


SCSD by the Numbers




3,419

Miles Driven Per Day
by our 59 Busses
from 4 Providers

672

Breakfasts
Served
Daily




1,305

Lunches
Served
Daily

134

Acres of Grounds
Cared for by Facilities



Meet the Valedictorian
and Salutatorian for
the Class of 2024

Read the full story on page 2.



Sahil Sekhon

VALEDICTORIAN



Michele Loebbaka

SALUTATORIAN

NON-PROFIT ORG
US POSTAGE
PAID
NEWBURGH, NY 12550
PERMIT #145

MAN-WSS

TO POSTAL CUSTOMER

Saugerties Central School District

Call Box A

Saugerties, NY 12477

845-247-6500

www.saugerties.k12.ny.us

Saugerties

Central School District

BUDGET 2024

Saugerties Board Addresses Budget Gap Between Revenues and Expenses through Multi-Tiered Approach

During a special meeting on April 23, the Saugerties Central School District Board of Education adopted a \$77,751,445 budget proposal, which carries a tax levy increase of 4.91 percent. The proposal will be presented to voters on Tuesday, May 21, and will require a 60 percent voter approval. The community will also be asked to elect three members to the Board of Education. Polls will be open from 6 AM to 9 PM at Cahill, Morse, and Riccardi Elementary Schools, and at the Mount Marion Learning Center.

Developing the Budget: Closing the Gap Between Revenues & Expenses

During the initial stages of this year’s budget development process, it became evident that sustaining a rollover budget would surpass the District’s projected revenues for the 2024-2025 school year. Understanding the challenges that lay ahead, the Board weighed feedback from the community about its priorities, and considered various combinations of budget reduction options to close the gap between revenues and expenses. The result is an adopted spending plan that is a compromise between making reductions to expenses and increasing revenues by presenting a tax levy increase that requires a supermajority voter approval of 60 percent to pass.

A significant revenue challenge being faced by the District is the loss of more than \$1.2 million of federal American Rescue Plan (ARP) funding which expires at the end of the school year. The ARP funding had been used for positions that provide mental health, literacy, and academic enrichment and support services throughout the District. Although this funding will expire, the need for these services has not diminished. Keeping these vital student support services in place will require increasing expenditures in next year’s budget.

The budget proposal also balances the impact of a \$1.5 million increase in the cost of Special Education services due to increased student need; a \$1.4 million increase in health insurance costs related to the non-renewal of a payment “holiday” (which allowed the District to only pay 11 months of premiums versus a full year); a \$481,054 increase in transportation costs; and a \$392,880 increase in mandated New York State (NYS) retirement system contributions. In addition, \$100,000 is being budgeted to improve accessibility at Riccardi Elementary School.

In order to help fund programs and reduce the budget proposal’s impact on taxpayers, a total of \$3 million in fund balance and reserves will also be applied as revenue next year. Despite applying all available revenues, a significant budget gap still existed, so reductions in expenditures totalling approximately \$1.4 million were needed.

“As a graduate of Saugerties High School, and a parent of children who attend the District, I can promise you that this is not something I wanted or anticipated in my first budget proposed to the community,” said Superintendent Daniel Erceg, Ed.D., emphasizing that all reductions were considered through the lens of student impact. “We did our best to align reductions to the priority areas that were identified through community input during our strategic planning process, always looking to find where the least possible impact would be to students.”

After much discussion and deliberation, the Board adopted a budget proposal that includes the following reductions, which are shown as Full Time Equivalents (FTEs):

- Part-time Counselor / Part-time Spanish Certified Teacher (1 FTE)
- Part-time French Certified Teacher (0.4 FTE)
- Library Media Specialist (1 FTE)
- Science Certified Teacher (1 FTE)
- Math Certified Teacher (1 FTE)
- English Language Arts Certified Teacher (1 FTE)
- Typists (2 FTE)
- Stipends for Lead Teachers for Math, ELA, Social Studies, Science, Technology
- A Full-time Nurse position moving to Part-Time
- Instructional Coaches (3 FTE)
- Multi-tiered Systems of Support (MTSS) Teacher (1 FTE)
- Reduction of Elementary After School Busing from M-Th to T-W
- Part-Time Teaching Assistants (5 FTE=10 Individuals)

Continued on page 4

Board of Education

Robert Thomann, *President*

Jeffrey Riozzi, *Vice President*

William Ball • Christine Bellarosa • Carole Kelder

Raymond (Mike) Maclary • James Mooney

Scott Polston • Timothy Wells

Meredith Mills, *Student Representative*



Superintendent of Schools

Dr. Daniel Erceg



Saugerties Central School District

FIND US:

Newsletter produced/created by Ulster BOCES

Saugerties High School Announces Top Two Students of the Class of 2024

The Saugerties Central School District proudly announces Sahil Sekhon as the valedictorian and Michele Loebbaka as the salutatorian of the Class of 2024. "We are incredibly proud of Sahil and Michele for their outstanding achievements, both academically and within the community," said Saugerties High School Principal Tom Martelli.

