



**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,

Peekskill High School is on the move and there is much for us to be proud of and celebrate! Here are a few of our notable accomplishments: our graduation rate is the highest it has been in the past five years; our passing rate on New York State regents examinations has increase; over 80% of our graduates were accepted to and are attending college; our select chorus, led by Mr. Larry DelCassel, participated in over 44 performances and received a level 6 at the New York State School Music Association, which is the highest level a group can earn. Moreover, the PHS Iron Red Devils Robotics team, coached by Mr. Carlo Vindrini, participated in a pilot STEM DRONE program and became the first group of students in the Westchester County region to build, program, learn Federal Aviation Administration regulations, and fly drones.

As we enter the 2017-18 year, it is important to note that we have increased our staffing in core content areas (*English, mathematics, social studies and science*) which has allowed us to expand our course offering to students and reduced the number of sections of study hall classes. You are encouraged to view the Peekskill High School Profile posted on the high school web page to learn more about our courses, which include college courses offered through our partnerships with Westchester Community College and the State University of New York at Albany.

As we expand our course offering and increase our student enrollment by 200 students, it became necessary for us to hire a new school counselor. Ms. Margaret Ellis comes to the Peekskill School District after working 9 years as a school counselor at Cardinal Spellman High School in the Bronx. Ms. Ellis has extensive experience working with the National Collegiate Athletic Association NCAA. Ms. Ellis's experience in this area will provide our student athletes with support as they transition to the college level. Ms. Ellis will be assigned to work with students in grades 10 to 12.

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 help to set the tone for my day. I look forward to receiving students each morning.

As a school community, we continue to create a safe and orderly 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 are committed to this goal and keep our building clean so that students can excel. I offer special thanks to Mrs. Mary Forster (*Interim 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. Over the last two summers, every classroom and stairwell has been painted. We added new desks and chairs to classrooms and renovated

the gymnasium. Our College Resource Center has been updated, painted and received new chairs. The bulletin boards throughout the hallway have been updated to reflect our various clubs and associations, students' work and our commitment to learning.

With many new changes at the high school, I am pleased to report that most of our students entered school the first week and responded positively and accepted the following expectations outlined for them in early September during our town hall meetings: *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.*

Throughout September, 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 the Senior Guidance Night 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 on the high school webpage for you to review, too.

The students of Peekskill High School received a unique opportunity 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.

Towards the end of October, fifty PHS students will experience another unique opportunity by visiting our nation's capital, Washington D.C., on 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 PHS staff and administration, several 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, January 6**, the high school will host the second annual regional qualification robotics event with 16 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 30 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](mailto:rarthur@peekskillschools.org) and [jreid@peekskillschools.org](mailto:jreid@peekskillschools.org). In the subject line, please write, *FTC Robotics Volunteer* or call the main office at the high school.

As I close, we are quickly approaching the midpoint of the first marking period. You are encouraged to visit the Guidance Department Office to meet with Mrs. Maria Gordineer to register for the parent portal. This software will allow you to monitor your child's attendance and academic performance in school. Finally, please consider the following quote by Nelson Mandela, *"Education is the Greatest Weapon that You can Use to Change the World."*

Sincerely,

Rodney Arthur

Rodney Arthur  
Principal