

# SUPERINTENDENT'S BRIEF

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

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VOLUME 5



**"Even the strongest blizzards start with a single snowflake."**

~ Sara Raasch

As 2023 draws to a close, I am proud to reflect on the **Power of Us** and how we continue to harness a substantial amount of energy to make the lives of our children better. Our transformational journey started with a vision - **a single snowflake** - and has evolved into a movement - **a blizzard** - that will guarantee that every child thrives regardless of race, ethnicity, poverty, or circumstance.

Our collective effort has resulted in demonstrable improvements throughout the Poughkeepsie City School District. The successes we've achieved for our children are substantial ([see 2019-2023 Milestone Accomplishments](#)). While there is much more for us to accomplish, working together, we have served well as Champions for Children in the Poughkeepsie City School District.

During this special time of the year, we should cherish the time with loved ones and rejuvenate our hearts, strength, and compassion, which undergirds our commitment to providing the conditions for our children to maximize their potential.

I invite you to read the stories on the various year-end festivities on the following pages. I hope each reinforces your purpose in this work, as they have for me. Happy holidays, and remain blessed.

~ Dr. Eric Jay Rosser, superintendent of schools



# Events spread cheer to students, families



Three hundred Poughkeepsie City School District families received some holiday cheer as Community Schools partnered with Charlia Frank, The Skip Lee Foundation, Team Richardson, and Saving Our Tomorrow for the Holiday Celebration in the high school cafeteria on Dec. 16.

Families were treated to a holiday meal, family bonding activities, live entertainment, and a visit from Santa Claus.

"This event is just one of the many ways the district is reinforcing the home, school, community connection," Natasha Brown, executive director of Community Schools stated. "Our school community is part of our

extended family and what better way to celebrate the holidays than with family?" Geneva's Blues House in Poughkeepsie catered to the holiday dinner. The family bonding activities featured activities such as gingerbread house and ornament making, and the Mighty Young Techs performed holiday favorites.

All children in attendance received at least two gifts provided by the many donors, including the Dutchess County Sheriff's Office. This was Community Schools' second big event in recent weeks. During Thanksgiving week, Community Schools partnered with The Skip Lee Foundation to distribute winter clothing and footwear to 70 families in need.



The Skip Lee Foundation provided 100 pairs of footwear.

Anyone or any organization interested in volunteering or being added to the Community Schools email list may email their contact information to Helen Purnell, Parent Empowerment Center manager, at [HPurnell@poughkeepsieschools.org](mailto:HPurnell@poughkeepsieschools.org).



**Clockwise from top left: Children and adults participate in family activities such as making a Christmas tree and ornaments at the Holiday Celebration in the PHS cafeteria on Dec. 16. Santa Claus visited with children at the Holiday Celebration in the PHS cafeteria on Dec. 16. Families line up to receive their holiday meal during the Holiday Celebration in the PHS cafeteria Dec. 16.**



## Evening festival rewards positive behavior

PMS' Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports coordinators have organized special events every month as a kudos to students who are excelling. The December event - a Winter Wonderland Festival held in the evening - featured dancing, pizza, hot chocolate, a selfie station, holiday bingo with prizes, and tables for students to make ornaments, as well as decorating gingerbread houses and Christmas cookies. "We always want to reward the positive students and reinforce how important it is for them to act like that to get the best out of their education," teacher and PBIS Coordinator Jamie Sheehan said. "It just changes the climate of the building."

Sheehan and fellow coordinator Dr. Raina Cunzio thanked Save at-Risk Children for Corporate America founder Wesley Lee for his generous donation to purchase the gingerbread houses and cookies. They also thanked Karmen Smallwood, Dutchess County assistant commissioner for youth services, for making the connection.

Students from the PMS National Honor Society and the Air Force Junior Reserve Officer Training Corps at Poughkeepsie High School volunteered at the various stations.

"For them to come back and give back to the middle school and see the growth they made is amazing," Cunzio said. "This is



a safe place where the kids can come and get to be kids."

PHS Freshman Bionca Simms was one of the student volunteers who was thrilled to be back assisting at the bracelet-making table.

"I thought it would be fun to see most of the teachers I had," Simms said.

Sixth grader Brileiye Porter gravitated more toward the craft tables than dancing and plans to be back for next year's holiday event. "I liked the gingerbread houses," Porter said.

**Clockwise from top: PHS students donned inflatable gingerbread man and snowman costumes for their visit to work on holiday crafts with students at the Early Learning Center. Students from PHS and Santa visit the Early Learning Center dressed in holiday attire. PMS students who modeled positive behavior and character traits during December dance at a special event filled with music, dancing, and activities Dec. 14.**





From top: ELC students perform the Christmas classic "Feliz Navidad" for their families. Students in Alexandra Cohane's kindergarten class decorated not-so-ugly holiday T-shirts, giving them the opportunity to practice fine motor skills and hand-eye coordination while adding pom-poms, sequins, bows, and drawings to their shirts.

Morse teacher Cheryl Haines takes a picture of ELC Pre-K student Alani Grant-Carballo with Santa Claus, played by Terence Henderson, during the winter Festival Dec. 21. The PCSD PTA helped put the event on, serving refreshments and staffing the gift basket tables.

## Other newsletters to keep you informed:



Poughkeepsie City School District publishes a variety of newsletters throughout the year. Here are the newsletters that are available now:  
[CI Weekly](#) for Dec. 22, 2023  
[College Readiness and Workforce Education, December 2023](#)

## Upcoming events

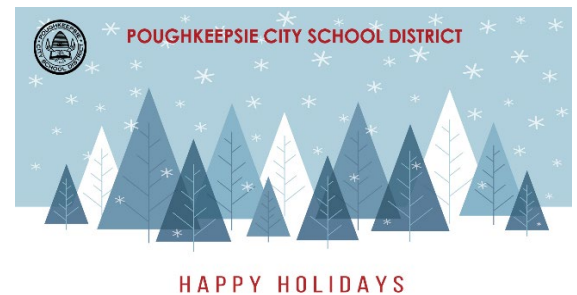
**Mon., Dec. 25-Tue., Jan. 2, 2024:**

Winter Recess, schools closed

**Fri., Dec. 29:** We Care: It takes a Village Basketball Tournament, 1:00pm., PHS

**Tues. Jan. 2, 2024:** City of Poughkeepsie Mayor Inauguration, 1:00pm., PHS No RSVP

**Wed., Jan. 3, 2024:** Board of Education regular meeting, 6:30 p.m., Administration Building, 18 S. Perry St.



# Happy Holidays to You and Yours!

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[www.poughkeepsieschools.org](http://www.poughkeepsieschools.org)