

SUPERINTENDENT'S BRIEF

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

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PHS serves as a backdrop to Mayoral Inauguration

Poughkeepsie High School (PHS) served as the backdrop to Tuesday's City of Poughkeepsie mayoral inauguration but played a much more significant role in shaping Yvonne Flowers, the City of Poughkeepsie's first African American mayor.

In a [prerecorded video](#) outlining her journey, Mayor Flowers heartfully stated, "Poughkeepsie High School is a part of my journey as an adult. When I walked across that stage, I thought about all the possibilities of what was going to happen in my life. I felt that I had to come back to the high school because this is where I got my start." Mayor Flowers credited former PHS business teacher, Lorraine Roberts for developing her interest in accounting, a discipline that served Flowers well in her career before retiring last year. Linda Melton Mann, former Poughkeepsie City School District administrator, was also credited for being a mentor and encouraging her through senior year. "She was like a second mom to me and she's part of why I am who I am today." Besides crediting PHS and its staff for providing a foundation for which her life evolved, Mayor Flowers' narrative also shows current Poughkeepsie City School District students what is possible.

"If you were to have asked me back then when I was graduating whether I would be mayor of the City of Poughkeepsie, I would have told you that you were out of your mind. I would have never imagined it. I look back at my journey and see the things that I've been through and the challenges I've overcome and I feel like I was destined for this position."

Hundreds of community members attended the historic event. They were joined by many federal, state, and county elected officials including [U.S. Congressman Pat Ryan \(NY 18th District\)](#), [NY Attorney General Letitia James](#), [NY Senator Rob Rolison \(39th District\)](#), [NY Assemblyman Jonathan Jacobson \(104 District\)](#), [Assemblyman Anil Beephan Jr. \(District 105\)](#), [Dutchess County Executive Sue Serino](#), [Dutchess County Clerk Bradford Kendall](#).

Dr. Eric Jay Rosser, superintendent of schools, delivered the Welcoming Remarks before PHS' Junior Reserve Officers Training Corps marched in for the Presentation of Colors and the Pledge of Allegiance. The Poughkeepsie High School Jazz Ensemble led by PHS' Joe North provided live music for the event.

After taking the mayoral oath of office, Flowers thanked audience members for their support and attendance.

"Today we take the mantle and begin the earnest work to push the City of Poughkeepsie to its true potential, to unify our city, to ensure it's a safe place where all are welcome and can thrive," said Flowers. "I recognize there is a lot of work to do, and I am calling on members of the community to join me in this work and to understand that change can't happen overnight, but progress can — and will — be made if we each do our part to help nurture the city we love."



Yvonne Flowers speaks at her inauguration.



Da'Ron Wilson delivers an address during Yvonne Flowers' Oath of Office ceremonies.

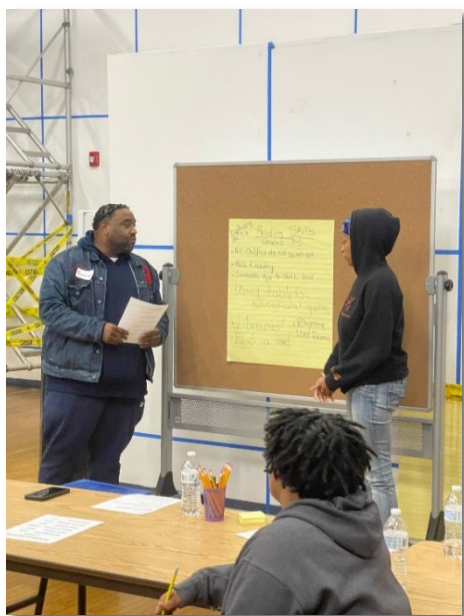


"I was excited to have a part in this historic event," Rosser said. "Not only has the City of Poughkeepsie elected its first African American mayor, the significance of Yvonne Flowers' election is pivotal in expanding Poughkeepsie City School District students' belief of who they can aspire to become. This is important for all students particularly the school districts' students of color, who represent 95 percent of the student body. The entire school community works hard to develop our children's mindset to understand that with a high-quality education, passion, commitment, and persistence they can attain the career of their choice. What has taken place here in Poughkeepsie has great power and meaning. A meaning and power that will have a long-term impact."

