

SUPERINTENDENT'S BRIEF

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

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Eighth graders are high school bound



Above left, Mauricia Ryland shakes hands with PMS teacher Aileen Lord during the recognition ceremony Thursday, June 22, 2023. Above right, Devonte Russell-Brown walks up to the PMS stage to accept his PPSTA Highest Achievement Award in Social Studies.

One hundred and thirty eight Poughkeepsie Middle School eighth graders were celebrated for their hard work and achievements during a recognition ceremony on June 22.

Everyone received a certificate, while select students received achievement awards from the Poughkeepsie Public School Teachers' Association.

Interim Principal Robert Parkes congratulated the departing students and noted how proud he was of their accomplishments. He also acknowledged the families in attendance and encouraged them to be involved with their children's education throughout high school.

"Please stay with them every step of the way so four years from now we can see you across the street graduating from high school," Parkes said. "Those are the big next steps."

In his speech to the students, Rashad Ricketts, a 2014 Poughkeepsie High School graduate and Financial Analyst for Central Hudson, highlighted the importance of avoiding complacency, taking education seriously and leaving an impact.

"The decisions you make every single day impacts your life," Ricketts said. "You are the next generation of leaders; once you become successful it's not if, it's when."

Zoe-Madison Fletcher is happy to be heading to high school, where she aspires to be valedictorian. She will miss her teachers and the PMS support staff.

"I'm so excited to be moving on to the high school," Fletcher said.

Devonte Russell-Brown is a little nervous about the transition but looks forward to joining the basketball team.

"It's a lot of emotions right now," Russell-Brown said. "It's kind of scary, but [going to high school] are the steps to success."

We congratulate all the eighth graders who persevered through some very difficult times to reach this milestone and look forward to their continued success as they move to Poughkeepsie High School.



Zoe-Madison Fletcher shakes hands with PMS teacher Ashley Hastings after receiving her certificate.

Board receives teacher contract update



At Wednesday evening's Board of Education meeting, Superintendent Dr. Eric Jay Rosser updated the Board of Education on the status of negotiations between the district and the Poughkeepsie Public School Teachers' Association and also addressed a local media report. The recent local media report blamed the district for the district's teachers being without a contract since June 30, 2018. After being asked about the media report, Rosser provided a chronology outlining dates associated with the expiration of the 2014-2018 agreement, the district's financial challenges, his hiring and charge of correcting the structural fiscal deficit and equity fixes associated with employee

compensation, and an overview of the bargaining that has taken place to date. His response to the board members highlighted that active conversations regarding a successor agreement began in April 2021, and have continued, to date, to achieve a mutually desired and agreed upon successor agreement. Since October 2022, the negotiating teams have met several times. Rosser provided detailed specifics regarding each of the financial proposals exchanged by each side.

The update touched upon the challenges that the union's most recent financial proposals would present for the district. While the union's proposal does highlight a \$353,000 cost savings associated with health insurance to the district, the proposal has been calculated to cost the district approximately \$10 million in retroactive pay to teachers dating back to 2018, a figure disputed by the union. If correct, given that the district does not maintain an unrestricted fund balance in that amount to cover the cost, any successor agreement providing this amount in retroactive pay would result in the district having to substantially raise school taxes and potentially cut staff, student programming and support.

Board members questioned this and requested further detail on the challenges associated with settling the financial aspects of the rollover proposal. One of the district's lead negotiators provided an in-depth explanation of the challenges. Rosser concluded the update by stating that there are two opposing perspectives that have resulted in the district and the union rejecting each other's proposals. He noted that the complications associated with the negotiation process and his desire to quickly settle a fair and agreed upon contract prompted him to initiate the process to involve a third-party mediator appointed by the Public Employee Relations Board (PERB) to facilitate the negotiation process. Last summer, Rosser took a similar action by involving PERB to facilitate the beginning of the negotiation process. A district goal this year was to settle three of the five collective bargaining contracts by June 30, 2023. To date, one of three have been settled as the district gears up to settle the remaining two collective bargaining units whose contracts expire June 30, 2024.

Rosser and members of the Board of Education have repeatedly articulated their desire and action to align compensation (salary and benefits) of all employees now that the district has recovered from a long standing fiscal deficit.

In 2019, Rosser was hired and charged with correcting a \$6.8 million fiscal deficit and aligning compensation of all employees to school districts in Dutchess County and throughout the region. While significant progress has been made to align the compensation of all employees, Rosser's equity fix update presentation at the last board meeting specified there is a lot more work to be done. At the previous Board of Education meeting, Rosser proposed a one-time \$1,700 payment to be distributed to all employees as a relief to the financial hardships created by the national economy. This payment would be contingent on a number of criteria including agreement with the collective bargaining units.

You can view the full [equity update here](#) and Wednesday's [negotiations update here](#). You can view the expired [collective bargaining agreement and MOA here](#).

CI Weekly focuses on year-end celebrations

This week's edition celebrates all the teachers and students and their success and looks forward to next year. There are photos from a variety of end-of-year celebrations. Download the [June 23, 2023 edition](#).

