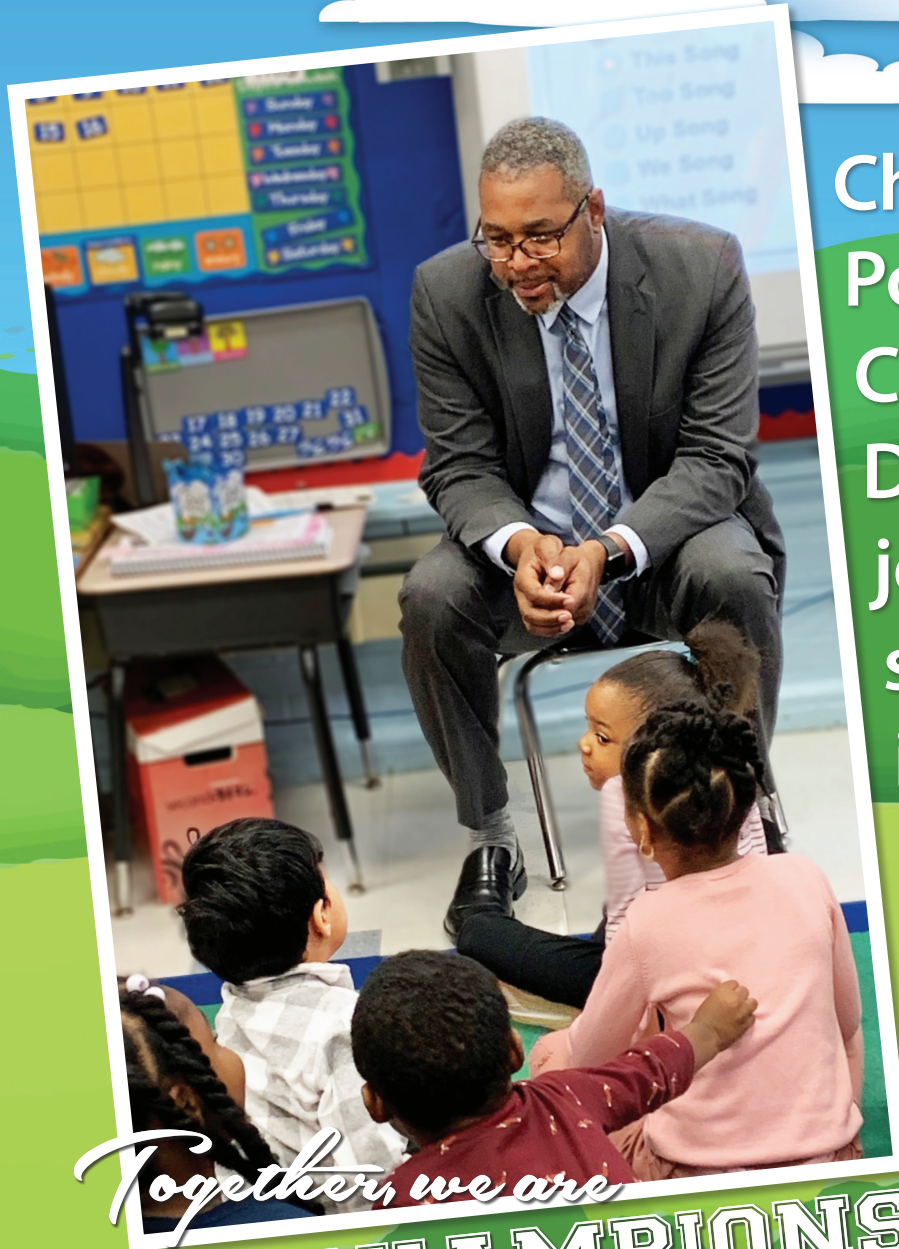


VISION • JOURNEY • DESTINATION

Strategic Planning Process Report - January 2020



Charting
Poughkeepsie
City School
District's
journey to
support
individual
paths to
success



Together, we are
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Resumen en
español estará
disponible en la
escuela de su hijo



POUGHKEEPSIE
CITY SCHOOL DISTRICT



Letter from Dr. Eric Jay Rosser

“How wonderful it is that nobody need wait a single moment before starting to improve the world” – Anne Frank



As the new superintendent of the Poughkeepsie City School District (PCSD), I am excited and privileged to serve the students, parents and other members of this community.

