

# IN

An IN Community Magazine

# Fox Chapel Area

## GIVING BACK

DMS HOLDS INAUGURAL AFTERNOON OF SERVICE

PAGE 10



Fox Chapel Area  
School District News

PAGE 8

Special Section:  
Home & Garden Renovation Guide

PAGE 45

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# FOX CHAPEL AREA

## School News



### Fox Chapel Area School District

- 9 A Message From the Superintendent
- 10 First-Ever DMS Afternoon of Service Boost for Organizations
- 12 Saudi Arabian Educators Learn From FCAHS
- 13 Therapy Dog a Valuable Addition to Counseling Program
- 14 Beattie Road Show Highlights Careers
- 15 FCAHS Graduates First Class of 2024
- 16 DMS Accepts Schools to Watch Honor
- 16 Middle-Schoolers Win STEM Competition
- 17 Five Accepted Into League of Innovative Students
- 17 School Directors Honored for Service
- 18 Elementary Highlights
- 20 Telethon Raises \$66,775 for Backpack for Hunger
- 21 Student-Athletes Learn to Be 'Triple-Impact Competitors'
- 22 Historic Year for Fox Chapel Area Wrestling
- 24 Gymnasts-Turned-Divers Make a Splash
- 25 Safety, Health, & Wellness Event
- 26 2023-2024 Facts & Figures
- 27 2024-2025 Fox Chapel Area School District Calendar
- 28 Fox Chapel Area School District Directory



## A MESSAGE FROM THE SUPERINTENDENT

Dear Fox Chapel Area Community,

As we enter the fourth and final quarter of the school year, it's a great time to peek into our schools and see what our students are doing in their learning.

Our elementary students have been busy! Our smallest students are learning to read, write, and count. They spent time learning sight words, developing fundamental math skills, and discovering new things about the world around them. Some of our older elementary students tested their academic skills with a spelling bee and by learning about other cultures.

Our middle-school students are not only learning academic subjects, but they are focusing on serving others. They participated in an Afternoon of Service, which you can read about on the next two pages. Some students made dog biscuits for a local shelter, and some made cards to brighten the day of residents in a local personal care home. Some built benches for a children's rehabilitation center, and others made soup to provide to homeless shelters. They broadened and expanded their horizons, becoming even more aware of the needs of others. There are abundant opportunities for students with a wide variety of interests and abilities to hone their academic and social-emotional skills at Dorseyville Middle School.

Our high school is certainly bustling as well! Students showcased their learning to visitors from around the world, highlighting how they learn and what they love about their high school experience. A.W. Beattie students and orchestra students showed younger children what they do and what opportunities exist for them as they grow. Students represented the school district locally and nationally. They also excelled in athletics in both individual and team recognitions.

None of this would be possible without the staunch and unwavering support of our district's families and residents. Our families provide support in so many ways – making certain homework gets finished, running students to practices and games, and working with their child's teachers to maximize their learning and growth. Those without children in our schools attend games to cheer on our student-athletes, attend plays and music performances, attend special senior citizen events, and take Fox Chapel Area Adult Education classes. We appreciate all that the school community does to buoy our district and its students through their interest, enthusiasm, and support.

Everyone plays such an important role in our school community to provide the very best and highest quality opportunities to our students. You are helping our students to become the best version of themselves, and we thank you.

Sincerely,

Dr. Mary Catherine Reljac  
Superintendent



*Everyone plays such an important role in our school community to provide the very best and highest quality opportunities to our students.*





## FIRST-EVER DMS AFTERNOON OF SERVICE BOOST FOR ORGANIZATIONS

**T**he first-ever Afternoon of Service at Dorseyville Middle School in late January showed students how even a small act of volunteerism can resonate in a big way.

Jon Nauhaus, DMS principal, devised the idea to illustrate the importance of giving back to others, he says, adding that the fact that all students and staff participated in the service projects was a particular source of pride for him.

“As I walked around that day to observe the various work being done, I saw that students were actively engaged and were willing to open themselves up,” he says. “Obviously, I was nervous at first because this was our first attempt at it, but I was very proud of the efforts of all the students and staff.”

Students got to pick the type of service project they participated in from a list of seven different strands: animal welfare and assistance; charitable and community organizations; elderly care and shut-ins; student, teacher, and staff appreciation; homelessness and basic needs; hospital patient and worker; and veterans, military, and first responders. Examples of service projects ranged from preparing care bags and cards of support to baking dog treats for a local animal shelter and building three benches to deliver to The Children’s Institute in Squirrel Hill. Others made blankets, painted stepping stones, and read to younger peers.

A unique component of the project is that each DMS teacher picked a service project, and the activities were put into one of the seven strands, says Dr. Laura Miller, DMS program principal.





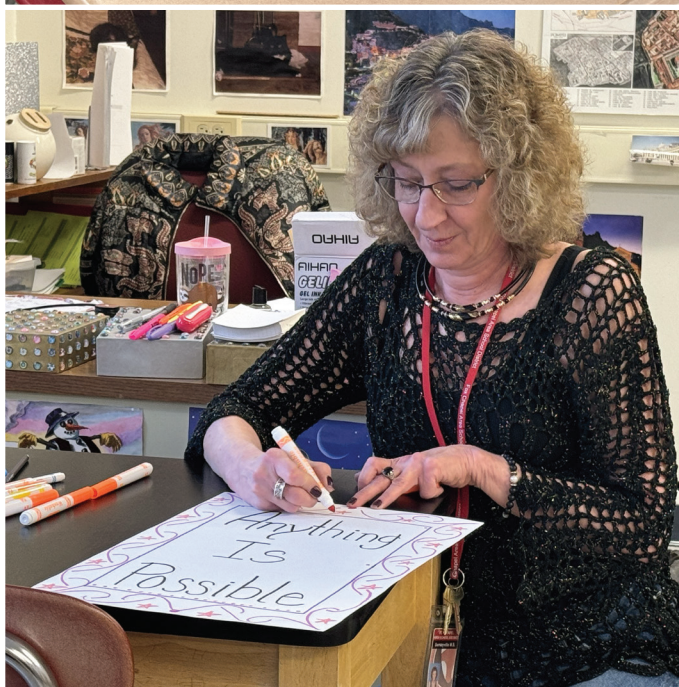
"There were no limits on the teachers," Dr. Miller says of their ability to select a service project. "We wanted them to pick something that resonated with them and spoke to them."

To prepare for the Afternoon of Service, students received a lesson about the organizations involved and the importance of service, Mr. Nauhaus says. Upon completion of the service projects, students and teachers recapped the day's events and collected information that will be used to plan future initiatives.

