. SMART goals are defined as Specific, Measureable, Ambitious, Results-Oriented and Timely. SMART goals should be designed to build upon the district's mission and vision statements. These goals should be communicated through multiple media (newsletter, website, Facebook, etc.) to the entire school community, faculty, staff, parents and students.

Establishing goals related to the seven guiding principles is the place to start. For example, a goal regarding the Common Core Learning Standards could address the extent to which curriculum maps have been aligned in the area of ELA or Math. This could be measured by reviewing these maps and assessing what additional work is needed to address gaps in student learning based on all levels of assessment.

The need for greater professional development was raised in several of the focus groups to ensure that the Pocantico Hills faculty is on the cutting edge of curriculum and instruction. This report has identified several areas where additional professional development is required. As part of ongoing training, the administration should identify two or three short and long term goals in collaboration with the teachers to address professional development concerns. To be effective, these goals should be aligned with the guiding principles of the district. The use of a strategic plan with SMART Goal development will assist the district in the annual evaluation of its goals and student outcomes.

The final issue that was raised during our focus groups and interview sessions centered on the possible restructuring of the administrative team. It was necessary to review previous administrative structures and explain the current role of the three administrative interns. Many individuals stated that the administrative structure should be resized. Some voiced the opinion that they were not sure "who was in charge." Many people believed that eight administrators directed the district - too many given its size. Some participants believe returning to the pre-2010 three-tiered administrative structure is the best option.

The State Education Department provides validation for an administrative leadership model through the School Leadership criteria for building level certification established in September 2006. In addition, the Educational Research Service (2009) found the national average building administrator to student ratio is 1 to 306. The National Institute for Educational Statistics indicates that in New York State, the average student to building administrator ratio is 1 administrator to 303 students. This calculation, however, is based solely on a numerical factor and does not represent what is currently needed for program and

evaluation requirements in New York State. The school community often shapes this calculation to reflect the educational needs of the students within the school community.

There is a clear distinction between school administrative responsibilities and district administrative responsibilities. In the past both of these functions could be performed by a smaller administrative team. Additional mandates from New York State, such as meeting the requirements of the CCLS and rigorous teacher evaluation make it extremely difficult for these functions to be performed by one or two administrators. A limited administrative structure would undermine any effort to fully realize the vision articulated in the district's guiding principles.

Based upon CASDA's review and research of other schools of similar size and demographics, a four-tiered administrative structure will best fit Pocantico Hills. The changes in regulations, accountability, staff evaluations and student assessments require more administrative time and oversight to monitor and manage a school district. The current requirements far exceed the administrative responsibilities of the 1990s.

This issue will be reviewed comprehensively in the section on Administrative Restructuring on page 13.

Enrollment Projections

Declining enrollment stood out as a serious concern. The district currently enrolls 270 students in Pre-K through 8th grade. Approximately 150 students are enrolled in the partner high schools of Briarcliff Manor, Pleasantville, and Sleepy Hollow. The following projections for Kindergarten through 8th grade are based on attendance for the past ten years. Data is current as of 2013.

Graph 1. (Based on Data from the NY State Center for Rural Schools.)

POCANTICO HILLS CSD
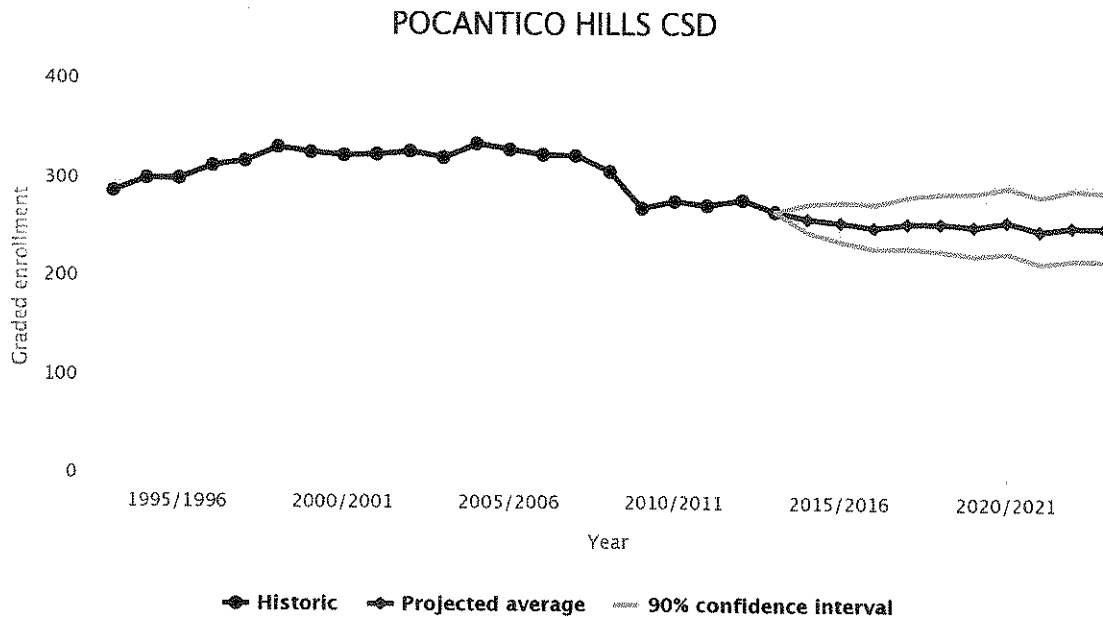
Enrollment trends in the Pocantico Hills CSD indicate a 16.6% decline in student enrollment during the past 10 years from 324 students in the 2003-04 school year to 270 students in the 2013-14 school year. In reviewing cohort survival percentages and Kindergarten enrollment projections, we can anticipate an additional 6% average decrease over the next 10 years. These projections are only estimates based on current trends in district enrollments and do not factor in changes associated with the opening and closing of private and parochial schools, future housing developments or economic development within the school district. The administrative team must monitor these trends moving forward.

