



LEARNING • ACHIEVEMENT • GROWTH • DIRECTION



# POCANTICO HILLS CENTRAL SCHOOL

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January 5, 2018

Dear Families,

Happy New Year!

I recently came across an editorial published in *The New York Times* just prior to the new year discussing the role that feelings of gratitude and compassion have in an individual meeting their desired goals. The author, [David DeSteno](#), a professor of psychology at Northeastern University, shared that his years of research in studying these emotions indicate that “unlike reason and willpower, [compassion and gratitude] naturally incline us to be patient and persevere.” Simply, feelings of gratitude naturally increase an individual’s ability to demonstrate self-control, regulate emotions and persevere through challenging tasks and obstacles.

While I encourage you to read this article in its entirety, I reference it in my first newsletter of 2018 because of its obvious relationship to our work in building an emotionally intelligent school community. Indeed, there is much at Pocantico to feel grateful for and compassionate about—as a student, parent, teacher and administrator—and the reminder of keeping these emotions at the center of our collective work helps to ensure that we can continue to grow and improve as a school community. As the author notes, “In nudging the mind to be more patient and more selfless, they benefit everyone whom our decisions impact, including our own future selves. In short, they give us not only grit but also grace.”

With this in mind, I am pleased to update you on the following initiatives:

- Given our continued work with the [Anchors of Emotional Intelligence](#), the Mood Meter is increasingly being utilized in our classrooms as our staff becomes more knowledgeable and confident in its use with our students. Additionally, thanks to the support of our Pocantico Hills School Foundation, we will begin implementing the [Second Step](#) program in many of our classrooms. Led by our new elementary guidance counselor, Ms. Sara Sonne, this social-emotional learning program explicitly teaches students pro-social skills including empathy, problem-solving and impulse control.



- As we further our collective work on emotional intelligence, I am delighted to share that our new Diversity Committee will begin this month with the goal of further supporting and celebrating the rich diversity at Pocantico. Our committee includes representation from teachers, administrators and parents, as our volunteers will work in concert with one another to support valuable future initiatives in our school community. While our committee presently consists of 10 individuals, I expect that subcommittees will be formed specific to different work, providing opportunities for additional participation from those who may have a future interest.



- Our chess program continues to gain momentum and interest. There is an abundance of research that has long indicated that chess helps to support students' strategic thinking, support mathematical achievement and is even tied to emotional intelligence by fostering impulse control and self-regulation. I am delighted that this program has been so well-received, and we look forward to our instructors, [Alanna Katz and Abby Marshall](#), continuing their good work with our students in grades 1 - 6.

Finally, in case you missed the community email that was sent in early December, Ms. Bonnie Berry, has joined our building staff as the new administrative assistant in the principal's office. Ms. Berry joined Pocantico shortly after my own arrival working in District office. Her prior experience as an administrative assistant to the principal has made her the perfect fit for our school community. True to my message on gratitude, Ms. Berry has been one of the many reasons I have been so grateful moving into 2018 at Pocantico! Any information specific to our building that may need to be obtained or any changes to dismissal for your child should be communicated directly to Ms. Berry. Absences should continue to be conveyed to our nurse, Gay Harmon.

With that said, I look forward to our continued work together and feel much gratitude for being part of this unique and wonderful community.

Best,

*Brent*

Brent Harrington  
Principal  
Pocantico Hills Central School District



*Scenes from our winter concerts.*

