

# Pelham FOCUS

A PUBLICATION OF THE PELHAM BOARD OF EDUCATION

WINTER 2019

## Strategic Plan 2019-2024

The Pelham School Community will develop empowered, adaptable, well-balanced individuals who are equipped to meaningfully contribute to our local, national and global society.

Dear Community,



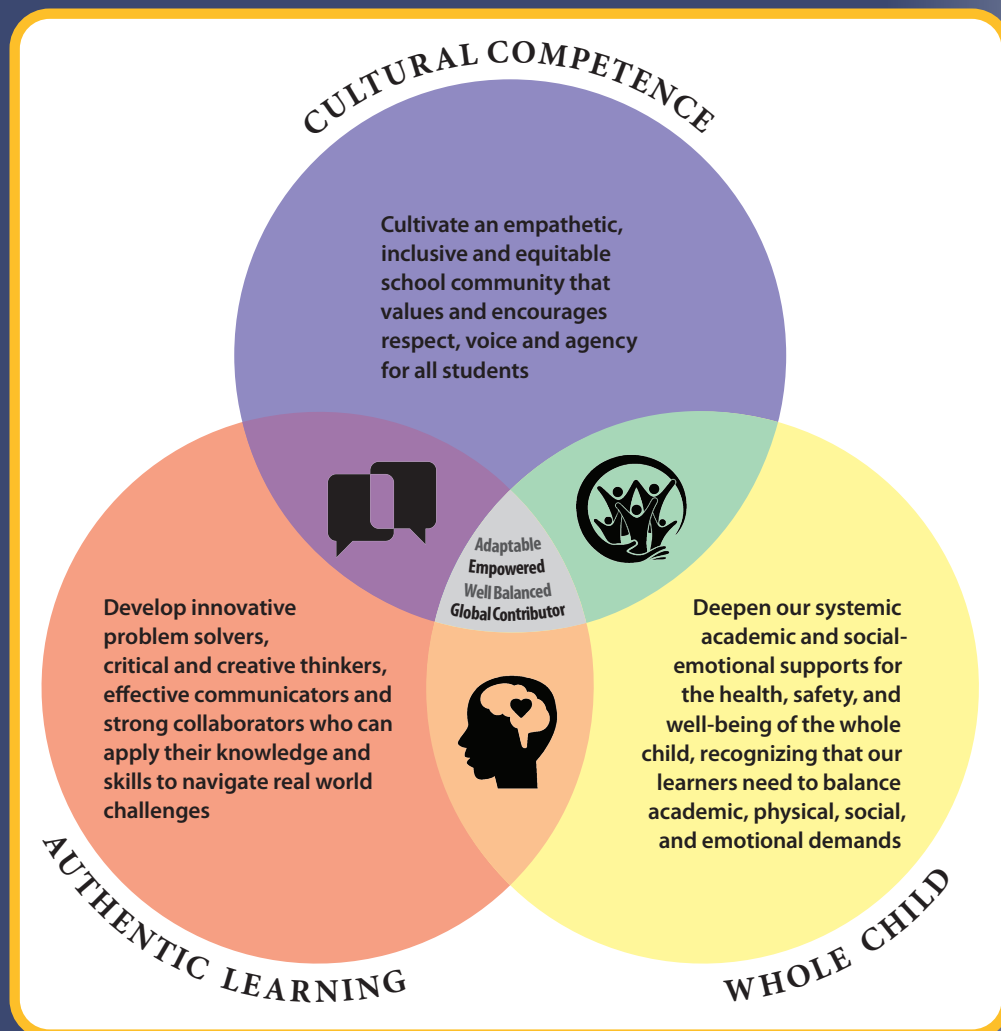
Over the past year, the Board of Education and a broad group of stakeholders collaborated

to produce a new Strategic Plan, which will guide the work of the District over the next five years. The vision of this group, developed through research, discussion and analysis of feedback obtained from our students, staff, and community, is captured in the preamble to the new plan: "The Pelham School Community will develop empowered, adaptable, well-balanced individuals who are equipped to meaningfully contribute to our local, national, and global society." We believe the interconnectedness of the goals of Cultural Competence, Authentic Learning, and the Whole Child will be the driving force to help us achieve this vision for all students.

