

SUPERINTENDENT'S BRIEF

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

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PCSD appreciates paraprofessionals



Across the Poughkeepsie City School District, paraprofessionals, or teaching assistants, elevate student achievement.

Having a wide range of responsibilities and skills, they serve as partners with classroom teachers in identifying and providing academic, linguistic and behavioral support students need to find success in the classroom. Acting as a nurturing influence on students during instruction, providing one-to-one assistance, encouraging students with social-emotional difficulties and reinforcing lessons to small groups, among many obligations, are what make our paraprofessionals true champions of Poughkeepsie city school

children.

Each year, Paraprofessional Appreciation Day is recognized on the first Wednesday in April. It's an important day to reflect on the sizable impact these team members make for our students. Please join us today in thanking our phenomenal support staff for their contributions to the school community.

District, BOE president receive awards

The Poughkeepsie City School District and Board of Education President Fatimah Carmen Martinez Santiago were honored recently with awards recognizing commitments to working to enhance the educational experience of area students and the community as a whole.

The school district received a Bridge to the Future Award at the Dutchess Community College Foundation's annual "Our Community's Bridge to the Future" gala on March 29 at The Grandview in Poughkeepsie. At the event, city Mayor Yvonne Flowers, a Poughkeepsie High School graduate, was also inducted into the DCC Distinguished Alumni Hall of Fame. Separately, Martinez Santiago earned the prestigious Greg Farrell Award from NYC Outward Bound Schools, a program through which her leadership skills emerged and sharpened, first as a student and then as a staff member.

Bridge to the Future Award

Through [the Bridge to the Future Award](#), the DCC Foundation recognizes individuals and organizations that distinguish themselves in working with others to enhance education, economic vitality, community wellness or civic responsibility in the mid-Hudson Valley. Past winners, since it was established in 2015, include the



Board of Education Member Kelleyann Royce-Giron, President Fatimah Carmen Martinez Santiago, Assistant Superintendent for Elementary Education Greg Mott and Board Clerk Becky Torres pose together.



The district's Bridge to the Future Award.

Eleanor Roosevelt Center at Val-Kill, Family Services, the Poughkeepsie Alliance, Day One Early Learning Community and others. In honoring PCSD, the DCC Foundation noted the successes seen since designating all seven of its schools as Community Schools in 2020. Notably, it highlighted that each of the district's elementary schools achieved "Good Standing" status by the state Education Department in 2023-24, a first in 13 years. "While there has been tremendous success at the elementary level, the school district continues to stress focus on student achievement at its secondary schools," the

DCC Foundation wrote in its description of the district as an honoree.

"Through the district's school, home, and community approach and through partnerships with the Poughkeepsie Children's Cabinet, Dutchess Community College, and other critical partners, the outcomes of Poughkeepsie City School District students continue to rise," noted the DCC Foundation.

"I've really appreciated the partnership with Dutchess Community College," said Dr. Eric Jay Rosser, superintendent of schools. "Dr. Peter Grant Jordan and his team have fully embraced working with the county's school districts. For Poughkeepsie, our collaboration has resulted in the district and DCC creating a pre-K program on the DCC campus to support city residents who are enrolled in the college and who are in need of a quality early learning program, expanding dual-enrollment courses to benefit over 350 students earning college credits at no cost to families, and working to connect the district's arts education programming to DCC programming, among other innovations that are benefiting Poughkeepsie City School District students."

Poughkeepsie was honored alongside Dutchess BOCES and the Wappingers Central School District; no school district had won the award before this year.

Greg Farrell Award

Greg Farrell was a founder of NYC Outward Bound Schools and Executive Director of the Fund for the City of New York, among other roles in education and public service. The Greg Farrell Award was established in 2020 in his memory is "meant to shine a light on individuals who bring to life through their work and personal example the qualities that defined Greg's life – encapsulated in the Award tagline of 'lighting sparks, living boldly, and leaving the world a better place,'" according to NYC Outward Bound Schools.

Martinez Santiago was [announced as the fifth recipient of the annual award in February](#). The organization noted her roots "as a change maker and force for good in her community began when she was a student at South Bronx High School, enrolled in an Outward Bound-inspired class called Project Discovery," and soon helped "to organize a 'Unity Project' aimed at stemming violence in her community." She also was a founder of "Rebels with a Cause," a youth-mentoring program aimed at creating positive change around the south Bronx.

