Pittsford School District News

Summer 2025

A publication for the residents of Pittsford Central School District

2025-26 School Budget Passes – Thank you voters!

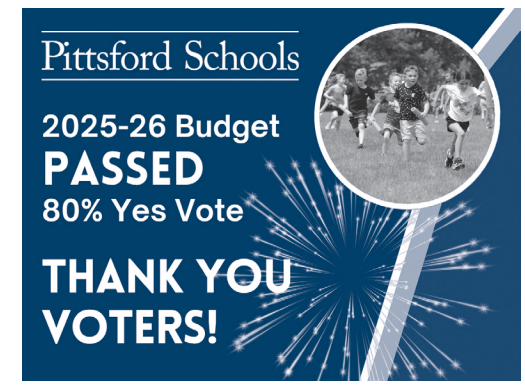
The Pittsford Central School District 2025-2026 School Budget passed with an 80% yes vote for the second year in a row. Thank you to the PCSD community for your support. The results are as follows:

Total Voters: 2,172
Budget: $168,218,102 within the tax cap
(Yes: 1,731/No: 433)

Proposition 1: Purchase 14 replacement buses and communication equipment used in the operation of buses from "Capital Reserve Fund - Purchase of Buses." (Yes: 1,812/No: 354)

Proposition 2: Authorize the withdrawal of funds from the "Capital Instructional Technology Reserve" for the purchase of laptops to support the 1:1 device program. (Yes: 1,891/No: 272)

Board of Education: Two Seats, Three Candidates
- Emily Kay (second term): 1,748 votes
- Dave Berk (second term): 1,611 votes
- Laura Schulitz (first term): 515 votes



New Cellphone Law Takes Effect September 2025



Through the NYS budget process, Governor Hochul signed into law a requirement that all public schools across NYS must create a distraction free learning environment which entails restricting access and use of cellphones and other internet-related devices. This law applies to all students in grades K-12. Specific to the District's policy, this also includes any non-internet messaging devices.

This means that students are not allowed to be "connected" to or with a device during the entire school day, including lunches, study halls and passing time. Students are, however, permitted to use their District issued laptops.

What the Policy Requires
- Secondary Schools (Grades 6-12): Phones / Devices must be turned off and stored in lockers from arrival until dismissal, unless the student leaves campus.
- Elementary Schools (Grades K-5): Phones / Devices must be collected and stored in the classroom.

Why the Change?

The policy is part of a broader statewide initiative signed into law to promote distraction-free schools and support students' mental health and academic potential. Unfolding research shows that excessive cellphone use and social media can negatively impact student well-being, attention, and peer relationships.

Possible Exceptions to this Law:

Students may be authorized to use an internet-enabled device during the school day on school grounds:
a) Where necessary for the management of a student's health care;
b) For translation services;
c) On a case-by-case basis, upon review and determination by a building administrator; or,
d) Where required by law.

Students must be permitted to use an internet-enabled device where the use is included in the student's:
a) Individualized Education Program (IEP); or,
b) Section 504 Plan.

Parent-Student Communication

If you need to reach your child during the school day, contact the school's main office. Likewise, if your child needs to contact you, phones will be available for their use in designated areas.

(Continued on page 3)

Class of 2025 Outstanding Seniors

Congratulations to Mendon High School senior **Dillon Frank** and Sutherland High School senior **Chris Gargan** who were recognized at the May 7, 2025, Monroe County Council of School Superintendents' Michael C. O'Laughlin Outstanding Senior Recognition Dinner. They were selected for this honor based on their scholarship, leadership, service and character. The honorees were presented with a gift by Monroe One BOCES District Superintendent Dan White and Pittsford CSD Superintendent Michael Pero.



Chris Gargan, Superintendent Pero, Dillon Frank (L to R)

Superintendent Michael Pero Announces Retirement Date; Shana Cutaia Named New Superintendent



Shana Cutaia

With over 30 years of service with the Pittsford Central School District (PCSD), **Superintendent Michael Pero** has announced his retirement. His last official day as Superintendent will be December 1, 2025. He has agreed to stay on through January as a Deputy Superintendent to assist with the transition and oversee the Business Office while the Assistant Superintendent of Business is on medical leave.

Pero began his career with PCSD in 1994 as a health educator at Pittsford Middle School. He later became assistant principal, then served as principal of Barker Road Middle School, assistant superintendent for human resources, and was appointed superintendent in 2013.

