Cuomo extends school vote deadline one week

City of Poughkeepsie residents who elect to participate in the school budget and board of trustees vote will now have until June 16, 2020 to have their votes counted, according to an executive order from Gov. Andrew Cuomo. Following the executive order, voters electing to hand deliver their ballots to the District Office must have done so by 5 p.m. yesterday, June 9, 2020.

The order specified that mail-in ballots must be received by 5 p.m. Tuesday, June 16. Ballots postmarked on or prior to June 16 but not received by 5 p.m. that day cannot be counted.

NTS Data, a vendor working with many school districts across the state, told PCSD it mailed ballots out to residents Wednesday, June 3.

PCSD was one of many local districts that supported Gov. Cuomo extending the deadline so that all electing to participate in this year’s process could have their vote counted. Given the importance of this democratic process, lawmakers from across NY advocated for an extension. As co-chairs of the Poughkeepsie Children’s Cabinet, myself and Mayor Rolison also sent a letter advocating for this extension.

“The COVID-19 pandemic has changed our world, and while we are making great progress and the numbers keep going down, no New Yorker should have to choose between their health and their right to vote,” Cuomo said in the release. “Extending the deadline to submit absentee ballots builds on our previous Executive Orders to make it easier for New Yorkers to vote absentee in the upcoming primary election and it will help to increase voter participation as we continue to fight this virus.”

We are grateful to Gov. Cuomo and our legislators for pushing to get the deadline extended so our residents have a chance to exercise their vote.

For information on our budget, including the budget newsletter, please visit https://bit.ly/pcsd2020budget. For candidate information, please visit https://www.poughkeepsieschools.org/Page/878

District schedules collection of technology

With the school year approaching an end, the district has set six days for collection of the Chromebooks and/or Wi-Fi hotspots loaned to students to support distance learning during the Covid-19 pandemic.

The leadership team who organized an exceptional distribution plan has outlined a collection plan that will occur June 12 – June 19 at the same location where parents received the device.

District administration is currently discussing how devices can be used for summer programming, while we wait to learn if Governor Cuomo will allow district-run summer programming to take place for all students. On June 5, 2020 Governor Cuomo released an executive order indicating that school districts may have in-person summer programming for students with exceptionalities who have an extended year designation on their individual education plans. PCSD is working to understand the order and the Department of Health’s guidance to school districts that was released yesterday. PCSD is also in conversation with several strategic partners to discuss use of the devices to support PCSD youth development.

For parents who will not have children participating in district-run and sponsored summer programming upon returning the device they will be expected to complete a Chromebook Return Form or Hotspot Return Form. Upon return, each device will be sanitized and securely stored for September.

For more detail regarding the collection plan please click here. Parents seeking additional information about the collection of devices can email: poughkeepsiescdtechnologydept@poughkeepsieschools.org or call Cheryl Rabinowitz, assistant to the superintendent, at 845-702-7842.
Two PHS students participate in Mock Assembly

*Story was to appear in a March issue of the Brief but was removed to provide an update on School Closures.

Two Poughkeepsie High School students, Neyman Tapia Ortega and Alija Clark, participated in this year’s 30th Puerto Rican Hispanic Leadership Institute that was held at the New York State Capital in March.

The Puerto Rican/ Hispanic Youth Leadership Institute is an innovative collaboration with the New York State Assembly and the Senate Puerto Rican/Hispanic Task Force that is designed to foster student empowerment and give students a firsthand experience in the development of the state legislative process. At first, Ortega said she didn’t want to participate in the program. “I’m a shy person and not real comfortable with English. Mr. Donnelly told me that I could speak either and he kept pushing me,” said the junior.

Ortega eventually submitted an essay to qualify - as did all the other participants - and was among the approximately 200 students chosen to participate.

During the three-day leadership weekend, students from eight delegations took key roles in activities which include team-building exercises to develop inter-regional relationships, a Mock Assembly session conducted in the NYS Assembly chamber as well as a student recognition dinner.

The bill the group was tasked with arguing for or against was one that would require the records of domestic abusers to be sent to their new partner. Ortega, who was assigned the role of assemblywoman for New York’s 104th district, spoke in favor of the bill.

“I had a friend who was involved with that and I shared my personal experience on how important it is to share the information,” Ortega said.

Ortega said she chose to speak in Spanish at the event because she doesn’t have a high level of comfort speaking English in public yet. But, she said she is getting better.

Given her level of success this past March she wants to participate again next year as a high school senior. “It is a really good program. You get to know a lot of people from other places, you can be yourself and get to know a lot of people in the Hispanic community - we had people who were writers, public speakers and students from colleges speaking to us,” she said.

Paul Donnelly, PHS social studies teacher, does a fabulous job working with high school students seeking to expand their leadership skills in this program and others.

“They’re both kind of shy and yet they both took on leadership roles. Alija volunteered to lead the color guard and Neyman was really quiet and yet she stepped up to speak on the floor of the assembly. To see that growth is amazing,” he said, adding, “With everything going on in the world, now is really the time for young students to get involved, become empowered and learn to become change agents in their schools and the community at-large,” he said.