Dear Pawling Community Members,

The Pawling Central School District is an integral pillar of our community, and the district’s growing excellence continues to pay dividends to everyone who calls the town of Pawling “home.” Our schools were the first in Dutchess County to open and have remained open for in-person and hybrid learning with remote learning options. We expect to offer full in-person learning for all kindergarten through Grade 12 students after spring break while continuing to provide a remote option.

Our students and staff are excelling in a broad range of academic and extracurricular pursuits. Pawling staff earned a professional development grant through the International Society of Technology in Education funded by General Motors. High school senior Ditte Isak is a finalist in the National Merit Scholarship Program and has been invited to apply to become a U.S. Presidential Scholar. Senior Hayden Housen is a top 300 scholar in the Regeneron Science Talent Search, the nation’s oldest and most prestigious science and mathematics competition. On the athletics front, senior Mason Watkins won his 100th career wrestling match and is weighing several college scholarship offers.

As a result of our many achievements, Pawling High School now ranks 135th among New York State High Schools in U.S. News and World Report, a 22% jump over the previous year’s ranking. For families, that means a broad array of universities, vocational schools, and branches of the military are competing aggressively for our students, as they consider their choices for the next phase of their educational lives.

But what does this mean to our residents who don’t have a family member working in the school district, or a child or grandchild attending one of our schools? The success of our schools benefits all of our residents. Pawling home values have been increasing rapidly, and Pawling home prices overall have risen over 8% since last year. More affordable home pricing categories (i.e., below $500,000) have risen between 30-50%.

Our school district is an important hub for the community, fostering Pawling pride and relationships. On behalf of the Pawling Board of Education, I am deeply grateful to the Pawling community for your ongoing support of the school district.

Sincerely,

Karen Burka
President
How were Pawling public schools able to open on time this fall and stay open for the most part when so many local districts have not? “Partnerships,” says Superintendent Kim Fontana. “We work together for the benefit of children. This may sound simple but look anywhere in the country to know that it’s not.”

This summer, district leaders worked with the community and association partners to prioritize students’ education. We broke out the measuring tape to make sure we could meet social-distancing guidelines; explored Town of Pawling sites to find possible alternative classrooms; put our heads together to solve transportation concerns. The district’s long-term investment in partnerships and technology paid off by making ours the first school district in Dutchess County to open while allowing families to choose remote options and we have led the way in this region in terms of our provision of in-person learning.

“Teachers are the heart of any school system. We are fortunate to have teachers who are eager to have kids in front of them and overcome their concerns to provide the education our children deserve.”

– Kim Fontana, Superintendent of Schools

“Hybrid, synchronous, asynchronous, cohorts and pods are just a few of the new buzz words and realities now associated with teaching during a pandemic. We are extremely proud of what we have been able to accomplish this year with our students.”

– Marge Schweizer and Kelly Wilcha, Pawling Congress of Teachers Co-Presidents

“Talking with my teachers and peers, I’ve seen how constant communication between faculty, students, coaches, and our local community has allowed us to be successful this year.”

– Catie Savarese, Pawling High School Senior

“My experience participating on the Instructional Advisory Committee offered me an entirely new perspective on how conscientious, hard-working, and caring our district is. I know I speak for many students and parents when I say we are so thankful for the collaboration and effort that has allowed our school year to run in the best way possible”

– Sara Corbi, Pawling High School Senior

“Our current board members have worked together for years on both PTA and PTSA. We’re friends, so it’s easy to work collaboratively to find solutions. The PTSA has been and continues to be fortunate to cooperate with our principals, staff, and the team at Pawling Recreation to come up with some new ideas.”

– Melanie Middlebrook, PTSA President

“My kids have always felt the teachers truly wanted to be there and be in person with them. It has been positive and happy since day one, despite how hard it has been on staff.”

– Jennifer Walsh, Parent

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“There was no doubt in my mind that Superintendent Fontana would do everything possible to keep schools open over the last year. Pawling families expect the absolute best for a reason, and Superintendent Fontana and her administration delivered. This was a huge achievement and I applaud everyone in the Pawling School system for their amazing work during these very difficult times.”

