PCSD plans more student supports, programs

New York State released its aid runs Tuesday night, bringing good news to the district. Poughkeepsie City School District will get $4.4 million more than the governor’s proposal in January and receive an additional $1.4 million in preK funding. Combined with $6.6 million from the Coronavirus Response and Relief Supplemental Appropriations Act of 2021 and a $4.9 million increase in American Rescue Plan funds, the district will be able to reduce the tax levy increase from the tax cap of 2.198 percent to 1.40 percent, Interim Chief Operations Officer William Hogan said.

This news also means the district can extend its Academic Recovery Program (ARP) from two to three years. The ARP is designed to provide personalized and collaborative academic and social emotional support to PCSD K-12 students. The goal is to provide students with focused instruction, enrichment, and social emotional supports.

While analysis of state and federal funding continues to ensure PCSD meets all requirements, district leadership is proposing the following for consideration to help bolster student supports and programs:

- Restoring assistant principals at Clinton/ELC, Morse, Krieger and Warring schools
- Adding a special education/transition counselor
- Adding 12 Academic Intervention Services (AIS) teachers in elementary/secondary schools
- Adding two ELL teachers, one for the district and another for Morse/Krieger
- Adding three special education teachers (Morse, PMS and PHS)
- Adding a total of five new custodial team members
- Avoid borrowing $1.5 million for the BOCES capital improvement project
- Paying off the $1.9 million BOCES bond anticipation note, eliminating $227,800 in annual payments and taking the pressure off future budgets
- Increasing cyber coverage and escalation insurance
- With the City of Poughkeepsie, hire a bilingual communications person to translate materials and conduct community meetings.

Hogan told board of education members Wednesday that the district was anticipating a surplus this year due to fiscal oversight, the governor not withholding 20 percent of state and the modified instructional model due to COVID-19. This will allow PCSD to purchase reopening supplies, special education supplies and equipment, instructional supplies, library materials, physical education supplies and athletic equipment and start replacing furniture.

“By purchasing these items this year it reduces the pressure on future budgets,” Hogan said. “This has been a phenomenal state-aid year at the state and the federal level. It allows us to do a lot of positive things in the district.

Board President Felicia Watson praised the work district leadership has done on the budget, saying she was “overjoyed at what was being presented when you think about where we were a year ago.”

You can view the entire presentation at about the 36:22 minute-mark here. Alternatively, see the slideshow only here.
BOE adopts 21-22 academic calendar

At its regular business meeting this week the Poughkeepsie City School District Board of Education adopted the 2021–2022 academic calendar. As in previous years, the first day of school is after Labor Day in September. Staff look forward to welcoming students back to school Sept. 9, 2021.

The 2021–2022 academic calendar dates mirror previous calendars with the exception of a June 20, 2022, Juneteenth observation. This is in response to legislation signed into law Oct. 14, 2020, designating Juneteenth as an official public holiday in New York State. Access the calendar click here.

Poetry takes over sidewalks at Krieger Elementary

April is Poetry Month and fourth graders in Johanna Mejia’s class at Krieger Elementary School ventured outside recently for a related ELA assignment, writing poems on the sidewalk outside the school. Here’s Mejia’s explanation of how it came about:

For ELA, I wanted the 4th graders to focus on poetry since April is Poetry month. We started studying acrostic poems so that the students can apply their five senses when writing these poems. I wanted to extend the lessons by going outside with this morning sun, which inspired them to write even more poems. Students wrote about topics of nature such as trees, weather, seasons, months and even anime. I wanted them to pour their love into this and creating these poems with chalk right outside Krieger made them feel very happy and proud of their work. We were all ecstatic to be outside taking in the sun’s energy and just enjoying poetry. The students felt so happy and I was beyond proud of them.

PCSD and CSEA agree upon successor contract

Recently, negotiating teams for the Poughkeepsie City School District and the CSEA, Local 1000 AFSCME, AFL – CIO reached agreement calling for the creation of a three-year successor agreement to one that expired on June 30, 2018. At the regular Board of Education meeting April 7th the contract agreement was ratified, covering a period of April 8, 2021 to June 30, 2024.

“Finalizing this collective bargaining agreement is long past due” said Dr. Eric Jay Rosser, superintendent of schools. Rosser further stated, “Every staff member of the Poughkeepsie City School District depends on this unit in a variety of ways, it was important to myself and the BOE to negotiate a successor agreement that both parties felt good about”.

Rosser also shared that he has directed the district’s negotiation team to begin the process of negotiating successor agreements with the final two collective bargaining units that have expired contracts in the coming months.

Groups partner to bring food, supplies to families

On Saturday, I’ll be joining Feed the Children, Marshall & Sterling Insurance and Dutchess Outreach as they provide $100,000 worth of food, hygiene items and Disney children’s books to about 400 pre-selected families struggling with food insecurity in the Poughkeepsie area.

Dutchess Outreach and its partners worked to identify the families and provided their information to Feed the Children. Those families will drive up at pre-scheduled times to Marshall & Sterling Insurance’s parking lot, 110 Main St., and remain in their vehicles as volunteers place boxes of food and supplies in their trunks. All social distancing and CDC guidelines will be followed.

We thank all the organizations involved in this event for helping feed our families, providing necessary supplies and encouraging them to read.