

# SUPERINTENDENT'S BRIEF

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

ISSUE NO 60 | March 22, 2023

VOLUME 4



## PCSD identifies '23-'24 budget priorities

Louise Lynch, assistant superintendent of business, and Dr. Eric Jay Rosser, superintendent of schools, presented an update on the 2023-2024 district budget to the Board of Education (BOE) and members of the community last week in preparation of an April 12<sup>th</sup> BOE adoption of the budget. Next year's budget maintains supporting the Poughkeepsie City School District's focus on strengthening its impact on student success in and out of the school environment, with a special emphasis on building upon the positive momentum of the district's focus on students with exceptionalities, English Language Learners, [Arts Education](#), the [District's Pathway Transformation Initiative](#), and [Strong Schools Equal Strong Communities Capital Improvement Project](#), all of which support the district's overarching [Community Schools](#) work. The presentation included Dr. Rosser's proposed 2023-2024 Budget/Programmatic highlights for the upcoming year which included:

Instructional program	Student support program	Operational program
Maintaining learning loss staff hired using COVID relief funds	Maintaining social-emotional staff hired using COVID relief funds	Maintaining operational staff hired using COVID relief funds
Expanding professional development opportunities	Expanding professional development opportunities	Implementation of energy performance contract*
Expanded pre-K through 8 <sup>th</sup> grade academic supports	Expanding social-emotional supports	Safety and security upgrades
Expanding dual language program (pre-K through 1 <sup>st</sup> grade)	Reimagining/reinstating evening food program	Site upgrades
Expanding Students with Interrupted Formal Ed and Newcomer programming at PHS	Additional extended learning programming at PMS and PHS	Continued investments in facilities and maintenance (equipment and service contracts)
Expanding ENL supports at Morse and Warring	Athletic programming and facilities upgrades	Upgrading cafeteria vehicles and equipment*
Expanding supports and programming for students with exceptionalities		Expansion of automated employee attendance system
Expanding arts education programming <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Arts pathway at PHS</li> <li>PMS theatrical performances</li> <li>District-wide auditorium upgrades</li> </ul>		New capital improvement projects* <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>PMS pool and locker room upgrades</li> <li>PHS HVAC upgrades</li> <li>Districtwide floor, ceiling, and window upgrades</li> <li>Demolition and site restoration (Jane Bolin Building and Maintenance Building)</li> <li>Site work (parking lots, etc.)</li> </ul>
Advancing Pathway Transformation Work <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Computer science pathway at PMS and PHS</li> <li>Doubling BOCES Career and Technical Institute student slots</li> <li>Transition coordinator (SWE)</li> <li>Career and technical education liaison</li> </ul>		
Phase IV of instructional furniture upgrades		

\*Not funded through the General Fund

The proposed budget amounts to \$134, 754,973 (not including grant funding the district receives), which is a 13.88 percent increase from the 22-23 \$118.3 million dollar budget. The increase to the budget, much of which comes from a projected increase in New York State funding, is driven by the ending of COVID relief funds, compliance mandates, projected charter school enrollment, increases in utility and transportation costs, contractual increases and new debt associated with the capital project and the energy performance contract.

Lynch noted that there is no intention of the district seeking the community to approve a tax levy increase above the calculated tax cap of 4.04 percent set by the state this year. "We are very mindful of the economic conditions we are experiencing as a nation. The economic conditions have micro and macro repercussions to our local economy and the people who represent our community. Our goal is to strike a balance between the needs of our children and the ability of our community to support those needs", shared Rosser.

This Saturday, March 25<sup>th</sup>, during the Superintendent's Fireside Chat at 9 a.m. at Poughkeepsie Middle School, Rosser and Lynch will be presenting the draft budget for community input. On Monday, March 27, a special budget workshop will take place at 5 p.m. in the Columbus Administrative Building. After the 2023-2024 budget is adopted on April 12<sup>th</sup> a Budget Hearing will be held on May 3 ahead of the May 16<sup>th</sup> community-wide budget vote.

## Peace Corps honors PHS graduate

Earlier this month PHS graduate and co-founder of the Poughkeepsie Children's Cabinet (PCC), Rob Watson Jr., was one of five recipients of the Franklin H. Williams Award from the Peace Corps. He was recognized at the March 1 ceremony in Washington, D.C., for being a leading public servant who has demonstrated a steadfast commitment to civic engagement, friendship, and world peace.

The PCC is focused on advancing cradle-to-career solutions for children, youth and families.

The Franklin H. Williams Awards were established in 1999 to honor the legacy of Williams' many contributions to the U.S. Peace Corps and the honor

recognizes the contributions of Returned Peace Corps Volunteers (RPCVs), Returned Peace Corps Response Volunteers (RPCRVs), and one non-RPCV of color whose work exemplifies the advancement of world peace and friendship. The awards also spotlight the achievements of Americans from diverse backgrounds that work diligently to advance the Peace Corps' Third Goal: To help promote a better understanding of other peoples on the part of Americans.

The Awards honor the legacy of former Peace Corps regional director for Africa and U.S. ambassador to Ghana, Franklin H. Williams. Ambassador Williams was the first Black person named U.S. representative to the Economic and Social Council of the United Nations and the first Black person ever to serve as an ambassador to an African country. Williams also served as a trusted adviser to the first Peace Corps director, Sargent Shriver, in advancing the agency's mission across the globe.

