

SUPERINTENDENT'S BRIEF

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

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Student panel gains leadership tips

For the final Student Advisory Panel to the Superintendent meeting of the school year, students were presented with a youth leadership workshop from David Kelly, America's Student Leadership Trainer. Kelly works mostly with college students, but has done some work with middle and high school students. So, when the opportunity to come to Poughkeepsie from Atlanta, Georgia, and try his material out with our students he was eager to do so.

Through storytelling, Kelly guided students through characteristics of leaders (listening, integrity, taking risks, tackling challenges, visualizing success, hard work and never quitting).

He had them work individually and in small groups to answer questions about their leadership experiences, how to overcome leadership challenges and listening. In one exercise, he had high school students gather in two small circles and talk about their favorite color, something that makes them happy and something they dream about doing - all while passing or tossing a tennis ball to each other. Then, he asked the person holding the tennis ball at the end to share who passed them the ball and what their dream was.

This stumped a few of the students, who were able to provide the correct response after some hints.

Kelly stressed how important a person's dreams are to them and that listening carefully to people can impact how they perceive you and how they feel about themselves.

When Kelly asked students what they wanted their leadership or school legacy to be, answers varied. Skyler Jenkins, a sixth grader, said, "I want people to remember me from being on student council." During her time on the council, Jenkins said they held a popcorn fundraiser, arranged field trips and reinstated the Panther tickets for PBIS. From the experience on the panel and in the leadership session, Jenkins said she learned to work together with people and received a lot of compliments on her work. "I learned multiple things about how to be a leader and how my actions affect others.

Jenkins plans to go to college and become a teacher, then go back to school so she can open her own bakery

Kelly stressed the idea of serving leaders - that leaders do for and help others and asked students to provide examples of things they could do to lead with "integrity and the heart of a serving leader." Elmandson raised his hand quickly. "You can give a homeless person food or money," he said.

"It's about service, not serve us," Kelly said. "They sound similar but if you are asking what's in it for me, you're asking the wrong question."

He encouraged students to not live with regret, but to forget it and look to the future. "Learn from the things you've done, but don't live in them."

In the high school session, when Kelly asked about ways the students have shown leadership, Nevaeh Barrington was the first to share.



David Kelly (above) talks about serving leadership with PMS students at the district office Friday, June 3, 2022 as part of the Student Advisory Panel. At right, sixth grader Skyler Jenkins talks about her school legacy.





Superintendent Dr. Eric Jay Rosser prepares to hand a certificate to Antonio Elmandson (hand raised).

"I help at the dance studio on weekends," she said, sharing a time when a young girl said it was too loud in class so she took her outside. Later, the teacher spoke to the child's mom about her behavior and Barrington said she intervened, explaining that the child just found it too loud and wasn't being defiant. "It turns out she had a sensory issue," Barrington said.

Kelly told students they don't have to be elected to a position to lead. "You can all do something. You can all step up and make a difference in someone else's life."

During the lunch break, Rosser thanked students for their involvement and contribution on the panel before distributing certificates to each student.

"I want to thank each of you for being a part of the Superintendent's Student Advisory Panel. I hope you have learned things from us and I assure you that we have learned from you," he said, adding that some of the ideas brought forth by the panel will be implemented.

Class of 2022 nets nearly \$100K in local scholarships

Poughkeepsie High School seniors earned close to \$100,000 worth of scholarships provided by local benefactors during the annual Scholarship and Awards ceremony June 1.

Most of the scholarships awarded at the ceremony were created specifically for PHS students including the Poughkeepsie High School Class of 1958 scholarship, for seniors who must apply themselves to prosper and the Corey G. Ingram Scholarship Award for seniors who prove to be a valuable asset to the City of Poughkeepsie.

Some of these scholarships were created by families of graduates who desire to help out their community.

"That's what makes the night so special when these people want to give back," Principal Kellyann Royce-Giron said. "They're all about the Pioneer Pride."

