



LEARNING • ACHIEVEMENT • GROWTH • DIRECTION



POCANTICO HILLS CENTRAL SCHOOL

599 Bedford Road • Sleepy Hollow, N.Y. 10591 • 914-631-2440 • fax 914-631-3280 • www.pocanticohills.org

September 2017

Dear Families,

It is hard to believe that September has already passed and we have now settled into the routine of the school year. It was a pleasure meeting many of you during our September Back to School evenings. As I shared during some of my brief remarks, please feel free to reach out to me with any questions during the school year. I look forward to building the same healthy relationships with families that I enjoyed in my prior district. Indeed, I have already met with a number of you and always appreciate the opportunity to chat in person.

Most importantly, I look forward to getting to know your child as I continue to make my transition to Pocantico. During September I enjoyed the opportunity to meet with every elementary class for a read aloud. I chose to share the story *We are all Wonders* by R.J. Palacio. Many of you may be familiar with the young adult novel *Wonder* by the same author and its theme of kindness and tolerance. Certainly, these reflect important values that we expect to continue to nurture at Pocantico. Aside from reading this story to every elementary class, I also spoke to each grade in the middle school, sharing a personal story that also addressed the theme of kindness. My message was simple: at Pocantico we all take care of one another.

I am hopeful that as we move forward in our school year we will be organizing a Community Read evening in February using the novel *Wonder* as the focus for small group discussions about the central themes in the book. For those of you who may not be familiar with a Community Read evening, the event invites interested students, parents and staff to school for small group discussions around the central theme of the book. These discussions are facilitated by staff and parents and include students. It is an excellent opportunity to further nurture a healthy school climate and effective partnerships between a school and its families.

As we move into October, I am delighted to report that students at Pocantico will be exposed to chess during the school day. Thanks to the generous support of the Pocantico School Foundation, beginning in 1st grade students will enjoy weekly chess instruction. Our program will be facilitated by Alanna Katz of Think Ahead Chess. Ms. Katz has had extensive experience with chess instruction in schools, including a wealth of experience with tournament play. I am delighted to bring her program to Pocantico, as I had worked with her in my prior district where she had built a vibrant chess program in three short years! We expect to begin weekly instruction toward the end of October.

Finally, as we continue to move forward in our work together, our responsibility in fostering an emotionally intelligent school culture will continue to be a large part of my leadership work. I was delighted to present to the Board of Education last week to share some of the initial work that is underway with staff and students. Simply, schools that prioritize social and emotional learning enjoy a school culture that better reflects healthy decision-making, quality relationships and improved

attention, memory and learning in classrooms. We are committed to the framework developed by the Yale Center for Emotional Intelligence. I look forward to sharing the components of this framework as we become better equipped in our own professional understanding to ensure an effective implementation with our students.

As the weather continues to cool and the days shorten, there is great work happening at Pocantico. It is a privilege to be here and I am excited about the wonderful work that is before us.

With Warm Regards,

Brent Harrington
Principal