

SUPERINTENDENT'S BRIEF

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

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Students become animators during Big Read

Five 8th grade social studies classes became animation studios last week, as teachers Jennifer Burke, Lalana Hunt, Christopher King and Joyette Walton teamed up with The Art Effect and the Poughkeepsie Public Library District to participate in this year's [Big Read](#) media arts residencies revolving around historical non-fiction novel "The Boys in The Boat," this year's Big Read book.

Nearly 130 PMS students participated in a weekly 'book club' during their social studies class, engaging in "The Boys in the Boat" via book chat circles, small group text analysis, and vocab synthesis in preparation for the culminating project of creating digital animations illustrating select passages from the book.

The book focuses on the life of Joe Rantz, a college athlete who would go on to join the 1936 Olympic gold-winning American crew team. The students learned about the trials and tribulations of Joe's life during the Great Depression, his personal triumph as an Olympic champion, and America's triumph as a nation in defeating the German crew team in Adolf Hitler's Nazi Germany. Several key moments in the book take place right here on Poughkeepsie's shoreline of Hudson River. According to Jennifer Burke, PMS social studies department chair, "The Boys in the Boat" was a perfect fit for our 8th grade social studies students. It is historical non-fiction that correlates with the U.S. History curriculum, and provides an opportunity for the students to engage in project based learning."

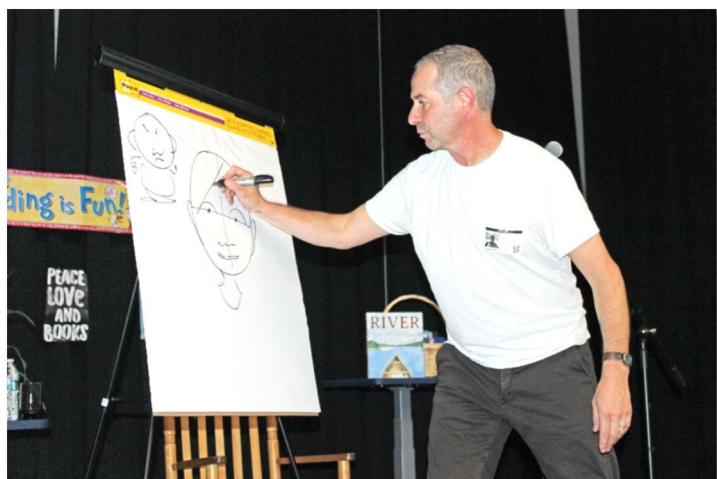
This unit infused STEAM, literacy skills and social studies themes into a culminating project where students created original animated scenes from the book. Over the course of a week, media educators from The Art Effect worked closely with students to develop storyboards, learn digital animation tools, produce and then edit their short animated films. "It's really exciting to see kids who may normally be quiet and shy become active and decisive through the animation process," said David Wong, one of The Art Effect educators leading the residency. "They're making creative decisions around social studies themes and making it come alive."

The project proved especially beneficial for the 30 ENL students in Mr. King and Mrs. Walton's classes, who were actively engaged and immersed in both visual literacy and English language acquisition through the digital animation medium. ENL students were able to create animated images to express their understanding of and thoughts about the novel, in a culturally inspired activity.

"We don't often get to work on a project such as this one that incorporates local and national history, and I feel like the students have gotten a lot out of the experience", said social studies teacher Chris King. The inclusive nature of the project equalized each student's opportunity for success as a true representation of American culture. More information about The Big Read can be found at <https://poklib.org/big-read/> More information about The Art Effect can be found at www.thearteffect.org



Eighth graders at Poughkeepsie Middle School animate selections from, "The Boys in the Boat" as part of the Big Read.



Above, Author Elisha Cooper shows Clinton Elementary School students how he draws his characters during a visit to the school. Below, Cooper speaks to students.



Author visits Clinton Elementary School

Children's author Elisha Cooper visited Clinton Elementary School Nov.3, talking to students about his career and his book, "River." The visit was part of the Poughkeepsie Public Library District's [Big Read](#) celebration.

"River" is about a woman who paddles down the Hudson River in a canoe from the Adirondacks to New York City. Clinton students read the book before Cooper's visit.

"It's a beautiful book," said Suzi Sullivan, a third-grade teacher who arranged Cooper's visit. "The students loved the book. They loved the pictures. We've read it a few times so they're very familiar with it."

Cooper, who played football at Yale University, grew up on a farm with barns, animals and an orchard in Connecticut.

"We had cats, dogs, goats and before school every morning, starting in third or fourth grade, I was milking the goats," he said to the students and staff.

"The reason I'm mentioning that is that it's almost this perfect place to draw because there were all these animals. It was a great place to grow up because I did a lot of drawing."