Academic Performance

One of the dominant concerns expressed during the focus groups and interviews has been the decline in academic performance on the NY State tests for grades 3 through 8. Since the inception of the Common Core tests during the 2012-2013 school year, average scores have declined statewide. As part of this study, CASDA compared the performance of Pocantico Hills to that of districts with similar Combined Wealth Ratios (CWR), enrollment and demographics. Pocantico Hills has a CWR of approximately 4.55. The state average is 1. If your CWR is higher than 1 you are considered wealthier, if your CWR is lower than 1 you are considered poorer.

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CASDA included all Low Needs Districts (districts with a high CWR) as well as the statewide average. The other districts included are Menands Union Free School District which is located just north of Albany with an enrollment of 256 students in Kindergarten through 8th grade. Lake Pleasant Central School District, located in Speculator, New York in the Adirondack Mountains, has an enrollment of 109 students. It serves students in grades Kindergarten through 8th grade. High school students attend either Wells High School or the Greater Johnstown High School. Tuckahoe Common School District, located in Southampton, New York on Long Island, has a current enrollment of 347 students in Pre-K through 8th grade. High school students from Tuckahoe attend Southampton High School. The final comparison school is Harrison Central School District. Although much larger than Pocantico Hills with an enrollment of 3533 students, it has a similar CWR. It provides a different comparison as opposed to the three other districts which are very similar to Pocantico Hills in size, wealth, and demographics.

Chart 1. Grade 3 ELA Proficiency Percentages. *All the following charts indicate the percentage of students scoring at proficiency level with a 3 or 4 rating on the NY State Tests.*

	2005-06	2006-7	2007-08	2008-09	2009-10	2010-11	2011-12	2012-13	2013-14
Low Need Districts	85.60%	86.20%	88.30%	90.30%	72.50%	75.90%	77.10%	50.70%	50.50%
Statewide	69.00%	67.30%	70.10%	75.80%	54.70%	55.90%	55.60%	31.20%	31.60%
Menands UFSD	85.00%	88.60%	89.70%	87.50%	62.50%	69.20%	74.10%	37.50%	50.00%
Lake Pleasant CSD	100%	83.30%	100%	100%	50.00%	62.50%	37.50%	36.40%	58.30%
Tuckahoe CSD	80.00%	85.70%	60.00%	71.40%	47.70%	38.50%	51.40%	32.40%	35.70%
Harrison CSD	89.20%	88.10%	88.00%	89.20%	71.50%	71.70%	76.10%	41.30%	36.70%
POCANTICO HILLS	80.50%	87.50%	85.40%	77.10%	67.70%	74.30%	67.90%	53.30%	61.80%

Chart 2. Grade 5 ELA Proficiency Percentages

	2005-06	2006-07	2007-08	2008-09	2009-10	2010-11	2011-12	2012-13	2013-14
Low Need Districts	87.20%	86.90%	92.60%	93.90%	72.80%	75.00%	79.30%	49.50%	47.60%
Statewide	67.20%	68.30%	77.60%	82.20%	52.50%	53.90%	57.60%	30.20%	29.00%
Menands UFSD	88.20%	83.90%	100%	100%	73.10%	66.70%	68.80%	46.20%	57.10%
Lake Pleasant CSD	80.00%	62.50%	100%	100%	85.70%	66.70%	75.00%	55.60%	42.90%
Tuckahoe Com SD	96.70%	85.70%	87.80%	90.90%	56.00%	48.60%	58.10%	18.90%	28.90%
Harrison CSD	82.80%	85.80%	92.90%	94.10%	70.10%	69.10%	80.40%	41.80%	46.40%

