

SUPERINTENDENT'S BRIEF

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

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PCSD thanks Community Schools

By now, you've heard the statistic.

While an average child spends roughly 20% of their waking hours in school, they spend the other 80% in the community.

Since 2020, the Poughkeepsie City School District's Community Schools Department has taken the lead in giving city youth organized activities with which to spend more of that 80 percent in a school setting.

The Community Schools Department is responsible for the Back to School Bash so many families enjoyed this past Saturday, just as it runs the spring festival each year and the Elite Adventure Summer Camp, among other events. It's also responsible for the Saturday Morning Lights program, which connects families with weekly activities and specialized instruction.

When outreach is needed to organizations outside the school community, Community Schools liaisons take the lead in visiting churches, libraries and other entities. They run workshops for parents, caregivers and families through its Parent Empowerment Center, and connect families with health and wellness resources. They've facilitated the growth of arts and music programming in each school, as well as mental health and crisis intervention resources.

The liaisons in each school are leaders in organizing extended day activities, such as the Sisters of Steel program at Clinton Elementary and Girl Scouts at the Early Learning Center and Krieger Elementary. The list of contributions that have helped transform the district cannot fully be captured in this space. Next week, Sept. 15-21, is the eighth annual New York State Community Schools Network Coordinators Appreciation Week. It's a chance for the school community to say thank you to the Community Schools liaisons and team members who are helping the district thrive.

Led by Executive Director Natasha Brown, the department includes Interim Administrator Jessica Ortiz; liaisons Ana Bastian (Warring), Lorraine Boughton (ELC), Gilbert Colon (Poughkeepsie middle and high schools), Justinne Rodriguez (Morse) and Lesley Rodriguez (Krieger); and Parent Empowerment Center Manager Helen Purnell.

When you see them in the halls or around the community – and you more than likely will – let them know how much the district appreciates their contributions.



The Community Schools staff takes a hayride together at its Back to School Bash event Saturday.

Join Community Schools

Are you interested in volunteering to assist Community Schools? The department is looking for volunteers to assist in its programs in roles that range from aiding at events and the Safe Routes program to facilitating workshop sessions.

Email Natasha Brown at nabrown@poughkeepsieschools.org for more information and visit [Community Schools' webpage](#) to learn more about the department.



Superintendent Dr. Eric Jay Rosser and Assistant Superintendent for Elementary Education Gregory Mott meet with Krieger Principal Carolyn Fields and Assistant Principal Jessica Baruffo.

District sets goals focusing on student outcomes, finances

The Poughkeepsie City School District has identified [five student outcome-centered goal categories and one financial management goal category](#) that will serve as its priority focus for the 2024-25 school year.

Aligned with New York State Education Department accountability measures, the district goals are a shift from the previously used performance objective framework that supported the district's improvement over the past four years. The performance objectives methodology used by the district served to establish professional practices and expectations essential to creating a foundation that strengthened the district's student achievement, resource stewardship, internal

process systems and structures, and organizational effectiveness responsibilities.

"Entering into the last year of the district's [Five-year Strategic Plan](#), it is important that we provide greater focus and transparency to the district's efforts with moving the needle on student outcomes," said Dr. Eric Jay Rosser, superintendent of schools.

"In the years leading up to this year, there was a greater focus on developing a solid foundation for the district so that it could be more responsive to student growth and need. When our financial status was not solid and our buildings were deteriorating, resulting in environments not conducive to learning and instruction, among other challenges Poughkeepsie faced, it was very challenging to solely focus on addressing the academic, social and emotional needs of our children in the manner that will sharply improve outcomes," Rosser said. "These issues and other professional practices have been addressed, thus providing us with more opportunity to concentrate our efforts on student outcomes."

The focus on student outcomes supports what the Board of Education, district and school leadership, parents and vested community members want PCSD students to know and be able to do. The goals give the administration specific targets for achievement in the areas of literacy and numeracy proficiency, post-graduation preparedness, and college and career Readiness, and maintain a focus on financial stewardship.

The Board of Education, superintendent, and district leaders spent considerable time this summer identifying and finalizing goals that would elevate student success. District goals are captured in six categories:

- 1) Student Outcomes NYS Benchmarks.
- 2) Student Outcomes District Benchmarks (grades PreK-5).
- 3) Student Outcomes District Benchmarks (grades 6-8).
- 4) Student Outcomes (college, career, and military readiness).
- 5) Student Social Emotional Learning Outcomes (grades K-12).
- 6) Financial Management.

Each of the student outcome categories highlight student achievement goals ranging from improved state assessment scores to increasing graduation rates and student post-secondary outcomes. Student social-emotional learning outcome goals focus on decreasing chronic absenteeism at all grade levels and also decreasing out-of-school suspensions. Financial management goals highlight the district's responsibility to be good stewards with state, federal and taxpayer dollars and ensure that findings from internal audits are minimized.



"Another step in the process of developing district goals is developing building-level goals based on the district goals for each building to work toward," Rosser said. "There will be alignment on student success from the New York State Department of Education down to each school."

