

SUPERINTENDENT'S BRIEF

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

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VOLUME 5



STEAM Center tour generates ideas



PCSD leaders visited the Peekskill STEAM Innovation Center.

Planning for state-of-the-art innovation labs to be constructed at Poughkeepsie Middle School and Poughkeepsie High School under the Strong Schools Equal Strong Communities Capital Improvement Project is well underway. The construction for both labs are slated for summer 2025 and will support each school's academic program and the [district's Pathways Transformation Initiative](#).

Leadership from the Poughkeepsie City School District's Department of Secondary Education recently visited the Peekskill City School District to observe the district's STEAM labs and learn more about its STEAM initiatives and community partnerships.

The Peekskill district has created numerous spaces in its pre-K through fifth grade buildings, and has recently constructed a state-of-the-art STEAM Innovation Center at Peekskill High School. The innovation center includes a design center and

robotics lab. The district hosts an annual STEAM fair at its middle school and boasts an award-winning robotics team.

During the visit, Poughkeepsie Assistant Superintendent for Secondary Education Dr. Charles Gallo and Director of College Readiness and Workforce Education Dr. Janety Encarnacion met with Peekskill staff and STEAM leaders. The visit provided insight as to how to create a space in every school building that provides students with the resources necessary to apply technology to solve problems. In addition, the STEAM labs can be aligned with the curriculum to provide cross-curricular support.

"Student choice is critical to ensure student engagement, as the STEAM labs have multiple areas that students can work with," Gallo said. These areas include engineering, architecture, robotics, science, music, and art.

"Exposing students to these resources will have a direct impact on their future in college and career choices," Gallo said. "As Poughkeepsie moves ahead with its Transformation Pathways Initiative, the creation and implementation of dedicated maker spaces will promote critical thinking and problem-solving skills that every high school graduate must have."

In May 2022, the Poughkeepsie City School District Board of Education approved the designs for innovation labs in each of the district's elementary schools ([see Superintendent's Brief Issue 69 Vol 3](#)). Designs have been submitted to the New York State Education Department and are awaiting approval. Construction of the labs, under the Strong Schools Equal Strong Communities Capital Improvement Project, is slated for summer 2024.

Progress continues on safety upgrades

Day Automation, Poughkeepsie City School District's vendor for its \$3 million Safety and Security Project, provided a community update on the project at the December Board of Education Workshop meeting, sharing a number of items that will be completed no later than summer 2024.

They include:

- Districtwide virtual lockdown system.
- Districtwide perimeter door monitoring systems.
- Districtwide building electronic card access additions.
- Districtwide additional video surveillance camera installations and upgrades.
- Hallway and classroom digital video notification systems installation (PMS & PHS classrooms and hallways) (elementary schools hallways).
- Districtwide video intercoms & additional main entrance cameras.

Day Automation is a leading provider of unified security solutions, building automation, network infrastructure and energy services providing services that impact over a half million students in over 320 school districts, colleges, and universities throughout New York State.

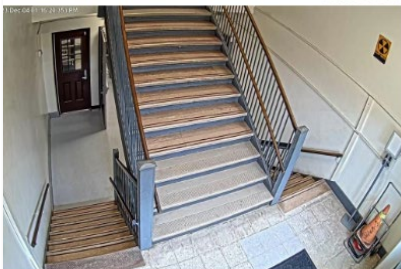
As a Performance Objective under the district goal of Improving Student Achievement, the district has made tremendous investments to improve culture, climate and school safety throughout all district buildings. So far, efforts have resulted in:

- Director of Safety and Security (All buildings).
- Additional safety personnel (PMS & PHS).
- Assistant principals of culture and climate (PMS & PHS).
- Social emotional counselors (PMS & PHS).
- Mental health clinics staffed by Astor (PMS & PHS).
- School counselor (Elementary buildings).
- Crisis intervention specialists (All buildings).
- Mindfulness rooms (three Elementary buildings).
- Camera updates (PMS and PHS).
- Two districtwide video surveillance-monitoring centers.
- Mass notification system.
- State-of-the-art weapons detection systems (PMS and PHS).
- Security vestibules and external door installations (all buildings).
- Anonymous student reporting system.
- Student responsibility campaign.
- Staff professional development (e.g., 7 Mindsets, Threat Assessment, De-Escalation, Trauma-Informed, etc.)

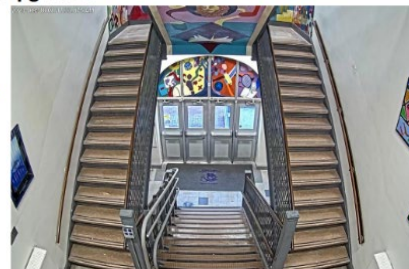
The \$3 million Safety and Security Project is funded through the district's \$5.7 million in [Smart Bond funding](#). To date, Smart Bond funding has supported district in-class technology upgrades, student, and staff 1:1 device distribution. To view the entire presentation click [here](#).

Current Projects- Smart Bond Project

Video Surveillance Upgrades



Blind Spots
Parking Lots
Fields
Stairwells



Digital Video/Audio Devices

Speakers, Signage & Clocks

HS & MS Classrooms/Offices & Large Gathering Areas ES Hallways

Clock servers will be installed and commissioned in January



Top: Examples of some of the blind spots the additional cameras will help cover.
Above: Examples of the digital audio/video displays to be installed.