| POCANTICO HILLS | 97.90% | 97.10% | 100% | 88.50% | 87.20% | 54.30% | 67.70% | 57.10% | 53.80% |

Chart 3. Grade 7 ELA Proficiency Percentages

	2005-06	2006-07	2007-08	2008-09	2009-10	2010-11	2011-12	2012-13	2013-14
Low Need Districts	80.30%	81.60%	88.40%	93.70%	73.70%	71.70%	75.30%	51.00%	46.40%
Statewide	56.40%	58.00%	70.10%	80.30%	50.10%	47.90%	52.40%	31.40%	28.40%
Menands UFSD	93.50%	66.70%	95.00%	100.00%	72.20%	65.40%	65.40%	46.20%	51.70%
Lake Pleasant CSD	42.90%	57.10%	100.00%	100.00%	62.50%	81.30%	90.90%	25.00%	33.30%
Tuckahoe Com SD	63.40%	86.40%	75.80%	86.10%	52.80%	66.70%	50.00%	42.90%	15.00%
Harrison CSD	80.10%	83.60%	89.30%	94.70%	78.90%	71.60%	70.60%	41.00%	38.40%
POCANTICO HILLS	81.80%	86.80%	97.90%	97.10%	80.00%	71.40%	71.40%	41.70%	45.70%

Chart 4. Grade 4 Math Proficiency Percentages

	2005-06	2006-07	2007-08	2008-09	2009-10	2010-11	2011-12	2012-13	2013-14
Low Need Districts	92.50%	93.30%	94.90%	95.80%	83.00%	84.60%	86.20%	56.60%	61.40%
Statewide	78.00%	80.00%	83.90%	87.20%	63.80%	66.60%	69.20%	36.40%	41.80%
Menands UFSD	93.50%	84.20%	93.80%	82.80%	69.20%	64.70%	64.00%	45.50%	62.50%
Lake Pleasant CSD	87.50%	87.50%	85.70%	87.50%	57.10%	72.70%	100%	35.70%	66.70%
Tuckahoe Com CSD	90.90%	91.90%	86.70%	85.10%	55.30%	40.80%	36.60%	33.30%	22.90%
Harrison CSD	90.40%	94.20%	96.30%	96.90%	80.10%	86.40%	84.40%	55.80%	55.80%
POCANTICO HILLS	97.10%	87.50%	95.80%	97.90%	74.30%	63.30%	83.30%	56.00%	67.70%

Chart 5. Grade 6 Math Proficiency Percentages

	2005-06	2006-07	2007-08	2008-09	2009-10	2010-11	2011-12	2012-13	2013-14
Low Need Districts	81.90%	88.30%	93.20%	94.50%	81.70%	83.90%	85.70%	51.40%	61.40%
Statewide	60.50%	71.40%	79.40%	83.00%	61.40%	63.00%	65.10%	30.60%	37.20%

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	2005-06	2006-07	2007-08	2008-09	2009-10	2010-11	2011-12	2012-13	2013-14
Menands UFSD	59.10%	100%	93.10%	80.00%	58.30%	60.70%	48.10%	40.00%	41.40%
Lake Pleasant CSD	60.00%	60.00%	100%	83.30%	45.50%	87.50%	66.70%	17.60%	70.00%
Tuckahoe Com SD	73.10%	90.60%	87.20%	97.10%	95.50%	87.50%	88.60%	26.80%	36.10%
Harrison CSD	74.90%	83.00%	91.80%	93.40%	77.80%	82.50%	82.30%	39.90%	44.30%
POCANTICO HILLS	75.70%	95.70%	94.40%	100%	84.60%	73.30%	75.00%	33.30%	61.10%

Chart 6. Grade 8 Math Proficiency Percentages

	2005-06	2006-07	2007-08	2008-09	2009-10	2010-11	2011-12	2012-13	2013-14
Low Need Districts	82.00%	84.30%	89.70%	94.40%	77.30%	81.90%	82.60%	46.10%	37.90%
Statewide	53.90%	59.00%	69.90%	80.20%	54.80%	59.90%	61.30%	27.50%	21.50%
Menands UFSD	71.40%	61.30%	53.60%	73.90%	48.10%	47.40%	30.00%	28.00%	40.00%
Lake Pleasant CSD	70.00%	88.90%	75.00%	100%	85.70%	44.40%	69.20%	20.00%	66.70%
Tuckahoe Com SD	76.70%	77.50%	74.10%	87.50%	76.70%	69.70%	77.80%	42.20%	32.00%
Harrison CSD	78.50%	81.30%	83.90%	92.00%	77.50%	77.90%	86.10%	53.70%	*0.00%
POCANTICO HILLS	81.40%	87.50%	94.70%	100%	82.40%	83.80%	72.70%	35.60%	*0.00%

A review of the achievement data for ELA and Math for the school years 2005-06 through 2013-14 was conducted using comparisons to similar school districts (See Charts). It must be noted that in the 2012-13 school year all ELA and Math tests were reconfigured by the New York State Education Department and all schools within the state saw dramatic decreases in students reaching proficiency in both ELA and Math.