The reach of the DMS students and staff extended throughout Pittsburgh and surrounding counties – and likely even further, Dr. Miller says. She says a friend adopted a dog in Washington County and sent her a photo of a gift bag that they received to take home. It was a care package assembled by DMS students.

Though the primary goal of the day was illustrating the importance of serving others, there was another benefit to the day's activities, Dr. Miller says.

"Students got to engage in servant learning in non-traditional ways," she says. "The Afternoon of Service allowed kids with many different learning preferences to participate in a way that best utilized their unique skills and abilities."







*Fox Chapel Area High School senior Eduardo Phelan-Vidal works on a robot as Saudi visitor Dr. Ibrahim Abduladeem Al Salem looks on.*



*Fox Chapel Area High School counselors Dana Papalia and Tara DeComo explain to Saudi visitor Haifaa Rabah how the Naviance college and career readiness software is used for postsecondary planning.*

## SAUDI EDUCATORS LEARN FROM FCAHS

Five distinguished educators from Saudi Arabia visited Fox Chapel Area High School in late February to learn about college admissions and higher education in the United States. The educators heard from the school's counseling department about the services offered to students, including assistance with the college admissions process. They also toured the high school and had the opportunity to speak with high school teachers.

According to Nadya Kessler, the director of GlobalPittsburgh, the visit was part of the International Visitor Leadership Program and the U.S. Department of State's premier professional exchange program. During their three-week visit to the U.S., in addition to learning about the college admissions process, the visitors explored how secondary schools prepare college-bound students and examined strategies that promote intellectual freedom, critical thinking, and innovation. The delegation began its visit in Washington, D.C., where visitors met with government representatives and learned how education is managed from a federal standpoint. They also visited public and private schools, as well as colleges and universities in San Diego and Columbia, South Carolina. Their visit ended in Pittsburgh with visits to Fox Chapel Area, Carnegie Mellon University, Duquesne University, Robert Morris University, Point Park University, Community College of Allegheny County, and the Winchester Thurston School.

Each educator participating in the visit was nominated by the U.S. Embassy. According to Ms. Kessler, these are educators who are leaders in their communities, and the exchange of ideas is beneficial to the visitors, as well as to those at the host schools.

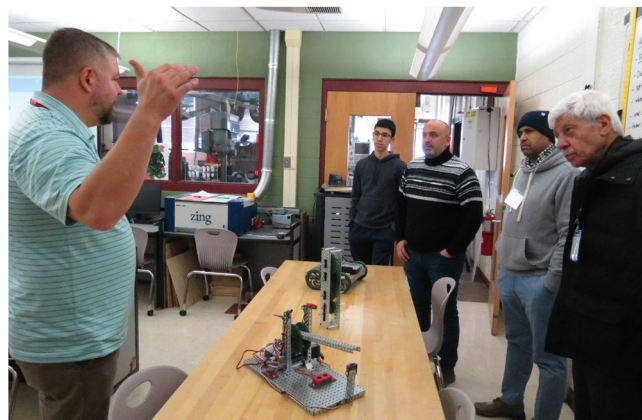
"This creates opportunities for best practices exchanges for educators from different countries. It also creates partnerships and cultural understanding," she said.

Dr. Ibrahim Abduladeem Al Salem, the assistant director for the Office of International Cooperation of the King Fahd University of Petroleum & Minerals, said he was amazed by the size of American schools, which can be very large, compared to those in Saudi Arabia.

"I wanted to participate in this program to expand my knowledge about universities and school administration, and to expand my network," he said.



*High school art teacher Mary Jo Montgomery shares information about the art curriculum with Saudi visitors Dr. Ibrahim Abduladeem Al Salem (left) and Mohamed Zeitr.*



*High school technology education teacher Ryan Siniawski explains to the Saudi visitors how robotics is used in class and during after-school activities.*

Other visitors included Yasmeen Abdullah Al Zarm, the vice dean of student and educational affairs at All Hussan National School - Jubail; Manal Ibrahim Al Rebdi, senior academic counselor & project manager for the ministry of education; Haifaa Rabah, the academic head of middle and high school for the Saudi International School Riyadh; and Mohamed Zeitr, international baccalaureate English teacher and head of the English department at Andalus International School.



# THERAPY DOG A VALUABLE ADDITION TO COUNSELING PROGRAM



It's always a good day at Fox Chapel Area High School when Remy, the school's certified therapy dog, is there.

According to Remy's owner and school counselor John Baxter, "Remy gets a lot of student and staff visitors each day he's at the school. He's great at his job and works for love only. Although he snores quite loudly in meetings."

Remy, who recently celebrated his 10th birthday at the school, used to only visit sporadically, but when the counselors witnessed the impact he was having on students' moods and how they positively responded to him, they decided to make him a more permanent part of the school counseling setting. Remy, a member of Therapy Dogs International, is in the counseling office several times each week.

"Remy has a very large following at the high school," Mr. Baxter says. "Some are regulars and come to the counseling office every time he's in school, while others seek him out when they are having a particularly tough day. With his facial expressions and slow tail wag, it's impossible for anyone to leave my office without a smile on their face."

According to Mr. Baxter, some students who had poor attendance now come to school just to see Remy. The pup has also coaxed high-anxiety students out of their cars and into the building. Remy has even served as the "guest speaker" for the school's psychology club, been the subject of photo shoots with the Advanced Placement (AP) photography students, and is a frequent visitor to the life skills class.



Mr. Baxter says some students will visit Remy after a difficult test or when dealing with panic or anxiety.

"Students dealing with an issue will often be more open and freely talk while petting Remy. He makes new friends each day. He has been an extremely valuable addition to our school counseling program."

Mr. Baxter also knows that not all students or staff may like dogs, or may have a fear of them. So, when Remy is there, he is mostly in Mr. Baxter's office with a gate across the door. However, Remy has even coaxed those who are fearful of dogs to come out of their shell.

"One former student actually had a fear of all dogs until he met Remy. His family was shocked and thrilled to see pictures of their child snuggling up to Remy," Mr. Baxter says. "Remy really is a gentle soul and truly therapeutic on many levels."





## BEATTIE ROAD SHOW HIGHLIGHTS CAREERS

The A.W. Beattie Career Center Road Show visited Dorseyville Middle School in January to give eighth-graders a glimpse of its programs and a jump on exploring possible careers.

Students cycled through dozens of sessions on fields such as carpentry, emergency response technology, sports medicine, and veterinary sciences. Students got to explore careers through hands-on activities and demonstrations.

