Dear Neighbors,

As we embark on this new decade, we are thankful for the wonderful staff and families that support each other and our students. This is a very busy and exciting time for our school district. Phase Two of the Strategic Plan is well underway and the Action Teams are working hard on recommendations to propel our students and district forward. Their efforts will help shape the next five years of our work. Additionally, our administrative team and architects are preparing to perform the work included in the bond this community passed last May. We are currently in the design and bid stage; the first phase of the actual work is scheduled to begin this summer.

The governor’s budget once again threatens to have a negative effect on the state aid we receive. Foundation Aid is the main source of state funding for our schools and was implemented after a landmark court case decided the state is required to provide funding to all public schools so all students receive a “sound basic education.” A rather complicated Foundation Aid formula was created to determine the amount of money each school district should receive. Our district receives $3.234 million annually, which is $2.2 million less than what we are owed under that formula. Because the Governor continues to fail to fully fund Foundation Aid (he refers to the court case and its formula as “ghosts from the past”), we get short-changed. Our suggested increase this year is a mere $11,500.

Also included in the governor’s budget is a proposal to absorb ten expense-driven aids into Foundation Aid, essentially freezing them at their current levels because they would no longer be calculated from our actual expenses. Most detrimental to our district would be to freeze BOCES aid. Our use of BOCES shared services, which allows member districts to benefit from competitive pricing, varies from year to year. Freezing BOCES aid will severely impact our ability to improve opportunities for children.

The governor’s budget proposes cuts to aid for school construction and transportation and the egregious elimination of the state’s portion of financial support for high needs students with disabilities who require out of district or residential placements. Yet he has increased aid to charter and non-public schools to “help reimburse them for certain NYS mandated costs,” without providing adequate mandate relief to public schools. All state legislation affecting public education should require an analysis of costs to school districts and should be funded by the state prior to passage. These are all issues that could have significant negative impacts on our district and children.

We ask that you go to the District website at pleasantvilleschools.org and click on Advocacy under the Board of Education tab. There you will find letters ready to be sent to the governor and our legislators on behalf of our children. Please join us in this fight to preserve the quality of education in our district. Thank you.

Sincerely,
The Pleasantville Board of Education
National Honor Society


Tri-M National Music Honor Society

New members, inducted in October, front: Lily Vidra, Angela Berg, Rebecca Pedulla, Ava Portmore, Erin Weitzman, Miranda Miller, Kaycie Budd; back: Charlotte Ward, Riik Acharya, Nicholas Wiebke, Brienna Ahmetaj, Abigail Lee, Caitlin Rubsamen, Sophie Vaughn-Johnson
School News

Science National Honor Society


National English Honor Society

National Merit News

Senior Christian DeJesus was named a National Hispanic Scholar by The College Board for his performance on the National Merit Scholarship Qualifying Test (NMSQT) that he took as a junior in October 2018. He is one of approximately 7,000 students from the over 400,000 who self-identified as Hispanic/Latino to receive this recognition.

Jazz Band

Band teacher Jon Vercesi, Jake Leis, Noah Solomon

PHS musicians Jake Leis (baritone sax) and Noah Solomon (guitar) were selected through competitive auditions to the Senior High School All-County Jazz Band. The concert is scheduled for March 13 at Hommocks Middle School in Mamaroneck.

To date, only one other student, Ricky Tegtmeier (PHS Class of 2015), earned a seat in the All-County Jazz Band.

PHS Area All-State Musicians

Nineteen PHS students participated in the 2019 Area All-State Concert held on November 9 at SUNY Purchase. This annual event is a showcase for the top Westchester high school musicians in grades 10-12.


11th Grade Writing Contest

Author Joe Wallace announced the results of the 11th Grade Writing Contest, an annual event now in its tenth year. Anthony Parnizari, Tia Poquette, and Angelie Wallace won top honors. Charlie Allen, Julia O’Reilly, and Christina Skrzypczak received honorable mention awards.

