

IN

An IN Community Magazine

Fox Chapel Area



BEST IN STATE

FCAHS LIBRARY
EARNS TOP HONOR
PAGE 10



Fox Chapel Area
School District News
PAGE 8

Special Section:
Home Improvement
PAGE 55

FOX CHAPEL AREA

School News



Fox Chapel Area School District

- 9 A Message from the Superintendent
- 10 FCAHS Library Named Best in State
- 12 Shelf Care Club Goes Beyond Books to Support Students
- 13 School Resource Officer Surprised with 'Buddy Bench'
- 14 Robust Environmental Sustainability Efforts Put Into Practice in FCASD
- 16 eSports Program One of Only Two in U.S.
- 17 Furthering a Culture of Belonging Goal of New Program Principal
- 18 'Be the Kind Kid' a Goal at Hartwood
- 19 First Class of 2025 Graduates
- 20 Kerr Celebrates School Directors
- 21 Multicultural Night Promotes Understanding at Fairview
- 22 Telethon Raises \$90,228 for Backpack for Hunger
- 23 FCASD Facilities Update
Michael Worsen Wills His Way to States
- 24 Foxes Swimmers Excel at WPIALs
- 25 Safety, Health, & Wellness Event Promo
- 26 2024-2025 Facts & Figures
- 27 2025-2026 Fox Chapel Area School District Calendar
- 28 Fox Chapel Area School District Directory

A MESSAGE FROM THE SUPERINTENDENT

Dear Fox Chapel Area Community,

As you may know, the Fox Chapel Area School District's strategic vision centers around four pillars: purpose, passion, care, and community. These pillars have become part of who we are and what we do as a district. We talk about these four concepts with students, parents and guardians, staff members, and the community whenever we can. And they are just that, pillars, because these concepts support what we do each day and are the foundation by which we learn, teach, and live.

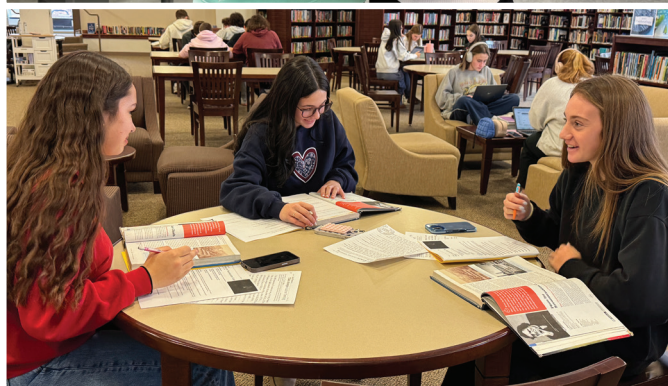
You'll see a number of examples of these pillars in action in this issue. You will read a story about environmental sustainability and how our district is promoting this very important concept to make our world a healthier place. There's an article highlighting the welcoming atmosphere in our award-winning high school library and an accompanying piece about the Shelf Care Club and how its members care for one another. There is also a story about a very special school resource officer and what the students, staff, and parents/guardians did to honor him for the kindness he has shown. Another article spotlights how our elementary school students are spreading kindness through the JAM Be the Kind Kid initiative. You'll also learn how we're building community through a brand-new Unified eSports program at Dorseyville Middle School.

These are just a few examples of what happens in our schools each and every day. We want our students to learn the importance of having a purpose; we want them to follow their passions so that they can be happy and proud of their accomplishments; and we want them to care about the world around them. It is also important that our students know that there is an entire community beyond our school walls that supports them in every way, and we encourage them to use their talents and other gifts locally and beyond.

We are so proud to be entrusted to help develop our students to be good examples of purpose, passion, care, and community.

Sincerely,

Dr. Mary Catherine Reljac
Superintendent





FCAHS LIBRARY NAMED BEST IN STATE

Thinking about a school library, most people envision a space with a large number of books, and, perhaps, computers and a collection of reference materials. But, to Fox Chapel Area High School librarian Dr. Laura Ward, the library is about so much more than that. Her vision for the library, which she has made come to life, is a welcoming atmosphere that goes well beyond that of a traditional library.

“It’s about connection development, not collection development,” Dr. Ward explained.

Her vision is just one of the reasons the Fox Chapel Area High School library has been named the 2025 Outstanding Pennsylvania School Library by the Pennsylvania School Librarians Association (PSLA).

“What makes me the most excited about this award is the idea that others see how great our library is,” Dr. Ward said. “I’ve always known the library is the heart of our school, but now everyone can see just how wonderful it is.”

Dr. Ward, along with longtime library clerk Mary Helen Ryan, have worked hard to cultivate the inviting and inclusive



atmosphere that the library provides, and they hope it is a place where students want to be.

Senior Isabella Cheatham is in the library homeroom, and she said it’s one of her favorite places in the school.

“The library has a welcoming atmosphere, which is the most important part of it. I am always greeted with a smile in the mornings, and any time I come to the library, there is someone willing to help me with a paper, research, or whatever I might need,” she said.

The recognition was awarded to the Fox Chapel Area High School library because it exceeds the criteria with regard to the six foundations that are part of the American Association of School Librarians National School Library Standards. Those standards are that school libraries are places where students are able to inquire, include, collaborate, curate, explore, and engage.

“It’s fantastic to see how our school library exceeds at incorporating the standards into everything that we do,” Dr. Ward said. “From collaborating with classroom teachers to





engaging and connecting with not just the students, but also our community, our library is making a difference in students' lives."

PSLA President Sarah DeMaria said, "The Fox Chapel Area High School library is an exemplary school library, as evident in the programming, community outreach, and daily interactions with students and staff."

Mrs. DeMaria cited the Shelf Care Club as just one example of how the Fox Chapel Area High School library influences students each day. The club, which is described as self-care, but through books, was started by Dr. Ward and school counselor Rachel Machen.

"The Shelf Care Club is a way for students to practice self-care by reading and discussing books that focus on many mental health topics relevant to young adults today," Dr. Ward said. "We read about challenging topics that provoke deep discussion, and we look at how the characters handle different situations and how everyone in our discussion group relates to those characters."

