

SUPERINTENDENT'S BRIEF

Together, We are the Champions for Children in Poughkeepsie City School District

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Students enjoy Eel Project's 18th year

Each spring, juvenile glass eels migrate from their hatching place in the Atlantic Ocean's Sargasso to North American estuaries, including the Hudson River.

As they travel the Fall Kill Creek approaching the Hudson, they encounter a fyke net, a tool used for catching and counting the juvenile eel population. The American Eel species is in decline, but its population is an important indicator of the health of a waterway's ecosystem. And, between April and May for the last 18 years, the person doing the counting has often been a Poughkeepsie High School student.

Poughkeepsie once again this year took part in the Department of Environmental Conservation's Eel Project, which wrapped up this month. Thirty-six Poughkeepsie students in all, including one from the middle school, took turns, most of them once per week, visiting the Fall Kill near the Mid-Hudson Discovery Museum and collecting data on eel population and water and air temperature. They do the work alongside volunteer teachers, Marist College students and DEC employees.

"Everybody's here on their own," said Mark Angevine, a science teacher and founding project member. "Nobody's getting paid to be here. Even for the DEC, this is after their workday." The Poughkeepsie site is one of 12 across the state that participates in the project, which in 2023 became the first citizen scientist project that's ever been accepted into official U.S. government data. On May 19, the project held an "Eelebration" along the Fall Kill, complete with pizza, snacks, drinks and cake that – yes – featured a cartoon eel. On that day, 481 eels were counted, weighed and released. But on average this year the students counted nearly 1,000 a day for a total of 18,276 this season, a school record. Visiting the creek four days a week, the students accumulated 151 volunteer hours, along with 64 teacher volunteer hours. The Poughkeepsie portion of the project begins each year with recruitment in March, followed by daily weekday sampling in April and May.



The 'Eelebration' included dozens of volunteers and a specially created eel cake earlier this month.



Science teacher Mark Angevine presented awards to some students.

think they are serving a role in helping the environment. He wants to pursue a job in the science field – but in health, not ecology. "It's not just about the fact that we count the eels," Guzman said, "it's about how we come as a group and do it together."

DEC Education Coordinator Chris Bowser praised all the volunteers who contribute to the daily count, pointing out the importance of teachers choosing to come to the creek, put on waders and jump into the water after a full day, year after year.

"This project depends on teachers," he said. "It's insane to me that we collected enough teachers who agreed to do that."

Jeru Savage is not one of the volunteers who got in the water. The senior did, however, learn about the project and the importance of eels to the water system. He proceeded to write a poem about eels for Hudson Data Jam, a Cary Institute of Ecosystem Studies competition that challenges students to teach science through artistic channels. Savage was named an honorable mention honoree in the high school competition and read his poem at the Eelebration:

"In Hudson's embrace, where shadows reside,
a slithering dance, beneath the river's tide.
Eels, serpentine, with scales of silver sheen,
through murky depths, a silent, flowing scene.
From distant streams, they journey, swift and strong,
to reach the river, where their purpose belongs.
With rhythmic grace, they navigate the way.
Through tangled roots, and rocks that pierce the night,
they seek their prey, with all their might.
The Hudson's heart, a pulse of ancient lore,
a timeless rhythm forevermore.
Eels, in their dance, a mystical art,
a hidden world, within the river's heart."

In addition to giving back to the environment, the project also provides students with career experience. "If you were to go into science in college – this is field work. This is what field work would be," Angevine said. "It's valuable for both career and work. It's the idea that there's a schedule and I have to be there at 4 p.m. on a Monday and I'm going to come on Monday."

Angevine pointed out, the project doesn't turn any student away, regardless of their standing at school. Everyone is welcome to take part and receive that experience.

"We've never said you can't participate," he said. "We have kids in the National Honor Society, we have kids who are struggling. We accept them all and we do our best. We're counting eels, we're trying to have fun, we're trying to demonstrate citizenship."