This summer, Assistant Superintendent for Elementary Education Gregory Mott, Assistant Superintendent for Secondary Education Dr. Charles Gallo, and Rosser met with building leaders to discuss and establish building goals. Those goals will be made public within the coming week.

The district goals can be accessed [through the district website](#).

Cheerleading team excels on camp trip

Toward the end of the four-day Trails End Cheerleading Camp last month, the team captains of each of the roughly 40 teams in attendance were asked a question:

If you couldn't be on your own team, and you could choose another team to join, which team would you choose?

"Poughkeepsie got the most votes," Poughkeepsie High

School's cheerleading coach, Lynnece Edmond, said proudly while sitting in her classroom in front of the camp's "Leadership Award," which her squad earned by virtue of that vote.

"It's the most prestigious award they give out at the end of camp," she said. "I was really excited about that – almost in tears. This is our second year going to the camp and it's great to see the other teams see the progress in the program."

The cheer squad spent part of its preseason at the camp, held Aug. 27-30 in Beach Lake, Pennsylvania, where it earned a slew of honors while obtaining valuable skills and training for the year ahead. Four individual Poughkeepsie students earned "All-American" status, qualifying them to take part in prestigious Universal Cheerleaders Association exhibitions around the world.

The UCA organizes the camp and provides teams instruction not only on techniques but in how to maximize their scoring potential in competitions.

Edmond, a Poughkeepsie Middle School teacher, said the team had time to bond, living together in their own dedicated cabin, worked on specific skills, learned position-specific conditioning exercises and left with an entire competition routine worked out.

"It was a lot of fun," senior Allysha Anderson said. "You learn about these new cheers and new dances, new stunts, new everything. And then you take it home and make it your own. We add a little Pioneer Pride to it." Teams went head-to-head on the final day of the camp, showing off those routines. Poughkeepsie earned two second- and two third-place trophies in their division, which included nearly 15 teams.



The Poughkeepsie High School cheerleading team poses together outside their camp cabin with "The Banana," an award just one team earned each night. Four Poughkeepsie athletes earned "All-American" status.





In addition, individual cheerleaders were invited to try out for UCA's All-American level by displaying various skills. While no Poughkeepsie athlete qualified last year, four – seniors Anderson and Azelia David, and juniors Tiffany Walters and Jurnee Smith – made the grade this time, amid a field of roughly 500 trying out.

While the cheerleaders who are invited to take part in the UCA exhibitions in places like Hawaii, London and Rome, among others, have to pay their own way, it's an honor, they said, to have that option. Anderson and Walters, at least, are strongly considering performing in Disney World for Thanksgiving.

"I guarantee it's going to be a lot of fun," Anderson said.

Walters attributed Poughkeepsie's success at the camp to familiarity and preparation. Knowing what to expect after their first trip there last year, the Pioneers worked on their skills through the summer months.

"We knew what to expect," she said. "We learned the stuff before we went there, so we could learn new stuff while at camp."

The Pioneers cheerleaders did win one other award on the second night of camp: The Banana.

"It's the most prestigious award when it comes to spiring. We had the spirit," Edmond said. "They would tell you to get there five minutes before, we would get there 10 minutes before. It was awesome. They did a great job."

Edmond doesn't know why an enormous Banana is awarded for such a high honor – just one team received it each night – but she said, it's revered in the cheer world. In fact, while the Pioneers own their plaque for winning the Leadership Award, The Banana couldn't make the trip back to Poughkeepsie.

"Each team that had the banana signed it or put a message on it. And then, the camp keeps it," the coach said. "No team walks away with the banana. That's how important the banana is. The banana stays in camp."



2024-25 calendars available

The Poughkeepsie City School District's 2024-25 school year calendar is available and being distributed to parents and caregivers at each school and at the district office.

Saturday marks the end of Arts in Education Recognition Week and, fittingly, this year's calendar theme highlights the increasing focus on arts education throughout the district.

Inside, you'll find information on what is offered to each student, be it full-time art and music teachers in each school, extracurricular clubs and instruction, community partner organizations that provide supplemental instruction, the new Smart Scholars Early College High School Performing Arts Program, or other district features.

You can also read about important resources available to families,

such as Community Schools and the Parent Empowerment Center, read the district's updated strategy map and goals, find contact information for each school and administration, and, of course, see the key dates to know through the year.

A digital version of the calendar [can be downloaded here](#).

Other newsletters to keep you informed:

Poughkeepsie City School District publishes a variety of newsletters throughout the year. Here is the available newsletter now: [Curriculum & Instruction Weekly](#), Sept. 13, 2024

Upcoming events

- **Sept. 18:** Board of Education meeting: 6:30 p.m. at the Columbus Administration Building, 18 S. Perry St.
- **Sept. 21:** PCSD Job Fair: 9-11:30 a.m. at the Columbus Administration Building, 18 S. Perry St.
- **Sept. 26:** Poughkeepsie High School Open House: 5-6 p.m. for English Language Learners and Special Education Presentation; 6-8 p.m. regular session; at 70 Forbus St.