Cooper always carried a sketchbook with him, even on his trips through the Hudson Valley and

the Adirondacks as he did his research for "River." He visited the mid-Hudson Valley and Henderson Lake in the Adirondacks, which is where the Hudson River starts.

"I realized that there was something about the river that lent itself to the writing of a book," he said. Cooper offered students the opportunity to ask him questions and he sketched some photos for students to show how he draws animals and people.

Dr. David Scott, principal of Clinton Elementary School, was thrilled students had the chance to see Cooper.

"I think it's fantastic because it gives the children the opportunity to read a book," he said before Cooper's arrival. "They've already read the book, so to get the opportunity to meet the person who wrote the book is going to be awesome."

Students celebrate writing with fiction party

Fourth graders at Krieger Elementary School read their own works of fiction during a Realistic Fiction Party on Nov. 2, 2023, to an audience that included Dr. Eric Jay Rosser, superintendent of schools, Principal Carolyn Fields, parents and students. The stories were written as a part of unit of study in Johanna Mejia's and Tara Siudy's classes.

The party was the culminating event to the six week unit during which students studied how to write from their own small moments, specifically focusing on writing styles such as: [Show, Don't Tell](#) and [Flashbacks](#).

Students wrote narratives inspired by their own memories and included descriptive words to ensure they crafted their stories in sequences with the intent of enabling readers to formulate mental images



from what they read.

To assist them in this process, students studied mentor texts such as [Dreamers by Yuyi Morales](#), [Tiger Rising by Kate DiCamillo](#), [Fly Away Home by Eve Bunting](#), and [Fireflies by Julie Brinckloe](#).

During the publishing party students presented their favorite chapter of their published pieces and their favorite writing skill.

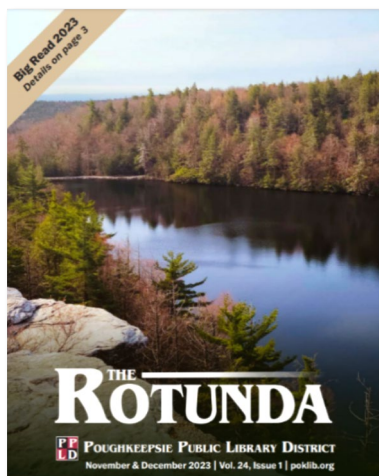
"It was amazing to witness the talent of our fourth grade students at Krieger. Having some formal training in fiction and non-fiction writing, it was heartwarming to learn how our students are exploring writing styles that are essential in crafting compelling and engaging stories. It was also nice to see a few of our Latino students not only craft their stories in Spanish but also read their favorite chapters in Spanish. I commend both Ms. Mejia and Ms. Siudy in engaging their students and providing a platform for them to take pride in reading before their peers and others. This experience will also aid students with developing good public speaking skills," Rosser said.

Both teachers are planning to host a Realistic Non-Fiction Publishing Party in the future.



A student reads a story she wrote at Krieger Elementary School's Realistic Fiction Party.

Library publication lists events for all



The Poughkeepsie Public Library District (PPLD) recently published its November/December 2023 edition of "The Rotunda," a bimonthly publication offering descriptions and dates of programs and services accessible to the community that promote lifelong learning, literacy and reading.

The content of the latest edition highlights [Big Read 2023](#), a National Endowment for the Arts and Arts Midwest program. Big Read is designed to broaden everyone's understanding of our world, our communities, and ourselves through the joy of sharing a good book. The National Endowment for the Arts provides a list of titles from which communities across the country choose their annual Big Read book selection. In Poughkeepsie a series of books that focus on the Hudson River have been selected (To see the brochure of the selected books click [here](#)).

This issue of "The Rotunda" also has a Public Relations Survey that seeks public input on the Library District's materials. The brief 11-question survey ends with asking survey responders to share information about how they

receive information from the PPLD and engagement with the PPLD.

The Rotunda also provides a number of high-quality events and programs in the following broad areas:

- Library Life.
- Books, Writing, & More.
- Arts & Entertainment.
- History and Current Events.
- Wellness & Environment.
- Connecting (social events).
- Festive Fun.
- Indoor Activities.
- Public Computer Center.
- Programs in Spanish.
- Dia de Muertos.
- Teen Programming.
- Teen Volunteer Opportunities (Community Service Credit).
- Early Childhood.
- Seasonal Shenanigans.
- Children.

The Poughkeepsie City School District greatly values the PPLD and its role in Poughkeepsie in offering the community diverse services and programs resulting in an informed and educated public. Both organizations have collaborated to promote literacy and reading among pre-K- 12th grade students. Rover, the PPLD mobile library is frequently at PCSD Community School events and through an invaluable partnership, PCSD students and teachers have access to PPLD's Sora digital library platform. To access the latest copy of the Rotunda click [here](#).