

Progress Report From Superintendent Dr. Juliette Pennyman: My First 125 Days Feb. 28, 2024

Dear Hudson City School District Students, Faculty, Staff, Families and Community,

On Tuesday night, I presented a progress report to our Board of Education on my first 125 days as your Superintendent. The past few months have been incredibly inspiring as I've listened and learned. I'm proud of the work our dedicated district team has done, as well as the partnerships we continue to nurture with our community. I am so grateful to have interacted with students, staff, and parents through many conversations to gather the qualitative information for my 125-Day Report and district performance data for the quantitative portion of the presentation. I look forward to us working collaboratively over the next few months to build upon and create a Hudson City School District Strategic Plan that will result in success for our student population.

Please [click here](#) to view the 125-Day Progress Report presentation.

Every step has been powered by one priority: optimizing education for our students. When I joined our district in July 2023, I outlined three proposed outcomes in my Entry Plan:

- An engaged district and community that understands the focus and direction of our school district with a renewed commitment that "we are all responsible for the success of our schools."
- A comprehensive summary of findings, observations and insights from my community engagement activities.
- An outline of a strategic planning process to review our school district's current strategic plan and stages of implementation.

How do we get there? I have identified Six Keys for School Improvement, which I believe can dramatically improve schools and instruction across each school and our district.

1. Strengthen the Instructional Core

Opportunities include:

- **Adopt and implement a high-quality curriculum** and continue the rollout of the Eureka Math Squared approach through Algebra I to create consistency in math experience and develop students' critical-thinking skills.
- **Improve 21st century learning** through technology embedded in daily instruction. This can be done by improving technology integration in classroom instruction; supporting teachers with cutting-edge curricular resources; and continuing to build partnerships to bring STEM (science, technology, engineering and math) opportunities to students.

Progress:

- **Audit and review district curriculum:** We have reviewed the quality and alignment of the current curriculum and identified gaps where curricular resources and supports may be necessary.

- **Continued curriculum and instruction support, resources and partnerships:** The Eureka Math2 curriculum rollout continues at the elementary school level, with some early exploration of secondary curriculum. We are looking into supplemental curricular resources to add rigor and relevance across core subject areas. We are partnering with Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute to supplement students' experiences with STEM both in the classroom and through off-campus opportunities.
- **Verizon Innovative Learning Grant application submitted:** If approved, the grant will provide funding for technology devices for all secondary students, instructional coaches and additional support to embed technology into the teaching and learning experience.

2. Strengthen Instructional Leadership Capacity

Opportunities include:

- **Drive instruction through Professional Learning Communities and peer-coaching models,** including investing in and leveraging the expertise of teaching staff and coaches, and providing structures for collaboration and peer observation that result in more alignment horizontally among grade-level teams and vertically across subject-matter teams.
- **Revamp our staffing recruitment and retention plan,** including attracting and retaining diverse, highly qualified teaching staff, and strategically invest in a "grow-your-own" program to create a pipeline for employment within the district.

Progress:

- **Instructional Coaching in English Language Arts and Math:** Instructional coaches work with teachers when invited, to support

curriculum implementation and instructional-capacity building.

- **Empowering principals to take on more responsibility related to instructional leadership:** This includes freeing time in their schedules, in collaboration with assistant principals, to increase time for classroom visits and observation. Principals have started to create and lead professional development targeted at teachers' needs.
- **District and school leadership teams drafting frameworks for highly-effective schools:** Utilizing the six keys to ground the strategic planning process and target specific needs within our district.

3. Improve Data-Driven Practices

Opportunities include:

- **Reset the strategic planning process:** This will provide opportunities to build structures and systems that support data-driven decision-making.
- **Revise the Kindergarten screening process:** Include stronger data collection and communication among team

members to provide early intervention and prepare for incoming kindergarten classes.

Progress:

- **Building capacity for data-driven decision-making among the leadership team:** Leadership coaching and leadership retreats are being utilized to build shared mission, vision, values and goals; reviewing and updating the strategic planning process; analyzing how grant money is

spent to ensure equity and alignment with the strategic plan; and seeking stakeholder input through surveys and additional outreach.

- **Implementing a data-informed approach to develop new initiatives and prioritizing next steps:** The Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Community Team has drafted diversity, equity and inclusivity goals based on stakeholder engagement and student-learning data. We also have begun gathering information from teachers on grade-level standards alignment in daily instruction.

