

# SUPERINTENDENT'S BRIEF

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

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## PHS students to represent US colleges



Poughkeepsie High School seniors celebrated their college choices with staff during the second annual Senior Signing Day May 2, 2023.

More than 130 PHS students have been accepted to colleges across the country so far this year.

"We have over 75 percent of our senior class accepted to colleges!" said Kelly Semexant, college readiness and workforce education counselor. "This is more than last year," In total, 38 colleges are represented in our students' selections with DCC having the most at 53. Next, in order, come SUNY Albany, 7; St. John's, 4 and College of

St. Rose, 3, she said.

Other colleges represented include Yale, Vassar, Louisiana State University, RPI, Northeastern, Barnard, University of Chicago, Emerson, and Fordham University.

Semexant held PHS' second Senior Signing Day Tuesday, May 2, 2023 at the school, with students dressing in their college's attire, taking photos in front of a decorated wall and generally having fun celebrating.

"I want to thank everyone who helped plan, decorate, attend and cheer," Semexant said. "It was a huge success!"

Staff members who participated and wore a college shirt will be entered into a random drawing for a spa-themed gift basket.

Part of what Semexant does in her role is increase exposure of PCSD students and their families to colleges.

During a three-week period in April alone, she and her team took students to visit Vassar College, Dutchess Community College, St. Thomas Aquinas and SUNY New Paltz.

- On April 14, Semexant and PHS counselor Stacey Lee took the top 10 students from the junior class and their families to Vassar College. We had an admissions presentation, campus tour, ate lunch in the dining hall then sat in two classrooms learning from current Humanities and STEM professors about those majors. Angela Henry, executive director of the Poughkeepsie Public Schools Foundation, paid for this trip and the "Class of '24" T-shirts for all attendees.
- April 21<sup>st</sup> found Semexant and Stephanie Fata, transition coordinator, on a trip to DCC with 15 seniors to learn about the supports available to them in college. Students learned that they'll need to advocate for themselves once they enter college. The group toured DCC's campus including the new dorm rooms.
- On April 25, counselor Takiyah Ingram and Semexant traveled with students to St. Thomas Aquinas College where they heard from admissions and HEOP Program representatives. Among our group were two seniors that have committed to attend STAC in the fall. They were so excited to see their



PHS students pose in front of St. Thomas Aquinas College's 1,000 point scorer sign during the trip.

campus! During our tour, students saw Ingram's (STAC Alumni) name on a plaque for STAC's 1000 Point Scorers in women's basketball.

- Rounding out the month, Fata and guidance intern Shannon Muse took 15 PHS juniors to SUNY New Paltz for the SUNY College Fair April 27. Students met with representatives from over 20 SUNY schools and walked around the New Paltz Campus.

"I'm so proud of the work of Ms. Semexant and the high school counselors. They have increased the opportunities that students have to participate in institutions of higher learning beyond our PreK – 12 institution. Their work has involved educating both students and their families, providing exploration opportunities, and supporting students and families along the process" shared Dr. Eric Jay Rosser, superintendent of schools. Congratulations to all our seniors!

## Hyde Park views Community Schools model

The Office of Community Schools, under the leadership of Natasha Brown, executive director of community schools, hosted a delegation from Hyde Park Central School District Leadership Team recently. The team is exploring effective practices and heard about the Poughkeepsie City School District's Community Schools model and wanted to learn more about it.

PCSD's Community Schools model is designed to support the success of the whole child and his/her family by providing opportunity and access to resources, services, programs, and community connections that support success in and out of school and beyond the pre-K – 12 continuum. In 2020, the district designated all schools as Community Schools as part of its school turnaround model.



Executive Director of Community Schools Natasha Brown presents PCSD's Community Schools model to Hyde Park Central School District's leadership team.

