

# SPEAK OUT!

## PITTSFORD DISTRICT TEACHERS ASSOCIATION



### Board of Education Election and Budget Vote Dwayne Cerbone, President

This edition of SpeakOut is primarily focused on the upcoming PCSD Budget Vote and Board of Education Election. These topics are incredibly relevant to our members as both, individually and in coordination, most directly impact our working environment and the students we serve. Recognizing this, the PDTA annually takes seriously our responsibility to closely review the PCSD Budget proposal and each of the candidates seeking a seat on the School Board. After thoughtful review of the budget details and interviews with the candidates, our Representative Assembly then makes a decision on our unit's position for each of these matters. Our intent is to advise our members and community on what we believe to be in the best interests of public education in Pittsford.

The District presented a Budget for the 2024-2025 school year that reflects a tax levy increase of 2.69%, which remains within the NYS Tax Cap. This budget continues to be fiscally responsible while still meeting the most critical needs of our students and staff. It is not without some challenges and concerns, as we are dealing with increasingly excessively high costs of doing business while state funding has become constrained and State Aid funds that were allocated to address the impact of COVID are expiring. Though we can all acknowledge the needs of students have not been fully addressed, even with this additional funding, the source of that revenue is drying up. The District Planning Team (an advisory group with stakeholders from various constituents including the

PDTA) as well as Central Administration identified areas for savings, which lead to \$600,000 in cuts. Aligned with these outcomes, the district unfortunately was forced to make some reductions in areas that, though valued, were not able to be sustained. These decisions have negatively impacted some of our members. The union is doing all we can to mitigate the impact of these decisions and to support our members though these times. As a result of our collaborative efforts, no member will lose a job, but there may be a need to shift some staff from current roles to other positions within the same unit. We will remain engaged as these puzzle pieces continue to shift and we strive to obtain the best outcomes for our members.

The PDTA is proud to have endorsed each current member of the PCSD Board of Education. We have interviewed and are proudly endorsing the three incumbents for reelection. Please read more about these impressive

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candidates later in the publication. Our support of these candidates was an easy decision based on their observed alignment with our shared mission and their overt commitment to supporting our students and staff. These community members volunteer for this service and do a tremendous job navigating the challenges of leading such a highly successful public education system in a tumultuous era. We are thankful for their service. We appreciate your assistance, sharing these endorsements and messaging regarding our support for the 2024-2025 PCSD School Budget.





# Executive Vice President Stephanie Warchol, Executive Vice President

## PCSD 2024-2025 Budget and BOE Member Vote

The development of a school district’s budget is a thoughtful, year-long undertaking. It is a multi-faceted process including establishment of shared priorities (Budget Guidelines) by the District Planning Team, budget preparation, presentation, review by the Board of Education and community members, formal budget adoption, further sharing with the community, and Board approval. Through my representation on DPT, and attending all of the budget work sessions and BOE meetings, I hope to be able to provide you a basic overview of the 2024-2025 proposed budget. Information below is compiled from the District website and budget newsletter.

As Pittsford residents head to the polls, they’ll see a proposed budget that maintains District academic programs and continues to put students first. They may also notice a significant reduction, compared to what was forecasted, in New York State Aid. While New York State is reporting a 3.53% increase in Pittsford’s 2024-2025 State Aid package, 3.03% of this Aid is in a form PCSD cannot use. As a result, the expected usable NYS Foundation Aid will only increase by \$1,161 for the 2024-2025 school year budget. Additionally, the District Planning Team, with representation from every stakeholder group, tackled a \$600,000 budget gap caused by a decrease in expiring State Aid funds from the American Rescue Plan that were targeted for COVID relief.

The proposed budget reflects a tax levy increase of 2.69% which is within the Tax Cap. The Property Tax Cap for PCSD is 2.69% as calculated by the New York State Property Tax Levy Cap Formula. This brings our two-year average tax levy increase to 1.39%. Residents will also be voting on three propositions. The first, to purchase thirteen replacement buses and communications equipment using Capital Reserve Funds. The second, to create an additional Capital Reserve Fund for Instructional Technology. The third, to authorize a withdraw from the existing “Capital Instructional Technology Reserve”, in a sum that does not exceed \$500,000 to be used for the purchase of laptops to support the 1:1 device program. These propositions will NOT impact taxes and in some cases will generate State Aid if approved by voters.

