

SUPERINTENDENT'S BRIEF

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

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Over the course of the day, more than a thousand people attended the Sept. 10 Back to School Bash.



Children and adults dance in front of the DJ booth at the Back to School Bash.

[SEE MORE Back to School Bash photos online](#)

Back to School Bash brings families out

Poughkeepsie's "Back-to-School Bash" on Sept. 10, 2022 brought families, staff, and community together for a day of fun in the sun, as a way to welcome all to the 2022-2023 school year! With numbers of attendees in the hundreds, more than 800 school-age children received packs of school supplies to start the year ready for learning!

Natasha Cherry, the Executive Director of Community Schools, and the Community Schools staff, district and building leaders, and many school staff members turned out with the families and students to enjoy an afternoon of multicultural activities including music

and dance, and an end of summer barbecue for the school community. A bounce house and other activities assured that even the youngest community members were having fun. Bilingual staff helped Spanish-speaking families fully engage in the festivities.

Partner organizations and other friends of the district joined in the celebration. Many of them joined parents and visited information booths and kiosks about healthcare and many community resources, all geared to support Poughkeepsie's children.

Superintendent Dr. Eric Jay Rosser attended the event, speaking with members of the community and staff as well as trying out the step-on piano mat set up at one of the district's booths.

The event was an

extraordinarily warm welcome and invitation of engagement for the families of the district as a start to the 2022-2023 school year. Themes of good health, good vibes and joy of learning carried the event, setting up our students and schools for a great year of learning.

Cherry shared that this event was another step in supporting our children and families with what they need to succeed. In addition to providing school supplies, we brought in the new school year with our whole school community through celebration and optimism for the year ahead.

"It is important that we kick off the school year with fun and excitement to encourage engagement with our staff and community partners, who work throughout the year to provide a high-quality educational program to all of our students," Rosser said, adding that since students spend nearly 80 percent of their time outside of school, it is what happens during that time that has the largest impact on students' lives.



Assistant Superintendent for Elementary Education Greg Mott, Executive Director of Community Schools Natasha Cherry and PHS teacher Kimberly Popken stop for a photo.



District welcomes new administrators for 2022-23

This year the district welcomed several new administrators to critical positions that will help further advance the transformation efforts of the district. Some of new administrators are new to the district and others are assuming leadership roles in buildings they were not in last year.

Warring Elementary School



Principal Nicole Penn

Warring Elementary School's new principal, Nicole Penn, should be a familiar face to many students and parents as she was the assistant principal prior to taking on her new role.

"When I came to Warring last year as the assistant principal, I was humbled by the warm reception I received by the Warring family," she said, adding that she enjoyed being part of the existing initiatives and starting some new ones. "When the ability arose to become the principal of Warring Elementary School, I was immediately interested in leading the continued growth."

Penn's goal is to "improve the academic aptitude of every student" as "education gives my students the ability to visualize multitudes of options for their future." To do this, she plans to increase collaboration with all community stakeholders.

"I would like for families and community members to realize the joint responsibility that we all have for the education of our children."

Going into her 26th year in education, Penn has spent more than half of it in Poughkeepsie - the last nine as an administrator.

In her off time, she enjoys spending time with her family - including her husband of more than 20 years and her four children - and sitting outside reading a good book.

Assistant Principal Yolanda Wright

"I joined this school community as it closely aligns with my beliefs as an educator and leader," said Morse's new assistant principal, Yolanda Wright. "I like to develop passionate, lifelong learners and take great pride in developing and sustaining a positive school culture."

Wright comes to the role after spending 19 years in the education field, most recently as an assistant principal in another district. She began as a third grade teacher, then became a data specialist while teaching literacy, math and social studies to K-5 students and then became a kindergarten teacher. At that time, she also decided to pursue her dream of becoming a school administrator.



"The diversity and sense of community and passion that is truly transparent has drawn me to become assistant principal at Warring."