This plan is built upon the strong foundation laid by our previous plan. It will serve as a bridge to the future where we extend 21<sup>st</sup> century learning skills into authentic realms of application and audience; where voice and choice are honored and respected for all in both the culture of our schools and the design of our programs and curricula; where we integrate social-emotional learning and networks of support to develop self-management skills in our students and provide the academic and emotional

supports for their success; where students and staff understand the function of culture in our schools and society, and use the tools necessary to build a more inclusive community.

On the pages that follow, please find additional details about each of our Strategic Plan goal areas. We look forward to the continued growth of our students and as always thank you for your support.  
Cheryl H. Champ, Ed. D.,  
Superintendent of Schools



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# Authentic Learning

**GOAL:** Develop innovative problem solvers, critical and creative thinkers, effective communicators and strong collaborators who can apply their knowledge and skills to navigate real world challenges.

## WHAT IS AUTHENTIC LEARNING?

According to Professor Audrey C. Rule, “Authentic learning occurs when students participate in an experience that addresses real-world problems and mimics the work of professionals; involves presentation of findings to an audience beyond the classroom; requires open-ended inquiry, thinking skills and metacognition; and allows students to engage in discourse and social learning in a community of learners in which they direct their own learning.”

Over the course of the next 18 months, the District will look for ways to expand authentic learning in all areas. Instruction will be guided by the Pelham Inquiry Cycle (see page 3), a process for learning in which students Question, Design, Apply, Reflect and Communicate as they solve real-world problems. By taking this approach, we will help students to apply and understand the content that they learn every day.

This work will be overseen by the District’s Authentic Learning Committee.

## ACTION STEP

Develop students who are equipped to solve real-world problems, demonstrate skills to audiences beyond the classroom, and engage in civil discourse by exploring new and advancing previous efforts in providing relevant and authentic experiences for all learners

## CURRENT AUTHENTIC LEARNING EXPERIENCES

- **Science 21** This curriculum is an phenomena-based and hands-on approach for elementary students.
- **Make a Change** This 5<sup>th</sup> grade capstone challenges students to make their school community a better place by solving a problem of their choosing and presenting their solution.
- **International Baccalaureate Middle Years Programme** Students are taught content through a global, interdisciplinary lens and make real-world connections to their learning.
- **Gr. 8 Community Project** Students design and conduct a service project of their choice to improve their community culminating in an expo night where they present their work.
- **Physics Scrambler Project** In this project-based assessment HS students design, build & test a car with a braking system, putting their knowledge learned throughout the year to the test.
- **Science Research** High school students work with mentors to conduct research on specific topics that are of interest to them.

## WHAT COMES NEXT

- **Gr. 10 Personal Project** The HS continues to roll-out the International Baccalaureate Middle Years Programme in grades 9 & 10. As part of this implementation, we will be designing a capstone project for sophomores.
- **Expand Internship Opportunities** Building upon the WISE program, the District will seek to increase professional experiences for students.
- **Teachers College Readers Workshop** Building on the success of the Writers Workshop program, next school year the Readers Workshop approach will be used to promote student choice in K-5 reading instruction and offer more personalized and student-centered instruction.
- **Economics: Personal Financial Literacy** 12<sup>th</sup> grade students can fulfill their economics graduation requirement through this new course in which they will learn about credit scores, balancing checkbooks, protecting against identity theft, and more.

To view the full Strategic Plan visit  
[pelhamschools.org/district/strategic-plan-2019-24](http://pelhamschools.org/district/strategic-plan-2019-24)



Sowing the Seeds of Learning

Siwanoy students planted tulip bulbs in the Outdoor Classroom in November as part of an international science project in which students track the tulips' growth and learn about the relationship between climate, geography, and the arrival of spring. This experience allows students to make connections between their learning and the world at large.