"The first couple weeks in April are kind of cold," he said, "but we get through it." The Eelebration fell on a sun splashed day on which anyone would want to volunteer. After conducting the daily count, the group posed for a photo and held a season wrap up party with awards for the students who put in the most time or made the largest contributions. Everyone walked away with certificates and green eel project t-shirts.

Hajar El Guerouani, Jedadiah Gonzalez, Brenda Martinez-Lopez and Jerico Peralta all earned an "Eel Medal," and Edwin Silva and Donye Swinton were named the "Iron Eelers" for the most total volunteer time, seven hours.

Jonathan Guzman, a junior, said it's nice to



Juvenile glass eels swim in a bucket.



No-cost dental clinic for elementary students

Elementary School children next week can receive free dental care through the Healthy Smiles program. A dental clinic Wednesday, June 4, will provide exams, cleanings, fluoride treatments and more at no cost to the family or the school, regardless of insurance coverage. The bilingual program, which was brought to the Poughkeepsie City School District by the Community Schools department, is funded through Medicaid and private insurance providers.

The clinic will be held at Krieger Elementary in the morning and Morse in the afternoon; bus service will be provided to students from other schools. Community Schools Executive Director Natasha Brown said she had been looking for more opportunities to provide students with healthcare services, noting a successful eye clinic two years ago. When she saw the availability of a Healthy Smiles grant, she applied.

Interested parents can complete a [digital consent form online](#) or a physical form at their child's school and hand it to their Community Schools liaison. Forms are available in numerous languages online, though the program only offers online support in English and Spanish.



Free summer meals return

Once again, this summer, kids ages 18 and under in the City of Poughkeepsie will be able to get free lunch and breakfast Monday through Friday. The Poughkeepsie City School District Summer Meals program will provide free food at six open locations – the Harriet Tubman Terrace Apartments have been added to the list for this year – in addition to sending food to a wide range of summer camps and programs. No registration is required.

The program begins June 30 and ends Aug. 22.

Lunch will be provided at all six sites; breakfast will only be available at the Pioneer On The Run bus, which will remain parked at Poughkeepsie High School each day. While some participating camps provide breakfast and lunch, others provide just one meal; contact your camp to learn more.

The six open sites, which are subject to change, are:

- Adriance Memorial Library, 93 Market St. Lunch from 11:45 a.m.-12:45 p.m.
- MLK Apartments, 159 Washington St. Lunch from 11:45 a.m.-12:45 p.m.
- Hudson Garden Apartments, 120 Hudson Ave. Lunch from noon-1:00 p.m.
- Thurgood Marshall, 109 Delafield St. Lunch from 11:00 a.m.-11:45 a.m.
- Harriet Tubman Terrace Apartments, 21 Williams St. Lunch from 11 a.m.-noon.
- Pioneer on the Run bus at Poughkeepsie High School, 70 Forbus St.

Breakfast, 8:30-9:30 a.m.; Lunch, 11:30 a.m.-12:30 p.m.

A cold meal will be provided at all sites, which will include deli sandwiches or wraps, fruit, vegetables and milk. A hot meal is available at the Pioneer On The Run bus, which will also be the site that will serve Poughkeepsie's summer school students. The school district each day prepares hundreds of meals for children around the area through funding provided through the state. To find sites outside of the area operated by a different entity, visit <http://www.fns.usda.gov/summer> or call 1-866-348-6479.

Other newsletters to keep you informed:

Poughkeepsie City School District publishes a variety of newsletters throughout the year. Here are the available newsletters: [Curriculum & Instruction Weekly](#), May 30, 2025; [College Readiness and Workforce Education](#), May 2025.

Upcoming events

- **June 2:** Athletics Banquet: 5 p.m. at Poughkeepsie High School, 70 Forbus St.
- **June 4:** Board of Education meeting: 6:30 p.m. at the Jane Bolin administration building, 18 S. Perry St.

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www.poughkeepsieschools.org