Valedictorian Sahil Sekhon

Sekhon, son of Rajwinder and Kashminder Sekhon of Saugerties, started the 2023-2024 school year as a junior. Following discussions with Guidance Counselor Eileen Madden about the possibility of graduating early, he proceeded to take the necessary steps to do just that. Showing remarkable maturity, self-confidence, and determination, he earned his valedictorian status by achieving a weighted GPA of 100.567.

In addition to excelling academically while taking four Advanced Placement (AP) courses and six college-level courses, Sekhon was involved in various clubs and extracurricular activities, including Math Team, Spanish Club, Science Olympiad, Student Council, and Student Government. Sekhon also participated in the Football, Wrestling, Tennis, and Soccer programs, serving as captain of the Tennis team. In addition to devoting more than 120 hours to community service through his involvement in the Key Club, he held a part-time position at the Saugerties Mobil Mart.

Sekhon said that some of his fondest memories of high school are from his time spent with the Football team. "The people on the team always had your back," Sekhon explained. "Everyone wanted everyone to do their best on and off the field; they motivated you to always do your best."

Sekhon expressed gratitude to his parents for instilling in him the importance of hard work and focus, drawing inspiration from their immigrant background from Punjab, India. He said that he also draws inspiration from his faith and his involvement in volunteer work with the Gurudwara, Sikh Temple.

While undecided on his college choice, Sekhon has received acceptance letters from Bucknell, Rutgers, and Binghamton Universities. He plans to pursue a major in Business to pave the way for a career in entrepreneurship or corporate leadership.

Salutatorian Michele Loebbaka

Loebbaka, daughter of Elizabeth and Michael Loebbaka of Saugerties, earned the title of salutatorian with a weighted GPA of 100.101. Alongside her rigorous academic schedule, including eight AP classes and nine college-level courses, she participated in several extracurricular activities, including Key Club, Band Council, and Math Club. A passionate flute player since Grade 4, she is a member of the Tri-M Music Honor Society. She was also inducted into the Saugerties chapter of the National Honor Society and selected as this year's Mum Queen by her peers.

Outside of school commitments, Loebbaka volunteers at St. Mary of the Snow Roman Catholic Church and works part-time at Buns in Saugerties. She also enjoys doing miniature nail art.

Reflecting on her high school experience, Loebbaka highlighted a memorable field trip to Mine Kill State Park and the NY Power Authority's Blenheim-Gilboa Pumped Storage Power Project, emphasizing her interest in environmental science.

Loebbaka attributes her success to her parents' guidance and the encouragement of both her Math teacher, Jennifer Sauer and her Band teacher, Michael Cho. Both teachers were incredibly supportive, making each class a highlight of the day.

In the fall, Loebbaka will attend Rochester Institute of Technology, embarking on the Engineering Technology Exploration Program with a focus on Packaging Science or Environmental Sustainability.

A Cultural Learning Journey at Grant D. Morse

On March 8, Grade 2 students at Grant D. Morse Elementary School had a special lesson about Ramadan, an important holiday for our Muslim friends.

Ramadan is a time when Muslims fast during daylight hours, refraining from eating and drinking. It's also a time for practicing generous acts and giving to those who are less fortunate. Our amazing Grade 2 teachers, Lorraine Collins and Catherine Averill, invited Grade 2 student Aayat Tahir's mother, Rubina Mirza, and Aayat's older sister, Zaara Ayaz, to their classroom to share their knowledge about this beautiful tradition.

Mirza not only explained the significance of Ramadan, but also brought a touch of the festivities to their classroom! After the discussion, she generously gifted each student a goodie bag filled with lanterns, candy, and star and crescent moon stickers, symbolizing the essence of Ramadan.


Collins expressed her hope that by learning about diverse cultural traditions, our students will develop a deeper understanding of, and respect for, others.