Craig Reinhard, the DMS eighth-grade school counselor, helps coordinate the road show's visit. He says he was inspired to bring the opportunity to DMS by a visit a few years ago to the local carpenters union. He said he heard from seasoned professionals that day who emphasized the importance of young individuals considering a career in the trades.

"Discussing the imminent retirements of many in the industry, each speaker highlighted the abundant opportunities for those with the necessary skills," Mr. Reinhard says.

"A.W. Beattie plays a crucial role by offering the essential education and certifications, enabling students to seamlessly transition from high school into these professions or pursue further postsecondary training," he says. "I am so thankful and



appreciative for the school's road show visits, this being our second year. Not only do their teachers and student leaders engage our students in hands-on educational activities, but the event also serves as a catalyst for DMS eighth-graders to explore diverse career pathways."





# FCAHS GRADUATES FIRST CLASS OF 2024



It's official: The first students from the Fox Chapel Area High School Class of 2024 have graduated!

"This is a day filled with joy, pride, and excitement," Lead Principal Dr. Michael Hower told the graduates, who attended the ceremony with their families, friends, and teachers.

Dr. Hower, compared what lies ahead for the graduates to a choose-your-own-adventure novel.

"Whatever your adventure, just remember, life is too short to take yourself too seriously," he told the graduates, some who are heading off to college and some to the workforce. "And as you embark on this new chapter, keep in mind the wise words of Dr. Seuss: 'Don't cry because it's over; smile because it happened.'"

He went on to describe the graduates as a "remarkable" group whose laughter, creativity, and unique talents have left an indelible mark on the school.

"Carry that spirit into the world. Embrace the challenges, cherish the friendships," he said. "As you step into the future, remember to stay true to yourselves, chase your dreams, and, of course, never forget that invaluable life skill of finding humor in every situation."

Superintendent Dr. Mary Catherine Reljac reminded the graduates of the importance of their accomplishments and that the entire community is excited for their future.

"Graduation is the culmination of the work of a lot of people – yourselves, family, friends, staff, the administrative team, and the whole community," she said. "You are always part of the Fox Chapel Area family, and you are always part of the history of our school."

Dr. Hower concluded the ceremony by reminding the graduates of how much everyone in the district cares about them.

"Don't hesitate to reach out. Your relationship with the school district is for life. It doesn't end because you have that piece of paper."

The members of the first graduating class of 2024 are Eva Arraujo, Julia Baker, Alyssa Berardi, Kiersten Berardi, Emma Bolton, Cassady Chapple, Malachi Chapple, Devin Charles, Jayne Dye, Alexandra Gerdes, Alex Guiste, Gabrielle Hodas, Haley Kulikowski, Barron Loeffler, Amanda Marron, Eva Mazreku, Connor Mazzoni, Hannah Mohoska, Safiyyah Muhina, Sofia Rhee, Jamile Washington, and Feona Williams.







## DMS ACCEPTS SCHOOLS TO WATCH HONOR

Several Dorseyville Middle School staff members attended the Pennsylvania Association for Middle Level Education (PAMLE) State Conference in King of Prussia in late February to accept the school's award for being named among the 2023-2024 PA Don Eichhorn Schools to Watch. On hand to present at the conference and receive the plaque were DMS Program Principal Laura Miller, gifted education teacher Mimi Loeffler, science teacher Johnna Regan, and computer science teacher Cathie Gillner. All PA Don Eichhorn Schools to Watch will be recognized locally this spring and again nationally at the National Forum's Schools to Watch Conference

in Washington, D.C., in June. Eleven schools were named PA Don Eichhorn Schools to Watch this school year. Schools to Watch state leaders selected each school for its academic excellence, developmental responsiveness, social equity, and organizational structures and processes. In addition, each school has strong leadership, teachers who work together to improve curriculum and instruction, and a commitment to assessment and accountability to bring about continuous improvement. It is the third time DMS has received Schools to Watch recognition. It was named among the Schools to Watch in 2010 and was redesignated for 2013-2016.

## MIDDLE-SCHOOLERS WIN STEM COMPETITION

A team of Dorseyville Middle School students won first place at the Hack the Ram competition at Pine-Richland High School in January. The students are eighth-graders Steven Hu, Kanisk Prakash, and Siddarth Srinivasan, and seventh-grader PJ Hart.

Hack the Ram was a STEM (science, technology, engineering, and math) 12-hour invention marathon. The purpose of hackathons is to create technology with like-minded peers in a collaborative environment. As part of the contest, students were tasked to come up with a way to support environmental initiatives. They were then given 10 hours of "hacking time" to create a website, app, program, robot, or other technology initiative to support the theme. The DMS students developed a prototype website that provided information on common recycling errors, enabled individuals to search for nearby recycling centers (and for those centers to post their information), and enabled individuals to calculate their carbon footprint. The Dorseyville students each won a GPS drone for their efforts.

The competition was open to students from grades 6-12 from across the greater Pittsburgh area.



Dorseyville Middle School students show the drones they won for attaining first place in the Hack the Ram competition. The students are, from left to right, PJ Hart, Steven Hu, Siddarth Srinivasan, and Kanisk Prakash.



## FIVE ACCEPTED INTO LEAGUE OF INNOVATIVE STUDENTS

**F**ive Fox Chapel Area High School students were accepted into the nationwide League of Innovative Students: senior Shriya Krishnamurthy; sophomores Laila Golla, Joseph Shin, and Niko Vavpetic; and freshman Nadre Digbohohou. The League of Innovative Students is part of Digital Promise's League of Innovative Schools, an organization composed of school districts that promote innovation in education.

Thirty high school students from across the U.S. are participants in this year's League of Innovative Students and were selected by an application process. The aim of the program is to allow students to develop leadership, problem-solving, and storytelling skills. The students will participate in a design process project from January to June 2024, during which they will work with representatives from Digital Promise's Center for Inclusive Innovation, as well as with other students to design projects that will focus on innovation in education. The inclusive innovation model amplifies voices that have been underrepresented in education to solve education challenges in partnership with school districts.

The goal of the League of Innovative Schools is to create a school environment that achieves equitable outcomes for all students and is a national network of school districts that connects and



The five Fox Chapel Area High School students accepted into the League of Innovative Students are, from left to right, Niko Vavpetic, Shriya Krishnamurthy, Laila Golla, Nadre Digbohohou, and Joseph Shin.

supports the most forward-thinking leaders in education. By collaborating on shared priorities, members – including superintendents and district leaders – spearhead innovative learning and leadership practices.

