Thornell Road Elementary School Principal DeBell to Retire

Thornell Road Elementary School Principal Roger DeBell has announced his retirement effective June 30, 2022 after 12 years of service in Pittsford CSD. Mr. DeBell began his 31-year career as a music teacher in Marcus-Whitman CSD, Manchester-Shortsville CSD and Hilton CSD. His administrative career began at Penfield High School and Churchville-Chili Middle School.

“These past 12 years at Thornell Road have been the highlight of my career. My greatest joy has been working with students and it has an absolute privilege to work with such a dedicated and caring group of professionals who always give their best,” said Principal Roger DeBell.

“The Board of Education and I want to thank Mr. DeBell for his 12 years of leadership at Thornell Road Elementary School. His focus on what’s best for students and always consistent,” said Superintendent Michael Penz. “We all wish Mr. DeBell a long and healthy retirement."

The District’s search for a new principal of Thornell Road Elementary School is a collaborative process, including feedback from the new principal to start on or before July 1, 2022.

Sutherland High School Student Amy Feng Named One of Nation’s Top Science Scholars

Pittsford Sutherland High School senior Amy Feng was named one of the nation’s top 300 scholars in the Regeneron Science Talent Search 2022, the nation’s oldest and most prestigious science and math competition for high school seniors. The 300 scholars and their schools will be awarded $2,000 each. Feng’s original research project is titled “Extending Choice Probability to High Dimensional Neural Data.”

Feng was among 1,804 applicants from 603 high schools across 46 states, Washington, D.C., Puerto Rico and eight other countries. Scholars were chosen based on their exceptional research skills, commitment to academics, innovative thinking and promise as scientists as demonstrated through the submission of their original, independent research projects, essays and recommendation.

60 Days In: Leading by Listening

As I reflect on my first 60 days as PCSD’s Coordinator of Equity and Inclusivity, the thing that stands out most is how united this community of students, families and staff are in their desire for everyone to feel welcome, respected and heard. One of my first priorities and objectives in my new position was to connect with people, develop positive relationships, and share about my role – which is to serve as a resource for supporting the District in increasing opportunities for equity. During my first 60 days in this new role, I have connected with district-level and building-level administrators, toured each of the nine schools in our District, and met with students and staff including Transportation Department personnel.

During multiple walk-through visits to the school buildings, I aimed to understand each school’s culture better and see the fantastic work that each school is doing. What’s been consistent at each school is their unwavering commitment to fostering a more equitable and inclusive learning environment for all students.

These listening tours also included connecting with members of the Pittsford community. I met with, and continued to meet with, various community partners – organizations, parents, and stakeholder advisory groups to listen and learn about the needs of our community.

Moody’s Investors Service Gives PCSD Its Highest Rating

Maintaining Pittsford Central School District’s fiscal stability and responsibility is an ongoing commitment to Pittsford taxpayers. That commitment was evidenced recently as Moody’s Investors Service assigned PCSD the highest credit rating – Aa1. Per Moody’s, “the Aa1 rating reflects strong financial operations supported by conservative budget practices and is the highest rating a school district can attain.”

Similar to a personal credit rating score, the District’s Aa1 rating reflects financial stability and health, and as a result affords the District favorable borrowing terms (low interest rates) when PCSD residents vote to approve debt issuance in potential capital projects.

Below are highlights from an October 2021 credit analysis published by Moody’s Investors Service:

- The credit position of PCSD is very strong. The Aa1 rating is above the U.S. school district median.
- Key credit factors PCSD demonstrated in order to earn an Aa1 rating included a very healthy economy, stable enrollment trend, sizable financial position, somewhat high leverage and very modest fixed costs.

Community Members Gather for Update on PCSD Equity Plan

Families and community members joined District administrators on February 17 to learn about what has been accomplished in the areas of equity and inclusivity, what is in process, and what’s ahead. Attendees had the opportunity to ask questions about the District’s equity goals and meet PCSD’s newly appointed Coordinator of Equity and Inclusivity Vincent I. French.

