MY BROTHER'S KEEPER COMMUNITY ACTION PLAN

Port Chester-Rye Union Free School District
A MESSAGE FROM LUIS A. MARINO,
MAYOR OF THE VILLAGE OF PORT CHESTER

The Village of Port Chester is fully committed to supporting the My Brother's Keeper initiative. We are committed to meeting our male scholars’ needs and promoting academic excellence and college and career readiness. We have a vested interest in supporting their mental health and helping them build upon their emotional intelligence. As a result, we welcome the opportunity to officially be a part of the New York State My Brother’s Keeper Community Network. Our district’s commitment to the MBK initiative is fully enshrined in the belief that we must support our young men of color. We recognize the challenges faced by these young people. The Village of Port Chester supports the six national MBK milestones that focus on ensuring that all children: 1. Enter school ready to learn 2. Read at grade level by third grade 3. Graduate from high school ready for college and career 4. Complete postsecondary education or training 5. Successfully enter the workforce 6. Grow up in safe communities and get a second chance if they make a mistake. In addition to supporting the six milestones set at the national level, we are also committed to supporting the six NYS goals. MBK goals: 1. Ensuring equitable access to high quality schools and programs 2. Expanding prevention, early warning, and intervention services 3. Using differentiated approaches based on need and culture 4. Responding to structural and institutional racism 5. Making comprehensive and coordinated support services widely available 6. Engaging families and communities in a trusted and respectful way we are proud to stand beside the New York State Education Department as an active member of the New York State My Brother’s Keeper Community Network to further these goals.

Sincerely,

Luis A. Marino Mayor of the Village of Port Chester

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“They see what ought to be by the reflection of what is, and endeavor to remove the contradiction.” – Frederick Douglas

Message from the Superintendent

Dr. Aurelia Henriquez

As the Superintendent of Schools, I aim to address an essential topic that lies at the heart of our educational journey: collective will. It is an honor to participate in this critical work in the context of the My Brother's Keeper (MBK) initiative and its impact on the Port Chester School District.

The MBK initiative inspires us to take a collective approach towards supporting and empowering our students, particularly those who face significant challenges. It calls upon us to break down barriers and create opportunities for every single student in our district, regardless of their circumstances. It challenges us to be accountable for the success of each and every student, especially those who need our support the most.

In embracing the collective will, we recognize that the success of our students is not solely the responsibility of teachers and administrators. It is a responsibility shared by every member of our community. From parents and guardians to community leaders, local organizations, and volunteers, we all play a crucial role in shaping the future of our students.

We must come together to remove the barriers that hinder the progress of our students. Whether those barriers are rooted in socio-economic challenges, language barriers, or limited access to resources, we cannot allow them to define the destiny of our children. It is our collective will that empowers us to overcome these obstacles, ensuring that every student has an equal opportunity to succeed.

Creating opportunities for our students means providing them with a supportive and inclusive learning environment. It means fostering a culture that celebrates diversity, embraces inclusivity, and promotes A SENSE OF BELONGING. It means investing in programs and initiatives that address the unique needs of our students, including mentorship, after-school activities, and access to technology.

Let us remember that our vision and mission as a school district cannot be fulfilled unless we commit ourselves to the success of all our students. Each student is a valuable member of our community, deserving of our unwavering support and dedication.
The Port Chester School District has accepted the MBK Challenge. At our MBK Summit we accepted responsibility and said yes to collective will. I call upon every single member of our community to join hands and be accountable for the success of every student in our district. Let us be the collective force that uplifts and inspires. Let us be the champions of our students' dreams, guiding them towards a future filled with endless possibilities.

Together, we have the power to transform lives, to break cycles of inequality, and to create a brighter future for our students. Let us unite our collective will, remove barriers, and create opportunities so that we may fulfill our vision and mission of success for all.

