

# SUPERINTENDENT'S BRIEF

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

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VOLUME 2



## Giving thanks ... and an extended break



Memorial Day weekend is a time when the entire nation recognizes the men and women who died defending our country. These brave men and women put their lives on the line so that all Americans could enjoy the freedoms that we appreciate today.

As a reminder to parents and students, the long weekend has been extended through June 1 since all emergency days were not used this winter.

The entire PCSD community has worked hard all year, and the extended break is well deserved. Classes will resume Wednesday, June 2.

### Meal service suspended

Please note that due to the holiday, meals will not be available Monday, May 31 and Tuesday, June 1, but will resume Wednesday, June 2.

Stay safe and enjoy time with family and friends. Don't forget to take a moment to give thanks to those who paid the ultimate price this Memorial Day weekend.

## Teenager shooting: Putting commitment to action



SNUG organized a gathering Wednesday at the place where a 14-year-old boy was shot early Sunday morning.

Wednesday afternoon, Superintendent Dr. Eric Jay Rosser, Board members Judge Thomas O'Neill and Debra Long, and incoming board member Carmen Santiago-Martinez, participated in a peaceful community gathering where the latest shooting incident involving a 14-year-old student took place. SNUG organized the event. About 50 community and elected officials attended and expressed concern about the senseless acts of violence that have impacted school-aged youth.

Dr. Rosser vocalized his frustration with the fact that within the past 12 months, four teenagers, all school-aged youth, have been impacted by unnecessary gun violence. While the latest victim is expected to recover, three passed on. Dr. Rosser said that as a community we must do more. He reaffirmed the Poughkeepsie City School District's commitment to be a partner at the table to identify a solution. Rosser provided updates on what the district is doing to provide youth with greater opportunity and access to positive youth development activities, strengthen its relationship with community-based organizations, and provide greater partnership and supports to parents through the hiring of three **See VIOLENCE page 4**

# Students present equity ideas to high school staff

Empowered by Principal Kelleyann Royce-Giron, five PHS students are leading efforts to make changes at Poughkeepsie High School with regard to equity.

Amya West, Unyque Webb, Briceida Reyes-Martinez, Harrison Brisbon-McKinnon and Angie Vivero attended the inaugural Equity and Education Leadership Conference offered by Dutchess BOCES' new Center for Educational Equity and Social Justice earlier this month along with Royce-Giron and teacher Shanna Andrawis.

West, Webb and Reyes-Martinez joined Royce-Giron on Wednesday's PHS staff meeting to talk about the conference and offer suggestions on how to make PHS more equitable. "These five young people have become equity ambassadors to move the work," Royce-Giron said.

"We need more celebrations and events," Webb said, explaining, "I'd love to see more kids be engaged." He talked about the importance of students being able to identify who "their person" is at school - the teacher or staff member they can go to.

West talked about scheduling, the need for student input on clubs/extracurricular activities and the enforcement of the dress code.

"I'm dedicated to making the school better because I have two younger brothers who will go here and I want to see them get the best opportunities offered to them," West said.

She said scheduling issues have plagued students for years and that it affects teachers, too.

"We need to do better on it," she said.