Mt. Marion Learning Center's Hilarious 100th Day

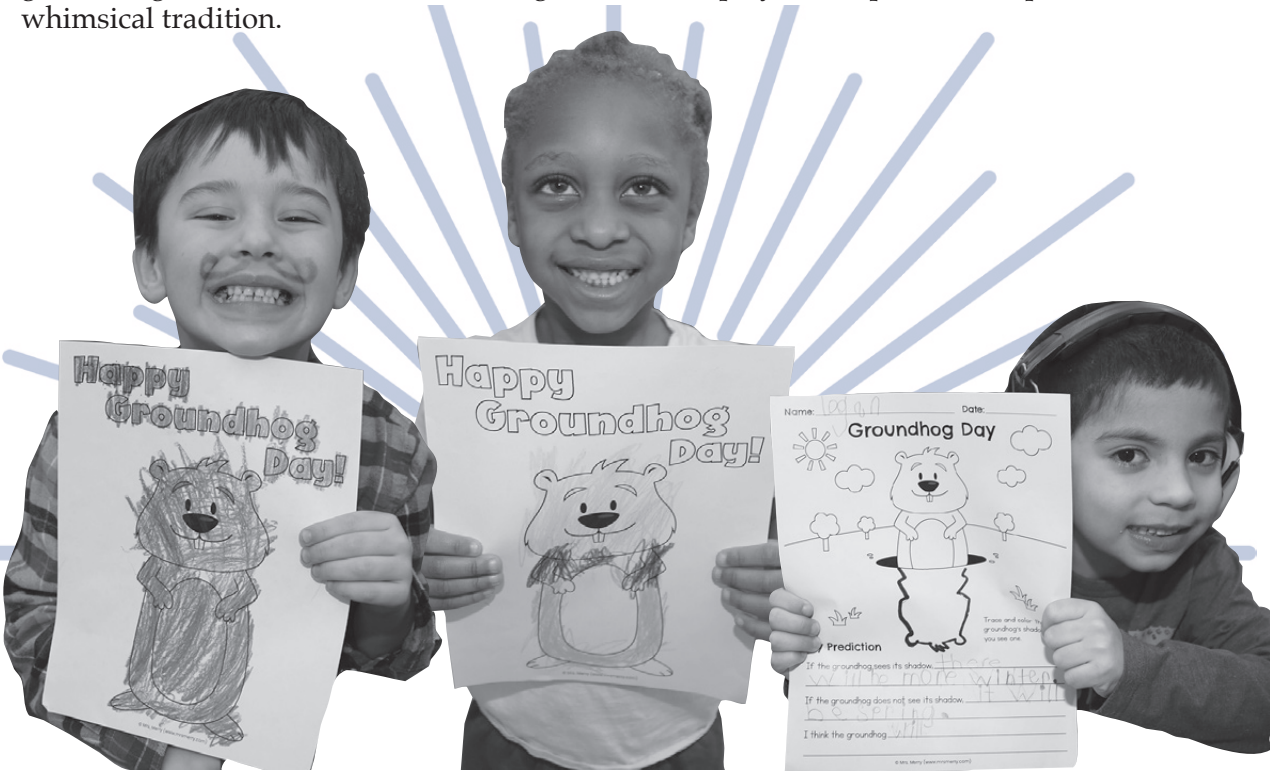


Mount Marion Learning Center transformed into a time machine as it reached the milestone of the 100th day of school in February. Traditionally, this special day is all about celebrating the journey of learning. But this year, the celebration also featured a time-traveling troupe of Pre-K students, who donned wigs, canes, and makeshift wrinkles to turn themselves into comically convincing 100-year-olds. Beyond the laughter and playful costumes, the occasion also marked the students' collective achievement of completing 100 days of academic learning. The day was a riot of fun, serving as a delightful reminder that while growing OLDER may be inevitable, the true adventure lies in growing WISER together.



A Groundhog Day Celebration

Katie Wiederspiel's Level K1 class at Cahill Elementary School eagerly awaited Punxsutawney Phil's Groundhog Day prediction. As the live newscast from Gobbler's Knob, Pennsylvania, revealed that Phil did not see his shadow, signaling an early spring, the young learners erupted in cheers. Inspired by the occasion, the students joyfully colored groundhog-themed worksheets, creating a vibrant display that captured the spirit of this whimsical tradition.