Thank you and let us embark on this journey of collective will, knowing that together, we can make a difference in the lives of our students and in the future of our community.
A Message from the Director of Guidance

Dr. Maeva Rich Kennedy

Our students are the future leaders, innovators and change makers of society. Investing in their support and mentorship not only helps them develop essential skills and knowledge but also cultivates a strong sense of community engagement and empowerment. The My Brother’s Keeper initiative (MBK) solidifies our values as a community; recognizing the imperative role education plays in shaping a brighter future for our students, particularly our students of color.

Rooted in mentorship, support, and equitable opportunities, MBK serves as a catalyst for empowerment, striving to dismantle barriers, while cultivating an inclusive environment, where every student can thrive—SUCCESS FOR ALL! My Brother’s Keeper, however, is more than an initiative; its significance lies not just within the name but the transformation it ignites, nurturing a community where every student’s potential is acknowledged and celebrated.

Our district pledges a commitment to prioritize identified milestones and priorities critical in fostering a supportive and inclusive environment. Through this work, we aim to create community cohesion through a universal framework in which all students feel valued and supported. By investing in our students, through these pillars, we are providing empowerment, socially and academically. Further, we aim to provide access to resources to those that may face socio-economic and racial disparities.

Our hope is to ignite a powerful conversation in which critical dialogue is required amongst our elected officials, community leaders, parents, and faith-based leaders to create and implement a purposeful plan to impart meaningful change for our young people. Becoming a New York State Education recognized participant in the MBK Community allows us to join a greater network of stakeholders aligned in a call to action to improve outcomes for our students.

It is in our collective efforts, together as a community, that we embark on a journey that will shape brighter, more promising futures for all. Our journey continues; and together, we will make a lasting impact for our youth ensuring pathways to their success and general well-being.
April 3, 2024

To the Port Chester Community:

I write to express the Port Chester Carver Center's commitment to the My Brother's Keeper (MBK) initiative accepted by the Port Chester School District and the Village of Port Chester. We look forward to becoming an integral part of the New York State My Brother's Keeper Community Network.

At Carver Center, we support the holistic development of our male scholars, with a focus on promoting academic excellence, college and career readiness, and mental health and emotional intelligence. We firmly believe that every young man of color deserves equitable opportunities and unwavering support to thrive in all aspects of their lives.

Aligned with the six national MBK milestones, we are dedicated to ensuring that all children:

1. Enter school ready to learn:
2. Read at grade level by third grade
3. Graduate from high school ready for college and career
4. Complete postsecondary education or training
5. Successfully enter the workforce
6. Grow up in safe communities and get a second chance if they make a mistake

In addition to our commitment to these national milestones, we are fully committed to providing robust programming and supported services to enhance the quality of life and positive outcomes of our male youth and young adults. These include:

1. A robust and comprehensive school-age after-school program to support academic growth and personal development
2. College and Career Guidance and support services outside of school hours to explore various postsecondary education pathways
3. A safe and welcoming center that extends support not only to the youth but also to their families, recognizing the importance of holistic support systems.

We are proud to be aligned with the Port Chester School District, Village of Port Chester, and New York State Education Department as members of the New York State My Brother's Keeper Community Network. We are committed to furthering the goals of the MBK initiative, fostering inclusive communities, and empowering our young men of color to achieve their full potential.

Sincerely,

Anne Bradner
Chief Executive Officer

Port Chester Carver Center
Introduction:

The Village of Port Chester is specified as the Westchester County Community with the largest per capita Latinx population. More than 65% of the residents identify as Latino and more than 80% of the students who attend the Port Chester Rye Union Free School District are Latino/Hispanic.

Port Chester-Rye Union Free School District (PCRUFSD) includes six district schools that serve a population of 4,455 K-12 students, residing in Westchester County, New York. Within the district's boundaries, a parochial school serves parentally placed students. The following demographic information and data points outlined in this section are related to PCRUFSD only. PCRUFSD is in the New York City metropolitan statistical area, with a total village population of 30,823 residents (US Census, 2022). Historically, our students have faced a disproportionate level of trauma and hardship in their communities due to poverty, high concentrations of crime, language/cultural barriers, and limited access to healthcare and human services. Together, these barriers have negatively impacted our students' collective well-being and impacted their ability to focus on school. As a result of the challenges in our surrounding community, our district has been identified as a “high need” LEA in the State of New York.

