

Iroquois Central Schools

IROQUOIS
NEWSLETTER
BOX 32
Elma, New York
14059

Volume 58 Issue 1

May 2025

Budget Vote

May 20, 2025

Intermediate School Gymnasium 7:30AM-9:00PM

Voter Qualifications to Vote in the May 20th Budget Vote

*Citizen of the United States *At least 18 years old *District resident for at least 30 days just prior to the vote * Must be eligible under Section 5-106 of the Election Law *No pre-registration required ***Note:** Individuals who are first-time voters should be prepared to provide identification to the poll inspector at the time



Instructions for obtaining an Early Mail in or Absentee Ballot

Early Mail in Ballot applications and Absentee Ballot applications for the May 20, 2025 Budget Vote/Board of Education Election are currently available in the District Clerk's office.

To request an **application:**

- * Stop in the District Clerk's office (Room 33) of the Intermediate School Building or;
- * Email nspecht@iroquoiscsd.org and request an application or;
- * Mail your request to Nora Specht
District Clerk, PO Box 32, Elma, NY 14059.

Applications must be received by the District Clerk no later than **May 13, 2025** if the ballot is to be mailed to the voter.

SPECIAL BUDGET ISSUE
ANNUAL VOTE MAY 20, 2025
INTERMEDIATE GYMNASIUM 7:30 AM — 9:00 PM

VOTE

**Iroquois Central School District
 2025-2026
 Budget Vote/Board of Education Election
 May 20, 2025
 7:30 AM - 9:00 PM**

VOTE

**PROPOSITION NO. 1
 ENTIRE EDUCATIONAL PROGRAM BUDGET 2025-2026**

Shall the following resolution be adopted, to wit:

RESOLVED, that the budget for the Iroquois Central School District, Erie County (the "District") for the fiscal year commencing July 1, 2025, as presented by the Board of Education, is hereby approved and adopted, in an amount not to exceed \$60,382,075 and the required funds therefore are hereby appropriated and the necessary real property taxes required shall be raised by a tax on the taxable property in said District to be levied and collected as required by law.



**PROPOSITION NO. 2
 PURCHASE OF PUPIL TRANSPORTATION VEHICLES**

Shall the following resolution be adopted, to wit:

RESOLVED, that the Board of Education of the Iroquois Central School District (the "District") is hereby authorized to undertake the acquisition of three 63-passenger buses (at a maximum cost of \$174,339 each), one 30-passenger cutaway bus (at a maximum cost of \$110,000), and one 24-passenger cutaway wheelchair bus (at a maximum cost of \$130,000) for use in the transportation program of the District, and having a maximum aggregate cost of \$763,017, less trade-in value, if any; and that such aggregate sum (or so much thereof as may be necessary) shall be raised by the levy of a tax to be collected in annual installments, with such tax to be partially offset by state transportation aid available and received therefore; and, in anticipation of such tax, debt obligations of the District shall be issued in an amount not to exceed \$763,017, or the District may enter into a lease/purchase or installment purchase contract up to such stated amount (and having a term of not more than five years), if the Board of Education determines that it is in the best interest of the District to finance the purchases using that method.





Douglas R. Scofield

Message from the Superintendent

The annual school budget vote for the 2025-26 school year is on May 20th and I want to take a moment to thank you for the ongoing support you show to our students, staff, and schools. Together, we continue to build Iroquois into a district that is not only academically strong but also deeply committed to nurturing the growth and potential of every child.

I am proud to say our school district is thriving. Each day, our classrooms are filled with curiosity, creativity, and the desire to learn. Our students are engaged and inspired—asking thoughtful questions, exploring new ideas, and developing skills that will prepare them for success far beyond the classroom. Whether it's through advanced coursework, arts programs, career and technical education, or hands-on learning experiences, we are committed to providing an education that meets the diverse needs and interests of all learners.

Our dedicated educators, support staff, and administrators go above and beyond to create a positive and inclusive school environment. They are more than teachers—they are mentors, role models, and advocates for student success. Their unwavering commitment helps ensure that every student feels seen, supported, and challenged in meaningful ways.

