

# Pascack Valley Regional High School District

Montvale



Woodcliff Lake



River Vale



Hillsdale



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Superintendent of Schools

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Dear Parents / Guardians, and Students:

The Pascack Valley Regional High School District prides itself on being considered one of the most innovative and successful school districts in New Jersey. We have earned this reputation as we constantly reflect upon our practices, conduct research, and implement thoughtful enhancements that will have a positive outcome on the academic achievement as well as the social/emotional well-being of our students. In fact, our vision is reflective of our innovative nature:

## The Vision of the Pascack Valley Regional High School District:

To create a culture of innovation, inquiry, and individuality that promotes achievement and choice by cultivating the skills needed to compete and collaborate as ethical and responsible global citizens.

Our 1:1 laptop initiative, thriving internship program, virtual learning opportunities, and Pascack schedule are examples of innovative practices that have resulted in positive outcomes for our students. The district is not resting on its laurels, and is committed to making additional improvements for the 2015 – 2016 school year.

A measured level of stress is important for our young people to be exposed to, yet too often our students are bombarded with burdensome amounts of homework, exams and projects that are often due at the same time. As a school district, we are committed to reducing the amount of unnecessary stress that is placed on our students. The following is a brief overview of the changes that will be instituted for the 2015 – 2016 school year:

1. Discontinue the traditional week of midterms in January and final exams in June. Instead, flexibility and discretion will be given to individual departments to determine how to best assess students. For example, a music class should be assessed differently than a social studies class and neither needs a 2-hour exam to assess students properly.
2. Eliminate individual marking periods in favor of an ongoing full-year running record of grades. Marking periods were created over one hundred years ago so schools could mail home report cards as they didn't have the ability to view grades and student progress throughout the school year. Today, marking periods often cause teachers to "squeeze in tests" prior to marking period deadlines and, in turn, place undue stress on students and teachers alike. As a result, we will be eliminating these artificial deadlines as students and parents utilize the district's open grade book program to view student progress.

3. Students and teachers will be engaged in two virtual days in the middle of the school year. Students will be going to school “virtually” as was done during our virtual school day last winter. At the same time, teachers will be engaged in professional development activities. More information will follow as we near the winter months.
4. Modify Freshman Seminar, a course for freshmen during the Pascack Period, to primarily focus on orientation to high school, school culture, digital citizenship, and acceptance. In addition, the course will be reduced from a full-year experience to a half-year program in an effort to allow freshmen greater access to the benefits of Pascack Period options.
5. Explore the modification of student learning spaces: If we are interested in changing the way instruction looks in our classrooms, we need to change the way our classrooms look to provide more flexible seating to enhance students’ ability to collaborate, present, and work in small groups. Expect to see this change take place over time.

The Pascack Valley Regional High School District is looking to provide parents with additional information and insight into these changes. District Director of Curriculum, Dr. Barry Bachenheimer, has created a video pod cast to provide parents and students with additional insight into these enhancements. [[Video Pod Cast](#)]

Students and parents are invited to attend one of two informational meetings that will take place prior to the opening of school. I encourage you to attend:

Tuesday, August 25, 2:00 pm Pascack Hills High School’s auditorium  
Monday, August 31, 6:00 pm Pascack Valley High School’s auditorium

Sincerely,



P. Erik Gundersen  
Superintendent of Schools