Jennifer Kohn, owner of The Village Bookstore, is a co-sponsor of the contest and English teacher Leigh Meyer coordinates student participation. There were over 70 entries this year.

School News

AP Computer Science Award

The College Board awarded its AP Computer Science Diversity Award to PHS for “closing the gender gap and engaging more female students” in AP Computer Science A. Of the 20,000 institutions that offer AP courses, only 143 schools — including four in Westchester County — received this recognition.

Regional Art Exhibition

Sedge Algiere (ceramic), Devon DelCastillo (hand colored dry-point etching), and Laila Vedovino (charcoal drawing), pictured above with art teachers Greg Nemec and Jim Maron, represented PHS in the 14th annual Regional High Schools Student Art Exhibition held at Concordia College in January. Devon was one of seven participants awarded a Certificate of Excellence.

Over thirty public and private high schools from Westchester, Fairfield, Rockland, and Orange counties and the Bronx participated. Each school was allowed to submit three pieces selected by its art faculty.

The Little Mermaid

The cast and crews are busy preparing The Little Mermaid, the upcoming PHS Performing Arts musical production. Both the Broadway show and the Disney animated film are based on the classic Hans Christian Andersen story about a mermaid who dreams of the world above the sea and gives up her voice to find love.

Performances are on March 6, 7, 13, and 14 at 7:30 p.m. and March 8 at 2 p.m. Tickets are $15 and can be purchased online at phsplay.org; by phone at 1-866-967-8167; or, if available, at the door one hour prior to each performance.
School News

Art and Writing Competition

Fifteen PHS students received awards in the regional division of the Scholastic Art and Writing Competition. Entries in 29 categories of art and writing are judged by professionals in the visual and literary arts who award Gold Keys to the “very best works”; Silver Keys to “stand-out works”; and Honorable Mentions to “accomplished works.” All Gold Key winners are forwarded for consideration at the national level.

Front: Elizabeth Hayes (HM, Digital Art), Laila Vedovino (Gold, Painting; Gold, Illustration; HM, Printmaking), Devon DelCastillo (Gold, Illustration; Silver, Illustration), Paige Sauther (HM, Painting). Middle: Devon O’Neill (Gold, Digital Art; Silver, Digital Art), Jenna Elluzzi (Gold, Digital Art; Silver, Digital Art), Riley Bates (HM, Painting), Maya Sauthoff (2 HMs, Illustration). Back: Angelie Wallace (HM, Personal Essay & Memoir; HM, Poetry), Amina Fayaz (Gold, Science Fiction & Fantasy), Tia Poquette (HM, Personal Essay & Memoir), Ella Agabob (Silver, Personal Essay & Memoir), Jillian Frank (Silver, Personal Essay & Memoir). Not Pictured: Grace Capko (HM, Science Fiction & Fantasy), Josie Driscoll (Silver, Personal Essay & Memoir)

Science & Engineering Night

Assistant Superintendent for Instructional Services Dr. Cameron Fadjo worked with Curriculum Coordinators Lisa Rodriguez (BRS) and Melissa Brown (MS) to offer a Science and Engineering Fun Night for third and fourth graders. Volunteers helped students engage in a number of Science Olympiad activities, including Gummy Bear Long Jump, Operation Egg Drop, Aerodynamics (pictured), Straw Tower, and Write It/Do It.

Wrestlers Chris Perleshi (left) and Lenny Balducci (right) are the Westchester County champions in their weight class, and Coach Bob Bernarducci (center) became only the fourth coach in Section I history to reach 400 wins. Lenny was fourth in his weight class at the Eastern States Wrestling Tournament, which drew 570 wrestlers from 175 schools and six states, and holds the record for most wins in Section I/Division II.