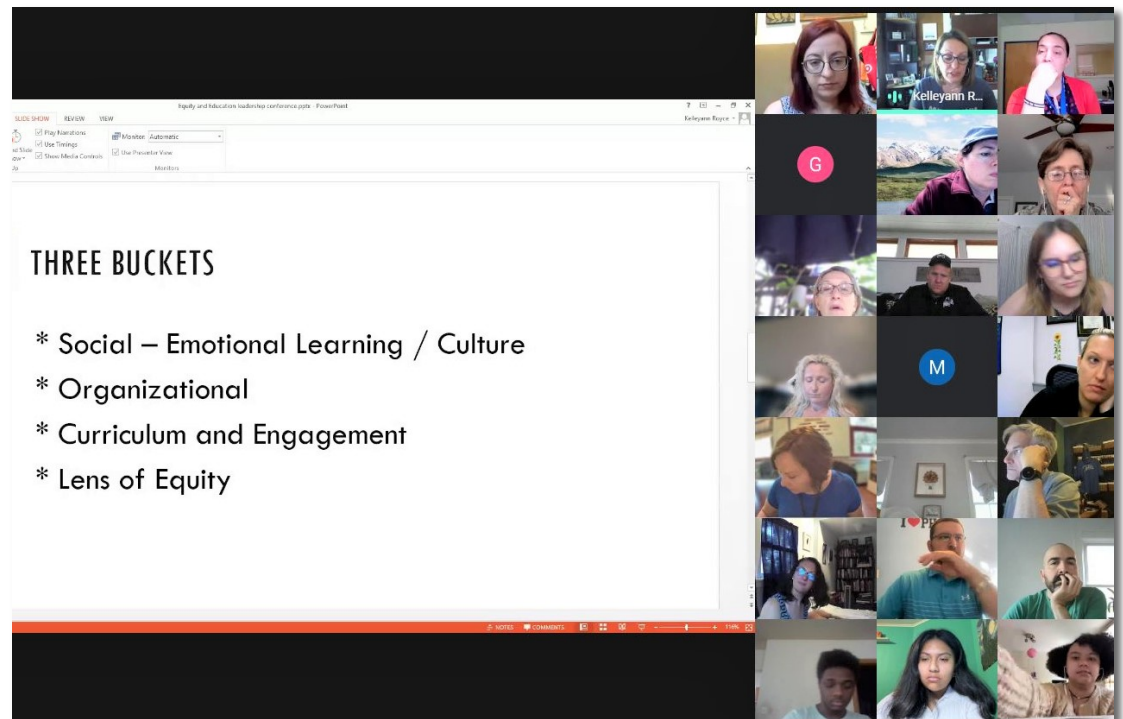
The dress code isn't applied equally to everyone, she said, particularly around head gear.

"I've seen students scared to wear their religious head coverings for fear of being harassed at being asked to take it off," she said.

West said the school needs to do a better job at letting students know about all the clubs and extracurricular activities that are available. Reyes-Martinez said students need to be asked what clubs/activities they want to see and "put more of a focus on it."

At that point in the presentation, Royce-Giron said she took the time to explain to the students what the process was for forming clubs so that they have a full understanding of the process and their role and voice in it.

Reyes-Martinez addressed issues related to curriculum and student engagement. She pointed out that the Living Environment class for ELL students is a two-year class instead of one as it is for the rest of the student population, meaning those students lose an opportunity to take another class. She suggested that a translator be added to the classroom. **See EQUITY page 4**



Students Unyque Webb, Briceida Reyes-Martinez and Amya West (bottom row, L-R), were asked to speak at Wednesday's Poughkeepsie High School staff meeting about the recent conference on educational equity they attended.



# First PHS E-Tech student graduates from DCC

Six years ago, Michael Moulden made a decision to join the E-Tech program at Poughkeepsie High School. It was new and offered the promise of a college education and career readiness in exchange for hard work.

Moulden, then in ninth grade, had to commit to a course of study at PHS that would enroll him in college-level courses while in high school and then continue at Dutchess Community College.

On May 21, Moulden completed that journey, earning an associate degree in electrical engineering from DCC.

"Back then, my mom pushed me to do it because it was offering a free degree and college. I got interested as I was going through the classes," Moulden said.

Though quiet by nature, Moulden impressed teachers, business leaders and his mother with his desire to learn, grow and master the skills needed to succeed in the program and workforce.

"He was always on time, came in excited to do the job and, when he was finished, would ask if there was anything else he could do," said Andrea Balga, senior counsel at Central Hudson, where Moulden interned as part of the E-Tech program.

"We had him create some Excel spreadsheets that would track where some of our cases were so we knew where and what we needed to do to update them. He also worked on a project to create a spreadsheet that helped us manage our damage claims," Balga said.

Kristina Giangreco, PCSD's director of special projects, was E-Tech principal during Moulden's senior year. She said the program, funded through a New York State Education Department Pathways to Technology grant, provides students with the ability to earn a degree and become an electrical technician. Even though students move to DCC in the last two years of the program, they remain on PCSD's roster so they can receive support from both the district and DCC.

"Out of his group (the first one), he was the only one who stayed through to completion," Giangreco said of Moulden. Other students went to four-year schools, deciding they didn't want to be an electrical engineer. Moulden recalled the first program-related class he took in high school was a computer-aided design class in which he had to draw an object and then use a computer to design it. In another class he learned how to use electric meters and check voltages of circuits - "the basics," as he called it.

