

SUPERINTENDENT'S BRIEF

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

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Congratulations PHS Class of 2022!



[See more Graduation photos bit.ly/phsclass2022!](https://bit.ly/phsclass2022)

At left, members of the PHS Class of 2022 toss their caps in the air to celebrate graduation. Top, the graduation cake before it was devoured.

Seniors darted about Poughkeepsie High School's gym, grabbing selfies, posing for photos, talking to teachers and smiling. A lot of smiling. It was June 25, 2022 - the Class of 2022's graduation day and they were excited.

All students overcame the challenges presented by the COVID-19 pandemic. Some overcame personal challenges, others felt the impact of changes happening throughout the nation.

But, as speaker after speaker enunciated from the stage later that evening, all 184 graduates persevered and made it!

"Graduating high school is a significant milestone for everyone, but when you go through, as we did, times of COVID, it is even a greater victory! In many ways, our high school journey has been an uphill battle. Despite the challenges, the graduates before you this evening have climbed that hill and are beginning to step into their essence," Harrison Brisbon-McKinnon, the National Honor Society president and liaison to the Board of Education, said welcoming everyone to the ceremony.

"Today means the start of a new chapter in life," said Nas Wilson who is entering the Marines. "At the start of the year I was doing badly, but I got the hang of it and now I'm here," said the National Honor Society member and Honor graduate - one of 38 total who, over seven semesters at PHS, had an average GPA of 90.

Karla Zarate moved here from Mexico just before the pandemic began and struggled to get her documentation processed. But, that didn't matter.

"Students who are willing to put themselves through will. If they can do it, they will - it doesn't matter how they did it because they did it," said Zarate, who at 19, worked very hard to earn her Honor Graduate recognition. She received a full scholarship to Bard College where she'll be studying psychology and biology.

Board President Dr. Felicia Watson praised Principal Kelleyann Royce-Giron for her work with the class.

"When it comes to positive youth development, you can't find someone more positive than this principal here," Watson said, before turning her attention to the students.

"You persevered, and you graduated. Make some noise up in here!," she shouted.

Watson left students with three pieces of advice: Be positive, be a lover of learning and be kind, loving, caring and good-hearted.

The next generation

Salutatorian Constance Pillsbury spoke about character, saying that without clubs or sports, “we wouldn’t be the people we are. Character plays an influential role in how we speak, act, and think. Character is the catalyst that creates the foundation upon which discipline is built.” She told classmates “Everyone has a unique path in life, and it is their responsibility to find the path that will lead them to great success and most importantly happiness.” Valedictorian Elijah Johnson encouraged classmates to not forget about their moments together.

“I’m sure we’ve all heard something along the lines of ‘in 10 years or so, you’ll forget your classmates...’ Why should we perpetuate this? Why should you forget those you care about in 10 years?,” he said. “Our job as a society, the next generation, is to break generational curses. The ideologies of the past that tell us to forget - to move on and forget - should not hinder our story.”

In her comments, Stacey Bottoms, assistant to Mayor Rob Rolison, told the class, “We need the next generation of leadership to rise up and help us find solutions to the problems, you are those leaders! You will make the difference needed in the City of Poughkeepsie.”

Superintendent Dr. Eric Jay Rosser urged the class to “Share your experiences to help future classes of Poughkeepsie High School” and wished them all “success, the opportunity to experience love of life, purpose, family and friends, the strength to never give up and prosperity in all you strive for.”

Make an impact

PHS Class of 2005 graduate L’Quette Taylor knows about overcoming adversity and shared his story with students during the keynote address. The successful architect and founder of Community Matters 2 spoke about partying, getting arrested, spending time in jail and losing custody of his son before he changed his life.

“I started working, went to school at night. I had to work harder, learn new things and surround myself with different people,” he said.

Taylor peppered his story with advice for students:

- Go hard at everything. He encouraged students to call the teachers who have told them to call.
- Your story, your journey will be an inspiration to other people.
- Believe in you, don’t wait for someone else to believe in you.
- Stay humble, listen.
- When you work toward a goal, put a date on the wall. You don’t win until you get there.
- It’s OK to fail, learn from your failures, just don’t ever stop.

