

PELHAM MIDDLE SCHOOL

Dr. Robert J. Roelle, Principal
Ms. Lynn M. Sabia, Assistant Principal



August 2017

Dear Pelham Middle School Parents,

It is with great enthusiasm that I welcome all of our new and returning students and families to Pelham Middle School for the 2017-18 school year. As summer quickly comes to an end, I hope that you are looking forward to the start of the new school year. It promises to be an exciting and productive experience for everyone at Pelham Middle School.

It is hard to believe only two short months ago, we said goodbye for the summer! During these two months, the middle school has been very busy with several summer academic programs in addition to our work to prepare for the new school year.

This summer, approximately 80 of our students continued their education at the middle school during July and August. Thirty of our students attended the middle school Summer Institute designed to provide additional support in reading, writing, and mathematics. Sixteen students participated in a rigorous two-week course to prepare them for joining our accelerated mathematics program (Algebra) offered in eighth grade. Additionally, ten students were enrolled in our highly intensive, 120-hour Algebra Institute intended to provide students with the opportunity to accelerate in high school mathematics beginning in ninth grade. Twelve students participated in summer support courses for foreign language, including seven who participated in an intensive credit recovery preparation course for high school credit in Spanish. Twelve of our students attended the Earth Science “crash course” in August. Students who took this course were able to retake the Earth Science Regents exam over the summer. I am extremely proud of all of our students who participated in these classes during the summer months!

Priorities for 2017-18:

Each school year is unique and this year promises to be successful and fulfilling for your children. We have established several school-wide and curriculum specific priorities for our continued improvement:

International Baccalaureate Middle Years Programme

We are proud to announce that, as of May 2017, Pelham Middle School has been recognized as an International Baccalaureate World School authorized to offer the IB Middle Years Programme to all of its students.

The International Baccalaureate (or “IB”) works with schools to help develop well-rounded students who respond to challenges with optimism and an open mind, are confident in their own identities, make ethical decisions, join with others in celebrating our common humanity, and are prepared to apply what they learn in real-world, complex, and unpredictable situations.

The Middle Years Programme (or “MYP”) provides a framework of learning that encourages students to become creative, critical, and reflective thinkers. By emphasizing intellectual challenge and encouraging students to make connections between their studies in traditional subjects and the real world, the MYP fosters the development of skills for communication, intercultural understanding, and global engagement: essential qualities for young people who will one day become global leaders.

The MYP holistically addresses students' intellectual, social, emotional, and physical well-being; provides opportunities for students to develop the knowledge, attitudes, and skills they need in order to manage complexity and take responsible action; and empowers them to participate in service within the community.

In the MYP, teachers organize their curriculum with attention to teaching and learning in a “global context,” using “key concepts” to help students examine knowledge holistically, helping students develop and apply “approaches to learning” skills so they can learn *how* to learn, and provide opportunities for them to apply what they are learning beyond the classroom through “service as action.”

For the past two years, our teachers have participated in extensive professional development through which they learned how to plan curriculum using the Middle Years Programme framework, worked on aligning the curriculum across grade levels and subjects, explored strategies in the areas of formative assessment and differentiated instruction, planned inquiry-based lessons and authentic, project-based assessments, and created rubrics to more accurately assess student progress and communicate with students and parents about learning outcomes. Teachers at every subject and grade level implemented Middle Years Programme lessons and units in their classrooms, and students had the opportunity to participate in a number of academically rich, high-interest units and projects as well as – for the first time – sixth grade foreign language.

During the coming year, teachers will continue planning units that engage students as inquirers and thinkers, foster a stimulating learning environment based on understanding and respect, and develop the IB Learner Profile attributes. We will also expand our use of the MYP Assessment Criteria to assess student work in order to provide a feedback process that is more standardized, precise, transparent, and holistic: one that not only reports on student learning but encourages it. In addition, we will be working on expanding our eighth grade “Citizenship Project” and incorporating additional service learning opportunities in all three grades.

For those who are new to Pelham Middle School or are not familiar with the International Baccalaureate Middle Years Programme, here are some answers to some common questions:

What is “IB”?

