



## Students excited about voice in district

I had the opportunity and pleasure to meet with some of our Poughkeepsie High School students last week for the final Superintendent's Student Advisory Panel of the 2020-21 school year. We met once virtually with each grade level throughout the year.

This final session was done in-person in the recently refreshed PHS courtyard. Joining me were student representatives from each grade level - Erick Vasquez-Maldonado, Evelyn Hunter, Harrison Brisbon-McKinnon, Gabrihana Jones and Corey Martin - along with school and central office leadership.

Students expressed excitement about some of the changes that are happening in the district, including their involvement in the process.

"I'm excited about all the change that's coming to PHS, but mostly about the diversity and culture that's being introduced into the school," senior Erick Vasquez-Maldonado said. "I love that they are including us now and not later. It's important that our voice is heard." Gabrihana Jones, a sophomore, said she was excited about the "new renovations to the school building. I am more excited to be a part of the facilitating change in the school," she said. "It's been great having my voice heard and accepted while also understanding the process it takes to accomplish all my peers and I have asked for."

During the meeting, Principal Royce-Giron outlined plans for the 2021-22 school year including:

- Creating an Equity Advisory Council
- Weekly advisory sessions
- New courses and pathways to success
- Opening of the PHS Dance Studio and Art Effect lab
- Opening of the PHS Pride School Store
- Opening of the PHS Pride Student Lounge

While great progress is being made to improve student school experience, there is still more work to be done and myself and other administrators will continue to meet with students to hear their concerns and work with them to address them if possible.

Two things students told us in feedback after the meeting that they wished we had discussed this year included life skills students need and school time schedule issues. We will consider these issues in the coming year.

## Communications seek to strengthen partnerships

The Poughkeepsie City School District has made significant strides in improving its communication with its essential partners - PCSD parents/caregivers and community based organizations. Once labeled as a district that lacked inconsistent and ineffective communication structures, the Poughkeepsie City School



Above, Superintendent Dr. Eric Jay Rosser speaks to the Superintendent's Student Advisory Panel in the PHS courtyard on Thursday, June 10, 2021. At right, student Harrison Brisbon-McKinnon speaks as classmates Erick Vasquez-Maldonado and Gabrihana Jones listen.





District continues to improve its communication to strengthen partnerships that will have the greatest impact on student achievement. Below are areas that the district made changes to:

## District and School Websites

As repositories of information that speak when district staff are not available, the district and school websites are instrumental in providing families and community members with useful and important information about the school district. Initiated last year, updates to district and school websites continue to occur with the goal of improving functionality for district staff, community stakeholder, current and future parents of the school district. Phase I, which included a total revamp of both district and school websites, resulted in greater functionality. Phase II will include greater access to information, specifically the district's monolingual parents, streamlined accessibility points, and additional functionality to all users. Phase II updates will be made this summer.

## Parent/Caregiver Communication

**School Messenger/Class Dojo and other school communication platforms** – For the past several years the Poughkeepsie City School District has used multiple



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communication platforms to share important information with its families. Given the challenges associated with the use of multiple platforms, PCSD will be transitioning to a single platform – [Parent Square](#) - where families will be receive district alerts, and school and classroom messages for the 2021-22 academic year. To

learn more about this exciting new platform click [here](#).



**Fireside Chats** - Initiated as an opportunity for parents/caregivers and community members to share and receive valuable district and school related information, Fireside Chats were instituted to create a two-way communication channel with the district's most essential partners. The Fireside Chats will continue into the 21-22 academic year.

**Monthly Superintendent Updates** - Given the evolving nature of COVID-19 guidance and the decision making that resulted in changes in guidance, Dr. Rosser established monthly communication to parents and caregivers

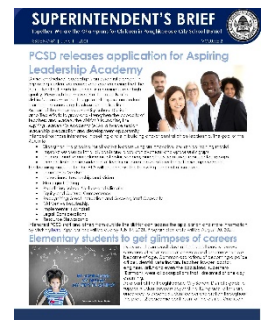
to keep them informed. The monthly superintendent updates were also used for Dr. Rosser to share with parents and caregivers additional information related to district supports and operations, community resources, important dates, and encouraging messages and words. Monthly Superintendent Updates will continue into the 21-22 academic year.

**Family Guides** – Keeping parents and caregivers informed of the safety and instructional protocols that the Poughkeepsie City School District were implementing as a part of the [remote learning model](#) and the [hybrid learning model](#) was paramount in ensuring that the safety and welfare of students and staff, while providing a high quality instructional experience. Each family guide was uniquely crafted to provide families with an easy read to understand what all parties would be expected to do to achieve the above stated goal. Family Guides can be found [here](#).

**Surveys** – While the district recognizes that surveys are not the preferred way to capture parent and caregiver voice, it is an effective way to collect parent feedback over a period of time. This year, surveys were created seeking parent feedback on topics ranging from family instructional device needs to preferences to summer programming.

## School and Community Communication

**Superintendent's Brief** - What has proven to be an effective strategy to communicate with school and community stakeholders, the semiweekly publication of the Superintendent's Brief provides great opportunity for stakeholders to learn about what is occurring throughout the District. The [Superintendent's Brief](#) serves as an informative medium to highlight the great things occurring throughout PCSD and also share status of various district-wide turnaround efforts. This year the district anticipates publishing more than 84 Superintendent's Briefs and will transition into year three of the administration in doing so.