In analyzing the ELA results, a decline in proficient scores was evident beginning in the 2008-09 school years through 2012-13 when the tests were changed by NYS. There was an increase in students reaching proficiency in most grade levels during the second administration of the new test design in 2013-14.

Math results showed similar declines in students reaching proficiency beginning in 2008-09 school year up to the 2012-13 school year with a rebound in the second administration of the new test design. On first look, one area of concern is in the Math 8 results for the 2013-14 school year when no students achieved proficiency. However, many of Pocantico Hills' stronger math students were excluded from this sample and were tested with only the Algebra regents.

In comparing the results for both ELA and Math, Pocantico Hills out-performed NYS public schools statewide and several of the similar low need districts. Nevertheless, substantial work with curriculum mapping is necessary to more closely align both the English Language Arts and Mathematics programs to the Common Core Learning Standards. As stated earlier in this report, it is the responsibility of the building principal working collaboratively with teachers to evaluate where there are gaps in student learning based on the NYS assessments as well as district formative and summative assessments. This analysis should be used to make adjustments in their curriculum maps.

Administrative Restructuring

Effective leadership is essential to any organization. CASDA state earlier in this report that the number of administrators needed is not necessarily determined by the size of the student body, but rather by the requirements and responsibilities that evolve over time as a result of State and Federal laws. Changes in regulations, accountability, staff evaluations and student assessments require more administrative time and oversight to monitor and manage a school district. As part of local consideration, the Board of Education in collaboration with the broader school community has established a district mission, vision, and guiding principles which call for providing a quality education to all students. Limiting human resources, such as key administrative positions, would inhibit the achievement of these goals. Expanding the administrative structure beyond what is necessary would diminish lines of authority as well as appropriate oversight.

During the focus group and interview sessions, questions were raised regarding the current administrative structure. The Pocantico Hills Board of Education had already recognized the need to consider administrative restructuring with the retirement of Dr. Valencia Douglas, Superintendent of Schools in June of 2016 as well as the retirement of Mr. Stanley Steele, Principal on Special Assignment in October of 2016.

As part of the transition process, three administrative interns were utilized during the 2013-14 and 2014-15 school years. This study reviewed the effectiveness of using these administrative interns and will provide recommendations in this regard later in the study.

Previous Administrative Structures

2008 and prior years

Superintendent/Principal

Assistant Superintendent
for Finance and Support

Assistant Principal

2009-2010

Superintendent

Assistant Superintendent
for Finance and Support

Principal

2010-2011

Superintendent

Assistant Superintendent for Finance and Support

Principal

Curriculum and Instruction/CIO

CSE/PPS Consultant

Current Administrative/Governance Structure - 2014-2015

The Board of Education

The Board of Education is responsible for governing the district by ensuring that all federal and state laws, regulations of the New York State Education department as well as all policies and procedure established by the district are implemented and carried out. The Pocantico Hills Board of Education is composed of five members who are elected to serve three year terms.

Superintendent

The Superintendent is the Chief Executive Officer for the district and reports directly to the Board of Education. This position is responsible for oversight of all district operations. The primary responsibilities include, but are not limited to the following:

- **The oversight of the central management team and administrative interns.**
- **Directing, planning and implementing curriculum.**
- **Implementing all board policies.**
- **Making recommendations to the board regarding all appointments and hiring.**
- **Developing and presenting the budget.**
- **Supervising and directing the Assistant Superintendent for Finance and Support and the business office.**
- **Supervising all instructional activities of the district.**
- **Any other additional duties prescribed by Board of Education.**

Assistant Superintendent for Finance and Support

The Assistant Superintendent for Finance and Support is responsible for all finances of district. Responsibilities include but are not limited to the following:

- **Financial planning, purchasing.**
- **Budget preparation.**
- **Debt service.**
- **Oversight of operations and maintenance.**
- **Oversight of food services.**
- **Oversight of transportation.**
- **Risk management.**
- **Safety and security.**
- **Human resources and employee benefits.**
- **Overseeing the Community programs (summer and after school).**
- **The Assistant Superintendent is also currently responsible for evaluation of some instructional personnel.**
- **Reports to the Superintendent.**

Interim Principal (CIO, Curriculum and Instruction)

The interim principal has assumed all primary duties of the Principal. This position is currently responsible for but is not limited to the following:

- **Instructional observations/evaluations of pre-K – 2nd and 7-8th grades.**

- Serving as Chief Information Officer who is responsible for maintaining and uploading student information and testing data to the NYS Education Department.
- Responsible for working with teachers on Curriculum and Instruction with support from the administrative interns – as per superintendent directions.
- The interim principal also deals with discipline issues.
- Working with the superintendent to implement the school's guiding principles and coordinating professional development with the partner schools.
- Reports to the Superintendent.