## ACTION STEP

Explore, study and recommend ways to structure time and space more efficiently and effectively in our schools and classrooms to foster true learning and social-emotional development

## A VISION OF EXCELLENCE

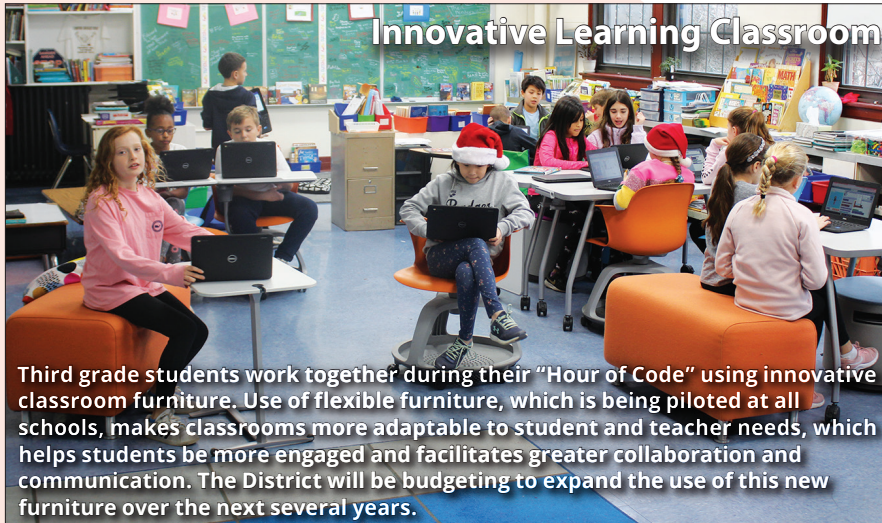
The Pelham school community, comprising The Board of Education, administrators, teachers, school staff, parents, students and community members, has high expectations and standards for all students.

The Pelham school community challenges and inspires its students to become creative and critical thinkers who make ethical choices, to work both independently and collaboratively to solve problems, to become life-long learners and responsible citizens in a democratic society, and to be prepared for the demands of a highly technological and global community.

The Pelham school community celebrates diversity, fosters a sense of belonging for all children and emphasizes the importance of contributing to the greater community.

The Board of Education, administrators, teachers, school staff, parents, students and community members all share the responsibility for public education in Pelham.

The Pelham school community is dedicated to continuous improvement and is committed to maintaining the flexibility necessary to anticipate and respond to a changing world.



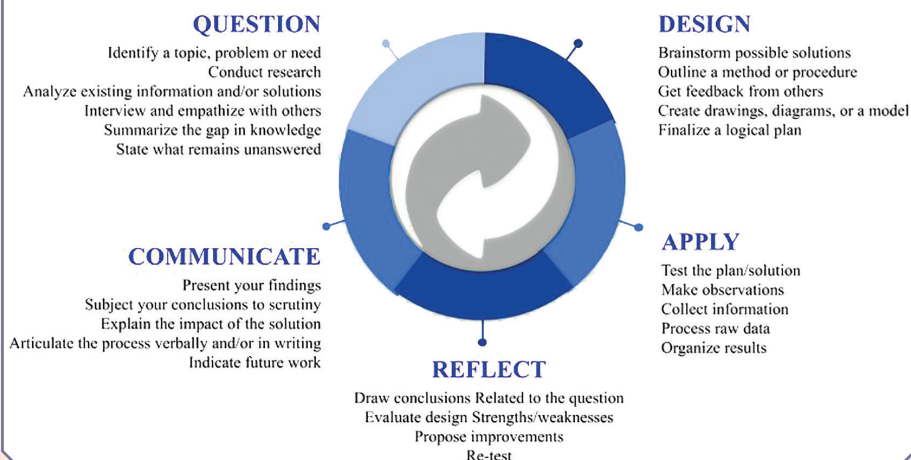
Third grade students work together during their "Hour of Code" using innovative classroom furniture. Use of flexible furniture, which is being piloted at all schools, makes classrooms more adaptable to student and teacher needs, which helps students be more engaged and facilitates greater collaboration and communication. The District will be budgeting to expand the use of this new furniture over the next several years.

