

# SUPERINTENDENT'S BRIEF

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

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## School district shares Arts Education vision

Poughkeepsie City School District (PCSD) superintendent Dr. Eric Jay Rosser was recently invited to speak with the Arts Network to provide an update on the important work the district is engaged in to expand arts education. Prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, Rosser met with this group to learn about the tremendous resources present in the Hudson Valley and the strong desire of the arts community to partner with the schools to expand student opportunity and access to the arts. Rosser and Kristina Giangreco, director of special projects, shared with a group of about 25 people the vision PCSD has for arts education and some of the efforts underway to support the vision.

Rosser noted that while the entire arts community is welcome to join the effort, the development and execution of an arts education strategic plan would

require a great deal of community involvement.

Rosser shared that under the district's Community Schools model, every school has art and music education provided by a certificated instructor. He discussed that this was a conscious decision the Board of Education supported, even when the district found itself in financial peril at the conclusion of the 2019-2020 school year. The Board of Education was adamant that art and music would not be adversely impacted by the personnel and programmatic cuts the district had to implement.

Giangreco shared efforts already happening throughout PCSD including three elementary schools receiving Stringendo programming (Stringendo is a nonprofit community music school located in Dutchess County that offers youth orchestra, traditional fiddling classes, private lessons and a summer music camp). Giangreco also shared that all elementary and secondary students have exposure to the arts through Baradvon programming and that the district, with the assistance of Gully Stanford, community supporter and Dutchess BOCES board member, has established an Arts Working Group composed of various members of the arts community to help inform ways to expand student programming, opportunity and access with secured resources. She also pointed out that in the Pathways Transformation Task Force survey to help identify instructional pathways aligned to emerging industry and occupational fields in the Hudson Valley, arts ranked the highest. Giangreco said the district has been accepted into the New York State Education Department's [Individual Arts Assessment Pilot program](#) in 2022-23.

The Board of Education recently approved the [Task Force recommendation](#) for the designing phase of innovation labs in each elementary school to serve as spaces where arts education can be expanded and students could also learn about other future occupational fields.

Rosser closed out sharing that the 2022-2023 budget, if approved by the community on May 17, 2022, would include a significant investment in Arts Education, providing our art education instructors with additional resources (i.e. music instruments, art supplies, etc.) enhancing the auditorium spaces of the high school, and one other major project being explored. More than \$400,000 in additional spending has been allocated through this budget. "The value of art in the lives of our children is unmeasurable provided that the dynamics of art education enhances student motor, language, social, and decision making skills and also serves a great role in positive youth development and student's desires to fully participate in the schooling process," Rosser said.

# LeadHERship Summit encourages women

Inspiration, motivation and encouragement flowed during Poughkeepsie's first LeadHERship Summit Wednesday, May 11.

"The purpose of the summit was to provide a space and opportunity for students to learn and grow from women in leadership roles," organizer and Director of Special Projects Kris Giangreco said.

About 40 young women in grades 6-12 from the Poughkeepsie City School District participated in the event held at Family Partnership.

Giangreco started the event with a video she created with messages from women leaders from across the United States: a superintendent of schools, a school principal, the CEO of an education company, "LeadHERship is about knowing there are people cheering for you," flashed across the screen along with other inspirational words before each woman shared a personal message with attendees.

Throughout the course of the day, students attended three workshops:

- Historic Women of Dutchess County by William Tatus III and Melodye Moore from the Dutchess County Historical Society
- Restorative Circles for Women Leadership by Gabriella Hill, Newburgh Armory Unity Center board member
- Women Leadership Panel (G. Angela Henry, executive director Poughkeepsie Public Schools Foundation; Fatima Carmen Martinez Santiago, PCSD Board of Education member, and Wendy Maragh Taylor, dean of student growth and engagement at Vassar College)

Henry gave the keynote address telling the audience, "You're all leaders. Some of you know that; some of you think you might be; some of you think you're not. I hope that by the end of this event today, you will know, you will believe and you will love the idea that You. Are. A. Leader!"

She shared that often people who are born or identify as girls are often underestimated, overlooked and not given equal opportunities or credit. That is why the LeadHERship Summit was created.



**Gabriella Hill (above) talks about affirmations during the Restorative Circles for Women Leadership workshop. At right, G. Angela Henry delivers the keynote address.**





She explained to the group that even if they didn't like being "in front" they could still lead. And, she explained that leadership itself isn't good or bad, but that it is what a leader does that can be classified good or bad.

"Use your leadership for positive things, for good things! Lead on my sisters!"

