

How Does the Dignity For All Students Act (DASA) Support My Child?

The Board of Education recognizes that a learning environment that is safe and supportive can increase student attendance and improve academic achievement. A student's ability to learn and achieve high academic standards, and a school's ability to educate students, is compromised by incidents of discrimination or harassment, including but not limited to bullying, taunting, hazing and intimidation. The District will strive to create an environment free of discrimination and harassment and will foster civility in the schools to prevent and prohibit conduct which is inconsistent with the District's educational mission.

The District condemns and prohibits all forms of discrimination and harassment of students based on actual or perceived race, color, weight, national origin, ethnic group, religion, religious practice, disability, sexual orientation, gender or sex by school employees or students on school property or at school-sponsored events and activities that take place on or off of school property. In addition, any act of discrimination or harassment outside of school-sponsored events which can reasonably be expected to materially and substantially disrupt the educational process may be subject to discipline.

The school's Dignity Act Coordinator is Mr. Brent Harrington.

POCANTICO HILLS SCHOOL

Important Information for Parents



LEARNING • ACHIEVEMENT • GROWTH • DIRECTION



This booklet contains important information about school policies and procedures, as well as contact information if you have additional questions.

As always, your feedback is appreciated.

Pocantico Hills School District
599 Bedford Road, Sleepy Hollow, NY 10591



pocanticohills.org

pocanticohills.org

Important Contact Information

Principal's Office:	Brent Harrington x712 Bonnie Berry x153
Student Support Services:	Celia Strino x192
Guidance:	Jim McVeigh x117 Sara Sonne x198
Curriculum & Technology	Adam Brown x132
Registration:	Vanessa Knightner x700
Health & Attendance:	Gay Harmon x113
Business & Facilities:	Marianne Heslin x709
Transportation:	Jane Anastasi x707
Food Service:	Kassie Arcate x709
Modified Athletics:	Cesar Sanchez x118
After-Care Program	x153

To reach a staff member, simply type first initial, last name followed by @pocanticohills.org

Example: bharrington@pocanticohills.org

What Is the District's Policy on Using *Photographs and Information*?

Students' names, grade levels and photos may be published on the District website, in school publications or released to the media to recognize student achievement or depict activities of the District. Parents who object to the use of their child's information or image for publicity purposes should complete the Photography and Information Refusal form.

PLEASE NOTE: While the District will honor the request of any parent who has submitted written notification opting their child out of publicity efforts, the District is not responsible for media that covers news happenings, sporting events or school events. The District also releases certain types of neutral student information also known as "Directory Information." The District has designated the following types of information as "directory" in nature (For example: name, address, phone number, etc.). Under FERPA, parents may object in writing to the release of that information.

What is the *Dress Code* for Students?

Every school district in New York is required to have a dress code. The Board of Education Policy (Section 5300, Part V) states that all students at Pocantico Hills are expected to give proper attention to personal cleanliness and to dress appropriately in accordance with the guidelines listed. Please refer to the District website under "Board of Education" and "Board Policies."

What is the District's *Wellness Policy*?

The District is committed to developing healthy schools that support student learning and create an environment conducive to the health and well-being of faculty, staff and all students, while also supporting parents in accomplishing this goal. To that end, the Board of Education has adopted a policy (Policy Section 5405) that addresses: nutritional standards of foods and beverages sold on school grounds; physical education; extra-curricular activities; recess; emotional wellness; staff wellness; nutrition education and student awareness; community wellness and knowledge; and health education. This policy can be found on the District website at pocanticohills.org. under "Board of Education" tab.

Is My Child's Information Private and Secure?