**A**s the delivery of content evolves and becomes more student-centered and interactive, so too must our approach to time and space.

The District will work with scheduling experts to investigate and implement schedules that most effectively support our approach to delivering curriculum and instruction to all students. We will also work to structure time within classes to support achievement and growth.

Similarly, the District will incorporate flexible furniture into our common spaces/ libraries and classrooms to support our teaching goals. This classroom design effort is already well on its way thanks to our partnership with the Pelham Education Foundation. Flexible classroom spaces help facilitate student-centered learning, collaboration and communication, which are essential elements of Authentic Learning.

## PELHAM INQUIRY CYCLE



## Thoughtexchange: Sharing Feedback

This school year, the District is partnering with Thoughtexchange to solicit feedback from the community on important topics. This on-line tool allows us to pose open-ended questions to which parents and community members can submit anonymous responses and rate those of others. The data gleaned from these surveys allows the District to gauge what is of most interest to the community, understand important perspective, and hear all voices. View the responses on our Strategic Plan goals by visiting

[pelhamschools.org/district/strategic-plan-2019-24](http://pelhamschools.org/district/strategic-plan-2019-24)





# The Whole Child

**GOAL:** Deepen our systemic academic and social-emotional supports for the health, safety, and well-being of the whole child, recognizing that our learners need to balance academic, physical, social, and emotional demands.

## ACTION STEP

Research and identify a clear vision for what constitutes a healthy environment for the Pelham Public Schools

## THE WHOLE CHILD: STRIKING THE BALANCE IN EDUCATION

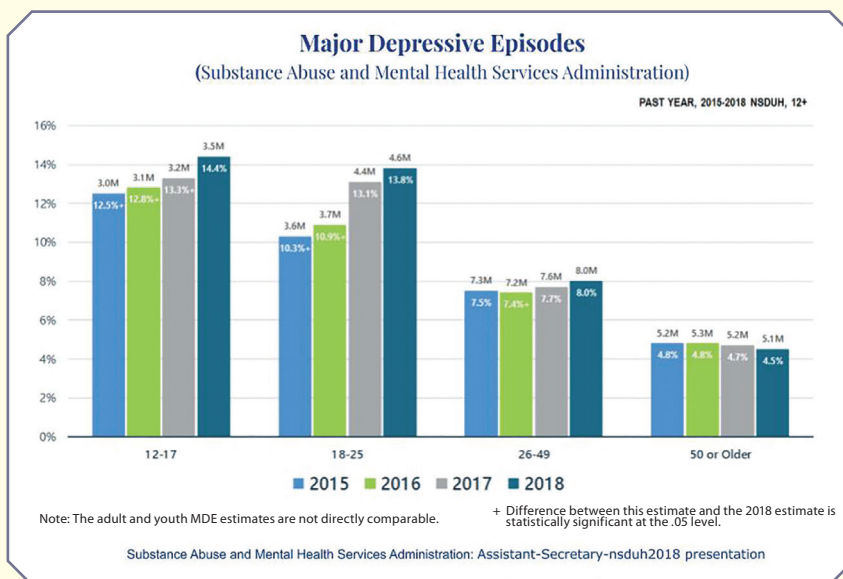
The Pelham Public Schools are committed to offering a comprehensive approach to education that blends academics and social-emotional development into our curriculum.

The need for this approach was affirmed by the Pelham community last school year through strategic planning surveys completed by a broad spectrum of stakeholders, leading to the inclusion of The Whole Child goal in our Strategic Plan.

