

SUPERINTENDENT'S BRIEF

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

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Rosser provides testimony to Senate

Offers PCC, district help



Sen. Rob Rolison (District 39), the ranking member of the NYS Senate Standing Committee on Cities II, recently invited Dr. Eric Jay Rosser, superintendent of schools to provide testimony at the December Committee on Cities 2 public hearing. Rosser spoke on the causes and effects of poverty and concentrated poverty in New York's medium and small-sized cities, and policies the

legislature can implement to reduce poverty.

In his opening remarks, Senator Rolison shared "As elected officials we have an obligation to seek out what's best for all New Yorkers, taking into account the creative initiatives that are being developed at the local level."

In upstate cities, poverty, and concentrated poverty rates have been stubbornly high for years. In 2022, Syracuse, Rochester, and Buffalo all ranked in the top 10 nationwide for childhood poverty rates for cities with at least 100,000 people. A recently released report cites Syracuse as ranking the 2nd highest for childhood poverty in the country for 2023. Data obtained from [City-Data.com](https://city-data.com) cites that in 2021 32.2 percent of Poughkeepsie's children live below poverty.

Concentrated poverty is considered an area with poverty rates of 30 percent or higher and has been widely researched and studied. Neighborhoods with a high level of poverty see a dramatic decrease in several success factors, from economic development to school outcomes to health and quality of life. The causes for this type of poverty include the historical legacy of redlining, economic decline from deindustrialization, and exclusionary zoning in wealthy areas.

Rosser's written testimony spoke to the plight of children in impoverished communities noting, "Children in impoverished communities enter school with fewer academic skills than peers growing up in other communities. These children tend to be at least one grade level behind their peers in other communities. These disparities translate into lower academic achievement, childhood mental health challenges, and alarming high school graduation rates, which are predictors of low economic mobility and a lack of financial stability in adulthood and are a precursor to intergenerational poverty (poverty that exists through multiple generations due to children not having an opportunity to escape the poor economic conditions that they grew up in)."

Rosser's testimony references the [Poughkeepsie Children's Cabinet \(PCC\)](https://poughkeepsiechildrenscabinet.org), as an innovative approach to addressing childhood poverty and refers to the importance of a school, home, and community approach to addressing children's academic social and emotional needs - prenatal to college/career.

Rolison, hailing the Children's Cabinet approach, further stated, "The Children's Cabinet has had success but there is much more to do to fight entrenched poverty in Poughkeepsie and other small and medium-size cities across our state. Rolison also points out that although the Poughkeepsie Children's Cabinet has caught



the attention of the Lt. Governor, State Board of Regents, the US Department of Education, and the White House, "Dr. Rosser correctly points out that what we need is sustained funding support from Albany so that our localities are not bearing the burden alone." He further states, "Smaller cities and school districts may not have the resources to promote those initiatives that work without state support. We have to get the particulars right and we have to constantly assess what we are doing and the performance [of these initiatives]."

Rosser ended his comments with an offer to help the committee.

"As the Senate's Standing Committee on Cities 2 continues to explore the causes and effects of poverty and concentrated poverty, I offer to provide myself and the Poughkeepsie Children's Cabinet as a resource to learn more about our local efforts."

The public hearing also received testimony from [The Bridge Project](#), [CNY Fair Housing](#), [Person Center](#), [Person-Centered Housing](#), [Schuyler Center](#), [The Children's Agenda](#), [Rise Up Rochester](#), [Rochester Educational Opportunity Center](#), [Black Community Focus Fund](#), [New York Immigration Coalition](#), [Cornell Center for Health Equity](#), [New York State Community Action Association](#), [Hudson Valley Justice Center](#), and the [Community Resource Center](#). View the [entire public hearing](#). Read [Dr. Rosser's testimony](#).

District starts data-driven instruction initiative

The Poughkeepsie City School District is in the early stages of implementing a data-driven instruction initiative to elevate the success of its administrators, teachers, and students.

"The goal is always to improve academic achievement, that's always going to be at the forefront of our goal," said Janet Bisti, district director of elementary education. "When we're looking at data, when we're choosing specific data to look at, and then making decisions on what the data is showing us, we can better target the supports that our students will need, the professional development that our teachers will need."

Building and district administrators recently completed three workshops: Observation & Feedback, Driven by Data 1.0 (Introduction to Data-Driven Instruction), and Driven by Data 2.0 (Weekly Data Meetings). A data-driven instruction consultant assisted administrators at the workshops and will continue to serve the district in this initiative.