Specifically, the Port Chester-Rye UFSD serves approximately 4,500 students in six district schools, including four elementary schools (K-5), one middle school (6-8), and a single high school (9-12). The district enrollment, as stated above, is predominantly Hispanic (60%) and African American/Black (37%) students, who comprise 97% of district enrollment in 2018-19. More than three quarters of students are considered economically disadvantaged (77%), and nearly 40% of our students are English Language Learners.

Most recently, our community has been grappling with a higher frequency and propensity of violence, possible gang-related recruitment activity, and higher poverty levels. More qualitatively, student behavior incidents are also on the rise, with consistent reports from building administrators about student behaviors leading to detentions and suspensions. Substance use, particularly vaping in our campus restrooms, is a prevalent issue across our community.

An analysis of crime within the Village of Port Chester provided by the Port Chester Police Department has revealed an uptick in altercations, threatening behaviors, and crimes committed by students in our community. In the 2022-23 school year, the Village of Port Chester Police Department reported several incidents that evidence the rising behavioral infractions, which impact our student's sense of safety and well-being on our campuses:

- Several threats to inflict bodily harm were made on K-12 campuses and via social media during the school year
- A BB gun and imitation pistol were recovered from students on two of our campuses
- Several students posted videos on social media of themselves committing larcenies in local shopping stores, committing acts of vandalism, and making threats to others.
- A student was apprehended distributing edibles on campus, and several students had adverse reactions.

**The Call To Action:**
While serving a beautifully diverse community, we also serve significant populations of students who have been historically underserved:

- 39% of students are English Language Learners
- 85% of students are Hispanic/Latino
- 3% of students are individuals of color (other than Hispanic)
- 16.7% of students have IEPs (Individualized Education Program)
- 1.5% of students are experiencing homelessness

Additionally, our district’s needs are significant and far surpass New York State’s “high need” threshold:

- 28.4% of our students experience chronic absences
- 73.45% of students are eligible for free or reduced-price lunch, compared to 56% at the state level

Aside from these metrics, our students struggle to perform in school at the level of their peers, largely due to the challenges they face in their daily lives. As a result, our district was designated as a Targeted District for Improvement by the NYS Education Department for the past four years. Based on data from the 2022-2023 school year:

- PCRUFSD has an overall 4% dropout rate, with our ELL dropout rate increasing from 14% to 30% over the past 5 years
- In grades 3-8, 31% of our students are proficient in ELA, in comparison to the state average of 47%
- In grades 3-8, 25% of our students are proficient in Math, in comparison to the state average of 41%
We understand that a stable, positive school environment, where students and families feel safe, supported, and engaged is vital for student well-being and success. As a district, we have already made considerable strides towards a more comprehensive approach to addressing the holistic needs of our students. Some key efforts include:

- Collaboration with Family Services of Westchester, a mental health community-based organization to provide clinical mental health services during the school day to identified students.
- Increased staff that includes four, full-time, NYS Certified School Social Workers to engage as School Community Coordinators; charged to implement the community schools' approach, supporting students and families.
- Implementing Rams Rising, a program designed to enhance students’ connection to our school community by fostering trusting relationships with caring adult mentors.
- Providing an alternative school program (Principal’s Prep Academy) that supports graduation opportunities for students coping with grief, trauma, anxiety, and depression.

However, the needs of our students are immense, and our district must take additional measures to proactively support student wellbeing in the form of prevention. As we have assessed community needs over the past decade, we have seen a steady rise in students exposed to trauma...
and adverse childhood experiences. Several key findings obtained from our 2022-23 district-level data and the July 2023 BOCES needs assessment report highlight this urgent need:

**Insufficient Social Emotional Supports for Students:**

- Only 43% of middle school faculty agreed that the school provides the resources, and training necessary to support students’ social or emotional needs and 55% reported that the school adequately supports students with their social, emotional, and behavioral problems. Additionally, only 50% of middle school families felt that the school supports parents in identifying the social and emotional skills their children need to develop. Lastly, as a district, we have seen an 80% increase in elementary school students referred to mandated counseling services for behaviors that impact their daily functioning and school success.
Low Sense of Connectedness to School:

- 64% of middle school students indicated that they feel like they belong at their school, and 65% reported that they are happy to be at their school. Only 41% of students agreed that students talk about the importance of understanding their own feelings and the feelings of others. Additionally, 71% of families agreed that they feel welcome at the school.

