

SUPERINTENDENT'S BRIEF

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

ISSUE NO. 29 | November 29, 2023

VOLUME 5



PCSD awarded Federal Community Schools grant



The U.S. Department of Education has awarded a \$2.5 million, five-year Full Service Community Schools (FSCS) grant to the Poughkeepsie City School District (PCSD). The award is one of the largest federal grants ever secured by PCSD and will be used to scale PCSD's [Community Schools Initiative](#) across its five elementary schools.

Community schools collaborate with local nonprofits, health providers, community partners and other agencies to coordinate and deliver services that improve conditions for student learning and healthy development. In 2020, PCSD designated all seven of its schools as

Community Schools as part of its district-wide transformation efforts.

PCSD will be using the grant to support a range of evidence-based, whole-child and community-wide supports including high-dosage tutoring; afterschool and weekend enrichment; early childhood family education; and targeted interventions addressing chronic absenteeism and violence prevention.

The new programming will include reestablishing [City Connects](#), which provides trained staff to create individualized support plans for every student; [EveryDay Labs](#) to combat chronic absenteeism; and an after-school enrichment program for Pre-K through Kindergarten-aged children. Current programming will also be expanded with the grant, including the district's high-dosage AmeriCorps tutoring programs, - [Early Learning Corps](#) for Pre-K students and K-3 [Math Corps](#) for elementary school students; the [Saturday Morning Lights program](#) that provides weekend enrichment for students in grades Pre-K through 12 and their families; Poughkeepsie Basics University that provides learning opportunities for parents of newborns through three-year-olds; and extended school day/school violence prevention after-school programming. [The Poughkeepsie Children's Cabinet](#) worked closely with PCSD to support its application, enlisting the assistance of national partners such as the [EdRedesign Lab](#) at the Harvard Graduate School of Education and the [William Julius Wilson Institute at the Harlem Children's Zone](#). Through this collaboration, the PCSD grant application was able to feature a range of dynamic partnerships and programs.

The Full Service Community Schools grant implementation will begin in January 2024. Implementation of the full grant program will occur in phases over the five-year grant period."

To access the PCSD Community Schools Guide click the following: [English](#) [Spanish](#)

Read the [Full Service Community Schools news release here](#).

District contemplates reconfiguring schools

Driven by an approach to strengthen the academic, social, and emotional development of the district's youngest learners, the Poughkeepsie City School District is exploring the potential of a grade reconfiguration of the district's elementary schools.

PCSD maintains five elementary schools – one pre-K and kindergarten school (The Early Learning Center at Smith School) and four schools for grades 1-5 (Morse, Krieger, Warring, and Clinton).



While student academic growth is on the rise in Poughkeepsie, as evidenced by recently released New York State Education Department state assessment scores (see [Superintendent Brief Issue 27, Vol. 5](#)), the district's continuous growth approach to strengthening the impact of the district's efforts to prepare all students to embark on individual paths of success in and out of the school environment serves as the foundation of this exploration. Changing community dynamics and the needs and concerns of parents and caregivers are also drivers.

At the Nov. 15 Board of Education

Workshop Meeting, Gregory Mott, assistant superintendent of elementary education; Janet Bisti, director of elementary education; Da'Ron Wilson, executive director of school engagement; and Dr. David Scott, principal of Clinton Elementary School, presented a comprehensive report on the exploratory work that began last fall on potentially reconfiguring the district's five elementary schools.

Dr. Eric Jay Rosser, superintendent of schools noted at the beginning of the presentation that no decisions have been made and that if it were the Board of Education's desire for leadership to continue its exploration the process would include a wider base of school and community stakeholders along with a broader community and surveying the broader community.

Presenters provided several compelling, evidence-based information points that were taken into consideration in the development of the presentation, which included research on early learning development and how school grade band configurations best nurture young learners to attain success throughout the pre-K through 12th-grade continuum. Research also included visiting neighboring school districts and learning about the successes and challenges found in schools with K-2 and 3-5 grade bands.

