

# SUPERINTENDENT'S BRIEF

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

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VOLUME 6



## Poughkeepsie thanks school library staff

Poughkeepsie City School District students are supported by dedicated librarians in every building who assist in ways that go far beyond simply checking in and organizing books. Our librarians are media specialists essential to the learning process. They support student inquiry, foster a love of reading as the district pushes to bolster its literacy instruction, and empower all students to become critical thinkers, enthusiastic and skillful readers, and curious researchers.

Our librarians have their fingerprints on more than you would expect. Dr. Shannon Mersand, for example, has been at the forefront of establishing our eSports program, coaching teams at the high and middle schools. That's a far cry from the classic image of a librarian reminding visitors to remain quiet within the library's walls.

April 4 each year is National School Librarian Day. It's an opportunity for us all to acknowledge the pivotal role they play in elevating student achievement. Please join us in expressing gratitude to these valued members of our schools.



### PCSD Library Media Specialists

**Clinton:** Nabia Khan (substitute)

**ELC at Smith School:** Mia Runza

**Krieger:** Dorothy Luongo

**Morse:** Casey Elmendorf

**Warring:** Jessica Sapper

**PMS:** Sara Burlingame

**PHS:** Dr. Shannon Mersand

## Four propositions on budget, board ballot



Capital improvements needed at the Jane Bolin administration building will appear as Proposition 4 on the May 20 ballot.

City of Poughkeepsie residents will decide on four propositions when they cast their ballots in the annual Poughkeepsie City School District budget vote and board election May 20.

In addition to next year's district budget and an open seat on the school board, which each year is represented in Proposition 1, residents will be asked if they will support a broad expansion of school bus availability, the Child Safety Zone designations that would allow the district to expand the service and be reimbursed on most of those transportation expenses, and a capital project to improve the district's administration building.

The list of propositions was finalized by the Board of Education at its meeting Wednesday, where Superintendent of Schools Dr. Eric Jay Rosser and Interim Assistant Superintendent of Business Margarita Lekaj presented an updated draft of the proposed district

budget for 2025-26. A final draft of the budget will be presented to the board April 22 to be approved to go in front of voters. [Watch a video of the Wednesday meeting here.](#)

Proposition 2 on the ballot authorizes the district to provide transportation to all eligible pupils. Proposition 3, which may only be passed if Proposition 2 passes, would establish Child Safety Zones to enable the district to



provide school bus service to any elementary student who lives beyond a half-mile from their school. By rough estimation, this would provide bus service to more than 900 students who currently do not have it. The district believes the availability of buses will lead to increased attendance, test scores and graduation rates, all elements for which the Child Safety Zone program was established.

Under the program, districts are eligible to receive financial aid for 90% of the cost of providing transportation to students who live more than a half-mile from their school and would have to walk through a hazardous area as defined by factors like traffic, lane crossings, availability of sidewalks, traffic control devices or crossing guards, crime rates and others.

Should the bus expansion be approved by voters, the expense not covered by state aid would come out of the district's fund balance and would not result in increased taxes for residents. [Read more here.](#)

Proposition 4 would authorize the district to utilize the "2021 Capital Reserve Fund," \$5 million plus accrued interest, for repairs and improvements to the Jane Bolin administration building at 18 S. Perry St., including installing new unit ventilators in classrooms, installing an elevator, roofing repairs and the installation of a digital sign.

It's "an opportunity for the district to move forward to be able to address \$5 million of the \$13 million of work that needs to happen here at the (Bolin) building," Rosser explained to the board. The unit ventilators would "make sure there's fresh air coming into all of the rooms that are currently occupied by our staff members." As for the elevator, "We recognize that it's important that, as we continue with our capital project work, that we're making sure that all our buildings are ADA accessible and currently this building, along with other buildings throughout the district, are not currently ADA accessible at all levels of the building," he said.

## Budget draft presented

The latest draft of the proposed 2025-26 budget is a \$147.6 million spending plan that would expand extended learning time and allow for the implementation of [school buses at the elementary level](#), while adding staff and remaining under the tax cap. The tax levy would increase by just 1.247%, the lowest in Rosser's six years in the district.

[Read the presentation here.](#)

Rosser noted at the outset the state's budget, which will include the final details of what state aid will come in to the district, is expected to be complete by April 9.

