

SUPERINTENDENT'S BRIEF

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

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BOE reopening discussion on Clinton name

The Poughkeepsie City School District's Board of Education is reconsidering the new name planned to be given to Gov. George Clinton Elementary School in a continued effort to involve the community transparently throughout its renaming process.

The board scheduled a special meeting for Friday evening at which it will vote on, and expects to rescind, the new name of Roberto Clemente Elementary School given to the building that sits at 100 Montgomery St. The new names for the Columbus and Morse school buildings, Jane Bolin and Sojourner Truth, respectively, will remain. [Watch the 5 p.m. meeting here.](#)

The board decided to reopen the renaming procedure after listening to residents who expressed concern the Clemente name choice did not reflect opinions submitted by the community during the process.

"From the beginning, our goals were to ensure each district building name reflects the values we want to instill in our students and for the community to feel ownership of the names through engaging in the process," said board President Fatimah Carmen Martinez Santiago. "Roberto Clemente is a worthy role model for all our students, including our Latino and Black communities, and may still become the new name given to Clinton Elementary. By reopening this process, we're not rejecting the name but ensuring anyone with concerns in this important decision is heard."

The board intends to form a new ad-hoc committee following its organizational meeting in July to make new recommendations for Clinton to the board.

The board chose the names following a multi-year process of revisiting the namesakes of each district building to evaluate how their actions and values reflect the district's values. In April 2024, the board formed its initial Ad-Hoc Committee Building Names Study Group, which spent nearly 10 months engaging with the community through two bilingual online surveys, visits to numerous school community events, a town hall event in October and multiple presentations at board meetings. The group was co-chaired by Martinez Santiago and board member Dr. Andrew Rieser.

Throughout, the board and Ad-Hoc group committed to the goal of involving the community and promoting its activities to give all residents a chance to be involved; this included promoting these efforts through newspaper and radio interviews, and messages posted on the school website, social media and other channels.

The Ad-Hoc group settled on suggesting to the full board three buildings – Columbus, Morse and Clinton – be renamed after Bolin, Truth and Clemente, and the board on Feb. 19 approved the new names. Both Bolin and Truth were prominently represented in survey responses; Clemente was suggested by a resident in the survey and was elevated by the committee when considering how to best represent the entire Poughkeepsie population.



A new committee will be formed to continue engaging the community on a new name for Clinton Elementary School.



In an 18-year career playing for the Pittsburgh Pirates, Clemente was a two-time World Series champion, the 1966 National League Most Valuable Player and a 15-time All-Star. He died at the age of 38 in a plane crash on Dec. 31, 1972, during a humanitarian mission to aid survivors of an earthquake in Nicaragua.

In its report, the Ad-Hoc group wrote "Throughout his career, Clemente used his platform to advocate for racial equity, speaking openly against discrimination faced by Latino and Black athletes and ensuring that underprivileged communities received the support and recognition they deserved.

"For Poughkeepsie's growing Latino and Central American population, Clemente's name serves as a beacon of representation and cultural pride. Students must see themselves reflected in the names of the institutions they attend, fostering a sense of belonging and connection to their history. His story teaches the power of determination, compassion, and standing up for justice, making him an inspiring figure for students of all backgrounds."

Several residents have attended recent board meetings raising questions regarding the choice, including Fifth Ward Common Councilmember Ondie James on April 2.

In her researching Roberto Clemente, she said she found "not only was he a famous baseball player, but he was also a great humanitarian." However, in speaking with community members, "there were several that did not even know or recognize who he was as it relates to our city or as it relates to our community, or Poughkeepsie in general. ... I do not oppose Roberto Clemente as being a choice," James continued, before requesting "the community would have one last opportunity" to be heard by the board.

Morse will be renamed Sojourner Truth beginning July 1, pending state Education Department approval, and the Columbus building is now operating as the Jane Bolin administration building. With the Clinton name change rescinded, any new name selected for the building cannot take effect until the beginning of the 2026-27 school year.

Dance celebrates fathers, daughters



Hundreds attended the Daddy Daughter Dance at Poughkeepsie High School last month.

Roughly 150 fathers, father figures and male role models accompanied the young women in their lives to Poughkeepsie High School last month for an inaugural Daddy Daughter Dance.

The event – which will become an annual occasion each spring – was hosted by the Poughkeepsie City School District, the City of Poughkeepsie and Fatherhood Talk Live. It served as the ending celebration for Community Schools' popular Donuts with Dad series, as well as a memorial for community leader Emmanuel Moore, the founder and CEO of Fatherhood Talk Live, who died last month. Moore, a tireless advocate and ally of fathers seeking to be involved in their children's lives, was highly involved with the Donuts with Dad events and worked with many dads in the city.

Mostly, it was an opportunity for hundreds of girls to dress to the nines and enjoy a night of dancing and food with their father figures as their dates. In addition to fathers, stepfathers, grandfathers, uncles, cousins, brothers and godfathers were among the men who brought one or more of the young ladies in their lives to



Community Schools and city leadership had a brief presentation for members of Emmanuel Moore's family.

the high school gymnasium. The groups walked in on a red carpet and under a balloon arch, and posed for portraits at a special backdrop.

"They were dressed to impress. Some of them came in coordinated outfits," Fifth Ward Common Councilmember Ondie James said of the men and daughters. "They were so into each moment and so engaged – laughing, having dinner, pulling out the chairs for their daughters."