City of Poughkeepsie Common Council (Da'Ron Wilson, At Large (PHS Graduate '93), Ernest Henry, First Ward; Evan Menist, Second Ward; Terriciena Brown, Third Ward; Nathan Shook, Fourth Ward; Ondie James, Fifth Ward; Christopher Grant, Sixth Ward (PHS Graduate '05); Nedra Thompson, Seventh Ward; and Megan Deichler, Eight Ward) joined Flowers in taking their oaths of office at the event.

"Mayor Flowers and Mr. Wilson have done tremendous work for the community, and I am excited about the accomplishments that will be achieved in their new leadership roles," Rosser said. "The two of them are perfect examples of what our community can produce when we work together. Both graduated from the Poughkeepsie City School District and understand the community's role and obligation in preparing the next generation of our community's citizens and leaders." View the [entire inauguration](#).

Parent University program engages Clinton families



Under the leadership of Dr. David Scott, principal of Clinton Elementary School, Clinton faculty and staff are approaching engaging parents in a more meaningful and strategic way. Designed as a new parent engagement strategy for this year, the Clinton Parent University is a series of eight 1.5-hour workshops designed to strengthen the relationship between school and home and empower parents with helpful information on how they can support their children beyond the school environment. The Parent University began in October 2023 and continues through May 2024. Each session has a different theme:

Accountability 101 - October 2023

This session provided an opportunity for the entire school community to discuss the shared goals for Clinton students and clarify the responsibilities of the teacher, child, and parents.

Literacy Night - November 2023

Stressing the importance of childhood literacy, parents and staff discussed the science of reading and the five building blocks of reading: phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension. Parents also learned about the district's literacy program, grades, and developmentally

appropriate texts parents can share with children.

Health & Wellness, Mindfulness, Self-Care - December 2023

Parents and staff engaged in conversations about the importance of health and wellness and detecting signs when a loved one's or personal mental health would benefit from mindfulness strategies.

Financial Literacy - January 2024

This session is designed for an open discussion about money and the importance of advancing the community by empowering families to make sound decisions on how financial resources are stewarded. At this session, a qualified professional will cover topics on saving, investing, life insurance, and taxes.

Math Night - February 2024

Stressing the importance of childhood numeracy, parents and staff will explore the fascinating world of numbers, shapes, and problem solving and the many interactive games, family activities, and activities parents and students can accomplish at home.

Internet Safety (gaming, social media, cyberbullying) - March 2024



Understanding that the 21st-century child experiences the world increasingly through technology, parents and staff will discuss cyberbullying, digital citizenship, protecting a child's privacy, and how to report incidents of internet abuse.

Gang Prevention (What every parent needs to know) - April 2024

This session is designed to equip parents with the information they need to promote child safety and bring awareness of youth voices and the recruitment of children into gangs.

How to Prepare Students and Families for summer - May 2024

This session will go into detail on how parents can ensure that their children are engaged in summer learning activities that minimize summer learning loss. The goal is for all students to be prepared for the rigor of new grade-level content when school starts in September.

"I had the opportunity to participate in the Literacy Night session and was pleased with parent turnout and the discussion around the science of reading. It was good seeing how engaged parents were in the various activities to learn how they can support childhood literacy in and out of school", shared Dr. Eric Jay Rosser, superintendent of schools.

Parent University sessions begin promptly at 5:30 p.m. and end at 7:00 p.m. Participation is limited to parents of Clinton students. During the session, children engage in meaningful activities facilitated by staff and Poughkeepsie High School Honor Society students. Dinner is provided for all participants.

Boys' basketball team takes second place in the tourney



Poughkeepsie Pioneers boys' varsity basketball team finished second in the 40th annual REB Invitational Basketball Tournament in Edmonton, Alberta, Canada, Dec. 14-16.

The Poughkeepsie High School varsity boys' basketball team recently expanded their worldview, learning about Canadian culture, and the people representing the culture when they traveled to Edmonton, Alberta, Canada for the 40th annual REB Invitational Basketball Tournament held Dec. 14-16.