Founded in 1968, the *International Baccalaureate* (IB) is a non-profit educational foundation offering programs that help students develop the intellectual, personal, emotional, and social skills needed to live, learn, and work in a rapidly globalizing world. There are currently over 4,000 *IB World Schools* offering programs in over 140 countries around the globe. The IB offers a high-quality curricular framework, professional development that supports effective educators, and a worldwide network of highly respected schools working together to share best practices.

What is the “Middle Years Programme”?

The Middle Years Programme (MYP) is a challenging curricular framework that encourages middle school age students to make practical connections between their studies and the real world, preparing them for success in further study and in life. The MYP framework comprises eight subject groups, providing a broad and balanced education for early adolescents. It is inclusive by design; students of all interests and academic abilities can benefit from their participation. The MYP aims to develop active learners and internationally-minded young people who can empathize with others and pursue lives of purpose and meaning. The programme empowers students to inquire into a wide range of issues and ideas of local, national and global significance. The result is young people who are creative, critical and reflective thinkers, well-prepared for the rigors of high school study and beyond.

What does this mean for my child?

We at Pelham Middle School believe firmly that students are best served through a process of continuous school improvement. The International Baccalaureate provides us with the framework, professional development, guidance, and global support network through which we can best achieve this valuable work. As compared to a non-IB program, students in the IB-MYP typically experience more interdisciplinary learning experiences, hands-on experimentation and open-ended problem solving, and opportunities to bring classroom learning out into the community and view issues through a more global perspective. Overall, there is a greater focus on inquiry, deep conceptual understanding, appreciation of others' backgrounds and opinions, and a dedication to the *IB Learner Profile*. It is also important to recognize that the IB Middle Years Programme is for *all* Pelham Middle School students, not a select group. Every student participates and benefits from the program.

For more information about IB, visit www.ibo.org. For information on how the Middle Years Programme is impacting Pelham Middle School, visit our own IB webpage at ibpelham.weebly.com. If you have any additional questions, please feel free to call Sean Llewellyn, Supervisor of IB, at (914) 738-8190 Ext. 1117 or 914-633-6517. You can also email Sean at sllewellyn@pelhamschools.org.

English Department

As William Yeats once said, "Education is not the filling of a pail, but the lighting of a fire." In order to increase student engagement, global mindedness, and individualize learning in English, middle school teachers will continue to focus on creating inquiry-based units and lessons in the IB design during the 2017-2018 school year. Over the summer months and throughout the school year teachers will engage in providing instructional experiences that support the development of students who are risk-takers, principled, reflective, open-minded, and who possess the skills necessary to exceed the standards and achieve excellence.

In line with the recommendations in the Tri State Consortium's report on Pelham's writing program and the recommendations from Pelham's K-12 Literacy Committee, teachers over the summer months refined their practice. Areas of focus included text choice, writing, and language instruction to promote student engagement and authentic experiences in reading and writing. During the school year, English teachers will continue to explore strategies, lessons, and instructional materials that provide students with instruction that is meaningful, relevant and useful to the students' lives and development. Performance Based Assessments will be refined and new pieces of literature will be explored. Student writing portfolios with an embedded reflective process also will be piloted in the eighth grade to support student engagement and commitment to their work as writers.

This year students will have the opportunity to get involved in a new club related to the ELA curriculum, the Spelling Bee Club (Beehive). Please see the school's list of activities to learn more about this opportunity!

Social Studies Department

Social studies teachers in grades 6-8 spent the last several years aligning their curriculum, instruction, and assessment to the New York State K-12 Social Studies Framework. This Framework was developed by educators from across the state to prepare our students for college, career and civic life through social studies courses that are rigorous and skill-based. Social studies practices or disciplinary and literacy skills are identified in the Framework, as well as the key ideas, conceptual understandings, and content specifications.

During the 2017-2018 school year, social studies teachers will begin to introduce more skill-based activities into their lessons that promote student comprehension, geographic and historical reasoning, and critical thinking. Strategies for teaching these skills were articulated and spiraled for grades 6-12 last school year during teacher professional development time. Teachers now will begin to more regularly incorporate these

activities into their daily instruction in order to help students grow as learners and global citizens. Part of this shift to “skill over content” includes explicit instruction on academic vocabulary and approaches to writing in social studies. These experiences also will help prepare our students for the new high school social studies state assessments in grades 10 and 11. Along with new activities, social studies teachers will continue to create inquiry-based units in the IB design which align organically with the new Framework and required social studies practices.