To learn more about equity and inclusion activities and initiatives, visit the District website at www.pittsfordschools.org/EquityandInclusion. To view a recording of the February 17 event, visit the Pittsford Central School District’s YouTube channel.

Annual Philanthropic Student Events Raise Over $30,000

Each year Pittsford students rally the community together in support of the Breast Cancer Coalition of Rochester and the Golisano Children’s Hospital. The extraordinary spirit of philanthropy and leadership is on full display as students work together to raise money through the sale of tickets, program ads and merchandise for the annual “Pink the Rink” hockey games and “Rainbow Classic” basketball games.

In recognition of Pittsford students’ commitment to and success with the Rainbow Classic each year, the “Outstanding Young People in Philanthropy – Group” award was presented by the Association of Fundraising Professionals Genesee Valley Chapter (AFCGV) on November 5, 2021.

PTSA Meet the Board of Education Candidates Night

Thursday, May 5, 2022, 7:30 - 9 p.m.
Barker Road Middle School, McCuski Room

Budget Hearing and Regular Board of Education Meeting

Tuesday, May 10, 2022, 7 - 9 p.m.
The Public Budget Hearing is the formal presentation of the Board of Education’s adopted budget which will later be voted on by residents at the annual Budget Vote and Board of Education Election.

Budget Vote and Board Election

Tuesday, May 17, 2022, 7 a.m. - 9 p.m.
Voter identification is required. Barker Road Middle School Gymnasium

First Quarter Honor Roll

Pittsford Central School District congratulates all the students who have earned a spot on the Honor Rolls for academic achievement. In the past, Honor Rolls appeared in the High School and Post, which is no longer published. We invite you to view the list of students on the First Quarter Honor Roll, located on the District website at www.pittsfordschools.org/HonorRoll.
Celebrating Black History Month in Pittsford Schools

Pittsford Schools honored Black History Month throughout the month of February with a variety of activities and events that both acknowledged and increased awareness of the impact of Black heritage and culture.

One highlight of the Black History Month, were the “Africa Drumming and Dance” performances that PTSA organized and funded as a way to engage students and share the culture of Ghana through dance and music. Thanks to funding from the District’s PTSA, students had the opportunity to both watch and participate in these high-energy performances.

During each of the 28 days of February, PCSD also posted videos to its social media sites of students and staff reading from the inspirational book “28 Days: Moments in Black history that changed the world.” by author Charles R. Smith, Jr.

Additionally, schools supplemented the existing inclusivity/diversity aspects of curriculum in a variety of ways, such as reading and discussing books written by or celebrating the accomplishments of Black people throughout history, morning announcements including moments in Black history that changed the world, commemorative bulletin boards, galleries and more.

“As we celebrated Black History Month, the District’s mission of “working collaboratively to inspire and prepare our students to be their best, do their best and make a difference in the lives of others” remained at the forefront of everything we did,” said Superintendent Pero. “On a regular basis, I witness students carrying out this mission in so many ways,” he added.

One such person is Barker Road Middle School student Flor Jelani Ayala-Pound who had artwork on display at the “2022 NYS Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Student Art & Essay Exhibit” which highlighted Dr. King's Six Principles and Steps of Nonviolence. Ayala-Pound’s pencil drawing (above) depicts Martin Luther King, Jr. surrounded by quotes from his speeches. It is one of hundreds of submissions from schools across New York State.

Ensuring a Culturally Responsive-Sustaining Learning Environment

The Pittsford Central School District is committed to creating an inclusive and equitable learning environment where the identity of all is affirmed, and where students experience high expectations, rigorous instruction, and a curriculum that elevates historically marginalized voices. Work is well underway to make appropriate and necessary revisions to curriculum and common resources that reflect the District’s commitment to a culturally responsive-sustaining learning environment.

Prior to the start of this school year, a team of 30 elementary educators came together for professional learning and curriculum development leading to the infusion of the Social Justice Standards (developed by the organization, Learning for Justice) into inquiry based units at every grade level, K-5. Resources identified to support the teaching of each inquiry were carefully selected to ensure the presentation of multiple perspectives and affirmation of diverse social identities, with the ultimate goal of developing multiple inquiries at each grade level that weave together a focus on diversity, equity, civic-mindedness and social justice throughout the elementary school experience.

