

SUPERINTENDENT'S BRIEF

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

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VOLUME 5



Applications open for BOE scholarships

Poughkeepsie High School seniors have the opportunity to apply for [12 Board of Education scholarships](#).

The scholarships were created last school year following Board of Education discussions into expanding its support of graduating seniors pursuing a postsecondary education. The board, with assistance from Dr. Eric Jay Rosser, superintendent, and

Becky Torres, board clerk, decided to expand its annual scholarship from one to 12, creating scholarships reflecting the diversity and postsecondary interests of the school system's student population:



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 athletics scholarships will be available for any graduating senior who takes part on a PHS 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 in the U.S. in the past two years.

The Tykeem Catts Scholarship

These 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 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.

To be eligible for the scholarship award, a graduating senior must have:

- Completed credit requirements for graduation
- A GPA of 2.5 or above
- Been accepted to a postsecondary educational institution or college
- Completed an application form

The application process has been simplified this year and is [available online](#).

In addition to the Board of Education scholarships, there are dozens of other [local scholarships](#) available to PHS seniors. For more information, reach out to Kelly Semexant, college readiness and workforce education counselor, at Ksemexant@poughkeepsieschools.org.



Poughkeepsie City School District

Arts Education



PCSD to create performing arts credits program

The Poughkeepsie City School district has been preliminarily awarded a New York State Department of Education Smart Scholars Early College High School grant of \$825,000.

Partnering with Dutchess Community College and the Bardonia, the grant

will allow Poughkeepsie High School students to earn up to 24 college credits toward an associate degree in the performing arts, advancing both the district's comprehensive arts education efforts and Pathway Transformation Initiative.

The five-year grant award has an enrollment target of 30 students per grade level, beginning in ninth grade. The program will enroll one cohort per year, beginning in the 2024-25 school year, and will add one grade level each year, up to the 12th grade.

Student recruitment will start April 2024. Recruitment activities will include parent presentations targeted to eighth graders and a presentation during the April 6 Superintendent's Fireside Chat.

Collaboration with school counselors will help identify and recruit students who are eligible for this program and meet the enrollment criteria. Teachers and school counselors will also help identify and recommend students who are interested in a Performing Arts Career Pathway.

"This is a wonderful opportunity to grow talent within the Poughkeepsie city community while allowing students to earn college credits at no cost to their families," said Dr. Janety Encarnación, director of college readiness and workforce education.

Phillip Grusenmeyer, supervisor for secondary education, said he is "elated to see that our grant was approved and that our students will be eligible to pursue a possible career in the arts and earn credits that can be utilized in college."

Dr. Charles Gallo, assistant superintendent of secondary education, said the district is "very grateful to have been preliminarily awarded this NYSED grant and look forward to collaborating with school and community stakeholders as well as parents to ensure our students take full advantage of this opportunity."

Warring art students explore plaster masks with Vassar grant

Isabella Dotson stood behind her desk carefully using a pencil to sketch on her mostly blank mask constructed of plaster. The plan, the drawing to her left shows, is to create a classic comedy-tragedy mask in black and white. The process is slow, though, and she's found translating her two-dimensional drawing to a contoured surface challenging.

"The sketching is most difficult," she said, "because it's rough." It's the Warring elementary student's first time drawing on such a surface, and that's the idea, Kathy Orza said.

Orza's fifth-grade art classes this year are making plaster masks, a project made possible through a grant from Vassar College.



Warring Elementary art teacher Kathy Orza shows her fifth-grade students how to use plaster strips to make masks.



Isabella Dotson sketches her mask design on her plaster mask.

The teacher said giving students a chance to use different mediums not only opens them to artistic avenues they may not otherwise experience, but introduces the need for critical thinking skills when dealing with something such as difficulty drawing and painting a rough, three-dimensional surface.

"It's a long process. But I think it's worth it," Orza said of the project, which spans roughly two months of weekly classes. "I've had kids say to me, 'Miss Orza, we've never done anything like this.' That's the goal." Orza introduced the project last year after receiving a \$300 donation, but only barely had enough plaster to finish. For this year, she worked with Vassar, communicating what supplies would cover all their needs, from plaster and gloves to paint and decoration. The college purchased the supplies with a \$700 grant. Vassar also planned to have student volunteers help Orza, though that fell through.

Before they can get their hands dirty, the students are walked through the process of designing their masks. Orza said the lesson begins with talking about different styles and the students do research on the history and meanings behind masks. They must draw and refine their designs before applying layers of small, wet strips of plaster to plastic mask shells. After

they dry, the students then reinforce the masks with more plaster, fix any bumps and – if they choose, add shapes like horns or scales and plaster those. Finally, they paint the masks and decorate with such items as gems, feathers or pom-poms.

As far as design parameters, "they had the freedom of doing anything appropriate that they wanted," she said, noting one student is making a mask with a Honduran flag on the bottom half and Mexican flag on top to symbolize their heritage. Kashif Edwards drew a mask with cat ears that is red on the left and blue on the right, which he called a "devil demon hero."

"This is like a spirit that could lead to destruction or a hero and peace," he said.

Nasir Hunter designed a mask that only covers the bottom half of the face, like a Japanese hanbo mask.

"I think it looks really cool," Nasir said. "I think it looks better than a full mask."

At the other end of the art table, Noah Dalmida did the same for his black mask, which has a yellow star and blue accents. Both said working with the plaster was "easy" and "fun." Noah said he enjoys art class for projects such as these.

"I like that we can create our own stuff," he said, "and we can visualize what we can make."

Orza said she plans to put the masks on display and the students will be able to take them home at the end of the year.

"I want them to keep this," she said. "I'm hoping they keep it forever and look back and say 'Look what I did.'"



Warring art students work on their masks.

Other newsletters to keep you informed:

Poughkeepsie City School District publishes a variety of newsletters throughout the year. Here are the available newsletters now: [CI Weekly](#), March 15, 2024; [Puentes](#), February 2024.

Upcoming events

- **March 25-April 2:** Spring recess, including first "give-back" day, April 2. District offices closed March 29.
- **April 6:** Superintendent's Fireside Chat: 9-10:30 a.m. at Poughkeepsie Middle School, 55 College Ave.