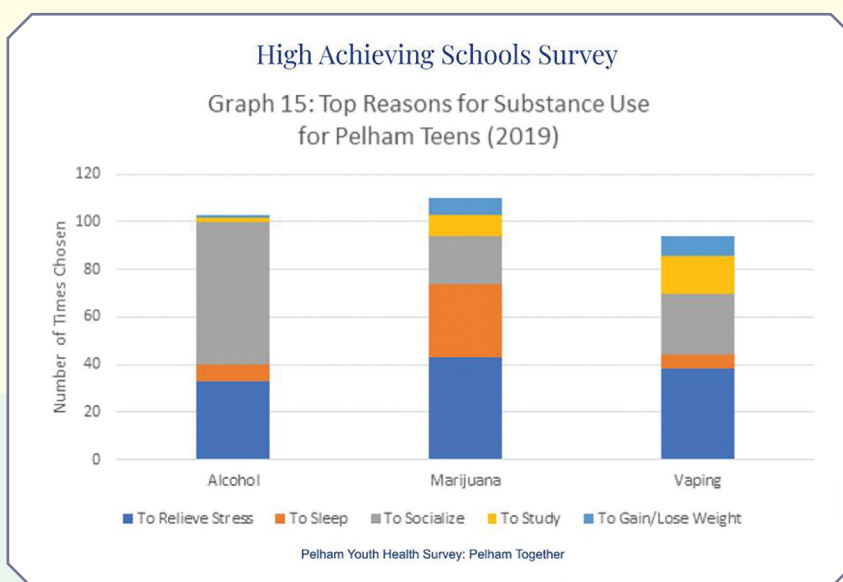
This work is predicated on the belief that students who feel physically and emotionally safe and cared for within the learning environment are more actively and cognitively engaged and will be more successful inside the classroom and out. As we define and create a healthy environment in our schools, we will also provide support for all learners so that they may reach their full potential.

## Data Points to Social-Emotional Health Concerns

National survey data shows a troubling rise in depression and mental illness among adolescents and young adults. Recognizing the correlation between stress, substance use, and other factors, the District's Wellness Committee will review research and make recommendations to improve our students' mental and physical health.



↑ National data shows the largest increases among 12-25 year-olds over the past four years.



↑ Recent survey data of Pelham's youth showing a strong trend of substances (alcohol, marijuana and vaping) being used to relieve stress.



## ACTION STEP

Develop Multi-Tiered System of Support (MTSS) committees to create a shared framework and identify approaches to providing equitable access to academic and social-emotional supports to all students

### Responsive Classroom: The Morning Meeting

Responsive Classroom is a research-based Tier 1 approach to social-emotional learning being introduced in grades K-5. Below are the four elements that compose the Morning Meeting, a routine that provides a social-emotional foundation for all students each day.



**Greeting**

Students say hello and address their peers by name. Each day, they speak to someone different than the day before, fostering connectedness and building relationships with everyone in their class.



**Sharing**

Prompted by a question from their teacher, students converse with a neighbor. They are encouraged to ask questions of each other, and then report out to the full group about their discussion.



**Activity**

A group activity, such as a game or song, helps build cohesion in the classroom while students practice social and academic skills.



**Morning Message**

Teachers prepare a morning message for their students each day to help transition from morning meeting into the day's academic lessons. In this first grade class, students move into a grammar lesson by correcting the morning message.

### WHAT IS MTSS?

Multi-Tiered Systems of Support is a process that helps teachers and staff identify at-risk students and provide progressive levels of intervention.

The framework identifies three tiers of need. The majority of students, approximately 80%, succeed and progress on track with solid, research-based classroom instruction (Tier 1). Approximately 15% of students (Tier 2) may need more targeted intervention outside of the classroom to help them progress in areas where they are struggling. As many as five percent may require more intensive, individualized interventions (Tier 3).

Standardized and curricular assessment data and teacher observations are key indicators that are used to identify students who are struggling and provide effective supports when necessary. Throughout the intervention process, students' growth is monitored to determine if more support is necessary or when intervention is no longer necessary.

The District's MTSS committees are working with Dr. Jim Wright, a leading consultant in this field to establish protocols for identifying students in need and to implement and identify effective interventions across all grade levels.