As part of the Leadership Panel, Henry noted that among the responses that resonated with students were "we took the initiative to ask someone to teach us, mentor us, give us opportunity" and "we stood up for ourselves and for others. When something wasn't right, we tried to make it right or be part of making it right." The day closed with a "Like A Girl" activity in which students viewed [Always' #LikeAGirl](#) ad from Super Bowl XLIX and then created art to show what they are going to continue to do "like a girl."

## Vassar class presents human rights lessons

Economics students at Poughkeepsie High School learned about human rights, migration and the impact on the economy thanks to a program designed and delivered by a team Vassar College students.

Nine students (Lily Thompson, Samantha Cavagnolo, Kevin McAuliffe, Malanie Hidalgo, Cyan Jackson, Felicity Rakochy, Arlen Chen, Valeria Munoz Gonzales and Jordan Shamoun) spent the first six weeks of the semester learning about the issue and developing the curriculum as part of Maria Hantzopoulos' "Education 283: Our Lives, Our World" class. The team settled on six lessons, with three students working on each: What are human rights, migration and what people go through and how migration connects to our economy, Hantzopoulos said.

Hantzopoulos reached out to PHS teacher Shanna Andrawis whom she knew as a former Vassar student. Originally, the lesson was about human rights but once the two spoke, the economic impact was brought in.

Andrawis' class served as a way for Vassar students to present the lessons and make adjustments. All the materials will be available for free to educators on the [Our Lives, Our World](#) website, which is still under construction.

"This is a good opportunity for our students to connect their learning with what Vassar College students are learning at the college level," Andrawis said.

Each lesson strived to engage students, and this last one on the economic impact of migration and associated human rights certainly did.

After students reviewed fact sheets about the economic impact of migrants, students were asked a series of questions for a three corners exercise in which they first indicated on a sheet of paper whether they agreed, disagreed or felt otherwise about a statement related to the subject such as "Migrant workers contribute to the economy" or "Migrant workers should have the same rights as American workers."

Then, they were asked to walk to a corner in the room and stand with those who felt similarly and speak to their reasons.

PHS senior Benjamin Nikolai Miranda moved to the "Other" corner for the question about rights. "Human rights, yes, but some such as the ability to obtain a passport should be different," he said.



Students in Maria Hantzopoulos' Vassar College class present a lesson on human rights, migration and economics at Poughkeepsie High School Wednesday, May 11, 2022.



PHS senior Benjamin Nikolai Miranda explains his reason for aligning in the 'Other' corner on the issue of rights for migrants.

Afterward, Miranda said this lesson was the most impactful for him. "It's a good program so everyone can understand migration and the contribution to the economy. "We talked about how migrants compare to American workers and how they should be equal and how we treat them and see everyone's opinions." Miranda said he plans to attend Dutchess Community College's nursing program and then transfer to the University of Buffalo to obtain his bachelor's in nursing and eventually become a nurse practitioner. Hantzopoulos' goal is to continue the partnership between Vassar and PHS next year, but perhaps bring a different school subject into the mix.



These Human Rights Trees were inspired by the Vassar program.

Cavagnolo is a senior at Vassar who took the intensive because she was involved in studying migration and wrote articles online "but was looking for a way to get the material into a classroom."

She too learned something from the experience of being in the classroom with students over a period of time.

"Honestly, what I found really helpful was learning what words and phrases the students responded to," she said.

Aside from the learning that happened between students, the program had another benefit. One of the exercises presented by Vassar students inspired Andrawis who modified it for use in her Global History class to create a wall of Human Rights trees in her classroom.

## Baseball team earns spot at finals

The Poughkeepsie Pioneers' 2-1 victory over Peekskill Tuesday landed the team in the Independent League finals tonight against East Ramapo High. The home game begins at 5:15 p.m. Sophomore Corey Martin will be on the mound to start with several other ready to go, coach Dylan Tully said.

Tully believes the keys to a successful offense tonight will be to swing the bats. "I always tell the guys, good things happen when you get the bat on the ball," he said, adding that "production from the second half of our batting lineup will be key to winning tonight's game."

Defensively, the team will be looking to "play clean defense and be efficient while pitching."

Come out and help cheer the team on to victory. Go Pioneers!



Sophomore Corey Martin will start on the mound for Poughkeepsie in today's match-up.



## Curriculum and Instruction: Mental Health month, helping kids learn

This week's edition provides information about behavioral indicators of possible mental health issues and features an article on brain-based learning which focuses on getting students thinking about their own learning. There are also some fun photos of Clinton Elementary School students enjoying a trip to Poughkeepsie Farm Project. [Download C&I Weekly 32.](#)

## Upcoming events

**Saturday, May 14:** Spring Into Community Schools Family Festival, 11 a.m.-2 p.m. PHS Track and Field, 70 Forbus St.

**Tuesday, May 17:** Annual budget vote and Board of Education election, 9 a.m. - 9 p.m. ([various polling sites](#))