



Student committee helps guide PCSD



Dr. Eric Jay Rosser, superintendent of schools, addresses the Superintendent Student Advisory Committee during their final meeting of the 2023-24 school year at the Columbus Administration Building.

The Superintendent Student Advisory Committee concluded its service for the 2023-24 school year earlier this month, when Dr. Eric Jay Rosser, superintendent of schools hosted a year-end luncheon and close-out session.

Established in 2020, the Superintendent Student Advisory Committee exists to elevate student voice, support student leadership and provide opportunities for students to directly inform the superintendent on a variety of topics spanning the student experience in the Poughkeepsie City School District. Past advisory committees helped inform student criteria for the 12 annual Board of Education Scholarships distributed each year, athletic facility upgrades and increased opportunities for students with exceptionalities and social-emotional resources students should have access to in school.

This year, the advisory committee comprised of approximately 40 students in grades 6-12 helped inform the programmatic offerings of a youth leadership summit that is being organized. The summit being planned for July 30-Aug. 1 on the campus of Dutchess Community College is designed to provide students with opportunities to develop their college and career mindsets; learn money management tips; engage in techniques to maintain a strong mental health, youth agency in preventing violence and substance use; among other highly engaging positive youth development opportunities.

As with prior years, the close-out session focused on students elevating their voices to share with Rosser the investments the district should make in bettering students' experiences at the elementary, middle and high school levels. Feedback ranged from improving the playgrounds at each of the elementary schools, more after-school programs and life skills courses offered at both middle and high schools. Recognizing the facility improvements that have been taking place under the Strong Schools Equal Strong Communities Capital Project work, students praised the improvements made inside the school and suggested that more can be done to beautify the exterior of each of the buildings. High School students also suggested that more out-of-state college tours take place like the Historically Black Colleges and Universities trip that many PHS students were able to go on earlier this spring, as well as suggesting that the district create more career technical opportunities for students.

Rosser closed out by thanking Da'Ron Wilson, executive director of school engagement, Danielle Green, Poughkeepsie Middle School assistant principal for culture and climate, and Dr. Marjorie Ambrose, Poughkeepsie High School assistant principal for culture and climate, for their leadership in supporting the advisory committee, before thanking the students for their participation. Prior to lunch, Rosser fulfilled his promise to the students by providing caramels that he purchased while visiting his daughter in South Korea over spring break.

"Out of all the meetings I host throughout the school year, meeting with the Superintendent Student Advisory Committee is my favorite. Students sharing their thoughts and exchanging their ideas with me informs and guides decisions that I make on student-centered programs, resources and supports. When I was in middle and high school, I never had an opportunity to interact with the superintendent. Their voices provide valuable insight that has contributed to many of the upgrades to the student experience the district has made in the past four years," shared Rosser.

Aquarium wows Morse students

Maya Mosher's eyes lit up as she remembered one of her favorite moments Monday.

"It was like a once-in-a-lifetime experience," the Morse Elementary fifth grader said. "I got to see a turtle eating!"

The turtles at the Maritime Aquarium, of course, are not just any box turtle you'll find in a pond. Loggerhead Sea Turtles grow more than three feet long and can weigh 300 pounds. The turtles were just one of many groups of animals that captured the imagination of Morse students on their annual trip to the facility in Norwalk, Connecticut.

"We got to see all kinds of sea animals," said fifth-grade student Londyn Cummings, noting she liked the seals best.

The harbor seals have the most spacious habitat in the aquarium, a 22-foot deep tank that stretches floor-to-ceiling on the first floor, and visitors can then see them surface on the second floor. The seals were also the subject of one of the group's biggest questions:

"Students asked what the difference is between sea lions and seals," AIS reading teacher Megan Bender said. "The students are now able to retell what the sea lions and seals have in common and what is different. They now know seals are smaller than sea lions, sea lions make more noise than seals, and seals have smaller front flippers."