She then served a number of roles on the staff of NYC Outward Bound Schools, before moving her family north to work at Astor Services and now Habitat for Humanity. The city-based organization [profiled Martinez Santiago as a standout alumnae](#) after she was elected president of Poughkeepsie's Board of Education. A description of the award notes, it "is not intended to be a lifetime achievement award" as it's intended to honor individuals "poised for even greater contributions in the years ahead."

"I am deeply honored to receive an award that embodies Greg Farrell's spirit of curiosity, service and adventure," she told NYC Outward Bound Schools after receiving the honor. "Like Greg, I believe in recognizing the gifts of others, breaking down systemic barriers, and cultivating spaces where people can connect with their highest potential – both individually and collectively. This award is not just a recognition but a call to continue the work of empowering communities, fostering belonging, and building a more just and compassionate world."



Mary Crown and her husband, William Ellis, sit on the bench dedicated to her sisters in Krieger Elementary School's lobby.

Bench honors Krieger alumnae

A bench in Krieger Elementary School's lobby honors the memory of three alumnae and the lasting connections created at the school. A group from the Krieger Class of 1975 recently worked with the school's PTA and leadership to donate and dedicate a bench in memory of the Crown Sisters – Jane, Nancy and Susan, graduates of the school in 1972, 1973 and 1975, respectively. The group also donated \$575 to the PTA, which will be used to support a future event or initiative that will not only support students' experience but honor the sisters.

The bench was officially dedicated March 18 with about a dozen visitors in attendance, including their sister, Mary Crown, her

husband, William Ellis, and members of the "Krieger Alumni Bench Team," among others. While some of the visitors remain local, others came in from as far away as California.

Sue Bernstein was inspired to do something to honor her friend, Susan Crown, shortly after she died in November 2021. She attended the 40th reunion for the Poughkeepsie High School Class of 1982, where the reunion committee honored late members of the class, including Susan, by displaying their graduation photo next to a dedicated candle. Shortly after, Bernstein noticed at an elementary school near her current home of Alexandria, Va., a bench had been donated by classmates of a late friend, and the idea to do the same at Krieger crystallized. Nancy Crown had passed in 2016 and, after Jane Crown died in February 2024, the project was expanded to honor all three.

Bernstein called it "a blessing to reconnect with friends throughout the project and at the dedication," noting not only the contributions of "Bench Team" members Bill Maserjian, Jean Sherry, Brian Mulvey and Josh Newman, but that more than \$2,100 was raised through a GoFundMe. "When we were kids," the GoFundMe description reads, "the Crown sisters – Susan, Nancy and Jane – so different but so similar in their ability to make and keep friends, occupied a central place in our little Poughkeepsie universe."

The bench "is a meaningful addition to our building," Krieger PTA President Jeromina Topaloglu wrote in a letter to the team of alumni. "It stands as a reminder that when we leave Krieger, we still remain in the fabric of our school community. It will be cherished by our students and staff for years to come."

The bench is engraved "May the loving memories of these wonderful Krieger alumnae watch over the next generation of Krieger students as they go forth and bring as much joy and love to their friends and families as Susan, Nancy and Jane did to theirs."

Registration remains open for fall pre-K, kindergarten

Registration remains open for the district's 2025-26 pre-K and kindergarten programs. Visit the district's [enrollment webpage](https://www.poughkeepsieschools.org/enrollment) to learn more, with instructions in English and Spanish, and to complete the central registration packet. Families can also contact the district's Central Registration Office at 845-437-3480 or centreg@poughkeepsieschools.org.

Both are free, full-day, five-days-a-week programs that include both traditional and dual language chapters. Pre-K is open to children who are 4 years old on or before Dec. 1 and reside in the district. Students who participate in pre-K and kindergarten have been shown to be more likely to succeed academically and graduate high school, are less likely to require academic intervention or special education services, and have stronger emotional and social intelligence, among a slew of other benefits.



Parents visiting the Jane Bolin Administration Building to register for pre-K or kindergarten this week found a fun photo booth for their kids.