- According to our most recent data, the Port Chester High School dropout rate for Hispanic/Latino male students is significantly higher.

Behaviors That Negatively Impact Student Safety and Wellbeing:

- Nearly 60% of staff members agreed that alcohol use is a major problem among students, and over 52% indicated that drug use is also prevalent.
- Additionally, 34% of staff members indicated that bullying is a problem among students, and nearly 27% agreed that physical altercations occur often.
Low Levels of Engagement in School:

- Chronic absenteeism is on the rise in our district. Attendance data from the 2018-2019 school year finds student absenteeism recorded at 14%, compared to the most recent 2022-2023 school year data indicating a significant elevation to 28%.

High Levels of Student Mobility

- More than 40% of students who graduate from Port Chester High School have experienced interruptions in their education due to mobility.
- 38% of current fifth grade students have not been continuously enrolled in the same school since kindergarten.
The Port Chester School District and Community Focused MBK Principles: My Brother’s Keeper is focused on six national milestones:

1. Getting a Healthy Start and Entering School Ready to Learn
2. Reading at Grade Level by Third Grade
3. Graduating from High School Ready for College and Career
4. Completing Post-Secondary Education or Training
5. Successfully Entering the Workforce Through Increased Engagement in Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEAM)
6. Successful Development of Social Emotional Competencies

In addition to these milestones, NYS MBK priorities include:

1. Ensuring equitable access to high quality schools and programs;
2. Expanding prevention, early warning, and intervention services;
3. Using differentiated approaches based on need and culture;
4. Responding to structural and institutional racism;
5. Making comprehensive and coordinated support services widely available; and
6. Engaging families and communities in a trusted and respectful way.

The above highlighted milestones and commitments represent the work that the Port Chester School District will focus on through our commitment to this initiative. These areas were selected by members of our community, including students, through a data dive that revealed challenges with reading proficiency by third grade, statistics regarding dropouts and our commitment to community engagement.
Community Support

On December 11, 2023, the Port Chester school district recently made history by hosting the My Brother's Keeper Summit, an event aimed at addressing the challenges faced by boys of color in education. The summit brought together various members of the Port Chester Community, including teachers, administrators, guidance counselors, mental health professionals, staff, parents, the Board of Education President and Trustees, Port Chester Village Trustees, Mayor Luis Marino, Senator Shelley Mayer, Assemblyman Steve Otis, local police, our School Resource Officers, Director of Guidance Dr. Maeva Rich Kennedy, Superintendent Dr. Aurelia Henriquez and most importantly, our students.

The summit focused on the need to improve the academic performance of black and brown male students, who, according to both NY State assessment data and internal data, have been underperforming on the New York State ELA assessment, particularly in third grade. Additionally, boys of color have had higher rates of suspensions and dropouts.

In response to these challenges, the community made a commitment to take an "all hands-on deck" approach to address the issues faced by boys of color in the Port Chester school district. There was a collective acknowledgment that the current situation is unacceptable, and a determination to improve the trajectory and outcomes for our students. The summit was recorded and made available on our website, ensuring that the discussions and action steps taken are widely accessible. Port Chester Schools MBK Local Action Summit Community Partner Committee meetings held on November 13, 2023, and January 23, 2024, provided an opportunity to engage with various stakeholders and discuss the data and the MBK Action Plan. On January 10, 2024, the challenges surrounding reading proficiency levels were specifically discussed and addressed through input from our Superintendent Advisory Group consisting of high school students. Port Chester Schools MBK Local Action Summit Through this collaborative effort, the Port Chester school district aims to create an inclusive and excellent educational environment for all students, with a particular focus on improving outcomes for boys of color. By recognizing the collective will to do better by our children, the community is committed to improving the collective future of Port Chester.
Community Action Plan

