

SUPERINTENDENT'S BRIEF

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

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PHS celebrates seniors at breakfast



Wearing an impossibly wide smile, Carole Myers wrapped her daughter up in a hug. Jhanea Stewart smiled, too, though tears welled in her eyes as they embraced. Stewart on Wednesday morning was officially announced as the Poughkeepsie High School Class of 2025 valedictorian as the school celebrated nearly 100 students at its annual Senior Honor Breakfast.

"I was shaking so much and my heart was beating," Stewart said. "I felt really accomplished. All four years, the hardships, trials, I felt like it all paid off."

While school and district leaders speaking Wednesday returned to the idea of overcoming challenges often, both Stewart and salutatorian Salome Vergara embody the concept. Stewart, a native of Jamaica, moved to Poughkeepsie around four years ago. Vergara and her family moved from Columbia around the same time; she started her freshman year as an English as a New Language student but was taking honors and AP classes by her sophomore year.

"I feel like it's a great achievement for me," Vergara said of earning salutatorian. "I grew up in another country. I didn't know anything about how the school worked."

In all, 98 students who are on track to finish high school with a cumulative average of 80 or better and their families were invited to the breakfast, held at the school's newly renovated cafeteria. That includes 27 who have an average of 90 or better.

Each received a packet upon arrival that included information on scholarship opportunities, including at least 15 specific to Poughkeepsie students, and a list of deadlines to hit for scholarships and other end-of-year necessities.

The event began with a hot breakfast that included eggs, sausage, bacon, hash browns, pancakes, muffins, bagels and other items, before members of the Air Force Junior Reserve Officer Training Corps presented the colors for the Pledge of Allegiance and performed the national anthem.



Above: All student honorees in attendance pose together at the 2025 Senior Honor Breakfast. **Below:** Carole Myers and Jhanea Stewart hug as students and families, including Salutatorian Salome Vergara, right, look on.



Salutatorian Salome Vergara and Valedictorian Jhanee Stewart, center, pose with their families and members of the school and district leadership team.

Grade 12 Assistant Principal Joseph Mazzetti said the day was "about celebrating perseverance and excellence" in welcoming the families and serving as emcee. "This is about more than just grades," he said. "Their achievements represent late nights of study, moments of self-doubt that were overcome, and the courage to keep pushing forward, even when life threw obstacles in their way." Greg Mott, the assistant superintendent for elementary education, who is slated to become interim superintendent of schools July 1, explained the

qualities needed to graduate will translate to the future.

"You have demonstrated with four consecutive years, you can persevere and will be successful if you put your mind, and your thought, and your dedication to doing so," "Always remember Poughkeepsie; Pioneer pride. ... As you prepare for life after high school I urge you to embrace new challenges with the same passion and commitment that has brought you here today."

Board of Education President Fatimah Carmen Martinez Santiago attended and spoke not just in an official role but as a parent. Her son, Amir Shell, is ranked 21st in the class. She reminded the students about the importance of service to the community.

"Your education is not just for personal advancement," she said. "It is a tool for leadership, service and transformation, whether through mentorship, advocacy or simply being an example of perseverance, your impact can be profound."

The breakfast is the first of several events at which the school and Poughkeepsie City School District will celebrate the students' accomplishments. Among them, the school holds a special "signing day" to acknowledge students' post-graduate plans, be it college, a trade school, the military or otherwise; as well as a senior awards night and graduation itself.

Grade 12 Counselor Stacey Lee elicited a round of cheers by announcing Wednesday marked 100 days until the end of school. Then, she announced the names of each of the 98 students being honored. For the top 27, she asked them to step forward to the front and stand together. Finally, she announced Vergara and Stewart.

Myers called herself an "extremely happy and proud mom," saying she didn't have the words to describe hearing her daughter's name.

"It's unexplainable," she said. "I'm elated but I wasn't shocked because I know the capability of my daughter and how hard she has worked. She's dedicated herself for all this."

As Stewart talked about what the accomplishment meant to her, Myers walked up with camera in-hand, recording it just as she recorded other moments through the morning. Stewart said having her mother there was "rewarding," before welling up again.