"It is critical that we create a learning environment for our Early Learners that builds a foundation of proficient literacy and numeracy. Establishing primary schools will assist in this work," Mott said.

PCSD is exploring creating two pre-K through second-grade sites and three grade 3-5 sites to serve the academic, social, emotional, and wellness needs of the district's youngest learners. This reconfiguration would result in Morse and Kreiger elementary schools transitioning to pre-K through 2nd-grade schools and Warring, Clinton, and Smith schools transitioning to serve grades 3-5.

"With this proposed reconfiguration, school and district staff will be better able to target instructional practices, pedagogy, curricula, professional learning opportunities, and PBIS supports that are specific to the developmental needs of the children in each grade band," Bisti explained afterward.

Scott added that the change benefits all stakeholders.

"Our scholars will then be in an environment that will be able to focus on their academic and social/emotional development at the appropriate age/grade band. For example, PK-2 scholars are learning to read while 3-5 scholars are reading to learn. In addition, PK-2 scholars are learning how to socialize in a school environment while 3-5 scholars are exploring new ways of socializing like joining clubs and participating in student government. In my opinion, this change will be a win-win for all stakeholders." Wilson added, "It also would provide more opportunities for young scholars to have targeted interventions for more academic success in secondary grades."

The [presentation](#) provided a few helpful illustrations of the potential mapping of what the schools' attendance boundaries would be.



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"I'm looking forward to engaging the community on this topic," shared Rosser. "When I arrived in Poughkeepsie a little more than four years ago, I aimed to learn what our community's vision for the Poughkeepsie City School District was in cultivating the city's school-aged youth. This participatory approach resulted in our 5-Year Strategic Plan, which has charted the district's journey leading to an abundance of demonstrable improvements in a very short period. This is simply a different phase of the community providing its vision for our schools and district leadership bringing that vision to fruition." A reconfiguration task force composed of parents, community members, PCSD staff, civic leaders, and the City of Poughkeepsie leaders will form in the coming month to continue the exploratory process. It will make recommendations to the Board of Education (BOE) in spring 2024. The potential reconfiguration would take place either September 2024 or September 2025, if recommended by the task force and approved by the BOE.

Perez-Lopez earns honor for leading Pioneer swimmers

Linsay Perez-Lopez learned how to swim as an eighth grader with the Poughkeepsie High School girl's swim program. As a senior, Poughkeepsie's October athlete of the month helped the Pioneers capture the Section I League 4 championship.

"Once we heard we won, we all huddled in and tears started," she said. "I've been trying to get this since my sophomore year and it kind of still feels unreal right now. It made me realize how amazing my teammates are."

Perez-Lopez placed sixth in the 100-yard butterfly with a time of 1 minute, 27.6 seconds, and eighth in the 200 individual medley, 3:17.44 at the league meet. The 200 individual medley has a participant swimming all four strokes – butterfly, backstroke, breaststroke, and freestyle.

"I love the butterfly because I think it's beautiful and it's relaxing. I feel strong when I do it," she said.

"I was inspired by previous swimmers around me and I think it made me want to learn the butterfly more than the other strokes."

Perez-Lopez just completed her fourth season with the varsity swim program.

"I'm really happy the coach was willing to take the time for me because I didn't know how to swim when I joined," said Perez-Lopez. "I felt it was awesome how far she was willing to push all of us."

Poughkeepsie swim coach Galen Franchek used one word to describe Perez-Lopez.

"To define Linsay is to talk about resiliency in Poughkeepsie because she's worked very hard to not just become the senior and the captain of the swim team, but to become a competitive swimmer," said Franchek.

Perez-Lopez is the daughter of Evelyn Lopez and enjoys reading. She hopes to study biochemistry at Binghamton University or Marist College and become either a doctor or a nurse.

"I honestly really enjoyed it and I don't think I could trade it for anything," she said of swimming at Poughkeepsie. "I'm going to miss it. I'm going to miss the girls on the team."



Linsay Perez-Lopez