– James Schmitt, Supervisor, Town of Pawling

“It goes beyond ‘getting along.’ We work well together. Every month, the town sits down with liaisons from the schools, Chamber of Commerce, Recreation Department, and Village to find ways to collaborate and support each other.”

– Coleen Snow, Town of Pawling Councilwoman
**PURPOSE, POSITIVITY, PLANNING**

**COLLABORATIVE LEADERSHIP**

“We care first and foremost about what’s right for our kids. In Pawling, there’s a deep level of caring by the adults who are hyper-focused on supporting the kids. We’re not afraid to collaborate to find a solution—I call it ‘phone a friend’ meaning that every principal, teacher, school counselor will work together or reach out to another person to uncover ways to support students.”

– Scott Rice, Director of Pupil Personnel Services and Pawling Administrators’ Association, Vice President

**BOARD OF EDUCATION**

“I’ve learned a lot about what other boards are going through and many are struggling and in conflict. The Pawling Board of Education members come from very different points of view and have different styles but we respect each other and work well together. That’s why we were able to put together a much-needed capital project with no tax levy implication.”

– Karen Burka, President, Board of Education

“A lot of old guys like me think the schools cost too much. But as a School Board Member for the last eight years, I see firsthand how fiscally conservative this district is. I believe in the importance of education but even if I didn’t, I’d have to look at the rising housing prices to know that our long-term investment in our schools is paying off in the value of my house. I see energy and intelligence at the helm of this District.”

– Jeffrey Asher, Board of Education

**PAWLING PROPERTY VALUES ON THE MOVE – UP!**

In one year, the price per square foot of Pawling real estate has increased from $165 to $212.

The median home value has risen from $529K to $662K.

These are not one-year blips related to COVID-19. The median home values and costs per square foot increases are similar over the past three years in Pawling.

Statistics reported by ResearchbyRate.com

**WORKING TOGETHER**

“Everyone had a full-time job before COVID, and then, boom, they have been working two jobs. I can’t say enough about all of our employees and the leaders of all four of our associations”

– Kim Fontana, Superintendent of Schools

“It is truly amazing to be a part of the Pawling CSD school services team. Serving meals on the go, redesigning classroom space, creating all new school bus routes. Their flexibility and unwavering support of our students and staff is inspirational.”

– Gary Green, Director of Facilities and Operations & President, Pawling Civil Service Administrators Association

“It’s been a real adventure, and is still ongoing. Our Pawling C.S.E.A. members have pulled together and worked to make this happen in order to keep the district open.”

– Jeff Stevens, C.S.E.A. Local 1000 Pawling Unit, President

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FOCUS ON THE FUTURE

“Often the focus is on what’s lost and not on what’s potentially gained. There’s a huge opportunity for our schools and classrooms right now to break out of traditional approaches and develop new ones in terms of education and learning.”

– Chris Quiñones, Technology Systems Director

“Fourteen district leaders come together virtually once a month to take a course, Teaching for Equity and Justice with Jevon Hunter, Ph.D. The course offers professional development on how educators can raise topics of racism, poverty, and gender in a meaningful curriculum that exemplifies New York State Learning Standards. These lessons on social justice are one of many ways we are working to achieve the important goals of equity, compassion, and inclusion.”

– Debra Kirkhus, Assistant Superintendent for Instruction

“We look forward to breaking ground on the football field and track. We anticipate the field being completed in the fall of 2022. Then, our nationally-recognized track teams will finally have a home field, and our residents will have a hometown track to further their own health and wellness.”

– Marianne Heslin, Assistant Superintendent for Finance

DISTRICT TEACHES FOR EQUITY


Read our monthly online newsletters and Digital Backpack on the website to stay up to date on news around the District.

BOARD OF EDUCATION

President
Ms. Karen Burka

Vice President
Mrs. Deborah Klein

Board Members
Dr. Jeffrey Asher
Mrs. Preeti Govindarajan
Dr. Edward Grippe
Mr. Harvey Matcovsky
Ms. Marie Vedder

PCSD NEWSLETTER

Produced by

PNW BOCES
Editor: Alison Pratt
Designer: Rena Franco

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Spring Newsletter 2021