Pursuant to Section 2-c and 2-d of the Education Law, parents and students are entitled to certain protections regarding confidential student information as set forth below:

- A student's personally identifiable information cannot be sold or released for any commercial purposes;
- Parents have the right to inspect and review the complete contents of their child's education record;
- The District is committed to implementing safeguards associated with industry standards and best practice under state and federal laws protecting the confidentiality of personally identifiable information, including but not limited to encryption, firewalls, and password protection when data is stored or transferred;
- A complete list of all student data elements collected by the State is available for public review at: <http://www.p12.nysed.gov/docs/parents-bill-of-rights.pdf> or by writing to Information & Reporting Services, Room 863 EBA, 89 Washington Avenue, Albany, NY 12234;
- Parents have the right to have complaints about possible breaches of student data addressed. Complaints should be directed to the Superintendent at 599 Bedford Road, Sleepy Hollow, NY 10591;
- Agreements with third party contractors/consultants will ensure that the subcontractors, persons, or entities that the third party contractor/consultant will share the data with, if any, will abide by data protection and security requirements;
- A parent, student, eligible student, teacher or principal may challenge the accuracy of the data that is collected by filing a written request with the Superintendent of Schools or his/her administrative designee, by sending a written challenge to the Pocantico Hills School at 599 Bedford Road, Sleepy Hollow, NY 10591.

Is There Support For My Child If His/Her English Is Limited?

Within 30 days of the start of the school year, parents of Limited English Proficient students will be notified if their child is participating in, or identified as eligible for, a program of bilingual education or for English-as-a-New Language (ENL) instruction. Parents will also be notified within two weeks after placement, if their child is placed in such program or will receive such services after the beginning of the school year. In addition, parents will be advised of their rights, including their right to decline having their child enrolled in the program.

What Are the Registration Requirements for Enrolling My Child?

Information and forms relating to the enrollment of students in the District can be obtained on the District's website at pocanticohills.org. Under the "Parents" tab, click "Parent Information" and scroll down to "Important Forms" and click "Registration Packet."

New York State Education Law also requires that each public school district account for the education of all resident minors. Please help the District comply with this requirement. If your child is home-schooled or attends a nonpublic school and has not previously been registered, please contact Mrs. Vanessa Knightner at 914-631-2440, ext. 700.

How Do I Access School District Records?

Requests for information that the District makes available according to the Freedom of Information Law should be addressed by going to the District's website at pocanticohills.org. Under the "Parents" tab, click "Parent Information." Scroll down to "FOIL – Freedom of Information Law Requests."

What Is a Code of Conduct, where can I find it?

The Board of Education, in accordance with Project SAVE Legislation, has adopted a Code of Conduct for the District. The Code of Conduct governs the conduct of students, teachers, staff and visitors, and is meant to help maintain a safe, orderly school. A Plain Language Code of Conduct is sent to parents and shared with students each year during the month of September. A complete version of the Code of Conduct is also available on the District's website and is published in the handbook.

How Do I Apply For Free and Reduced-Priced Lunch?

Free/reduced meal applications are available at any time during the school year. Applications are available in the business office and on the District website at pocanticohills.org. Click the "Parent" tab and then click "Parent Information" and scroll down to "Important Forms."

How Do I Access Student Records?

Under the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA), parents and students over 18 years of age have the right to inspect and review the student's records or request an amendment of records believed to be incorrect. They can also withhold consent on disclosure of personally identifiable information, except in cases where the law allows for disclosure without consent. <http://www2.ed.gov/policy/gen/guid/fpco/ferpa/index.html>

Parents have the right to ask for and review records about their child unless the District has been legally notified in writing that their rights as a parent have been terminated or otherwise limited by court order. Upon the parents' request, the District must make a child's records available within a reasonable time; in no case more than 45 calendar days after requested; before any meeting about their child's individualized education program (IEP); and before any due process hearing about their child's special education needs.

The rights of parents concerning educational records transfer to students at age 18. However, the District may disclose educational records to an eligible student's parents if the student is claimed as a dependent for Federal income tax purposes by either parent, without the student's consent.

Student records and or student record information may not be released without a parents' consent unless it is given to school officials, including BOCES or private school officials or district consultants and agents (e.g., school physician, school attorney, insurance company, service provider and/or evaluators) with a legitimate educational interest, state/local educational authorities or certain individuals designated under federal law; or otherwise as permitted by law (FERPA).

How Is Student Health Data Collected and Shared?

Because New York State is interested in child health data, schools are required to record students' height, weight and Body Mass Index (BMI). If our district is surveyed by the state, we will only share group data (for instance, the number of second grade boys whose BMI is below the fifth percentile), not individual data. However, if parents wish for their child's data to be excluded from such group calculations, they may do so by contacting the school nurse.

