District programs receive Harvard support

Poughkeepsie City School District’s efforts to bolster support for children through the City Connects program at Poughkeepsie Middle School, received a boost through Harvard’s EdRedesign Lab Institute for Success Planning Community of Practice (SPCP) recently. The institute launched SPCP to help entities working with youth develop plans to create one-to-one mentorship programs and individual success plans for children. The Poughkeepsie City School District is one of the first inaugural organizations to participate. Twelve organizations from across the country will participate. “This institute will provide an opportunity to be more coordinated. Now we’ll have a community of practice of 12 communities,” said Tauheeda Jackson, director of the institute, which runs the program. Each participating entity is developing its own plan tailored to its community needs and resources. The Institute will provide technical assistance, peer networking opportunities and a continuum of development to help participants develop the next level of work.

The goal for each organization is to develop an action plan, implement it and then rethink and reimagine it based on feedback before the end of the school year, Jackson said. “The shared vision is that all students will have an opportunity to be connected to a caring adult. We will lift up best practices, tackle obstacles together and provide opportunities for learning, linking and leading.”

Mentors play a vital role as children spend much of their time outside of school. “The student success plan approach connects students with school and community resources and addresses the whole child from academics to social-emotional development,” she said. There are four components to a successful plan:

1. A navigator for each student.
2. Children’s Cabinet to help raise awareness and connect services.
3. Identify supports within the faith-based community, out-of-school time, non-profits to help and enhance a child’s progress.
4. Use of a data system to follow and tell the story for sport across the district or entity and look at equity, cultural content and student voice.

The SPCP is complementary to the City Connects program but will expand PCSD’s support to all students. PCSD participated in a virtual kickoff session June 23 and will meet with other participants at the Institute July 18-20. Virtual meetings will then take place regularly through May 2023.

Board Organization meeting highlights

As per PCSD Board of Education (BOE) policy and Educational Law, the Poughkeepsie Public School District (BOE) held its annual Organization meeting this morning. The purpose of the organizational meeting is to elect officers of the Board and make the proper appointments and designations of other district employees for the proper management of the school district during the school year. BOE Policy For the 22-23 calendar year, the Board elected Thomas O’Neill, Esq. to serve as Board of Education President. The Board also elected Fatimah Carmen Martinez Santiago to serve as the Board of Education Vice President. The terms for both of these positions will be for one-year.
ELC PTA growth earns recognition

The Parent Teacher Association at the Early Learning Center recently received the Gold Apple Membership Growth Award from the New York State PTA for exceeding 100 percent growth over last year. Led by co-Presidents Carolyn Rohde and Naomi Flinchum-Marquez, the group added 44 members for a total of 72 participants - more than doubling membership. Last year the group organized or participated in about 10 events, Flinchum-Marquez said. Those events include cleaning up the ELC garden, creating a sensory garden within the garden (thanks to member Brooke Ellsworth), sponsored awards and prizes for the Bee Prize Shop (for good behavior), a pop-up shop for the holidays at which students could purchase gifts for family and friends, butterfly kits for classrooms, ELC Field Day and the Pumpkin Patch. “Let’s all give Carolyn and the ELC PTA members a serious round of applause and thank them for their hard work this past year,” Flinchum-Marquez said.

The recognition letter the ELC PTA received from New York State PTA states, “Members from your community have embraced and supported students and teachers within your PTA which is a wonderful achievement.” In addition to Rohde and Flinchum-Marquez, officers for 2021-22 were: Shalina Williams, vice president, Alexandra Ceribelli, treasurer; Eriah Feliz, secretary; Loretta John, corresponding secretary and Tavares Johnson, membership chair.

Congratulations to all of the ELC PTA officers and members. We hope you reach this goal again next year as a new group of students and parents become members of the ELC community.

Reflection and the Re-Distribution of Happiness – A postcard, the potential, our obligation

Recently, the Poughkeepsie City School District received correspondence from Stockton, California addressed to the “Superintendent of Schools” from Lowell Joerg, a senior citizen who recently turned 94 years of age. As a hobby, he calls a “RE-Distribution of Happiness”, Mr. Joerg visits antique shops looking for postcards to send “home”. Mr. Joerg shared how he located “a circa 1933 picture card of your beautiful high school of that era” in a California antique shop, and wanted to send it “home where it can be appreciated.” As I reflect on Mr. Joerg’s hobby of “re-distributing happiness” I am reminded of the commitment, personally witnessed, of Poughkeepsie City School District employees and members of the community in providing quality educational and positive youth development experiences to our children. This commitment is derived from a place of love and desire, two important words that serve as the motivation behind efforts to support our children’s solid academic, social, emotional and wellness foundations, which support quality of life and life-long happiness.

Our obligation to our children and the promise we must uphold in standing steadfast in our commitment to deliver on the democratic principle that an equal and high-quality education is every child’s civil right, must remain paramount in everything we do and stand for. Here in Poughkeepsie we, collectively, have moved the needle forward in strengthening our school district to be an ideal choice for all parents. Our collective work has resulted in demonstrable improvements across the district (see What’s Happening in PCSD: Selected Milestones 2019-2022 pgs. 4 and 5) that are real and contribute to the foundations of success our children require.

Mr. Joerg’s sharing of a 1933 “picture card” of Poughkeepsie High School is an indication that the grandeur of the building and school district was worthy enough to become a postcard. Our work, while hard to depict on a postcard, should be just as timeless. The legacy we collectively create should lead to happiness felt by all students and families Poughkeepsie City School District serves today and those that are to come in the future. Our collaboration and commitment will continue to yield positive outcomes for PCSD children.