At the secondary level, teachers who are responsible for teaching United States History in 7th, 8th, and 11th grade have created a bank of high quality resources representing diverse perspectives to assist students in learning a more complete history of our country than can be represented in any single textbook. Teachers are working collaboratively on lessons that incorporate these resources so that students may benefit from the voices and perspectives of all ethnicities, races, genders, and abilities to better understand the complex and beautiful tapestry that is our country’s history.

New books have also been integrated into English Language Arts instruction at all grade levels to enhance students’ learning experiences by engaging them in texts written by a diverse complement of authors about experiences that can serve as windows, mirrors, and sliding glass doors for students. Pittsford Central School District strongly believes that all students need to see themselves, their families, and their lived experiences in the literature and materials they encounter throughout their educational experience.

Families Invited to Join Pittsford Special Education Parent Teacher Association

PCSD families are invited to join the Pittsford Special Education Parent Teacher Association (SEPTA), a group that brings together families of students with special education needs to discuss and share valuable resources and information that support students’ success throughout their educational experience.

Members of the Pittsford PTSA can become a member of SEPTA by completing and returning a membership form located on the Pittsford PTSA website’s SEPTA link under the “Programs” tab.

The NY-ALERT System for Sex Offender Notifications

Residents of New York can register to receive alerts when nearby high-risk sex offenders move into or out of their area. The NY-ALERT System will send alerts through email or as a text message, fax or telephone recording.

Subscribers can register for up to three areas for notification. Areas are defined by county, zip code or a specific address. If a specific address is selected, the subscriber designates a radius from a quarter-mile to 25 miles around that address.

Registration can be completed at http://www.criminaljustice.ny.gov/nyalert. Subscribers will receive sex offender relocation notices when a Level 2 (moderate risk) or Level 3 (high risk) sex offender listed on the public subdirectory moves into or out of a community of interest. By law, the state will provide information about Level 1 (low risk) offenders or those with a pending risk level through a toll-free number (1-800-262-3257).

This service is possible through a partnership of the New York State Division of Criminal Justice Services (DCJS) and the New York State Emergency Management Office (SEMO) which manages the NY-ALERT system.

60 Days In: Leading by Listening (Cont.)

I have also connected with Mendon and Sutherland High School students and advisors who have participated in the ROC2Change Student Summit on Race. Since the 11th annual ROC2Change Summit held in November 2021, we have had several meetings to formulate meaning and understanding around the topics covered at the summit, and to generate ideas for ways students can implement what has been learned within the school community.

During my first 60 days, working with PCSD Director of Student Services Shana Cutaia, we hosted a comprehensive interview process to recruit new staff members within the Pittsford community to be part of PCSD’s Inclusivity Advisory Council (IAC). The IAC provides guidance to the Superintendent of Schools regarding systems, structures, policies, regulations and experiences related to inclusivity. It was wonderful to see the depth and breadth of experience and backgrounds of the caring residents who applied.

In recent weeks, I worked with secondary school leaders and students on Black History Month activities and met with community members at the February 17 Equity Plan Update event. As I move forward, I will continue to collaborate on an ongoing basis with District leaders on a variety of initiatives including, the annual review of the PCSD Code of Conduct and the formulation of recommendations, including restorative justice practices and tools for teachers; monitoring PCSD Equity and Inclusion Goals to make recommendations for additional goals, provide more specificity when necessary, and align resources to achieve these goals; engaging with students, staff, community groups and the Superintendent’s Student Advisory Council; meeting with Monroe County Sheriff’s Office (MCSO) on the goal of listening to their perspective on racial incidents and continuing to improve positive relationships with the MCSO; connecting with Urban-Suburban students via monthly community circles to increase inclusivity within the school community; and meeting with Curriculum Department leaders to stay abreast of the ways in which equity/inclusion has been and continues to be woven into curriculum.
Celebrating National Rankings while Understanding their Limitations

Nearly two years into this global pandemic, Pittsford students, staff, and families continue to demonstrate incredible fortitude, adaptability, and resilience.