In addition to the budget and propositions, voters will also be choosing their Board of Education representatives. This year we have three candidates running for three open seats. PDTA conducted its formal endorsement procedures and have endorsed returning members Sarah Pelusio, René Sanchez-Kazacos, and Jeffrey Casey. You can find out more information about the candidates later in this edition of Speak Out, [and here](#).

Voting will take place at the Barker Road Middle School from 7 AM to 9 PM on Tuesday, May 21. Residents seeking an absentee ballot must obtain an application and submit it to the PCSD District Clerk. The return deadline is no later than 5:00 PM local time on May 21, 2024.

**PDTA ENDORSED |  
BOE CANDIDATES |**



SARAH  
PELUSIO



RENÉ  
SANCHEZ-  
KAZACOS



JEFF  
CASEY



# Professional Learning Updates

**Julie Barker**

## Important information for 2024-2025:

All professional learning hours for this school year must be completed by **May 31st**.

Collegial Circle Final Reports are due no later than **May 15th** to allow time for the committee to review them before the end of year deadline.

If you have been approved for an *Individual Initiative*, please send your certificate of completion to Cindy Craig immediately after the event. If you are no longer planning to complete an *Individual Initiative*, please notify our office so we can cancel the activity in WinCap Web.

## Looking ahead to 2024-2025:

The summer catalogs will open at the end of May with activities running from June 27th through August 30th.

If you are interested in running a collegial circle during the summer, proposals are now being accepted. Forms are available on the Teacher Center webpage.

Certificated Staff who are interested in attending a full-day workshop on “Harnessing the Power of AI to Elevate Student Learning and Engagement” with Monica Burns on July 24th are encouraged to [sign up here ASAP](#). This workshop is being sponsored by our Teacher Center so it will be included in our summer catalog for PD credit.

On a personal note, thank you for your support and collegiality while I’ve been in this position. I am honored to have worked with all of you and am proud of the amazing work we do in this district on behalf of our students.

Wishing you all a great end to the school year!

*Julie*



# SRP Newslink

**Connie Maust**

With the end of the school year approaching, here are some important reminders:

**Para Evaluations** - The Association worked with Administration last summer to revise the Para evaluation process and procedures. The noticeable changes are the elimination of self-evaluation and including the evaluations June 1 due date on the form. [A link to the form is attached here for your reference.](#)

**Summer day of work** - SRPs are required to complete one summer workday. The prior approval portion of the form must be submitted to your building principal by June 14th. The form can be found on the PDTA.org website under Documents School Related Professionals tab or [click here](#).

**Open position postings for school year 2024-2025** - Watch for emails from Human Resources for open paraprofessional positions, which should be coming very soon. This process is especially important for our “undesigned paras.” It is important to express interest in all paraprofessional positions, including the role you currently hold, in order of preference. Placements are made based on assigned unit and each member’s seniority. There will be multiple rounds of postings so it could be a few weeks before you are settled in a position. You can, and should, continue posting until you obtain your most desired assignment.

**The PCSD Budget Vote & School Board Election** is May 21, 2024 (7:00 am – 9:00 pm)

**The Retirement Party** is May 23, 2024, at Eagle Vale at 4:30 pm.

# Board of Education Candidate

Sarah Pelusio



## Why do you wish to serve on the PCSD BOE?

As a lifelong Pittsford resident and 2001 graduate of Pittsford Sutherland High School, I take tremendous pride in the outstanding achievements of our district. Over the past three years, I have had the privilege of serving on the Pittsford Board of Education. Through this lens, I have gained an exclusive perspective of public education that I hope to expand upon in a second term of board service. I am committed to ensuring that every student that enters our school buildings receive the best quality educational experience available to them. I believe that Pittsford Schools is consistently at the forefront of additional growth opportunities that will further enhance the education we can provide. I feel confident in my ability to support this work and maintain excellence in Pittsford Schools well into the future. I have the time and the desire necessary to give what is needed of the demanding role.

## What are our school district's greatest strengths and opportunities for improvement?

Throughout my years of involvement in Pittsford schools as a PTSA leader, parent, and Board of Education member, I have witnessed firsthand that the key element of the District's success is in collaboration. It is critical that all stakeholder groups work together to provide a supportive environment for our youth to thrive in. It is a testament to all of Pittsford – parents, teachers, staff, administrators, the Board of Education, the Town and Village governments, and the community at large, that they are fully invested in pursuing a high standard of excellence in education in all aspects, and for all students. Our objective is to serve our students. To continue to do so exceptionally, we must adapt to the rapidly changing environment that surrounds us, anticipate needs, and plan for the unexpected. Pittsford has made great progress in addressing issues presented through essential partnerships and district-wide collaboration.