James noted, it was intentionally marketed as an all-ages event. "Nobody said it's just for the little girls. The daughters ranged from toddlers to high school seniors. I loved that."

James is among the community leaders who had been working with Moore for more than a year to make his vision of the dance a reality. A plan to hold an event last spring fell through. This February, though, after Moore let James know his diagnosis was looking grim, she and the district's Community Schools department worked to make it happen. The district provided the venue, catering and the DJ. James, through the Common Council, provided funding for the event decorator. Mayor Yvonne Flowers and the city stepped in to cover the chair and table rentals, the photographer and the videographer. [See a gallery of photos on Hooperazzi Photography's website.](#)

"We were able to pull together, all of us," James said, calling herself an advocate of Moore's Fatherhood Live radio show and his mission to support fathers. Much of his work was centered on advocacy for men whose ability to see their children was impacted by the criminal justice system. "What he was doing was reaching out to those who did not have a voice; who were good fathers but were not heard and not seen by the system. They just wanted to have a fair opportunity to be the fathers they knew they could be."

Moore died roughly a week before the dance was held on March 29.

Moore spoke at many of the Donuts with Dads events, run by Community Schools liaison Gilbert Colon. The series, which is held at each school once through the course of the year, is an opportunity for fathers to eat and play games with their children while learning more about their school and discussing issues facing fathers. The last installment was held at Morse April 11. After low attendance during its inaugural year in 2023-24, interest skyrocketed with the first Donuts with Dads held this past fall and each has since been a booming success. Colon called the dance "a beautiful token" to the series.

"You go to every school and give a platform to fathers. You give them a safe space to enjoy their child. You give them equity in the school district," Colon said. "Then, you have a big celebration and it continues the momentum of positivity within the male community."

James said she believed the dance was reassuring to Moore's 14-year-old daughter. His service was held the morning of the dance in New York City. Still, she and several other family members were among the attendees. Photos of him, and him and her, were on display at the dessert table, and organizers gave her a plaque honoring her father. "I know that was a tough day, but she felt overwhelming support from the community," the councilmember said. "She was smiling. She knew that's what he wanted – his last wishes. I know it really made her heart happy."

James said they made Moore a promise to hold the dance every year. Next year, she said, they may find a larger venue than the gymnasium in order to accommodate the overwhelming interest displayed. She called it part of Moore's legacy and a final effort to continue supporting fathers.

"We want to possibly go to a larger venue where we can have as many attendees as we like," she said, "as many people who want to come out and have a good time, can."



Board scholarships deadline approaches

Poughkeepsie High School seniors have the opportunity to apply for 12 Board of Education scholarships created during the 2023-24 school year following Board of Education discussions into expanding its support of graduating seniors pursuing a postsecondary education. Each scholarship is \$750 and made possible by the George A. Strba Charitable Trust and through district-wide fundraising.

Students and parents throughout the year are kept aware of scholarship opportunities and encouraged to apply through reminders from Kelly Semexant, college and workforce readiness counselor, who maintains [a list with requirements and deadlines](#).

The deadline for applications for the BOE scholarships is April 30. They are:

- **Pioneer Excellence Scholarship:** Two academic scholarships will be available for any graduating senior who has maintained an exemplary academic record over four years.
- **Poughkeepsie Creator and Dreamer Scholarship:** Two arts education scholarships will be available for any graduating senior who participates in a Poughkeepsie High School arts or music club or is a member of a PHS band, choral, or theatrical collective.
- **Poughkeepsie Champion Scholarship:** Two athletic scholarships will be available for any graduating senior who participates on a Poughkeepsie High School athletic team.
- **Poughkeepsie Leaders of the Future Scholarship:** Two student leadership scholarships will be available for any graduating senior who has demonstrated school-based or district-level leadership responsibility while in high school. The student liaison to the Board of Education will automatically receive this scholarship as long as they meet all criteria.
- **Poughkeepsie Dreamers Scholarship:** This scholarship will be available for any graduating senior who has arrived to the United States within the past two years.
- **Tykeem Catts Scholarship:** Two scholarships are intended to provide students with exceptionalities with additional opportunities to attend the postsecondary school of their choice. The scholarship is available to any graduating senior who is currently classified by the Poughkeepsie City School District Committee of Special Education as a student with an exceptionality or has a 504 plan.
- **The Dr. Ronel E. Cook Scholarship:** This scholarship is available for any senior who has demonstrated civic engagement in the community.

[Click here to apply for a Board of Education Scholarship](#). For more information about scholarships, contact Semexant at ksemexant@poughkeepsieschools.org or by phone at 845-451-4850 ext. 6477.



Board member Dr. Andrew Rieser presents Abass Na-Aata and Olivia Groucher with Board of Education scholarships during the 2024 Awards and Scholarships Celebration.

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 25, 2025; [Multilingual Learner Weekly](#), April 25, 2025; [College Readiness and Workforce Education](#), March 2025; [In the Spotlight](#), April 2025.

Upcoming events

- **April 30:** Skilled Trades Fair: 5-7 p.m. at Dutchess BOCES, 5 Boces Rd., Poughkeepsie.
- **May 6:** NAMI Mid-Hudson "Ending the Silence" mental health awareness event: 5-6:30 p.m. at Poughkeepsie Middle School, 55 College Ave. [Register at this link](#).
- **May 7:** Board of Education budget hearing and meeting: 6:30 p.m. at the Jane Bolin administration building, 18 S. Perry St.