It's important to Dr. Ward that the high school library be a welcoming place for all students, somewhere they can feel comfortable being exactly who they are.



"One of my main goals for the library is to continue to welcome students and have them see themselves here. It's so important for everyone to see themselves on the shelves in the books we have in the collection and in the artwork on the walls. We want everyone to know they are welcome here, and we want them here," said Dr. Ward.

Dr. Ward also created a mindfulness cart in the library. It has Rubik's Cubes, brain-teaser games, and other relaxing activities. The cart is on wheels and can go anywhere in the library students want to move it.

"It's a nice way for kids to relax after a test or have fun with friends," she said.

Junior Umayma Trebak said she loves coming to the library and describes it as a "social spot." With a smile, she says, "Even though you're supposed to be quiet, it's a fun place where everyone can come together."

In an effort to keep the high school library among the best, Dr. Ward never stops thinking about ways to improve the experience for students. Up next is a podcast studio, in collaboration with the Advanced Placement (AP) U.S. History class, and then an expansion of that for other classes to make podcasts. She would also like to create a digital collection of recordings of students talking with influential people in their lives.

"I am so proud to even be a small part of what makes this library so wonderful," Dr. Ward said. "I would not want to work anywhere else. I love the students. I love being able to just talk with them and get to know them. This is a great place!"

Shelf Care Club Goes Beyond Books – Page 12



SHELF CARE CLUB GOES BEYOND BOOKS TO SUPPORT STUDENTS

The members of the Fox Chapel Area High School Shelf Care Club know that the group is more than just a book club.

According to club president Isabella Cheatham, “Shelf Care Club is meant to bring students together to learn and share about mental health, offer support to one another, become educated on mental health, and be able to read great and challenging books.”

Members describe the club as self-care, but with books. Two-year club member and senior Kai Edwards said that the books the members read span a variety of genres, “but the focus has always been on directly addressing topics of mental health in an environment that fosters open discussion and communication.”

The Shelf Care Club was started almost three years ago in a collaboration between high school librarian Dr. Laura Ward and school counselor Rachel Machen. The members meet twice a month, during which the students delve into various mental health topics, based on the book they are reading.

According to Dr. Ward, offering this kind of club is essential to students’ mental and physical well-being.

“We’ve read books where characters struggle with addiction, have been hospitalized and are dealing with the stigma of mental health, and have family members struggling. Knowing that there’s a safe space to sit and say, ‘This part hit home for me,’ and knowing that you won’t be judged or criticized for sharing your experience is empowering for our students.”

Kai said that the club is important as it identifies and addresses an aspect of high school life that is not often addressed in other areas – mental health.

“Knowing that there’s a safe space to sit and say, ‘This part hit home for me,’ and knowing that you won’t be judged or criticized for sharing your experience is empowering for our students.”

– Dr. Laura Ward, Librarian

“No matter how much you read outside of school or how much you already know about mental health, the Shelf Care Club offers a distinct opportunity to explore important topics with a group of your peers,” Kai said.

Isabella, a senior, agrees with Dr. Ward’s assessment of the importance of the club. She also appreciates that the members of the group can speak freely and know that they will receive support from their peers, rather than judgment.

“I love that Shelf Care allows students to feel seen and like they have support in difficult times. It is so nice to hear and know that others are going through the same things or have been through them, and that you are supported, which is what Shelf Care does. It is a safe space for any student to listen and learn about mental health and feel welcomed to contribute their own experiences, while getting to hear others,” Isabella said.

SCHOOL RESOURCE OFFICER SURPRISED WITH 'BUDDY BENCH'

Amid cheers of “Off-i-er Lynch! Off-i-er Lynch! Off-i-er Lynch!” by his youngest fans, a “buddy bench” was dedicated to O’Hara Elementary’s “#1 Buddy,” school resource officer Dennis Lynch.

The O’Hara Elementary School students, staff, and members of the PTO surprised Officer Lynch by dedicating the playground bench to him at a schoolwide assembly February 14.

According to the O’Hara Elementary School PTO, “Officer Lynch is always the first to reach out to students who may be sitting alone and provides immediate comfort to those around him. We hope the students will be inspired to spread similar kindness and comfort to those in need of a buddy.”

And, true to form, always looking for the opportunity to spread kindness, Officer Lynch told the students at the assembly, “I am truly honored that this bench is dedicated to me. I am also grateful for the students. This buddy bench is for all of you to show kindness. This is why O’Hara is so special. All of you, be kind, be nice to each other, help each other out, be a good listener.”

Here are just a few of the statements made by the students about Officer Lynch.

Kindergarten

“Officer Lynch tells us that we cannot dance on the playground. We know he loves dancing! He is so silly!”

“Officer Lynch is a police officer. He watches and protects the whole school! He makes us feel happy all the time because he is so funny and kind!”

First Grade

“He thinks about others before he thinks about himself.”

“Officer Lynch helped keep me safe when I had a broken arm.”

“Officer Lynch always protects us. He keeps us safe when we play on the playground. He watches everyone. We love getting a fist bump from Officer Lynch. He always smiles at our class, even if our line is noisy. We love him!”

Second Grade

“He always keeps us safe and protects us. He is kind and takes care of us, especially at recess when we are sad or hurt.”



“We greatly appreciate Officer Lynch! He always makes us feel safe when we see him.”

“Officer Lynch has nicknames for us, which makes us feel happy and special!”

Third Grade

“Officer Lynch gives fist bumps and makes us laugh from being



funny. He cares about us and helps us when we get hurt. When we are sad, he puts a smile on our face. He keeps everyone in the school safe. He encourages us to be ourselves.”

“Officer Lynch helps us be the best versions of ourselves and gives us reminders when we need them.”

Fourth Grade

“He taught me what integrity means.”

“He taught me what respect looks like.”

“Fist bumps are our favorite, even as fourth graders!”

“The first time I met him in kindergarten, he helped me find my classroom on the first day.”

Fifth Grade

“What I will miss about him the most (when I move to Dorseyville Middle School) is that he’s so fun and positive, and he’s kind.”

