

SUPERINTENDENT'S BRIEF

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

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Schools celebrate students' move to 6th



Morse Principal Samantha Mitchell shakes the hand of student Iany Robertson while Robertson's teacher, Jill O'Flaherty smiles during the school's moving up ceremony. Below, Krieger's Rebeca Recinos speaks during a moving up ceremony.

[SEE MORE MOVING UP PHOTOS ONLINE](#)

More than 300 Poughkeepsie City School District fifth graders are moving up to middle school next year and each of the district's four elementary schools held celebrations honoring them this week. Though students face new challenges in sixth grade - individual schedules, classes taught by different teachers - they all seemed to be ready for it.

"We give ourselves the motivation to strive for greatness," said Lei'Lani Huxtable from Morse Elementary School. "We would all say, 'Goodbye to fifth grade and hello to sixth grade.'"

At Warring, Jahkai McEachern said he'll miss his Warring teachers but is excited to take new science classes in sixth grade.

"It's going to be a big change for me with all the different classes," he said. "But I'm ready to go to middle school."

Krieger's Rebeca Recinos thanked the parents, teachers and administrators for all

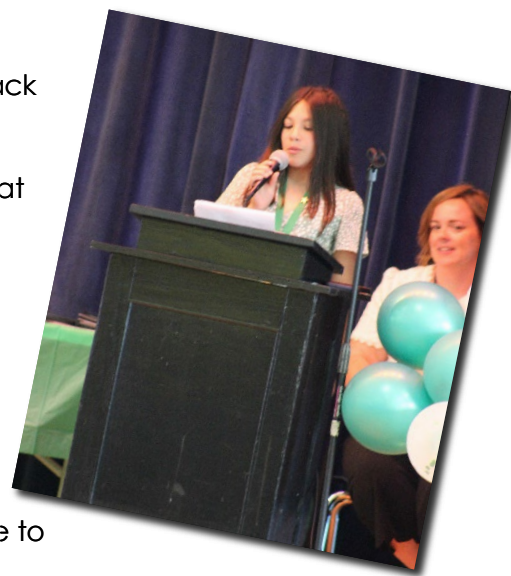
their support to reach this point.

"We all have dealt with challenges, we learned new skills and now we have to stand up, move forward and persevere through the struggles," Recinos said, ending with a quote from Abraham Lincoln, whom the students are learning about.

"The best way to predict the future is to create it," she said.

And Clinton's Ny'Ree Johnson shared inspiration by reading, "Hey Black Child," a poem by Useni Eugene Perkins. At one point, Johnson lost track of the poem she had worked hard to memorize and turned to Scott who offered his program for her to read. She refused, glancing at it and then continued. In the closing, the poem states "Hey Black Child/Be what you can be/Learn what you must learn/Do what you can do/And tomorrow your nation/Will be what you want it to be." When she completed the last line, the crowd erupted in applause. Principals and keynote speakers shared advice with students at each school, though any of the advice could be applicable to any student at any school.

- Warring Principal Nicole Penn left students with this advice: "Please allow yourselves to make mistakes; be accountable for your mistakes, but forgive yourselves," Penn said. "Continue to get better every single day."
- David Scott, Clinton's principal, told students to take the "environment of excellence" created at Clinton with them wherever they go. "The only obstacle stopping you from achieving is you," he said. And, teacher David Stark told students, "You measure your success for yourself. Did you do your best? Did you get smarter? Did you improve?"





- Speaking at Morse, Kelly Semexant, the district's college readiness and workforce education counselor, shared: "Knowledge is limitless and the more you see, the more you'll discover. Your potential knows no bounds."
- "You'll need to be more focused and determined and avoid the distractions at the middle school so you can become high school ready," Greg Mott, assistant superintendent of elementary education, shared at Krieger. While the celebrations were focused on the 314 students moving into Poughkeepsie Middle School and their accomplishments, Mott addressed the parents at Krieger with words that hold true for parents of all students entering middle school. Mott said while middle school is the shortest grade band for schooling (three years) it is the

most challenging for students.

"Thank you for your support," Mott said. "But now they are going to need you to be even more involved," he said, encouraging parents to set aside a quiet space at home for students to do homework and reflect on the day's lessons.

B. Desmond Murray, associate director for employer experience at Marist College, praised students and parents for their efforts and encouraged parents to keep the learning experience alive outside of school.

"Many of your children learned 1,000 words before they even entered Warring," Murray said.

"We want you to continue speaking with your children when they get home from school."

One student already has his eyes set on high achievement at PMS.

While Noah James will miss his teachers at Morse, he is excited to study at PMS, where he hopes to get on the honor roll.

"It feels actually pretty good to me," James said. "I can learn even more and rise up from where I used to be."

Each celebration featured student musical performances, school awards and an award from the Poughkeepsie Public Teachers Association and the presentation of diplomas to students. Students and family members were treated to refreshments afterward. At Krieger, a bounce house waited outside in the parking lot.



Clockwise from top: Warring's Evelyn Jimenez walks to accept a certificate from her teacher Dr. Shanna Didymus; Clinton's Ny'Ree Johnson recites the poem, "Hey Black Child," during the moving up ceremony and Morse students recite the school's pledge.

AmeriCorps director visits Poughkeepsie

Key stakeholders involved in expanding student academic supports welcomed Sonali Nijhawan, AmeriCorps state and national director to Poughkeepsie for two days last week. The new supports involve members of the community volunteering under the federal AmeriCorps program, Ampact. Ampact recently received a [\\$240,000 federal planning grant](#) from [AmeriCorps State & National](#) to work with Poughkeepsie and Dutchess County institutions to develop a place-based cradle-to-career AmeriCorps strategy for our region inspired by national best practices such as [Stockton Service Corps](#).

Nijhawan's visit was for her to learn about Poughkeepsie's leading community development efforts and the plan for leveraging service years/AmeriCorps to address local needs, advance civic engagement and create pathways for local residents to civic leadership and careers.

Over the last year, the [Lead for Poughkeepsie](#) (LFPK) team has developed a partnership with [Ampact](#), a national service organization working across many states to support our efforts to scale service year opportunities in our region.



Superintendent Dr. Eric Jay Rosser speaks during the visit from AmeriCorps' Sonali Nijhawan.

Poughkeepsie City School District, Nubian Directions and Day One, concluding the evening at a reception and dinner hosted at the Poughkeepsie Trolley Barn by Lead for Poughkeepsie.

The following morning she joined the Poughkeepsie Children's Cabinet Executive Committee at its June meeting to share about AmeriCorps and the opportunities to engage the community in service.

To learn more about how to become an AmeriCorps member through Ampact click [here](#).

Children's Cabinet seeks executive director

As part of its growth strategy to serve as a collective impact organization created to develop a citywide cradle-to-career agenda for children, youth and families in the City of Poughkeepsie, the [Poughkeepsie Children's Cabinet](#) has begun the search for its inaugural executive director.

The Cabinet is seeking a collaborative self-starter who will provide the executive leadership to shape the Cabinet into a high-impact 501(c)(3) organization that functions as the backbone organization of a transformative cradle-to-career system. The Executive Director will build on collaborations with some of the most prominent thought leaders in the field — including the [EdRedesign Lab at the Harvard Graduate School of Education](#) and the [William Julius Wilson Institute](#) at the [Harlem Children's Zone](#) — to create the systems, structure and staffing that will allow the Cabinet to reach its full transformative potential for children and families in the City of Poughkeepsie.

Those interested are invited to apply using this [link from Idealist.org](#).



Sonali Nijhawan, AmeriCorps state and national director, speaks in Poughkeepsie.