



HOME PAGES

THE QUARTERLY NEWSLETTER OF THE POCANTICO HILLS SCHOOL

FALL 2017

Dear Community Members,

This year the district is implementing a new organizational structure, distributing leadership and promoting collaboration through strategic teaming. What exactly is distributed leadership? It means that leadership is not restricted to one person, but is instead distributed among multiple individuals who have the tools and skills to contribute to the success of the organization. Together we are developing a schoolwide leadership mindset to create a culture where professionals share responsibility to influence the achievement of all students.



The **Board of Education** is comprised of five trustees, President Emily Segal, Vice-President Fred Rickles, Charlie Minton, Alfred Pacile and Kasama Star. They are strong advocates for public education and are responsible for communicating the needs of a school district to the public, and the public's expectations to the district, they work closely with parents, educational professionals and other community members to create the vision we hold for the children of our community.

Teacher Team Leaders facilitate teacher collaboration, two grade levels at a time. Lindsey Wiley leads the PreK-K Team, Katie Bryce leads the 1-2 Team, Nicole Marples leads the 3-4 Team, Laura Garrido leads the 5-6 Team and Lisa Levy leads the 7-8 Team. Together they build curriculum connections, assess and plan for individual children's learning styles, coordinate grade level activities and represent their colleagues on the District Leadership Council. Teacher leaders work closely with the principal, and district administrators to chart the course for continual school improvement.



The **District Leadership Team** provides school and district leadership, joining me in central office is Assistant Superintendent for Business and Operations Mimi Heslin. Leading Pocantico Hills School is Principal Brent Harrington. Program support and development comes from Director of Curriculum and Technology Adam Brown and Committee on Special Education Chair/Director of Special Services Celia Strino. Together we develop and execute a strategic framework and goals to bring the district's mission and vision to life.

At every level of the organization we are building a culture of collective responsibility to harness the expertise of our staff members and deepen our collective efficacy. One of our district goals this year is supporting student achievement and a positive school culture through a well-defined, distributed leadership model. Sharing responsibility and accountability in more meaningful ways will lead us to achieve at higher levels. In keeping with this initiative we are striving to strengthen communication with all district constituents, we invite you to join us in developing the leadership mindset by sharing your ideas and suggestions.

Sincerely,
Carol Conklin-Spillane
Superintendent of Schools

EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE

Promoting and developing emotional intelligence is critical in nurturing a healthy school climate. Staff and students at Pocantico have begun to explore and utilize the Anchors of Emotional Intelligence through the Yale Center for Emotional Intelligence. The Charter is one of four primary tools identified in the Anchors that are based on scientific research to promote emotional intelligence with students, staff and families. A collaborative document,

Pocantico Hills School Charter

At Pocantico we want to feel:

Valued
Respected
Inspired
Connected
Successful

We promise to...

Lean into struggle, recognizing that mistakes are proof you are trying.
Embrace our differences and celebrate our diversity.
Recognize that a warm smile is the universal sign of kindness.
Show the respect you expect to receive in return.
And, never hesitate to choose to help one another.

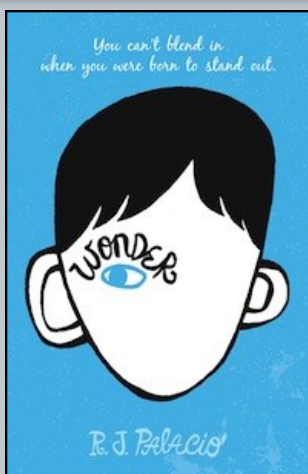
When we fall short we will...

Consider speaking to a trusted friend.
Recognize that our judgement improves with daily practice; success is a result of lessons learned from mistakes and temporary setbacks.
Use "I" statements to own our words and actions.
Accept apologies that are genuine and move forward with kindness and optimism knowing that the past doesn't define our future.
And, agree that we are all responsible for the culture and climate we envision and work towards.

the Charter seeks to identify how we wish to feel in our school community, behaviors that foster those feelings and guidelines for preventing and managing potential conflict. After our staff spent time collaborating during our August Superintendent Conference Days the Pocantico Hills School Charter was drafted as a living document and a guiding vision for our school community. As we continue to move forward in this rich work, staff, students and families will increasingly be exposed to the Mood Meter - a second essential tool within the Anchors. The ability to identify and label emotions is a crucial step in the development of emotional intelligence. The Mood Meter provides

