

SUPERINTENDENT'S BRIEF

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

ISSUE NO 58 | March 15, 2023

VOLUME 4



Morse lesson brings history to life

American history is full of examples of how African Americans have impacted the history that has shaped this country. For 20 years, Morse teacher Jennifer Ennist and students at Morse Elementary School have brought many African American notables to life via the Black History Wax Museum project.

Fifth graders submitted three choices for a historic figure to portray (alive or deceased) and names were drawn for assignments in each class. Students spent February (Black History Month) researching and preparing to become the person they are researching. Last week, their hard work paid off as students donned their costumes, stood in the fifth grade hallway - as still as a wax figure - until their 'button' (a red sticker) was pressed by a parent, guardian, relative or schoolmate. Once pressed they came to life, telling who they represented, what they are famous for, and some additional facts about their life.

Ennist got the idea as a second grade teacher from her teacher assistant, Shirley Stout, who suggested doing a wax museum during Black History Month that was inspired by Madame Tussauds famous establishment. The event is an experience for everyone involved: students, teachers and guests.

"We see our students in a different light - someone who may not make great decisions but then they learn the information because they are invested and interested," Ennist said.

Kari Atkins, a special education teacher, is in her first year at Morse.

"I was surprised. It wasn't what I expected." she said of watching rehearsals.

Students learned research skills, acting, public presentation and teamwork through the project.

Shy'mir Poole took on the role of President Barack Obama, choosing him because he was familiar with him and Obama was the first African American president.

"I'm proud to be him. I learned he served as a U.S. Senator for Illinois from 2005-2008," Poole said, adding, "It was exciting to be teaching younger people about important people."

Classmate Kotera Holman played U.S. Supreme Court Justice Thurgood Marshall.



At top, fifth grade teacher Jennifer Ennist gives students in her class 'buttons' to activate their historic figure in the Morse Black History Wax Museum. Above, Saniyah James portrays actress Ruby D as other students listen.

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She learned that Marshall was also a civil rights activist and died at the age of 84.

"He looked young," she said, adding that he died of heart failure. Holman said she liked being able to show her acting skills, but that's not one of the careers she is eyeing.

"I want to be a lawyer, a judge and maybe a hair stylist," she said.

Teacher Rachel Lee said she enjoyed "seeing the curiosity, interest and excitement students had as they were finding out details and making a connection" between the character's life and their own family.

Yasmine Johnson came to Morse to see her daughter, Saniyah James portray actress Ruby D. She was accompanied by James' cousin, Tyzhan Catts.

"It is extraordinary!" Johnson said. "What they are doing is great and they need to do more like this."

Catts agreed. "They are fast learners - even the outfits matched the characters, this is nice."

Atkins agreed.

"This is an amazing idea and opportunity not just for the students but for myself to become more educated on Black History and individuals that changed the world for kids in our district and everywhere," she said.

PHS program rewards positive actions



Teachers Richard VanScoyck and Gayle Gerrard Lewin with student Omari James who was chosen as the first Pioneer Power Positive P winner.

Developing positive character traits is important, especially for high school students who are preparing to enter college, the workforce and adulthood. Poughkeepsie High School has developed a new positive behavioral interventions and support program that rewards positive behavior and teaches different social-emotional skills to help students succeed.

The Pioneer Power Positive P program was developed by teacher Michelle Parker as part of the revised positive behavioral interventions and supports (PBIS) program, overseen by Gayle Gerrard Lewin, PBIS coordinator at the high school. Teacher Richard VanScoyck is in charge of marketing and promoting the program.

February was the first month and random acts of kindness were the behavior students were recognized for practicing. Each time a staff member witnessed a

student performing a random act of kindness, they could write up a reward ticket and hand it to the student for the student to deposit into a box. At the end of each month, a winner's name is drawn.

For senior Omari James, being kind and helpful comes naturally.

"I feel like it is how I was raised - to help people. It's my normal thing and in today's world it is seen as strange to help someone because people are not together," he said.

James had three entries in the first contest and his name was pulled as the first winner. One was for giving another student instructions, another for helping a student with their locker and a third for helping collect recycling from around the school, Gerrard Lewin said.

James shared this about one of his tickets.

"I helped explain the classroom rules and helped a student in English when we were doing independent work. Some students were off-task and not focused so I re-explained the lesson to my peers."

Gerrard Lewin said students voted on the name of the program and that the theme and trait will change from month-to-month.

"We are rolling it out this year with more fidelity and infusing monthly social-emotional lessons beginning in April," she said.

March's program, named March Madness, is focused on helping students learn to control their emotions and tickets will be given for helping to de-escalate a situation or if a student is seen calming themselves, Gerrard Lewin said.

"This plays a big part in the state of our school's mental health," James said.



As part of the March program, students are encouraged to enter a school song or design a t-shirt contest. The winning song and t-shirt will debut at the March Madness basketball game between PHS staff and the Poughkeepsie Police Benevolent Association March 29 at 6 p.m. at PHS.

Each month's winner gets to pick their choice of prizes. James chose a \$50 Amazon gift card, which he plans to use to purchase items to help redo his room.

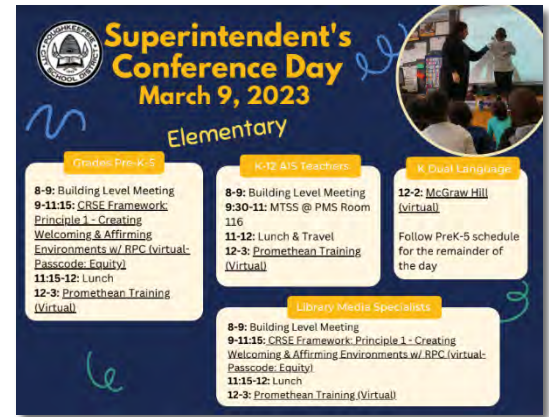
"We want to thank the faculty and staff for participating," VanScoyk said.