“We will miss you so much when we go to DMS. You really care about us, and we are thankful for that!”

“I learned to define, assess, respond, and evaluate when I have to handle peer pressure and make safe choices.”



ROBUST ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY EFFORTS PUT INTO PRACTICE IN FCASD

Environmental sustainability is a concept not only taught in classrooms across the Fox Chapel Area School District; it's put into practice every day on each of the district's campuses.

"It's just the right thing to do," said Dan Breitreutz, Fox Chapel Area's director of ancillary services, noting that sustainability efforts have been in place in the district for more than 15 years, such as the recycling of mixed paper, cardboard, metal and aluminum containers, and landscape waste. "Every time we make decisions, we keep in mind how we can carry them out in the most environmentally friendly fashion."

Mr. Breitreutz said the conversion to LED lighting from incandescent and fluorescent bulbs has been the most significant environmental sustainability effort for the district in the past few years.

"That has been an easy, cost-effective, and versatile solution for our various lighting needs," Mr. Breitreutz said. "The LED lighting reduces our carbon footprint by lowering carbon and heat emissions, and it lowers our energy consumption, and, consequently, our utility bills."

Other recent sustainability efforts, according to Mr. Breitreutz, include the installation of bottle fillers and low-flow bathroom fixtures in all Fox Chapel Area schools, as well as the automation of all heating, ventilation, and air conditioning (HVAC) systems in the district.

"We are continuously refining our capital projects to ensure the most efficient mechanical equipment is installed," he said.



A Kerr Elementary School student conducts an experiment at a wind farm as part of the district's fifth-grade Camp Allegheny environmental experience.



Goats from Allegheny Goat Scape visit Dorseyville Middle School as part of a science lesson on how goats can be an eco-friendly and effective method of clearing overgrown land.

One of Mr. Breitreutz's next endeavors will be overseeing a major mechanical project at Hartwood Elementary School that will include a new HVAC system with high-efficiency boilers, as well as the installation of new LED lighting. Hartwood also recently received an energy-saving dishwasher in the cafeteria.

"We look forward to getting that project underway as we continue to make incremental gains for the betterment of our students, families, faculty and staff, and greater school community," he said.

At the building level, environmental sustainability efforts of all kinds are taking place. This year, attendance forms were digitized at all schools, eliminating the need for paper excuses and educational trip forms. All fifth-grade students attended Camp Allegheny to learn about sustainability, including how to reduce food waste and how wind farms work. Students have heard from guest speakers from Duquesne Light, Xylem Water Solutions, the Allegheny Parks Foundation, and Allegheny Goat Scape. A rain barrel was added to the courtyard at Dorseyville Middle School to help water recently installed planters, and students at O'Hara Elementary School planted raised garden beds and participated in a partnership with the Audubon Society of Western Pennsylvania.

The district will continue its work with the Audubon Society at its Summer Learning Academy. Themed "A Sense of Place," this year's lessons will focus on not just math and reading, but also on geospatial awareness and sustainability efforts driven by local geography. The sessions will culminate with the students planting trees in the community.

"It's essential to teach our students how to be good stewards of the environment," said Dr. Ashley Constantine, Fox Chapel Area's executive director of elementary education and instruction. "We hope the lessons we impart this summer will transform into lifelong practices for our students."



Fox Chapel Area High School students pose with their model demonstrating their solution to powering Acrisure Stadium during the 2024 Powering Pittsburgh competition. Students were encouraged to use recycled, recyclable, and/or refurbished materials for the project.

FCASD SUSTAINABILITY EFFORTS AT A GLANCE

22

bottle fillers across the district



53%-72%

How much more efficient, on average, an LED bulb is over a traditional fluorescent bulb



1,000+

light fixtures converted to LED across the district

FCASD Organic Landscape Debris Recycled in 2024

- Fox Chapel Area High School – 51 cubic yards
- Dorseyville Middle School – 34.5 cubic yards
- Fairview Elementary School – 33 cubic yards
- Hartwood Elementary School – 30 cubic yards
- Kerr Elementary School – 21.5 cubic yards
- O’Hara Elementary School – 35.5 cubic yards



Mixed Paper, Cardboard, and Metal and Aluminum Containers Recycled in 2024

- Fox Chapel Area High School – 8.54 tons
- Dorseyville Middle School – 8.54 tons
- Fairview Elementary School – 3.20 tons
- Hartwood Elementary School – 4.27 tons
- Kerr Elementary School – 4.27 tons
- O’Hara Elementary School – 4.27 tons





ESPORTS PROGRAM ONE OF ONLY TWO IN U.S.

Already a pioneer of Unified Sports, the Fox Chapel Area School District is overseeing the creation of a Unified eSports league to add a new way to bring together students with and without disabilities.

Backed by a \$35,000 Moonshot Grant from The Grable Foundation and the Claude Worthington Benedum Foundation, as well as a grant from PlayVRS for equipment and gaming codes, Fox Chapel Area is teaming with Pittsburgh Public Schools and the Freeport Area, South Fayette, and Beaver Area school districts on an after-school Unified eSports league, during which students will compete in Mario Kart and Super Smash Bros. The Unified eSports league is the first of its kind in Pennsylvania, and only the second one in the nation. Fox Chapel Area will host an in-person Unified eSports tournament on May 8 at O'Hara Elementary School.

Fox Chapel Area's eSports program is based at Dorseyville Middle School, and work on the school's new eSports lab will get underway this spring.

The collaboration fundamentally rethinks how inclusion is practiced in both education and sports by using Unified eSports as a platform for mutual empowerment, said Dr. Megan Collett, the district's executive director of instructional and innovative leadership.

"Traditional models often position students with disabilities as recipients of assistance, unintentionally framing inclusion as a one-way street," Dr. Collett said. "Our approach challenges this by emphasizing that all students, regardless of ability or neurodiversity, bring unique skills to the table – or in this case, to the screen. It moves beyond 'inclusion' to 'equity,' where all participants are equally valued and contribute to the team's success."

