

# SUPERINTENDENT'S BRIEF

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

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## Reorganization, Reconfiguration

# Familiar faces moving to new places

The reorganization of the Poughkeepsie City School District leadership team and the reconfiguration of elementary school buildings took another leap forward this week.

The Board of Education at Wednesday's meeting approved the appointments of three building principals for the 2025-26 school year, new roles for several members of the district administrative team and the transfer of more than 75 teachers and educators in accordance with the elementary reconfiguration plans previously approved by the board.

The district in 2025-26 will have a new structure for its elementary buildings with two, Krieger and Truth (currently Morse) serving grades pre-K to 2, and three buildings, Clinton, Smith and Warring, serving grades 3-5. Learn more [about the reconfiguration here](#), and watch [Wednesday's meeting here](#).

### Leadership changes

The district's seven buildings will have four new principals in 2025-26, but at least three of them, appointed Wednesday, will be faces familiar to families and students.

Barrington Atkins, District 9 Dutchess County Legislator representing the City of Poughkeepsie and an assistant principal at Poughkeepsie High School during the 2022-23 school year, has been hired as Poughkeepsie Middle School's principal. The school has had interim principals the last two school years.

"I am very grateful to return back home to Poughkeepsie, to this district," Atkins told the board. "I'm dedicated to our community. I'm ready to work with not only the students, faculty and staff but also the families in our community."

Assistant Superintendent for Elementary Education Gregory Mott, who will become superintendent July 1, noted Atkins is a Poughkeepsie resident who has long been an advocate for students and the district.

Felicia Schinella, who has been interim principal in the middle school this year, will become an assistant principal at the high school, and high school assistant principal Cecil Coston will serve the same role in the middle school in 2025-26.

The district is conducting interviews to fill a vacant principal position at Smith left by Principal Nadine Elting-Dargan's retirement. The board on Wednesday appointed Jessica Baruffo, the assistant principal at Krieger for the last three years, to serve as interim principal.



From top left, Barrington Atkins, Melissa Barrow and Jessica Baruffo were appointed building principals for 2025-26 Wednesday.



"She'll be a good fit with building camaraderie and bringing that team of new teachers together at Smith," Mott said. "Her background and her strength, I believe, is grades 3 through 5."

Smith's assistant principal, Melissa Barrow, will become principal at Krieger after Carolyn Fields' resignation. Barrow joined the district at the start of this year.

Mott cited Barrow's experience in bilingual instruction as a reason for placing her in the building that will house the district's pre-K to 2 dual-language program. While in the East Ramapo Central School District, she created a robust English language learner program.

"She's demonstrated her readiness," Mott said. "She is a 10-year veteran of working in a central office and she came to us wanting to grow her capacity as a building leader."

The board on Wednesday also moved forward with its [previously approved plan to reshape several administrative positions](#) as part of a two-year administrative reorganization effort, and named four of the administrators who will serve those roles. Effective June 30:

- Director of Elementary Education Janet Bisti becomes Director of Curriculum and Instruction (PK-12).
- Supervisor of Elementary Education/Director of Teaching and Learning (PK-8) Patrice Woods becomes Director of Teaching and Learning (PK-12).
- Executive Director of Strategic Planning and Resource Stewardship Lisa Spencer-Perry becomes Director of Data, Assessment and Accountability.
- Senior Personnel Administrator Kevin Hanratty becomes Executive Director of Human Resources.

### Teacher transfers approved

The work to prepare buildings, staff and families for this fall's elementary reconfiguration will continue through the summer. But the complete picture came more into focus this week with the release of staff lists at each of the five buildings. [See the lists here](#).

Around 80 staff members, roughly two-fifths of all elementary educators and special programs support staff, were transferred Wednesday by the board, enabling the district to release the staff lists before the summer arrives.

The teacher transfers followed an extensive process that took into account building principal recommendations, teacher preferences, and other critically important information regarding district and program needs and priorities.

While most furniture and classroom fixtures, such as Promethean Boards, are remaining in each room, teachers who are moving will need to pack personal belongings and educational tools and books that may not be age-appropriate for the students who will be incoming to that school.

Teachers will have time to pack during half days June 23-25 and full days June 26 and 27, the last day of the academic year for staff.

Other updates in the reconfiguration process include:

- The district issued a request for proposals for businesses to provide school bus transportation services, with a deadline of June 24. Beginning this fall, the district will offer bus service to all elementary students who live more than a half-mile from their school.
- A Spanish language informational session regarding the reconfiguration is being planned for mid-summer. When details are available they will be posted on the district's website, social media and ParentSquare channels.



Many elementary educators around the district will remain in their current buildings during the reconfiguration, such as first-grade teacher Cheryl Haines at Morse.





## Dual-language students enjoy 'Frida Kahlo Day'

Tara Jankovitz and Marisol Gouraige's kindergarten dual-language class students enjoyed a "Frida Kahlo Day" on May 30 with art, music, dance and writing activities.

The students, during Women's History Month in March, learned about Frida Kahlo. Along with art teacher Megan Rowland, they created self-portraits inspired by her. Their enthusiasm for the Mexican painter and activist and her culture inspired the teachers to launch the follow-up event.

"They enjoyed performing the Mexican hat dance and engaged in various activities that showcased the richness of Frida's Mexican traditions, such as creating self-portraits, crafting vibrant paper tissue flowers, bead bracelet making, and writing about Frida Kahlo's special interests," the teachers said, noting the students' families joined in their enthusiasm. "They had their children dress up in traditional Mexican clothing or hairstyle with a flower worn in their hair."



"Frida Kahlo Day" included numerous artistic and musical activities.

## Doughnut-inspired learning

AIS reading teacher Megan Bender and Morse first grade teacher Eric Galvano mixed reading and art with food to create a fun day for students.

After reading "Arnie the Doughnut" by Laurie Keller, the teachers asked the students to design a doughnut of their own and write a creative story about its journey.

"Before writing their stories they used graphic organizers to plan out their ideas, including their doughnut's personality, setting and adventure," Bender said. "Their hard work and creativity truly shined – so much so that we decided to bring their doughnuts to life."

The teachers supplied the students with real doughnuts, frosting and sprinkles to complete the experience. "Students recreated the doughnut they had imagined, turning their stories into a sweet and memorable hands-on experience," she said.



Students enjoyed being able to eat their creations after writing and art activities.

## 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](#), June 6, 2025; [College Readiness and Workforce Education](#), May 2025.

## Upcoming events

- **June 10:** National Honor Society Induction Ceremony: 4 p.m., at Poughkeepsie High School, 70 Forbus St.
- **June 10:** Senior Awards and Scholarships Night: 6 p.m., at Poughkeepsie High School, 70 Forbus St.