Our sixth graders will enjoy new social studies resources chosen by a committee of teachers and administrators to support their learning and understanding of social studies content and skills. These new resources include multimedia and interactive experiences for our students as well as hard-copy textbooks. The new program by Houghton Mifflin Harcourt is aligned to both the Next Generation Social Studies Framework and the IB MYP philosophy and framework. We look forward to utilizing these resources to make social studies even more relevant and engaging for our sixth graders in class and at home.

As in years past, all seventh and eighth grade students will participate in the 2017 National Geographic Bee. Sixth grade students will participate in the Bee for the first time this fall. Each year thousands of schools participate in the Bee using materials prepared by the National Geographic Society. This contest is designed to encourage the study of geography. Eighth grade students also will act as historians as they conduct research, synthesize information, and then create a performance based project for the 2018 National History Day Contest. The theme of the 2018 NHD contest is “Conflict and Compromise.” Please join us on Thursday, January 25th at 6:30 pm for our annual Museum Night where student NHD projects will be displayed and celebrated.

If you have any questions pertaining to the English or Social Studies Departments please contact the Director of Humanities, Dr. Maria Thompson at mthompson@pelhamschools.org or call (914) 738-8110 x-1108.

Science and Mathematics

The Pelham Middle School math and science departments are continuing our work on engaging students through authentic learning experiences. This has included the development of performance based assessments, labs, and in class activities that challenge students to access content and to utilize their skills to engineer solutions and solve problems.

As a newly authorized IB World School, we are uniquely prepared for the state’s adoption of the Next Generation Science Standards (NGSS) this year. The IB and the NGSS expect that instruction is student centered, inquiry based, and designed to develop critical thinking in all students. To that end, instruction in science classes has included an expansion of computer based lab equipment, with the capacity to collect data so students can evaluate original questions. The science department has also developed a format for lab reporting that will set a standard for technical writing in the subject area.

Teachers have planned units that expose students not only to theoretical math but to the practical applications of math all around us. From using statistics to analyze a baseball game to calculating the rate of a car traveling down a ramp, students are involved in problem-based approaches to learning that engage them and facilitate intellectual growth.

Our sixth grade Performance Based Assessment (PBA) challenges students to use mathematical principles to design a knight’s shield. Similar concepts were then applied to construct working catapults, which allowed students to explore physics and the design process included in the new science standards. In seventh grade, our work on water chemistry is tied to existing units in ELA and social studies centered on water’s critical role in the development of societies. These activities complement the overnight trip to Sharpe Reservation in

May which involves team building activities and environmental studies. The eighth grade will study geography, geology, and astronomy in October when they travel to the Frost Valley YMCA. Students will also participate in orienteering activities and a high-ropes course, for skill and team building.

We are also committed to providing STEAM experiences outside of the typical academic day. These offerings allow our students to explore science, technology, engineering, art, and math even before or after the bell rings. One of our newest additions, the STEAM Research Club, won national recognition with two Broadcom qualified students in just its first year. Whether it's research, building a robot, or just tinkering before or after school in the MakerSpace, we encourage all students to investigate their interests and get involved in these programs.

If you have any questions about any of these programs or others, please feel free to contact Dr. Thomas Callahan, Director of Mathematics and Science (K-12), at tcallahan@pelhamschools.org.

Technology Department

Chromebooks - Grades 7 & 8

I am very happy to announce that once again this year, Pelham Middle School will provide all seventh and eighth grade students with 24/7 access to World Wide Web resources. Pelham Middle School seventh and eighth grader will be issued a Google Chromebook for use at school and at home for the entire school year. This year, seventh graders will receive their Chromebook during Design/Technology classes.