## SCHOOL DIRECTORS HONORED FOR SERVICE

**S**tudents from Dorseyville Middle School honored members of the Fox Chapel Area School Board in recognition of School Director Recognition Month, which is observed in January. The seventh-grade flute ensemble performed an arrangement of the national anthem, followed by "Edelweiss" from "The Sound of Music." The students, who are also members of the DMS honors band, are Rebecca Dorneich, Celestial Hou, Delaney Liu, Zoey Liu, and Brooke Nalevanko. The students also presented the board with fox-themed coasters, made in the DMS makerspace, as a token of gratitude for their leadership.







# ELEMENTARY HIGHLIGHTS

## Local Author Visits Schools

Local author Tamara Girardi visited all Fox Chapel Area kindergarten students in January to read, “Why, Daddy? Why?,” her book about a curious bear cub who, like many children, asks a lot of questions.

The visit was sponsored by the Rotary Club of Fox Chapel Area, which donated a copy of the book for every kindergartner. The visit was also supported by Mystery Lovers Bookshop in Oakmont, which discounted the books. Ms. Girardi also signed each book.



## A Morning of Disney

The Fox Chapel Area High School orchestra held its fan-favorite Young Persons Concert in February at O’Hara Elementary School. In addition to the Disney-themed performance, attendees had the opportunity to do a craft and even try out some of the orchestra’s instruments, assisted by the big kids!







## 120 Days Smarter

First-grade students at O'Hara Elementary School celebrated the 120th day of school in early March with fun activities that included coloring special hats to wear, making artwork that each contained 120 stickers, and sorting and stringing 120 beads. The celebration was a culmination of their work to be able to count to at least 120.



## O'Hara Elementary Supports Animal Friends

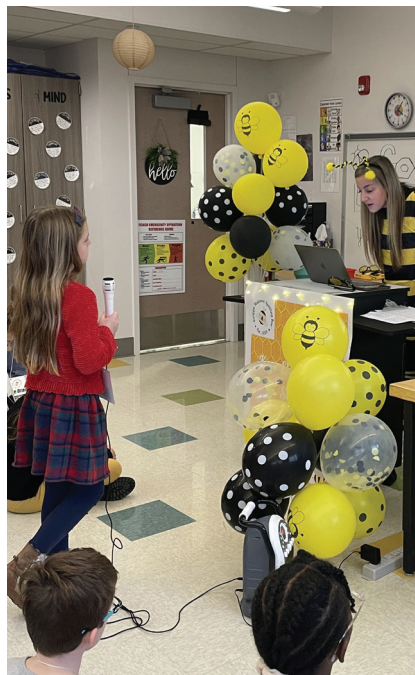
The student council and student engagement committee at O'Hara Elementary School recently conducted a service drive for Animal Friends, collecting hundreds of items for the shelter, including treats, dog beds, collars and leashes, and toys. They also collected more than 650 pounds of pet food.

Representatives from Animal Friends visited the school to thank the students for their efforts and explain how their donations would be put to good use. The students and staff collected so many items that Animal Friends had to make several car trips to transport it all!



## Kerr Super Spellers

Kerr Elementary School held its first spelling bee under the Scripps National Spelling Bee platform in January for fourth- and fifth-grade students. Congratulations to first-place winner Nico Berret, who will compete in the regional bee sponsored by the Pittsburgh Post-Gazette on March 24. Regional winners will advance to the national bee in Washington, D.C., at the end of May.







## TELETHON RAISES \$66,775 FOR BACKPACK FOR HUNGER

**F**ox Chapel Area School District students held their 34th annual telethon December 22, 2023, and raised \$66,775. This brings the money raised by Fox Chapel Area students and staff to nearly \$1.2 million over the last 34 years for various local and regional charities.

The telethon raised money for the local organization Backpack for Hunger and involved students from all six schools in the district. Students, teachers, parents/guardians, and community representatives participated in the telethon.

The telethon was broadcast and is available on the Swift Fox Media YouTube Channel. It was coordinated by the Fox Chapel Area High School Fox Leadership Council and video production students, who planned and produced the event.

Backpack for Hunger is a local volunteer organization that provides weekend food for students in the district. Additionally, the group also provides food bags to district children during the summer months through various programs that service the district. Since its inception in 2015, the group has distributed more than 85,000 bags of food.





## STUDENT-ATHLETES LEARN TO BE 'TRIPLE-IMPACT COMPETITORS'



The Fox Chapel Area athletics department hopes to produce more well-rounded student-athletes through a new partnership with the Positive Coaching Alliance (PCA), an organization that provides competitors with a positive, character-building sports experience.

Mike O'Brien, Fox Chapel Area director of athletics, says the goal is to turn student-athletes into "triple-impact competitors." One level is self – making oneself better. Another is teammates – becoming a leader who makes others better. The third is the game – guiding and honoring the game and influencing others to improve the team and community as a whole.

"The kids are going to have the chance to learn three different types of skills on three different levels," Mr. O'Brien says.

The PCA has a mission to make high school sports a "development zone" to mold "better athletes, better people."

"It's not only a positive coaching experience, but it also provides students the opportunity to see things from a different perspective and give them leadership opportunities and teach them how to take a leadership role with their team," says Mr. O'Brien.

"We thought it was really important to not only give the kids the opportunity of empowerment, but to also help foster a student-initiated leadership culture within our programs, and assist the coaches with being better coaches," Mr. O'Brien says.

The first workshop for students and coaches was held in late February, and three more sessions are scheduled during the next year and a half.

PCA founder Jim Thompson first realized a need for an organization dedicated to cultivating a positive youth sports culture in 1971 when he worked as a teacher at an elementary school dedicated to serving children with severe behavioral and emotional issues. The school used relentless positivity to help children achieve their goals.

In 1998, Mr. Thompson started PCA in an athletics closet at Stanford University's Roble Gym. Since then, PCA has grown from a small, local nonprofit to a strong, national organization hosting thousands of workshops every year and partnering with some of the largest organizations, pro sports teams, and national governing bodies. PCA has partnered with about 3,500 schools, districts, conferences, youth sports organizations, and parks and recreation departments nationwide.

The PCA's advisory board includes some impressive names, such as Steve Kerr, head coach of the NBA's Golden State Warriors; Julie Foudy, former member of the U.S. Women's National Soccer Team; and Dusty Baker, a longtime Major League Baseball manager.

As far as Mr. O'Brien is aware, Fox Chapel Area is the first school district in the Pittsburgh region to form a partnership with PCA, although the organization lists the Pittsburgh Hockey Academy as a partner.

Mr. O'Brien feels that this partnership will be full of positives for the district.