Over the past year, we've made significant strides across many important areas. Academic programming has evolved to support 21st century learners, technology is becoming more imbedded within the classroom, and we provide more targeted support for students. Iroquois' commitment to social-emotional learning and mental health services has evolved to support students' needs.

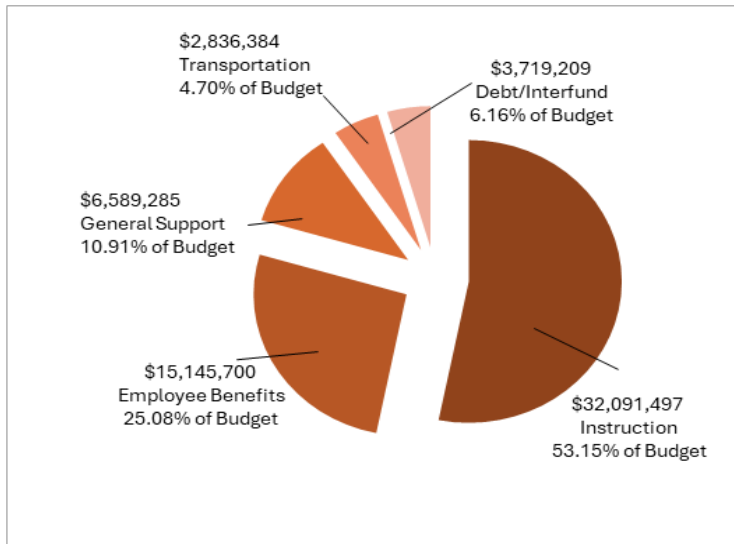
The budget we are presenting to you for consideration reflects these priorities. It is thoughtful, responsible, and designed to sustain the progress we've made while preparing for the opportunities and challenges of the future. It supports our mission of academic excellence, student growth, and equity, while remaining mindful of the impact on taxpayers.

We understand that voting on a school budget is not just about numbers. It's about what we believe our children deserve and the future we want to create for them. We believe that this budget honors those values.

Thank you for believing in our schools. Thank you for standing behind our educators. And most of all, thank you for supporting our students who are the focus of everything we do. We encourage all community members to make their voices heard in this year's budget vote and to remain involved in the exciting journey ahead.



Where the Money Goes



EXPENDITURES	2024-25	2025-26	% Change	% of Budget
<p>Instruction</p> <p>Includes: K-12 instructional programs, supervision, BOCES, special education, occupational education, community education, interscholastic athletics, co-curricular programs, library programs and computer instruction.</p>	\$31,233,645	\$32,091,497	2.75%	53.15%
<p>Employee Benefits</p> <p>Includes: Teacher & Employee Retirement Systems, health insurance, unemployment insurance, Social Security and Workers' Compensation.</p>	\$14,873,521	\$15,145,700	1.83%	25.08%
<p>General Support</p> <p>Includes: Insurance, school board, refunds on property tax, utilities, BOCES administrative fees, central offices, buildings and grounds.</p>	\$6,372,735	\$6,589,285	3.40%	10.91%
<p>Transportation</p> <p>Includes: Transportation to public and non-public schools, vocational schools, educational field trips and children requiring specific transportation accommodations.</p>	\$2,722,204	\$2,836,384	4.19%	4.70%
<p>Debt/Interfund Transfer</p> <p>Includes: Principal and interest payments for renovation projects/additions approved by voters. (off-set by Revenue Building Aid) Includes \$100,000 Capital Outlay Project for building repairs. *</p>	\$3,655,574	\$3,719,209	1.74%	6.16%
TOTAL	\$58,857,679	\$60,382,075	2.59%	100.00%

*The 2025-2026 budget includes a Capital Outlay Project for \$100,000. This project will address renovations/repairs to the Transportation Building. The work is scheduled to take place in the summer of 2026.