Wire Sculptures at the Middle School Art Show

Photo: Dr. Charles Matteo)
Middle School Science Olympiad

Our Middle School Science Olympians competed against some of the most seasoned teams in the state at the Long Island Science Olympiad Invitational in December and finished in fourth place, up from sixth last year. Since then, preparations have been underway for the Regional Tournament at Scarsdale Middle School on March 7.

Front: Dr. Martha Matteo, volunteer/coordinator; row 1: Kalliope Primis, Samantha Horoszowski, Logan Dundas, James Kuo, Evan Cochran, Alex Arbucci, Koby Crowder, Zachery Neilson-Papish; row 2: Camilla Browand, Hanifa Thein, Dylan Blaney, Anirban Biswas, Harshini Pothuganti, Sophia Zucker, Dana Ballin, Camilla Zabikhodhaeva, Matthew McClain; row 3: Will Perlman, Sebastian Vidra, Dillon Tsang, Claire Kristensen, Mitzy Garcia Blacio, Danna Blacio; row 4: Nicholas Peters, Aiden Kayizzi, Lucas Captan, Daniel Sadreyev, Maxim Gusarov, Eli Neilson-Papish; not pictured: Alexei Katalevsky, Lucy MacPhee, Sean McClain (Photo: Dr. Charles Matteo)

Elementary and Intermediate All-County Musicians

Nineteen students in grades 4–9 were selected to perform in the Elementary (grades 4–6) and Intermediate (grades 7–9) All-County Music Festival at SUNY Purchase on March 7 (Chorus, Orchestra) and March 8 (Band). This annual event showcases outstanding student musicians from schools throughout Westchester County.

Pictured above, at the Middle School, front: band teacher Amanda Rimm-Hewitt, Elementary Band members Adam Fayaz (clarinet), William Pearlman (clarinet), Crawford Gray (baritone), Elementary Chorus members Konstantine McTiernan, Adrienne Grunspan, Colette Prevost, Zoey Lin; back: Intermediate Chorus members Adriana McGarry, Colin Rubsamen, Ashley Madden, Chloe Ramsey-Lavoie, Philip Dundie, Haiden Wolf, chorus teacher Rachel Heyman

Pictured top right, at BRS, Elementary Chorus members Lexi Boyce, Nehla Sauthoff, Aiden Crowder, Gemma Cascardo, music teacher Katherine Hughes

Pictured bottom right, at PHS, Symphony Orchestra members Miyako Cornelius (violin), Alex Powell (violin), orchestra teacher Mary Ann Meade
School News

GeoBee School Championship

Front: Peter Pepdjonovic & Zachary Neilson-Papish (7th); Oliver Giebelhaus & Aiden Kayizzi (8th); on stage: Aidan Kress & Alexander Rogovin (5th); Martin Blasdell & Omobolanle Seni-Alabede (6th)

Eight finalists — two winners per grade-level — vied for the school championship in the Middle School’s 8th annual National Geographic Bee. After an hour of questions that drew on the finalists’ knowledge of geography, map reading skills, cultures, and more, the school championship was claimed by seventh grader Peter Pepdjonovic; classmate Zachary Neilson-Papish was the runner-up. Peter took a qualifying test for the state-level competition and is awaiting the results. The top 100 scorers will compete in Albany on March 27.

Teamwork Counts. Fourth graders worked together on a series of cooperative, problem-solving activities.

Mathletics. Third graders applied their math skills in completing hands-on activities.

Walk in My Shoes. Fourth graders experienced challenges, such as juvenile rheumatoid arthritis, that some students face. All three events are BRS PTA programs.

In December, over sixty fifth and sixth graders participated in the cast and crew of Annie Jr., directed by BRS music teacher Katherine Hughes. They were assisted by MS music teacher Rachel Heyman and a dedicated group of MS PTA volunteers.
School News

Fall Varsity Awards

Boys Cross Country. **NYS Scholar/Athlete Team.**

Girls Cross Country. **NYS Scholar/Athlete Team.**

Field Hockey. **NYS Scholar/Athlete Team.**


Boys Soccer. **NYS Scholar/Athlete Team.**

Girls Soccer. **NYS Scholar/Athlete Team.**

Swimming. **NYS Scholar/Athlete Team.**
*All League:* Lauren Arnold, Sunell Zorgman.

