

APRIL 26, 2006 PUBLIC STATEMENT BY NEW  
POUGHKEEPSIE SUPERINTENDENT OF SCHOOLS,  
DR. LAVAL S. WILSON

Introduction

I would like to indicate to President Stanley Merritt, Vice President Carol Bogle, and all of the Members of the Board of Education my appreciation to the entire Board for selecting me as the new Poughkeepsie Superintendent. My wife Constance is here with me tonight. She had a chance to meet the Members of the Board during my first interview. We have been married for 44 years. She has been a partner in the Superintendency with me during my 30 years as a Chief Executive Officer of Urban School Districts. Connie is an elementary school teacher in the Passaic, NJ School District. During my 30 years as a Superintendent, my wife and I have raised 4 children who are now adults. They are all living very productive lives in different parts of the country.

Poughkeepsie has a fine reputation as a forward looking school system. I look forward to collaborating with the Board of Education, staff members, the community, parents, business representatives, university representatives, governmental officials, and our students in enhancing all of the current programs. Prior to the end of the school year, I plan to visit all of the schools in order to get a personal snapshot of the nature of the programs and to begin to meet staff members and our students.

Providing a quality educational program in cities is a tough task. I congratulate all of the stakeholders who are associated with the Poughkeepsie City School District for supporting the current programs, and I look forward to forming a positive partnership with everyone who desires to be of help to the Poughkeepsie Schools.

I know that members of the community, parents, the staff, the media, and the students of the Poughkeepsie City School District all desire to know who their new Superintendent is.

Let me now spend a few minutes providing you with an overview of my philosophy of education, as well as my background. During the next few months we will all have the opportunity to interact together about a number of topics and Poughkeepsie School District issues. This evening I will give you just a short overview of my philosophy and my background.

### **Philosophy of Education**

I strongly believe in public education. It provides the opportunity for enhanced academic progress in realistic social settings for America's vast array of students. Our public school youth have differing academic needs. All students, however, have the ability to learn. We must, therefore, be successful in our teaching and interactions with our young people. When parents, students, and community believe that our schools are making progress in meeting the needs of all students—high achievers, moderate achievers, and those who need academic support—schools will continue to be supported by their constituents.

It is also important for me to indicate that I strongly believe young people should graduate from our schools technologically literate, proficient in thinking critically, and capable of successfully interacting with people in their milieu who are culturally different. First of all, however, our youth must achieve appropriate skills in the areas of reading, writing, and mathematics. Meaningful opportunities in the world of work and higher education will only be available to young adults who are academically literate. Students, parents, employers, and the community have, as a minimum, this basic expectation of the schools.

Many students will complete high school and continue on to higher education, while others will enter the job market directly from high

school. Our secondary offerings must be comprehensive enough to provide a wide range of academic courses to meet the diverse needs of our high school students in general, while at the same time meeting the vocational and career requirements of students involved in specialty programs.

Finally, all students should be safe and emotionally comfortable while in school. We must expect, however, mutual respect and mutual consideration for the well-being of all who are associated with our Poughkeepsie Public Schools.

### **Career Profile**

Let me now describe a little bit about my personal background. I was born in Jackson, Tennessee. My father passed away when I was about 5 years old. My father was a teacher and principal, my mother was a teacher, and my father's brother was a teacher. My father's mother decided to attend college after her three children were adults, and she also became a teacher after graduating from Lane College in Jackson, Tennessee. So, I come from a family of educators. You might say that education is sort of in my blood.

A few years after my father passed, my mother and I moved to Chicago, where I attended the public schools in that City. I graduated from elementary and high school in that school system. I also graduated from Chicago Teachers College with a B. Ed., from the University of Chicago with a M.A., and from Northwestern University with a Ph.D.

After graduating from college, I became a teacher and counselor in the Chicago School System.

I then started my administrative career in Evanston, Illinois where I served as an Assistant Principal and Principal.

### **Review Profile with the Audience**

## FINAL COMMENTS

Again, let me indicate to the Board of Education my appreciation for my selection as the new Poughkeepsie City School District Superintendent. I do indeed look forward to meeting and collaborating with the Board of Education, staff, parents, the community, representatives from higher education and business as well as, governmental officials on enhancing the programs of the School District. And, I look forward to chatting with each of you present here tonight.