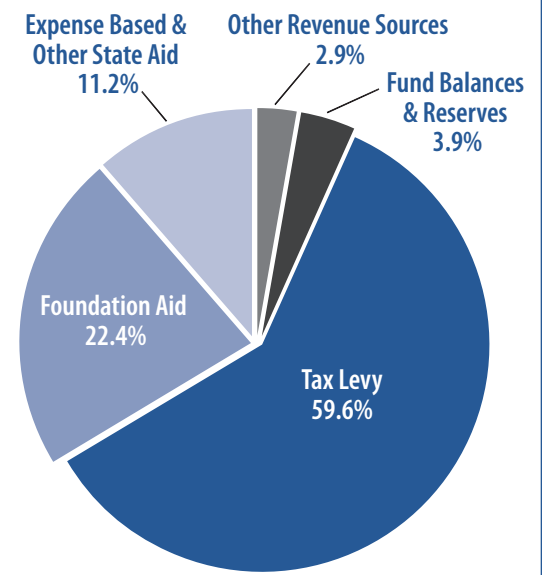
Saugerties

Central School District

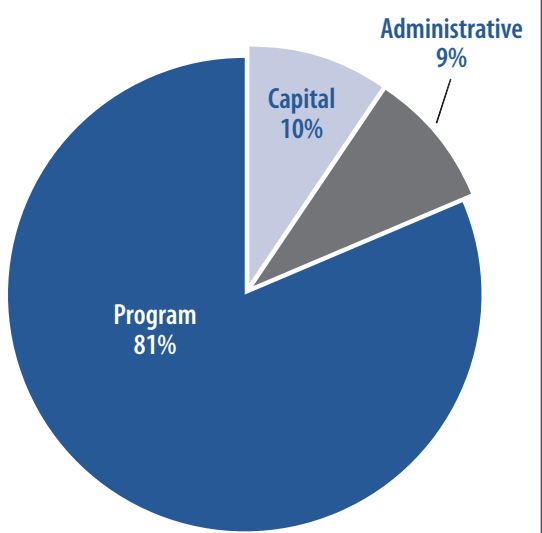
2024-2025 PROPOSED BUDGET

Saugerties CSD 2024-2025 Budget				
	Administration	Program	Capital	Total
Board of Education	\$45,336			\$45,336
Chief School Administrator	\$279,355			\$279,355
Finance	\$733,378			\$733,378
Legal	\$61,500	\$61,500		\$123,000
Personnel	\$277,184			\$277,184
Records Management Officer	\$6,215			\$6,215
Public Information	\$147,438			\$147,438
Operation of Plant			\$2,213,704	\$2,213,704
Maintenance of Plant	\$115,000		\$789,558	\$904,558
Security & Safety	\$345,000		\$12,645	\$357,645
Other Central Services	\$401,708			\$401,708
Other Special Items	\$986,698		\$373,314	\$1,360,012
Curriculum Dev. & Supervision	\$219,066			\$219,066
Supervision: Regular School	\$1,611,478			\$1,611,478
Supervision: Special School	\$7,000			\$7,000
Research, Planning & Evaluation	\$14,000			\$14,000
Inservice Training-Instruction	\$114,595			\$114,595
Teaching: Regular School		\$18,397,598		\$18,397,598
Programs: Students w/Disabilities	\$123,600	\$13,064,712		\$13,188,312
Special Programs: ELL		\$548,930		\$548,930
Occupational Education		\$1,336,425		\$1,336,425
Teaching: Special Schools		\$198,647		\$198,647
School Library & Audiovisual		\$593,743		\$593,743
Computer Assisted Instruction		\$1,880,025		\$1,880,025
Attendance: Regular School		\$85,049		\$85,049
Guidance: Regular School		\$837,978		\$837,978
Health Services: Regular School		\$548,366		\$548,366
Psychological Services: Regular School		\$428,268		\$428,268
Social Worker Services: Regular School		\$418,840		\$418,840
Co-Curricular Activities: Regular School		\$92,474		\$92,474
Interscholastic Athletics: Regular School	\$48,209	\$717,052		\$765,261
Transportation	\$13,905	\$6,002,429		\$6,016,334
Employee Benefits	\$1,491,411	\$17,644,240	\$1,104,065	\$20,239,716
Debt Service			\$2,934,807	\$2,934,807
Transfer to Other Funds		\$325,000		\$325,000
Transfer to Capital			\$100,000	\$100,000
GRAND TOTALS	\$7,042,076	\$63,181,276	\$7,528,093	\$77,751,445

REVENUE



THREE-PART BUDGET



★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★

VOTE! May 21
6 AM to 9 PM

Come out to vote on the budget and elect members of the Board of Education! Be sure to flip the ballot over and complete both sides. Polls are open at Cahill, Morse, Riccardi, and Mt. Marion.

★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★

Academics at the High School

13

Advanced Placement Courses

4

Honors Courses

11

College Courses

27

Career & Technical Education Courses

2

Foreign Languages Taught

7

Music Courses Offered

7

Art Courses Offered

10

Math Courses Offered

15

Science Courses Offered

12

Social Studies Courses Offered

Athletics

44 Modified, JV & Varsity Sports Teams Available

790 Participation of Athletes Across All Sports

Universal Pre-K

80 Pre-K Students (spots are still available)

Security

7 SRO & Security Guards Protecting our Students

Saugerties 2024-2025 PROPOSED BUDGET

Central School District

POETIC TEAMWORK ON THE WHITEBOARD

Here's to exploring poetry with Jamboard magic! Katharine Squires's Grade 8 English class embarked on an exciting journey into the world of poetry by breaking down Shel Silverstein's timeless poem, "Morgan's Curse."

Harnessing the power of collaboration, the students analyzed Silverstein's poem using Jamboard, an interactive whiteboard by Google that allows real-time teamwork. With Squires's screen positioned at the front of the class and the students working on their laptops, they were all able to weigh the advantages of finding gold treasure and the disadvantages of risking a pirate's curse. Students could underline, highlight, or circle words on their screens, which would then appear on Squires's screen at the front of the room. The lesson quickly became a group activity, which enhanced the students' learning experience.



CAPITAL PROJECT UPDATE: Embracing History and Enhancing Safety

In a blend of historical preservation and modern upgrades, the Saugerties Central School District is forging ahead with its 2020 voter-approved Capital Project, which will lead to significant improvements to our educational facilities.

One of the primary focuses of the project is enhancing safety measures, a paramount concern in today's educational landscape. The Junior/Senior High School is set to receive a new, secure vestibule, a vital addition aimed at controlling access to the building and ensuring the safety of students and staff.

In addition, a new gym-divider door is being installed, promising improved functionality and versatility for various sporting and recreational activities.

However, perhaps the most captivating aspect of the Capital Project lies in its nod to local history. The air shaft at Cahill, an integral component of the building's original design dating back to 1908, is receiving much-needed repairs and replacements. This meticulous restoration effort not only ensures the structural integrity of the building, but also pays homage to the rich architectural heritage of Saugerties. One of the interesting facts about the building is that many of the bricks used in its original construction were sourced locally from Saugerties. Also discovered was a piece of wood with the names of several workers on it, dated January 24, 1908.



Saugerties Board Addresses Budget Gap Between Revenues and Expenses through Multi-Tiered Approach

Continued from page 1

Although additional cuts were discussed throughout the budget development process, the Board's final decision to propose a 4.91 percent levy increase and the use of \$3 million in fund balance and reserves allowed several positions to be saved. Among the positions being preserved are a social worker and psychologist in each building, two reading teachers, one instructional coach for literacy, non-mandated teaching assistants, armed security, an athletic trainer, an assistant principal at Cahill, an at-large MTSS teacher who will be assigned according to student need, and an advocacy specialist.