The Unified eSports league is experimental because it leverages the rapidly growing world of eSports – an unconventional yet highly engaging medium – as a learning tool, Dr. Collett said.

"Rather than utilizing conventional means, it uses gaming technology to foster teamwork, problem-solving, and empathy in a way that feels relevant and exciting to today's learners. It also disrupts conventional approaches by integrating students from diverse geographic, socioeconomic, and ability backgrounds, ensuring that every student has access to the same opportunities and tools," she said.

Even though the Unified eSports league is in its infancy, the benefits for the students were immediately apparent, said DMS literacy teacher Andrew Shaw, who sponsors the club along with DMS physical education teacher Matthew Murslack.

"This is one of the first times that I've really seen this level of interaction between grade levels," Mr. Shaw said. "And it's not just in passing with a 'hello' in the hallway. It's them wanting to sit down with each other multiple times a week to have this experience. It's been really, really positive to see."

"It's just a fun after-school activity," said Mr. Murslack, adding that the lessons that students are learning are the same as those taught in more conventional sports. "I'm a huge believer in sportsmanship. I emphasize that concept in my physical education classes all the time. So, it's just really great to see them working together, having fun, and in a different context, too, besides in a classroom all the time."

One of the students who routinely stays after school to compete is DMS sixth-grader Jaxen Horwitz, who owns three gaming systems and considers himself a dedicated gamer.

"I really enjoy playing," Jaxen said. "I have fun with my team, but I really like playing with new people, too."

FURTHERING A CULTURE OF BELONGING GOAL OF NEW PROGRAM PRINCIPAL

Dr. Nicole Smith, who grew up in the Deer Lakes area, has always been familiar with the Fox Chapel Area School District.

“It’s a highly successful school district with a reputation for high expectations and academic excellence,” she said.

Dr. Smith became even more interested in the district during her interactions with the Fox Chapel Area High School principals during their Northern Area Principals Association meetings. She joined Fox Chapel Area as a program principal on March 3 after most recently serving as a principal of Northgate Middle School/High School.

“It was clear that good things and good people were at Fox Chapel Area High School,” she said. “They clearly have the best interest of students as their priority. I am excited to be part of the team and continue the great work that is happening here.”

One of Dr. Smith’s main goals is to continue to foster a culture of belonging and to make an impact on the mental health of students. She firmly believes that schools have to prioritize the development of not only academic skills, but also emotional intelligence and preparation for life beyond high school.

“Mental well-being, a sense of belonging, and positive school experiences are crucial for students because these things directly impact their ability to learn, focus, and succeed in school. Possessing knowledge is not the only determining factor in a person’s success and lifelong happiness. Skills such as self-regulating emotions, building strong relationships, making healthy life choices, and having resilience and coping skills are all tied together with good mental health.”



Most recently, Dr. Smith and her team at the Northgate School District implemented what is called the “House System.” In seventh grade, students are randomly assigned to a group, or a “house,” a peer circle they stay with until they graduate. These groups foster a culture of belonging and help form a schoolwide community in which students are collectively rewarded for demonstrating positive character traits.

Northgate administrators also changed the bell schedule at the high school to more closely resemble the longer class periods at Fox Chapel Area High School. Dr. Smith reports that this change had many positive outcomes, including improved student and faculty mental health.

“The cognitive load that students were carrying when they were worried about eight subjects at one time was simply too much on top of regular teenage life,” she said. “The shifts fundamentally changed the daily experiences students and teachers were having, which reduced stress and improved the culture of the building.”

Dr. Smith also taught seventh - and 12th-grade English during her tenure of more than 20 years at Northgate and was assistant principal before serving as a principal for nearly four years.

She has a bachelor’s degree in English from Penn State University, a master’s in secondary education from Duquesne University, and a doctoral degree in leadership and administration from Point Park University.

Dr. Smith lives in the North Hills with her husband, Jeff, and three sons, ages 10, 11, and 14. The family enjoys traveling, especially to the beach in the summer, and going to the movies.



'BE THE KIND KID' A GOAL AT HARTWOOD

Hartwood Elementary School third-grade students spread happiness with their projects through JAM's Be the Kind Kid initiative. Most recently, the students made suncatchers with inspiring messages and valentines for those who receive Meals on Wheels.

Be the Kind Kid is a student-run nonprofit organization started in the Avonworth School District by teacher Maureen Frew and two students. The goal of the group is to promote kindness through maker projects, entrepreneurship, and community outreach. The organization also established the hashtag #bethekindkid and encourages wearing T-shirts and other gear that remind others to spread kindness.

JAM has provided grants to both Hartwood and Kerr elementary schools, as well as Dorseyville Middle School. The grants are then used to buy supplies. This year, Hartwood's grant enabled 46 third-graders to do various projects to inspire kindness, as well as start a JAM Packed Closet, which houses personal care items that are free for students. Third-graders also run a JAM store to sell their handmade items to raise money for various charities. The club meets once a week during recess.

Since the club's inception at Hartwood three years ago, the students have donated the funds raised from the JAM store and JAM apparel sales to the Ronald McDonald House and Singing Winds Food Pantry in Indiana Township. The students have also made and donated valentines to Harmony at Harts Run, a senior living community. Other projects included students making and delivering thank you notes to important people in their lives and cards for bus drivers. They also distributed kindness keychains for

the helpers in the school and welcome bags for families arriving at the Ronald McDonald House. The JAM members work together to decide which charities they want to support with their efforts. Next up is a fundraising project for Animal Friends.

According to Hartwood Elementary JAM coordinator and teacher Jessica Papcunik, "The students take great pride in knowing that they help to select the charities that will benefit from their hard work. I also talk to the students about kindness and charity work, and we discuss simple entrepreneurship concepts to help them prepare and run a successful JAM store."

The idea to support Meals on Wheels came from third-grader James Synan, who has helped his grandparents deliver Meals on Wheels in the past. James and Mrs. Papcunik explained Meals on Wheels to the group, and "they all agreed it would be a great group to share our creations with," said Mrs. Papcunik.

James was proud that his idea was the impetus for helping people who receive Meals on Wheels.

