

# SUPERINTENDENT'S BRIEF

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

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## Join Saturday elementary schools chat



The Poughkeepsie City School District (PCSD) invites parents, caregivers, and community members to attend the next Superintendent's Fireside Chat to learn about and provide feedback to the district's elementary school reconfiguration exploration. PCSD is exploring reconfiguring the district's elementary schools as a response to parent needs and research that suggests that particular grade configurations increase student achievement, enhance student social-emotional development, and build stronger school relationships.

"We are excited to explore the possibility of creating elementary grade-band configurations that advance

the academic and social development of Poughkeepsie students", Greg Mott, assistant superintendent for elementary education, said.

PCSD parents have shared their desire for the district to consider how each of the elementary schools are structured that provides greater support to addressing the needs of families. In response, district leadership 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.

The Superintendent's Fireside Chat will provide parents, caregivers, and community members an opportunity to learn more about the district's exploration into reconfiguring the elementary schools and serve as an opportunity for district leadership to gather feedback.

The meeting will take place Saturday, Jan. 20, 2024, at the Family Partnership Center, 29 North Hamilton St., beginning at 9 a.m. View the [Elementary School Reconfiguration Exploratory report](#) from the Elementary Division of Instruction to the Board of Education.

## McGuinness focuses on helping teachers, tutors

Kate McGuinness is happy to be back home in the Hudson Valley. She joined the Poughkeepsie City School District in September as district instructional coach and [Ampact](#) internal coach.

"I know there is so much more to learn," she said. "We have a huge staff. We have five different schools. I know in one year; I will not get to know every teacher as well as I want to".

"I fully plan to spend the next couple of years really getting to know the teachers and the more I can get to know the teachers and their students, the better I'll be able to help them."

McGuinness became part of the district's elementary team when Poughkeepsie became the first district in New York State to launch the Ampact tutoring program for the 2023-2024 school year. She serves as a supervisor and coach for the tutors at the five elementary schools.



**Kate McGuinness works with both Ampact tutors and district teachers as part of her role. Her office is in the administration building.**



"The more I get to know the program, the more it can be tailored to meet the needs of Poughkeepsie City Schools," she said.

In her other role, McGuinness is a coach to teachers in the elementary schools where Wilson Foundations, a program that makes learning to read fun, was introduced to students in kindergarten through second grade during the 2022-2023 school year. McGuinness is helping third-grade teachers implement Wilson Foundations in the current school year.

"With both roles, I find it rewarding when you're working with a teacher or tutor just giving them some tips or support and coming back and watching how that teacher or tutor took that advice and applied it to their own classrooms or their own tutor groups," she said.

McGuinness, a graduate of New Paltz High School, and her husband, Patrick, live in New Paltz. She earned a bachelor's degree in elementary education from Penn State University, and master's degrees in special education from Loyola University in Baltimore, and educational administration from Towson State University. Before returning to the Hudson Valley, McGuinness was an elementary school teacher, instructional coach, and new teacher mentor in Maryland.

"I think in the next three years or so, I would like to see my role as an instructional coach grow whether that means having more instructional coaches or being able to meet with teachers more," she said of her role in Poughkeepsie. "I really see the value in this role, and again in the next couple of years, the goal is to build teacher capacity which then in turn will better help the students."

## Uniforms unite, provide recognition for facilities staff



**Facilities staff members Michele Maddalena, Jayson Rojas, Tina Jackson and Kris Bottoms show off their new uniforms.**

The Department of Buildings and Grounds performs a wide range of services for the Poughkeepsie City School District, from building repairs and grounds upkeep to custodial duties and bus driving. The department's work does not go unnoticed but, wearing generic work clothes each day, members of the team sometimes have.

That changed at the beginning of January when Director of Facilities Marcos Rodriguez issued each member of the 50-person department uniforms. "People can identify who we are in the building," said Kristopher Bottoms, the lead custodian at Krieger Elementary School. "It boosts morale and makes us feel more proud and more appreciated for the work we do for the Poughkeepsie City School District." The team members each received five blue shirts with the school district logo on the left of the chest; some are collared polo-style shirts and others are t-shirts. Rodriguez said the uniforms "make them feel more like a team,"

department members brought up noting the idea last year

at a staff development session. "Marcos is really doing a good job of making this a family atmosphere," Bottoms said, noting the uniforms are "putting us all on the same page." Floyd Melvin, the head custodian for Poughkeepsie Middle School, said it "brings a cohesion with the staff." He noted team members would also save money in the future, no longer providing their own work clothes.

Melvin said walking through the front doors of a district building was one time not having uniforms could cause confusion for a security employee watching the entryway.

"Most (employees) you recognize by the badge or the shirt. They'll look at either and say 'Oh, he's a district employee.' Sometimes I have to take out my keys. I'll say 'Don't buzz me in,' I'll use my own key to identify that I'm a district employee." That's no longer a concern.

"All the teachers are responding to this: 'Oh, you look nice!'" he said.

Rodriguez noted, there's a fundamental benefit to everyone in the schools. "It's easier for others to find a custodian now," he said.