



## Fellowships help grow Community Schools



**Julia Kisilinsky (left) and Lauren Leiker, both Lead for Poughkeepsie Fellows, listen during a meeting with Superintendent Dr. Eric Jay Rosser and Executive Director of Community Schools Natasha Cherry.**

There are two new faces supporting the collaborative work of Community Schools and Poughkeepsie Children's Cabinet. Lauren Leiker and Julia Kisilinsky joined the district this year as Lead for Poughkeepsie fellows. Lead for Poughkeepsie is a branch of a larger [Lead for America](#) initiative, which is committed to building strong communities through service and bringing people together across lines of difference. Both fellows will work with Executive Director of Community Schools Natasha Cherry and the Executive Director of Strategic Planning, Partnerships, and Resource

Stewardship on projects they created as part of their fellowship. Kisilinsky is creating a family needs assessment that will help guide programming and services offered through the department while Leiker is working on expanding the community schools program in the district.

Though both attended college locally (Leiker at Vassar and Kisilinsky at Marist) they didn't meet until the Lead for America two-week training in Washington, D.C. The program's goal is to recruit, train and place young leaders in the City of Poughkeepsie. Fellows are AmeriCorps members and receive two weeks of training in Washington, D.C., a \$30,000 stipend and a \$6,500 scholarship for graduate school and student loans.

Leiker, an urban studies major with a minor in education and sociology had done case studies looking at equity-related matters in Poughkeepsie. Kisilinsky studied English and Film/TV but listed the school district as her top choice because she worked with children as a camp counselor for three years.

Once selected, the two conducted a listening tour throughout the community to form a proposal for their projects.

"I'm excited to have the ability to work on practical and tangible solutions to inequality our students face - from food insecurity to housing insecurity and poverty," Leiker said, adding that her work will also involve the Poughkeepsie Children's Cabinet, co-chaired by Superintendent Dr. Eric Jay Rosser and Mayor Rob Rolison.

Kisilinsky is looking forward to meeting new people and getting to know them on a personal level. As part of her work, she'll be planning events and developing a catalog that outlines all the resources available to Poughkeepsie City School District families.

"I welcome the perspectives and help Lauren and Julia bring to the district as Lead for Poughkeepsie fellows. They have jumped right into the work and have already shown a commitment to making an impact on the lives of our families," Cherry said.

## Back to School Bash starts school

It's a celebration and all Poughkeepsie City School District families are invited! That's the word from Executive Director of Community Schools Natasha Cherry about the first Back to School Bash scheduled for Sept. 10 at Poughkeepsie High School's Track and Field from noon to 3 p.m. Attendees will enjoy free food, bounce houses, games, music and receive free school supplies. Plus, they'll be able to browse the many community resource tables to learn about all of the programs and supports available to district students and families through Community Schools.

"We wanted to start the school year the same way as we finished last school year at May's Family Festival and build on the momentum," Cherry said.

Aside from having a good time, Cherry wants families to bond, meet members of the district and access the many resources available to parents and caregivers.

"We want to engage with our parents and provide information on positive youth development opportunities offered by the district and our community-based partners," she said.

Parents/caregivers will have an opportunity to enroll children in the district's Saturday Morning Lights academic and enrichment program which is scheduled to begin Oct. 1 and also sign up for the PTA organization representing their school.



**Aspiring Leadership Academy participants Dr. Shannon Considine, Christine Pizer and Pam Knittel work on an exercise.**

## Staff members explore leadership

School hasn't started but the next generation of Poughkeepsie School District leaders are already working on ways to help improve the district as part of the 2022-23 Aspiring Leaders Academy.

The kickoff session held this week focused on what it means to be a leader and the difference between leading and managing. Participants also spent time reflecting on themselves, their personalities and leadership styles to discuss what kind of leader one would want to be, Director of Secondary Education Mariya Pushkantser said.

Members will identify a Capstone project they'll work on throughout the year. The first option is to identify a challenge or problem and

then collect data, conduct research and try out a solution to it. A second option is to create and conduct a professional development workshop.

Last year's program yielded this year's debut of a dual language program for pre-K and kindergarten students. This year's class includes:

- Andrea Boccio, Krieger fifth grade teacher
- Dr. Shannon Considine, PHS science department chair/teacher
- Andrew French, PHS algebra teacher
- Andrea French, Krieger life skills teacher (formerly special Education at PHS)
- Jennifer Howard, Morse first grade teacher
- Pam Knittel, PHS English as a New Language teacher
- Christine Pizer, PHS environmental science teacher
- Simone Stewart, Krieger fourth grade teacher

"I'm happy that PCSD is offering this opportunity to our educators, many of which who have expressed an interest in working in administration to support the upward trajectory of the district. I've personally witnessed the talents of many of those that are enrolled in the Academy. I am highly supportive of their journey to administration to support greater numbers of children," Superintendent Dr. Eric Jay Rosser said.

## Upcoming events

**Tuesday, Sept. 6,** Faculty and staff report back

**Wednesday, Sept. 7, BOE meeting,** Administration Building, 18 S. Perry St., 6:30 p.m.

**Thursday, Sept. 8:** School resumes

**Saturday, Sept. 10:** Back to School Bash, PHS Track and Field, 70 Forbus St., 12-3 p.m.