"Franklin H. Williams Award honorees demonstrate what is possible when bold leadership is combined with optimism, vision and heart," said Peace Corps Director Carol Spahn. "The Peace Corps is honored to recognize these 2023 Williams Awards recipients – they challenge us all to see what is possible when the call for social justice leads to action."

Watson was a Peace Corps volunteer in Paraguay from 2010-13 and is the director for partnerships and community impact at the EdRedesign Lab and a secondary lecturer on education at the Harvard Graduate School of Education.



PHS alum Robert Watson speaks during the Franklin H. Williams Award presentation in Washington, D.C., March 1, 2023.



His work has focused on the themes of civic engagement, community development, and educational equity in the U.S., Latin America and Africa. Before the COVID-19 pandemic struck, he partnered with then City of Poughkeepsie Mayor Rob Rollison, PCSD's Superintendent Dr. Eric Jay Rosser and community leaders from his hometown of Poughkeepsie to form the PCC.

Watson is also a co-founder of Lead for Poughkeepsie, a new AmeriCorps program affiliated with Lead for America that aims to attract and retain hometown talent to pursue social impact careers in his hometown and the Mid-Hudson Valley region of New York State.

"Robert Watson has been extremely instrumental in connecting Poughkeepsie City School District to national organizations and think tanks which, in part, has elevated the district's impact on student and family success. His advocacy and thought partnership has been unparalleled," Superintendent Dr. Eric Jay Rosser said.

## Annual Pops Concert moves audience to dance



The PMS stage was filled with musicians for the Pops Concert last week. Here the PHS band performs under student leadership.

Student vocalists and musicians from Poughkeepsie High School and Poughkeepsie Middle School had audience members clapping throughout and dancing in the back of the auditorium during the March 15 Pops Concert.

The PMS chorus sang, "Lean on Me" by Bill Withers and "Stay" by Rhianna led by teacher Holly Dunn, whose last day in the district was Thursday.

Fellow teacher and co-chair of the district's music department Mike Colucci thanked Dunn for

her 18 years of service and presented her with a bouquet of flowers.

The PHS chorus performed Rhianna's "Lift Me Up," Ed Sheeran's "Thinking Out Loud," and "Candy Man" by Soul for Real led by Neal Grover.

PMS and PHS bands and string groups also performed.

About 125 students performed in the concert, according to Joe North, PHS band director and music chair. The concert came as renovations are underway in the auditorium, thanks to Neal Grover, music teacher and technical theater adviser. Two wireless handheld microphones were used to amplify performers. Bulbs in about a dozen spotlights and work light fixtures were replaced and unused equipment was moved to create better access to the overhead rigging controls, Grover said. Temporary control of dimmer switches were enabled and the district's facilities crew is in the process of building a control booth for lighting and sound at the rear of the auditorium.



Above, PHS chorus performs. At right, PMS' strings perform at the annual PCSD Pops Concert.







Looking ahead, overhead and boundary microphones were purchased as were wireless on-ear bodypack microphones and receivers for dramatic performances. The existing audio amplifiers and speakers will be augmented by full-range, mounted and powered speakers and a digital soundboard will be added. Grover thanks Dutchess Community College, Stissing Mountain High School staff, Gully Stanford and other partners in the theater trade for their help in putting together the plans for PMS and PHS. Kudos go out to all the students who performed and the teachers who led them, Joseph North, PHS band; Mike Colucci, PHS band; Brandon Codrington, PMS and PHS strings; Holly Dunn, PMS chorus and Neal Grover, PHS chorus.



At top, students and caregivers tried to estimate how many items were in each container. Above, Renegades Mascot Rascal shows a student how to graph during Math Madness night at Morse Elementary School.

## Math Madness takes over Morse

Morse Elementary School staff, families and community partners came together for Morse March Math Madness - a night of fun and math held at the school March 16, 2023. Designed by the school's community engagement team, the goal of the event was to introduce math concepts including number sense, graphing, addition skills and multiplication, said teacher Stephanie Green.

"Teachers hosted math games in their classrooms and provided families with ideas of how to support their children at home," she said.

In Cheryl Haines classroom, they played Addition BINGO.

"Students shared with their family partner and demonstrated how we use the counting up strategy to add," Haines said. "When I read the math equations, students identified the larger number, then began counting up the other number to reach the answer. Parents were then encouraged to use the counting up strategy alongside their child to support their math skills and enjoy the game."

Meanwhile, in the cafeteria, Heritage Financial Credit Union, the Hudson Valley Renegades and staff provided estimation and card games with snacks and free books. Each child who attended received a family math pack with games and activities to play at home with their grown-ups.

Plus, the Renegades are providing free tickets to a future game for all families and students who attended.



## Poughkeepsie City School District Superintendent firesidechat

Fireside Chats are opportunities for the Superintendent to share with community members important information and updates concerning the education of children. As a medium for two way conversation, community members also have an opportunity to ask questions and provide comment to the Superintendent.

**TOPICS:**  
2023-2024 Budget Priorities  
Prekindergarten and Kindergarten Programming

Saturday, March 25, 2023  
Poughkeepsie Middle School  
9:00am – 10:00am

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