The final workshop was held on Dec. 14, a day before the district released its weekly Curriculum and Instruction Weekly, which featured an article by Michael J. Bolz and Vidya Madhavan titled, "What is Data-Driven Instruction in Education?"

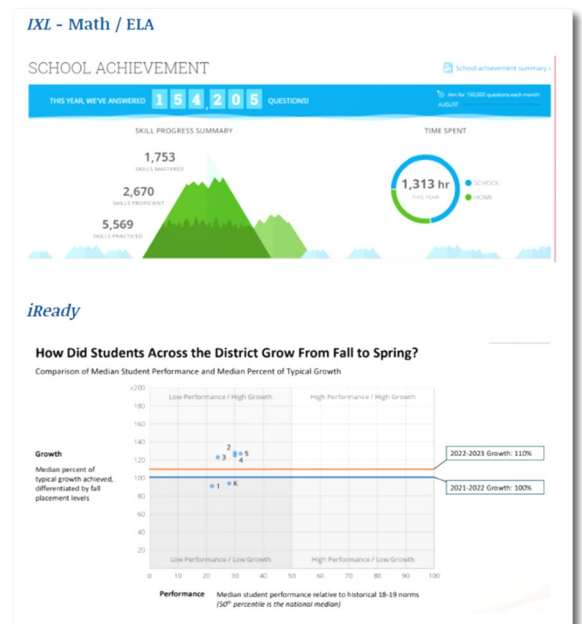
The article explains that there are three phases to data-driven instruction, including the intentional assessment of student learning, data analysis and interpretation, and using the data analysis to implement strategies for instructional changes to meet the needs of students. "It's very preliminary," said Bisti. "We're getting the leaders to understand it, to buy into it, and they seem pretty enthusiastic about it."

"The next step will be to provide onsite and professional development with our teachers."

Patrice Woods, supervisor of elementary education, previously worked in Newburgh schools where this program had success.

"It's a process and it doesn't happen instantly," said Woods. "The goal is we're going to continue to push forward to move this district into becoming more data-driven."

"The consultant said it takes several years to get to the results where we would feel more success, but I think along the way, you're going to see success."



A screenshot from PCSD's Data Dashboard shows a small portion of the data the district tracks. View the dashboard at <https://www.poughkeepsieschools.org/Page/1275>

Middle school students experience BOCES CTI

A group of 22 Poughkeepsie Middle School eighth graders learned all the tools of a trade, many trades in fact, during a morning visit to Dutchess BOCES' Career & Technical Institute (CTI) on Dec. 15. The students, led by CTI Guidance Counselors Kirstin Litwin and Deanna Pillius, were shown courses such as Plant & Animal Science, Fashion Design, and Computer Hardware, the latter of which involved current CTI students demonstrating numerous aspects of the class. One popular feature was a retro-styled "BOCES Arcade" branded video game. PMS School Counselor Ann Marie Tucker noted that it is never too early to bring kids to CTI because they can potentially plan their future after seeing the numerous courses offered.

"I think they're very excited to be here," Tucker said of the students. "It sparks their imagination and their drive for the future." Once a month, Tucker visits the different classrooms to showcase different career opportunities in a session dubbed "Tucker Time."

"We've done things like HVAC, respiratory therapy," Tucker explained. "We've talked about those, so to see this in action is amazing."

The only thing Tucker wished she could do was bring more students on the trip, so she took plenty of pictures to show to her students during next month's Tucker Time. Additionally, BOCES Superintendent Jason Schetelick will address the PMS student body in late January.



Adrian Ashung, a second year Computer Hardware student at Dutchess BOCES' Career & Technical Institute, explains how ethernet cables work to visiting students from PMS.



Asija Bagley enjoyed learning about the Computer Hardware course, particularly playing the retro video game. She advises all students to pay attention to everything going on if they visit CTI in the future.

"It does seem nice," Bagley said. "I would like to learn about computers." Donovan Blake learned about many aspects of computer hardware, including how to use a 3D printer, which he counted as one of his favorite parts of the trip. He is potentially interested in trying his hands at the class when he starts junior year.

"It's very interesting to see," Blake said. "This might be a thing I might do."

Johen Pak Anderson, a second year Computer Hardware student at Dutchess BOCES' Career & Technical Institute, shows PMS students a "BOCES Arcade" video game during the tour.