As I reflect on my first 100 days as superintendent of schools, I am thrilled to have met so many people who are committed to creating a quality educational system for our children. The goal of every school district is to support student growth and to provide opportunity and access for them to maximize their potential in order to achieve success in school and beyond. Resoundingly, members of this community have expressed their desire to partner with the district on its journey toward achieving this goal.

While it is no secret that significant challenges exist on our journey to creating a quality educational institution, it is important to note that **where there are great challenges there are even greater opportunities.** The Board of Education and I are steadfast in our commitment to deliver on the democratic principle that an equal and high-quality education is every child’s civil right; and as educators and supporters of Poughkeepsie City Schools, we must hold this paramount in everything we do and stand for.

To accomplish this, it is important that we embrace a shared **Vision** for what a quality educational experience will yield for our children. We must have a strategic roadmap that charts our **Journey** toward a **Destination** that fulfills a promise of creating and strengthening pathways to opportunity that will lead to the achievement and success of all PCSD students.

As part of my entry plan, I promised to engage in a listening and learning tour to seek feedback from school stakeholders (i.e. staff, parents, and students) and others who have a vested interest in the success of children (i.e. future PCSD parents, businesses, philanthropic organizations, community-based organizations, and community members).

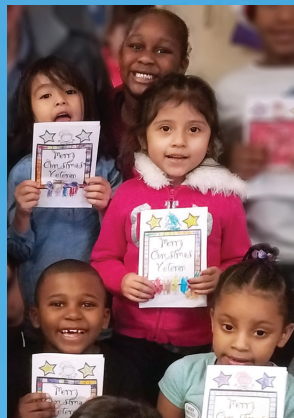
This document, in part, delivers on that promise. It represents an analysis of your feedback, my professional evaluation, and highlights the need to guarantee student-centered transformational leadership, school and community engagement, and an unrelenting pursuit of greater school outcomes for our children.

The work has already begun in earnest and we continue to identify opportunities to: build and repair relationships throughout our school community; ensure that the district is compliant with local, state, and federal mandates; fix broken systems and processes that have served as impediments to our success; begin the work of stabilizing the system with a sound educational philosophy and approach; develop a strategy for upgrading the physical infrastructure of our facilities; support and partner with committed adults who serve as champions for our children; develop the capacity of all school staff; and enhance and create new academic, social, emotional, and wellness opportunities for all PCSD students.

...an equal and high-quality education is every child’s civil right...

There is no question that this work will be very difficult and filled with unexpected challenges, however I am confident that together – school and community – we can create an educational system that not only has an immediate and positive impact on PCSD children, but also serves as a beacon of pride for our community. This is just the beginning of our journey and I’m looking forward to working collaboratively with the school community and other vested stakeholders. I invite you to join me on this incredible journey toward developing and growing greater access, equity, opportunity, and quality for our children. This is our moment to improve the world around us, our moment to positively impact the lives of children.

Mission



We are champions of children who inspire and nurture the whole child by providing innovative, high-quality educational opportunities that prepare all students to embark on individual paths of success in a globally diverse community.



Strategic Planning Process

“All you need is the plan, the road map, and the courage to press on to your destination” – Earl Nightingale

As the superintendent of Poughkeepsie City School District, my primary goal has been to learn as much as I can about the school system by analyzing the district from A to Z and seeking input from the school community and members of the community. My intent was to acquire important information that will inform the district’s direction (strategic roadmap) to reach a destination of an improved school system.

My initial activity included:

- Visiting all PCSD facilities, taking note of school-based resources and longstanding infrastructure issues
- Meeting with district and school administrators and community stakeholders to learn about District and community assets
- Reviewing reports and internal and external audits that highlighted concerns ranging from financial to programmatic issues

In order to hear from all school and community stakeholders, I held Fireside Chats (listening and learning sessions) with staff at all levels of the organization and engaged students, families and community members across the city. I held four community Fireside Chats and eight special sessions with key groups such as students, parents, staff, and philanthropic and business stakeholders. I also requested feedback from all members of the Poughkeepsie community through six group specific online surveys (parents, future parents, community, students, graduates and former students, teachers/staff). Observations and feedback from all stakeholders have yielded important data that I categorized into nine overarching themes:

STRATEGIC PLANNING THEMES		
Students: Academic Achievement	District: Transformative, Effective and Sustainable Leadership	Schools: Culture and Climate
Students: Enhancing Opportunities and Access	District: Facilities and Infrastructure	Family: Empowerment, Education, and Engagement
Staff: Capacity Building and Support	District: Effective and Efficient Operations and Financial Sustainability	Community: Engagement and Partnership

These themes will help establish the framework for activity, objectives, and goals that I will outline in a five-year strategic plan. Our charge is to improve the educational experiences and outcomes of PCSD students in grades pre-K through 12. Some of my key findings of needs include:

- ◆ A New York State standards aligned curriculum which leads to vibrant and emerging postsecondary options needs to be developed and adopted.
- ◆ All students need to have equitable access to pathways that will lead to success in and out of school.
- ◆ All staff need to be provided with continuous professional development with an emphasis on teacher and administrator professional development and support.
- ◆ The culture and climate of our schools, specifically the middle and high schools, requires critical attention.
- ◆ Leadership throughout the district has lacked focus on instructional, operational, and organizational leadership – all of which are important to system-wide improvement.
- ◆ The facilities of the school district have been grossly neglected and has resulted in learning environments that are not best suited for the 21st century education our students deserve.
- ◆ The system is fraught with operational issues from outdated protocols and the absence of integrated technological systems, to a history of poor business practices that compound the district’s current financial state.
- ◆ Parent voice, engagement, and involvement have been sorely missed and the lack of galvanized partnerships has impacted the success of all students.
- ◆ The community has been poised to partner with the District for years, however, a lack of district follow-up and follow-through has resulted in missed opportunities for students.



Strategic Planning Process Key Findings

"I have been impressed with the urgency of doing. Knowing is not enough; we must apply. Being willing is not enough; we must do." – Leonardo DaVinci

The following section is a synthesis of what I've learned from the surveys, Fireside Chats, and my system-wide analysis from the period of August 2019 – December 2019. (Detailed data from the surveys can be found on the district website.)



Students – Academic Achievement: Findings indicate there is a need to develop a system of standards-based teaching and learning utilizing a curriculum designed to support student learning and success at every grade – pre-K through 12th and student post-secondary endeavors. Findings also indicate that technology should be integrated in student learning. Academic, social, emotional and wellness services and programs are needed during and after school.



Students – Enhancing Opportunities and Access: Findings indicate that student engagement and success across the district can be amplified by creating and enhancing pathways to greater access to instruction and learning in the areas of the Arts, Life Skills, Career and Technical Education, Family and Consumer Sciences, and Computer Science. Findings also suggest that to expand their worldview, students need opportunities to gain more exposure to culture and experiences different from their own.



Staff – Capacity Building and Support: Findings revealed that PCSD educators and staff need and want consistent, high quality professional development focused on instruction, instructional supports for students, culturally and linguistically relevant practices and responses, social emotional learning, and trauma informed care. Beyond professional development, staff needs ongoing coaching support in the delivery of effective teaching practices to meet PCSD students' evolving needs.



Schools – Culture and Climate: Findings point to a great need to transform the culture and climate of PCSD schools by establishing a student-centered culture built on addressing the social, emotional, and wellness needs of our students in collaboration with parents, students, community members and staff. Survey responses pointed to a need to provide students with greater school-based support and social and emotional programming.



Family – Empowerment, Education, and Engagement: Findings strongly point to parents appreciating school and home partnerships built on respect, transparency, and a collaborative approach to educating children. Parents expressed a need not only for partnership, but a need to be supported and empowered as they nurture and cultivate their children outside of school.



Community – Engagement and Partnership: Findings indicate the community wants greater transparency, regular updates, and clear communication in aspects of financial management and improvement efforts. Community members and organizations have also expressed a great desire to partner with PCSD to contribute and facilitate positive youth development and academic success. Engagement and partnership interests range from volunteer opportunities and grant awards to financing a new innovative learning environment in our high school.



District – Facilities and Infrastructure: Findings reveal that PCSD's schools are in desperate need of repair and updating. Throughout all surveys, comments emerged describing our learning environments as not being conducive to 21st century learning and instruction. A recent facilities study confirms survey findings and estimates that a more than \$100 million investment is needed to provide students with an educational environment comparable to their peers in neighboring school districts. Our students, parents, members of the community, and staff want better for our children.