The proposed spending plan also preserves art and music programs at existing levels throughout the District, as well as the District's pre-kindergarten program.

What Will the Budget Cost?

The anticipated tax levy increase associated with the budget proposal is 4.91 percent. The tax levy is the total amount of taxes that the school district needs from all taxpayers to support the budget.

The amount a taxpayer is charged per \$1,000 of assessed property value is called the tax rate, and is determined by dividing the tax levy into the total assessed value of all the properties in the school district. Individual assessments can vary widely.

The tax rate is set over the summer, after towns finalize their assessments and the State sets equalization rates (which helps ensure the tax burden is distributed fairly between towns). Since this occurs after the District is required by law to hold its budget vote, it is impossible to determine actual tax implications at this time.

That being said, it is estimated that the annual increase for a home with an assessed value of \$300K in the Town of Saugerties would be \$222. (This fall, the Board of Education approved a tax exemption to reduce the level of taxes due from volunteer firefighters; those who qualify will have a smaller increase.)

What is the Tax Cap and How Does it Impact the Budget?

Under NYS law, a school district must plan its budget around a complex formula that is used to calculate the baseline tax levy increase allowed with a simple majority voter approval, which is known as the "tax cap." This calculation is different for each school district, and changes from year to year.

This year, the tax cap that would require a simple-majority voter approval is 3.62 percent. In order to close a budget gap between revenues and expenses and limit the already deep reductions included in the budget, the Board of Education adopted a budget with a 4.91 percent levy increase. Since this is above the tax cap calculation level, the budget will need a 60 percent supermajority voter approval to pass.

What Is a Contingency Budget?

Should the budget proposal not receive at least 60 percent approval by voters, the District may present voters with the same budget, or a revised budget, for one more attempt at earning approval. If the budget is unsuccessful on the second attempt, the District must adopt a contingency budget with a zero percent levy increase, which would require additional cuts in the amount of \$2,626,079 to non-mandated programs. Programs such as pre-kindergarten, armed security, and others would be at risk.

In addition, under a contingency budget, local control over certain decisions is lost. NYS dictates the removal of any non-essential equipment purchases and the removal of any non-essential building maintenance. In addition, by law, there can be no free use of facilities by the community, so public use of facilities for outside groups would require a full facilities use charge to fully reimburse the District for all costs associated with its use.

Who is Eligible for a STAR Credit?

If you own your home, it's your primary residence, and your income is \$500,000 or less, you're eligible for the Basic STAR credit. In addition, if you're 65 or older with an income of \$98,700 or less, you may be eligible for the Enhanced STAR credit. In the first year of your new home, you may receive the prior owner's STAR exemption. In future years, as long as you're eligible, you'll receive a STAR credit payment. You don't need to register again.

VOTER ELIGIBILITY

All eligible voters are welcome to participate in the school budget vote. To qualify, individuals must be U.S. citizens, at least 18 years old on the day of the vote, and have been residents of the District for at least 30 days prior to the vote. Those already registered with the Ulster County Board of Elections are automatically registered for school elections as well.

ABSENTEE & EARLY MAIL BALLOTS

A new voter law has been enacted in New York that allows eligible voters to apply for, obtain, and cast an Early Mail Ballot in advance of the annual budget vote and school board election. The legislation aims to provide greater flexibility and convenience, enabling residents to participate more easily in the voting process. Absentee Ballots are still available.

To obtain either an Absentee or Early Mail Ballot, an eligible voter must first fill out an application, which can be picked up from the District Clerk, or be requested by mailing a letter to the District Clerk. Please note, the "Application for Absentee Ballot" requires an applicant to provide a qualifying reason.

Completed applications may be returned to the District Clerk in person or sent by mail. Upon receipt of a completed application, a ballot will be issued. If the voter is requesting to have a ballot sent to them by mail, applications must reach the District Clerk by May 14. If the voter is collecting their ballot in person, applications must be received by May 20.

Completed ballots must be received by the District Clerk by the strict deadline of 5 PM on Tuesday, May 21.

Saugerties
Central School District

2024-2025 PROPOSED BUDGET

School District Budget Notice

OVERALL BUDGET PROPOSAL	Budget Adopted for the 2023-2024 School Year	Budget Proposed for the 2024-2025 School Year	Contingency Budget for the 2024-2025 School Year*
Total Budgeted Amount, Not Including Separate Propositions	\$71,192,559	\$77,751,445	\$75,125,366
Increase/Decrease for the 2024-25 School Year		\$6,558,886	\$3,932,807
Percentage Increase/Decrease in Proposed Budget		9.21%	5.52%
Change in the Consumer Price Index		4.1%	
A. Proposed Tax Levy to Support the Total Budgeted Amount	\$44,185,168	\$46,354,719	
B. Levy to Support Library Debt, if Applicable	\$0	\$0	
C. Levy for Non-Excludable Propositions, if Applicable **	\$0	\$0	
D. Total Tax Cap Reserve Amount Used to Reduce Current Year Levy	\$0	\$0	
E. Total Proposed School Year Tax Levy (A + B + C – D)	\$44,185,168	\$46,354,719	\$44,185,168
F. Total Permissible Exclusions	\$1,002,427	\$1,185,105	
G. School Tax Levy Limit, <u>Excluding</u> Levy for Permissible Exclusions	\$43,182,741	\$45,169,614	
H. Total Proposed School Year Tax Levy, <u>Excluding</u> Levy to Support Library Debt and/or Permissible Exclusions (E – B – F + D)	\$43,182,741	\$44,600,553	
I. Difference: (G – H); (Negative Value Requires 60.0% Voter Approval – See Note Below Regarding Separate Propositions) **	\$0	-\$569,061	
Administrative component	\$6,943,498	\$7,042,076	\$6,879,024
Program component	\$57,426,065	\$63,181,276	\$61,093,248
Capital component	\$6,822,996	\$7,528,093	\$7,153,094