#### 2018-19 STRATEGIC PLANNING COMMITTEE

##### Board of Education

| Sue Childs | Eileen Miller | Peter Liaskos |

##### Administration

| Dr. Cheryl Champ (Superintendent) |  
| Dr. Steven Garcia (Asst. Superintendent for Curriculum, Instruction & Personnel) |  
| Julia Chung (Asst. Superintendent for Pupil Personnel Services) |  
| Dr. Thomas Callahan (Director of Math & Science) |  
| Dr. Maria Thompson (Director of Humanities) |  
| John Sebalos (Director of Technology) |  
| Greg Lau (Supervisor of Special Ed. Gr. 6-12) |  
| Tonya Wilson (Principal, Colonial School) |  
| Lynn Sabia (Principal, Pelham Middle School) |  
| Judd Rothstein (Asst. Principal, PMHS) |

##### Faculty & Staff

Steve Beltecas	Joanna Bonaccorso	
Scott Brown	Angela Calvelli	Devon Fallon
Meryeme Gashi	Nicole Marousek	
Julia Martin	Madison Martineau	
Kathleen McCarthy	Laura Pelin	
Jessica Vitale		

##### Parents

| Joan Paradis | Gayle Potter | Emily Sharrock |  
| Emily Tancredi-Brice Agbenyega |  
| Bjorn Haines | Kate Carpenter |  
| Linda Woodward |

##### Student

| Morgan Jenkins |

#### ACTION PLAN COMMITTEES

##### Cultural Competence

**Co-Chairs:** | Lynn Sabia | | Laura Pelin | Sara Pinsker |  
Meryeme Gashi		Megan Rice	John Sebalos
Gene Archer	Cristina Camacho		Linda Woodward
Sue Childs	Jeannine Clark		
Mariana Cordero	Suzanne Diano		
Gayle Potter	Anne Solimine		
Emily Tancredi-Brice Agbenyega			
Maria Thompson	Tonya Wilson		

##### Whole Child

**Co-Chairs:** | Julia Chung |  
| Dena Delfino |  
| Kate Dembowski |  
| Elizabeth Belanfante | Tom Callahan |

##### Authentic Learning

**Co-Chairs:** | Steve Garcia | | Greg Lau | Julie Liebersohn |  
Alicia DelMastro		Eileen Miller	Michele O'Neil	
Steve Beltecas	Tom Callahan		Judd Rothstein	Maria Thompson
Trisha Fitzgerald	Sean Llewellyn		Jessica Vitale	Katie Walker
Peter Liaskos	Joan Paradis			



# Cultural Competence

**GOAL:** Cultivate an empathetic, inclusive and equitable school community that values and encourages respect, voice and agency for all students.

## Building Our Competence

Spearheaded by the District's Diversity Oversight Committee, the Pelham Public Schools have made strides in recent years recognizing and celebrating the diversity of our students and community.

As we seek to build upon this work, our staff is deepening its understanding of how culture impacts our work and how we can

build a more inclusive learning organization.

Culture is the system of shared beliefs, values, customs, behaviors, and artifacts that distinguish one group from another. By better understanding our own cultural lenses and those of our students, we will work to foster greater connection and adapt our curriculum, policies and practices in ways that support the learning and success of all students.

### ACTION STEPS

- Create a greater sense of connection and belonging by increasing student voice and agency within the K-12 System
- Examine curriculum, instruction, resources, and assessments to ensure that they reflect principles, values and lessons of exclusivity and equity
- Increase partnerships with community stakeholders to build greater interconnectedness
- Foster a school culture that is responsive to and inclusive of all students and families by empowering teachers, administrators, staff and students to routinely exercise awareness and understanding of culturally responsive theory and practice
- Aligning recruitment, hiring, and on-boarding practices to build a more diverse and culturally proficient staff that mirrors the diversity of our students and community

## Building Bridges



**B**uilding Bridges, a disability awareness program, was piloted at Colonial School last year. Thanks to our partnership with the Pelham Education Foundation, this program will be introduced at all four elementary schools this school year. Building Bridges helps students build understanding and appreciation about those with disabilities by engaging guest speakers and offering interactive activities. This program provides important perspective such as what it is like to be blind, to not have full use of one's limbs, or to have other physical or cognitive limitations.