Enraged	Panicked	Stressed	Jittery	Shocked	Surprised	Upbeat	Festive	Exhilarated	Ecstatic
Livid	Furious	Frustrated	Tense	Stunned	Hyper	Cheerful	Motivated	Inspired	Elated
Fuming	Frightened	Angry	Nervous	Restless	Energized	Lively	Enthusiastic	Optimistic	Excited
Anxious	Apprehensive	Worried	Irritated	Annoyed	Pleased	Happy	Focused	Proud	Thrilled
Repulsed	Troubled	Concerned	Uneasy	Peevish	Pleasant	Joyful	Hopeful	Playful	Blissful
Disgusted	Grim	Disappointed	Down	Apathetic	No Class	Ecstasy	Content	Loving	Fulfilled
Pessimistic	Morose	Discouraged	Sad	Bored	Calm	Secure	Satisfied	Grateful	Touched
Alienated	Miserable	Lonely	Disheartened	Tired	Relaxed	Chill	Pleasant	Blessed	Reassured
Despondent	Depressed	Sullen	Exhausted	Fatigued	Mellow	Thoughtful	Peaceful	Comfy	Calm
Despair	Hopeless	Desolate	Spent	Drained	Sleepy	Complacent	Tranquil	Cool	Serene

both a visual and a common language for identifying our emotions and expanding our vocabulary around the many emotions we may experience during our school day. As we move through the school year Mr. Harrington's monthly newsletter will continue to share important updates and learning around this work. Additionally, we look forward to scheduling parent information evenings on the Anchors of Emotional Intelligence to provide families with training to further support the work being done in school. Indeed, we all play a critical role in nurturing a climate of social-emotional learning. A strong home-school partnership is key to our success.



In February parents, students and staff will have an opportunity to participate in a discussion of the book *Wonder* by R.J. Palacio. This fictional story shares the moving experience of a young man, Auggie, who enrolls in school for the first time in middle school with a facial deformity. At a time when adolescents are struggling to fit in and not be seen as different, Auggie's visible difference cannot be masked. This #1 *New York Times* bestseller has been lauded in numerous reviews celebrating it as a story of courage, tolerance and empathy.

FACILITIES UPDATE

We are very excited about the work in progress to renovate our auditorium. The community approved this capital project in 2015, and it is finally coming to fruition. When the project is complete we will enjoy an auditorium with new seats for the comfort of our audiences, new flooring and a redesigned ceiling to enhance the acoustical properties of the space. The Pocantico Hills Foundation will also be donating decorative acoustical panels to brighten the walls. The redesign also includes the creation of a lighting and sound booth so that we have better access to these production necessities.

Our original timeline included a completion date at the end of November 2017. Due to unforeseen conditions above the existing ceiling that required modifications to the ceiling design, we are unfortunately behind our original schedule. The architects needed to reconfigure the slope of the ceiling and our contractors needed to order materials for that new design. Due to these delays, we now anticipate a project completion date at the end of February.



A rendering of our new auditorium

Please be assured that, although our auditorium renovation will not be completed in time, we have plans in place to allow our students to perform the middle school play and the elementary and middle school winter concerts. **Our middle school play, Willy Wonka Jr.** will be held on December 2nd at 2:00 p.m. and 6:00 p.m. at the Morse Elementary School in Sleepy Hollow. The **Elementary School Winter Concerts** will be held on December 13th in the Pocantico Hills Gymnasium, 1st and 2nd Grade at 6:00 p.m. and 3rd and 4th Grade at 7:00 p.m. The **Middle School Winter Concert** will be held on December 20th at 7:00 p.m. at the Morse Elementary School. We thank our partners at the Tarrytown School District for accommodating our needs. Although we are disappointed about the delayed availability of our auditorium, we are confident that the final product will be worth the wait!



WE INVITE YOU TO TAKE A SURVEY...

In the interest of making our building and grounds the best resource they can be for student learning and for community recreation, we are in the process of planning site improvements. Some improvements, such as repairing sidewalks and driveways, are necessary to repair and maintain our facility, others are considered enhancements. An important first step in our planning process is to gather input from the community on a range of potential projects under consideration so that we can identify and prioritize areas for improvement. We ask for your feedback via a survey which is open to all District residents of voting age. Please log onto our website www.pocanticohills.org and tell us what you think. The survey is open through November 20th.