In the event the budget is defeated, the Board of Education must adopt a contingency budget, pursuant to Section 2023 of Education Law, in which the tax levy may not exceed the prior year tax levy and is subject to an administrative cap. By law, certain items are required to be excluded from the contingent budget, including equipment purchases, Capital Outlay project appropriations, non-represented personnel salary increases, and costs associated with community use of the school facilities.

** List Separate Propositions that are not included in the Total Budgeted Amount: (Tax Levy associated with educational or transportation services propositions are not eligible for exclusion and may affect voter approval requirements)

¹The basic school tax relief (STAR) exemption is authorized by section 425 of the Real Property Tax Law.

Description	Amount
No Separate Propositions	

	Under the Budget Proposed for the 2024-2025 School Year
Estimated Basic STAR Exemption savings ¹	\$542

The annual budget vote for the fiscal year 2024-25 by the qualified voters of the Saugerties Central School District, Ulster County, New York, will be held at Cahill, Morse, Riccardi, and Mt. Marion school(s) in said district on Tuesday, May 21, 2024 between the hours of 6:00 a.m. and 9:00 p.m., prevailing time in the Cahill, Morse, Riccardi, and Mt. Marion school(s), at which time the polls will be opened to vote by voting ballot or machine.

Sample Ballot

The wording on the proposition will appear as shown in this example and you will have a choice of either YES or NO:

PROPOSITION 1: 2024-2025 Budget

Shall the Board of Education of the Saugerties Central School District be authorized to expend the sums of money which will be required for School District purposes for the 2024-2025 school year in the total amount of \$77,751,445.00 (the budget), and to levy the necessary sum against the taxable real property in the District?

Election of Board of Education Members

Three 3-Year Term Vacancies are available at this time. Voters may select no more than THREE candidates:

Sakinah Irizarry
Katie Emerson-Hoss
Marlene Anderson-Butler
Robert Thomann
Michael Meyer

Saugerties Junior Shares his Experience Attending a Local Youth Summit

Hello, my name is Eduardo Menjivar Sanchez and I am an 11th grader at Saugerties High School.

I recently had an opportunity to attend the Youth Empowerment & Sustainability Summit (YESS) at The Ashokan Center in Olivebridge.

I’ve always been interested in how we can improve the treatment of the environment because I believe it reflects how much we care about ourselves and others. When I heard about the opportunity to attend YESS during the morning announcements, I was intrigued. I decided to ask my AP Chemistry teacher, Mr. Skalla, about the program. He explained that the YESS summit is a program for students to exchange perspectives on environmental issues and collaborate on finding solutions within their own communities.

After listening to this, I decided to do my own research about the program. I became fascinated by the program’s approach to learning, the emphasis on sustainable practices, effective communication strategies, team collaboration, and problem-solving techniques. I realized that these skills are essential for driving positive change in today’s world. This made me even more sure that I wanted to be part of the YESS summit.

While I was there I met a lot of people who had similar passions for environmental sustainability. It was very exciting to be surrounded by students from other communities that had different ideas and perspectives towards the same problem. This gave me the opportunity to gather information from other schools and organizations to work on an action plan for my community that is not only going to benefit me, but an entire future generation. One of my favorite parts of the programs were the hikes. I was able to contemplate the beautiful views that nature offered, which made my passion towards the environment increase significantly. I also discovered that the connection between nature and the human being is one of the most important aspects of life.

I am so appreciative that I was able to participate in this program. Seeing the impact that this experience has had on me, I believe that everyone should have the access to similar opportunities. It gave me the chance and the inspiration to make positive changes in my community.



