



Peekskill City School District

A System Focused on Every Student; Every Day

The Mission of the Peekskill City School District is to educate students in a caring, inspiring environment characterized by a spirit of excellence and high expectations; prepare graduates to meet or exceed standards; graduate students who respect and appreciate cultural diversity; and prepare students to pursue adult lives as contributing citizens of our local and global community.

*Rodney Arthur
Principal*

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Dear Parents/Guardians,

As we approach the holiday season, there is much to be thankful for at Peekskill High School. I am thankful for the opportunity to serve as your child's principal. I am equally thankful for being a part of a committed community and having a dedicated staff that put the needs of children first. The staff and administration of PHS are thankful for your trust and partnership. Through active collaboration, we will create a home school partnership that will allow **ALL** students to flourish and *Dare to be GREAT*. We have amazing students striving to achieve their dreams and greatness. Your nurturing and tender touch lay the foundation to make this possible.

In an effort to support our students and families, the staff members of PHS donated \$1,050 to support families in need during this holiday season. The students in our Great Potential Program received over 50 items of nonperishable food from their food drive. This food was delivered to families on **Thursday, December 22nd**. In addition, two staff members combined their effort and resources to provide families with food, clothing and financial support totaling \$450.

On **Wednesday, December 21st**, Mr. Arthur, Principal and his wife, Dr. Arthur, sponsored a laptop and Kindle giveaway to students at PHS. With the collective efforts of the school counselors, social worker, school psychologists, teachers of the English Department and the school library media specialist, five students out of two hundred were selected to receive a laptop. In early December, the staff members of PHS were asked to identify a student who has demonstrated great improvement in attending school, shown academic progress and does not have a computer at home. After a three weeks period, the committee selected five students. For the Kindle giveaway, students were chosen after writing an essay explaining why they deserve to win a free Kindle. The five best essays were selected by the staff of PHS.

To celebrate their achievement and to honor their overall progress at PHS, a special luncheon was held for these students and their parents. The students who were selected for a laptop were not informed that they were nominated for an award. Moreover, they were not aware that they were going to be awarded a free Chromebook. They were presented with the laptop by the staff member who nominated them for the award. This was a special event that brought tears to the eyes of many who attended. Dr. David Fine, Superintendent of Schools, offered warm remarks to our students and their families.

Mid-way through, Mr. Arthur explained the purpose of the celebration. He informed students and their families that when he [Mr. Arthur] was a high school student, teachers filled the void in his life by providing him with unconditional support. He added that teachers took the time to get to know him and build a strong relationship with him, which encouraged Mr. Arthur to take risks and still feel confident, even when his responses were incorrect.

According to Mr. Arthur, when he graduated from high school, teachers gave him a financial award to assist him during his first year at college. Moreover, when Mr. Arthur graduated from Cortland College with his Bachelor's Degree, he wanted to become an educator. He [Mr. Arthur] did not have the financial means to pay for the the New York State Teacher Certification Examination, which was required in order for one to be a licensed teacher in New York State. The generosity of teachers greatly impacted Mr. Arthur's life and helped him to realize the important role teachers play in developing the character of students. At the end of the celebration, Mr. Arthur challenged the students to *Dare to be Great* and to always give back to those in need, especially children. The students were encouraged to watch the movie – *Pay It Forward*.

In November, three amazing PHS students in the Drama Club directed three interesting plays in the production, *Triple DeFright*:

- Emily Czerwinski directed *Fog on the Mountain* by Tim Kelly
- Gordon Evans directed *Trifles* by Susan Glaspell
- Deanna Rodrick directed *The Monkey's Paw* by W. W. Jacobs

From observing the students' work, it is clear to see that our children are ***creative, intelligent, brave, determined, daring, collaborative and caring***. It's amazing to witness what children can do when they are supported, encouraged and given opportunities. I hope our three young directors remember their Peekskill roots when they achieve fame. It is always important to give back to your community.

On ***Saturday, December 3rd***, Peekskill High School hosted its first FTC Robotics Competition. There were 13 teams from around the tristate area that competed in this event. It was a fantastic showcase of the creative minds of our children and the wonderful support they receive from their parents. PHS has two robotic teams and one of our teams was allowed to compete in the competition. Many of the schools we competed against have had robotics teams for the past 8 years and have developed funding networks to sustain their robotics program. The PHS Robotics team is in its third year and we were able to beat 4 other teams in the event. Hosting the FTC Robotics Competition has been a longstanding dream of Mr. Carlo Vidrini, PHS Robotics Teacher. ***"If you want something you've never had, you must be willing to do something you've never done."*** - ***Thomas Jefferson*** There were many hands that were directly involved in bringing this dream to fruition. This was truly a team effort. The event was successful and we received many praises for running a well-organized competition.

