

HOME PAGES

THE QUARTERLY NEWSLETTER OF THE POCANTICO HILLS SCHOOL

FALL 2008



‘Nothing endures but change.’ As we welcome autumn with its ever changing beauty and bounty, we are reminded that change is integral to life. Here in Pocantico, the new school year has brought a number of changes to the District, including our new Superintendent, Dr. Freddie Smith, whose fresh enthusiasm is reflected in the eager faces of our students. We remember as the leaves turn from green to amber that, as the Greek philosopher Heraclitus said, “Nothing endures but change.”

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LETTERS H

HEARING FROM OUR COMMUNITY LEADERS

FROM OUR SCHOOL BOARD

Welcome Home Parents and Friends,

The 2008-2009 academic year is going to be awesome! There is an air of renewed vibrancy ringing through the halls of Pocantico Hills. The children are excited; the teachers are excited; the whole school is excited, and we invite you to be an active part of it.

We hope by now you have all had a chance to meet our new Superintendent, Dr. Freddie D. Smith. We know that all our students have met him, and it would be fair to say that the children have welcomed him with open arms. Ask your children about Dr. Smith and you might be very pleased. We forecast a re-doubling of our efforts to propel our children's education to greater excellence under his leadership. Welcome Dr. Smith!

This year our students and our school will be honored by the United States Department of Education, in Washington D.C. On Oct. 21, 2008, Pocantico will be presented with a Blue Ribbon representing Excellence in Education. This national designation and honor was bestowed on only 19 schools in New York State and two schools in Westchester County. Kudos and hats off to all of our students – you make us proud. Congratulations parents; keep up the good work. And thank you, teachers – our great and dedicated teachers who have planted the seeds of inquiry, and cultivated and tended the growth of the foundation of education in our students. We thank you.

The Rockefeller Brothers Fund has graciously extended an opportunity for our third and fourth grade students to participate in an agricultural project utilizing organic-based gardening techniques. Private garden beds on the Rockefeller Estate have been reserved for the children to plant and harvest several rotations of crops for their consumption. The academic framework that surrounds the project will give rise to interdisciplinary connections to science, math and writing for our little agriculturalists.

The Pocantico Hills Board of Education remains dedicated to the highest standards of academic excellence for all our students. We welcome alumni to come back and add to the richness of the quilt that is the Pocantico Hills School. We seek parent volunteers to actively participate in our children's social and interpersonal growth. We seek knowledgeable and gifted individuals of the community to offer their insights and mentoring for our youngest minds. Come join us in the excitement that is Pocantico Hills.

Robert W. Balog

*President
Board of Education*

Katherine Yu

*Vice President
Board of Education*

OME

FROM DR. SMITH

Welcome back to a new school year!

I hope you all had a great summer and are ready for an exciting new year.

I am pleased to be writing my first newsletter as Pocantico Hills Superintendent. My transition to Pocantico has been an easy one thanks to the entire school community. I feel fortunate to be working with such a talented and caring staff and all of the wonderful families in Pocantico Hills. Education is a partnership that requires the work and support of the entire community. When parents are involved in the school community, it sends a clear message to children that education is valued and should be a priority.

While every family has their own unique way of communicating and being involved in one another's lives, I offer the following avenues for involvement in your child's education. Have conversations with your son or daughter about school. Ask your child what he/she did at school, ask what work is due, and provide a quiet place to study and do homework. Stay involved at school by coming to an activity or event at Pocantico Hills with your child AND encourage him/her to join a club, activity or team. Plan on attending all Parent/Teacher conferences, PTA and Board of Education meetings and monitor your student's progress. Call your son's/daughter's teachers, counselor or principal when you have questions or concerns.

We all must enthusiastically encourage our students to study and work in order to propel them up the ladder of success. Remember that we are all working toward the same goal of helping students discover and develop their abilities, and we will achieve maximum results when we work together with open lines of communication. I am looking forward to working with everyone throughout the year.

The Pocantico Hills families welcome our new Pre-Kindergarten parents, new staff members and those new to the District. If you haven't already done so, please remember to join the PTA. The Pocantico PTA is a strong, effective organization because of our many dedicated parents and staff members. Through their commitment and support, we are able to provide so much for our children. We have an exciting school year ahead of us. There are many special events to look forward to this year: book fairs, family nights, the carnival, assemblies and much more!

