



## 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.

Dr. David Fine,  
Superintendent of Schools

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## Superintendent's E-Corner, January, 2017

*"There is No Substitute for Hard Work." Thomas Edison*

Welcome to the year 2017, wow! I hope that you had a peaceful, restful, and enjoyable holiday break with your friends and family. As a team of educators, professionals, and community we have much to be grateful for. These blessings are numerous and occur in every classroom, hallway, building, and street; with every student; every day. As Haim Ginott mentioned in paraphrase, *"As an educator, I am an instrument of inspiration; I am the decisive element in the classroom. My personal approach creates the climate. My daily mood makes the weather. In situations, it is my response that decides whether a crisis will be escalated or de-escalated and a child humanized or de-humanized."* Great job to all stakeholders across our district and community that continue to make each day better than the next by remaining part of the solution and leading in a student-centered, selfless, and transparent manner. #peekskillpride

**Foundation and Mindset:** Haim said it well above. Our work is literally one day at a time. Celebrating along the way and maintaining consistent focus on our goals, expectations, and interdependence upon each other. The wonderful Michael Fullan reminds us how change is a process, which is organic and continues to be modified throughout the journey!

**Engagement:** Dr. Justin Tarte said that the most engaged classrooms aren't teachers asking good questions; they're the classrooms where the kids are asking good questions. Our work on higher-order question is targeted to this environment. We set the stage; facilitate the learning; and have 100% faith in the success of all. They will rise to the occasion. Many have for years and more continue to succeed, every day!

**CIA:** Our Curriculum, Instruction, and Assessment (CIA) CORE team continues to lead with respect to our aligned programming across our district. They listen to various proposals by staff members regarding anything from courses to programs and all in between. The CORE team then provides feedback, approvals, suggestions, etc. for potential adoption into district. This allows our work to not only be systemic but aligned in an educationally and fiscally responsible manner.

**Educational Planning and Budget:** Ms. Zimmerman and I presented our 1<sup>st</sup> Educational Planning and Budget workshop to the BOE prior to break. Our theme this year, *Enhancing Equitable Opportunities for Every Student; Every Day provides a foundation for the work. The five (5) strategic questions provide a consistent mindset with regard to our planning and budget. See below for the five (5) strategic questions:*

1. How do we handle increasing enrollment without diminishing programs for both students and staff?
2. What types of data do we utilize to inform and drive our decisions? (CIA & Programmatic)
3. How do we continue to create equity for all students in and out of the classroom?
4. What are we doing to meet the academic, social, and emotional needs of all students?
5. How do we provide equitable high-quality educational programs and continue to remain fiscally responsible?

**Capital Projects Update:** Thank you to Mr. Carmine Crisci, all custodial/maintenance teams, and Ms. Robin Zimmerman for their focus on our buildings/grounds and assessment of our short/long range planning/needs. Thank you to our building leaders for keeping us informed of these needs as well as all staff/faculty that share and shared various suggestions/needs during my learning walks this past month.

**2015-16 Project Update**

- ✓ **Doors and Hardware:** Hillcrest 100% Complete, starting Woodside on 12/20 and then proceeding to PHS (Anticipated completion Mid-January).
- ✓ **PHS Outdoor Physical Education Space (rear of admin)-** 100% Complete
- ✓ **Energy Performance Contract**
  - Gas lines UH, WS, HC, OS and Admin 90% complete (holiday break)
  - WS new wing unit ventilator replacements to be completed over holiday break
  - Boilers have arrived and have been placed at each building
    - UH, WS, OS, HC condensing boiler installs anticipated over holiday break
  - Lighting phase will begin week of 12/19
  - Exterior door submittals modified and approved. Anticipated install February/March
- **2016-2017 Project Update**
  - **PHS Gym Acoustical Ceiling Removal and Modifications**
  - Design completed & SED package being prepared for submittal to SED
- **2017-2018 Capital Planning for the Future**
  - Five Year Plan – Facilities Committee and Long Range Facilities/Enrollment Study

**Student Performances:** Excellent work with regard to our holiday concerts and student performances. They continue to get better and better every performance. Senator Murphy called and asked if our select choir can perform at his swearing in ceremony on January 8<sup>th</sup> at the Plumbers Steamfitters on McKinley, 10:30am. Our students and the support provided combine for amazing experiences for all learners in and out of the classrooms.

**Athletic Schedule for the Week:**

**TUESDAY, JANUARY 3<sup>rd</sup>:**

- ✓ VARSITY WRESTLING - HOME VS. BYRAM HILLS (PKMS) 4:30PM
- ✓ BOYS' FRESHMAN BASKETBALL @ MAHOPAC 4:30PM

**WEDNESDAY, JANUARY 4<sup>th</sup>:**

- ✓ BOYS' VARSITY BASKETBALL - HOME VS. BEACON - 6:15PM
- ✓ BOYS' JV BASKETBALL - VS. BEACON 4:30PM
- ✓ GIRLS' VARSITY BASKETBALL @ BEACON - 6:00PM
- ✓ GIRLS' JV BASKETBALL @ BEACON - 4:15PM

**THURSDAY, JANUARY 5<sup>th</sup>:**

- ✓ VARSITY WRESTLING - HOME VS. EASTCHESTER (PKMS) 4:30PM
- ✓ BOYS' VARSITY SWIMMING @ WAPPINGERS CSD (MOUNT ST. MARY COLLEGE) 4:30PM
- ✓ BOYS' MODIFIED BASKETBALL - HOME VS. LAKELAND COPPER BEECH (PHS) 4:30PM
- ✓ GIRLS' MODIFIED BASKETBALL @ LAKELAND COPPER BEECH 4:15PM