"It made me feel amazing. I knew it would give them a little bit of kindness and let them feel like a lot of people love and support them," James said. "Meals on Wheels feels more like family now because my classmates are helping them, too."

Mrs. Papcunik said the program is important as it gives students the opportunity to see that the world is bigger than them, yet they can still make a positive impact on it.

"Third grade is a year when kids are balancing the desire to be a big kid while still enjoying being little. Providing this opportunity for them to be creative while helping others is a great bridge for this age group. They have a chance to feel big with the impact they are making, while still engaging in simple things that they enjoy."



FIRST CLASS OF 2025 GRADUATES



The members of the first Fox Chapel Area High School graduating Class of 2025 are front row, left to right, Kaelynn MacFarlane, Cameron Cavlovich, Sydney Hudock, and Henry Chamberlain. Back row, left to right, are Finnigan Holton, Bekhruz Mumindzhanov, Aidan Byrnes, Maleke Butler-Austin, and Caleb Adams. Not pictured are Maria Gill, Moonyoung Hwang, Swati Mylarappa, and Gavin Owings.

With the certification by Superintendent Dr. Mary Catherine Reljac, the newest (and the first) Fox Chapel Area High School Class of 2025 officially graduated. Thirteen students were among the early graduates and were celebrated by faculty, family, and friends at a ceremony January 16 at the high school.

Lead Principal Dr. Michael Hower said the commencement marked a “momentous occasion for all of us.”

“No matter where you go, you are not just carrying a diploma. You are carrying the entire community who is going to support you your whole life,” he said.

He noted the importance of graduation and that these particular students showed up and never gave up.

“That’s the most important thing. You showed up, and you succeeded,” Dr. Hower told them. “Remember this moment because it’s proof that no matter what life throws at you, you are capable of overcoming, and I am confident that this will be one of many achievements.”

Dr. Reljac addressed the graduates and their friends and families by telling them that graduation represents the hard work and diligence of the students to prepare themselves for their futures. She also reminded the graduates that they will always remain connected.

“We are all here for you,” she said. “Once you are part of the Fox Chapel Area community, you are always a part of the Fox Chapel Area family.”

Referring to all of the families, friends, and staff members sitting behind the graduates, Dr. Reljac said, “All of the people behind you are, literally, behind you.”

Early graduate Caleb Adams thanked his parents for being “kind and supportive caregivers.” He also addressed and thanked his friends “for being there for me, making me laugh, and showing up.” He also mentioned the faculty and staff members who inspired him.

“I’m so proud to be a student here and so proud to be graduating,” he shared.

Other graduates also thanked their families and school faculty. Cameron Cavlovich said, “I’m extremely grateful for everything they have done for me. I’m so grateful to be in the position I’m in.”

Early graduate Bekhruz Mumindzhanov specifically mentioned teacher Kathleen Rombach, saying she was “the best teacher I ever had.”

Program Principal John McGee addressed a Fox Chapel Area High School graduating class for the final time, as he is retiring in March.

“I want to explain the impact that you have had on this school ... You have always handled yourselves with class, dignity, and respect. That is not only a tribute to you, but it is also a tribute to the cohort of people who got you to this point. We are exceptionally proud of you, and you should be proud of yourselves.”



The Kerr Elementary School students who honored the school board for School Director Recognition Month were, front row, left to right, Emilia Kuhns, Bella Gao, and Kara Schneider; and back row, left to right, Kalissa Acquaro, Joey Sanchez, and Zoe Hedayati.

KERR CELEBRATES SCHOOL DIRECTORS

This year, Kerr Elementary School fifth-graders celebrated the work of the Fox Chapel Area Board of School Directors in honor of School Director Recognition Month in January.

Each of the presenting students was asked to think about and write a small paragraph on how the board members exemplify the four pillars of success that are part of the district's strategic vision: purpose, passion, care, and community.

Student Zoe Hedayati pointed out that the pillars remind students and the community of the importance of being good people. "Every student, teacher, and school board member in the district contributes to these pillars daily," Zoe said. "That is what makes our school district awesome and unique."

Joey Sanchez focused on the care pillar. He expressed that the board shows everyone "care in every possible way," even when making difficult decisions. "I appreciate how much care and thought you put in every choice you make for us. In the Fox Chapel Area School District, care and kindness are very important," Joey said.

Kalissa Acquaro highlighted community. She mentioned how the board works together and helps each other. "You are a great example of how a community can positively impact the students in our district," she said.

Emilia Kuhns' topic was purpose, and she emphasized the importance of having purpose in everyday life. "You make decisions, rules, and keep us safe," she said. "Every choice you make impacts us, our learning, and our happiness."

Bella Gao talked about passion and the importance of helping others. "Your passion to help our school district's students and



teachers shines through with every decision you make for the good of our schools," she said. "We are extremely lucky to have you guiding every step of our educational journey."

Each board member was presented with a picture frame created by the students that featured the four pillars. In the frame was artwork by student Kara Schneider featuring a pair of young foxes playing together. "The playfulness and friendship of the foxes symbolizes the friendship and care that is provided in the Fox Chapel Area School District," Kara told the board.

"Thank you for helping bring these pillars to life, making them the foundation of our district's success," Zoe said. "Without purpose, passion, care, and community, our district wouldn't be the strong, supportive place it is today."

MULTICULTURAL NIGHT PROMOTES UNDERSTANDING AT FAIRVIEW

The Fairview Elementary School PTO held its annual multicultural night January 31. The evening included food samples from various countries and enabled participants to learn about cultures from around the globe. There were demonstrations of Chinese, Indian, and South American dancers; taekwondo and kung fu; and henna tattoos. The various booths were manned by Fairview families who sponsored a country booth related to their ethnicities. This year, 14 countries from five continents were represented.

The participating students also got a “passport” and a stamp for every country booth they visit, and also answered trivia questions. According to Fairview Elementary School Principal Susan Kreit, the multicultural event is a “fan favorite” packed with memorable experiences that students and their families look forward to every year.