*Members of the Facilities Advisory Committee:
Brigid Quadrino, Peter Basha, Fred Rickles, David
Wilens, Fiona Carney, Al Pacile, Kristen Kumar,
Don Booth & Carol Conklin-Spillane
(not pictured: Mimi Heslin)*

READING and WRITING WORKSHOP

Last year, kindergarten through sixth grade teachers embarked on a multi-year plan of redesigning our literacy curriculum and redefining our instructional practices in support of a reading and writing workshop model. With the facilitation and coaching of literacy experts Dr. Gravity Goldberg and Mrs. Laura Sarsten throughout all last year, including a summer institute this past June, teachers developed vertically aligned writing units that compliment and build upon each other. This year, we are further refining our writing units while also creating our new reading units, which are similarly aligned and scaffolded.

How This Comes to Life in the Classroom...

The essential elements of the workshop model are the mini-lesson, time for students to read and write independently, teachers conferring with individual students, and the sharing of work. Elements of the workshop also include interactive read-alouds, shared reading, word study, whole class mini-lessons, and small guided strategy groups. In addition, students have reading and writing folders or notebooks that serve as collections of their work while also tracking their goals for growth. The mini-lesson in particular is a time for the teacher to explain and model a specific practice or strategy to the class, such as an element of the reading or writing process itself, adding descriptive details and word choice, organization and structure, or character development.

Our writing units explore a variety of genres depending upon the grade level, including opinion or argument writing, informational “expert” writing or research, literary or issue-based analysis, personal narratives, poetry, and fiction. Our reading units, which include book clubs and broad exposure to genres such as non-fiction or informational text, realistic or historical fiction, and fantasy, are often paired with the writing units to provide a cohesive workshop experience.



At the heart of it all is student choice and personalized learning, where each child explores his or her interests, finds his or her voice, and builds the essential skills outlined in our State Standards. The Workshop Model is designed to be responsive and naturally differentiated because teachers are meeting students where they are and designing next steps built from what they’re able to do and not what they can’t do. The shift in approach is best summarized by Mrs. Sarsten’s motto: “We teach the reader not the book, and we teach the writer not the writing piece.” It’s an exciting and responsive approach to literacy. Please visit the Curricular Resources page of the website to see our curriculum outlines, which are updated as our work evolves.

Fall Traditions at Pocantico



Harvest Festival



8th Grade Retreat



Swan Lake Walkathon






PTA Tinker Night

HIGH SCHOOL SELECTION PROCESS

The high school selection process began on October 23rd with a meeting for 8th graders and their parents in the library led by Superintendent Carol Conklin-Spillane and School Counselor Jim McVeigh. Packets of materials from all three partner high schools including curriculum guides, information on athletics and extracurricular activities along with copies of student newspapers were distributed. Mrs. Conklin-Spillane spoke about the importance of finding a right match and shared the kinds of questions that students and parents might ask to learn more about course offerings, student achievement, education outside the classroom, school safety and the quality of student, teacher, parent interaction that defines the culture of each school. Mr. McVeigh moderated a panel of six current high school students representing all three high schools. They described personal experiences with choosing which school to attend and spoke about the transition to high school, giving next year's freshmen class some great advice and lots to think about. "The only real way to get a feel for a school's culture is to spend some time walking the halls," said Mrs. Conklin-Spillane. Visits are arranged to give all 8th graders the chance to do just that. During the month of November school tours are scheduled, with follow up opportunities for Pocantico students to shadow high school students upon request. In December, there are individual meetings with Mr. McVeigh to assist families with the decision-making process; the deadline for selection is January 19th. In February, high school counselors meet with students here at Pocantico to initiate the course selection process. We are proud to offer three excellent options for children in this community, we look forward to all that lies ahead for the Class of 2022 as they begin their high school journey.



The Class of 2022 ready for a high school visit.