Eduardo Menjivar Sanchez

Grade 11

Math Tutor

President of Eco Club

Working towards earning the Seal of Biliteracy

Working towards earning the Seal of Civic Readiness

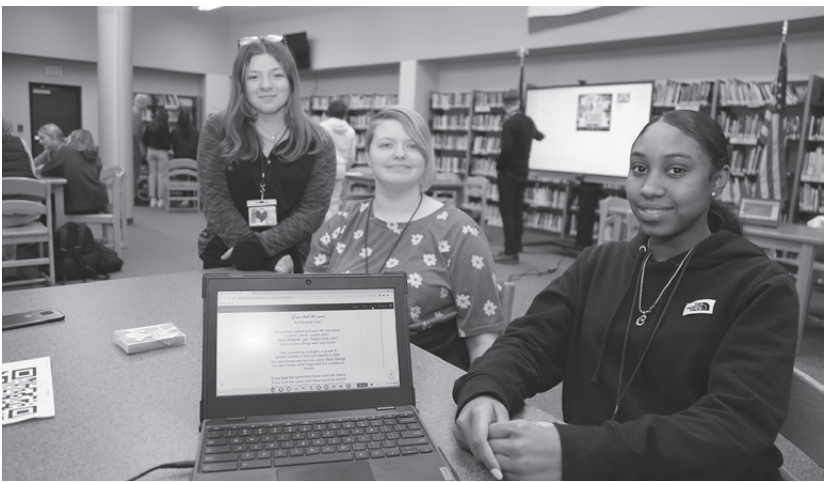
Student International Committee Member

HARMONIZING EDUCATION: Saugerties Teacher and Students Make Music

A whirlwind of media magic occurred on March 5, when Saugerties English teacher James Fetcho and Grade 9 student Elizabeth Day were the guest stars on two programs—one hosted by Spectrum News, and the other by Radio Woodstock (WDST). Following a televised interview by Brooke Reilly from Spectrum News, the duo appeared on a show hosted by WDST Program Director and Morning Host Greg Gattine!

Fetcho and Day discussed a recent lesson that had been aimed at inspiring students to pen profound song lyrics. Fetcho’s lesson first had students researching current song lyrics. Then each group focused on crafting their own lyrics on topics that resonated with them on a personal level. They explored themes like mental health, toxic relationships, and the journey to finding love. The result? An incredible fusion of education and artistry!

Fetcho then took it to the next level and had those meaningful lyrics turned into actual songs, with the help of talented musicians in his network. The seeds for this innovative project were planted during a professional development trip Fetcho had taken to High Tech High in California two years ago—a trip that had been coordinated through Ulster BOCES and made possible by the support of the Saugerties Central School District. High Tech High is renowned internationally for its cutting-edge approach to project-based learning.



Hands-On Campus Repair Project Allows Saugerties Student to Share his Expertise

Pat Bennett, a 17-year-old senior from Saugerties High School who attends the Ulster BOCES Career & Technical Center in Port Ewen, recently applied the knowledge and skills learned in his Welding & Metal Fabrication program to a real-life scenario as he made precise repairs to an exterior aluminum stair railing at the career-training campus.

When made aware of the need for a stair-railing repair, Bryan Lundy, the precision metalwork teacher at Ulster BOCES, brought the task to Bennett. At the time, he was the only young professional in his class who was skilled in the Aluminum Tungsten Inert Gas (TIG) welding process that was required for the job. “Aluminum is a lot more difficult because it is toxic when you grind it—the dust from it—so you have to wear a mask to do it,” explained Bennett. This experience made him the “go-to” person for the technical aspect of the repair.

After removing the broken railing and bringing it into the welding classroom, Bennett was able to successfully fix the piping in several areas. He then also welded all three posts to connectors, which were used to firmly secure the railing to the concrete steps.

Looking into the future, Bennett sees himself remaining in the welding field for the long term and seeing where it takes him. Eventually he says, he might even see himself relocating to Texas, where welding is a high-demand field.

SNOWMAZING LEARNING: Boxed Creativity Unleashed at Cahill Elementary

Our Grade 5 students at Cahill Elementary School recently transformed empty boxes into adorable snowmen, a lesson that had an educational twist. The students had to calculate the volume of each snowman.

It was amazing to see the youngsters not only showcase their artistic skills, but also engage in some hands-on math exploration. The combination of creativity and learning made this project truly special.

A big shoutout to our dedicated Grade 5 teachers—Jamie Temple, Heather Breen, and Lori Puertas—for fostering such a creative and interactive learning environment!

GRADE 6 BIOGRAPHY BONANZA AT GRANT D. MORSE ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

The Grade 6 students at Grant D. Morse Elementary School have been diving into an awesome biography lesson.

The young learners in Jessica Brott’s class were tasked with researching an important or famous person, unlocking the mysteries of their lives, and preparing a speech to share all the fascinating details with their classmates. Offering up everything from jaw-dropping achievements to heartwarming anecdotes, these young scholars proved themselves to be expert biographers!

To add a bit of magic to the project, students were encouraged to dress up like their chosen historical figures, which included such luminaries as soccer player David Beckham, education advocate and Nobel Prize winner Malala Yousafzai, and singer-songwriter Taylor Swift.

The lesson was a thoroughly engaging one, in which students captivated their classmates with tales of the past, present, and their person’s hopes for the future.



Riccardi Holds an Out-Of-This-World Lesson

Grade 2 students in Riccardi Elementary School gave a stellar performance during their annual Planet Runway event in March.

Guided by the brilliance of show coordinator and Grade 2 teacher Frances Murphy, these bright stars embarked on an interstellar odyssey of research and creativity. From composing research papers, to crafting their own planetary costumes, to choreographing their cosmic catwalk, the students enjoyed every step of their fascinating journey into the cosmos!

With tunes like “Drops of Jupiter” by Train resonating through the cafeteria, our budding astronauts took center stage, each sharing captivating factoids about their chosen planet. Talk about teamwork! They collaborated like true intergalactic ambassadors to ensure a constellation of knowledge was shared with the audience.

