



HUDSON
CITY SCHOOL DISTRICT
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Dr. Juliette Pennyman, Superintendent of Schools

Hudson City School District Curriculum Initiatives Take Spotlight at Board of Education Meeting

The Hudson City School District is advancing and rolling out a variety of curriculum initiatives this school year under the direction of Dr. Elsa Kortright-Torres, the district's new Executive Director for Teaching and Learning. She provided a presentation to the Board of Education and community Tuesday, Sept. 24, 2024.

The multifaceted initiatives are rooted in [Six Keys for School Improvement](#), announced by Superintendent Dr. Juliette Pennyman last school year. They also are based on New York State Education data pointing out opportunities to advance student success as part of being a state-designated Target District. This designation requires the district to create a [Comprehensive Improvement Plan](#), including [techniques to address the performance](#) of Hispanic students at Montgomery C. Smith Elementary School.

There are three areas of focus, Dr. Kortright-Torres said.

- Aligning curriculum and assessments to New York State's Next Generation standards, which replaced Common Core standards.
- Differentiated Instruction, which provides students with tailored instruction to meet their needs and help them learn in ways most comfortable and effective.
- Professional Development for teachers and teaching assistants on key initiatives such as Multi-Tiered Systems of Support (MTSS), which directly helps students learn through a variety of supportive techniques, the Science of Reading, Eureka Math and AVID, which stands for Advancement Via Individual Determination.

A district steering committee is a key factor in implementing MTSS, Dr. Kortright-Torres said. It meets monthly to gauge progress and strategize solutions and next steps, using software to track progress for each student. The district uses benchmarks in areas such as English Language Arts and math, with assessments throughout the year. MTSS meetings are regularly held at each school, where teachers and administrators collaboratively evaluate students' needs and intervention approaches.

Dr. Kortright-Torres also outlined additional initiatives that are underway:

- **Just Right Readers – Decodables:** Decodable books, which help students in pre-kindergarten through grade five accelerate their reading level, have a barcode in each book to help connect teachers with resources to teach reading skills based on the book. The books are key components of individualized learning.
- **Professional Learning Community (PLC) meetings:** Teachers collaborate about instructional strategy and how students are performing, and create action plans to improve scholastic results. The meetings include a focus on ongoing professional development for teachers. Meetings occur at least bi-weekly.
- **Achieve 3000-Literacy:** This Hudson Junior and Senior High Schools program provides tailored learning opportunities that improve reading literacy. It starts with establishing a student's baseline level and customizes approaches through software that, on a singular topic, provides text at a variety of reading levels so the most appropriate text can be used by the student. It also helps students understand skills requirements for a variety of careers, and can be used outside of class, independently, by students.
- **Eureka Math Squared:** This program provides differentiated lessons, tied into real-life scenarios. It also offers lessons – including those that are culturally responsive – to help students needing assistance.
- **Culturally Responsive-Sustaining Educational Practices:** This New York State Education Department-mandated program helps create student-centered learning environments that affirm cultural identities; foster

positive academic outcomes; develop students' abilities to connect across lines of difference; elevate historically marginalized voices; empower students as agents of social change; and contribute to individual student engagement, learning, growth and achievement by cultivating critical thinking.

- **Restorative Justice and Practices:** The program underscores the importance of adherence to the district's Code of Conduct to ensure students feel safe, welcome and are comfortable enough to share their experiences in a positive way.
- **Rubicon Atlas:** This is a repository of lesson plans and curriculum initiatives, as well as a technique to ensure compliance with New York State standards. The Rubicon identifies what approaches are successful and where gaps are. It also provides the ability to be more strategic when writing curriculum or allocating resources in place. While it has been in use in Hudson for significant time, it now is receiving a renewed emphasis.

Superintendent's Report

During her Superintendent's Report, Dr. Pennyman:

- Noted that Board of Education Vice President Mark DePace and new Board members Matthew Mackerer and Amanda Grubler toured all three district schools and were thrilled to see classes in action.
- Provided an update on the ongoing strategic-planning process and an inclusive, meaningful discussion held among Board of Education members, parents and staff. The strategic plan now being formulated will guide the school district's future via goals and metrics to evaluate progress, while keeping the public informed.
- Shared a letter to the district from Cobleskill High School football coach Ed Hantho, who complimented Hudson High's varsity football team for being "completely prepared, disciplined and playing like a unit... You are a classy team that is going in the right direction with players that want to succeed and work together, and I think that is a direct reflection of those leading you - YOUR COACHES. Keep the faith and keep doing what you are doing, and the sleeping giant in Hudson will be awoken again."
- Announced that September's Harvest of the Month food item was corn and how some classrooms, including the Food and Nutrition class, engaged in educational, fun experiences.
- Said that she participated in recent Meet the Teacher Nights at the junior high and senior high schools, which were well-organized events that allowed for open communication between parents and teachers.

Dr. Pennyman also announced new staff members. These include:

Chante Brooks, Executive Director of Human Resources: Brooks' diverse experience includes being a special education teacher, mentor teacher and Committee for Special Education chair for New York City's Department of Education. She also has been an assistant principal and assistant director of special education for the Wappingers Central School District in Dutchess County and has served as a school crisis interventionist and teaching assistant at youth residential centers. She most recently has been an adjunct professor and mentor at SUNY New Paltz. She holds a bachelor's degree in Sociology and Criminal Justice from the College of New Rochelle, and master's degrees in Urban Teaching and School Building Leadership from Mercy College, as well as a District Leadership Certification from SUNY Plattsburgh.

Dr. Pennyman emphasized that this position is not new. It has been vacant since 2022 and previously was referred to as the Human Resources Manager. In addition, the salary for the position is not new either – it was in the 2023-2024 school district annual budget, and it is funded in the current 2024-2025 district budget approved by the Board of Education and community voters. She added that no positions have been created in the district's administrative office during her tenure.

Dan Connor, Interim Associate Principal, Hudson Junior High School: An educator for 48 years in rural, urban and suburban school districts, Connor brings a passion and belief that all students can reach their maximum potential. One of his key beliefs is that "no one ever really cares about how much you know until they understand that you care about them." He believes this is extremely beneficial when developing trust and confidence throughout the school community.

Angela Grandinetti, physical education teacher: A 2015 Hudson High School graduate, Grandinetti studied applied sciences at Columbia Greene Community College before earning her degree in physical education at Russell Sage College. She most recently has been a teaching assistant at Ichabod Crane Middle School in Valatie, where she has been coach of the junior varsity softball team.

Edward Hamm, social studies teacher, Hudson Senior High School: After graduating from Hudson High School, Hamm received his bachelor's degree in political science at Syracuse University and a master's degree in adolescence education

at SUNY New Paltz. He previously worked at a nonprofit, helping individuals navigate housing challenges as a counselor and program manager certified by the federal Department of Housing and Urban Development.

Other Actions

Elsewhere, the Board of Education also approved contracts and personnel items. Learn more by visiting <https://go.boarddocs.com/ny/hudsoncsd/Board.nsf/Public>. Click on the Sept. 24, 2024 Meeting Agenda and then click each item for details. View the meeting on the Hudson City School District's YouTube page at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KBSdp3bYfCM>.

The next Board of Education meeting is Tuesday, Oct. 8 at 6 p.m. in the Hudson High School library. The meeting also can be viewed live, or on demand, on the YouTube page.