Her goal for the first year is to "develop a trusting and supportive relationship with staff, students, families and members of the school community," she said, adding, "I want to make a huge impact on everyone I serve within the school community."

Wright is the mother of three children, ages 9, 14 and 16 and said she "married her best friend" and enjoys spending quality time with him and their children listening to music, engaging in discussion, barbecuing and attending sports events together. Wright has a pet bearded dragon and is drawn to the outdoors and a good book.

Morse Elementary School

Assistant Principal David Feliciano

Morse Elementary School's new assistant principal, David Feliciano, comes from a family of educators and is eager to work with students and parents.

Feliciano has been in education since 2008, where he was a dual language teacher in New York City. He has also taught math and science in grades 3-5.



"I want to continue building on the great work that is already taking place at Morse. I am excited to work alongside our staff and Principal Mitchell as we build relationships and trust in the work we have taken on," he said, adding, "The intended outcome is to faithfully and consistently work to provide each and every one of our students with a high-quality learning experience."

In 2010, Feliciano became part of his school's leadership team. The team's goal was to write the school's Comprehensive Education Plan, which sets the goals for the school year. Soon after, he became a dean.

Feliciano said he sought this position because "This opportunity allows me to impact a greater number of students through collaboration with our school teachers."

When he's not at Morse, Feliciano enjoys spending time with his three boys and wife, Jessica.

Poughkeepsie Middle School

Principal Kelleyann Royce-Giron

Kelleyann Royce-Giron takes over leadership at Poughkeepsie Middle School, knowing what her students will need as they prepare to advance to Poughkeepsie High School. A 1990 graduate of Poughkeepsie High School, Royce-Giron returned to the district as PHS principal in 2020 where she worked to establish a rapport with students and an atmosphere of respect. She also worked with students who presented a program on equity to district staff. Later in the year, one of those students, Amya West was selected by Dutchess BOCES to join a presentation to the Board of Regents on the subject. Royce-Giron has 22 years of experience as an educator.



Poughkeepsie High School

Principal Phee Simpson



Phee Simpson returns to lead Poughkeepsie High School with the goal of ensuring all scholars receive a world-class education to be college and career ready. An educator for more than 21 years, Simpson began her career in education as a guidance counselor moving to assistant principal and then to principal of alternative, middle and high schools. She has been an administrator for 12 years. Outside of school, Simpson enjoys spending time with family and traveling.

Assistant Principal, Climate and Culture, Barrington Atkins

Barrington Atkins remembers being a student in the Poughkeepsie City School District and wanted to come back home to the community he loves.

"I believe that my experience is unique because, in addition to utilizing the leadership skills necessary for this role in administration, I can also use the skill set I have developed as a social worker, which amplifies the tools that I have available."

In this newly created position, Atkins is charged with helping to develop and implement programs to meet the needs of at-risk students and assist with disciplinary and/or restorative practices.

"It is essential to realize that climate and culture constitute the pulse of the building. ...If the climate and culture are not at equilibrium, nothing in the building will function appropriately," he said.

Atkins has been in education for about five years, starting as a substitute teacher, moving into a school social worker role and then a college professor.

After work is done, Atkins enjoys spending time with his family, traveling and biking.