Tennis. **NYS Scholar/Athlete Team.**

Volleyball. **NYS Scholar/Athlete Team.**
*All League:* Jenna McAllister. *All League Honorable Mention:* Isabella Lleshaj, Madison Schneeweiß, Mia Togneri.

NYS Scholar/Athlete Team — a team’s average GPA for 75% of the roster must be greater than or equal to 90.00

Lacrosse players Jake Coleman and Lauren Drillock signed Letters of Intent for Fairfield University and Holy Cross, respectively. Both are Division I schools.
CSE Personnel Changes

Dr. Rukmini Bhalla, Director of Special Education, has taken a personal leave of absence through June 30, 2020. Dan Iorio, Assistant Director of Special Education, is serving in her place as Acting Director of Special Education. Bedford Road School psychologist Dr. Rachael Goldrich is now the District’s CPSE/CSE Coordinator in the Special Education office; school psychologist Elizabeth Stamboulian was hired to join the Bedford Road School team. Ms. Stamboulian is in her fifth year as a school psychologist with experience at both the elementary and middle school levels.

Grant Recipient

French teacher Keith Grasmann applied for and received a one year grant subscription to TV5MONDE, an educational streaming service that has content produced from all over the francophone world. Its language-leveled pedagogical activities cover all of the themes in the District’s French curricula.

Kindergarten Registration

A Letter of Intent was mailed to Bedford Road School’s list of households with children eligible to enter kindergarten in September 2020 (five-years-old on or before December 1, 2020). Those with eligible children who did not receive this letter can either print one from the District website (on the BRS home page, click on “Kindergarten Letter of Intent” under News and Announcements) or call the school (741-1440).

Incoming Kindergarten parents are invited to attend an orientation program, “A Peek into Kindergarten,” at 7 p.m. on March 12 in the BRS Little Theater. Entrance is through the Manville Avenue doors. Building tours will immediately follow the presentation.

Kindergarten screenings will take place by appointment in April and May. Parents/guardians will be notified of their child’s appointment date and time after March 20.

Candidates for Tenure

Lauren Byassee (Social Studies), Amanda Delle Bovi (Special Education), Jackie (Russo) Mancari (School Psychologist), Christine Pallotta (General Science), and Emily Weiss (Art) are eligible for tenure this school year. District residents may provide input regarding one or more of these candidates in a signed letter to the Superintendent of Schools. Anonymous letters will not be considered. Please be reminded that personnel decisions are considered confidential under the law and cannot be discussed.

2020–21 School Calendar

First Day of Classes
September 8, 2020

Last Day for Students
June 25, 2021

School Holidays

Schools are closed on these days.

—2020—
September 1: New Staff Orientation
September 2 & 3: Supt. Conference Days
September 7: Labor Day
September 28: Yom Kippur
October 12: Columbus Day
November 3: Supt. Conference Day
November 11: Veterans Day
November 26 & 27: Thanksgiving Recess
December 24–31: Holiday Recess

—2021—
January 1: Holiday Recess
January 18: Martin Luther King Jr. Day
February 15–19: Winter Recess
March 29–April 2: Spring Recess
April 30: Supt. Conference Day
May 31: Memorial Day
Transportation Requests

Requests for transportation to private and parochial schools for the 2020-2021 school year must be submitted in writing to the District Office by Wednesday, April 1, 2020. A family moving into the District after this date must submit a written request to the District Office within 30 days of occupancy if transportation to a private or parochial school is required. These deadlines are strictly observed.

A new request must be submitted each year, even if transportation is currently being provided. A Transportation Request form is available on the District website under Departments>Business Office/HR. For more information, contact the Business Office at 741-1400, x10521.

