



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,

Thank you for entrusting the staff and administration of Peekskill High School with your most precious gift, your children. After the first five weeks working as the Principal of Peekskill High School, the love and passion for my job is even more profound. While I have enjoyed working in other school districts throughout New York State, the students, parents and staff of the Peekskill School District have captured my heart.

At PHS, we have outstanding teachers and incredibly talented and gifted students who are daring to be great each day. The students enter school each day with tremendous amounts of energy creating a lively atmosphere in the building. Every opportunity I have, I meet students as they enter the building greeting them and absorbing some of their positive energy. Their beautiful smiles and cheerful greetings helps to set the tone for my day. I look forward to receiving students each morning.

One of our main goals at PHS is to create a safe and orderly, but nurturing school environment for students, parents, faculty and visitors to our building. Our custodial staff led by Mr. Carmine Crisci (*district-wide*) and Mr. Fred Vanca (*PHS*) are committed to this goal and keep our building clean so that students can excel. I offer special thanks to Dr. David Fine (*Superintendent of Schools*), Ms. Robin Zimmerman (*Assistant Superintendent for Business*), Dr. Joe Mosey (*Assistant Superintendent for Administrative Services*) and Mr. Daniel Callahan (*Assistant Superintendent for Secondary Education*) for their continued support and honoring my request to increase the security personnel at PHS. The security guards are led by Mr. David Santiago whose leadership, vision and commitment have been invaluable to me as I transitioned to Peekskill in September.

With many new changes at the high school, I am pleased to report that most of our students are responding positively and accepting the following expectations outlined for them in early September: *respecting themselves and others by wearing appropriate attire to school, conducting themselves appropriately as they transition through the halls by using appropriate language and keeping their hands to themselves, following directives from adults without argument or complaint, keeping our school free of drugs and contraband, committing themselves to excellence by arriving to school on time and realizing that their priority is school, not friendships, and accepting the challenge of being great each day.*

Moreover, approximately 90% of the students are adhering to the school rules adopted by the Board of Education. Some of these rules include the following:

- *Electronic devices such as earplugs, cellular phones, headphones and MP3 Players are not permitted in school, except for the cafeteria.*
- *The wearing of hoods and bandanas are not permitted, but hats are allowed*
- *Flip-flops are not permitted and appropriate school attire is required*

You are asked to speak with your children about these expectations because as a school community, we will not waver on our expectations. Please be aware that one of the responsibilities of a high school faculty is to prepare students for their next journey in life – college or employment. Working together, we will achieve this goal and be joyful of the outcome from our joint efforts.

Over the summer months, the administrative team, that includes Mr. Kent Picou, Dr. Margie Daniel and Mrs. Naima Smith Moore, and I developed an overarching goal for Peekskill High School to provide us with direction and purpose. The goal is as follows: *To create a safe and orderly school environment that will permit teachers to employ effective learning strategies which will allow students to maximize their full potential.* Included in this goal is ensuring that the students of PHS receive a rich academic and cultural experience that goes beyond the walls of Peekskill High School. This means to provide students with opportunities to travel to other communities, states and countries so that they may experience other cultures and share their own.

To achieve this overarching goal, we (*parents/guardians and PHS faculty*) will have to adopt a mindset of collective ownership and pursue ways to increase our partnership. It with pleasure that I announce that the faculty and administration of PHS have renewed our commitment to establish collaborative relationships with the Parent Teacher Organization and local organizations such as the NAACP to conduct outreach to parents/guardians so that the overarching goal comes to fruition. A strong partnership will allow us to build bridges of excellence for all students, every day.

Working to achieve the overarching goal, towards the end of August, the faculty of PHS kicked off the second annual *Real Talk* community barbecue. This was a wonderful event that was opened to the Peekskill school community and their extended family members. There were many community partners who assisted in making this event a special occasion. They included the Peekskill Police Department, Stop N Shop and Lowes. Our partners committed to donating food, supplies, drinks and their time. The event last for more than 5 hours and had well over 400 hundred participants who engaged in games, listened to music and enjoyed each other's company.

Throughout the months of September and October, the faculty of PHS continued on the theme of building bonds with parents. The Guidance Department of PHS made several presentations, by grade-level, to parents about the high school experience of students. Recently, they made a presentation to families who attended the PTO General Meeting held on Wednesday, October 19th on the topic of *preparing for college*. The key areas of their presentation focused on *Graduation Requirements, College Entrance Requirements, College Search Process, College Application Process, Opportunity Programs and Paying for College*. You are encouraged to visit the high school webpage to view the entire presentation. There are other PowerPoint presentations from the freshmen and senior parent meetings on the high school webpage too.

In keeping with the theme of building partnerships with parents and local organizations, the PHS staff are co-sponsoring with the NAACP a parent event titled, Father Bring Your Child to Bowl on Saturday, October 29th at Cortlandt Lane located at 2192 Crompond Road, Cortlandt Manor, NY 10567 from 7 to 11pm. This is a free event (*shoes are included*) for current students of Peekskill High School and their fathers or father figure (*uncle, older brother, cousin or family friend*). Please note that siblings will not be permitted to attend this event unless they are a student presently attending the high school. Space is limited so you are asked to R.S.V.P. to Mr. Rodney Arthur by sending an email to rarthur@peekskillschools.org or calling the main office at the high school and leaving a message for Mr. Arthur. Please be sure to indicate your name, phone number and your child's name and grade.

The students of Peekskill High School received a unique opportunity in September to listen to a presentation made by the Honorable Judge Carmen Velasquez who is the first Ecuadorian to serve as judge for the Civil Court and Supreme Court of the State of New York. The students were moved by Judge Velasquez's speech and testimony regarding her journey to the bench. Judge Velasquez shared with the students that she was born in Quito, Ecuador and immigrated with her family to America at the age of 14 in 1975, and was determined to succeed in

school. Judge Velasquez added that, through hard work and resiliency, she achieved her goals. Before leaving PHS, and as a sign of encouragement, Judge Velasquez permitted students to hold the gavel that she uses in her courtroom. This was inspiring to observe.

On October 26th, fifty PHS students will experience another unique opportunity by visiting our nation's capital, Washington D.C., for a two night trip. It will serve as a culminating activity for their history class and provide the students with a rich experience in making their textbook and course content come alive. Because of the continuous support of the PTO, two deserving students, who were not able to pay for the trip, will now participate. As part of their itinerary, the students will receive a private tour of the United States Capitol building and other national landmarks. They will visit the new National Museum of African American History and Culture. This unique opportunity will remain etched in their memories forever.

On Saturday, December 3, the high school will host a regional qualification robotics event with 14 to 20 teams participating from around the State. This is part of the First Tech Challenge Robotics Championship to qualify to the State Championship at Pace University. The teams are responsible for designing, building and programming their robots over a 10 week period. This event will serve as another unique experience for the students of PHS, parents and members of the Peekskill community. We are seeking 20 parent volunteers for this all-day event that will start at 7am and end at 5pm. If interested, please send an email to rarthur@peekskillschools.org and jreid@peekskillschools.org. In the subject line, please write, *FTC Robotics Volunteer* or call the main office at the high school.

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

Rodney Arthur
Principal