Morse's first-grade students were on the trip, as well as three classes of fifth-grade students who were paired as buddies with first graders throughout the year.

"The kids loved the trip," said first-grade teacher Taloneith Rushie. "They were excited to receive a real-life connection to our science objectives. Some students were visiting an aquarium for the first time, and seeing real marine animals for the first time. The guides at the aquarium provided us with information about the specific animals and their habitats."



Morse Elementary students touch a Stingray at the Maritime Aquarium in Norwalk, Connecticut.



Students look at jellyfish in a tank at the aquarium.

Questions from the students included what water temperatures were required for different animals to survive and what the differences and similarities are between different animals.

Touch tanks in which they touched jelly fish, stingrays and sturgeon were also memorable for the kids – but not always a highlight.

"They were scaly," Cummings said of touching sturgeon. Mosher noted "it had a rough spine," while the stingrays were "slimy but it was soft." Fifth-grade teacher Rachel Lee said the facility elicited from the children "that genuine interest that drives most to enter the STEM field." She noted, "Students who may not look as engaged in a typical classroom setting might be totally engaged in a different way in a hands-on learning setting."



Lee said all the students left the aquarium with a free ticket to return, as long as they are accompanied by a paying adult. She said seeing “that ooh-ah moment,” was the highlight for her. “Anytime they saw an animal that they had not seen before they were like, ‘Oh my gosh, come look at this!’” the teacher said. “The genuine excitement was the best part for me on the trip.”

Free summer reading event Saturday

Summer vacation shouldn't become a vacation from learning. As the school year ends, the Mid-Hudson Discovery Museum is offering an opportunity for young learners to embrace reading on their own before classes resume. The Discover Summer Book Festival is a free event at the museum's pavilion on Saturday, June 22, at which readers can connect with children's book authors and illustrators, as well as two beloved characters.

From 10 a.m. to 4 p.m., Clifford the Big Red Dog and Pete the Cat will be available to meet and take pictures. Bestselling authors and illustrators Pat Schories, Valerie Bolling, Julie Gonzalez, Sujean Rim, Artie Bennett and Jyoti Rajan Gopal will be in attendance.

Dargan, principal at the Early Learning Center, stressed this week in kindergarten moving up ceremonies.

“Ninety days without being in school is a long time,” she said. “They will forget a lot if you don't remind them. Have them read to you.”

Books will be available to purchase and be signed, but attendees can also bring their own.

The importance of continued learning through the summer months is something Nadine

In addition, children will be able to interact with animals from the Two-by-Two Animal Haven, take part in arts and crafts or science experiments, or get their faces painted. Food trucks and vendors, including from Groovy Scoops Ice Cream and El Azteca, will also be on hand.

Entry to the children's museum itself is an additional charge.

The Mid-Hudson Discovery Museum Pavilion is located at 75 North Water St. in Poughkeepsie. Visit mhdm.org for more information.



Attendees Saturday can meet book character Pete the Cat.

Other newsletters to keep you informed:

Poughkeepsie City School District publishes a variety of newsletters throughout the year. Here are the available newsletters now: [Curriculum & Instruction Weekly](#), June 21, 2024; [Puentes](#), May 2024; [Z Mindsets for staff](#), June 2024; [Z Mindsets for parents](#), June 2024; [College Readiness and Workforce Education](#), May 2024; [Mental Health in the Spotlight](#), May 2024; [Mental Health & Wellness](#), May 2024.



Upcoming events

- **June 25:** Poughkeepsie Middle School Eighth Grade Moving Up Ceremony: 9 a.m. at Poughkeepsie Middle School, 55 College Ave.
- **June 25:** Last day of school for students
- **June 26:** Poughkeepsie High School Graduation: 6 p.m. at the high school, 70 Forbus St.
- **July 1:** Board of Education Organizational Meeting: 5 p.m. at the Columbus Administration Building, 18 St. Perry St.