The Pocantico Hills Central School District has had another successful start this year. The faculty, staff and students are all working hard and doing wonderful things academically and in all extracurricular activities.

There have been a few staff changes this year. Joining the District this year is Deborah Kraemer, Teacher's Assistant After-School Program; Joy Scantlebury, ESL teacher; Angel Ruggiero, Teacher's Aide - fourth grade; Norma DeSousa, Teacher's Assistant, Special Education - fifth grade; Michelle Tarchine, Teacher's Aide - fifth grade; Sana Fanek, Teacher's Aide - Middle School; and Barbara Lawrence, Teacher's Aide, Middle School. I am very pleased to have these professionals on our staff and look forward to working with them. They come to us with various work experiences within education and impressive academic backgrounds. They also bring great energy, enthusiasm and a very positive attitude to their positions.

We are looking forward to a very successful school year. Please feel free to call me with any suggestions, questions or new ideas.

Once again, I look forward to working with all of you.

Dr. Smith

Getting To Know Dr. Freddie D. Smith

Dr. Freddie D. Smith, Pocantico Hills Central School District's new Superintendent, has hit the ground running, actively getting to know the community and its students. "I have enjoyed getting to know everyone," he said. "This is a very special place."



Dr. Smith comes to Pocantico Hills with a 19-year record for innovation and improvement in education and educational systems. He brings a distinctly progressive approach to the position.

His last position was Assistant Superintendent of Pupil Personnel and Curricular Services for the City School District of New Rochelle, where he worked to help the district raise its level of achievement for all students, especially Limited English Proficient and Special Education students. Dr. Smith was also instrumental in helping the district win the coveted Magna Award for the district's exemplary Dual Language Program from the National School Boards Association. Additionally, he assisted in significantly increasing the district's competitive grant awards.

Before that, under his leadership as Principal of the Post Road Elementary School in White Plains, the school was recognized as one of New York State's 574 "high performing/gap closing" schools for two years. Dr. Smith's career as an educator began in the Prince Georges County Public Schools in Maryland where he served as an elementary school teacher and guidance counselor, and subsequently moved into administration.

"I think that we can accomplish a lot together for the benefit of our children," said Dr. Smith. "We are only limited by our imaginations."

A graduate of South Carolina State University, Dr. Smith received his master's degree from Virginia State University and his Ph.D. from the University of Virginia's Curry School of Education and Darden School of Business. As a graduate student, he was awarded a \$5,000 research grant from the Core Knowledge Foundation to evaluate the schools in Virginia piloting the Core Knowledge Curriculum, and an Educational Exchange Fellowship to study at Seoul National University in Seoul, South Korea. Dr. Smith recently spoke at the annual Congressional Black Congress Legislative Conference and before the Congress of the United States on Teacher Education Training and School Safety Solutions.

He has been featured in the Washington Post Magazine-Education Edition with Dr. E.D. Hirsch on "Core Knowledge Curriculum" as well as in other newspaper and magazine articles regarding the role his grandfather, Attorney George E.C. Hayes, played in the *Brown v. Board of Education* landmark case and his continuance of his grandfather's legacy of Equal Educational Opportunity.

In addition to holding leadership positions in numerous professional and community service organizations, Dr. Smith teaches as an adjunct professor in the School of Education at Manhattanville College, Iona College and the College of New Rochelle.

2008 Blue Ribbon for Us!

Pocantico Hills School has been named a 2008 Blue Ribbon Schools by the U.S. Department of Education. This prestigious program recognizes the most successful of American schools in helping students achieve at very high levels and for making significant progress in closing the achievement gap.



Pocantico is very proud to make the short list! Pocantico is one of only 320 public and private schools nationwide to be named to the list this year.

“While we are certainly proud of our scores, I would be willing to say that we are far more proud of our students’ everyday successes that result from creative, challenging curricula, real-world connections, individualized attention and the supportive, safe atmosphere we create for them here,” said Principal Stanley Steele.

The No Child Left Behind-Blue Ribbon Schools Program honors both public and private elementary, middle and high schools that are either academically superior or that demonstrate dramatic gains in student achievement to high levels.

Schools must undergo a rigorous and comprehensive assessment to be considered a Blue Ribbon School. The schools are selected based on one of two criteria:

- schools with at least 40 percent of their students from disadvantaged backgrounds that dramatically improve student performance to high levels on state tests; and
- schools whose students, regardless of background, achieve in the top 10 percent of their state on state tests or in the case of private schools in the top 10 percent of the nation on nationally normed tests.