"I think this is going to give the kids the opportunity to see how they can impact society through their participation in sports and, at the same time, focus on becoming a better person, impacting their community, and continue to be good to the game and honor something that has touched their lives in some capacity," he says.







## HISTORIC YEAR FOR FOX CHAPEL AREA WRESTLING

### Boys Wrestling Pins Down First Section Title in Over 50 Years

The Foxes boys wrestling team accomplished something this season that more than 50 teams before them were never able to do – win a section championship. But that was only one of the many vast achievements made by a program that has had a rich history in the Fox Chapel Area.

“We knew we had a special group this year, so we had very high expectations,” said coach Michael Frank. “They have been committed, we had experience, and we treated each other as family, which showed in the way they pulled for each other’s success.”

In fact, it had been evident all season, from the moment the wrestlers entered the gymnasium for warmups to the energetic, intense classic rock song “Welcome to the Jungle,” that the team was determined to take care of business. Many of the athletes had spent countless hours training right after last season ended to keep in shape and get a jump on the competition. It paid off.

Junior Landon Funk won the 114-pound weight class at the Allegheny County High School Wrestling Championships, while junior Michael Worsen (121) won the school’s first gold medal at the Southmoreland Holiday Classic. Then, in an enormous achievement for the team, 10 wrestlers qualified for the WPIAL Class 3A wrestling championships, the largest contingent the Foxes have ever sent to the tournament.

The significance of being a part of a team that has come so far was not lost on the wrestlers.

Junior D’Angelo Hamilton (285), a WPIAL qualifier, said, “To be a part of the first team to win a section championship in 50 years ... to me it means that nobody wanted it more than us. It means that everybody was putting in those extra hours, such as staying after practice, really pushing yourself whenever it matters and whenever the whole team is tired, and still running that last sprint.”

Co-captain Josh Alexander (145), another wrestler who advanced to the WPIAL meet, said their success had as much to do with team chemistry as it did with talent.

The senior commented, “We had a special bond that not many other teams have. More than half of the starting lineup had been wrestling together since we were in elementary school. That can create amazing success at a high level of wrestling.”

D’Angelo learned a lot about perseverance from four-year head coach Frank.

“Something coach Mike says that I will always remember is, ‘Nobody cares if you’re tired.’ That is what I say to myself whenever I’m so tired, but then I remember how badly I wanted us to win the section and how much I wanted our team to succeed as a whole.”

It’s no coincidence that the team found success.

“We have been committed to our program for so many years,” said coach Frank. “Most of this group has wrestled together since elementary school. That experience makes a huge difference. The youth program has increased its numbers over the past two years, so hopefully we’ll see future years with this many kids matriculating through the program together.”

For their efforts, two of the wrestling coaches were honored by the Pennsylvania Wrestling Coaches Association. Coach Frank was named the WPIAL Class 3A Section 1 coach of the year, and assistant John Baxter was named assistant coach of the year.

Senior co-captain Alex Kaufmann (152) has witnessed the growth of the program since he was a freshman.

“It’s crazy to think that I finished my freshman year with not even a full team, and now we have an incredibly deep team that is the best in the section,” said Alex, who will continue his wrestling career at the next level at New York University. “I attribute the numbers to the youth program and all the guys that have come from that. I have been incredibly fortunate to be able to compete with those same teammates and for the same coaches for one final year. It’s special how everything has come full circle.”

“This was a year that we will use as a springboard for our future success,” said coach Frank. “I’m extremely proud of this group of young men for the work they’ve put in and what they’ve accomplished. They still aren’t satisfied, and I’m glad to hear that.”



## Girls Wrestlers Settle Into Own Identity

When Dr. Laura Ward agreed to be a part of the coaching staff of the historic all-female pilot wrestling team at Fox Chapel Area High School, she wasn't sure what she was getting herself into. She had been around wrestling her entire life, but coaching a team carried unknown responsibilities and would take a village to give the girls a valuable experience, some of whom had never wrestled before or even knew much about the sport.

Through a combination of hard work, support from Dr. Ward and assistant coach Deb Welty, and time spent with the boys wrestling coaches and volunteers, the inaugural year proved there was a lot of promise ahead. The team took seven wrestlers to the WPIAL championship tournament, where three girls placed – sophomore Atia DiGioia got fourth (106 pounds), senior Ava McCaffrey took sixth (118), and junior Vie Filar took sixth (235). By the end of the season, Ava, Vie, and Atia had reached a level of competitiveness that qualified them all for the very first girls PIAA West Regional.

Atia admits she hadn't really heard of girls wrestling until last year when she found out there were some girls on the boys team and then went to some open mats throughout the summer. Now, with the girls having a separate identity, the chance to be a part of Fox Chapel Area history was very meaningful. Ava agrees with Atia's sentiment.

"It truly means a lot to be part of the team," Ava said. "Being one of the few female wrestlers at our school and growing girls wrestling has made me feel amazing. I feel super proud to be able to detail what I have accomplished. It has meant a lot of growth and overcoming adversity, but that has truly made being on the team worthwhile."

"At the start of the season a lot of the girls on the team, including myself, were new to the sport so we hardly knew anything," said Atia. "I remember at one of our first scrimmages, some girls from Plum, Kiski Area, and Mt. Lebanon were way better than me, but they also helped a lot with explaining certain skills. I've definitely improved. By the WPIAL tournament, I had won or at least come closer to winning against a couple of the girls that I lost to in the beginning of the season."



The team's improvement was encouraging for everyone associated with the program.

Coach Ward said, "We had 16 on the team, which is pretty good for the first year. The first two tournaments we went to we didn't have any medal winners. I just wanted the girls to get experience and a better understanding of the sport. Then, they really seemed to hit their stride in February. We had three girls place at the North Allegheny tournament, and for Atia to place fourth at WPIALs as a first-year wrestler was exciting."

Vie didn't realize at first that she had moved on to West Regionals. She said, "When I realized I had actually qualified, I was so excited and in genuine shock because of my lack of experience. Now I am extremely motivated to do my best and make sure I perform the best I possibly can."

"I've learned so much in the past two months. Obviously, I learned so much about the sport, but more importantly I learned a ton about what being on a team means. The team is so crazy supportive of each other, and they were so welcoming when I joined the team. The coaches are absolutely the best and have taught me so much about having confidence in my own ability."

Members of the Fox Chapel Area High School first female wrestling team were senior Ava McCaffrey; juniors Vie Filar, Caroline Slember, Emma Srodes, Andrea Wang, and Yuqi Zhou; sophomores Atia DiGioia, Emma Kuhns, Lily McLaughlin, Ayla Ojanen, and Mira Owens; and freshmen Lilith Bohin, Elaine Huang, Kayla Nguyen, Evelyn Owens, and Lilah Rivera.

