

SUPERINTENDENT'S BRIEF

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

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PCSD celebrates assistant principals

It's difficult to attend an event in the Poughkeepsie City School District without running into an assistant principal. They're running many of the PBIS events incentivizing and encouraging positive behaviors. They're on the fields and courts for faculty versus students competitions. They're facilitating field trips and experiences. They're taking photos and video, documenting major moments. They're greeting students as they walk through the buildings in the morning and available to students in need through the day. In every building, Poughkeepsie's assistant principals are helping things run smoothly while providing guidance to our learners and staff members. This week is National Assistant Principal Week, April 7-11. It's an opportunity to appreciate the varied roles these educators play in the lives of students. Please join us in thanking our assistant principals this week and give them a high five or a handshake as you pass them in the halls. They make themselves easy to find.

PCSD Assistant Principals

Clinton: DaVetta Price

ELC at Smith School: Melissa Barrow

Krieger: Jessica Baruffo

Morse: Paul Weir

Warring: Yolanda Wright

PMS: Danielle Green (Climate and Culture), Julliet Coxum (8th), Pierce White (7th), Ronald Jackson (interim 6th)

PHS: Felix Contreras (Climate and Culture), Donata Carolina (9th), Robert Parkes (10th), Cecil Coston (11th), Joseph Mazzetti (12th)



Students pose together at the Martin Luther King, Jr. Memorial, one of several sites they visited in addition to the four college campuses.

HBCU tour inspires students

The roughly five hour bus ride from Washington, D.C. to Poughkeepsie gave students time to reflect on the four-day odyssey they would soon complete.

Many discussed with each other how they had been inspired: to keep their grades up, to apply for scholarships, to think more seriously about their post-graduation goals, to take ownership of their future.

From March 31 to April 3, a group of roughly 30 Poughkeepsie High School juniors and sophomores took part in a trip touring four Washington-based Historically Black Colleges and Universities, or HBCUs, and capital monuments and museums.

The idea was not only to expose students to HBCUs but different levels of college life and experiences in general.

Leilani Thompson, a junior, said the trip "gave me a whole new perspective.

"I think more young African Americans should have opportunities like this," she said, "and the school should definitely offer this trip again in the future."

The trip, made possible through funding from the Poughkeepsie City School District and the Marist Liberty Partnerships Program, was led by College Readiness and Workforce Education Counselor Kelly

Semexant, Marist Liberty Partnerships Program Director Crystal Parkhurst, high school English teacher Nashon Anderson and Marist Liberty Partnerships Program coordinator at the high school Rachel Cullen, who all chaperoned. Roughly half the students on the trip are in the Liberty Partnership Program.

The inaugural trip was the latest initiative launched under the district's focus on college and career preparation and exposure. Semexant called the experience "powerful and unforgettable," noting for some students it was their first time visiting a campus outside of New York, traveling without family or taking part in a multi-day academic trip. The tour included Morgan State and Bowie State universities in Maryland, and Howard University and the University of the District of Columbia in Washington, D.C. They entered buildings, were able to watch some classes and learn more about each campus.

"I now know I definitely want to attend an HBCU," Thompson said. "In society, African Americans are often the minority. But, at an HBCU, we're the majority and that's empowering."

Semexant said Morgan State was a favorite. Not only was it the first campus the group toured, they visited on a sun-splashed day in which students were gathered on the lawn, fraternity members strolled across the quad and music played in the background. Autumn Bland and Trinity Majors, two 2024 Poughkeepsie graduates attending Morgan, met with the group and shared their experiences transitioning to college life, getting involved in multiple student organizations, and adjusting to a new sense of independence.

"Many students said they could truly picture themselves there," Semexant said. When the students visited Howard, they likewise met with 2022 Poughkeepsie graduate Alexia Miller, now a junior majoring in biology with a minor in chemistry. "Alexia spoke to our students about her journey, her plans to apply to Ivy League medical schools, and how her time at Howard has shaped her confidence and career goals," Semexant said. "Her presence reminded our students that someone from their own hometown can go on to achieve something incredible."

Semexant said the different campuses provided students a range of lifestyles for students to sample.

Compared to Morgan State and Howard, Bowie State's campus was quieter and had a slower pace, and, like the University of the District of Columbia, is a commuter school. Though, she noted, as UDC is in the middle of the nation's capital and surrounded by embassies, it's not unusual to see children of diplomats or royalty walking across campus.

"The tour helped students understand that a school doesn't have to be large or flashy to offer meaningful opportunities and a strong education," she said.

In addition to the schools, the students visited the Lincoln Memorial and Reflecting Pool, the Martin Luther King Jr. Memorial and the National Museum of African American History and Culture, which was "emotional and deeply moving," Semexant said. She also noted many of the experiences connected to what students were learning in their U.S. History classes, "adding depth and real-world relevance to their upcoming Regents and AP exams."

Thompson said the museum visit was one of the highlights for her.



Above: Students pose together at Thurgood Marshall Hall on Morgan State's campus. Right: Kelly Semexant poses with 2024 Poughkeepsie graduate Autumn Bland, now a Morgan student.



Students pose together in front of a display on Howard University's campus.

"Getting to experience that was powerful," she said. "I think every kid should go there at least once. It's something you'll never forget."

Semexant hopes the same could be said of the trip as a whole.

"This was more than a college tour," she said. "It was a transformational experience that helped our students see the world and themselves in a new way."

Students learn about careers in sports through MetLife Stadium trip

On March 20, around 50 Poughkeepsie High School students and educators took a bus to MetLife Stadium in East Rutherford, N.J. to learn about how to have a career in sports.

"We weren't there to see athletes. We weren't there to see general managers," School Counselor Jason Conrad, one of the trip coordinators, said.

"We were there to understand the network of positions it takes to run an NFL team."

Indeed, the members of the New York Jets team that most made an impact during the trip are not household names. In fact, the students didn't even remember their names. But, they opened the students' eyes to possible jobs to pursue.

"As someone who is has an interest in business and finance, there are a lot of jobs you can get,"

Chance Tanguu, a sophomore, said. "There are suites that are really expensive. Like, \$30,000 per game. There's a guy who sells them. I was able to ask him a few questions after he finished speaking and I learned a lot about sales."

The students were able to visit the Jets' locker room and team meeting space, outdoor practice area and the field itself, a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity. And yet, the students had to be prompted to talk about that aspect of the trip. "I wanted to know more about the team," Tyrese Smalls, a junior, said. "What does everyone else do in the background? I wanted to understand the different roles."

Besides, Smalls said, the locker room "was smaller than I thought. It was claustrophobic, a little bit."

That's what Conrad and other chaperones like assistant principals Cecil Coston and Felix Contreras hoped students would glean most from the experience – the job exposure.

Conrad said nine employees spoke with the students, noting seven were women and some were women of color. Some worked in social media, some in hospitality and others worked closer coordinating with players. A team photographer was especially informative, he said.

"She was discussing and explaining to kids, if you want to be part of sports, you can be part of sports in multiple different areas," he said. "One girl asked if you can get a job if you don't have a college degree. The photographer said she has a friend who works for the Detroit Lions and does the same thing she does and she didn't go to college but she specialized in photography."

He said it was important students understood multiple different college degrees, or even just specialized training in a field, can lead to a job in sports.

"No one we spoke with said, 'I had a parent who works here. I have an uncle who works here,'" Conrad said.

"They said they wanted to do something in sports, I applied for a job, and this is what happened."



Students were able to explore the MetLife Stadium field and the New York Jets locker room during the tour. Assistant Principal Cecil Coston, left, a Jets fan, took the opportunity to load his belongings into a player's locker.