Iroquois Central School District Projected Revenues

	2024-25	2025-26	\$ Change	% Change
State Aid	\$ 17,829,535	\$ 17,990,276	\$ 160,741	0.90%
Erie County Sales Tax	\$ 3,082,882	\$ 3,250,000	\$ 167,118	5.42%
Appropriated Fund Balance	\$ 1,773,612	\$ 1,773,612		0.00%
Reserves	\$ 602,995	\$ 685,000	\$ 82,005	13.60%
Other Sources	\$ 1,074,748	\$ 1,038,772	\$ (35,976)	-3.35%
Tax Levy	\$ 34,493,907	\$ 35,644,415	\$ 1,150,508	3.34%
Totals	\$ 58,857,679	\$ 60,382,075	\$ 1,524,396	2.59%

Tax Levy



Iroquois Tax Levy History	
Year	Levy %
2004-05	8.80
2005-06	8.78
2006-07	5.99
2007-08	8.03
2008-09	5.93
2009-10	4.97
2010-11	3.98
2011-12	4.98
2012-13	3.42
2013-14	2.24
2014-15	3.14
2015-16	3.41
2016-17	0.81
2017-18	2.58
2018-19	2.89
2019-20	2.77
2020-21	2.08
2021-22	1.96
2022-23	2.51
2023-24	2.84
2024-25	3.25
2025-26	3.34

Understanding Your School Taxes

Three Factors That Affect Your Tax Rate

1. The **Tax Levy** from the school district.
 - ◆ From the budget approved by district voters;
 - ◆ Set by district voters at the May budget vote.

2. The **Equalization Rate** set by New York State.
 - ◆ New York State balancing property values in the different townships;
 - ◆ The lower the equalization rate, the higher the full value and the higher your tax rate;
 - ◆ Fixed in August by New York State Property Tax Division.

3. The **Total Assessed Value of the District** set by the Tax Assessors of the towns.
 - ◆ Home values and new construction;
 - ◆ The more improvements to the entire community, the higher the assessed value and the lower the tax rate;
 - ◆ Set by Town Assessors in June;
 - ◆ Individual households value changes from improvements and similar house sales.

Considerations for Budget Preparation

Completely and unwaveringly committed to serving the interests of our students.
 Committed to exercising care and good judgment in managing the resources with which we are entrusted.
 Committed to conducting business in an open, objective, and professional manner.
 Future-focused planning and committed to constant improvement.