Reading at Grade Level by Third Grade

Port Chester is committed to building a district-wide culture of inquiry and data study K-12, with a strong focus on outcomes, targets, and achievement that supports the whole child, whole school, whole community philosophy and approach. Students in need of academic and/or behavior intervention services will be referred by their general education teachers or parents to their respective Multi-Tiered System of Supports (MTSS) / Response to Intervention (RTI) teams for prompt consideration and development of required plan for services. Students with RTI/MTSS plans will be monitored closely for progress and revisions of their plans as delineated in the District’s RTI/MTSS Plan. Further and highlighting an emphasis on literacy, Port Chester has adopted and begun implementation of a new literacy program; American Reading Company (ARC). The goals established through use of the ARC program are for all students who have entered Kindergarten in Port Chester Schools by 2022 and who have remained in our schools through grade 3, will achieve grade level literacy by the end of Grade 3.

Graduating High School Ready for College and Careers

Port Chester Schools aims to create a culture of student agency, where ALL students are exposed to multiple college and career opportunities across grade levels Pre-K-12. Our school counselors
have been engaged in year long professional development to grow our college and career preparation through increased-push-in lessons, increased parent informational workshops and increased graduation pathways for students to engage in college or career goals. Port Chester has created partnerships with local colleges and universities, including Westchester Community College (WCC), and Purchase College to support students' direct access to college. Specifically, Port Chester has an “Instant Admissions’” program in which graduating seniors, upon consent from students and parents, are automatically enrolled in their Freshman year at WCC. Further, to promote students' career pathways into the world of education in particular, Port Chester is in the process of creating a “Grow Your Own” program. “Grow Your Own” will ideally provide students with aspirations of career pathways into educational career opportunities to take classes at the High School that will provide a trajectory into teaching or other school providers like counselors, school psychologists or service providers. Another platform for exposure and access to college and career is through our college and career fairs. Port Chester High School will commence its second annual College and Career Fair in which trades and education will be featured in addition to college programs. This year’s fair will host workshops facilitated by local community members who will speak about their career trajectory, pathways, and experiences. Port Chester Middle School will also hold their own college and career fair to support exposure and access to the middle school community and their families.

Expanding Prevention, Early Warning, and Intervention Services

As previously mentioned, Port Chester Schools utilizes MTSS for students identified in need of academic or behavioral intervention services. Currently, we are examining our academic support to ensure expansion of academic intervention services to meet the needs of identified students. One program that Port Chester Schools has created is an alternative learning environment within the high school for students who have been identified with emotional regulation difficulties in which their academic success and performance have been compromised. Through the Principal’s Promise Academy (PPA) students receive personalized instruction, differentiated scheduling, and engage in college and career readiness activities. PPA students also have an assigned counselor that supports their needs during their time in PPA.
A peer-mentorship program known as Rams Rising was initiated this year to support middle school students at the middle school. Like PPA, a small group of students (approximately 15-20) will be supported, to fulfill their potential. Like the My Brother's Keeper initiative, we aim to begin to address persistent opportunity gaps. We also aim to become part of the My Brothers Keeper community through our work with Rams Rising. SEL, inclusivity, and mental health are at the core of this. The Guidance Director and counselors, and others will also be working with our Rams during the day.

Engaging Families and Communities in a Trusted and Respectful Way

Port Chester Schools continue to create opportunities for all students, teachers, leaders, staff, parents, and members of the community to feel included, respected, and well-informed. We see our diversity as a strength and we are engaging stakeholders in conversations about inclusive excellence and equitable access in all programs, practices, and initiatives. This commitment fits into the district’s vision of Success for All Students. When all students are supported, have access to various programs and learning opportunities it ensures that they will be successful in their academic and social development. Therefore, it is an important priority to pursue as it is in our students’ best interest.