“Our PTO Multicultural Night helps foster understanding and respect for different cultures, and brings together families from varied backgrounds to create a stronger and more connected school community,” she said.





TELETHON RAISES \$90,228 FOR BACKPACK FOR HUNGER

Fox Chapel Area School District students held their 35th annual telethon December 20, 2024, and raised \$90,228. This brings the total money raised by Fox Chapel Area students and staff to \$1,278,496 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 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. The group also provides food bags to district children during the summer months through various programs. Since its inception in 2015, the group has distributed more than 97,000 bags of food.

Anyone wishing to donate to Backpack for Hunger can visit <https://backpackforhunger.org/donate/>.



FCASD FACILITIES UPDATE

With a desire to keep its facilities among the best in the area for students, staff, and the entire school community, the Fox Chapel Area School District has recently completed work, or plans to do so, at each of its six buildings.

Fox Chapel Area High School

- Work will begin this summer on a domestic water line replacement
- New lights are planned for the James M. Burk Athletic Facility
- Replacement of the tennis courts is being evaluated and planned

Dorseyville Middle School

- Windows were replaced in the entire school
- New LED lights were installed in the auditorium

Fairview Elementary School

- Design work began in mid-March on a plan to install new windows in the building

Hartwood Elementary School

- Work will begin this summer on a major mechanical project, including the installation of a new heating, ventilation, and air conditioning (HVAC) system with high-efficiency boilers, a new generator, new ductwork, acoustical ceiling tiles, a new PA system, and new LED lighting, as well as electrical upgrades

Kerr Elementary School

- Extended sidewalks are complete



New lights are planned for the James M. Burk Athletic Facility at Fox Chapel Area High School.

O'Hara Elementary School

- A new energy-efficient refrigerator and freezer were recently installed in the kitchen area

Districtwide, all HVAC systems have been automated so set points can be adjusted depending on factors such as the time of day and the number of people in the building at a certain time.

“We take exceptional pride in our buildings,” said Dan Breitreutz, Fox Chapel Area’s director of ancillary services. “We continue to strive every day to keep the interior and exterior of our facilities aesthetically pleasing and well-maintained for the thousands of people who use them.”

MICHAEL WORSEN WILLS HIS WAY TO STATES

After the WPIAL Class 3A Championships, senior Michael Worsen thought his season was over, as he had just missed the cutoff to qualify for the PIAA West Regional Championships. Disappointing, but he’d already amassed an impressive high school career record of 98-42, and he figured he had ended his career and was proud of what he’d accomplished.

But fate had other plans, and he got his chance to wrestle at regionals.

“I took a two-day break from practice and ate whatever I wanted,” said Michael, who competes in the 121-pound weight class. “The day before the tournament, I found out I was added to the bracket at the last minute due to a scratch. I had to share the news with my family and friends, then immediately started cutting weight. By the end of practice, I was a pound under and still made it to my girlfriend’s birthday dinner, as I had promised.”



Michael approached this next step as he had all year. He never really thought about making it to states or placing; instead, he took one match at a time, knowing each one could be his last. At regionals, he wrestled to a fifth-place finish, which qualified him for the 2025 PIAA Class 3A Wrestling Championships in early March.

Getting the opportunity to wrestle at states wasn’t the only special thing to happen to Michael late in the season. At regionals, Michael ended up notching his 100th career win.

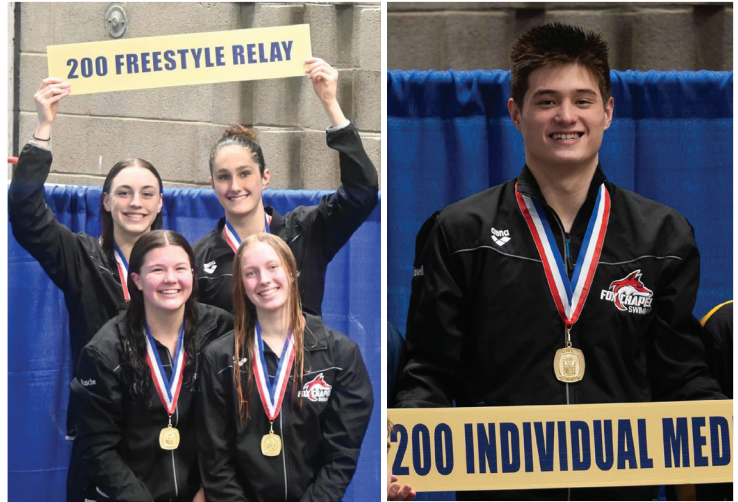
“There wasn’t time to change anything about how I wrestled, so I relied on my mentality before each match, believing I was better and deserved to win,” said the senior, a University of Pittsburgh at Bradford recruit. “When I got my 100th win, I was in complete shock. I was high-fiving every teammate in sight and calling my brother and past coaches to tell them I made it. The amount of support I received was incredible, with so many people telling me how proud they were.”



FOXES SWIMMERS EXCEL AT WPIALS

The Foxes went into the WPIAL Class 3A Swimming Championships full of talent, and they did not disappoint. For the third year, the girls team finished in second place, and the boys moved up a notch to finish fourth overall.

Senior Sarah Pasquella was the first to strike gold with her victory in the 200 yard freestyle. Later, senior Owen Howell added another first-place medal by successfully defending his title in the 200 yard individual medley (IM). Not to be outdone were two of the girls relays in the 200 and 400 yard freestyle. Sarah, senior Grace Kovach, and sophomores Charlotte Rusche and Josephine Stanczak won the 400 relay last year and swam even faster this time to claim gold again. But what thrilled the girls even more was adding gold in the 200 free relay as a bookend.



