



LEARNING • ACHIEVEMENT • GROWTH • DIRECTION



POCANTICO HILLS CENTRAL SCHOOL

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March 5, 2018

Dear Families,

“Be present at all times and thankful for all things,” said the late and noted African-American poet—Maya Angelou. Indeed, her words seem appropriate as we reflect on our celebration of Black History Month and look towards Women’s History Month this March. There is much to be thankful for as we reflect on last month’s happenings while looking forward to several exciting experiences planned for March.

Of course, February marked Black History month, and its celebration was recognized each morning with sharing a noted African-American’s contribution to our nation’s history during our morning announcements. Additionally, a visual display helped to capture the essence of the month’s importance, and special artwork was shared by local artist Gloria Forte. The month culminated in a special presentation for our students in grades 2 – 8 from the Bokandeye African-American Dance Theater. Their presentation focused on traditional West African dance and music and was well-received by our students. A warm thank you to our supportive PTA in providing the financial support to ensure that we could hold this fabulous assembly.



The beginning of February provided an opportunity for parents to partake in some of the new games and routines that have been initiated during recess through our partnership with Playworks. A staff developer and facilitator introduced these games to families for an enjoyable evening of healthy play. Again, this work supports our commitment to Emotional Intelligence and works in concert with Yale’s Anchors of Emotional Intelligence.

Aside from our celebration of Black History Month, we held our first successful Community Read evening on February 15th, highlighting R.J. Palacio’s celebrated novel *Wonder* and the children’s picture book edition *We’re All Wonders*. The evening proved an enormous success with over 40 families in grades PK-8 in attendance as well as a healthy turnout of our own staff members. After brief introductions, students, families and staff discussed the text in age appropriate groups facilitated by our teachers. A special thanks to our Library/Media Specialist—Ms. Anne Gordon—who was critical in organizing the evening’s success.

February concluded with Pocantico's annual Jump Rope for Heart tradition. Our students in grades PK – 5 took part in 45 minutes of jump rope activities to raise awareness on healthy heart activities. A special thanks to Ms. Sheila DePaola and Mr. Dan Linehan for organizing and facilitating this annual tradition.

As March is upon us and we continue to recognize and celebrate women's contributions to our nation's history, February was marked with another tragic act of school violence in Florida. As we continue to wrestle with issues of school safety in our country, students have increasingly begun to demonstrate civic engagement and voice their concerns in healthy and democratic ways. Many of you may be aware that a nation-wide peaceful and civil protest is being organized by students from 10:00 to 10:17 on March 14th. Some of our middle school students have appropriately requested to organize, and we see this as an opportunity for our students to safely have their voices heard. We will be sending additional information about March 14 as plans develop.

Aside from this National School Walk-Out Event, it is important to note that we will also be bringing John Halligan of *Ryan's Story* to Pocantico on March 15th for our middle school students. This PTA sponsored event will allow our 5th through 8th grade students to hear Mr. Halligan share his son's tragic story that speaks to issues related to bullying.

Mr. Halligan shares his own tragic experience as a dad whose 13-year-old son, Ryan, took his own life in 2013 after incessant bullying by peers. Ryan wrestled with underlying mental health issues and depression and these factors contributed to his vulnerability and eventual suicide. Middle school parents are invited to attend the 9:15 presentation that will be followed by a question and answer session.

More information can be found by going to www.ryanpatrickhalligan.org. If you have further questions or concerns regarding your child's attendance at this presentation, please feel free to reach out to me directly. I have had the honor of hearing Mr. Halligan speak on several occasions during my tenure at my last school district, and I am personally appreciative of the PTA's effort to bring him to our students and families here at Pocantico.

This month marks the beginning of spring, and its hard to believe that we will soon be enjoying the warmer temperatures and anticipation of summer. This expectancy aside, as we move forward with each exciting experience and initiative for the students at Pocantico we can remind ourselves to continue to live the words of Maya Angelou and "Be present at all times and thankful for all things."

With Gratitude,

Brent

Brent B. Harrington
Principal

