

# CHANGE IS GOOD

The Peekskill Middle School Admin are new for the 21-22 school year!

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*Don't be afraid of  
CHANGE. It is leading  
you to a new beginning.*

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## A WORD FROM THE PRINCIPAL

*By: LaJuan White*

I am a driven leader who has founded and opened two brand new middle schools in New York City and took over two "Turnaround" schools and experienced success. Success for me is non negotiable. Years ago, I entered American Academy of McAllister Institute to pursue a career in Mortuary Science. The passion and love I had for science derived from my upbringing in a funeral home living and watching my father in his career as a funeral director. Watching him care for people at their darkest times revealed compassion that I didn't know would mold me to be the educator I developed into later in life. After finishing mortuary school, I went on to St. John's University to complete my bachelor's degree in mortuary science. I completed my bachelor's, the first in my family, and decided to pursue teaching.

I pursued a teaching degree at Wagner College in Staten Island, New York and went on to teach in a high school and then middle school. In the spring of 2003, I was accepted into New Leaders for New Schools and I began my journey in educational leadership being supported and developed by some of the best educators.

This past year has been unique and full of opportunities. Parents were faced with becoming teachers and a new found respect was born. So much was learned this past year but one of the things that stood out was how resilient children are. I look forward to working with all stakeholders to deepen what was learned and to take it to the next level.

Orchestrating teaching and learning for the growth and betterment of children is my life's work. I am committed to the Peekskill community for years to come and I look forward to working with the amazing staff at Peekskill Middle School to ensure that every student has a world class education they deserve.

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## GET TO KNOW DR. TORO

*By: Assistant Principal Dr. Toro*

Hello, my name is Dr. William X. Toro and I am excited to join the Peekskill Middle School family. I started my educational career 14 years ago; which includes working at both the middle school and high school levels. I have worked as a mathematics teacher at both levels and have administrative experience at the high school level. In my current role as the Assistant Principal at Peekskill High School, I work with the 9th and 10 grade students as well as oversee the mathematics department. My parents were both born in Colombia, and I was a first generation born child in this country. Spanish was my primary language and I learned English when I started attending school. Growing up, my parents encouraged and emphasized the importance of education, whether it was a college or vocational education. My parents were positive role models in my life who always guided and motivated me to do my best. I received my Associates in Liberal Arts from Suffolk County Community College, my Bachelor of Arts in Mathematics from St. Joseph's College, my Masters of Liberal Studies from SUNY Stony Brook, my Advanced Graduate Certificate in Educational Leadership from SUNY Stony Brook and my Doctorate of Education from St. John's University.

I made the decision to devote my life and career to education when I was in college. At the time, I was deciding, "what should I be when I grow up?", and realized that some of the most important life lessons and memories that I had were from being in school and I wanted to give that experience to other children. I believe greatly that our students are tasked with the great responsibility of making far more difficult decisions than we will have to. It is our responsibility to help guide them to reach their highest potential and prepare them to make those decisions. As an educator and life-long learner, my goal is to prepare students for the rest of their lives and make decisions that will impact them in a positive and productive manner.

## MEET MR. PETERS

*By: Assistant Principal Donald Peters*

Greetings, my name is Donald D. Peters and I am thrilled and eager to join the Peekskill Middle School family. I started my journey in education 15 years ago working as a substitute teacher in a middle school. My career includes working at both the middle school and high school levels. I have also worked as a special education teacher at both levels and have administrative experience at the middle school level. In my current role as the Assistant Principal of Instruction and Supervision at a middle school in the Bronx, NY, I work with all grades (6-8) as well as oversee the mathematics, science, special education departments, discipline and programming. I am originally from New York City and I moved to Peekskill in 2017. I received my Bachelor of Arts degree in Criminal Justice from The George Washington University in Washington, D.C., my Masters of Science in Education from Mercy College and my Masters of Science in School Building Leadership from the City College of New York (CUNY).

My philosophy in education is predicated on the understanding that you always put the interest of children first in any decision that you make. In my time in education, I have acquired various skills to build student character, increase student achievement, and integrate collaborative practices that ensure all community stakeholders have a voice at the decision-making table. These abilities are the fuel that powers my interest in becoming an educator. As a leader, it is important to take a holistic approach to education that will lead to lifelong learners who will be active contributing members of society. Schools should value a holistic approach to teaching through a strategic support structure consisting of faculty, students, parents and the community.

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