Coach Ward said every underclassman indicated they want to come back next season, and they've already been given their first assignment.

"We have a team expectation for every girl to bring at least one friend to join the team next year," she said. "My hope is that we will have at least one girl in each weight class, and we will continue to build a strong program."





## GYMNASTS-TURNED-DIVERS MAKE A SPLASH

Juniors Ainsley Anderson, Ellie Dering, and Noelle Dick have a lot in common. The divers are close friends who share a background in gymnastics, have a stake in each other's success, and say they gained their drive and perfectionism from their former sport. The three juniors had another commonality recently when they qualified for the second year in a row for the WPIAL Class 3A championships.

"I feel this was the strongest girls team I've had yet at Fox Chapel Area," says longtime diving coach Vernon Yenick. "They are all extremely close and very supportive of each other. I was thrilled with everyone's progression, especially Ellie, Ainsley, and Noelle, because they are only going to get better."

When the three WPIAL qualifiers joined the team as freshmen, they were diamonds in the rough; none of them had any previous experience on the board, and that rookie year was more of an introductory period than anything else. Coach Yenick says their growth has been impressive.

One of the most thrilling aspects of diving is watching an athlete make a complicated dive look graceful and effortless. It's also a skill demonstrated by the best gymnasts, and, while some movements might look similar, many who make the transition to diving find there are a lot of things they need to learn – and unlearn.

One thing Ellie knew for sure was that she wanted to find something where she would still be able to do the stunt-like movements she had done for years, but in a way that would be easier on her body.

"Diving was perfect because I got to flip and twist like I had done for years, but without the harsh impact of tumbling," she says. "At the end of the day, I love flipping around. I find overcoming the scary skills is really rewarding and super fulfilling."

Coach Yenick couldn't have been more pleased with his captain.

"Ellie is a leader and great captain who kept the team excited and motivated," says her coach. "I'm happy with how confident and curious she has become, which has led to her getting better scores."

Ainsley, whom her coach says is physically one of the strongest divers he has, rivals teammate PIAA Class 3A medalist junior Jackson Hagler in her takeoff heights.

"She's in a great position," coach Yenick says.

Her highest score this season was 250.45, only 27 points away from matching the school record set in 2015 by Miranda Simon.

Ainsley credits the dynamic among her, Ellie, and Noelle as a factor in not only helping her to improve, but also the entire team.

"We all try to always be supportive and encouraging with each other," she says. "I know, for me, the low-stress environment of our team has also helped my performance a lot, and I find myself having more fun at practices and meets. Diving has been a breath of fresh air for me."

Once she retired after eight years of competitive gymnastics, Noelle found herself in the same position as Ellie and Ainsley when she first joined the team.

"I still had a sort of itch to flip and go upside down," says Noelle. "Diving was a great option for me because it is easier on my body, and I could carry over my flipping experience. I think I am able to keep improving the dives that I've been doing since freshman year by focusing on the little corrections, which allows me to get increasingly higher scores."

"Noelle has really been coming on strong, especially with her degree of difficulty," says Coach Yenick. "She came back really powerful this year, and it's a wonderful thing to see. This year was an explosion of motivation with her."



*Ainsley Anderson shows off the seventh-place medal she won at this year's WPIAL Class 3A diving championships.*



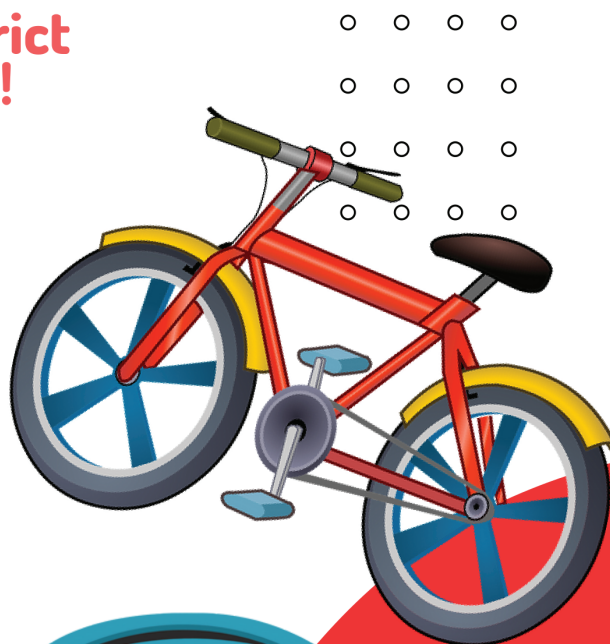
All Fox Chapel Area School District  
families and residents welcome!

# Safety, Health, & Wellness Event

**Saturday, May 11, 2024**

10 a.m. - 2 p.m.

Aspinwall Municipal Parking Lot  
241 Freeport Road, Aspinwall



## FREE!

Wellness screenings  
Touch-a-truck area  
Bike helmets  
Bike rodeo w/police  
Car seat checks  
Food & treats

Sponsored by the Fox Chapel Area  
School District & its school resource  
officers; the boroughs of Aspinwall,  
Blawnox, Fox Chapel & Sharpsburg;  
Indiana & O'Hara townships; and all  
local municipal police departments

For more information:

Officer Joseph Kozarian  
(412) 967-2448  
joseph\_kozarian@fcasd.edu







# 2023-2024 FACTS & FIGURES

## 2023-2024 STUDENT ENROLLMENT

### ELEMENTARY SCHOOLS (K-GRADE 5)

Fairview Elementary School.....	372
Hartwood Elementary School.....	393
Kerr Elementary School.....	436
O'Hara Elementary School.....	715
Total Elementary Enrollment.....	1,916

### SECONDARY SCHOOLS (GRADES 6-12)

Dorseyville Middle School (6-8).....	959
Fox Chapel Area High School (9-12) .....	1,288
Total Secondary Enrollment.....	2,247

Total District Enrollment ..... 4,163

## CLASS OF 2023

The total number of graduates in the Fox Chapel Area High School Class of 2023 was 332. The percentages of 2023 graduates entering some type of postsecondary education were as follows:

Four-Year Colleges .....	232 or 72%
Two-Year Colleges/Other .....	37 or 12%
Total Continuing Education.....	269 or 84%

## AVERAGE SAT SCORES

	Evidence-Based	
	Reading & Writing	Math
Class of 2023 .....	611	606
Class of 2022 .....	608	613
Class of 2021 .....	611	618
Class of 2020 .....	617	619
Class of 2019 .....	608	616

A total of 245 members (76%) of the Class of 2023 took the SAT during their junior or senior year. The national average scores for all 2023 graduates taking the test were 560 in evidence-based reading and writing and 547 in math.