Principal on Special Assignment (2014-present)*

This is a temporary position that will end in October of 2016 with the retirement of Mr. Steele. The responsibilities of this position include but are not limited to the following:

- Working in conjunction with the Interim Principal.
- Professional development in technology.
- Observation/evaluation of instructional staff in grades 3 through 6.
- Coordinating the district's grant programs.
- Serving as testing and Universal Pre-K (UPK) coordinator.
- Responsible for researching and developing the Special Education plan.
- Reports to the Superintendent

{Once this position is phased out in October 2016, these duties and responsibilities will be assigned to the building Principal and Director of Student Services.}

Part Time PPS/CSE Chairperson (consultant)

The part time PPS/CSE chairperson currently oversees the special education program for the district. These responsibilities include but are not limited to the following:

- Chairperson of the Committee on Special Education
- Coordination of all special education reviews,
- Coordination of all student placements.
- Coordination of special education programs with the partner schools.
- Reports to the Superintendent

*Three Administrative Interns

During the past two years, the district provided a career pathway for three teachers to receive their administrative certification with the agreement that they would provide 600 hours of service to the district in each of these years for a total of 1200 hours. The administrative interns maintained their teaching positions during the day, while any administrative duties were performed before or after school. Their duties during the past two years included but were not limited to the following:

- Assisting the interim principal and superintendent with analyzing and using school data to inform instructional practices,
- STEM program.
- Assisting with the technology program.
- Assisting with coordinating extended learning opportunities.
- Assisting with organizing and coordinating special events.
- Working with the interim principal and superintendent to observe and evaluate teachers according to the Annual Professional Performance Review (APPR).
- Work with discipline issues.
- Assisting in developing the master schedule.
- Assisting with the coordination of the superintendent's conference days.
- Assisting with Human Resource work such as job postings and reviewing resumes.
- Serving as a liaison with parent and community organizations.
- The interns reported directly to the superintendent.

It was originally proposed that the three administrative interns become part of the administrative structure for the 2015-2016 school year. As CASDA reviewed the concerns raised during the focus group and interview sessions, it became clear this was a significant issue. When examining the current administrative structure, the perception exists that the district would have eight administrators. CASDA recommends that it would be unnecessary for the interns to move forward into any administrative capacity. CASDA's proposal is to restructure the current administration by eliminating the interns and focus upon teacher leaders with the future in mind.

Recommendations:

Options for Administrative Transition and Restructuring:

For any administrative structure to be successfully implemented it is imperative that:

1. Overall administrative structure possesses clear lines of authority and accountability as well a culture of total transparency.
2. Each administrative position has clear, concise duties and responsibilities.
3. Strong and engaged leadership with a visible presence in the school and community.
4. Develop an active partnership with community organizations and businesses to foster greater learning opportunities for students and staff.
5. Possesses knowledge of current educational research and a skill set to direct professional development to best meet the needs of students and staff.
6. Communication with staff, students, parents and the community must be clear, accurate and timely.

These principles must facilitate a clear strategic plan for all current and future district administrators.

Options for Administrative Restructuring

Option 1. (Recommended by the CASDA consultants)

Superintendent

Assistant Superintendent for Finance and Support * *

Principal – Curriculum and Instruction

Director of Student Services (Full time)

Pros:

- Four administrative positions which consolidate all responsibilities into a district leadership team, establishing a clear chain of command for school operations.
- Principal and Director of PPS/CSE/CIO have clear responsibility for teacher observation and evaluation. Assistant Superintendent for Finance and Support is removed from teacher evaluation process.
- In coordination with the Superintendent, the Principal will develop clear curriculum maps consistent with Common Core Learning Standards, utilizing data driven instruction as well as embedding instructional technology as a core resource for teacher practice.
- The Principal and PPS Director will coordinate professional development initiatives that reflect current educational research.
- This model does not make use of administrative interns as utilized by the current administrative structure.

Cons:

- Maintains a position for the Principal on Special Assignment until October 2016. This position will still focus on grants, coordination, technology, Title I and UPK coordination, testing coordination, and communication within the school and with parents. This is reflected in every option considered as the board has already committed to this position.

Option 2.

Superintendent/with principal responsibilities

Assistant Superintendent for Finance and Support * *
|
Intern to support community programs (Teacher Leader Stipend position)

Assistant Principal
|
Intern (Responsible for working on curriculum and instruction and professional development

Director of PPS/CSE Chairperson/CIO (Full time)

Pros:

- Four administrative positions which consolidate all responsibilities into a district leadership team, establishing a clear chain of command for school operations.