Students grow through BOCES Debate tourney

Poughkeepsie High School students, along with those from Dover and Wappingers, brought their A-game to the fall 2023 Dutchess BOCES Debate Tournament held at Dutchess Community College (DCC), debating complex and diverse topics.

The students followed the "World Schools" debate format where a team of three dubbed "The Government" argued in favor of a



PHS Debate Club Vice President Diana Canales makes her case during the BOCES Debate tournament.

Previous page: PHS Debate Club President Jada Morgan and Canales prepare for the next topic at the BOCES Debate.

Viewpoint, while "The Opposition" argued against it. Topics included the United States implementing a four-day workweek and whether personal privacy is subordinate to the public good. BOCES' Educational Resources Coordinator Audrey Roettgers and DCC Speech Professor Margeaux Lippman coordinated and facilitated the debate where DCC students and BOCES staff judged the students' efforts.

Roettgers most enjoy seeing returning students evolve in their debate style year after year. "That really gives you the opportunity to watch them grow as debaters," Roettgers said. "We've got it down to being a well-oiled machine."

Students gain numerous skills including how to structure a sound argument and actively listen, something Roettgers believes is underutilized. "It's to really understand what someone else is saying and

being able to refute a point and to understand what their cognizant argument is, so you can respond appropriately," Roettgers said. "This is something that can work for a lifetime."

Senior Jada Morgan, president of PHS' Debate Club, started out in the club as more reserved, but soon found her voice and hopes to be a role model that other older debaters were to her.

"I kind of didn't expect it because I was really shy," Morgan said. "I wanted to set an example for everybody."

Initially, Morgan was supposed to attend the debate for moral support, but since some of her teammates did not show, she stepped in to argue her points. While the team was nervous at first, they overcame that very quickly.

"It will feel very scary at first, but once you come and you talk to everyone you realize how nice everyone is," Morgan said. "We felt good about the topic, we had strong evidence,"

Freshman Isabella Taliaferro joined the club because she desires to be a lawyer. While there, she learned to make more sound arguments and be organized.

"It's been kind of stressful, but that's what it's like in the real world, so I want to get used to that," Taliaferro said. "Once I found out about Debate Club in middle school, I decided this is what I wanted to do."

Taliaferro prepared extensively for the debate and acknowledged Global Studies teacher Sankung Susso for being a big help.

"He's been a very good support system," Taliaferro said of Susso.

Leaders attend statewide Literacy Symposium

Poughkeepsie literacy leaders participated in the first ever New York State Education Department Literacy Symposium Wednesday at Dutchess BOCES alongside representatives from schools across the county. The

event, held at BOCES locations throughout the state, came the day after Gov. Kathy Hochul put the focus on literacy in her State of the State address.

In her speech, Hochul specifically referred to the Science of Reading – an evidence-based approach to reading instruction, which symposium participants discussed in-depth through a series of briefs. The hybrid webinar brought together every BOCES in the state, the NYSED team, and Dr. Nonie Lesaux, the author of the briefs, to work collaboratively and strengthen literacy education for all students.

This all day event allowed literacy leaders to hear Lesaux speak about each brief before reflecting on them in small groups with colleagues and a facilitator, listening to takeaways from other BOCES sites on the call, and engaging in statewide Q&A about the briefs.

“We’re really excited about being able to use this literature, this information, this opportunity to share best practices that are going to work alongside our own multifaceted approach to literacy instruction in the district,” said Janet Bisti, director of elementary education at Poughkeepsie City School District. “We’re looking forward to more opportunities to learn and grow together.”

Lesaux, the Roy E. Larsen Professor of Education and Human Development at the Harvard Graduate School of Education, described the science of reading as “a term that reflects a dynamic interdisciplinary body of research that continues to evolve.” She continued, “It has been with us for 50 plus years that describes literacy development at all ages, provides guidance for instruction and intervention, and is also intricately tied to other frameworks.”

The briefs address literacy instruction from pre-K to the secondary years. One aspect that is emphasized throughout all age groups is the importance of developing the “Big 6” - oral language, phonological awareness, phonics, comprehension, fluency and vocabulary - through high impact practices.



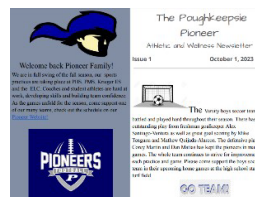
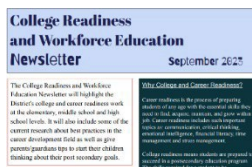
Poughkeepsie City School District administrators and teachers discuss one of the briefs at the symposium.

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Other newsletters to keep you informed:

Poughkeepsie City School District publishes a variety of newsletters throughout the year. Here are the newsletters that are available now:

[CI Weekly](#) for Jan. 12, 2024



Upcoming events

- **Mon., Jan 15: No School** – Martin Luther King Day
- **Wed., Jan 17: BOE Workshop Meeting**, 6:30 p.m., Administration Building, 18 S. Perry St.
- **Sat., Jan 20: Superintendent’s Fireside Chat** – Elementary School reconfiguration exploration. 29 North Hamilton Street,
- **Thu. Jan. 25: Beauty and the Beast Jr.** at Krieger Elementary, 265 Hooker Ave., 5:45 p.m.