Action Plans- Utilize multiple platforms and outlets to broadcast important information to celebrate and highlight the district’s success stories. We will collaborate and be inclusive more often to allow for meaningful discourse with key stakeholders. We will include opportunity for
student voice and celebrate publicly our students’ and staff’s accomplishments. Ensure access to translation devices at all Board of Education Meetings. Use Covey’s Speed of Trust and 13 Habits of High Trust Leaders to guide relationships. Ongoing collaborative conversations with elected officials. Opportunities for student voice. Implement a robust school climate survey system for staff, students, and families beginning in September 2023 with a participation rate of at least 50% for constituencies throughout the school year.

What does success look like? Building a culture of collaboration and trust is the necessary foundation for inclusive excellence. Based on quantitative and qualitative data gathered, the need for consistency and collaboration across schools has emerged as a priority. Lack of collaboration and consistency in the past has led to disconnected and isolated decisions regarding curriculum, instruction, and programmatic decisions that were not supported by data. One of the goals of the Board of Education for the 2021-2022 year is: Foster A Sense of Community Connectedness. In the same way that the Board and District aim to ensure that students, families, and district staff engage in meaningful and authentic interactions and to forge and sustain community partnerships to expand opportunities for students, a collaborative environment, which emphasizes shared ownership, is key, at all schools.
MBK TIMELINES

Port Chester Schools

MBK Timeline

September 2023
Rams Rising &
Port Chester
Partners
Initiatives
launched

October 2023
Rams Rising &
Port Chester
Partners
Committee
launched

November 2023
Community
Partners
Committee
Meeting

December 2023
MBK Local
Action Summit
Kick-off

January 2024
2nd Community
Partner
Committee
Meeting

Call to Action;
Engagement of various
community stakeholders
to discuss data and MBK
Action Plan

Community event;
discussion around
selected principals,
data and
recommendations

Engagement of various
community stakeholders
to continue the
discussion around data
and MBK Action Plan
Port Chester Schools

MBK TimeLine
Ongoing

January 2024
Superintendent’s Student Advisory Group
Panel of PCHS students discuss challenges around meeting proficiency levels, school climate and culture

January 2024
Port Chester Commemorates Black History Month
Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Celebration Video

February 2024
Port Chester Pearls Society
Face centered forum around SEL, evidence, leadership

Ongoing 2023-2024
TSG Disproportionality Committee
Year long examination of discipline data from 2021-2024

May 2024
PC College and Career Fair
Providing access and exposure to college campuses and career pathways
Port Chester My Brother’s Keeper Community Partners and Committee

Dr. Aurelia Henriquez, Superintendent of Schools
Dr. Maeva Rich Kennedy, Director of Guidance
Luis Marino, Port Chester Mayor
NAACP – Tom Kissner and Fred Griffin
Don Bosco – Jerry Rodriguez
Family Services of Westchester – Lupita DeLuccia
Family Services of Westchester – Karen Fink
Open Door – Sara Hodgdon— Karen Mandel
Tamarack Tower – Denise Quinn
Carver Center – Anne Bradner
Carver Center – Daniel Bonnet
Port Chester Council for the Arts –Denise Colangelo
One World/Aspire – Joe Carvin
Steer – Derek Vincent
Steer- Montserrat Cardenas
Charles Morgan – PC Youth Bureau Director –
Feeding Westchester – Jandery DeLaCruz
Westchester Mobile Mental Health – Beth Glauber –
Phil Oldham – Larchmont/Mamaroneck Lions Club
Jackie Lopez – Prolific Hoop
MOMS/Meals on Main – Denise Cypher
MOMS/Meals on Main – Bill Cusano
Nicole Barros – Bilingual Survivor Response Program Coordinator/WestCOP-Victims Assistance Services
Helping Hands for the Homeless and Hungry – Young Kim
Joan Grangenois-Thomas – Port Chester Village Board
Phil Dorazio – Port Chester Village Board
Religious/Faith Leaders
Ingramah Tyler – NAACP; ACT-SO
Chris McGregor – Feeding Westchester
BHFP - Blue Heart Forever Project; Lynda De Gomez - Director