District – Effective and Efficient Operations and Financial Sustainability: Findings indicate the structure and operations of Central Office has impeded district-wide improvement. Central Office staff and operations are integral to district-wide transformation. Rebuilding and restructuring every aspect of the Central Office, from leadership, business operations and school supports to the management of financial resources is imperative. Recent NYS Comptroller's audits have cited multiple areas where the absence of systems and protocols have resulted in mismanagement of financial resources.



District – Transformative, Effective and Sustainable Leadership: Findings indicate that there is a strong desire for leadership in all areas of the organization to be transformative, effective, and supportive. This leadership must be consistent over time. A need for meaningful and impactful professional development and coaching will also be essential to school and district-wide improvement.

In summary: These key findings point to a great need to begin the hard work of addressing long-standing issues that exist throughout the Poughkeepsie City School District. As previously stated, I have met so many people who are committed to creating a quality educational system for our children. Our success will be dependent on understanding where it is we need to go, charting the journey, and working collaboratively to reach our destination.

Together, we are
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Charting Our Journey

“Change comes from the inside out” – Dr. Kriner Cash

Our journey must begin with a “Systems Thinking” approach toward developing a high functioning school district that is **Effective** in providing a quality educational experience for all students across the system, **Efficient** in every aspect of the organization in meeting this goal, and is able to **Sustain** both effectiveness and efficiency over time regardless of leadership. For us to transform our school district, we will need to strategically chart our journey taking the proper steps over the next five years. This will require PCSD to challenge its past approaches and innovate our thinking to improve our impact on the academic achievement, social and emotional development and wellness of our children.

Systematic Change Priorities

The first steps of our journey must begin with addressing barriers that have hindered our ability to create a school district primed to prepare all PCSD students to achieve success in and beyond the pre-K through 12 continuum.

Equity: In order for PCSD to provide innovative high quality educational opportunities that prepare all students to embark on individual paths of success in a globally diverse community, we must address the district’s equity issues. Looking at PCSD through an equity lens requires us to develop quality across the system, guaranteeing that we meet all students’ academic, social, emotional and wellness needs. Our approach must provide students with the supports and enrichments they need to maximize their potential.

Collaboration: Meeting the needs of the whole child requires meaningful and authentic collaboration between all school and community stakeholders (community, students, parents, and staff). Educational institutions are important to the fabric of every community. Schools serve as the primary institution that educates and socializes students to be future contributing members of our society. As the primary learning institution, the impact of our work is amplified when the community is our partner in what we do to support student success.