Some of the areas the spending plan would make investments in include:

- Providing buses to all students grades pre-K through 5 who live at least a half-mile from their school.
- Instructional programming, including the addition of high school credit-bearing courses at the middle school, giving students a head start on graduating on time.
- Extracurricular program expansion at the secondary level, including the addition of a marching band and robotics club.
- Expanding extended learning time, or ELT, from three days to five.
- Financing early college and career training programs, such as dual enrollment courses and [participation in the Dutchess BOCES CTI program](#), and the general pre-K through 12 college and career readiness programming happening in each district school.
- Multi-language learning supports, including the implementation of a system in which multi-language learners have access to a dedicated transition counselor throughout high school to help address the "high population" of such students who drop out prior to graduation.
- Supports for students with exceptionalities.



**Propositions 2 and 3 on the ballot, if approved, would drastically expand bus service for elementary students.**



- Arts and music education supplies and repair funding.
- Increased availability of field trips.
- Social and emotional learning, including adding an additional social worker for the middle school.
- Community Schools.
- Teacher and leader professional learning, in addition to resources allocated through the district's Title II budget.
- Right-sizing compensation for staff, a process that has been ongoing for six years.

In addition to the school budget and propositions, one Board of Education seat will be up for election; Trustee Andrew Rieser's term expires June 30. Polls will be open from 9 a.m. to 9 p.m. May 20 at the following locations:

- **Wards 1 and 3:** Morse Elementary, 101 Mansion St.
- **Ward 5:** Warring Elementary School, 283 Mansion St.
- **Wards 2 and 4:** Clinton Elementary, 100 Montgomery St.
- **Wards 6 and 7:** Poughkeepsie Middle School, 55 College Ave.
- **Ward 8:** Krieger Elementary, 265 Hooker Ave. (Whittier Boulevard entrance)

Absentee, early mail and military voting will also be available. Visit [the district's voting page](#) to learn more.



## Fair provides college exposure to PMS students

Poughkeepsie Middle School students have years before they'll have to make a decision on what to do after graduation. What's important, though, is that they know they have options.

The school last Friday held its inaugural college fair, an opportunity for students to learn more about the different choices they'll have in about four years for higher education.

"This is all about exposure," said College Readiness and Workforce Education Counselor Kelly Semexant, who organized the event with the school's Assistant Principal for Climate and Culture Danielle Green, and SEL Counselor Takiyah Ingram. "When they came in here, I don't think anybody knew what an HBCU was. They'll leave knowing that and about other schools."

The fair encompassed six tables around the perimeter of the gymnasium. Each table represented a different type of post-high school learning opportunity: community colleges, SUNY schools, private schools, Ivy League schools, HBCUs (or, Historically Black Colleges and Universities), and the military.

Each table included a poster board presentation



High school students shared details on different higher education options at Poughkeepsie Middle School's inaugural college fair.

representing the type of school, with facts included. Volunteer high school students stood at each table to also answer questions.



As the grades and classes rotated into the gym, they were given questionnaires on each type of school to fill out, which included questions about what they would learn at each table and about how it may apply to them. They then submitted the questionnaires at each table to be entered into a drawing to win college swag – shirts, drawstring bags, keychains, etc. – from the trove in Semexant's office. Semexant contacted several high school groups – Sister 2 Sister, My Brother's Keeper, National Honor Society and the AFJROTC – to find volunteers to make the presentations and stand at the tables. She said it was important the message to the middle schoolers was coming from high school students, some of whom already have plans to go to prestigious schools like Vassar. "I want them to see that it's possible to go far," Semexant said.



Seventh grade student Davae McClinton said the fair was "important for my future," as it would teach him more about schools available. "I like to draw," he said. "I'd like to go to some sort of art school." Senior Olivia Arnfield was about the high school volunteers. She said she wanted to take part as it's important "to facilitate and reinforce the fact that education is really important," and "needs to be taken more seriously." She said many of the middle school students "asked good questions. Some asked what I was planning to do after high school, which I appreciated, and they showed interest in what was a private school, what was a community college, we had good interactions." The fair in the morning was followed at the end of the day with a March Madness-themed pep rally that included games – such as musical chairs and a pie eating contest – drumming and a student versus staff basketball game.



A pep rally held Friday afternoon included, among other activities, a pie eating contest and a staff versus students basketball game in which Interim Principal Felicia Schinella was among those who took the court.

## Other newsletters to keep you informed:

Poughkeepsie City School District publishes a variety of newsletters throughout the year. Here are the available newsletters: [Curriculum & Instruction Weekly](#), April 4, 2025; [College Readiness and Workforce Education](#), March 2025; 7 Mindsets [for Parents](#), [for Parents \(Spanish language\)](#), [for Staff](#); March 2025.

## Upcoming events

- **April 9:** Unlocking the Promise of Poughkeepsie" with Geoffrey Canada: 6:15 p.m. at Morse Elementary, 101 Mansion St. [RSVP at this link](#)

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[www.poughkeepsieschools.org](http://www.poughkeepsieschools.org)