## Diversity Bookbags



**E**lementary families are encouraged to discuss culture through the Diversity Book bag program.

With the help of our PTAs, we will be expanding this program to all elementary schools. Students will be provided with a variety of diverse, inclusion-themed books to bring home. Parents and students are encouraged to read them together, then discuss the works as a family. Students may then record their thoughts and conversations in a journal and have the opportunity to share them in class.



## Achieving Cultural Proficiency



↑ Cultural Proficiency Night was held in October, providing parents and community members a glimpse into the training that has begun and is ongoing in our District.

The District's Diversity Oversight Committee selected CampbellJones & Associates to train administrators, teachers, staff, parents and students in Cultural Proficiency. This interactive training helps participants uncover and recognize one's own biases and understand how a person's background and culture affect the way they work and interact with others.

The training highlights diversity across all realms including race, religion, gender, sexual identity, ability, socio-economic status and more.

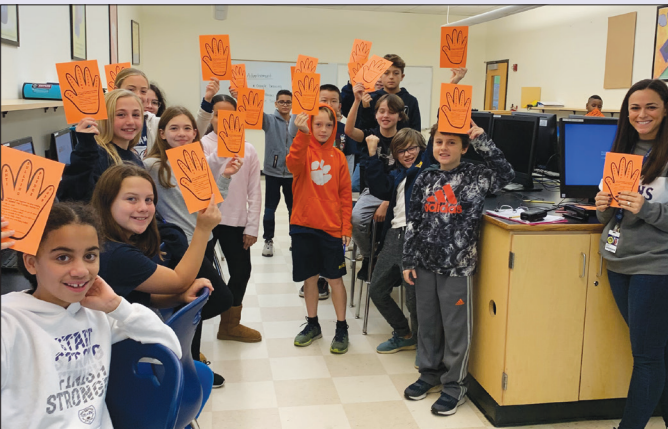
The training began last school year with an initial cohort and expanded to a second group this year. Over time, the District will train all staff in the principles of Cultural Proficiency.

## Face-off Fridays Encourage Civil Discourse



Students in Neil Schleifer's AP English Language & Composition class participate in Face-off Fridays, in which students debate issues relevant to them. This assignment amplifies student voice and promotes civil discourse as students explore a variety of viewpoints - key components of the Cultural Competence goal. Student-submitted topics that have been debated this year include whether or not schools should require a dress code, if vaccinations should be required for school, and whether teachers should assign homework over school breaks. To prepare for the debate, students must research and write two short essays about the topic, one for and one against. The night before, Mr. Schleifer informs six students that they will be reading their essays with three reading for each side. After sharing the six essays with the rest of the class, all students participate in a debate, asking questions and discussing the issues at hand.

## Middle School Anti-Bullying Week



As part of building Cultural Competence and becoming a School of Character, Pelham Middle School students participated in Anti-Bullying Week in November. The week focused on different activities to educate students about different types of bullying and how it can be prevented. Activities to raise awareness included students wearing specific clothing corresponding to a message about bullying, such as wearing a hat to "Put a Cap on Conflict" or donning odd/mismatched socks



to "Sock it to Bullying." All students also attended grade level assemblies where Principal Sabia and Asst. Principal Llewellyn defined bullying and other key terms and led a discussion with students to help them identify when bullying is occurring. The students were then given the opportunity to "lend a hand" by signing an anti-bullying pledge and writing ideas to help stop bullying on orange hand cut outs. More than 700 hands and messages are now on display in the Pelham Middle School lobby.