A committee composed of former Superintendent, Dr. Thomas Elliott; Principal Stanley Steele; Adam Brown, ELO/HGS Instructor, and Mary McIntyre, School Secretary, worked on the application, which is evaluated by the Department of Education.

In addition to being honored at a ceremony in Washington, DC, where each school receives a plaque and flag signifying their status, Blue Ribbon Schools serve as models for other schools throughout the nation.

Pocantico Hills Superintendent, Dr. Freddie Smith, said everyone was excited by the news, especially because so few local schools had received Blue Ribbon designation.

The School District, which has only 332 students, operates under a Pre-Kindergarten through 8th grade model. The Superintendent said this model benefits students because it does away with difficult transitions.

Dr. Smith thanked the entire school community for its hard work and commitment to the schools. “It’s not so much about the prestige,” he said, “but rather about saying job well done.”



Kids come first. *Principal Stanley Steele connects with students from the mentoring program on a field trip to Outhouse Orchards.*

FROM OUR PTA

Time flies when you're having fun...isn't that so true? It seems like just yesterday that we were at the PTA Spring Carnival enjoying the games, food and the dunking booth.

It's hard to believe that summer is now behind us, and we are moving full speed ahead into the 2008/2009 school year.

In the first month, the PTA has lived up to this year's motto "Positive Teamwork in Action." We began by welcoming our new Superintendent, Dr. Freddie Smith, through sponsoring "Coffee with the Superintendent" before our first general meeting. Our membership drive, spearheaded by Gina Downes, was present at both open houses, and our PTA Family Dinner Night at Applebee's was a complete community success! It was so great being a part of all the parents, teachers and families who came out to eat together as a Pocantico Hills family. Special thanks to Jen Leahy, Julie Minerva and Lauren Amsterdam for all their hard work and to Dr. Smith for initiating such a great event. Rachel Gumina and Julie Minerva worked together as a team to rewrite the PTA booklet for Class Parents. If you are a Class Parent and haven't yet received one, please contact us.

Jennifer Poux worked very hard to bring our first assembly to the third through sixth graders. I immediately heard so much positive feedback from the kids as well as the teachers about Peter Laurie, the author who brought so much enthusiasm into their reading and writing experience. "Box Tops for Education" is well under way thanks to Kelly Owen's organization and energy. Truck Day was so much fun! The Pre K through third graders loved experiencing each type of truck and spending some time exploring. Laura Dineen and Steve Cowles did a superb job! What a great team we have at Pocantico!

Did you also know that the PTA is now on e-chalk because of the efforts of both Terry Hongell and Gina Downes? Please visit our site and let us know what you think. It is a great place to see all PTA events and even print out your membership form to complete and send into school. We could only accomplish this much success so quickly within the first month of school

because of our parents, teachers, administrators and community. As I begin my first year as the PTA President, I can't help but feel supported by the fabulous team that has already done so much.

We are always looking to reach out for more members, so please feel free to contact me, anyone from the Executive Board, or even any of the chairpersons that are listed on the inside of your school calendar.

Brenda L. Misuraca
PTA President



PTA Carnival fun! *Principal Stanley Steele will do what it takes!*

FROM OUR FOUNDATION

Dear Friends and Neighbors,

Welcome back to a new academic year at the “Blue Ribbon” Pocantico Hills Central School and congratulations to all who made this award possible! The Foundation is looking forward to a new year of providing support for programs and projects that continue this outstanding performance.

On behalf of the Foundation, I am happy to announce that we are partnering with the school and Rockefeller Brothers Fund to develop the new organic gardening program at Pocantico Hills School. For this multi-dimensional program, in which children plant, harvest and prepare their own organically grown vegetables, the Foundation will help buy the start-up materials needed for the program to take root. Although initially involving third and fourth-grade students, the school plans to expand the program to include more grades. The Foundation enthusiastically supports this innovative program, which offers hands-on curriculum in science, math, social studies, English and the arts.

On another note, music teacher Sheila Stanton recently expressed her utmost appreciation to the dedicated students who helped raise money for the vocal music program during the Foundation’s “Walking in Rhythm” fundraiser at Swan Lake last spring. To start her new year, she received a plethora of rhythm instruments, recorders, method books and a portable PA system with microphones. The rhythm instruments have been a huge hit with all students. Additionally, she said the students are giddy with excitement asking when they can go “on tour” with the portable PA system.