4. Tiered Approach to School Support & Intervention

Opportunities include:

- **Build on our data-driven Multi-Tiered Systems of Support (MTSS) process:** Create consistent practices to build student success teams, involving clear communication among team members, and utilize New York State Education Department and Stronger Connections grant funding to target individual student academic and social-emotional needs.
- **Creatively address individualized students support:** Maximize inclusion for students with Individualized Education Plans (IEPs); differentiation support for teachers; investigate flexible scheduling solutions to address credit deficiencies; and expand graduation pathways.

Progress:

- **Building a comprehensive Multi-Tiered Systems of Support framework for Kindergarten through Grade 12:** Working across building leadership teams and district leadership, the MTSS framework will address age-appropriate interventions to improve student outcomes with cohesion and transparency.
- **Bluehawk Academy as a model for a team-approach to successful program leadership intervention strategies:** District leadership is developing a new proposal for the innovative school model at Bluehawk Academy to embed internship opportunities into students' school day; Mollie Zucker joined the leadership team as the Bluehawk Academy's Associate Principal in November 2023.
- **Crisis plan developed to address student mental health support needs:** The district leadership team worked with counselors, social workers and school staff to develop a thorough intervention plan.

5. Promote a Positive, Inclusive School Environment for all Stakeholders

Opportunities include:

- **Student advisory team:** Involve students in conversations about how to improve sense of community and belonging in classrooms; collaboratively rebuild a sense of pride to be a Hudson City School District student.
- **Build district-wide strategy to prevent and respond to harmful behavior:** Build on the foundations of Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS) work; offer robust training to staff and students around restorative practices to enhance conflict prevention and positive resolution tools; draw from Bluehawk Academy successes re: restorative practices.

Progress:

- **Investments in safety, leading to fewer student altercations in schools:** The STOPit online reporting tool was adopted to deter and mitigate bullying, cyber abuse and other inappropriate behaviors; additional school safety officers were hired in secondary schools.
- **Diversity, equity and inclusivity initiatives and leadership in place to propel change:** DEI Manager Dr. Tia Pressey joined the staff in October 2023 to lead the district in building a more supportive learning environment for all; for staff, book study and professional development using “*Culturally Responsive Teaching and the Brain*” by Dr. Zaretta Hammond.
- **Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS) implementation:** Implementation at Hudson Senior High School: 110 students were recognized for being respectful, responsible and safe in December 2023.

6. Increase Monitoring & Accountability

Opportunities include:

- **Improve teacher observation and feedback protocols to facilitate opportunities for professional growth:** Align observation and feedback protocols with district-wide Initiatives; provide targeted professional development based on needs identified through evaluations.
- **Continue to update technology in facilities and technology use practices and protocols:** Assess cybersecurity protocols and develop incident response plans; update the student technology handbook and use policies; update the district website to ease users’ experience.

Progress:

- **Community members express excitement around increase in transparency and communication, leading to more meaningful engagement:** Superintendent Pennyman engages stakeholder groups once per month to collect feedback and gather input for decision-making from community members, school staff and students; Family Fun Nights bring community members into schools to connect with staff and each another; the Pennyman’s Pen newsletter to keep stakeholders informed every other week; the district leadership team developing an end-of-year community feedback survey.
- **Significant progress made to increase student access to technology and improve district-wide technology systems and processes:** Cybersecurity risk is significantly diminished; technology infrastructure exists and plans are focused on embedding technology into everyday instruction.

Strategic Planning Next Steps

The Hudson City School District’s strategic plan sets priorities, focuses energy and resources, strengthens operations and ensures that employees and other stakeholders work toward common goals. Here is our approach to review and update the district’s current plan and stages of implementation:

- **Community Engagement** (Focus groups, community events, survey): April - June, September - October 2024
- **Plan Revision and Rewriting** (Board of Education and staff strategy revision): July - August 2024
- **Plan Review and Finalization** (Final Board of Education review and revision): September - October 2024



I extend my deep gratitude to the Board of Education and our schools' leadership teams, teachers, staff, students, families and community members for partnering with me and investing their valuable time and efforts to support our students' success. Our school district team is comprised of committed, dedicated, skilled and compassionate professionals who care about the education, success and well-being of our students and families.

Together, I know we will accomplish great things. I'm excited for the future because our students deserve the very best, every single day. Thank you, as always, for your investment in our students' lives.

Sincerely,
Dr. Juliette Pennyman
Superintendent
#HudsonTogetherWeCan