PCSD Superintendent Dr. Eric J. Rosser credited students in attendance for maximizing their full potential in school so they can achieve something greater after



Elijah Johnson, Riona Creavy, Abiba Na-aata, Math Teacher Laura Tietz, Constance Pillsbury and Harrison Brisbon McKinnon on stage after accepting the Tietz Family Stellar Student Award.

graduating. He stressed the importance of students having experiences supporting any endeavor they choose in the future.

"Students are continuing to excel beyond our beliefs and we are proud of you for doing so," Rosser said. "While we're interested in all students walking across the stage for graduation, we are more interested in what they do upon graduation."

At the end of the ceremony, Royce-Giron encouraged students to be proud of their accomplishments and tell everyone about it. She is incredibly proud of their resilience.

"There's a lot to talk about," Royce-Giron said. "You talk about the young people here at PHS who are so resilient, who every single day persevere so they can strive to be the best versions of themselves."

Abiba Na-aata was happy to be rewarded multiple scholarships, especially the Paula S. Neustat Scholarship because it ties into her future studies of psychology and social services at Marist College.



Judah Laster and Phoenix Watson proudly holding their Poughkeepsie Public School Teachers' Association Certificates of Recognition.

"I didn't expect to get all of these, but I'm really grateful I did," Na-aata said.

"It was overwhelming and exciting."

Julia Quezada was proud to receive multiple scholarships, including the Ed Joba Scholarship which will be helpful when she studies biomedical engineering at the University of Connecticut this fall.

"I'm glad I made it through and have these good memories of Poughkeepsie High School," Quezada said.

Honor society inducts new members

Earlier in the day, 40 Poughkeepsie High School students became members of the National Honor Society (NHS) making their principal proud. They were inducted during a June 1 afternoon ceremony.

The organization recognizes and elevates a school's commitment to the values of scholarship, service, leadership and character. It was established in 1921 by the National Association of Secondary School Principals, according to the NHS website.

The students who earned this honor are driven individuals and for PHS Principal Kellyann Royce-Giron, there is more to it than just academics.

"It's about the community service, it's about the character, it's about representing positivity," Royce-Giron said. "That's exactly what they're doing."

The first NHS ceremony Royce-Giron attended as principal in 2020 was over Zoom. Having the ceremony in person, with many of the students also receiving scholarships that same night, was a thrilling experience.

"This year felt like it was really back to a sense of normal," the principal said. "It's the best way we could kick off the month of June."



A crowd of PHS students, staff and community members check out the artwork at the Fine Arts & Music Festival. Below right, tiny artwork on tiny easels.

Poughkeepsie Mayor Rob Rolison and City Administrator Marc Nelson.

"It was nice that he showed up," Duncan-Carter said of the mayor.

"There's a lot of community people coming in."

Many of the students attending were seniors and Duncan-Carter said they deserve to have an event like this after missing out on many celebrations in the past two years due to COVID.

"Everybody really needed this event, everybody is just waiting to celebrate," she said. "The energy is amazing."

Senior Danasha Reeves most enjoyed seeing the paintings on the wall, especially those featuring the LGBTQ flags in honor of Pride Month. She credited festival organizers for spreading joy at PHS.

"They really went all out," Reeves said. "I feel like it really helps the community to just get that joy in the beginning of the month." Dr. Rosser, who also

Festival showcases PHS art, music talent

The community were presented with a sample of just how talented Poughkeepsie High School students are during the Fine Arts & Music Festival on June 2.

Student artwork, ranging from detailed paintings to realistic looking clay shoes, were on display in the main lobby where junior Joey Roach serenaded the crowd with acoustic guitar music.

In the evening, there were musical performances in the auditorium from the chorus, orchestra, concert band and the wind and jazz ensemble made up of close to 100 students in five bands.

PHS Art Department Chair Heather Duncan-Carter initially anticipated 100 people coming, but was surprised to see between 150 and 200 people shuffle through to see the art, including



attended shared that “the work of our PHS students is amazing. Their ability to express themselves artistically is something the district is working to invest more in.”



Above, students perform during Fine Arts and Music Festival at PHS. At left, some of the colorful artwork produced by PHS students on display. Right, the chorus performs.