Back by popular demand and sponsored by the Foundation, Monte Carlo Night returns on Feb. 28, 2008, right down the road at the Doubletree Hotel in Tarrytown. This will be our main event to raise funds for projects, programs and equipment that

enhance the educational experience of our children. Please plan to join us for an evening of fun, food and festivities!

As always, we thank you for your support and encouragement. We are eager to do all that we can to help our children, school and community thrive!

Best wishes for a great school year,

Shelly Marchese

Stay Connected

Be included in the school Directory and keep in touch with the Pocantico Hills community, whether your children are attending high school or graduated years ago. Friendships formed in Pocantico often last a lifetime. Once you are in the directory, you will be included each year in a special section until you opt out. Completed forms can be dropped off at school, mailed to the PHCS Foundation, or you can check the school website for easy online registration.



Name: _____

Address: _____

Telephone: _____

E-Mail: _____

Children: _____ Year Grad PHCS

_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____

Students' Organic Garden Serves Up Lunch & Learning

On a gorgeous sunny day in early September, the third and fourth graders tasted the fruits of their labor (or should we say, the vegetables of their labor?) as they harvested the lettuce, radishes, squash and herbs that they had planted in the new organic garden. Judging from their enthusiastic response, they enjoyed every minute of it, from touring the garden and harvesting the crops to washing the produce and then turning it all into a healthy and delicious salad, complete with vinaigrette dressing.

The organic garden, located on the neighboring Rockefeller estate in Pocantico, is part of a pilot project that eventually could involve the entire school. It supports curriculum in math, social studies, English and the arts that will be unified under the overarching principle of environmental sustainability. Teachers trained over the summer to learn how to integrate organic gardening tech-

niques with the garden's varied applications for curriculum.

"This program is a great partnership with the Rockefeller Brothers Fund and BOCES, one that has so many benefits," said Dr. Freddie Smith, Superintendent. "It gets the students out into the environment so they value how food gets from the farm to their plate, and it's also a way of tapping into our history as Americans."

Parents were on hand to assist with the harvest, helping students to wash the lettuce, slice the radishes and whisk the vinaigrette. Students worked through five stations, which included writing their observations and transplanting seedlings of ornamental cabbage to take home. In addition to all the hands-on lessons, they learned that their garden recreated a technique used by Native Americans, the "three-sister garden" where corn, squash and beans grow symbiotically.



"Welcome to Your Garden!"
Adam Brown masterfully led the students through the garden, instructing them on how best to pick the lettuce, squash, radishes and herbs for the salad.



It was a glorious day. *Dr. Freddie Smith, with Judy Clark and Susanne Pandich of the Rockefeller Brothers Fund, enjoy Harvest Day.*

This harvest was the first of five. For Harvest Soup, in conjunction with Wellness Day on Oct. 10, the group harvested some of the beans, squash, tomatoes, cucumbers, carrots, chard and herbs. Students can also expect a Pumpkin Harvest around Halloween and a major Winter Soup Festival in early January. Since the program will utilize a greenhouse and cold frames in addition to the outdoor beds, students will be exploring interdisciplinary projects year-round. There is a final Harvest/Salad Day in June, followed by the final project during which the fourth graders will replant the garden for next year's September Salad Day.

The group has also contributed some vegetables to the cafeteria and will harvest the basil to give to the Home and Careers class in the middle school, where they will make fresh pesto.

The project was facilitated by Adam Brown, who acts as the liaison between the school, RBF and BOCES. "Salad Day was a team effort," said Mr. Brown, who works with Susanne Pandich of the Rockefeller Brothers Fund; Denise Martabano, the health, wellness and sustainability coach for the Katonah-Lewisboro school district; and Ginny LoBosco of Putnam/Northern Westchester BOCES. Ms. LoBosco will be working with the District this year on the garden and other green initiatives.

Getting a Taste of the Fun

So the entire community can share in the fun, here is the recipe used for the dressing.