## What do you see as the major challenges facing public education and our school district in the next few years?

Over the past few years, there has been a dramatic shift in the educational landscape of our country. We have reached a pivotal point in public education, and how we respond to it will have a profound impact on future generations of students. In Pittsford, the responsibility of educating the whole child – addressing social-emotional challenges, mental health concerns, and academic weaknesses – has created a need to pause, reflect, and re-evaluate best strategies before moving forward. This increased demand for services places a significant strain on resources at a time when many experts are retiring or otherwise leaving the profession. In order for Pittsford Schools to remain steadfast in supporting student needs, we must advocate for increases in funding to train and hire qualified professionals. Rather than asking

teachers to do more with less, we need to navigate pathways that bring more resources in to assist.

## In this role, how will you address the current fiscal realities while continuing our commitment to excellence?

The current fiscal realities facing our school district are substantial, and if not addressed promptly will jeopardize the entire system of public education as a whole. It is imperative that we work with our state and federal representatives to raise awareness of the issues and push for increased funding. As legislative committee co-chair, and legislative liaison of Monroe County School Boards Association (MCSBA), I have worked diligently throughout my first term to build relationships with our local representatives and advocate for funding sources that will have a real impact on the fiscal limitations of public school districts in NYS. In order to best serve our Pittsford students, we must work together with our district stakeholder groups to put pressure on our representatives in government. In conjunction with increased funding, we need more local control, so that we can allocate our state aid in a way that best suits our specific school community.

## What else would you like our members to know about you?

It has been my privilege to represent Pittsford Schools as a member of the Board of Education for the past three years. I consider myself lucky to have found a role that I am incredibly passionate about, in a community that truly values public education. I am grateful to have had the support of our many stakeholder groups working to address the issues facing our school district. I pledge to continue my work as an advocate for all members of the Pittsford school community, to raise awareness of our concerns and champion our successes. As we embark upon the next era of public education, I hope to be a constant contributor to our District's continual triumphs. It is my belief that the highest priority and the most valuable asset for any individual is education.

## Where can we learn more about you?

I am grateful for the opportunity to serve a second term as Board member of Pittsford Central School District. I hope to earn your vote on Tuesday, May 21st, so that together, we can continue to provide excellence in education for all our students.

I invite you to follow my campaign page on Facebook @ ReElectSarahPelusio. I can also be reached by phone or email at 585-727-3648 and sarah.pelusio@gmail.com.

Thank you for the opportunity to serve!

# Board of Education Candidate

René M. Sanchez-Kazacos



## Why do you wish to serve on the PCSD BOE?

I would like to continue to represent all of the stakeholders in our community. It has been an honor and pleasure to represent

our community for the past seven years. Our Board is seven individuals and we each bring a unique lens to the table. I, like my colleagues, am a parent, but I am also an educator. As we continue to see the evolution of public education in a post-covid society, it is important to have an educator's perspective that can address issues and ask questions regarding decisions that may impact all stakeholders.

Advocacy is another reason I am seeking re-election. As educators we continue to do more with less, we tirelessly fight for equity within our classrooms and buildings and want nothing more to do our best for our students and their families. I am in a position where I can bring my parenting, teaching, and board experiences together to help foster real change where it matters most.

## What are our school district's greatest strengths and opportunities for improvement?

In a district with many strengths, there are a few I would like to note. At the top is our dedicated staff. Every job at every building is what makes this district successful. We are all here to do our best for students and their families. This could not be more evident in every building I have visited over the years. As a parent, I have felt that dedication and support in every building that my two children have been part of.

Additionally, our core values are what guide and make us strive to do and be better. As a district, I can confidently say that we are student centered, offer a supportive environment for all, always work towards continuous improvement, and are progressive and collaborative.

In the past seven years as a school board member, I have had the opportunity to use these guiding principles with my colleagues to address a range of issues.

## What do you see as the major challenges facing public education and our school district in the next few years?

The first concern we are facing is retention and recruitment of employees. In the next 3-5 years we will see an increase of Tier 4 employees retiring while others are leaving the district and or the profession for their own reasons. We need to ask ourselves the question: What do we offer candidates as a district? Part of the answer is that we need to stay competitive with both our salaries and benefits, as well as continue to offer professional development to help all staff meet the changing needs of our students.