Eighth graders were permitted to keep their Chromebooks over the summer. However, please be aware that on **Monday, August 21st**, all district Chromebooks will be disabled for updates. In order for eighth graders to re-enable their Chromebooks and for seventh graders to receive a Chromebook in Technology class, the following must be completed:

- Chromebook Acceptable Use Regulation signed by both parent/guardian and student
- Insurance Acceptance/Decline Waiver signed by parent/guardian
- Provide a check for \$27.00 for insurance made payable to Pelham Union Free School District (Pelham UFSD). *Failure to sign the insurance waiver portion of this form or provide a check (if applicable) will lead to the student's Chromebook not being re-enabled.*

To provide students/families (eighth graders only) more convenient options to submit documentation and payment, the PUFSD Technology Department will be available before the start of the school year on these dates and times:

- **What:** Signed Chromebook AUP Form/Insurance Payment Collection/Device Activation
- **Where:** Pelham Memorial High School, hallway outside Room 113A
- **When:** Wednesday, August 30th; Thursday, August 31st and Friday, September 1st from 8:30 am-3:30 pm

Students who do not come during the above times can also bring the required documentation to room 113A during Academy after school begins

Chromebooks – Grade 6

For the first time, our sixth graders will also have access to Google Chromebooks during the school day. By the start of the school year, all sixth grade classrooms will have a class set of Chromebooks. These Chromebooks will be used during individual classes as directed by teachers and then returned to the carts at the end of the class period. Our sixth grade teachers received training on using the Chromebooks, the Google Classroom, and several of the resources associated with the Google suite of educational applications. They will continue to receive further training as the school year progresses.

Design (Technology) Curriculum

As our Technology teachers continue to implement the IB MYP Design program, they are constantly looking for ways to enhance their courses and remain ahead of the ever-changing world of instructional technology. In the spring of 2017, our teachers explored a variety of new resources for exposing students to new developments in technology. These new resources include our Middle School Makerspace where students invent and explore with various technologies including robotics, coding, and engineering. These new resources support new and improved modules of the program including in-depth computer coding, engineering, and 3d-design experiences. An example of an engineering resource that will be expanded can be viewed here at the Whitebox Learning website <https://www.whiteboxlearning.com/applications>. We are in Year II in introducing a platform that will develop coding skills in all of our students, grades 6-8. Our teachers were busy this summer adjusting courses to provide students with opportunities to explore these new technologies using a hands-on learning environment. With the addition of Chromebooks in all grades, there will be an emphasis on the Google Apps for Education. Once again this year, our Makerspace club will be available to Grades 6-8 with availability both before school and after school. We also have a new computer coding club, (Google CS First) available to Grades 6-8. More information on clubs and activities will be sent directly to parents and available on our website.

For more information about our Design curriculum, the Chromebook initiative, the Infinite Campus Portal or other technology related questions or concerns, please visit the Technology Department web page at: http://www.pelhamschools.org/groups/3777/educational_technology/educational_technology or contact our Director of Technology, Mr. Joseph Catania at jcatania@pelhamschools.org.

Dignity for All Students Act (DASA)

The Board of Education of the Pelham Public Schools, along with the administration, faculty, and staff of Pelham Middle School are committed to providing all students with a safe and productive learning environment. The school expects that all students and staff will conduct themselves in a manner that allows all students to focus on educational growth and healthy interpersonal development. If students choose to not allow others the opportunity to learn by harassing, hazing and/or bullying, students may be subject to disciplinary action as provided in the Pelham Board of Education Policy on Student Conduct.

Any student or parent who wishes to report violations of DASA may contact the middle school DASA Coordinator, Dr. Tricia Joseph at (914) 738-8190, ext. 1197 or any other member of the school faculty or administration.

Parent/Teacher Conferences

Here at Pelham Middle School, we believe the parent/teacher partnership is essential for supporting young adolescents through these critical, middle school years. We will continue to utilize the internet-based appointment booking system, *Pick-a-Time* to coordinate appointment times. Instructions on how to use Pick-a-Time to schedule appointments will be sent to all parents in November. Teachers will be available for **7 minute** conferences on the following days and times: Thursday, November 30 - 1:00-4:30, Thursday, December 7 - 1:00-3:00; 5:30-8:30, and Wednesday, December 13 - 8:15-12:00; 1:00-4:00; 5:30-8:30. Spring conferences will be made by **invitation** to the parents of students who are in need and will be scheduled as Team Meetings whenever possible. Spring conferences will occur on Thursday, March 8 and Thursday, March 15 from 1:00-4:30 on both afternoons. We believe that in order to improve student performance, parent/teacher communication is critical. Individual conferences, phone calls, emails and team meetings are always available and may be initiated by parents, teachers, counselors or building administrators at various times during the school year.