2025-2026 Proposed Budget

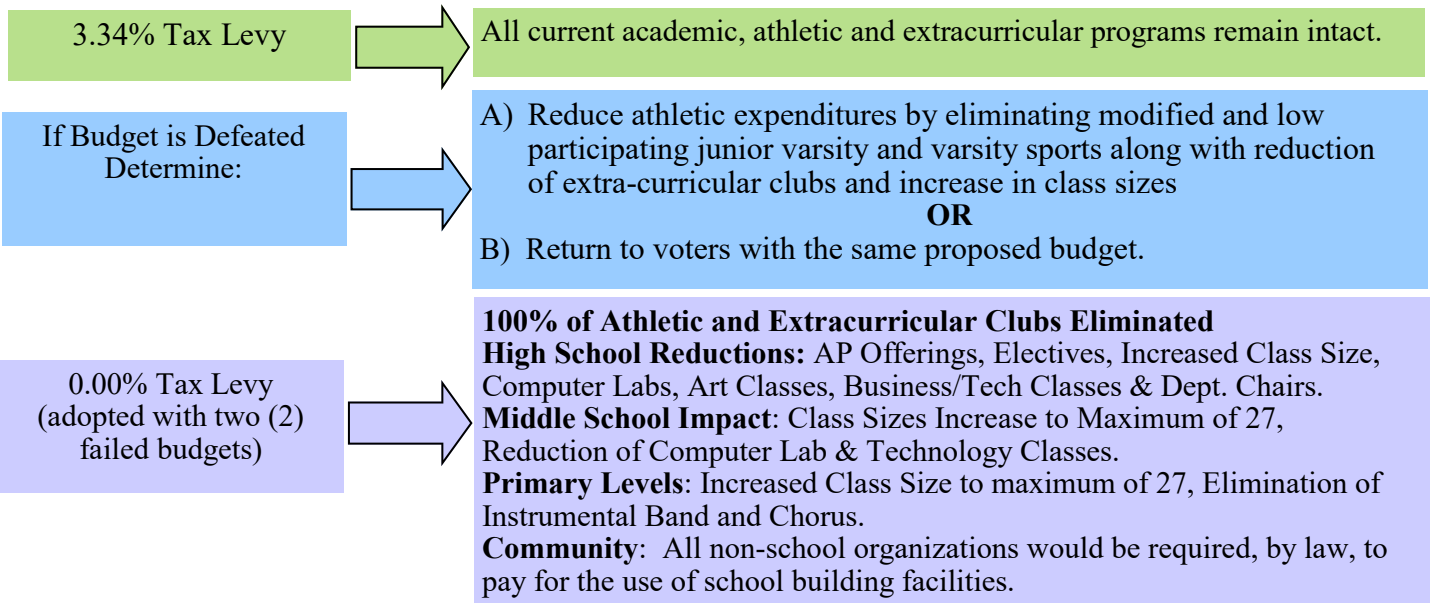
\$ 60,382,075

Budget-to-Budget Increase: 2.59%

Projected Tax Levy Increase

3.34% Increase Over Current Levy

Total Levy of \$35,644,415



PLEASE NOTE
**Estimated School Tax Bill*
Based on \$250,000 Property**
PLEASE NOTE

County	Town	Property Market Value	Equalized Assessed Property Value	Actual 2024-25 Tax Rate (Per \$1,000)	Estimated 2025-26 Tax Rate (Per \$1,000)	Estimated Dollar Tax Increase	Estimated % Increase
Erie	Aurora	\$250,000	\$57,500	\$ 46.68	\$ 48.24	\$89.54	3.34%
Erie	Elma	\$250,000	\$6,750	\$398.51	\$411.81	\$89.73	3.34%
Erie	Lancaster	\$250,000	\$180,000	\$ 15.17	\$ 15.68	\$91.08	3.34%
Erie	Marilla	\$250,000	\$60,000	\$ 44.89	\$ 46.39	\$89.85	3.34%
Erie	Wales	\$250,000	\$65,000	\$ 41.35	\$ 42.73	\$89.66	3.34%
Wyoming	Bennington	\$250,000	\$225,000	\$ 12.98	\$ 13.38	\$89.43	3.06%

*Estimates do not include STAR subsidies.
 *The estimates are based on 2024-25 equalization rates and property values. They will change for 2025-26.
 *Individual assessments may vary.

School District Budget Notice

Overall Budget Proposal	Budget Adopted for the 2024-25 School Year	Budget Proposed for the 2025-26 School Year	Contingency Budget for the 2025-26 School Year *
Total Budgeted Amount, Not Including Separate Propositions	\$ 58,857,679	\$ 60,382,075	\$ 59,231,567
Increase/Decrease for the 2025-26 School Year		\$ 1,524,396	\$ 373,888
Percentage Increase/Decrease in Proposed Budget		2.59%	.64%
Change in the Consumer Price Index		2.95%	
A. Proposed Levy to Support the Total Budgeted Amount	\$ 34,493,907	\$ 35,644,415	
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)	\$ 34,493,907	\$ 35,644,415	\$ 34,493,907
F. Total Permissible Exclusions	\$ 81,556	\$ 302,031	
G. School Tax Levy Limit, <u>Excluding</u> Levy for Permissible Exclusions	\$ 34,412,351	\$ 35,342,384	
H. Total Proposed School Year Tax Levy, <u>Excluding</u> Levy to Support Library Debt and/or Permissible Exclusions (E - B - F + D)	\$ 34,412,351	\$ 35,342,384	
I. Difference: G - H (Negative Value Requires 60.0% Voter Approval - See Note Below Regarding Separate Propositions) **	\$ 0	\$ 0	
Administrative Component	\$ 6,237,677	\$ 6,357,424	\$ 6,223,143
Program Component	\$ 44,121,622	\$ 45,258,583	\$ 44,571,126
Capital Component	\$ 8,498,380	\$ 8,766,068	\$ 8,437,298

*The contingent budget represents expenses that are related directly to student instruction and required support activities. The contingent budget excludes non-contingent equipment and program expansion. It would also include cutbacks as follows: a percentage of extracurricular clubs, a percentage of athletics, some supplies, and the Capital Outlay Project.