"She's been there," she said. "I wanted to make her proud." Myers broke in quickly: "You did!"



Students and their families gathered Wednesday in the high school's cafeteria.



Poughkeepsie competes in Academic WorldQuest

Members of the Poughkeepsie High School debate club participated at the World Affairs Councils of America of the Mid-Hudson Valley's Academic WorldQuest at the Franklin D. Roosevelt Presidential Library and Museum March 1.

Academic WorldQuest is a knowledge-based team competition for area high schools with 10 rounds of questions focusing on international affairs, current events, the global economy, geography, world history, general knowledge about the world, and more. The regional competition, a qualifier for a national competition in late April held in Washington D.C., began in 2013 and this marked the first time Poughkeepsie has competed. "While we did not win the top prize, our students did come a few points shy of third," debate club adviser and social studies teacher Dr. Sankung Susso said. "The experience was nice and we will be back again in 2026."



From left, Myelle-Sanai Johnson, Christopher Webb, Markyah-Sade Johnson and Diana Canales Melendez took part in Academic WorldQuest in Hyde Park March 1.

Register address changes with district office

The Poughkeepsie City School District is asking for any family who has changed its address since registering a student to submit those changes through [an online form](#).

Having accurate residential information for all students is crucial to the schools' and district's ability to communicate information to families, and prevents waste through mail being sent out and returned. It's especially important now, though, as the district moves forward in its elementary school realignment, that there is an accurate depiction of where students live as boundary lines for schools are redrawn for the fall. [Follow this link](#) to submit an address change to the central registration office. If you have any issues with the form, email centreg@poughkeepsieschools.org or call 845-437-3480.

MISSION STATEMENT

"We are champions of children who inspire and nurture the whole child by providing innovative, high-quality educational opportunities that prepare all students to achieve and contribute to paths of success in a globally diverse community."

The Poughkeepsie City School District is Hosting a Job Recruitment Fair!

When:
March 22,
9-11:30 a.m.

Where:
Columbus
Administration
Building
18 S. Perry St.
Poughkeepsie

Positions include:

- Teaching Assistants and Substitute Teaching Assistants
- Health Aides and Substitute Health Aides
- Food Service Workers
- Bus Drivers: Full-Time and Substitute
- School Monitors
- School Security Monitors

New Pay Rates!

- Salaries for district teaching assistants recently increased by 10%
- Pay rates for health aides recently increased by \$2 per hour

All are welcome to attend! If you are interested in having an interview on-site, please register using the QR code above.

If you are unable to register online, walk-ins are welcome! For more information, contact the Office of Human Resources at (845) 451-4900 or HROffice@poughkeepsieschools.org

Job recruitment fair this Saturday

The Poughkeepsie City School District is holding a job recruitment fair Saturday for a range of open positions including teaching assistants and substitute teaching assistants, health aides and substitute health aides, full-time and substitute bus drivers, school monitors, school safety monitors, and food service workers.

The recruitment fair is scheduled for March 22 from 9-11:30 a.m. at the Jane Bolin Administration Building located at 18 S. Perry St.

The district recently increased salaries for teaching assistants by 10% and pay rates for health aides by \$2 per hour.

All are welcome to attend. If you are interested in having an interview, pre-register [using this link](#). If you are unable to register online, walk-ins are welcome. For more information, contact the Office of Human Resources at 845-451-4900 or HROffice@poughkeepsieschools.org.

BOE meeting to cover budget, Pathway Initiative, planning

The Board of Education meeting scheduled for 6:30 p.m. tonight will cover a slew of important topics with presentations that include a draft of the proposed 2025-26 budget, including tax implications and what new programs would be funded; an update on the Pathway Transformation Initiative, including what new programs will be offered to students in 2025-26; an overview of a district strategic planning initiative and how you can be involved in the process; and more.

Visit the Jane Bolin Administration Building at 18 S. Perry St. to attend or [watch a livestream on YouTube](#).

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www.poughkeepsieschools.org