



## Grandparents join students for breakfast

Friday, Samuel F.B. Morse Elementary School's first grade team held its Grandparents Day Celebration as a way to show appreciation to a group of caregivers who many of us can personally identify as unsung heroes in our rearing as children.

The celebration was well attended by the grandparents of the school's first graders. Dr. Eric Jay Rosser, superintendent of schools; Bob Creedon, Poughkeepsie City School District Board of Education member and Rob Rolison, mayor for the City of Poughkeepsie, served as surrogate grandparents to students whose grandparents were unable to participate.

The celebration intended to build a strong connection between home and school as well as welcome the school's newest children and families into our school.

Grandparents and students started the day by sharing breakfast before the program began. As a part of the program, students were able to recite a poem entitled "Grandma's Glasses" and also sing a song that captured their appreciation for their grandparents.

First grade teacher Cheryl Haines, one of the event organizers, shared "We are so happy to be able to bring our students' families back into the school. We want them to see many of the people who work with their children, as well as feel a part of and take an active role in their child's academic development. We are always grateful to our school, district, and community participants who make this day one of the best days of first grade at Morse Elementary School."

Grandparents Day is officially the first Sunday after Labor Day each year.



Morse students celebrated Grandparents Day Friday by inviting their grandparents to join them for breakfast and a short program at the school.



## Federal grant seeks to boost climate, culture

Last week, the Poughkeepsie City School District was notified that the Office of Justice Programs (OJP) out of the U.S. Department of Justice, awarded the district funding from its STOP School Violence Program to support the District's efforts to improve culture, climate, and school safety, a

2020 – 2025 Strategic Plan performance objective.

The Office of Justice Programs is committed to advancing work that promotes civil rights and racial equity, increases access to justice and supports crime victims and individuals impacted by the justice system. It also strengthens community safety, protects the public from crime and evolving threats, and builds trust between law enforcement and the community. This program is based on the Student, Teachers, and Officers Preventing School Violence Act of 2018 (or STOP School Violence Act).

The goal of the act is to increase school safety by:

- Implementing training that will improve school climate using school-based behavioral threat assessments and/or intervention teams to identify school violence risks among students.

- Technological solutions such as anonymous reporting technology using a mobile phone-based app, hotline, or a website in the applicant's geographic area to enable students, teachers, staff, and community members to anonymously identify threats of school violence; or other school safety strategies that assist in preventing violence.

The funding, which amounts to approximately \$900,000 over the next three years will support:

- Salaries of the two social-emotional counselors at PMS and PHS.
- Training in suicidal awareness and prevention training.
- Purchasing anonymous threat reporting technology.
- Securing supplies and materials.

This program will be implemented under the leadership of Da'Ron Wilson, executive director of school engagement. A planning meeting with multiple stakeholders will occur during the month of November.

## District shares efforts to serve Latino community

Last week, Dr. Eric Jay Rosser, superintendent of schools; Natasha Cherry, executive director of community schools; Mariya Pushkantser, director of secondary education, and Julee Molina, Spanish speaking information officer, met with members of Reunite Migrant Families to discuss the Poughkeepsie City School District's current efforts to serve the needs of Latino students and their families and potential collaboration opportunities. Reunite Migrant Families is a Community Foundations of Hudson Valley grassroots grantee who has been involved in outreach support to Latino immigrant families in the Hudson Valley and at the southern border for the past four years.



**Michael Kessler, retired ACSD principal; Muriel Horowitz, retired ACSD teacher; Val Carlisle, retired PCSD teacher; Superintendent Dr. Eric Jay Rosser; Natasha Cherry, executive director of community schools; Julee Molina, Spanish Public Information Officer and Mariya Pushkantser, director of secondary education, meet.**

The PCSD team highlighted that over the past three years there has been a special emphasis placed on addressing the academic, social, emotional, and wellness needs of the district's Latino population, which over the last several years has been growing. The team outlined the following innovations and supports that have emerged:

- Establishing a Coordinator of ENL position at the District level.
- Providing greater supports to school ENL teachers.
- Creation of Dual Language program at Smith ELC (PreK – K).
- Expanded supports and programming for students with interrupted/inconsistent formal education (SIFE) and added supports for the Newcomer Program at PMS and PHS.
- A focus on hiring additional Spanish speaking school-based staff to support parents and caregivers (Community School Liaisons).
- Securing technology to support a school's ability to communicate with parents including Waverly Labs Ambassador.
- Secured funding to support Latino parents interested in adult education and English as Second Language classes.
- Hired a Spanish speaking Information Officer, who will aid in the school district and City of Poughkeepsie with getting critical information into the Poughkeepsie Spanish speaking community and also create opportunities for district and city leadership to hear how it can be more supportive of the Latino community.
- Established the Community Schools' Parent Empowerment Center to support all parents seeking assistance. "Chat Arounds", an opportunity for Latino families to meet, share and support one another was created last year.



- Established Saturday Morning Light's, an extended learning opportunity for both students and parents, with a specific focus on creating family bonding opportunities.
- Adopted Parent Square, a school district communication platform that provides parents the ability to select the language that they would like to receive important messages from the school district in.
- Made substantial improvements to the district's websites providing visitors the ability to translate the website into a preferred language and download many documents originally written in English into a preferred language.
- Ready the publication of Puentes, a newsletter that will contain important City of Poughkeepsie and Poughkeepsie City School District information to be shared with the Latino community.

While Dr. Rosser indicated that these innovations and supports most certainly help, there is more that is required of our community in supporting the success of its Latino students and collaborating with Reunite Migrant Families and other community-based organizations will further strengthen our mutual goals.

## Parent advisory committee meetings resume

The Parent Advisory Committee to the Superintendent (PACS) meetings for the 22-23 academic year resumed this past week. Dr. Eric Jay Rosser, superintendent of schools, and Natasha Cherry, executive director of community schools met with district parents to discuss family and community engagement performance objectives outlined in the [22-23 District Annual Goals and Performance Objectives document](#), PTA outreach, and a need to seek additional parents to serve on PACS.

The PACS was created to advise the superintendent on strategies and solutions toward the district and parents forging a strengthened partnership in addressing the academic, social and emotional needs of PCSD students.

The PACS is organized to:

- Mutually develop goals that address student success through strong collaborative partnerships with parents and caregivers.
- Identify common needs and goals among the parents of students enrolled in Poughkeepsie City School District and facilitate strategies to increase parent involvement and engagement.
- Provide the superintendent with feedback and insight from the parent's perspective on school processes, policies and initiatives to ensure that the needs of parents and their families are included as decisions are made in the district.
- Bring to the superintendent's attention existing and emerging issues expressed by parents at the school they represent.
- Serve as an advisory - not a decision-making body - that makes recommendations, encourages brainstorming and provides opportunities for parent involvement.
- Facilitate communication between and among the parents and parent organizations from district schools and serve as a forum for sharing innovations and best practices from around the district.

"The establishment of the Parent Advisory Committee to the Superintendent (PACS) is an important step for me to meet monthly with a group of highly-invested parents and caregivers as we continue to work in partnership in reconstitution efforts of the Poughkeepsie City School District," Rosser said when he created the committee in December 2021.

During Saturday's meeting, the committee set a meeting schedule for the 22-23 year, which will coincide during Saturday Morning Light's (SML) to provide PACS members flexibility to engage in the monthly meeting while their children engage in SML programming. SML is slated to restart Oct. 15, at Poughkeepsie Middle School. Cherry also provided parents with Community School's Parent Leader shirts so that at events parents and caregivers would be able to easily identify them if seeking information.

"Parents were perhaps the most underutilized resource in this district for years," Cherry said. "Not only are they their child's first teacher, they are also a critical connector to the community around us. One of the goals of the PACS committee is to establish a strong home-to-school alliance with all of our district families through the development of committee goals. These goals will support the district's mission while identifying ways that our families can become more involved in their child's education."