Which leads me to my second concern: mental health and

behavioral issues among students. Every school district is battling these concerns. The students we see in our classrooms today are not the same students we had five years ago. So much has changed since covid, and I do not pretend to know the answer. I do think that part of the solution is the continuation of staff members working collaboratively to help find solutions for the students who are in front of them. A "one-size-fits-all" approach is not the answer as our students and their needs change regularly. Teachers and staff know what their kids need. Part of our role as a board is to make sure we have a budget that funds those needs, whatever they may be.

Lastly, some educators have voiced concern surrounding cell phone usage, AI (like Chat GPT), social media platforms, and their appropriate place/usage in the classroom setting. Honestly, I have more questions than I do answers around this topic. While there are policies in place, moving forward, I would like to see an open dialogue on this subject as it is ever evolving. It is imperative that we stay on top of practices that are both academic and age-appropriate for our students.

## In this role, how will you address the current fiscal realities while continuing our commitment to excellence?

Budgeting is always a challenge. I am grateful for all members of the District Planning Team who partake in the ongoing development of the budget. Once the budget presentations begin, our job is to make sure the district maintains what students and staff need to be successful. This includes everything from meeting contractual obligations, safety and security updates, maintaining our buildings, to the funding for the 1:1 computer initiative. While we have control of our spending, it is the revenue side that can be concerning. Particularly, what we receive for Foundation Aid from New York State. This is where our advocacy is critical. Our board is committed to advocating in Albany and raising awareness locally in order to procure our fair share of state aid for all of our student's needs.

## What else would you like our members to know about you?

I am married to a music teacher and I am mom of two PCSD kids, both of whom are at MHS. They both attended TRE and BRMS. Thank you all for your support over the year. I am a strong supporter of my local union (RHEA) and NYSUT. I am the co-coordinator of PAC and VOTE/Cope in my local, and I am about to complete my 26th year in teaching, twenty-five at Rush-Henrietta. The past few years have been challenging for educators and parents alike! You all have continuously risen to meet any and all challenges that have come your way. I could not be more proud to serve you and our profession.

## Where can we learn more about you?

[Follow this link for my Facebook page.](#)

Rene\_Kazacos@pittsford.monroe.edu  
585-732-4382

# Board of Education Candidate

Jeff Casey



## Why do you wish to serve on the PCSD BOE?

I am seeking re-election to a second term because the last three years have been challenging, incredibly rewarding, and I have learned so much from everyone I have had the opportunity to interact with as a Board member. I believe that all I have learned over the last three years about the finances, operations, and needs of our school community provide a solid foundation for a successful second term. In addition, I would like to see through the recently approved capital project that was passed with overwhelming support. The project includes many necessary upgrades to District facilities including important safety measures. I look forward to working with PDTA, administrators, staff, volunteers, and families toward the successful completion of that project and other initiatives under way, and to come in the future.

## What are our school district's greatest strengths and opportunities for improvement?

Our District's greatest strengths are its people and the ability of those people to collaborate with each other to do what is best for kids. I see this every day as kids of all ages and abilities do amazing things in, and outside of, the classroom. Touring the buildings each month and seeing this work is inspiring. The District's commitment to continuous improvement at all levels is impressive. I am constantly amazed at the hard work put in to evaluate and re-evaluate the District's various programs, policies, and procedures to implement best practices. One challenge when there is so much good happening is finding a way to recognize it all. I think we can continue to work on ensuring that the incredible work done in the District is recognized within the Pittsford community and beyond by seeking even more opportunities to publicly recognize the achievements of the District's students and employees.

## What do you see as the major challenges facing public education and our school district in the next few years?

There are a number of challenges facing public education in the next few years. Funding is one of those challenges.

Unfortunately, the Governor seems determined to go back on her promise to fully fund foundation aid. The continued long-term failure of the State to fully fund foundation aid, in conjunction with inflation, and a statutory tax cap, present a very challenging fiscal landscape for districts like Pittsford. This challenge presents an opportunity for continued collaboration among many District stakeholders to advocate for funding necessary to deliver the level of service the Pittsford community has to come to expect from our schools. I look forward to continuing to be a part of those efforts.