The model focuses on five pillars: [Early Learning – Pre-natal to Pre-school](#), [Integrated Student and Family Supports](#), [High-Level Community and Family Engagement](#), [Expanded and Enriched Learning Opportunities](#), and [Collaborative Leadership Practice](#) intended to:

- Implement strong educational programs which reduce learning gaps, enrich and expand the curriculum, and strengthen parent and community engagement throughout all schools.
- Implement high-quality extended day and year-long programs of excellence (e.g., academic, cultural, artistic, athletic, and needs-based).
- Coordinate local resources to offer medical, dental, health & wellness for families.
- Extend PCSD's involvement in the Prenatal to College & Career Success youth development space.

Dr. Eric Jay Rosser, superintendent of schools, joined Brown, Julie Maserjian, parent empowerment center manager; Gilbert Colon, community school liaison and Jasmine Clay, parent partner in conversation about the district's framework, parent empowerment center, parent and community partnerships, and what the community school model looks like operationally in each of the schools. Clay shared how the model drew her in as a parent, whose first exposure to the model was after she needed assistance with navigating the district. After receiving support from the Community Schools staff, she learned that the district's approach to supporting the whole child and their family was aligned with her nonprofit organization, which is now able to support a greater number of students and parents by partnering with the district.

Rosser shared why implementing a Community Schools model was important to the turnaround efforts in the district, attributing the formation of it in Poughkeepsie with his experience in [Buffalo Public Schools](#) and the results the model yielded there.

"I'm just taking a moment to thank you and your outstanding Community Schools team for an incredible presentation! I was inspired by all you have accomplished to support children and families and especially



for the way you are involving everyone in the process!" Aviva Kafka, Hyde Park's superintendent, wrote afterward.

Therese McKenna, Hyde Park's school information system data manager, said, "Your team's passion for the program is phenomenal."

But it wasn't just administrators who left inspired. Teacher Melissa Lawson said, "Your school community is so fortunate to have such a dedicated team. I walked away with several ideas about how to get started here in Hyde Park. I look forward to collaborating with you in the future!"

Leaders from both school districts are working to identify a date for the HPSCD Leadership Team to return to visit the [Saturday Morning Lights extended learning opportunity](#) provided to parents and students. To review the presentation click [here](#).



## Partnerships send students to circus

[The Royal Hanneford Circus](#) brought family fun, laughs and excitement to the City of Poughkeepsie last weekend, where over 150 PCSD students were provided an opportunity to attend the thrilling and spectacular circus presentations.

As a part of the district's Community School efforts to involve community in supporting the in and out of school success of students, a recent partnership with Majed J. Nesheiwat Convention Center (MJNCC) yielded free tickets for PCSD students with good school attendance and their families to attend the circus. As an ICARE partner, the MJNCC donated 75 tickets to support the district's efforts of providing its students with meaningful out-of-school learning experiences and the City of Poughkeepsie Mayor's Office donated an additional 40.

Students were able to see a number of acts including: the Ariel Extravaganza, Grumpy's Pork Chop Revue (direct from America's Got Talent!), Twisting, Twirling Daredevil antics, Extreme Trampoline, Motorcycle Thrill Riders in the Globe of Death, and a special tribute to the USA, the Star Spangled Finale.

To learn more about how to support Poughkeepsie City School District students through the ICARE initiative, click [here](#).

Top left, pony rides were part of the Royal Hanneford Circus experience for PCSD students. Right, members of the circus perform.



## CI Weekly: District offers grants, certification options

Poughkeepsie City School District is offering Teacher Innovation Grants and opportunities for teachers to extend their certifications. Learn more in this week's edition along with tips to help teachers with grouping and lesson pacing. [Download CI Weekly for May 5, 2023.](#)

## School Lunch Hero Day recognizes food service staff

We want to take this opportunity on School Lunch Hero Day, to thank and acknowledge our food services team for providing nutritious food for students throughout the year. You are appreciated.



## Upcoming events

- **Monday, May 8-12:** Teacher Appreciation Week
- **Wednesday, May 10:** School Nurse Day
- **Friday, May 12:** School Communicators Day
- **Saturday, May 13:** "It's Your Money," financial literacy for middle schoolers. Register at <https://bit.ly/msfinances> a chance to get a gift card.
- **Wednesday, May 16:** School budget vote