**Social Media** – Adapting to the change in how people access information, the Poughkeepsie City School District established and activated social media accounts as a way to communicate with its schools' stakeholders. The district maintains accounts on [Facebook](#), [Instagram](#) and [Twitter](#). Click onto the links to follow the district to stay in tuned with important information and notifications.

**Community Partner Meetings** – As a strategy to increase the collective impact of school and community based organizations, the Poughkeepsie City School District hosted its first Community Partner Meeting. Designed to increase communication, alignment, and the provision of resources, with school district and community based organizations, these meetings will continue into the 21-22 academic year.

## PEC helps forge community ties; receives praise

An orientation to familiarize families who don't speak English with Poughkeepsie City School District's Parent Empowerment Center's services and help them register their children for school, turned into much more than that Monday.

The session turned emotional as mothers shared their stories: One fled from her home country, seeking to avoid the abusive father of her child only to be kidnapped and robbed of her money, another struggled with providing for basic needs during off months at the apple field she works at. Most struggled with childcare and navigating a system designed for those who speak English.



(L-R) Poughkeepsie Journal photographer Patrick Oehler and reporter Katelyn Cordero speak with Citaly Cruz Pacheco; her mother, Karina; brother, Christian; Mark Virgilio Abreau and his mother, Nilfa, during a Parent Empowerment Center orientation.

The message from Interim Executive Director of Community Schools Natasha Cherry, Bilingual Family Advocate Lorraine Boughton, and Family Advocate Christina Peterson to the four families who were able to make the session was, "We're here to help." Cherry told the group that the Parent Empowerment Center is designed to support parents and caregivers as we partner to provide students with the supports they require to find success. The PEC has links with outside resources to help with housing, childcare, legal matters, food, health and clothing.

Poughkeepsie Journal

reporter Katelyn Cordero and photographer Patrick Oehler were invited to learn more about the PEC, and their questions prompted the group to share their stories, bond, and offer support, where previously some of them had experienced nothing but ridicule and rejection from their own communities.

Some stories brought tears to participants' eyes, as one woman related that while fleeing from an abusive situation, she was kidnapped and had all her money and papers taken so she could not legally get a job here to support herself and her daughter.

As each story unfolded, the women - from different countries - found commonality and decided they would like to meet and help each other and others. Peterson suggested something like a support group and all the women indicated they would be interested in participating.

"This is your space," Cherry told them, explaining that in addition to the services provided through the district and its partners, the space was available for them to use for meetings, relax in, meet with family advocates and educate themselves.

One woman, Nilfa Abreu, said she wanted to become a private investigator/detective.

Cherry told her, "We can help."

Parent Karina Cruz said she appreciates the fact that the PEC offers help with childcare and other resources. "I want to take advantage of this and also be part of the community," Cruz said, adding that she would also be interested in the parent coordinator positions Cherry mentioned would be available next year to have parents in the schools helping.

All of the families thanked Cherry and her team for establishing the center and providing its services.

Velveth Barilla became emotional as the session ended, "Being here is a blessing. I've seen more support here with (Lorraine Boughton) helping me register my child and having people support me," she said.

## Sports Banquet honors PCSD student-athletes

Despite numerous obstacles due to COVID restrictions, there were many reasons to celebrate the success of Poughkeepsie City School District student-athletes with an end-of-year outdoor celebration. So of the highlights of the event included but were not limited to:

- PHS varsity boys' basketball team winning the Dutchess County championship
- The boys and girls bowling team being recipients of the NYSPHSAA scholar-athlete team award
- For the first time in recent years, the varsity football team qualified for a playoff spot
- PHS varsity girls' softball team having a winning season and winning their regular-season league championship
- The varsity baseball team having a winning season, and placing #3 in the post-season playoff
- PHS cheer team competed in various competitions and was among the best large school squads in the region
- The outdoor track team had individuals who qualified for the Section I meet
- The varsity girls swimming team had its best season in recent memory



Student-athletes enjoy some social time during the Thursday, June 10,

All Pioneers, current and alumni, wish for the continued success of our teams during the 2021-2022 school year, which is slated to resume schedules as they were prior to the COVID-19 pandemic. Under the leadership of each coach and Mr. Gregory Russo, director of physical education, health services, recreation and athletics, a complete program is planned for our student-athletes that will build on this year's success. Congratulations to PHS student-athletes, and good luck to our seniors in the next stage of their lives.

### Varsity Scholar Athletic Award Winners

**Varsity Girls Basketball:** Amira Ibrahim, 10<sup>th</sup>; Abiba Na-aata, 11<sup>th</sup>

**Varsity Cheerleading:** Patrena Campbell, 11<sup>th</sup>; Gabriel Anderson, 9<sup>th</sup>; Autumn Bland, 9<sup>th</sup>

**Varsity Girls Swimming:** Dulce Castellanos, 12<sup>th</sup>; Rose Celaya Ruiz, 11<sup>th</sup>; Rosalie Pillsbury, 11<sup>th</sup>; Grace Clifford, 10<sup>th</sup>; Gianelli Luis-Ruiz, 11<sup>th</sup>; Cindy Ibarra-Gutierrez, 10<sup>th</sup>

**Varsity Girls Volleyball:** Micvick Tangunu, Mia Miller, Tyonna Morgan and Ines Matias, all seniors.

### Coach awards

**Coach of the Year:** Lynnece Edmond, Varsity Cheerleading

**First Varsity Win:** Dylan Tully, Varsity Baseball

**First Varsity Win:** Thomas Murphy, Varsity Softball