After being surrounded by colorful art, freshman Khamari Hardin, was inspired to start sketching in his notebook.

“It was just in the moment,” Hardin explained. “It’s an art thing.”

Hardin was pleasantly surprised to hear Roach’s music and impressed by the artwork on display.

“It was exciting to see that,” he said. “I like the vibe.”

City of Poughkeepsie Public Arts Commission Jeff Aman was impressed by the talent of the PHS students and hopes that more are exposed to the arts in the future.

“You have to be exposed to something and say ‘Gee, I’d like to try that,’” Aman said. “That’s why we’re happy to see these events take place.”

Krieger students ready to entertain in ‘Annie Jr.’

It’s been more than 10 years since the Krieger Elementary School performed a play at school, but if Annie Jr. is any indicator, the shows will go on.

Twenty-nine students in grades 3-5 have a role in the play, be it on-stage or as part of the crew behind the scenes, co-director/teacher Nicole Schmitt said. Since February students have participated in rehearsals and drama activities after school every Monday through Thursday. They learned how to animate themselves and project their voices. They also watched the original movie of “Annie” so they could get a sense of the characters, Schmitt said.



Harriet Luongo as Annie and the orphans rehearse one of the early scenes of “Annie Jr.” at Krieger Elementary School Wednesday afternoon.



Annie is introduced to Oliver Warbucks, played by Darrin Bennett.

For co-director/teacher Esther Stewart doing this play was nostalgic as when she was in the fifth grade, she played Annie - played by fourth grader Harriet Luongo in this version.

Students auditioning provided their top three choices of characters they'd like to play, read lines from the script while showing how they'd portray the character and sing.

"We were amazed at how many of the students had such wonderful voices," Schmitt said.

During a rehearsal earlier this week, students were spot-on with nearly all their lines and songs. For some, like fifth grader Darrin Bennett who plays Daddy Warbucks, it was their first time acting.

"I always wanted to be an actor," he said, adding that he learned you have to practice your lines so you remember them. "The most challenging thing

was getting the choreography," he said, adding that he is most excited about "Once I come out and have my first scene."

Luongo is already a veteran at 10-years-old, having performed as Matilda at the Rhinebeck Center for Performing Arts staging of the show at the age of 6. "I've been acting since I was really young," she said, explaining her first role was as part of an ensemble at age of four in "Oliver."

"I've always loved acting and thought this would be another chance to have fun with people."

She too said the choreography was the most difficult part and said her favorite part of the play is when she sings, "Tomorrow."

Seven students, including third grader Aiyahna Johnson-Jordan, make up the crew. Johnson-Jordan said she enjoys working behind the scenes making sets.

"I've been in plays before and I really like helping," she said, pointing to the scene when Rebecca sings "Little Girls."

"I can see some of these students really going places, they're full of talent," Stewart said, adding that she has two of the students in her class and they've "really internalized their roles."

Schmitt is excited for students to take the stage. "They've worked really hard on it. They're pretty much running it," she said.

If you'd like to be inspired and wowed, you can check out the community performance of Annie Jr. on Thursday, June 9, 6 p.m. at Krieger Elementary School, 265 Hooker Ave., Poughkeepsie. Doors open at 5:45 p.m. Krieger students will see the play during school hours that week.



Mrs. Hannigan doesn't want Annie to meet Oliver Warbucks.

C.I. Weekly: Growing relationships, summer reading

This week's Curriculum and Instruction Weekly talks about how now is a crucial time for teachers to strengthen their relationships with students. It also provides teachers with a list of suggested books for teachers to read to help teach students who are under stress, learn ways to improve schools, be inspired or learn new teaching techniques. [Download CI #35](#)

Upcoming events

- June 8: Athletic Awards, 5 p.m., PHS, 70 Forbus St.
- June 15: School board workshop meeting, 6:30 p.m., Administration Building, 18 S. Perry St.
- June 20: Juneteenth (Schools closed)
- June 24: Last day of school for students
- June 25: PHS Graduation