



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](http://www.pocanticohills.org)

December 4, 2017

Dear Families,

With November behind us and December upon us, I hope that you all had an opportunity to enjoy precious time with family and friends over the Thanksgiving break. Indeed, the holiday season can feel like a whirlwind of festivities and chores that include both the stresses of holiday shopping and the joys of holiday celebrations. While we may feel the constant struggle to complete an ever-expanding holiday “to do” list, I do hope that you find the time to enjoy these weeks ahead and recognize those around us that may need our support and comfort.

Certainly, November proved to be another busy month filled with many exciting experiences for our students, including the numerous rehearsals in preparation of our middle school production of *Willie Wonka and the Chocolate Factory*. The hard work and commitment of our students culminated in a spectacular performance by many of our 6<sup>th</sup>, 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> grade students this past weekend at Morse Elementary School in Tarrytown. It was magnificent to see so many participate in this performance; and of course, it provided a fabulous way to begin our holiday season together. A sincere thank you is extended to our Director Ms. Sheila DePaola for her tireless work in preparing and supporting our students. Also, Ms. Melissa Lupi—Co-Director—and Mr. Michael Murray—Assistant Director—deserve praise for helping to support this fine production.

As the holiday season is upon us, and we reflect on the many past and future happenings in the district that benefit our students, our commitment to nurture an emotionally intelligent school climate remains at the core of our work. As we continue our investment in the Anchors of Emotional Intelligence, I am excited to further support this good work by investing in the Second Step curriculum and providing students with consistent lessons on pro-social behavior through our new part-time elementary guidance counselor—Ms. Sara Sonne. Additionally, I am excited to form a Diversity Committee at Pocantico that includes staff and parent representatives to help support opportunities to celebrate our beautiful diversity. I look forward to sharing updates about this good work with you in the new year.

And, of course, our fine staff continue to be invested in growing their practice. Our elementary classroom teachers are committed to Readers and Writers Workshop through their professional development with consultant Laura Sarsten. The infancy of our work in middle school to nurture Project-Based Learning through our STREAM initiative is showing promise as our 7th grade students are preparing to present to a number of staff members in the building, while our 8th grade students are immersed in their innovation and design work.

Finally, as we journey into the holiday season and approach the midpoint of the school year, a temperature check on our school culture seems both healthy and appropriate. While the demographics of schools can widely differ based on size, socio-economics, ethnicity, geography and many other variables, every successful school can point to a single commonality—a positive school climate. Culture assumes a shared sense of values, principles, expectations of behavior and collective vision that are overwhelmingly shared by those who belong to the community. A collective responsibility around norms of behavior and shared principles ensures that an institution’s expressed tenets are, indeed, real and reflect the day to day behaviors of those in the community. Our work with the Anchors of Emotional Intelligence and our School Charter helps to set us on this important path. And, regardless of our role in this fine school community, we all bear the enormous responsibility of shaping and maintaining our school’s culture—administrators, teachers, staff, parents and students.

This is not to imply that everyone, everyday models exemplary behavior. While we may strive to be our best selves every day, of course, we all occasionally fall short. The power and beauty of a healthy school climate is that we all continue to strive towards a perfect vision of our community that we know is never quite attainable. Nonetheless, the collective effort and vision that we hold promotes success and nurtures an environment of a happy school.

As we get ready to celebrate the holidays with our families and friends I hope that the happiness, optimism and connectedness that often exists in our building is experienced by each Pocantico family during this holiday season.

With Gratitude,

Brent B. Harrington--Principal