Board Election/Budget Vote

There will be two vacancies for the Office of Member of the Board of Education for three-year terms, commencing July 1, 2020 and expiring June 30, 2023. Nominating petitions are available at the District Office. They require a minimum of twenty-five qualified voters’ signatures and must be returned to the District Clerk no later than 5:00 p.m. on Monday, April 20, 2020.

To be eligible to vote in the Annual Budget Vote and School Board Election on May 19, 2020, you must be:
1. A citizen of the United States;
2. At least 18 years of age (by May 19, 2020);
3. A Pleasantville UFSD resident at least 30 days immediately prior to the day of the vote;
4. Registered with the Westchester County Board of Elections OR registered to vote with the school district no later than May 14, 2020.

Registering at the District Office does not register an individual with the Westchester County Board of Elections.

If you have previously registered and voted in either a school district or general election in the last four calendar years, re-registration is NOT required.

For more information, select Voter Registration under the Parents/Community tab on the District website (pleasantvilleschools.org).

Retirement Announced

On March 6, BRS Head Custodian Lonnell Beechum Sr. will retire after thirty-eight years with the District, including several terms as president of the District’s CSEA bargaining unit. Of his twenty-two years at BRS, principal Peggy Galotti praised his “outstanding service,” noting that “Lonnie’s dedication to ensuring our building is safe, clean and child-centered has always been his top priority.” Although Mr. Beechum will miss — and be missed by — his BRS family, he looks forward to spending more time fishing and bowling. We wish him “tight lines” and lots of strikes.

Upcoming Board Meetings

Unless otherwise noted, all meetings of the Board of Education begin at 7:30 p.m. in the Pleasantville High School Library Media Center. Reports scheduled are subject to change. Information on the upcoming Board meeting is available at pleasantvilleschools.org (Board of Education>BoardDocs) and 741-1460. Every meeting provides an opportunity for comments and questions from the audience.

Tuesday, March 3
• 2020-21 Budget Review (Technology, Operations & Maintenance, Athletics)
• Strategic Plan Update

Tuesday, March 17
• Recognition of Retirees
• 2020-21 Budget Review (Bedford Road School, Middle School, High School, Special Education)

Tuesday, March 31
• 2020-21 Budget Review (Projected Revenues and Reserve Fund Balances)
• Winter Athletic Season Recap

Tuesday, April 21
• Final 2020-21 Budget Presentation

Tuesday, May 5
Budget Hearing followed by Public Meeting

Tuesday, May 26
• Strategic Plan, 2019-20 Schools/Board Goals Update

Tuesday, June 9
• 2020-21 Board Goals

Tuesday, June 23
• Spring Athletic Season Recap
Girls Soccer: League, Section, Region & State Champions!

Front (on either side of signs and holding back sign): Norah Foley, Grace Capko, Isabelle Kapoor, Lauren Mathews, Katie Moses, Maeve Roney, Carolyn Lee, Amber Nanaj, Eliza Murphy, Katrina Kelly, Lila Donohue, Maddie Braverman, Avery Manna; middle: JV Coach Tom Baffuto, Lexie Rippstein, Riley Vavolizza, Summer deLuca, Elsa Ammirati, Ella O’Malley, Maya Sauthoff, Analese Picart, Ali Portera, Mary Grace O’Neill, Isabella Pepdjonovic, Julia O’Reilly, Lauren Drillock; back row: Head Coach Chris Osterhoudt, Assistant Coach Keith Gardener. (Photo: John Bauerlein)

The team finished the season with a record of 21-1-2, having scored a total of 81 goals (24 of them in the playoffs) while giving up 12 (3 in the playoffs). The team excelled academically as well: all 25 team members met the criteria for a New York State Scholar Athlete team (75% of a team’s roster must have an average GPA of 90 or above; 100% of the team did).