

SUPERINTENDENT'S BRIEF

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

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Dual language program launches at ELC

Students in the inaugural year of the district dual language program enter classrooms where many objects and posters are labeled in blue and green. The English appears in blue while the Spanish is in green, a theme that is consistent in the pre-K classroom downstairs and the kindergarten class upstairs.

Since the program is new, students and teachers are learning as they go and there are learning opportunities everywhere.

At one point in the kindergarten class, a student complained that he asked a classmate to stop doing something, but the student didn't seem to listen.

"He knows a lot of words in Spanish, we could try saying it in Spanish," teacher Kristina Parker, the Spanish teacher in the class said, then said, "Para!" emphatically, and had the class repeat it, explaining that para means stop."

Parker's teaching partner, English teacher Maribeth Smith, said the two are still working on helping the children adapt to the rituals and routines of school - how to come in on a line, how to transition to other activities, what the chimes mean and how to ask questions. "Both languages are used all day long," she said.

English teacher Joy Marino and Spanish teacher Marsha Cotten teach the pre-K dual language class, with Cotten joining the district specifically for this opportunity.

"I am so appreciative to be here and that this is happening because it is so needed in our community," she said. "This gives students an opportunity to be bilingual and bicultural and says, 'you belong here and who you are matters.'"



English teacher Joy Marino (at calendar) and Spanish teacher Marsha Cotten teach students the month of September in English and Spanish.



Spanish teacher Kristina Parker (left) points to a student wearing blue while English teacher Maribeth Smith points out a student's blue jeans.

By design, the program mixes speakers of the languages in equal proportion to help aid in absorption of the language and culture. "It is planned integration because we wanted to make sure that they learn and interact with each other," Parker said.

Eventually, the classes will move to teach English on one day and Spanish on another and alternate, but students will still be able to use their first language.

The goal is to move from alternating days to two days of one and three of the other so that by June the classes can do one week of a language before switching to the other language.

"We won't shut down children using their native language. We're building a community where children will learn how to respect each other's culture and language," Smith said.

The English curriculum is McGraw Hill's "Wonders" or "Maravillas" while the skills part is "Foundations" for English and "Estrellitas," which translates as Little Stars in Spanish. "We're very excited," Cotten said, explaining that she and Marino are sharing ideas and making changes to "do the best we can for the children and the program's success." ENL Coordinator Tracey Bleau said the four teachers in the program will begin meeting together and working collaboratively next week and said that response from parents has been positive. The program is near capacity with 18 students in the pre-K program and 21 in the kindergarten class.

Students, alum help create weekend art festival

The PKX Youth Committee, made up of Poughkeepsie High School students and alumni, had fun planning, creating art and attending the first annual arts-focused [PKX Festival](#) continuing through Saturday, Sept. 17, along Main and North Cherry Streets. Wonderland was the theme of this inaugural festival featuring community-wide art, musical performances, workshops and a public art installation, inspired by the area. PKX serves as a building block to develop a student-led arts district in and around the Trolley Barn Gallery dubbed the Youth Arts Empowerment Zone.

The PKX Committee is [The Art Effect](#)'s youth training program where participants learn public speaking skills, conduct presentations to government officials and learn about place making - a people-centered approach to planning, designing and managing public spaces. They used all these skills to plan the festival, working beside artist duo BoogieREZ and Curator Alison M. Glenn to create and curate various art experiences at the festival. "Community art-making is at the heart of the PKX Festival," Art Effect Executive Director Nicole Fenichel-Hewitt said. "From painting the pavement to workshops, music, face painting, juried exhibition, and partner booths — there is something for everyone." PHS graduates shared their excitement seeing this festival take off.



The PKX Committee: Jadeen Sampson, Olivia Barker-Duncan, Keli Faircloth, Chanel Reed, Harrison Brisbon-McKinnon and Kaleceia Douglas.