And guess what? This cosmic spectacle unfolded when a total solar eclipse was about to grace our skies on April 8!



SAUGERTIES MATHLETES CRUSH THE EQUATION GAME AT DUSO MATH CHAMPIONSHIP

Congratulations to the Saugerties Mathletes Team and their advisor, Math and Computer Science teacher Jennifer Sauer. The Math Team not only qualified for the Dutchess-Ulster-Sullivan-Orange (DUSO) Math League Sectional Championship—they also excelled there!

During the competition, which was held at Vassar College on March 6, these brilliant minds tackled highly complex math problems, showcasing their expertise in algebra, geometry, and advanced algebra. The competition featured two challenging parts—a timed problem-solving session in which the students competed individually, and an exciting relay round where teammates passed the mathematical torch to each other in their efforts to conquer the various portions of a problem.

Following the intense competition, everyone had the honor of listening to guest speaker Trevor Hyde, a Vassar College Math professor. He shared his inspiring journey that led him to become a Math teacher, and he delved into the fascinating world of p-adic numbers. (Much too complicated to explain here.)

These mathletes are just as competitive as athletes. Instead of pumping iron, they flex their brains and conquer the world of mathematics!



Les Misérables: A Tale of Redemption, Rebellion, and Perseverance

This past March, the Saugerties Drama Club staged *Les Misérables School Edition*, a musical based on the hit Broadway show and, originally, in the 1862 novel by Victor Hugo. Even though the students were presenting a truncated “school edition” version of the play, it was not an easy show to produce. Play Director Justin Zelamsky said, “This show is a beast.” The production boasted a large cast, a deep storyline, shooting deaths, suicide, prostitution, and despair. However, Zelamsky and Assistant Director Rebecca MacDougall took on the challenge with enthusiasm and determination.



The audience was in awe as they followed the gripping tale of Jean Valjean, played by Sean Mahoney, who is released on parole after having been imprisoned for stealing bread to feed his sister’s starving children. His time is finally up and he is being released but Javert, an overzealous policeman, played by James McTague, reminds him he will always be a sinner. Shunned by the local townspeople after his release, Valjean resorts to stealing some silver, using the proceeds to reinvent himself as a mayor and factory owner. Eight years later, Valjean becomes the loving guardian of a child named Cosette, played by Chloe Turner, after her mother’s death, but Javert’s relentless pursuit means that peace will be a long time coming. Javert’s firm belief that Valjean is a criminal incapable of being redeemed is ultimately shaken, however, when Valjean saves a boy’s life, Javert lets him go and tries to reconcile why he freed him.

In the end, our student thespians showed us two different ways of looking at the world—one that’s harsh and unforgiving, and one that is full of love and forgiveness. Congratulations to Saugerties Drama Club for a job well done!



Reading Challenge Inspires Students and Families to Dive into Books

During this year’s PARP (Pick a Reading Partner) reading challenge, organized by the Saugerties Central School District’s Parent Teacher Associations (PTAs) and the Parent Teacher Student Association (PTSA), students and their families were presented with a plethora of reading activities. They could quietly read a book, wear clothing with words on it, and/or listen to “read alouds.”



This challenge aims to encourage and bolster students’ reading and writing skills, leveraging the progress they’ve made throughout the academic year. Participants are tasked with recording the duration of their independent reading sessions over a three-week period. Prizes are awarded during a final assembly to students who log the highest number of reading minutes. Elementary school principals joined in the spirit of the event, offering to undergo “sliming” if their students achieved their reading goals. This year’s competition showcased commendable achievements across all participating schools.



SAWYER ATHLETES SHINE DURING THE 2023-2024 WINTER SEASON

Meredith Mills and Savannah Tittelback won Wrestling Sectional titles in their respective weight classes.

Santiago Chrisjohn and Isaiah Hockx earned trips to the New York State Public High School Athletic Association (NYSPHSAA) Wrestling tournament on February 23.

Keiran Hinchey, Gabrielle Papa, Carmella DeWitt, and Harper Ferraro qualified for the All-Section Composite team and represented Section IX at the State Bowling Championship on March 9. Ed Coddington earned Boys High Series of the Season.

The Girls Basketball team reached the Sectional semifinals. The Boys Basketball team won the Class A, Section IX, Championship. The players went on to play in the Regional finals.



NON-DISCRIMINATION STATEMENT: The Saugerties Central School District affirms its commitment to non-discrimination and recognizes its responsibility to provide an environment that is free of harassment and intimidation as required by Federal and state law. Harassment is a violation of law and stands in direct opposition to District policy. Therefore, the District prohibits and condemns all forms of discrimination and harassment on the basis of race, color, creed, religion, national origin, political affiliation, sex, sexual orientation, age, marital status, military status, veteran status, disability, use of a recognized guide dog, hearing dog or service dog, or domestic violence victim status by employees, school volunteers, students, and non-employees such as contractors and vendors as well as any third parties who are participating in, observing, or otherwise engaging in activities subject to the supervision and control of the District. All inquiries regarding the Non-Discrimination policy and/or all complaints regarding violation(s) of these policies should be directed to the Compliance Officers Daniel Erceg, Superintendent, or Colleen Mills, School Business Official; (845-247-6550).