Medalists at WPIAL Championships and PIAA Qualifiers

**new school record †state qualifier*

Boys	Girls
200 Yard Medley Relay – 8th Place Owen Nguyen, Paul Park, Nathan Agens, Hugo Mickus	200 Yard Medley Relay† – 7th Place Cameryn Brindza, Elizabeth Datt, Margaret Rusche, Tuuli Airik
200 Yard Freestyle Christian Dantey† – 3rd Place	200 Yard Freestyle Sarah Pasquella† – 1st Place (1:48.79)* (All-American) Charlotte Rusche† – 3rd Place
200 Yard IM Owen Howell† – 1st Place (1:51.40)*	200 Yard IM Cameryn Brindza – 7th Place
100 Yard Butterfly Nathan Agens† – 8th Place (51.57)*	50 Yard Freestyle Grace Kovach† – 8th Place Josephine Stanczak† – 9th Place
200 Yard Freestyle Relay† – 5th Place (1:27.26)* Arman Alborzi, Paul Park, Owen Howell, Christian Dantey	100 Yard Butterfly Margaret Rusche† – 4th Place
100 Yard Breaststroke Christian Dantey† – 2nd Place (55.95)* Owen Howell† – 3rd Place	200 Yard Freestyle Relay† – 1st Place (1:35.14)* (All-American) Sarah Pasquella, Grace Kovach, Josephine Stanczak, Charlotte Rusche
400 Yard Freestyle Relay† – 4th Place (3:09.59)* Arman Alborzi, Nathan Agens, Owen Howell, Christian Dantey	100 Yard Freestyle Grace Kovach† – 4th Place
1 Meter Diving Jackson Hagler† – 2nd Place Gosha Pistsov – 8th Place	500 Yard Freestyle Charlotte Rusche† – 4th Place
	100 Yard Backstroke Margaret Rusche† – 4th Place Cameryn Brindza – 8th Place
	100 Yard Breaststroke Sarah Pasquella† – 2nd Place
	400 Yard Freestyle Relay† – 1st Place (3:27.93)* Sarah Pasquella (50.67)*, Grace Kovach, Josephine Stanczak, Charlotte Rusche

Results from the PIAA Class 3A Swimming and Diving Championships were not available at press time.

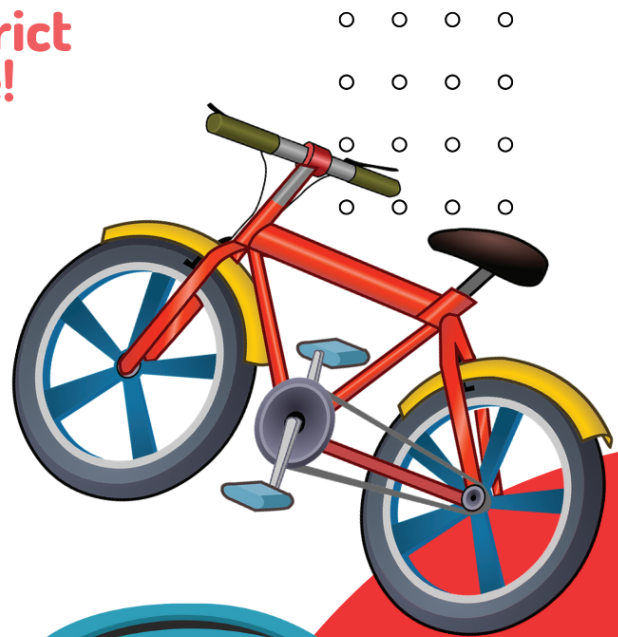
All Fox Chapel Area School District families and residents welcome!

Safety, Health, & Wellness Event

Saturday, April 26, 2025

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 police in the school district

For more information:

Officer Joseph Kozarian
(412) 967-2448
joseph_kozarian@fcsd.edu





2024-2025 FACTS & FIGURES

2024-2025 STUDENT ENROLLMENT

ELEMENTARY SCHOOLS (K-GRADE 5)

Fairview Elementary School.....	388
Hartwood Elementary School.....	388
Kerr Elementary School.....	434
O'Hara Elementary School.....	728
Total Elementary Enrollment.....	1,938

SECONDARY SCHOOLS (GRADES 6-12)

Dorseyville Middle School (6-8).....	979
Fox Chapel Area High School (9-12).....	1,361
Total Secondary Enrollment.....	2,340
Total District Enrollment.....	4,278

CLASS OF 2024

The total number of graduates in the Fox Chapel Area High School Class of 2024 was 272. The percentages of 2024 graduates entering some type of postsecondary education were as follows:

Four-Year Colleges.....	212 or 78%
Two-Year Colleges/Other.....	28 or 10%
Total Continuing Education.....	240 or 88%

AVERAGE SAT SCORES

	Evidence-Based	
	Reading & Writing	Math
Class of 2024.....	613	615
Class of 2023.....	611	606
Class of 2022.....	608	613
Class of 2021.....	611	618
Class of 2020.....	617	619

A total of 219 members (81%) of the Class of 2024 took the SAT during their junior or senior year. The national average scores for all 2024 graduates taking the test were 520 in evidence-based reading and writing and 510 in math.

PROFESSIONAL STAFF STATISTICS

NUMBER OF PROFESSIONAL STAFF

Elementary.....	170
Secondary.....	184
Total.....	354

MASTER'S OR DOCTORATE DEGREE OR EQUIVALENT

Elementary.....	75%
Secondary.....	81%

AVERAGE YEARS OF TEACHING EXPERIENCE

Elementary.....	18 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.

THE SCHOOL DISTRICT

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

MISSION

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

VISION & PILLARS

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

2025-2026 Fox Chapel Area School District Calendar

August 2025				
				1
			<i>I</i>	<i>I</i>
4	5	6	7	8
<i>I</i>		<i>P</i>	<i>FC</i>	<i>P/C</i>
11	12	13	14	15
<i>P</i>	<i>P</i>	<i>FC</i>		(2)
18	19	20	21	22
				(7)
25	26	27	28	29

September 2025				
<i>X</i>				(11)
1	2	3	4	5
				(16)
8	9	10	11	12
				(21)
15	16	17	18	19
	<i>X</i>			(25)
22	23	24	25	26
29	30			

October 2025				
			<i>X</i>	(29)
		1	2	3
		<i>E/+</i>		(34)
6	7	8	9	10
				(39)
13	14	15	16	17
<i>X</i>				<i>E/C</i> (43)
20	21	22	23	24
				<i>R</i> (48)
27	28	29	30	31