## In this role, how will you address the current fiscal realities while continuing our commitment to excellence?

As Board member, I will continue to work collaboratively with all interested parties to address the fiscal realities the District faces. The District's use of committees with representatives of different stakeholder groups is an excellent model for working through these issues and others. I will continue to work with these various committees as we seek creative solutions to these fiscal issues. It is critical that we work together to build consensus around the steps necessary to address fiscal realities while continuing to deliver a world class educational experience for Pittsford kids, while also ensuring the District is an attractive and fulfilling professional environment for the recruitment and retention of talented educators.

## What else would you like our members to know about you?

As a parent of current second and sixth grade students, I remain personally invested in the present and long-term success of the entire PCSD community. I agree completely that education is a people business, and it has been an honor the last three years to work with everyone that makes Pittsford Schools so special. I think that my professional experience was an asset through my first term and I look forward to applying all I learned over that time in continued service of our incredible schools.

## Where can we learn more about you?

If you would like to learn more, please visit my [Facebook page \(Re-Elect Jeff Casey for Pittsford School Board\)](#).

Follow us on X  
@PDTAunion



# Your Reps:

## Building Representatives:

Michele Riedl, ACE  
Bret Burrows, JRE  
Jennifer Villareale, MCE  
Spencer Jones, PRE  
Greg Bischooping, TRE  
Kristen Dolan, BRMS  
Melissa Althouse, CRMS  
Todd Warren, MHS  
Amanda Marshall, SHS  
Connie Maust, SRP

## Assistant Building Representatives:

Alyson Hallett, ACE  
Patty Steeley, JRE  
Nina Dezio and  
Trisha Sullivan, MCE  
Kelly Sanderson, TRE  
Ann Conciardo, Ellen Fox, and  
Karen Grace, BRMS  
Jessica Wojcik and Sophie  
Spyra, CRMS  
Mindy Johnston and Sam  
Hyde, MHS  
Marc Hellemms, Brian Shafer,  
and Jeff Wing, SHS

## Assistant SRP Representatives:

Susan Benson, ACE  
Julie Pellegrino, JRE  
Rebecca Tan and  
Debbie Ricketts, MCE and PRE  
Radhika Ramesh, TRE  
Farida Patrawala, CRMS  
LaShanda Clark McCadney,  
MHS  
Brian Oliver, SHS

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## Important Information and Dates:

- [Certificated Staff can find more information about APPR here.](#)
- **5/21/24: Budget and School Board Vote, Annual Chicken BBQ Fundraiser**
- **5/23/24: Retirement Party at Eagle Vale**



**Speak Out!** has been edited and compiled by **Murie Gillett**. Feel free to contact me with any questions at [murie\\_gillett@pittsford.monroe.edu](mailto:murie_gillett@pittsford.monroe.edu).

## SPEAK OUT! Ads

You and your family members are invited to place ads in future issues of SPEAK OUT! Rates for members and family (price is for one issue):

1/8 Page: \$12.50   ¼ Page: \$25.00   ½ Page: \$50.00   Full Page: \$100.00

Above rates are for copy ready advertising. If additional design or set-up is required, an additional fee of \$25 will be assessed. Space for ads is limited per issue. Checks should be made out to PDTA and mailed to the PDTA Office. **Ad proceeds will support PDTA charitable efforts.**

Send copy and questions directly to [murie\\_gillett@pittsford.monroe.edu](mailto:murie_gillett@pittsford.monroe.edu).

# PDTA CHICKEN BBQ FUNDRAISER

PRESALE: NOW UNTIL MAY 13!

TICKETS \$14



DINNER:  
1/2 BBQ CHICKEN  
MACARONI SALAD  
SALT POTATOES  
DINNER ROLL & BUTTER



SEE YOUR PR REP TO  
PURCHASE TICKETS!

AC - ALYSON HALLETT  
JR - JEN TERENZI  
MC - KRIS FERNANDEZ  
PR - ALLISON LUTA  
TR - RADHIKA RAMESH  
BRMS - PEGGY CARR  
CRMS - CHRISTINE JOHNSON  
MHS - RACHAEL BONANNO  
SHS - ASHLEY MADDEN

EVENT INFO: TUESDAY, MAY 21, 2024 FROM 3-6:30 PM @ BARKER ROAD MIDDLE SCHOOL



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For information about contractual endorsement arrangements with providers of endorsed programs, please contact NYSUT Member Benefits.



May/June 2024