**FRIDAY, JANUARY 6<sup>th</sup>:**

- ✓ GIRLS' JV BASKETBALL - HOME VS. LOURDES 4:15PM
- ✓ GIRLS' VARSITY BASKETBALL - HOME VS. LOURDES - 6:00PM
- ✓ BOYS' JV BASKETBALL @ LOURDES 5PM
- ✓ BOYS' VARSITY BASKETBALL @ LOURDES - 7PM

*\*\*SATURDAY, JANUARY 14 IS BASKETBALL ALUMNI DAY AT PEEKSKILL HIGH SCHOOL. ALL FORMER MEN'S AND WOMEN'S BASKETBALL PLAYERS AT PEEKSKILL ARE INVITED TO ATTEND OUR GAME THAT DAY AT 3PM VS. MAHOPAC. IN ADDITION, WE WILL RETIRE THE BASKETBALL JERSEY OF BILL "BUCK" BRICKHOUSE - PEEKSKILL 1967. WE WILL RAFFLE A LARGE SCREEN TV. ANY BASKETBALL ALUM WHO SIGNS IN IS ELIGIBLE FOR THE RAFFLE.*

**Social Justice: Creating Classrooms for Social Justice by.** Dr. Tabitha Dell'Angelo, Assistant Professor and Coordinator of the Urban Education Master's Program at The College of New Jersey.

A lot has been discussed and written about being an "educator for social justice." What does that really mean? In this post, I will break down a few basic classroom practices that allow teachers to engage with best practices in teaching core subjects while also being advocates for social justice in the classroom.

Social justice is recognizing and acting upon the power that we have for making positive change. Teachers do this every day in many ways. And, in order to take that idea to the next level, teachers might include classroom practices that will make this dynamic explicit. It's a good idea to give students opportunities for seeing how positive change happens and how they can be both actors and leaders in creating change.

It is also important to note that many of the practices that demonstrate a social justice orientation are also reflective of best practices in teaching. Social justice is not an "add on" for classrooms. This is a both/and proposition. Teachers can *both* maintain high-quality content instruction *and* create a classroom with a social justice orientation. Also, a social justice orientation is appropriate for all classrooms. This isn't something that just gets done in diverse classrooms, or classrooms that lack diversity, or urban classrooms -- or any other special category of school. It is a way of teaching and being that supports high-level thinking and learning throughout our lives.

### **Connecting to Students' Lives**

When making curricular decisions, consider, value, and build on the diverse prior learning experiences of your students. This can be as simple as knowing a little bit about every student's background, if they are coming from another school, or if they have an interest in a particular area. Acknowledging and showing that you value what students are already bringing to the classroom is an important step in creating a classroom for social justice.

### **Linking to Real-World Problems and Multiple Perspectives**

Make what you are teaching relevant to what is going on in the world. The classroom walls aren't magical barriers to the realities outside of them. If there's something happening in the news that you can link to your content, do it. Choose something controversial, or ask your students if they have questions regarding anything they have been hearing about. Chances are that someone is going to mention teacher strikes, honeybee decline, trash pick-up, even the events in Gaza or Robin Williams' death. This is an opportunity to teach children high-level thinking skills:

- Discerning fact from opinion
- Figuring out your own and others' point of view
- Interpreting all of this information to decide on your own "truth."

Of course, this is not an opportunity for a teacher to impose his or her beliefs on the students. It is important to choose topics about which you feel you can be pedagogically neutral as you support students' own journey of learning how to be critical thinkers and forming their own opinions.

### **Creating Classroom Community**

Create opportunities for students' voices to be heard. They need to be taught how to participate in a discussion. As teachers, we can encourage both sharing one's own ideas and responding to the ideas of classmates. The teacher's role is to use questioning that can help students make connections between the big ideas that inform the lesson content.

Classrooms can also provide time for collaboration toward a common goal. Teach students to be "academic siblings." We all know that sometimes siblings get on each other's nerves, but ultimately you know that you can count on your siblings to have your back, be honest with you, and support you.

Also, teachers can take a critical look at the materials in the classroom. Do the books, stories, and other curricular materials present one specific narrative? If they do, revamp what you have to be sure that your materials include examples from diverse aspects of society, including ethnicity, religion, language, gender, ability, sexual orientation, and socio-economic status in a non-stereotypical manner.

### **Include Authentic Assessments**

Authentic assessments are opportunities for students to write for real audiences, share knowledge with a wide audience, and engage in the kind of work that occurs outside the classroom. For instance, if you are having students learn how to write letters, be sure they actually get mailed to a real person. A few years ago, I saw a classroom where students wrote letters to a fictional zookeeper. They went into the teacher's homework pile. Although the letters were fine, I suggested that the students revise them and send them to an actual zookeeper. As they made these revisions, the students learned that a zoo has multiple zookeepers for different animals. They each decided which zookeeper they would send letters to. That led to researching the animals in that zookeeper's care. The letters were richer, more personal, and just plain better. And then, they got responses! Getting those responses taught the students that they could make things happen in their world -- that they could be agents of change.

There are many other ways that you can be an advocate for social justice in your classroom. I have suggested just a few. It's also important to note that you don't need to do all of them in order to have a social justice orientation. As you think about your classroom, try to find small ways to include the ideas outlined here within the practices that you know will work best for you and your students.