## PROFESSIONAL STAFF STATISTICS

### NUMBER OF PROFESSIONAL STAFF

Elementary .....	171
Secondary .....	186
Total .....	357

### MASTER'S OR DOCTORATE DEGREE OR EQUIVALENT

Elementary .....	75%
Secondary .....	82%

### AVERAGE YEARS OF TEACHING EXPERIENCE

Elementary .....	17 Years
Secondary .....	22 Years

## THE COMMUNITY

The Fox Chapel Area School District is located in a dynamic suburban community about 11 miles northeast of downtown Pittsburgh. The district includes six municipalities (the boroughs of Aspinwall, Blawnox, Fox Chapel, and Sharpsburg, and the townships of Indiana and O'Hara) representing a wide range of social, economic, cultural, and religious backgrounds. The schools provide a comprehensive array of educational opportunities to serve the needs of this diverse population and to meet the high expectations of its residents. The district encompasses an area of about 36 square miles with approximately 29,000 residents.

## MISSION

The Fox Chapel Area School District exists to maximize learning, achievement, and growth through a focus on educating the whole student.

## THE SCHOOL DISTRICT

The Fox Chapel Area School District is a nationally recognized, award-winning school district that produces high achievement in students, with a motivated and professional faculty and an involved and caring administration. There are six schools in the district.

## VISION

The Fox Chapel Area School District will engage students in a learning community that values belonging and focuses on the education of the whole student through four pillars for success:

- Purpose: Learning and teaching through inclusive, standards-aligned, and culturally responsive approaches that meet the needs of all students, while monitoring growth and success through a data-informed approach for continuous improvement
- Passion: Providing students with authentic learning experiences that motivate them to pursue their interests with a focus on educating the whole student
- Care: Fostering safe and supportive learning environments that value the diversity, individuality, social and emotional wellness, and belonging of all students
- Community: Partnering and collaborating with the community

## VALUES

- Respect: Valuing self and others; caring for one's environment; and pride in positive actions
- Responsibility: Accountability; taking ownership of what you do; and listening and following through
- Integrity: Doing the right thing, even when no one is watching; being honest with self and others; and trustworthiness in thoughts, words, and actions



# 2024-2025 Fox Chapel Area School District Calendar

August 2024				
			1	2
			<i>I</i>	<i>I</i>
5	6	7	8	9
<i>I</i>		<i>P</i>	<i>FC</i>	<i>P/C</i>
12	13	14	15	16
<i>P</i>	<i>P</i>	<i>FC</i>		(2)
19	20	21	22	23
				(7)
26	27	28	29	30

September 2024				
<i>X</i>				(11)
2	3	4	5	6
				(16)
9	10	11	12	13
				(21)
16	17	18	19	20
				(26)
23	24	25	26	27
30				

October 2024				
			<i>X</i>	(30)
	1	2	<i>E/+</i>	(35)
7	8	9	10	11
				(40)
14	15	16	17	18
				<i>E/C</i> (45)
21	22	23	24	25
			(49)	
28	29	30	31	

November 2024				
				<i>X/R</i>
				1
<i>E/CONF</i>	<i>CONF/+</i>			(53)
4	5	6	7	8
				(58)
11	12	13	14	15
				(63)
18	19	20	21	22
		<i>E/+</i> (66)	<i>X</i>	<i>X</i>
25	26	27	28	29

December 2024				
<i>X</i>				(70)
2	3	4	5	6
				(75)
9	10	11	12	13
				(80)
16	17	18	19	20
<i>X</i>	<i>X</i>	<i>X</i>	<i>X</i>	<i>X</i>
23	24	25	26	27
<i>X</i>	<i>X</i>			
30	31			

January 2025				
		<i>X</i>		(82)
		1	2	3
				(87)
6	7	8	9	10
			(91)	<i>FC</i>
13	14	15	16	17
<i>P</i>				<i>R</i> (95)
20	21	22	23	24
				(100)
27	28	29	30	31

February 2025				
				(105)
3	4	5	6	7
				(110)
10	11	12	13	14
<i>P</i>				(114)
17	18	19	20	21
				(119)
24	25	26	27	28

March 2025				
				(124)
3	4	5	6	7
				(129)
10	11	12	13	14
				(134)
17	18	19	20	21
				<i>E/C</i> (139)
24	25	26	27	28
<i>X</i>				
31				

April 2025				
	<i>X</i>	<i>X</i>	<i>X</i>	<i>X</i>
	1	2	3	4
				<i>R</i> (144)
7	8	9	10	11
			(148)	<i>X</i>
14	15	16	17	18
				(153)
21	22	23	24	25
28	29	30		

May 2025				
			1	(158)
			2	(163)
5	6	7	8	9
				(168)
12	13	14	15	16
				(173)
19	20	21	22	23
<i>X</i>		<i>K/E</i>		(177)
26	27	28	29	30

June 2025				
				<i>E/C</i> (182)
2	3	4	5	6
<i>FC</i>	<i>P</i>	<i>P/C</i>		<i>R</i>
9	10	11	12	13
16	17	18	19	20
23	24	25	26	27
30				

1<sup>st</sup> Grading Period – October 25 – 45 days  
 2<sup>nd</sup> Grading Period – January 16 – 46 days  
 3<sup>rd</sup> Grading Period – March 28 – 48 days  
 4<sup>th</sup> Grading Period – June 6 – 43 days

November 4 – Elem/Sec Early Dismissal & Parent Teacher Conference Day

November 5 – Parent Teacher Conference C (No School for Students)

June 6 – Last Day for Students = 182 Days (unless makeup days are required)

June 11 – Last Day for Professional Staff = 195 D. (unless makeup days are required)

## First Semester

8/8, 9, 12 New Teacher Induction Days  
 8/14, 19, 20 Professional Development Days  
 8/15 & 21 Full Clerical Days  
 8/16 Professional Development/Clerical Day  
 8/22 First Day for Students  
 9/2 Labor Day  
 10/3 & 11/1 Fall Break  
 10/9 Elem/Sec Early Dismissal  
 10/25 Elem/Sec Early Dismissal & Clerical Day  
 11/4 Elem/Sec Early Dismissal & Parent Teacher Conference Day  
 11/5 Parent Teacher Conference Day  
 11/27 Elem/Sec Early Dismissal  
 11/28-12/2 Thanksgiving Break  
 12/23-1/1 Winter Break