Opening Day – Thursday, September 7, 2017

On Thursday, September seventh Pelham Middle School students will attend school as follows. Sixth graders will report directly to the middle school library by 8:15 AM where they will participate in a brief orientation. The purpose of the orientation is to familiarize our new students with the facility, their teachers, their daily schedule and their lockers. Sixth graders will also participate in several opening day activities throughout the day. Students in seventh grade will report to the middle school gym at 8:30 AM and eighth graders will report to the middle school gym at 9:00 AM where they will receive their class schedules, student planners, and other important information. Lunch service will be available on the first day of school. Dismissal for all students will be at 2:51 PM.

All students will receive their school schedule and other information on the first day of school. Students will attend school at the following times on Thursday, September 7, 2017:

Grade 6 – 8:15 AM – 2:51 PM – Report to PMS Library

Grade 7 – 8:30 AM – 2:51 PM – Report to PMS Gym

Grade 8 – 9:00 AM – 2:51 PM – Report to PMS Gym

Middle School Bell Schedule

The official start of the school day is 8:15 AM and the end of the school day is 2:51 PM. We also encourage all students to take advantage of our Academy Period, from 2:51 to 3:11 PM for help with homework and other academic needs. All of our teachers are available during the Academy Period, every day! Our library will have extended hours on Monday through Thursday starting Monday, September 11 until 4:00 PM. Eighth grade students taking Advanced Studio Art will begin their day at 7:32 AM, during Period 0. **Please see the attached bell schedule and delayed opening schedule for the 2017-18 school year. Note: All delayed opening days end at 3:03 PM.**

New Staff

Please join us in welcoming the following new staff members to the Pelham Middle School Community:

Sara Pinsker	English – Grade 8
Samantha Grossman	Reading - Grade 6
Alexis Betancourt	Special Education – Foundations Program
Monica Ricci	School Psychologist – Therapeutic Support Program
Ellen Driscoll	Latin – 6-12
Mary Preston	Art – 6-8

Communication

The middle school website will be updated and revised during the upcoming school year. Our website is a valuable tool for parents and students for communicating with school personnel and for obtaining pertinent school information. The school calendar, as well as our middle school policies and procedures, are on our website. You are encouraged to review our policies and procedures with your children. Our food service has a link on our website. Please visit the food service website for more information. Most communications from the middle school will be sent as email blasts. Please be sure to keep us informed of changes to your email address and other contact information as necessary. Parents can also sign up to receive email alerts from the district by registering at <https://goo.gl/ghZ1dd>

Middle School Clubs, Activities, Academic Competitions

Pelham Middle School has many clubs, activities, and competitions designed to offer students a variety of opportunities to become involved in school life, to explore and develop their interests and talents, and to contribute to the overall middle school program. While these activities are not required, our students are encouraged to participate. Activities offered may change year to year, based on student interest. The following is a list of extracurricular and afterschool activities. A full description of each club is available from our website and will be emailed out to parents in September. Clubs meet at different times throughout the year and are announced during morning announcements. For more information, including meeting dates and times please contact the advisor or check our website.