- Assistant Principal and Director of PPS/CSE/CIO have clear responsibility for teacher observation and evaluation. Assistant Superintendent for Finance and Support is removed from teacher evaluation process.
- In coordination with the Superintendent, the Assistant Principal will develop clear curriculum maps consistent with Common Core Learning Standards, utilizing data driven instruction as well as embedding instructional technology as a core resource of teacher practice.
- The Assistant Principal and PPS Director will coordinate professional development initiatives that reflect current educational research.
- This model uses two interns/teacher leaders. One intern/teacher leader will assist the Business Administrator with community initiatives such as the summer camp and after school child care programs. The second intern/teacher leader will assist the Assistant Principal with curriculum and instruction and professional development initiatives.

Cons:

- Adding principal responsibilities to the Superintendent will require clear delineation of duties and responsibilities to avoid conflicts with state commissioner regulations.
- By adding interns/teacher leaders lines of authority and chain of command could be diluted without clear roles and responsibilities being defined.

Option 3.

Superintendent

Assistant Superintendent for Finance and Support * **

Principal

    Intern (Teacher Leaders with no administrative responsibilities using stipend in current teacher contract)

CSE Chairperson (Part time)

Pros:

- Three administrative positions which consolidate all responsibilities into a district leadership team, establishing a clear chain of command for school operations.
- Principal and CSE Chairperson have clear responsibility for teacher observation and evaluation. Assistant Superintendent for Finance and Support is removed from teacher evaluation process.

- In coordination with the Superintendent, the Principal will develop clear curriculum maps consistent with Common Core Learning Standards, utilizing data driven instruction as well as embedding instructional technology as a core resource of teacher practice.
- The Principal will coordinate professional development initiatives that reflect current educational research.
- This model uses one intern/teacher leader. The intern/teacher leader will assist the Principal with curriculum and instruction and professional development initiatives.

Cons:

- Does not strengthen the district's ability to coordinate a better special education delivery model and oversee the transition of students to partner schools.
- Employing the PPS/CSE Chairperson on a part time basis with increased support for the CIO could undermine the ability to strengthen Data Driven Instructional analysis.
- By adding an intern/teacher leader lines of authority and chain of command could be diluted without clear roles and responsibilities being defined.

Option 4.

Superintendent with principal duties

Assistant Superintendent for Finance and Support * *

Assistant Principal/PPS/CSE Chairperson/CIO

This specific option was considered by CASDA as it was perceived by some participants as a sufficient model that had worked in the past. CASDA believes is was an adequate structure in the past, but does not serve the district well considering the most recent requirements and responsibilities from Federal, State and State Education Department regulations.

Pro:

The option would return the district to a past model and would generate savings for the district.

Con:

This model, however, does not allow for sufficient administrative support to meet current educational standards as well as the vision articulated in the districts guiding principles and essential skills.

In all of the options provided, the school business administrator should not be directly involved in the evaluation of certified instructional personnel. The focus of the school business administrator should be on evaluation and monitoring of non certified/civil service personnel. The emphasis of this position should be on the coordination and oversight of operations and maintenance, transportation, food services, and school community programs; i.e. summer recreation program and afterschool care.

**Given the size, scope and complexity of the PHCSD operating budget it is impractical to have anything less than a full time Business Official. If the title of the position was changed to Business Manager or Director of Finance thereby becoming a Civil Service position, the extent of the duties and responsibilities remain the same.*

Process for Selecting the Next Superintendent

When a school district begins the process of selecting a new system leader, it is incumbent upon the district to develop a transparent process that involves all stakeholders in the school community. This report could be used as a model for engaging the community and their ideas during the selection process.

For the past five years Dr. Valencia Douglas has moved the district forward, most notably, through the development of the seven guiding principles and essential skills. As the Board of Education seeks her replacement, they should take advantage of the time between now and June of 2016 to begin this process. The information and ideas provided in this report could serve as a framework for helping the district decide on who will best lead the district in the coming years.

This process is directed by the Pocantico Hills Board of Education. The Board should develop a profile of the district's needs and use it as a rubric to determine who would bring the best skill set to implement the goals and objectives of the Board of Education and broader school community. It is the prerogative of the Board to determine what other stakeholders will be involved in this process. Parents, community members, teachers, staff members and even

students may be involved, especially during the interview stage. This should be done by September or October, 2015. Once this is accomplished, the Board of Education should develop a timeframe for advertising, interviewing and selecting potential candidates. This should be completed by February, 2016. If the interview process is completed by the end of February and the Board has selected the new superintendent, it will provide several months for the new superintendent to become acquainted with the Board and the school community.

<u>Opportunities for Consideration</u>

1. Implement Option 1 for the 2015-2016 school year as the first step for administrative reorganization. As part of Option 1, make the current CSE chairperson full time as Director of Student Services, which will encompass her current responsibilities, as well as supporting students and their families on the full spectrum of learning needs. Additional responsibilities would include work with curriculum and instruction and teacher evaluation.