## Second Semester

1/17 Full Clerical Day  
 1/20 Martin Luther King Jr. Day & PD Day  
 2/17 Presidents' Day & PD Day  
 3/28 Elem/Sec Early Dismissal & Clerical Day  
 3/31-4/4 Spring Break  
 4/18 Spring Holiday  
 5/26 Memorial Day  
 5/28 Kennywood Day (Tentative) & Early Dismissal  
 6/6 Last Day for Students  
 Elem/Sec Early Dismissal & Clerical Day  
 6/8 Commencement  
 6/9 Full Clerical Day  
 6/10 Professional Development Day  
 6/11 Professional Development/Clerical Day

*I* New Teacher Induction Day  
*C* Clerical Day  
*FC* Full Clerical Day (No School for Students)  
*P* Professional Development (PD) Day (No School for Students)  
*E* Elem/Sec Early Dismissal  
*X* Holiday/Break/No School  
 + Act 80 Day  
*CONF* Parent Teacher Conference Day  
*K* Kennywood Day (Tentative)  
*R* Report Cards Available

April 21-May 2 shaded areas indicate PSSA testing windows. January 6-17 and May 12-23 shaded areas indicate Keystone Exams testing windows. Refer to the FCASD website ([www.fcasd.edu](http://www.fcasd.edu)) for specific grades tested in each time frame.

Makeup days, if necessary, will be added on to the end of the school year, beginning June 9, 2025.

Please note that the 2025 spring break does not fall around the Easter holiday, as it traditionally has, due to PSSA testing.

Please consult building and website calendars for building-level early dismissal dates, school activities, and other special events.





# FOX CHAPEL AREA SCHOOL DISTRICT DIRECTORY

## District Administration

611 Field Club Road  
Pittsburgh, PA 15238  
412/963-9600  
[www.fcasd.edu](http://www.fcasd.edu)  
Superintendent: Mary Catherine Reljac, Ed.D.  
Deputy Superintendent: David McCommons, Ed.D.  
Business Manager: Kimberly Pawlishak

## District Resource Staff

Executive Director of Elementary Education and Instruction: Ashley Constantine, Ed.D.  
Executive Director of Secondary Education and Instruction: Matthew Harris, Ed.D.  
Director of Special Education and Pupil Services: Timothy Mahoney, Ed.D.  
Executive Director of Instructional and Innovative Leadership: Megan Collett, Ed.D.  
Director of Literacy: Dana Simile, Ed.D.  
Director of Student Achievement and Instructional Verification: Stephen Edwards, Ed.D.  
Director of Ancillary Services: Daniel Breitreutz  
Chief of School Police/School Safety and Security Coordinator: Joseph Kozarian  
Director of Athletics: Michael O'Brien  
Coordinator of Communications: Bonnie Berzonski  
Community Engagement Specialist: Jill Leonard

## FOX CHAPEL AREA SCHOOLS

### Fairview Elementary School

738 Dorseyville Road  
Pittsburgh, PA 15238  
412/963-9315  
Principal: Susan Kreit

### Hartwood Elementary School

3730 Saxonburg Boulevard  
Pittsburgh, PA 15238  
412/767-5396  
Principal: Rachel Fischbaugh, Ed.D.

### Kerr Elementary School

341 Kittanning Pike  
Pittsburgh, PA 15215  
412/781-4105  
Principal: Paul Noro, Ed.D.

### O'Hara Elementary School

115 Cabin Lane  
Pittsburgh, PA 15238  
412/963-0333  
Principal: Kristy Batis, Ed.D.  
Program Principal: Katelyn Toth

### Dorseyville Middle School

3732 Saxonburg Boulevard  
Pittsburgh, PA 15238  
412/767-5343  
Principal: Jonathan Nauhaus  
Program Principal:

Laura Miller, Ed.D.

### Fox Chapel Area High School

611 Field Club Road  
Pittsburgh, PA 15238  
412/967-2430  
Lead Principal:  
Michael Hower, Ed.D.  
Program Principal (A-L):  
Michelle Young, Ph.D.  
Program Principal (M-Z):  
John McGee, Ph.D.

## FOX CHAPEL AREA SCHOOL BOARD



Front row, left to right: Adam G. Goode (2025 – Region III); Eric G. Hamilton, Treasurer (2027 – Region I); Marybeth Dadd, President (2027 – Region III); Ronald P. Frank, Vice President (2027 – Region II); Vanessa K. Lynch, Assistant Secretary (2027 – Region II); and Ariel Zych (2025 – Region II). Back row, left to right: Amy B. Cooper (2025 – Region I); Katie Findley (2027 – Region I); Paul Giuffre, Solicitor; Dr. David P. McCommons, Deputy Superintendent; Dr. Mary Catherine Reljac, Superintendent; Kathleen Anuszek, Board Secretary; and Kimberly Joi Andrews (2025 – Region III).

For more information, visit [www.fcasd.edu/schoolboard](http://www.fcasd.edu/schoolboard).

## COMPLIANCE STATEMENT

The Fox Chapel Area School District is an equal rights and opportunity school district. The school district does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, age, creed, religion, gender, sexual orientation, ancestry, national origin, or handicap/disability. The district shall make reasonable accommodations for identified physical and mental impairments that constitute disabilities, consistent with the requirements of federal and state laws and regulations.

Additional information pertaining to civil rights, school district policies, and grievance procedures can be obtained by contacting the compliance officers listed below between 8 a.m. and 4 p.m. Monday-Friday. This notice is available from the compliance officers in large print, on audiotape, and in Braille.

Title IX: David P. McCommons, Ed.D.  
(412/967-2456)

Section 504 and ADA: Timothy A. Mahoney, Ed.D.  
(412/967-2435)

Address: Fox Chapel Area School District  
611 Field Club Road  
Pittsburgh, PA 15238





## FOX CHAPEL AREA HIGH SCHOOL PRESENTS 'THE LITTLE MERMAID'

The 2024 Fox Chapel Area High School spring musical, "The Little Mermaid," wowed audiences Feb. 29 and March 1- 3.

In addition to the stunning performances, the cast held a Meet & Greet in the Grotto for children ages 8 and under on Saturday, Feb. 24. The special event included autographs from the performers, face painting, crafts, and a sing-along with Ariel and King Triton.

Approximately 140 Fox Chapel Area High School students were involved in this year's show, including the cast, crew and live pit orchestra.

PHOTOS COURTESY OF FOX CHAPEL  
AREA SCHOOL DISTRICT.