Staff spends day learning

Poughkeepsie School District staff spent Thursday, March 9, engaged in professional learning sessions for its Spring Superintendent's Conference Day. The comprehensive day of professional learning and engagement featured specially selected sessions to support the core responsibilities of every member of the organization. The following sessions were offered to all PCSD staff:

- Culturally Responsive – Sustaining Education Framework: Principle 1 – Creating Welcoming & Affirming Environments (PreK – 5, library media specialists, greeters and safety monitors)
- Promethean Board Training (Prek – 8, library media specialist and K-5 Special Education Teachers)
- Multi-Tiered Systems of Support (K-12 AIS)
- McGraw Hill (K Dual Language)
- ELA and Math IReady (6-8 PMS core teachers)
- iXL Training (PHS ELA, Math and 6 – 12 special education teachers)
- Mission Literacy (PHS core teachers)
- College and Career Ready Monthly Activities (K-12 counselors)
- Infinite Campus Training (K-12 school counselors)
- Individual Student Success Plans (K-12 school counselors)
- Smithsonian American Art Museum (Art)
- Art Effect PD (Art)
- Strings w/ Liz Handman (Music)
- Choral w/Christine Howlett (Music)
- Band w/ Jenny Park (Music)
- Curriculum Alignment with Checkpoint Exam (World Language)
- Progress Monitoring Tool and Testing Schedule Preparation (ENL)
- Report Writing, Progress Monitoring & Medicaid Billing (school nurses, social workers, community school liaisons, district family advocates and psychologists)
- 504 vs. IEP (school nurses, social workers, community school liaisons, district family advocates and psychologists)
- CSTAG Level I (social workers, SEL counselors, APs of culture and climate and psychologists)
- New Physical Education Standards (physical education)
- Specially Designed Instruction w/ RPC (K-12 special education teachers)
- Role of Aides and Assistants in Management of Student Behavior w/ RPC (K-12 health aides and teaching assistants)
- nVision Training (administrative support)
- Managing Multiple Projects, Objectives and Deadlines (administrative support)
- First Aid & CPR Training (school monitors)
- Communication, Incident Reporting, Raptor, and Timely Notifications (greeters and safety monitors)
- Equipment and Cleaning Chemical Training (facilities)
- Blood Borne Pathogens, Right to Know, Sexual Harassment (New staff hired after Sept. 6, 2022)

See the [full March 9th Superintendent's Conference Day schedule](#).



As a part of the district's efforts to expand the capacity of all staff a survey was released providing opportunity for the district leadership team to receive feedback so that they can continue to strengthen the professional learning opportunities provided to faculty and staff. Initial results show that 98.1 percent of responders found the training relevant to their role in the district.

Workshops help students prep for job search



Ethan Allen Staffing's Amy Van Tassel, far left, and PHS' Kelly Semexant, far right, speak with students about designing their resumes.

A group of seniors at Poughkeepsie High School received helpful tips on how not only to write a resume, but also to make it stand out during a workshop facilitated by Ethan Allen Staffing on March 10.

This workshop is part of a five-part employment workshop. Future sessions will focus on how to search for a job, job interview preparation, mock job interviews and more.

Amy Van Tassel, Ethan Allen's industrial division manager, conducted this session where she and Kelly Semexant, PHS college readiness & workforce education counselor, assisted students with creating the perfect resume right in class.

According to Van Tassel, some of the most important aspects to writing a good resume is to keep it short and accurate, have bold lettering and use varied language when describing previous job duties.

"I don't need an essay, I just need to know what your experience is," Van Tassel said. "You always want to look at it from the perspective of the person that's going to be looking at it."

Additionally, Semexant encouraged students to include any volunteer work on their resume and to have a professional sounding email address when job hunting.

"Don't use your Poughkeepsie email address because it expires July 1," Semexant said.

The resumes students worked on will come in handy for the upcoming Career & Job Fair at the PHS gym scheduled for May 18, so they can give them to nearly 70 potential employers.

"I'll make copies of their resume that they can hand it out and be proud of that," Semexant explained. "The Career & Job Fair is going to be huge."

Semexant was impressed to see that some students already had a resume prior to the workshop.

"I'm very pleasantly surprised with them having that already," she said.

Jah-Zel Thomas was one of the students who already had a resume prior to the workshop, but found the tips he learned on how to enhance it beneficial.

"I'm updating it now," Thomas said of his resume. "I think it was a good experience."

County music festivals feature PCSD students

Four Poughkeepsie City School Districts students participated in the Dutchess County Music Educators' Association All County Music Festivals held in January and March.

The elementary festival (grades 5-6) was held March 10 and 11 at Van Wyck Junior High School while the junior high festival (grades 7-9) was in January at Stissing Mountain High School.

The students who participated were:

- Kameron Palmetier, 9th Grade, Junior High All County Band
- Shaqeeem Vassell, 9th Grade, Junior High All County Band
- Christopher Webb, 8th Grade, Junior High All County Chorus
- Alexandra Lopez-Agustin, 6th Grade, Elementary All County Chorus

Junior High All County participants had to audition before being selected, Dunn said. Elementary students are chosen by their teachers for the Elementary All County Chorus.

In addition to students participating, Clinton Elementary School music teacher Victor Izzo chaired the elementary All County Chorus.



Ninth grade trumpet players Shaqeeem Vassell and Kameron Palmetier at the junior All County Festival.