2. The Interim Principal should become Building Principal when the Principal on Special Assignment retires in October 2016.

3. The Board of Education should consider looking at other districts that are similar in size, wealth, and demographics to explore how these school districts are organized. An example is Tuckahoe Common School District on Long Island. This district was used in the academic performance comparison.

4. With the administrative restructuring, each position must have clear responsibilities within an organizational structure which reflect clear lines of authority.

5. Concerns were expressed by the Board of Education and focus groups regarding financial transactions within the budget for school programs and operations. Budgetary expenditures should be fully reviewed by the Board of Education with ample time for consideration and approval. The Board of Education should conduct a financial review to assess the efficacy of all budgetary expenditures.

6. With the retirement of Dr. Douglas and Mr. Steele in 2016, the district will realize a significant savings that could be used to invest in appropriate student related programs which were reduced in earlier budgets.

7. Utilize the position of teacher leader, which is provided for in the teacher contract. Teacher leaders will work in conjunction with the Principal and Director of Student Services to develop Professional Learning Communities within the school to address

some of the concerns identified earlier. The most important of these include curriculum mapping, the use of Data Driven Instruction and the implementation of instructional technology to improve student achievement.

8. As stated on page seven, the district should develop stronger communication protocols with all stakeholders including parents, community members, community organizations, teachers, and students.

9. Nurture the relationship with the Rockefeller Brothers Foundation which has been an important partner of the district. Additionally, there are many other community and business organizations that could connect with Pocantico Hills School. Regeneron was mentioned earlier in this report, but there are many others that would offer students numerous learning opportunities.

10. Develop a strategic plan built upon the seven guiding principles to move the district forward. The strategic plan should outline clear SMART Goals that will help the district realize the ideals set forth in these principles.

Summary

The Pocantico Hills Central School District is at a crossroads in its history. With several administrators retiring next year, an opportunity exists for the Board of Education and school community to reflect upon the future of the district. Over the past five years, Dr. Douglas has guided the district and laid a foundation for the future by helping to craft the seven guiding principles that have been embraced by the school and community. The Board of Education now has the opportunity to build upon that foundation as they look to the next generation of school leaders.

Pocantico Hills receives high praise as a school that has nurtured many generations of residents. During the focus group sessions, many participants indicated that they went to school here, their parents went to school here, and their children go to school here. The students also indicated their safety and comfort within its walls. The Board of Education recognizes that the community plays an important role in determining the district's future direction.

This is not to say that the district is void of challenges. Many districts in New York State have struggled to implement the Common Core Learning Standards and the results of the Common Core testing have been less than desirable. The thoughtful implementation of the

district's guiding principles through an effective action plan created by a new administration in conjunction with the school and community will ensure improvement in test scores and lay the foundation for a rich education for all students in Pocantico Hills.

Through administrative restructuring, the district has the opportunity to refocus positions within the district prior to hiring a new superintendent. Option 1 provides the district with two levels of expertise. The Superintendent and Assistant Superintendent at the district level will provide Pocantico Hills the expertise for overall district operations. The Principal and Director of Student Services will provide for the overall operation of the school. Moving forward, this configuration best enables the district to use its resources to effectively address the concerns raised in this study.

Edgar Schein, who has studied organizational culture and leadership for more than thirty years, stated that "it is essential that leaders recognize that cultural alignment requires not only cultural humility on the leader's part, but the skills in bringing different subcultures together in the kind of dialogue that will maintain mutual respect and create coordinated action" (Schein, 2010, p. 270). Pocantico Hills is a diverse community with multiple subcultures whose voices must be heard as the district moves forward. The issues facing public schools in New York State seem to be growing by the day. With the right administrative structure and system leaders, the future of Pocantico Hills will be one of great promise.

Appendix A

SCOPE OF WORK TO BE COMPLETED BY CASDA FOR POCANTICO HILLS

The CASDA faculty will conduct a document review of items that impact the variables indicated above. Additionally, interviews and/or focus groups of administrators, BOE members, parents, community members, faculty, staff, and students will be conducted.

ACTIVITIES TO COMPLETE PROPOSED STUDY

Activity	Session	Focus/Agenda	CASDA Faculty	Timeline
#1	On-Site Visits Document Review	***To identify the short and long term administrative structure to provide leadership within the District.*** • Review of Administrative organizational chart and current job descriptions and how they correlate to educational programming • Interview Administrative Team • Interview BOE members	Terry Brewer Jerry Steele	2 days

#2	On-Site Interviews/Focus Group Sessions	***To determine if the current staffing level within the District is sufficient to efficiently carry out its tasks and responsibilities.***
		• Enrollment trends
		  o School Building
		  o District
		• Current and projected education programs
		• Current and future staffing needs
		• Interview Administrative Team
		• Interview Teachers and PTA
			Terry Brewer Jerry Steele	2 days