Description	Amount
Proposition #2: Purchase of transportation vehicles	\$ 763,017
	Under the Budget Proposed for the 2025-26 School Year
Estimated Basic STAR Exemption Savings ¹	\$ 332.47

The annual budget vote for the fiscal year 2025-2026 by the qualified voters of the Iroquois Central School District, Erie County, New York, will be held at the Iroquois Intermediate School Building in said district on Tuesday, May 20, 2025 between the hours of 7:30 AM and 9:00 PM prevailing time in the Iroquois Intermediate School Building Gymnasium, at which time the polls will be opened to vote by voting ballot or machine.

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

** 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)

Frequently Asked Questions

Q: How does the budget support student achievement?

A: The Iroquois Central School District budget is carefully crafted to prioritize student achievement at all levels. A substantial portion is dedicated to curriculum and instruction, ensuring access to high-quality educational programs, updated materials, and skilled educators.

The budget also supports vital student services such as special education, academic intervention and counseling and helping to address diverse learning needs. Investments in transportation and technology ensure students have safe access to school and modern tools that enhance learning and digital readiness.

Additionally, the budget funds extracurricular activities and athletics, recognizing their value in promoting engagement, leadership, and overall student development. Together, these investments reflect the district's strong commitment to providing a well-rounded, high-quality educational experience for every student.

Q: Has the Board of Education initiated any new future focused planning?

A: Yes. The Iroquois Board of Education is in its fourth year of a five-year Strategic Plan developed by members of the community, students, staff, teachers, and administration. This process reflects current practices and goals for creating a comprehensive plan for the future. This year the Board has directed the administration to survey key stakeholders and update the Strategic Plan.

Q: Did the Iroquois School District remain within the tax cap limit?

A: Yes. Iroquois has remained within the tax cap every year since its inception and is doing so again for the 2025-2026 school budget.

Q: Does the increase in the tax levy actually equal the increase on my school tax bill?

A: No. The increase in the tax levy does not directly correlate to the increase on individual school tax bills. Various factors such as the equalization rate and assessment contribute to the customization of each resident's tax bill.

Q: In instances when the state delays the release of its annual budget, as is the case this year, how does the school district address the uncertainty regarding the state's contribution to the school district's budget?

A: The District utilizes reserves to fill the gap left by the uncertainty of a delayed state budget. Once NYS releases the funding for school districts, Iroquois modifies the use of reserves to parallel the final state aid funds.

Q: How are the reserves funded?

A: After all expenditures are complete, the remaining balance is used to fund reserves. Annually, the Board of Education reviews all reserves to ensure appropriate funding.

Q: Is the total dollar amount stated in the bus purchase proposition the actual amount expended?

A: No. The total dollar amount stated in the bus purchase proposition represents the maximum cost as required by law. However, the final cost of buses purchased is typically reduced through the trade-in of existing buses.

Q: If enrollment changes, does the District modify staff?

A: Yes. Each year, the District conducts a review of the staff-to-enrollment ratio to accommodate fluctuations in enrollment. Two years ago, adjustments were made to "right size" the ratios. Over the past decade, the District has consistently made modifications based on enrollment. Student enrollment has now stabilized requiring the same staff numbers as previous years.

Q: What modes of communication does the District implement to make budget information more available to community members?

A: The District continues communication services that allows any resident to sign up and receive texts, emails and phone calls directly from the school which may include budget information, newsletters and mailings. To sign up, go to our website at: www.iroquoiscsd.org and click on *Connect with Us*. The District also provides this information on the website under *News and Announcements*, and on the District Facebook page.