Taylor spoke to parents, too, telling them, “Parents, stick with your kids. You have to be involved.”

When it was her turn to speak, Principal Royce-Giron said she had a difficult time getting the words down on paper. “If I could only open my heart - you would see what I want to say. I will start by simply saying - you are amazing. I love you.”

Royce-Giron praised the class for meeting the challenges of the past 2 ½ years with “so much courage, so much strength - the Pioneer way. She touted the many students recognized at Student Success Celebrations, the accomplishments of the sports teams, debate team, the musicians, dancers and artists and encouraged the class to “Talk about it,” one of her favorite sayings. “You better talk about it. I want people to talk about you,” she said.

Graduate JaShawn Hamilton called the day, “the end of a long journey. A lot of people didn’t think I’d

make it. It took a lot of hard work and dedication, but I’m happy I made it.” Hamilton is headed for Siena College to study nursing.

At left, some of the decorated graduation caps on display during the June 25, 2022 ceremony.



Harrison Brisbon-McKinnon dashes over to congratulate Valedictorian Elijah Johnson.





PCSD administrators in training Tuesday, June 28, 2022.

Retreat starts off summer

This week Poughkeepsie City School District administrators kicked off their Summer Retreat schedule as part of the annual professional development administrators receive. Two days in June and two days of professional development in August are slated for professional learning and planning for the 22-23 academic year. Yesterday and today, PCSD administrators engaged in Infinite Campus Reporting training, student suspension data review, school building and district finance training,

school staff 22-23 professional development planning, and learning what the administrative Summer 2022 expectations are.

In August, the professional learning will continue, focusing on instructional design, English as a New Language support, culturally responsive education and Dignity for All Students Act reporting.

District upgrades security system

When summer school begins at Poughkeepsie High School, students and staff will be greeted by a new security scanner. The EVOLV scanner is only one element of security upgrades being made throughout the district, beginning this spring and continuing through the summer and beyond, Da'Ron Wilson, executive director of student engagement, said.

Day Automation installed the new system June 22 and staff began training on it last week with sessions continuing this week. PHS and Poughkeepsie Middle School also each have six new high-definition video cameras and workers are in the process of installing the lockdown system.

Within the next few weeks, all district buildings will be getting new external cameras as well, Wilson said.

"The district saw the need and pursued getting the system installed and in place for summer use so we can see how it works in preparation for the transition next year," Wilson said, adding that the district also pushed to get some additional cameras installed for safety purposes immediately.

The security upgrades are being paid for through budgeted money, district savings and grant money so there is no additional cost to the community.



The new EVOLV security scanner at Poughkeepsie High School.

Phee Simpson scheduled to be reinstated as PHS principal

On June 15, Poughkeepsie City School District released information about a State of New York Appellate Division Second Judicial Department ruling involving Phee Simpson. The Appellate Division ruling reversed the judgment of a lower court and hearing officer in the disciplinary matter of Phee Simpson requiring that the Poughkeepsie City School District reinstate the employment of Dr. Simpson.

After an extensive legal review of the determination by the district's law firm, it has been established that the ruling does not provide the district the authority and/or autonomy to deviate from reinstating Dr. Simpson as the executive principal of Poughkeepsie High School (PHS).

Therefore at the July 1, 2022 Board of Education meeting, the Board of Education will comply with the ruling of the Appellate Division and take action to reinstate Dr. Simpson as executive principal of PHS.

One major implication of the court's determination in the reinstatement of Dr. Simpson as executive principal is the displacement of current PHS principal Kelleyann Royce-Giron. Given the value-added and unmatched commitment that Ms. Royce-Giron brings to positive youth development to PCSD students, the district is currently in conversation with Ms. Royce-Giron on how she will continue to support PCSD youth. Over the course of the summer, district leadership will be working closely with Dr. Simpson to prepare for a smooth and successful opening of school in September, guaranteeing that the progress achieved under the District's transformation efforts continue to elevate student success.