#3	On-Site document review and Interview/Focus Group Sessions	*To assess the degree to which the current allocation of tasks within the administrative structure are effective.* • Review of District Mission and Vision • Analysis of the administrative tasks and how they correlate to educational programming • Analysis of the cost/benefit relationship of the current administrative structure as opposed to other potential options that may be considered	Terry Brewer Jerry Steele	3 days
#4	Assessment Review	*Review and analyze district/school assessments.* • Compare NY State assessments with similar districts based upon size and demographics • Analyze the success of all students as well as subgroups		2 days
# 5	Opportunities for sharing	*Assess the opportunities for sharing educational programs with Middle Schools associated with the 3 receiving districts of tuition based students.* • Curriculum and Instruction • Development of PLCs • Academic opportunities not offered at Pocantico Hills • Distance Learning		2 days
#6	Development of a draft report for	*To submit a final report to the Board of Education.*	Terry Brewer Jerry Steele	2 days

	review and final presentation of our findings	• Compilation of data from interviews, focus groups and document reviews • Develop a working draft of the report to include the following: • Review all data and options as well as prepare information for final report including recommendations to Superintendent and Board of Education • Presentation of the final report to the Pocantico Hills Superintendent and Board of Education		

Appendix B

Community/Parent Focus Group Questions

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1. Are you in agreement with the current Mission, Vision and Guiding Principles of the Pocantico Hills School District? Is the District achieving these ideals? To what extent are you an active participant in achieving the school's mission and vision?

2. Identify the District's strengths and weaknesses.

3. To what extent is the school budget in alignment with the district's mission, vision and guiding principles?

4. To what extent have parents and the community supported or not supported the educational initiatives of the District?

5. In what ways might Pocantico Hills CSD engage in additional sharing and/or collaborating opportunities with neighboring school districts academically or in other areas?

6. To what extent and in what manner does the District communicate with you as parents, and community members? Are there other ways that may be beneficial?

7. Should the administrative structure be reorganized? If so, how?

Appendix C

Faculty and Staff Questions

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1. Are you in agreement with the current Mission, Vision and Guiding Principles of the Pocantico Hills School District? Is the District achieving these ideals? To what extent are you an active participant in achieving the school's mission and vision?

2. Describe the strengths and weaknesses of your school.

3. What areas of professional development are needed to strengthen teaching and learning to improve student outcomes?

4. To what extent does the central office support you in the areas of curriculum and instruction and how do you stay informed to meet accountability measures?

5. To what extent has the community supported or not supported the mission, vision and guiding principles of the district as well as educational initiatives of the school district?

6. Do you feel the administrative leadership has promoted growth opportunities to the educational environment?

7. Should the administrative structure be reorganized? If so, how?

Appendix D

Student Questions

1. What elements or aspects of school make it special for you as a student attending Pocantico Hills Elementary School?

2. Describe the strengths and weaknesses of your school.

3. Describe some of the activities and programs the school offers.

4. If you could expand on what the school has to offer to prepare you for your future, what might that be?

5. How do you feel about sharing programs with neighboring schools?

6. If you could change anything about your school, what might that be?

Appendix E

Administrator Questions

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1. Are you in agreement with the current Mission, Vision and Guiding Principles of the Pocantico Hills School District? Is the District achieving these ideals? To what extent are you an active participant in achieving the school's mission and vision?

2. Describe the strengths and weaknesses of your school.

3. To what extent is the school budget in alignment with the district's mission, vision and guiding principles?

4. What areas of professional development are needed to strengthen teaching and learning to improve student outcomes?

5. To what extent do you have an impact upon areas of curriculum and instruction and how do you stay informed to meet accountability measures?

6. To what extent has the community supported or not supported the mission, vision and guiding principles of the district as well as educational initiatives of the school district?

7. To what extent has administrative leadership promoted growth opportunities to improve the educational environment?

8. Should the administrative structure be reorganized? If so, how?

Appendix F

Board of Education Questions

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1. Are you familiar with the current Mission, Vision and Guiding Principles of the Pocantico Hills School District? Is the District supporting these ideals?

2. Does the district have a strategic plan to support educational programs and training of staff to assist all students as learners? To what extent is the school budget in alignment with the district's mission, vision and guiding principles?

3. Identify the District's strengths and weaknesses.

4. From your perspective as a member of the Board of Education, to what extent should the administrative team be realigned? Given the current job descriptions for each of the administrators, in what ways could responsibilities be realigned for more efficiency? What is the Board's commitment to maintain the current administrative structure through the 2015-16 school year or are you willing to modify this structure at this time?

5. What are the essential elements that are needed to move the District forward with the support of both parents and the community? In what ways has the community been supportive or not supportive of the educational initiatives of the District?

6. What options do you see as possibilities for the district to share or collaborate with your partner schools?