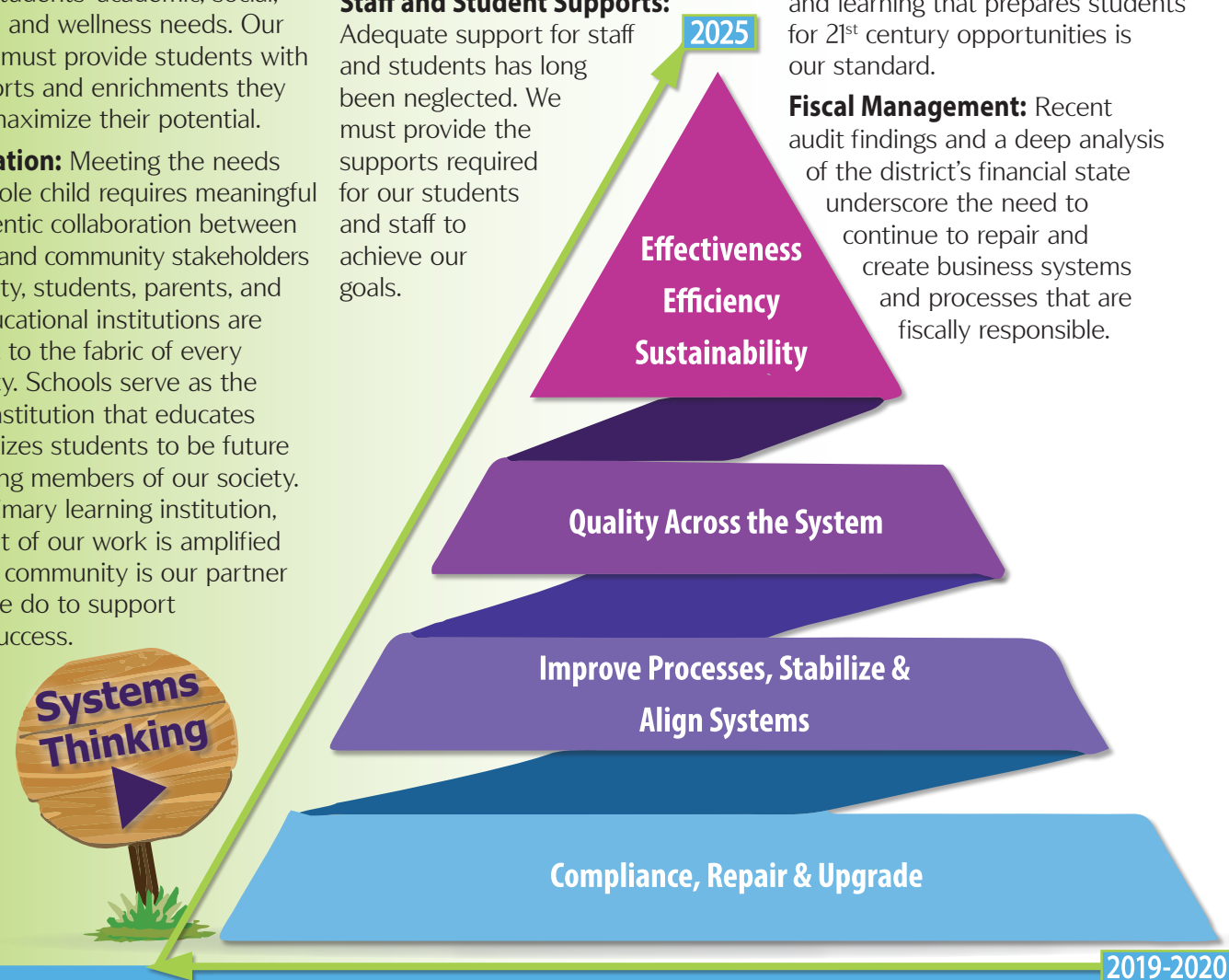
Communication and Transparency: Every successful relationship is built on a strong foundation where communication and transparency are key. Without communication and transparency, collaboration does not exist. These must be paramount in everything we do as we embark on this journey to collaboratively transform our schools.

Staff and Student Supports: Adequate support for staff and students has long been neglected. We must provide the supports required for our students and staff to achieve our goals.

Systems and Processes: All organizations are best when sound systems and processes exist for all to follow. Our systems and processes will serve as our framework for operating throughout our journey.

Learning Environments: Our school facilities are in desperate need of repair and revisioning. We must create spaces where instruction and learning that prepares students for 21st century opportunities is our standard.

Fiscal Management: Recent audit findings and a deep analysis of the district’s financial state underscore the need to continue to repair and create business systems and processes that are fiscally responsible.