One data point (among many) is how PCSD high schools rank locally, regionally, and nationally. With respect to national rankings, attention is often directed to the annual list of the nation’s best public high schools as published by the “U.S. News & World Report.”

Pittsford Sutherland and Pittsford Mendon high schools historically compare very favorably on this list. While the District celebrates these impressive rankings, the rankings are not used to influence curriculum, instruction, or assessment in any meaningful way.

When considering the value of these rankings, it is also important to understand that the methodology used by “U.S. News & World Report” is not static; it ebbs and flows. The factors used to assess and compare shift regularly – as does the very number of schools evaluated.

For example, if a school’s overall score increased by just one point (for example, from 97 to 98 in a year), that school’s ranking would move up by approximately 179 places. In the same way, if a school’s scores slipped by even half a point (for example, from 97 to 96.5 in a year), it would fall by approximately 90 places in the rankings.

Also important to note is that there has been a shift in ranking methodology. In 2019 “U.S. News & World Report” altered their ranking system to include every eligible public high school in the nation (~17,800 schools). Before 2019, they ranked only ~2,700 high schools.

“These figures represent the hard work and dedication of both students and their long-term success,” he said.

MHS Students Advance to National Virtual Enterprise Competition

Mendon High School students, Mari Lindley, Noah Lucas, and Mark LoMaglio earned first place in the Virtual Enterprise (VE) Northeast regional competition for the business plan they created for their VE business “Horizon,” a subscription-based vintage clothing company. The mission of “Horizon” is to “provide sustainable, fashionable options to add to your wardrobe delivered straight to your door that maintain a concern for clothing waste and environmental stressors.” The students will advance to the national competition in April 2022.

Sutherland High School students Merilyn Arikkat, Abby Chamot, Jackson Ciccoia, Kailani Liu placed fourth for their VE business “Coldest Brew,” an online marketplace for the purchase of cold drinks, food items, coffee products and accessories.

Snow Day Closing Information

When it is necessary to close or dismiss schools for any emergency, including inclement weather, announcements are made on local radio and television broadcasts as early as possible. The information is also communicated to parents through the Blackboard® notification system and posted on the District’s website at www.pittsfordschools.org.

Transportation Requests Due April 1, 2022

Residents whose children plan to use Pittsford Central School District’s transportation next year for private or parochial school attendance are required by the State Education Department to file an application with the District by April 1, 2022, in order to receive transportation services. Dual Location Daycare forms are also due by April 1.

Transportation Request Forms are available online at www.pittsfordschools.org in the Parent Center under Transportation.
Board of Education Honors Pittsford Pride Recipients

Nine students received the Pittsford Pride Citizenship Recognition Award during the February 8, 2022 Board of Education Meeting for demonstrating excellent citizenship and positive leadership. Students are chosen for this award three times a year.

Congratulations to Mia Adler, Gr. 12, SHS; Omer Ahmed, Gr. 6, BRMS; John Dean, Gr. 8, CRMS; Will Fickling, Gr. 3, MCE; Roman Irizarry, Gr. 3, JRE; Vinay Pendri, Gr. 11, MHS; James Pritchard, Gr. 5, TRE; Piper Rae Webb, Gr. 5, ACE; and Alborz Yousefi Nouraei, Gr. 5, PRE.

To view the video of the ceremony, visit the Pittsford Central School District YouTube channel.

New Graduation Date, Times & Locations!

Due to COVID-19 protocols, MHS and SHS graduation ceremonies have been moved on campus. New dates, times and locations are listed below.

Rehearsal
Thursday, June 23
High School Athletic Stadiums
- MHS at 2:00 p.m.
- SHS at 2:00 p.m.

Graduation
Friday, June 24
High School Athletic Stadiums
- MHS at 4:00 p.m.
- SHS at 7:30 p.m.

Rain Date
Saturday, June 25
High School Athletic Stadiums
- MHS at 10:00 a.m.
- SHS at 1:00 p.m.