Balsamic Vinaigrette
Makes about 1 cup dressing

2 T. balsamic vinegar
2 T. lemon juice
1 T. Dijon mustard
 $\frac{3}{4}$ cup olive oil
 $\frac{1}{2}$ t. salt
 $\frac{1}{2}$ pepper

1. Measure the Dijon mustard, balsamic vinegar and lemon juice into a bowl.
2. With a whisk, combine the mixture.
3. While continuing to whisk constantly, add the oil very slowly. The vinaigrette should "emulsify" if you are adding the oil slowly enough.
4. Add the salt and pepper.
5. Enjoy on fresh salad greens!

The recipe was contributed by Denise Martabano.



Students whip up delicious dressing.

Students are fully engaged as they learn to make the salad dressing.



Bookmobile Makes the Reading Easy

During the lazy days of summer, what could be better than having your summer reading delivered to your door? The Summer Bookmobile is filled with books for all readers and at all levels

including middle school required reading.

Driven by Mrs. Carrigan, Pocantico's Pre-Kindergarten teacher, and Mrs. Fitzpatrick, Pocantico's Reading Recovery teacher, the bookmobile brought books to Pocantico residents as part of its summer reading program making scheduled stops at all of Pocantico's neighborhoods. Schedules are published in June for the summer.

CALENDAR CHANGE

This year the Primary AND Intermediate House Concerts will be on the same night!

TUESDAY, DEC. 16, 2008

Primary House at 7 p.m.

Intermediate House at 7:45 p.m.

WEDNESDAY, APRIL 29, 2009

Primary House at 7 p.m.

Intermediate House at 7:45 p.m.

DOUBLE THE FUN ON ONE NIGHT!!!

JOIN THE PTA!

Support your school and join the Pocantico Hills PTA.

Dues: \$15.00

Forward a check (or cash) to the Main Office to the attention of
Gina Downes

Membership Chairperson

AROUND THE DISTRICT



Happy About Apples. *The kindergarten students enjoy apple picking at a nearby orchard with their teachers Christina DiStefano (left) and Elizabeth Lapicki. It is one of several activities centered around their apple theme for September.*



Eyes Light Up on Truck Day. *During Truck Day, students in Pre-K through third grade get a close-up look at many kinds of trucks brought to school through the help of the community.*

upcoming dates

NOVEMBER

- 2 DAYLIGHT SAVINGS TIME ends
Set clocks back one hour
- 3 School Board Meeting, Library 8 p.m.
- 4 Election Day
- 6 Foundation Meeting, Teachers Lounge 8 p.m.
No 9th period
- 7 1st Marking Period ends
- 10 No 9th period
- 11 VETERANS DAY, School Closed
- 12 Grade 5 NYS Social Studies Exam (Booklet1)
- 13 Grade 5 NYS Social Studies Exam (Booklet 2)
PTA General Meeting, Cafeteria 8 p.m.
- 14 Report Cards home
- 17 School Board Meeting, Library 8 p.m.
- 21 Pre-K- 8th Grade, 11:30 Dismissal
Parent-Teacher Conferences, Noon – 3 p.m.
- 26 11:30 dismissal
- 27-28 THANKSGIVING RECESS, No School
- 29 PTA, "Breakfast and a Movie"

DECEMBER

- 1 School Board Meeting, Library 8 p.m.
- 2 Senior Citizens', Luncheon and Concert
10:15 a.m., Grades 6 – 8
- 3 Middle School, Winter Concert
Grades 6 – 8, 7:30 p.m.
- 4 Foundation Meeting, Teachers Lounge 8 p.m.
- 15 School Board Meeting, Library 8 p.m.
- 16 Primary House, Winter Concert
Grades 1 – 2, 7 p.m.
Intermediate House, Winter Concert
Grades 3 – 5, 7:45 p.m.
- 18 No 9th period
- 21 HANUKKAH begins at sundown
- 23 No 9th period
- Dec 24 - Jan 2 HOLIDAY RECESS No School
- 26 Kwanzaa Begins
- 29 Hanukkah Ends
- 31 New Year's Eve

POCANTICO HILLS CENTRAL SCHOOL
599 Bedford Road
Pocantico Hills
Sleepy Hollow, N.Y. 10591

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RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED

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Mr. Robert W. Balog, President
Mrs. Katherine Yu, Vice President
Mr. John Conrad, Trustee
Mr. Maurice Curran, Trustee
Mr. David Wilens, Trustee
Superintendent, Dr. Freddie D. Smith



LEARNING
ACHIEVEMENT



GROWTH
DIRECTION

For more information, please visit our website:
www.pocanticohills.org