Thursday, 11/2/17 	Thursday, 11/9/17 	Thursday, 11/16/17 
8th Grade Student/Parent Visit to Sleepy Hollow High School	8th Grade Student/Parent Visit to Pleasantville High School	8th Grade Student/Parent Visit to Briarcliff High School

December 2017 - Individual meetings with Mr. McVeigh

Friday, January 19, 2018 - DEADLINE FOR HIGH SCHOOL SELECTION

February 2018 - High school counselors meet w/ students to start course selection

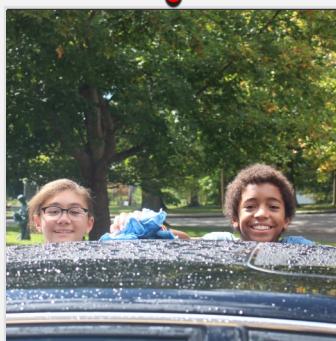
Fall Traditions at Pocantico



Swan Lake Walkathon



Halloween Costume Party



8th Grade Car Wash



Halloween Parade

SPORTS

Halloween season marks the end of the Fall Modified Sports Season. This year, Bob Slotoroff joined Pocantico Hills School as Athletic Director, his passion for athletics is obvious to all who watch him cheer the Hawks from the sidelines. During the season, approximately fifty 7th and 8th graders participated in one of four athletic programs – football merged with Sleepy Hollow, girls and boys soccer, and girls volleyball.

The girls soccer team completed a remarkable undefeated season, with a record of 9-0-1. Their on-field dominance has been a total team effort with excellent communication on and off the field. Offensively the girls averaged three or more goals per game; while defensively the team relinquished less than one goal per game. We look forward to hanging an undefeated season banner in the gym to recognize this accomplishment.

The girls volleyball team also enjoyed unbridled success winning eleven of their twelve matches. While the team is not deep in numbers it is deep in spirit and determination. This team regularly dominates their opponents. On the court the girls communicate and support each other. Coach Gallery's infectious enthusiasm and knowledge of the game has helped each player reach their potential and beyond.

The boys soccer team attracted over twenty participants in both 7th and 8th grade.



"Success is where preparation and opportunity meet."

Bobby Unser

Competition on the field has been spirited against tough opponents. Although the team only notched one win, they were clearly playing better soccer at the end of October than at the beginning of the season. One of the goals for every team at all levels of play is to demonstrate improvement over the course of a season - the boys certainly did that.

Three students are part of a merged football program with Sleepy Hollow and are positively contributing to the team. One of our 8th grade students, Aren Arduino, was named a captain for his leadership and qualities as a student athlete.

The winter sports season is just around the corner and we look forward to another successful season with the return of Coach Paupst heading the girls basketball team. Coach Papanicolaou joins us as the new boys basketball coach, he previously served as assistant coach of the JV boys basketball team.

WELCOME



Late last year we said goodbye to Anacleto Nunes, Pocantico's legendary head of facilities, after 42 years of service. Taking over for him is Don Booth, Director of Facilities, who brings an exceptional level of expertise to our District.

New faculty members: Stephanie Vaughn (Special Education), Kerry Papa (3rd Grade), Adele Morton (Spanish), Katell Carruth (French), Michael Murray (Music) & Jane Tulley (English)



FROM OUR PTA

TINKERING, THINKING AND EXPLORING AT FAMILY TINKER NIGHT

The gym was alive with the sound of TINKERING! The PTA-sponsored Family Tinker Night Welcome Back Party allowed families and kids of all ages to experience innovative, inquiry-based learning in action at ten different tinkering stations such as a wind tunnel, life-size dominoes, robo-sumo derby, SCRATCH! Learn to Code, cooking, stomp rockets and more. Curious-on-Hudson, who runs our POCADEMY after school enrichment program, led the hands-on STEAM activities (STEAM stands for Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts, Math). Families enjoyed sweet treats and refreshments. Administrators and teachers were also on hand with their families to tinker. Children of all ages were engaged the entire evening as they explored the different tinkering stations, with a team effort from a group of ten students ranging from preschool to middle school ending the night building a life-sized domino pyramid!



Tinkering continues this fall in the PTA sponsored after-school enrichment program, POCADEMY. Classes are off to a great start and our students are enjoying Pancake Pandemonium, with our own Chef Kassie, Math Makers, Acting Up with Theater O! and STEAM Lab 101 as part of the fall session. The winter session begins in January with more exciting inquiry-based learning.

“Events like the PTA Family Tinker Night are possible with the continued support of our parents and community members and participation in our membership drive and fundraisers. All of the funds raised are used for programs and activities that benefit all of our children,” commented PTA President Annalisa Altieri. The PTA brings in special guest speakers, sponsors author visits and assemblies, fulfills teacher grants and hosts community events such as the Halloween Costume Party and End of Year BBQ. Thanks to YOUR involvement in picture day, the membership drive, family portraits and the book fair, the PTA is off to a great start this year. Interested in volunteering or sharing ideas? Haven’t joined the PTA yet? Email us at: PTA@PocanticoHills.org. www.facebook.com/PocanticoHillsPTA.