November 2025				
<i>E/CONF</i>	<i>CONF/+</i>			(52)
3	4	5	6	7
				(57)
10	11	12	13	14
				(62)
17	18	19	20	21
		<i>E/+</i> (65)	<i>X</i>	<i>X</i>
24	25	26	27	28

December 2025				
<i>X</i>				(69)
1	2	3	4	5
				(74)
8	9	10	11	12
				(79)
15	16	17	18	19
	(81)	<i>X</i>	<i>X</i>	<i>X</i>
22	23	24	25	26
<i>X</i>	<i>X</i>	<i>X</i>		
29	30	31		

January 2026				
			<i>X</i>	<i>X</i>
			1	2
				(86)
5	6	7	8	9
				(90)
12	13	14	15	16
<i>P</i>				<i>R</i> (94)
19	20	21	22	23
				(99)
26	27	28	29	30

February 2026				
				(104)
2	3	4	5	6
				(109)
9	10	11	12	13
<i>P</i>				(113)
16	17	18	19	20
				(118)
23	24	25	26	27

March 2026				
				(123)
2	3	4	5	6
				(128)
9	10	11	12	13
				(133)
16	17	18	19	20
				<i>E/C</i> (138)
23	24	25	26	27
<i>X</i>	<i>X</i>			
30	31			

April 2026				
		<i>X</i>	<i>X</i>	<i>X</i>
		1	2	3
				<i>R</i> (143)
6	7	8	9	10
				(148)
13	14	15	16	17
				(153)
20	21	22	23	24
27	28	29	30	

May 2026				
				(158)
				1
				(163)
4	5	6	7	8
				(168)
11	12	13	14	15
				(173)
18	19	20	21	22
<i>X</i>		<i>K/E</i>		(177)
25	26	27	28	29

June 2026				
				<i>E/C</i> (182)
1	2	3	4	5
<i>FC</i>	<i>P</i>	<i>P/C</i>		<i>R</i>
8	9	10	11	12
15	16	17	18	19
22	23	24	25	26
29	30			

1st Grading Period – October 24 – 43 days
2nd Grading Period – January 15 – 47 days
3rd Grading Period – March 27 – 48 days
4th Grading Period – June 5 – 44 days

November 3 – Elem/Sec Early Dismissal & Parent Teacher Conference Day
November 4 – Parent Teacher Conference Day (No School for Students)
June 5 – Last Day for Students = 182 Days (unless makeup days are required)
June 10 – Last Day for Professional Staff = 195 Days (unless makeup days are required)

First Semester	
8/7, 8, 11	New Teacher Induction Days
8/13, 18, 19	Professional Development Days
8/14 & 20	Full Clerical Days
8/15	Professional Development/Clerical Day
8/21	First Day for Students
9/1	Labor Day
9/23, 10/2, 10/20	Fall Break
10/8	Elem/Sec Early Dismissal
10/24	Elem/Sec Early Dismissal & Clerical Day
11/3	Elem/Sec Early Dismissal & Parent Teacher Conference Day
11/4	Parent Teacher Conference Day
11/26	Elem/Sec Early Dismissal
11/27-12/1	Thanksgiving Break
12/24-1/2	Winter Break

Second Semester	
1/16	Full Clerical Day
1/19	Martin Luther King Jr. Day & PD Day
2/16	Presidents' Day & PD Day
3/27	Elem/Sec Early Dismissal & Clerical Day
3/30-4/3	Spring Break
5/25	Memorial Day
5/27	Kennywood Day (Tentative) & Early Dismissal
6/5	Last Day for Students
	Elem/Sec Early Dismissal & Clerical Day
6/7	Commencement
6/8	Full Clerical Day
6/9	Professional Development Day
6/10	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 20-May 1 shaded areas indicate PSSA testing windows. January 5-16 and May 11-22 shaded areas indicate Keystone Exams testing windows. Refer to the FCASD website (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 8, 2026.

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

APPROVED 2.10.25



FOX CHAPEL AREA SCHOOL DISTRICT DIRECTORY

District Administration

611 Field Club Road
 Pittsburgh, PA 15238
 412/963-9600
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 Patterson, Ph.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: Katelyn Toth

O'Hara Elementary School

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

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): Nicole Smith, Ed.D.

FOX CHAPEL AREA SCHOOL BOARD

Amy B. Cooper (2025 – Region I); Marybeth Dadd, President (2027 – Region III); Katie Findley (2027 – Region I); Ronald P. Frank, Vice President (2027 – Region II); Adam G. Goode (2025 – Region III); Eric G. Hamilton, Treasurer (2027 – Region I); Dr. Jessica Haselkorn (2025 – Region III); Vanessa K. Lynch, Assistant Secretary (2027 – Region II); and Ariel Zych (2025 – Region II).

Region I covers all of Sharpsburg Borough and Wards 2, 3, and 4 of O'Hara Township; Region II covers Districts 2, 4, and 5 of Fox Chapel Borough and all of Indiana Township; and Region III covers all of Aspinwall Borough, Blawnox Borough, Wards 1 and 5 of O'Hara Township, and Districts 1 and 3 of Fox Chapel Borough.

School board meetings are typically scheduled for the first and second Mondays of each month at 7 p.m. The public is invited to attend. For more information and meeting locations, visit www.fcasd.edu.

COMPLIANCE STATEMENT

The Fox Chapel Area School District does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, religion, sex, national origin, age, disability, and/or any other basis prohibited by law, and prohibits discrimination, including harassment, in any employment practice, education program, or activity that it operates. Individuals may report concerns or questions to the Title IX coordinator and/or the Section 504 and Americans with Disabilities (ADA) coordinator. The notice of nondiscrimination is available at www.fcasd.edu.

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 ADDAMS FAMILY'

This year's Fox Chapel Area High School spring musical, "The Addams Family," was performed March 13-16. Audiences enjoyed the popular show featuring the kooky and spooky Addams family! Approximately 140 students participated. Congrats to the cast, crew and pit orchestra musicians!

PHOTOS BY RALPH LOVUOLO