Artist Risa Tochigi, one half of the art duo BoogieREZ (Boogie), works with PHS alum Lamont Smith (seated) on a project for the PKX Festival.

"Wonderland is a place full of imaginary beauty and strangeness," Chanel Reed said. "Seeing all of these artists give us their own definitions of 'wonderland' makes me very excited and motivated for this amazing show."

Jadeen Sampson, who plans to pursue a visual arts degree at Purchase College, hopes the festival will give the public a better representation of what Poughkeepsie is all about. He and Keli Faircloth had visitors join them in painting their own planets. "Seeing the exhibition come together makes me proud of myself and my colleagues because we put so much effort and heart into this festival," Sampson said. "The main goal is to do it again, we want it to be a success."

Some of Sampson's favorite art pieces are paintings by Art Effect alum Morgan Suter.

"They're really euphoric," he said. "She has beautiful work." For Sampson, the committee allowed him to focus on his art and said his bosses supported his and the other students' endeavors. He also helped recruit many of his fellow students to join.

"They're very supportive of everything, they're more like mentors than bosses," Sampson said. "I feel like the program honed my skills."

Yusuf House donates new tablets for PHS seniors



Students show their tablets (from left) Matthew Romano, Tanario Nelson, Cheylin Vijil Jimenez, Aliyah Brickell, Saanie Moodie, Kimberly Garcia, Assemblymember Jonathan G. Jacobson, Yusuf House founder Omega Alston, PHS Principal Dr. Phee Simpson, Janelle Seals, Humberto Cruz, Deavin Moore, Yusuf House Board Member Curtis Whitted and PHS School Counselor Franky Perez. Jahniya Brown was not present to receive the tablet.

Ten Poughkeepsie High School seniors, who have demonstrated dedication to their school work, were each presented with a new, personal tablet on Sept. 15 during a brief ceremony in the school auditorium. The Lenovo Tab M10 Plus tablets were donated by Yusuf House of the Hudson Valley, Inc. and funded through a Learn, Play, Create grant from Dutchess County. County Legislator Randy Johnson, who represents the City of Poughkeepsie, helped secure the funding.

Yusuf House Founder Omega Alston and Board Member Curtis Whitted, along with New York State Assemblymember Jonathan G. Jacobson presented the tablets and certificates to students.

"We're hoping that they'll get a lot of use out of them," said Principal Dr. Phee Simpson. "We're excited about it and looking forward to having a good productive year."

Once the year has ended, students will have the devices to use as they move on to college or a career. Some students, who may not have been recognized before, were initially shocked, but pleased by the generosity shown to them.

Saanie Moodie was not informed until the day before the ceremony that she was getting a tablet, but is grateful for the gesture. "I'm glad that I got chosen and that I worked hard in order to get it," Moodie said. Tanairio Nelson appreciated receiving his tablet and will write his college essays on it.

"It's amazing that people in the community are trying to help kids in our school," Nelson said. "I'm really thankful."

School Counselor Franky Perez was tasked with choosing 10 students most deserving of the tablets, a tough feat as he works with over 200 hardworking students. He honed in on those who love to learn, improved during the previous year and were able to successfully navigate any challenge. "These are the students that exemplified that for me," Perez said. "I'm very proud of them and proud of what they've done. ... All of those students are going to have great success this year."

C&I Weekly: iReady diagnostic set to start, developing academic identities

The iReady diagnostic for grades K-8 is set to start Monday, plus helping students develop an academic identity and Saturday Morning Lights plans. Learn more in [C&I Weekly for Sept. 16, 2022](#).

Upcoming events

- **Today:** Boys varsity soccer vs. Our Lady of Lourdes, 4:15 p.m., PHS, 70 Forbus St.
 - Varsity football vs. Walter Panas, 6 p.m., Walter Panas High School, 300 Croton Ave., Cortlandt Manor
- **Sept. 21:** School Board Workshop/Regular meeting, 6:30-8:30 p.m., Administration Building, 18 S. Perry St.