Marianne Heslin, 914-631-2440 ext. 709:

Title IX (sexual harassment/gender- or sex-based discrimination)

Title VII (discrimination in employment based on race, color, religion, sex and national origin)

Title VI (discrimination based upon race, color, creed, national origin, ethnic group, religion)

Section 504 (disability-based discrimination and/or harassment)

General Non-discrimination - Questions about this non-discrimination policy may be directed to the appropriate Compliance Officer, c/o District Clerk-Pocantico Hills, 599 Bedford Road, Sleepy Hollow, NY 10591. The appropriate compliance officer has information related to grievance procedures. The Board also prohibits any retaliatory behavior against complainants or any witnesses. Any individual who believes that he/she has been subject to discrimination or harassment on the basis of race, color, weight, national origin, ethnic group, religion, religious practice, disability, sex, sexual orientation, or gender (including gender identity and expression) should report the alleged misconduct immediately, to the appropriate compliance officer, so that corrective action, up to and including discharge of an employee or suspension of a student, may be taken at once. In the event that the Compliance Officer is the offender, the complainant shall report his/her complaint to the next level of supervisory authority. The complainant shall not be discouraged from reporting an incident of alleged discrimination or harassment. In the absence of a victim's complaint, the Board, upon learning of, or having reason to suspect the occurrence of any discrimination or harassment, will ensure that an investigation is promptly commenced by appropriate individuals. Any person who has knowledge of specific acts that he or she reasonably believes constitutes wrongful conduct should disclose the conduct to the appropriate district official.

Please see the following policies for additional pertinent information and complaint procedures: <http://www2.ed.gov/about/offices/list/ocr/index.html>

What Does *Responsible Use of Technology* Mean?

Using technology responsibly means that students and adults are using their devices, as well as their access to the network and the Internet, in ways that are productive, safe, thoughtful, respectful and ethical. The District has developed Responsible Use Policies that explain how students and teachers should use technology at the school. These policies must be signed by students, parents and teachers, and they are available on the District's website.

Does the District Have An *Asbestos Management Plan*?

In accordance with federal law, the District has in place a management plan to identify and manage asbestos building materials. The Asbestos Management Plan is on file and available for review in the District Office during regular business hours.

Can I Be Notified If *Pesticides* Will Be Applied?

The District is required by law to maintain a list of staff and persons in parental relation who wish to receive forty-eight (48) hour prior written notification of pesticide applications at relevant facilities. Please see the District calendar.

Does Everyone Have *Equal Opportunities*? What if I have a concern?

The District hereby advises students, parents, employees and the general public that it does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, creed, gender, national origin, religion, age, economic status, marital status, military status, disability, predisposing genetic characteristics or sexual orientation in its educational programs, activities or employment practices and provides equal access to different youth groups.

This policy of nondiscrimination includes, but is not limited to: (a) access by students to educational programs, counseling services, course offerings, student athletics, student employment assistance, extracurricular activities and other school resources; and (b) recruitment and appointment of employees, as well as their compensation, benefits, opportunities for advancement and/or terminations.

Further, the District, its officers, employees and agents shall not discriminate against students on the basis of actual or perceived race, color, weight, national origin, ethnic group, religion, religious practice, disability, sex; sexual orientation, or gender (including gender identity and expression).

What Are My *Rights Regarding Surveys, Screenings, or Examinations*?

The Protection of Pupil Rights Amendment (PPRA) affords parents and students over 18 years of age certain rights with regard to student surveys, instructional materials, physical examinations or screenings, and the collection, disclosure, or use of personal information. The District will provide you the specific or approximate dates during the school year when any of the following are scheduled or expected to be scheduled:

1. Activities involving the collection, disclosure or use of personal information collected from students for the purpose of marketing or selling that information;
2. The administration of any survey containing one or more of the items in the PPRA. Any non-emergency, invasive physical examination or screening that is required as a condition of attendance, administered by a school and scheduled by the school in advance, and not necessary to protect the immediate health and safety of the student and/or other students. You will have the opportunity to exclude your child from participating in any of the above activities, by notifying the District in writing. Please call or contact the Principal of your child's school if you have questions about this notice.