Nearly winning the entire prestigious tournament, the Pioneers placed second losing, 78-72, to Kelowna in the championship game.

Poughkeepsie, the only team from the United States in the tournament, defeated Ross Sheppard, 60-54, and host Jasper, 74-59, to earn a spot in the final.

"Second place is not the goal. We do our best to hold ourselves to a higher standard no matter what we're competing in," said Poughkeepsie coach Cody Moffett.

"On the flip side, I was very excited about the overall opportunity, especially as a coach, to take that many people to another country. The number one concern was safety, taking everyone there and bringing everyone home. That mission was accomplished. Everything on top of that is a beautiful, wonderful experience."

Sophomore Victor Nelson finished with 53 points in the three games to earn a spot on the all-tournament team. Junior Savion Nesbitt scored 39 points over the three games for the Pioneers, who also received key contributions in the tournament from sophomore Tyrone Dubose, and seniors Kymani Palmatier, Amir Woody, Jalen Lee, Prince Boone, and Dovion Dates.

"I feel great about the season. I feel we're going to have a lot of confidence," said Nesbitt.



The tournament used International Basketball Federation (FIBA) rules, which required Poughkeepsie to compete at a quicker pace and get into its offensive sets faster. Like the NBA, FIBA uses a 24-second shot clock, and if a team maintains possession after missing a shot, the clock resets to 14 seconds. Poughkeepsie competes in the New York State Public High School Athletic Association, which uses a 35-second shot clock.

The players also said participating in this tournament prepared them for what's ahead, especially in the playoffs, as they played against Jasper in a packed and loud gymnasium.

"We grew a lot as a team," said Nelson. "We got to know each other more off the court. I think it's going to transfer into the season because we have a lot of away games,"

The Pioneers also enjoyed learning the culture, which included tasting Ketchup potato chips and meeting new people.

"I learned we need to be a family if we're going to win anything. We've got to stay tight," said senior Andre Nelson. "The trip brought us closer together. There were many laughs. It was a lot of fun, seeing new people, meeting new people, and trying new things. The people are very nice."

Moffett is hopeful the program will go on the road yearly to compete in similar prestigious tournaments.

"I know when I played, going away was a big deal and that was something as players we always looked forward to," he said. "I would love to have that opportunity for these young guys in high school because some may play college basketball, some may do something different, but the experiences you never forget."

Athlete of the Month

Nelson wins honor for work on and off the court

Victor Nelson is starting the 2023-2024 basketball season as a student-athlete, succeeding on the court and in the classroom.

The 5-foot-7 point guard earned all-tournament honors at the 40th annual REB Invitational Basketball Tournament in Edmonton, Alberta, Canada, and is on the high school academic honor roll.

"I think it's just confidence and the trust from my coaches and teammates helped me," said December's Athlete of the Month on his tournament performance.

The sophomore scored 53 points over three games in being honored by the committee at one of Canada's most prestigious high school basketball tournaments. Poughkeepsie lost in the tournament final.

"I'm seeing many great things and not only is he progressing as a basketball player, but he's progressing as a leader," said Poughkeepsie varsity boys' basketball coach Cody Moffett.

"He's starting to become more vocal, starting to voice his influence and things he sees in the game, being an ultra-positive teammate. Those are certain things I'm seeing from the maturation standpoint that I love."

Nelson was introduced to the game at a very young age and began playing in Poughkeepsie's Unity Basketball League and Holy Trinity's CYO program. He's in his second season as a varsity player at Poughkeepsie.

"I love just being on the court and having a new family competing," he said. "Being a point guard helped me come out of my shy shell because I have to be more vocal on the court, and get along with others fast."

Nelson hopes to play basketball in college, and one day be a coach and athletic trainer.

He is the son of Jasmine Davidson, a teacher at Clinton Elementary School, and understands the importance of being a good student.

"It means a lot because my mother is a teacher so I know if your grades are right, you can go far in life, even without sports, but it also helps you with sports," he said.

Nelson's mother, Jasmine Davidson, was featured in [Superintendent's Brief Issue No. 13 Vol 4](#) for returning as a teacher to the same classroom where she was a kindergarten student.



Victor Nelson Athlete of the Month