**BOARD OF EDUCATION**

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Cheryl H Champ, Ed. D.....738-3434, ext. 1155

**EDITOR**

Alex Wolff

**DESIGNER**

Beth Pollock

**Postal Patron  
ECR-WSS****Dear Pelham Community Members,**

I am thrilled to serve as the President of the Board of Education this year. It is such a privilege to have a front row seat to all of the exciting work in our District, and there is truly a lot going on.

Speaking of exciting, this was certainly an eventful summer at Hutchinson School. After a few noisy months, the rock blasting and removal is complete and the land is ready for construction to begin later this year. We thank all of Hutchinson's neighboring residents for their patience during this work. Progress is also being made on our other facilities projects. The turf field installation and tennis court replacement at Glover has progressed nicely and we look forward to both being ready this spring. Plans for the Middle, High School and Prospect Hill are in the bidding and review phases, respectively. At the beginning of the summer, thanks to the overwhelming support of our community, the District was able to purchase 314 Pelhamdale Avenue. This property acquisition will allow the District to move several of our District Administrative offices to make room for additional classrooms at PMHS and it has already given the students at Colonial School much needed green space and extra room to play during recess.

As you have read in this edition of the FOCUS, the Board adopted a new Strategic Plan. The energy this new plan has created is already palpable throughout the District. The three goals, Cultural Competence, Authentic Learning, and the Whole Child, create bridges between much of the work of our previous strategic plan and the Pelham we strive to become. At our Board of Education Work Sessions, we have delved into each goal area to learn more about intended outcomes and plans to measure success. If you weren't able to join us for these sessions, I hope you will watch these highly informative meetings on-line. We look forward to sharing updates about our progress with you throughout this year and in years to come.

Finally, I would like to thank all of the community members who applied to serve on our District and Board committees. It is amazing to see the amount of talent, expertise, and time our community members are willing to share with our schools. We hope you will remain engaged throughout the year, attend a Board of Education meeting or board coffee, or reach out via email.

Best,

Jessica B. DeDomenico

**Board of Education President**

**BOE MEETINGS SCHEDULE**

<b>January 15   8:15 pm   Alumni Hall</b>
W Regular Meeting: Superintendent's Mid-Year Report on the Strategic Plan
<b>January 29   8:15 pm   Alumni Hall</b>
W Work Session: Technology and the Strategic Plan
<b>February 12   8:15 pm   Alumni Hall</b>
W Regular Meeting: Overview of Superintendent's Budget Proposal
<b>February 26   8:15 pm   Alumni Hall</b>
W Regular Meeting: Budget Discussion
<b>March 7   9:00 am - 4:00 pm   Alumni Hall</b>
S Line by Line Budget Review
<b>March 18   8:15 pm   Alumni Hall</b>
W Regular Meeting: Budget Discussion
<b>April 1   8:15 pm   Alumni Hall</b>
W Regular Meeting: Guidance/PPS Update on Implementation of New Curriculum & Staff
<b>April 22   8:15 pm   Alumni Hall</b>
W Regular Meeting: Budget Adoption
<b>May 6   8:15 pm   Alumni Hall</b>
W Regular Meeting: State Mandated Budget Hearing
<b>May 27   8:15 pm   Alumni Hall</b>
W Regular Meeting: Tenure Appointments
<b>June 10   8:15 pm   Alumni Hall</b>
W Regular Meeting: Retiree Recognitions
<b>June 24   8:15 pm   Alumni Hall</b>
W Regular Meeting: Superintendent's End-of-Year Report on the Strategic Plan

**COFFEE SCHEDULE**

Th	<b>March 26   9:00 a.m.   J. Cafe</b>
Th	<b>May 15   9:00 a.m.   J. Cafe</b>

**SENIOR CITIZEN GOLD CARD:** Residents of the Town of Pelham, 60 years or older, are eligible for a Gold Card. This will admit you, at no charge, to designated school musicals and dramatic presentations. Please contact Alex Wolff at 738-3434, ext. 1131 or [awolff@pelhamschools.org](mailto:awolff@pelhamschools.org).