On ***Saturday, November 19th***, our extraordinary students in the Selected City Signers participated in a special musical event in Mamaroneck and gave us MUCH to be proud of as members of the Peekskill High School community. As a result of their great talent, they have been invited to participate in other upcoming musical events. Please find time to acknowledge our talented students. It is equally important to recognize how fortunate we are as a school community to have gifted teachers like Mr. Terry Sandler, Mr. Larry DelCasale, Mr. John Hahn, Mrs. Elizabeth Tabone and Mrs. Heather Brown guiding and nurturing our students. Special thanks to Ms. Laura Belfiore for her commitment to the Peekskill High School Drama Club. Dr. ***"The influence of teachers extends beyond the classroom, well into the future. It is they who shape and enrich the minds of the young, who touch their hearts and souls. It is they who shape a nation's future."***

On ***Thursday, December 15th***, our talented students performed in the Winter Concert. Their performances not only captured the imagination of their family members, friends and guests, it moved many of our visitors to tears of joy. There was standing room ONLY and the crowd left well

pleasured and reassured that our future is bright and promising. We are expecting our students to perform at the Paramount in Peekskill in the coming months. Additional details will be provided via the PHS webpage. We encourage you to continue to support all of our children at each school event.

Because of the coordination and combined efforts of Mr. George Goess, English Teacher, and Mrs. Angela Byrnes, English Teacher, we had a successful Blood Drive in November. This was our second blood drive for the 2016-17 school year. We had a total of 87 donations, which means that we potentially saved 261 lives.

We give thanks to Mr. Pete Peterson, Security Guard, and Mr. John O'Donnell, Social Studies Teacher, will be retiring at the end of the month after a combined 50 years of service to the City School District of Peekskill. Although I have only known them for a short time, I appreciate their guidance, counsel and commitment to children. *"The mediocre teacher tells. The good teacher explains. The superior teacher demonstrates. The great teacher inspires."* - William A. Ward

We welcomed Mrs. Amy Torres, School Counselor to the PHS family. She is assigned as the counselor in the Freshmen Academy. Mrs. Torres' primary responsibility is to support the needs and goals of all 9th graders. Mrs. Torres has hit the ground running and added value to the staff of PHS.

On **Saturday, December 10th**, Peekskill High School and the NAACP cosponsored a financial workshop for the Peekskill community – *Financial Choices that Matter*. Although the turnout was low, the message was powerful. Our guest speaker was Mr. Daryl Thompson of Prudential Securities. Mr. Thompson will return in the spring to continue to inform the members of the Peekskill community about the importance of financial literacy. We look forward to seeing many more members of the community attend this spring event to take advantage of the important information that will be shared.

On **December 20th**, the School Leadership Team of Peekskill High School made its annual presentation to the Board of Education highlighting steps implemented to improve the school culture, increase teaching and learning and prepare our students to be college and career ready. Moreover, we provided evidence to support our school-wide focus on addressing the five tenets outlined in the Comprehensive School Improvement Plan. This plan drives ALL of our decisions. This means that the time allocated for professional development and faculty meetings are being used consistently to support our work with the five tenets. From the presentation to the Board of Education, it is clear that the staff of PHS has fully embraced the challenge and have taken decisive steps to implement recommendations with fidelity. It is the collective responsibility of the School Leadership Team to be the vehicles to provide you with the information. You are encouraged to view the PowerPoint presentation posted on the PHS website. The five tenets are as follows:

- **Tenet 2:** *School Leader Practice and Decisions*
- **Tenet 3:** *Curriculum Development and Support*
- **Tenet 4:** *Teacher Practice and Decision*
- **Tenet 5:** *Student Social and Emotional Development and Health*

○ **Tenet 6: Family and Community Engagement**

It should be noted that the PHS staff continue to collaborate with Dr. Christine Clayton of PACE University in deepening our understanding and practice of Inquiry Based Learning. For the school year, we have held four 3 hour workshops and our students are benefiting greatly from this professional learning experience.

As I close, please consider the following African Proverb:

IF YOU WANT TO FAST, GO ALONE. IF YOU WANT TO GO FAR, GO TOGETHER.

Sincerely,

Rodney Arthur
Principal