His favorite part of the program during high school was the summer program at DCC where he took a class not related to his degree - the class built a robot you could command.

"I'm not sure I would have gone to college if I didn't have this program," Moulden said.

He said meeting new people and the DCC professors was a great experience and he really enjoyed his work at Central Hudson.

Daniel Barbuto is one of those professors and chair of the electrical engineering technology program at DCC.

"Michael was a strong student the whole way," he said. "He's a quiet student who would always be able to do good work." Barbuto said that for the first three semesters, Moulden took four to five classes earning As and Bs in all of them.

"It's great that he stayed with it," Barbuto said, adding that there are a lot of area companies hiring in this field.

Moulden said he's going to take a little break and then look for a job. He had this advice for students who



Michael Moulden graduated from Dutchess Community College May 21 with an associate degree in electrical technology. He is also a PHS E-Tech graduate. Inset, Moulden works on an assignment in a DCC class.

*Photos courtesy/Dutchess Community College*

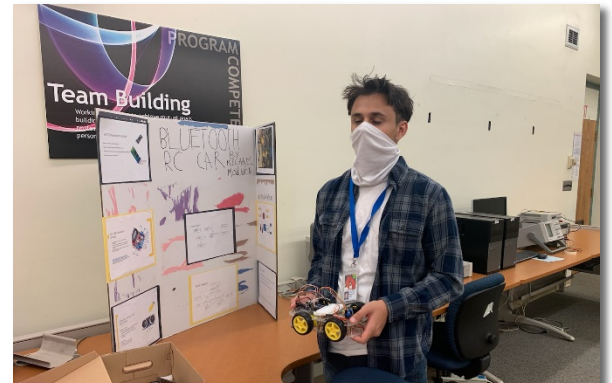
are still in the program: "Don't procrastinate in your work." As for Moulden's mom, Andrea Beres, she is very grateful for the program.

"I'm so proud of him. He has been through a lot and persevered. If it wasn't for this program I couldn't have paid for college," Beres said.

While grant funding Poughkeepsie's program ended this year, the program had great success.

"E-Tech runs over a 90 percent graduation rate because of the supports available. Everyone always looks out for each other," Giangreco said.

And, while the last students just finished their time at PHS and have moved to DCC, Giangreco said the lessons learned through the program can be implemented in grander way in the district moving forward.



Michael Moulden shows the Bluetooth RC Car he created for his Capstone project needed to graduate from the DCC program.

**EQUITY from page 2** - Other issues Reyes-Martinez identified were the lack of classes Spanish or Latin American literature and the fact that many students find sitting in seats for long periods of time difficult so it affects their performance on assessments.

West said that much of what is taught is taught primarily so students pass such tests.

"That puts students at a disadvantage because in the real world you're not just doing something for a test. Having students share what they know, their opinions on a subject would give us a different way to study and learn."



One of the slides summarizing discussion at the Equity and Education Leadership Conference.

Illustration/Courtesy Dutchess BOCES

conference in the fall at Poughkeepsie High School for students who attended the first one to further develop their ideas.

As for BOCES, Schinella said she is working on formalizing the center, gathering district reviews of the conference and designing more opportunities for students and staff to explore equity.

## Next steps

The conference was designed to give students a safe space and a voice, Jenny Schinella, BOCES director of educational resources, said. "Your students are so amazing," she said. "They had immediate action steps they wanted to go to their principal with."

And they did just that.

The hour-long staff meeting was just the start of the work at PHS.

"I came here to do this work. Amya, Unyque, Briceida I vow to you and every one of the 1148 students and teachers that every decision I make as your principal I make because of you," Royce-Giron said.

Royce-Giron offered to host a follow-up

**VIOLENCE from page 1**- Family Advocates and establishing the Parent Empowerment Center.

"The Poughkeepsie City School District will leave no rock unturned in identifying opportunities to partner with the community in addressing the evolving and varying needs of PCSD students and parents," he said.

Board member Long, who also serves as SNUG coordinator, shared that the local SNUG office provides many opportunities for community members and youth to share concerns they have that might lead to gun violence and receive assistance in finding resolution. Call SNUG at 845-452-1110 ext. 3138. SNUG will host a series of events as part of its commitment to create a community positioned to make a difference.