FROM OUR FOUNDATION

A MISSION OF GOODNESS BRINGS CHESS, FREE BOOKS, AND MAKERSPACES TO POCANTICO!

What does it mean to be fueled by a mission of goodness? It means backing innovative initiatives. It means bolstering curriculum. It means empowering students, staff, and the community. And that’s just what the Pocantico Hills School Foundation has been doing. The Foundation has kicked off another year of enhancing the education of Pocantico’s students by fostering innovation and funding meaningful initiatives beyond the scope of the school budget. From science, to technology, to English and language arts, to performing arts, to history, to recreation, and more – the mission of goodness continues for the 2017-2018 school year.



*Free books for all!
Pocantico's Little Free
Library, donated by
the Pocantico Hills School
Foundation and
Ty Amsterdam.*

The weather couldn’t have been more perfect for the Foundation’s Swan Lake Walkathon. This year’s fundraiser was dedicated to the new chess program, which will be integrated into the school day so that all students have the opportunity to learn. Chess champions will be teaching the students strategic thinking as they engage in the game, and also relate the ideas to life-lessons. “The Foundation proudly supports learning opportunities like the new chess program,” says Co-President, Eric Levenson.

The Foundation embraced the efforts of a student who built the Pocantico Little Free Library. “I saw a Little Free Library at a local park, and I thought it would also be perfect for our school so that everyone could have free books,” said 8th grade student Ty Amsterdam, who pioneered the initiative for the school. Through a grant from the Foundation and using gift money from his bar mitzvah, Ty designed the cabinet unit to be extra big in order to hold books for Pre-K through 8th grade. The unit now sits outside at the bus circle near the playground. Take books. Donate books.

The Foundation invites you to come to meetings and join the mission of goodness! www.facebook.com/PocanticoFoundation

POCANTICO HILLS CENTRAL SCHOOL
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 Student Services
 Don Booth
 Director of Facilities

Board of Education

Emily Segal, President
 Fred Rickles, Vice President
 Charles Minton, Trustee
 Alfred Pacile, Trustee
 Kasama Star, Trustee



November

2 8th Grade Student/Parent Visit to Sleepy Hollow
 7 PTA Meeting - 7:30 p.m.
 9 8th Grade Student/Parent Visit to Pleasantville
 10 Veteran's Day (DISTRICT CLOSED)
 14 BOE Meeting - 7:30 p.m., Briarcliff Presenting
 16 8th Grade Student/Parent Visit to Briarcliff
 20 Foundation Meeting 7:30 p.m.
 22 11:45 a.m. Dismissal (Students & Staff)
 23-24 Thanksgiving Recess (DISTRICT CLOSED)
 27 Winter Sports Begin
 28 BOE Meeting - 7:30 p.m., Pleasantville Presenting

December

2 Middle School Play - 2:00 p.m. & 6:00 p.m.,
Morse Elementary School - Sleepy Hollow
 12 BOE Meeting - 7:30 p.m.
 13 Elementary Winter Concert
 6:00 p.m. - Grades 1 & 2, 7:00 p.m. - Grades 3 & 4
Pocantico Hills Gymnasium
 14 Snow Date - Elementary Winter Concert

December (continued)

20 Middle School Concert - 7:00 p.m.
Morse Elementary School - Sleepy Hollow
 21 Snow Date - Middle School Concert
 25 Christmas Day (DISTRICT CLOSED)
 26-29 Holiday Recess (School Closed)

January

1 New Year's Day (DISTRICT CLOSED)
 8 Foundation Meeting - 7:30 p.m.
 9 BOE Meeting - 7:30 p.m.
 11 PTA Meeting - 7:30 p.m.
 15 Martin Luther King, Jr. Day (DISTRICT CLOSED)
 19 Deadline for High School Selection
 23 BOE Meeting - 7:30 p.m.

February

8 11:45 a.m. Dismissal (Students Only)
 12 Foundation Meeting - 7:30 p.m.
 13 BOE Meeting - 7:30 p.m.
 19 President's Day (DISTRICT CLOSED)
 20-23 Winter Recess (School Closed)
 27 BOE Meeting - 7:30 p.m.