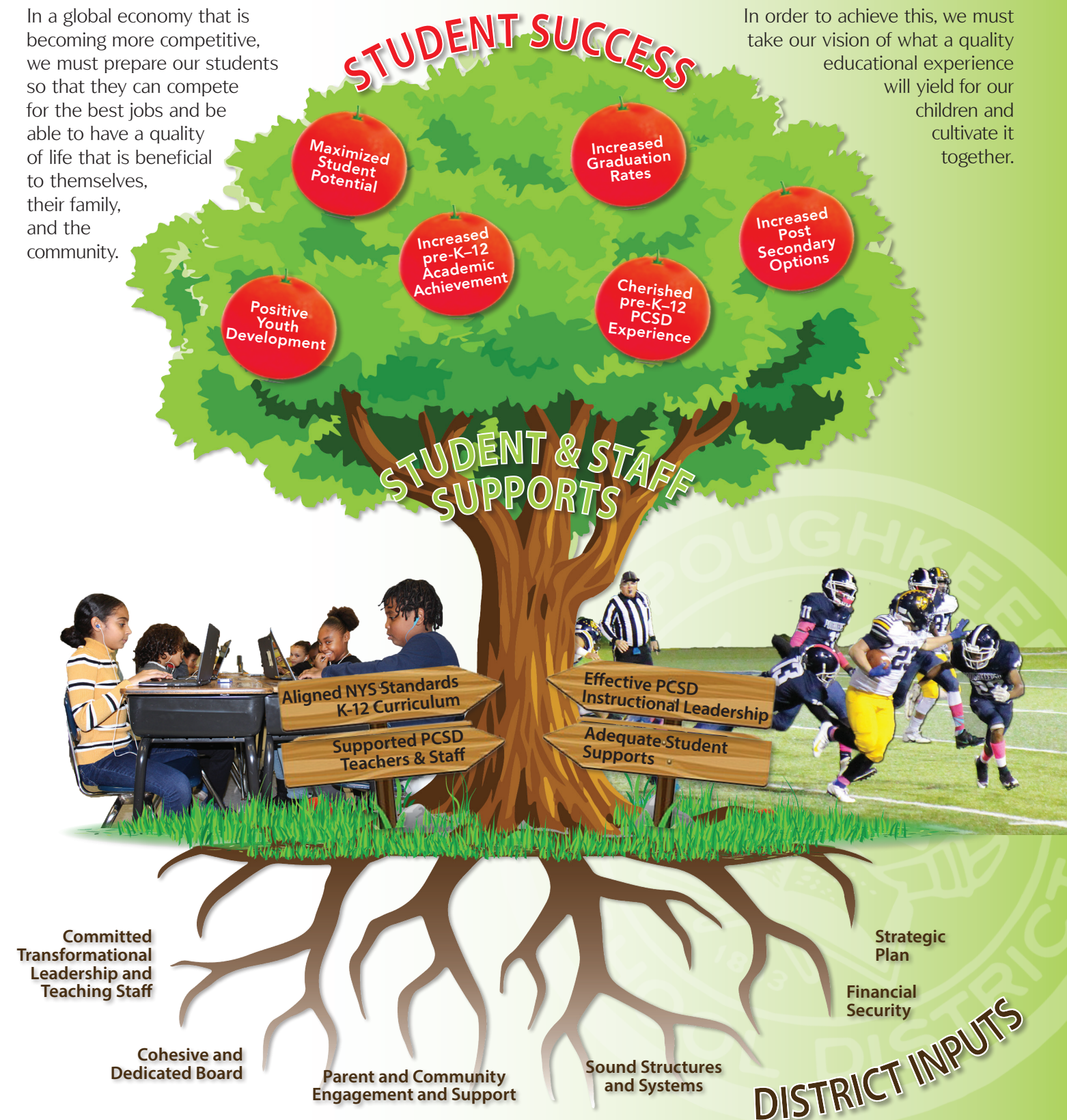
Shared Vision for Education

“From a small seed a mighty trunk will grow.” -Aeschylus

Our focus as a community must always be on what we can accomplish to position City of Poughkeepsie children to achieve success in school and beyond. Every community wants its children to prosper and to have opportunities that far exceed those we had access to when we were in school.

In a global economy that is becoming more competitive, we must prepare our students so that they can compete for the best jobs and be able to have a quality of life that is beneficial to themselves, their family, and the community.

In order to achieve this, we must take our vision of what a quality educational experience will yield for our children and cultivate it together.





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CONCLUSION

The Strategic Planning Process feedback key findings suggest there is significant work that needs to be done to create a quality educational system. However, there are both impactful school and community assets in place to support this work.

The findings are just the beginning of the work that needs to take place over the next five years. This information, along with school and community assets, will play a monumental role in the development of the District's 5-Year Comprehensive Plan. As stated previously, the plan will chart our journey to a school system that provides multiple pathways for all students to obtain success.

As we work together to transform the Poughkeepsie City School District, it is important to recognize that our collective success will be determined by our ability to work cohesively with a common vision of what a quality educational experience will yield for our children and what it will take for us to get there.

The Board of Education and I are committed to working collaboratively with the broader Poughkeepsie community to achieve this goal.

Please visit our website to learn about how you can stay informed of the development of the 5-Year Comprehensive Strategic Plan and how to receive the semiweekly publication of the Superintendent's Brief.

THANK YOU FOR YOUR SUPPORT OF THE CHILDREN OF THE POUGHKEEPSIE CITY SCHOOL DISTRICT

Eric Jay Rosser

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 Superintendent, Poughkeepsie City School District
www.poughkeepsieschools.org



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The Board of Education consists of five members of the community, each elected to a three-year term of office. They are elected by city residents to carry out functions mandated by the State Constitution, Legislature and State Education Department; and are responsible for establishing school district philosophy, policy and goals.

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