Can I Request *Information about My Child's Teacher*?

Pursuant to the federal Every Student Succeeds Act, parents may request information regarding the professional qualifications of their child's classroom teachers and teaching assistants including:

- Whether state requirements and licensing criteria have been met for the grade level and subject area being taught.
- If the teacher is working under emergency or other provisional status under which state qualification and licensing criteria have been waived.
- The teacher's college major and subsequent advanced degrees.
- Qualifications of any teaching assistants providing services to your child.
- If an uncertified teacher will be working in a classroom for four or more weeks.

Requests for the above information may be directed to the Superintendent's Office.

In accordance with NYS Education Law 3012-c, parents have the right to access the composite APPR score for the teacher(s) and/or Principal of the school building to which their child is assigned during the current school year.

What If My Child Qualifies for *Special Education Services*?

Children with special needs may be entitled to additional services from the school district in which they reside. If your child has special needs and is not known to the school administration, please call the District Office. Parents or persons in parental relation of newly enrolled students are hereby notified that they may obtain additional information regarding the referral and evaluations of student suspected of or having disabilities by reviewing the publication "A Parent's Guide to Special Education in New York State for Children Ages 3-21" on the New York State Education Department website at <http://www.p12.nysed.gov/specialed/parentpubs.htm> and/or by review the following Procedural Safeguards Notice at <http://www2.ed.gov/policy/speced/guid/idea/modelform-safeguards.pdf>

What Is *Section 504* of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973?

Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, commonly called "Section 504," is a federal law that protects students from discrimination based on disability. Section 504 assures that students with disabilities have educational opportunities and benefits equal to those provided to students without disabilities. Students may be eligible for evaluation and reasonable accommodations to enable access to educational facilities, programs and services. To be eligible, a student must have a physical or mental impairment that substantially limits one or more major life activities. If you believe that your child may have a disability and be entitled to reasonable accommodations and/or services, please contact Special Education Office at 914-631-2440, x192.

What is *Title I*? Is there a district plan for *parental involvement*?

Title I is the federal program that provides funding to improving the academic achievement of disadvantaged students. School Boards receiving federal Title I funds must adopt a written parent involvement policy that is developed jointly with, agreed on with, and distributed to, parents of participating children and is incorporated into the District's Title I plan. Please contact Mr. Brent Harrington at 914-631-2440, x712.

What Is the District's Policy on *Promotion and Retention*?

The District's policy regarding student grade promotion and retention (Policy Section 4750) can be found on the District website at pocantico-hills.org. under the "Board of Education" tab.

What Is the *Attendance Policy*? What If my child is sick?

The District believes that regular school attendance and student success have a direct correlation. It is the intent of the District to strongly encourage students to be in attendance every day. Therefore, our goal is to have students participate in their education for the mandated 180 days a year. All children of compulsory attendance age (6 through the school year in which a child turns 16) must attend school on a regular basis.

In the case of a student's absence from school, parents are required to call the main attendance office at their school by the start of the school day to inform them of the reason for the student's absence. Otherwise, the school will make a reasonable attempt to contact the parents regarding the student's absence. This policy can be found on the District website at pocanticohills.org under "Board of Education" tab.

Please note that a written excuse must be provided and brought to the Nurse's attendance office by the student upon his/her return to school. Without a note, the student's absence from school is deemed unexcused.

What If I Am or Become Homeless? What are my rights and who do I contact?

All programs and services of the District are available to homeless students and unaccompanied youth. Whenever a homeless child or unaccompanied youth seeks to enroll in the District, and at least twice annually while the child is enrolled, the parent and child will be informed of their rights. Some of these rights include the right to attend the school they previously attended or to attend school in the district of current location, the right to be enrolled even though the admission requirements have not been completed and prior student records are not available, and the right to transportation to and from school.

The District's Homeless Liaison is: Mrs. Marianne Heslin,
Pocantico Hills School, 599 Bedford Road, Sleepy Hollow, NY 10591