Frequently Asked Questions Continued

Q: What methods does the Iroquois Board of Education use to hear public opinion?

A: The Board of Education employs various methods to engage with the public, including dedicated time at every board meeting for direct public input. Additionally, the email addresses of all board members are accessible on the district website for community members to voice their opinions.

Q: What happens if the May 20th budget vote is not supported?

A: If the budget is not supported, the Board of Education will decide to either:

- Return to voters with reduced athletic and extracurricular club expenditures, decreased course offerings and increase class size; or,
- Return to the voters with the same proposed budget and corresponding tax levy; or,
- Adopt a contingent budget.

Q: What does it mean if the budget is defeated, and we are required to adopt a contingent budget?

A. A contingency budget would cause elementary class sizes, in a majority of the classes, to increase to approximately 27 students per class. There would be a reduction of elective courses, including art and music, as well as advanced placement courses. It would also be necessary to eliminate some modified, junior varsity and varsity sport teams, as well as some extracurricular clubs. Equipment purchases would be eliminated. In addition, all non-school organizations would be required, by law, to pay for the use of school building facilities.

Candidates for the Board of Education

Seeking Election to a Five-Year Term

(vote for 1)



Henry Szymula III—I have been a lifelong resident of the Iroquois School District, deeply committed to serving my community. My wife Amy and I have four children: Evan, a current UB student; Alex, a senior and future UB student; Lizzy, a junior; and Harper, in first grade. My community involvement spans various roles and organizations, reflecting my dedication to making a positive impact.

I currently serve as a board member and Interment Liaison for the Elma Cemetery, where I contribute to the management and operations of the cemetery. Additionally, I am a 12-year member of the Elma Volunteer Fire Company, holding the position of Corresponding Secretary on the Board of Directors. My volunteer work with the fire company demonstrates my commitment to public safety and community service.

In youth sports, I have coached numerous baseball and softball teams, including 10u, 11u, 12u, 14u, 16u, CEBA, PAL, AAABA baseball, and EMW T-ball and softball. I have also served as the President and a board member of the Iroquois Baseball Booster Club, supporting the development of young athletes in our district. Professionally, I work as the Facilities Manager at Fisher-Price (Mattel) in East Aurora, a position I've held since 2016. My experience in facilities management equips me with skills in organization, budgeting, and project management, which I believe can greatly benefit the school board in maintaining and improving school facilities.

My dedication to community involvement, professional expertise, and commitment to education drive my desire to contribute to the Iroquois School Board, ensuring a bright future for our children and community.
~printed as submitted by candidate

Candidates for the Board of Education (continued)

Seeking Election to a Five-Year Term

(vote for 1)



Katelyn Letizia—Dr. Katelyn Letizia is a passionate advocate for education, community, and opportunity. She holds a Doctor of Education in Higher Education from the University of Rochester, a Master’s degree from Canisius University, and a Bachelor’s from Buffalo State University. With over a decade of experience in higher education, Dr. Letizia has led extensive policy development efforts focused on increasing access, improving student outcomes, and ensuring institutional accountability. Her work has centered on making data-

informed decisions, promoting equity, and strengthening the systems that support student success.

Currently serving as Assistant Provost and Registrar at Hilbert College, Dr. Letizia brings a deep understanding of how thoughtful, well-designed policy can make a lasting difference in the lives of students and families. She is running for school board because she believes in the power of public education and the need to preserve and strengthen it during a time of increasing uncertainty and political pressure.

A lifelong Western New Yorker, Dr. Letizia lives in the district with her husband and their two young boys, one of whom is currently attending school. She is committed to bringing a thoughtful, transparent, and forward-thinking voice to the table on behalf of all families in the community. *~printed as submitted by candidate*



Anna Pitz—My name is Anna Pitz, and I am a 2019 graduate of Iroquois CSD. During my time at Iroquois, I was actively involved in athletics, playing on the soccer, ice hockey, and lacrosse teams, while also being a member of the National Honor Society and Key Club. After graduating, I earned a Bachelor of Science in Environmental Resources Engineering from the SUNY College of Environmental Science and Forestry in Syracuse, NY, in 2023. While in Syracuse, I remained engaged with the community by coaching youth soccer and volunteering with local organizations.

