

# SUPERINTENDENT'S BRIEF

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

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## Poughkeepsie praises principals



Inside each Poughkeepsie City School District building, you'll find a principal balancing many roles. They're educators encouraging student achievement. They're advocates for their students, their families and their schools. They're innovators, initiating programs to best serve their population and encourage engagement. They're leaders for the faculty and staff. They're community connectors. You can even find them, from time to time, serving breakfast at student incentive events. Each of Poughkeepsie's principals are role models who establish a culture of excellence in their buildings. That's why, each year, tomorrow is a special day.

Each May 1 we celebrate National School Principals' Day, recognizing the tireless work our school leaders do to support each district student, be it at a public event or behind the scenes as a calm, guiding hand. Please join the district in thanking each of them and celebrating their efforts.

Poughkeepsie's principals: Top row, from left: Dr. Phee Simpson, Poughkeepsie High School; Dr. David Scott, Clinton Elementary; Nadine Elting-Dargan, ELC at Smith School; Middle row: Samantha Mitchell, Morse Elementary; Carolyn Fields, Krieger Elementary; Nicole Penn, Warring Elementary; Bottom row: Felicia Schinella, Poughkeepsie Middle School.

## All schools see positive growth in attendance

The percentage of students classified as chronically absent improved across the Poughkeepsie City School District in March and remains below the rate seen during the 2023-24 school year. Every school saw its year-to-date percentage of chronic absenteeism drop by the end of March compared to the end of February, with warmer temperatures returning on many days and the winter recess and holidays further in the rear-view mirror.

### Chronic absenteeism decline

School	February	March
PHS	44.3%	43.9%
PMS	22.1%	19.7%
Clinton	40%	38.1%
Krieger	44.3%	40.9%
Morse	44.6%	43.9%
Warring	40.9%	38.6%
Smith	54.6%	53.1%
District	39.5%	37.9%



Attendance also improved in each school.

As of the end of March, 37.9% of students were characterized as chronically absent, or having missed at least 10% of the total possible 126 days of school. That's down 1.6 percentage points from the end of February (39.5%) and 2.8 percentage points from the end of March 2024 (40.7%).

Of all schools, Krieger enjoyed the largest month-over-month change, dropping from 44.3% chronically absent in February to 40.9%.

Poughkeepsie Middle School remains the school with the lowest percentage overall, dipping below 20% (19.7%) in March after it was at 22.1% in February. It's also the school with the best overall attendance, 95% as of the end of March.

District attendance improved from 85.1% at the end of February to 90.3% at the end of March, with both the high and middle schools growing by more than 9 percentage points.

The improvement comes as each school has made a concerted effort to encourage and celebrate attendance with incentives like breakfasts, parties and wall displays. The district itself has also been pushing for increased attendance through a social media campaign and an incentive program through the Community Schools department in which the school each month with the highest attendance and best chronic absenteeism reduction is given \$500 to be used on elements to enhance the educational environment, at the principals' discretion. The uses span from new pencils and children's supplies to new games at recess. The program is financed through a My Brother's Keeper Family and Community Engagement grant.

While missing 12 days of school may not sound like much by the time April hits, studies have consistently shown students who are chronically absent are less likely to graduate from high school and attend college. This is especially true of students at younger grade levels, who need to be in class to form a base of knowledge, literacy and work ethic to follow throughout their academic careers. And, many students who are chronically absent do not simply miss the minimum number of days; on average, Poughkeepsie's chronically absent students have missed 24.3 days of school through March, which equates to nearly 20% of the total number of days available. Parents, students and community members are encouraged to provide their thoughts on how to reduce chronic absenteeism through the district's [online survey available here](#).

## Spring building improvements

While most students and staff enjoyed a well-earned break during spring recess, the facilities team was hard at work upgrading buildings around the Poughkeepsie City School District, wrapping up ongoing projects and accelerating new efforts.

Members of Director of Facilities Marcos Rodriguez's department:

- Replaced hallway doors at Clinton Elementary, an effort that was already completed at the high school and Krieger, Warring and Morse elementary schools.
- Completed hanging unit ventilators at the Early Learning Center, after installing most during winter break.
- Water system improvements in each school building.
- Repaired ceilings at Warring's main office.

Meanwhile, work continued on constructing innovation labs at Clinton, Warring and Morse elementary schools. Work preparing the spaces to be reconstructed began in the fall.

"The work has started on them. They're demoed, the electricians have started their work, the plumbers have started their work," Rodriguez said. "It's going to look worse before it looks better."

The unique educational spaces are scheduled to be ready for the fall. Construction on a lab at Krieger is also scheduled to begin this summer with a planned fall opening.



**Above: Hallway doors were replaced at Clinton; Below: The space that will become Warring's innovation lab had been prepared for construction.**