Assistant Food Service Director Craig Elliott



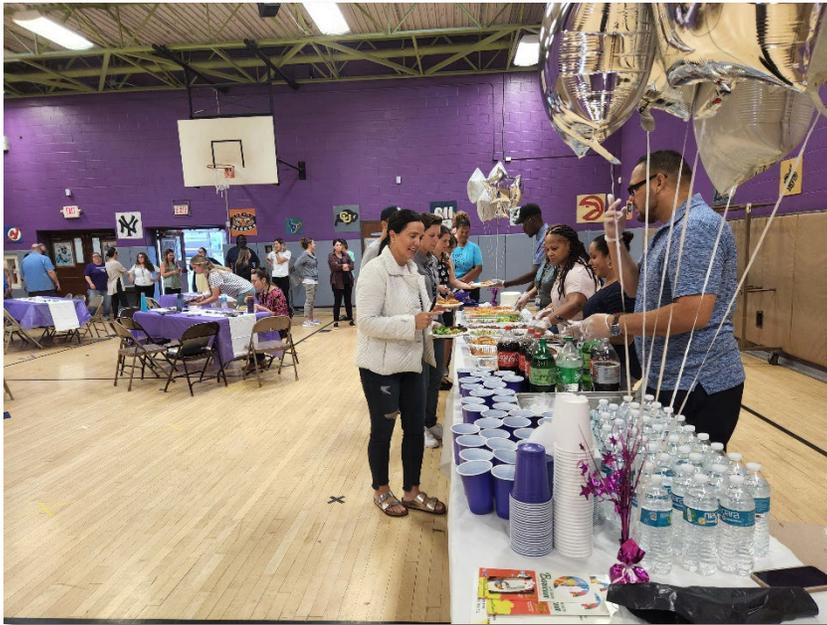
A Culinary Institute of America graduate, Craig Elliott brings 17 years of experience as the executive chef of SUNY New Paltz's dining system to his new role.

"This is something I've always wanted to do," he said, explaining that he wants to teach students before college how to put a meal together and eat better.

Elliott said he is also excited about implementing some new dishes this year at the elementary schools based on training the staff participated in.



This year he plans to add back the popular french fries but also kick it up a notch by adding fresh fruits and vegetables and exploring getting the food vending machines back up and running.



Warring staff line up to get food from a buffet line on the first day of school.

Warring staff treated to first day lunch

Warring Elementary staff started the year off on a positive note, with soft music, a relaxing and friendly ambiance and delicious food!

When Pastor Cat of Hope Church discovered the news from one of his parishioners (who prefers to work behind the scene) that Warring Elementary School was under a new administration, he generously offered to join forces with Ms. Nicole Penn, Warring principal to provide the entire staff with a delectable luncheon. The staff brought dishes such as beef, cheese & chicken empanadas, chicken chunks, rice and peas, roasted brussel sprouts, and salad (catered by Mi Sazon Boricua), while Principal Penn ensured there

were options for non-meat eaters and vegetarians alike such as penne al a vodka and baked ziti, by way of Rossi's Deli.

The goal of the luncheon was to begin the school year with the message that we are truly a family. We work hard together, change the lives of children together and break bread together as well.

"What better way to do that, then to serve our entire staff- from the clerical and teaching staff to the kitchen and custodial staff, just as they serve our students and families all year long. Even our resident Cocoa with a Cop volunteer joined us for our Family Meal!"

Pioneers open season at home

The Poughkeepsie High School Varsity Football team opened its season at home against Ramapo this past Saturday at the Poughkeepsie High School Athletic Complex. Hundreds of spectators gathered to see the PHS Pioneers compete.

The Varsity Cheerleading squad, led by PHS teacher Lynnece Edmond, were on hand cheering on the varsity football team and getting the crowd excited.

While the competition ended with the Pioneers losing 26 to 0, spectators including Board of Education members, Dr. Eric Jay Rosser, superintendent of schools, Dr. Charles Gallo, assistant superintendent of secondary education, Mr. Gregory Mott, assistant superintendent of elementary education, Dr. Phee Simpson, PHS principal and many Poughkeepsie City School District employees enjoyed the event.

The team's next competition will be Friday, Sept. 16th at 6 p.m. against Walter Panas at Walter Panas High School, located at 300 Croton Avenue, Cortlandt Manor, NY 10567. View the complete [athletic schedule here](#). You can also follow PHS sports through social media. Peter Bianco, executive director of physical education, health services, athletics and recreation, recently announced the creation of Pioneers Athletics social media accounts on Instagram ([@PCSDpioneersports](#)) and on Twitter ([@PioneersPCSD](#)).



The PHS Pioneer football team opened its season at home against Ramapo.

[SEE MORE Football photos online](#)