Club/Activity/Competition	Advisor	
24 Math Club	Mr. Friel	dfriel@pelhamschools.org
eighth Grade Mural Committee	Mrs. Schwarz	rschwarz@pelhamschools.org
Academic Triathlon	Mrs. Bonaccorso	jbonaccorso@pelhamschools.org
American Math Competition 8	Dr. Callahan	tcallahan@pelhamschools.org
Art Club	Mrs. Schwarz	rschwarz@pelhamschools.org
Chess and Strategy Club	Mr. Brown	sbrown@pelhamschools.org
Drama Club	Mr. Beck	tbeck@pelhamschools.org
Dungeons and Dragons Club	Mr. Brown	sbrown@pelhamschools.org
Forensics Speech Program	Mr. Beck	tbeck@pelhamschools.org
French Club	Mr. Avena	savena@pelhamschools.org
Living History Club	Mr. Acocella	dacocella@pelhamschools.org
Mandarin Club	Ms. He	yhe@pelhamschools.org
Margaret's Place	Ms. Charles	scharles@pelhamschools.org
Math Olympiad	Ms. Vitale	jvitale@pelhamschools.org
Mindfulness Club	Mrs. Lieggi	klieggi@pelhamschools.org
Morning Basketball (7:15-8:00 AM)	Mr. Finegan	mfinegan@pelhamschools.org
National Geographic Bee	Mrs. Thompson	mthompson@pelhamschools.org
Newspaper Club (Pelham Post)	Ms. Rosenberg Ms. Pixley	lrosenberg@pelhamschools.org rpixley@pelhamschools.org
Pelham Cares / S.A.D.D (Students Against Destructive Decisions)	Mr. Steinfeld	jsteinfeld@pelhamschools.org
Pelham Middle School G.O.	Mr. Acocella	dacocella@pelhamschools.org
Science Olympiad	Mrs. Battema	lbattema@pelhamschools.org
Spelling Bee	Mrs. DeVito	wdevito@pelhamschools.org
STEAM Research Club	Mrs. Buckley	mbuckley@pelhamschools.org
Technology/Engineering/Robotics Club	Mr. LaGreca	jlagreca@pelhamschools.org
Google CS First Computer Club	Mrs. Satalich	psatalich@pelhamschools.org
Yearbook	Mrs. Salman	jsalman@pelhamschools.org

Interscholastic Athletics – Modified Sports

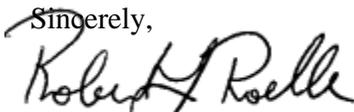
Modified sports are offered to our seventh and eighth grade students. Modified athletics is the beginning of our athletic program and are the foundation of our JV and Varsity programs. Our students will begin to learn the importance of being a student-athlete and the dedication it takes to be part of a team. Modified teams are expected to practice Monday - Friday and games will be played on weekdays. All members of a team will play in each scheduled game. Playing time may not be equal but everyone plays. To be eligible a student must have a valid physical and complete the family ID form which can be found on our school website under "Athletics". Sports that are offered in the fall season are boys & girls soccer, field hockey, football, boys & girls cross country, and volleyball. During the winter season, we offer boys & girls basketball and ice hockey. For the spring season, we offer baseball, softball, boys & girls track, and boys & girls lacrosse. The start dates will be the week of 9/11 for the Fall, Monday, 11/27 for the Winter, and Monday, 3/19 for the Spring.

Important Upcoming Dates

Wednesday, August 30	Gr. 7 & 8 Locker Distribution - 10:00 AM – 11:30 (seventh) 1:00 – 2:30 PM (eighth)
Wed-Fri 08/30-09/01	Gr. 8 Chromebook Reactivation, 8:30 AM – 3:30 PM, PMHS Room 113A
Thursday, August 31	Grade 6 "Bagels and Locks", 10:30 AM – 12:30 PM
Thursday, September 7	First Day of School/Student orientation sessions; Lunch program begins
Monday, September 11	Extended Library hours begin (until 4:00 PM, Monday-Thursday)
Wednesday, September 13	PTA Meeting, 7:00 PM
Tuesday, September 19	Middle School Back to School/Open House, 7:00 PM
Thurs./Fri. Sept. 21-22	No School – Rosh Hashanah
Monday, October 9	No School – Columbus Day
Thurs./Fri., October 12/13	Yearbook Picture Days
Mon-Wed, Oct. 16-18	Grade 8 – Frost Valley Overnight Trip
Tuesday, October 17	2-Hour Delay (10:15 start time)
Friday, October 27	G.O. Dance (Grades 7 & 8), 7-9 PM
Friday, November 3	Grade 6 – Friday Night Live Dance, 7-9 PM

I truly believe that successful schools are built upon strong partnerships between and among all members of the school community. We are very fortunate in Pelham to have a wonderful facility, outstanding teachers and staff, supportive parents and great students. To this end, I look forward to working closely with you and your children as we work together to continue the tradition of excellence at Pelham Middle School.

Sincerely,


Robert J. Roelle, Ed.D.
Principal