Currently, I work as an environmental engineer in Western New York, collaborating with professional teams to address environmental challenges and support sustainable development. I am eager to apply the critical thinking and problem-solving skills I’ve developed as an engineer to help identify solutions to the challenges facing our schools and community. As a recent graduate, I have seen firsthand the changes in both education and the workforce. I am committed to ensuring that our students receive a high-quality education that equips them to be contributing members of our ever-evolving society, and I am passionate about making strategic decisions that will support students and educators for years to come. *~printed as submitted by candidate*

Candidates for the Board of Education (continued)

Seeking Election to a Five-Year Term

(vote for 1)



Brandessa "Brandy" Stepowski

I am a 2000 Graduate of East Aurora High School and have resided in the Iroquois district for the last 17 years with my husband, two children, two cats and some chickens. I have been tremendously involved with the school community serving previously as the President of the Elma Primary PTO for three years and the Middle School Parent Association for the last three years; in addition to, chairing events, fundraising and volunteering. The skills and strategic thinking gained during this time, and throughout my life, has given me the leadership needed to have a respected seat on the Iroquois Board of Education. Being involved at many stages of my children's education, I have been witness to the difference of opinions from parents and the intricate needs of the tax payers who reside in our community. We have a great community here in Iroquois with remarkable students who need to be heard, supported to better their positive future. We are our children's first example of giving back to their community and the essential importance that it brings to their education.

~printed as submitted by candidate



Lisa Starr— Hello Iroquois Families! I am proud to be an Iroquois CSD Graduate, Class of 2004. While attending Iroquois, I participated in many activities, including field hockey, basketball, softball, track & field, National Honor Society, and Varsity Club. The opportunities, inspiring teachers and coaches I have had, along with the many friendships made, have created a lifetime of memories I will never forget.

After graduating from Iroquois, I attended SUNY Brockport where I majored in Meteorology and Mathematics. I also played four years of field hockey (Captain my senior year) and was a member of the Honors Program and Meteorology Club as an undergraduate. After earning my Bachelor's Degree in 2008, I continued my education and earned a Master's Degree in Atmospheric & Oceanic Science from the University of Maryland, College Park in 2010. After moving back home and working for the family business for awhile, I decided to attend SUNY Buffalo State where I earned a Master's Degree in Secondary Science Education in 2012. Upon graduation, I was blessed with an Earth Science teaching job at Iroquois High School from 2013 – 2016. I am extremely grateful for the opportunity to have taught our amazing students for three years, but made the decision to work at our family's fire alarm and security business full-time in June 2016. I am currently the Service Coordinator at Great Lakes Building Systems, Inc.

I am proud to live in Marilla with my husband, Matt, and two children, Parker (5 years old) and Mason (3 years old), and am very grateful and excited to have my children grow up in our tight-knit community. I look forward to helping provide all students with the highest quality education possible and continuing Iroquois CSD's motto of 'Striving to be the Best!' ~ printed as submitted by candidate

~printed as submitted by candidate

IROQUOIS NEWSLETTER
U.S.P.S. 270-040

BOARD OF EDUCATION

James Michalek, President
Todd Aichinger
Robert Barry
Heather Becker
Heather Jacobs
Jane Sullivan
Keith Vergien

Douglas R. Scofield
Superintendent of Schools

Nora Specht
District Clerk

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This is your official School District Newsletter



*Public Budget
Hearing
Tuesday May 13,
2025
6:30PM*



VOTE May 20, 2025
**INTERMEDIATE
SCHOOL**
7:30AM-9:00PM



Education breeds confidence. Confidence breeds hope. Hope breeds peace . ~ Confucius