"Mr. Pero is a compassionate leader who has steadfastly championed our District's mission, vision, and values throughout his tenure," said Robin Scott, President of the Board of Education. "We thank him for his skilled leadership and unwavering dedication to the students and staff of Pittsford Schools. The entire Board of Education wishes him good health and happiness in his well-deserved retirement."

The Board of Education has named **Shana Cutaia** as the next Superintendent of PCSD. She will officially assume the role on December 1, 2025, allowing for a brief transition period with Superintendent Pero.

Cutaia began her career with the District in 2003 as a social studies teacher at Barker Road Middle School. She later became assistant principal at Brighton's Twelve Corners Middle School before returning to Pittsford in 2014 as principal of Barker Road Middle School, a position she held until 2021. Under her leadership, the school was named a National School to Watch and the top middle school in Monroe County by the "Rochester Business Journal" during that time.

In 2021, Cutaia was appointed Director of Student Services, overseeing areas including health and safety, counseling, nursing services, and social-emotional support programs.

She holds a Bachelor of Arts in History and Secondary Education from Nazareth University and a Master's in Educational Leadership from St. John Fisher University. She also earned certifications in School District Administration from SUNY Brockport and Human Resources Management from Cornell University. Most recently, she participated in the Future Superintendent's Academy (2023–2024) and Harvard University's "Civic Leadership in the Superintendency" program (2024).

Cutaia resides in Pittsford with her husband, Kevin, and their two daughters.

"I wholeheartedly support the Board's appointment of Ms. Cutaia as Superintendent," said Michael Pero. "She is a caring and focused leader who will guide PCSD confidently into the future with her institutional knowledge, talent, and expertise. I feel very confident leaving the District in her capable hands."

(Continued on page 2)

Transportation Efficiency Study to Streamline Bus Routes



The Pittsford Central School District has launched a Transportation Efficiency Study aimed at optimizing school bus routes and improving the use of District transportation resources. The initiative is part of a broader effort to reduce operational costs, ease the ongoing bus driver shortage, and increase reliability for families.

Assessing Current Routes

The District is currently evaluating existing bus routes to identify opportunities to condense runs and better utilize bus capacity. As part of this analysis, bus drivers have taken attendance on their routes to gather accurate data on the average number of students riding each day.

Some students don't ride the bus even though they are scheduled. These buses could be transporting as few as 20 students – below capacity. Additionally, multiple buses are currently covering overlapping areas, a sign that routes may be due for realignment. This study will help the District make more efficient use of its buses and drivers.

Goals and Benefits

The primary goal of the study is to eliminate two to three bus runs per day by reconfiguring routes to improve efficiency. This will not only reduce the number of buses and drivers needed but also provide a more fiscally responsible use of District resources.

By streamlining transportation operations, the District hopes to minimize the risk of route cancellations and better manage the current shortage of qualified bus drivers.

This study is about making sure we can consistently get students to and from school safely and on time.

(Continued on page 2)

Pittsford Hits a High Note: 20 Years of Music Education Recognition

For the 20th time, Pittsford Central School District has been honored by the NAMM (National Association of Music Merchants) Foundation as one of the "Best Communities for Music Education." This prestigious national recognition is awarded to school districts that demonstrate outstanding commitment and support for music education as part of a well-rounded academic experience.

Pittsford CSD is one of just 935 school districts and 88 individual schools across the country to receive this distinction in 2025. The award celebrates the collaborative efforts of teachers, administrators, parents, students, and community leaders who make music education a priority in their schools.

Summer 2025

Laura Hefner Appointed Coordinator of Special Education Programs and Services

Mendon High School's assistant principal, Laura Hefner, has been named the Coordinator of Special Education Programs and Services. Her start date is July 1, 2025, pending Board of Education approval.



Laura Hefner

Hefner has served as the assistant principal at Mendon High School since 2012. She previously worked at Monroe BOCES #1 in special education capacities. Prior to that experience, she was in Colorado working under various special education titles including Alternative High School Principal and District Special Education Coordinator.

"Along with her institutional knowledge, Laura brings extensive administrative and special education experience to this position and will be a great addition to the Special Education Department," said Superintendent Michael Pero.

Hefner earned a bachelor's degree in Ornamental Horticulture and Landscape Design from University of Tennessee, a master's degree in Special Education from the University of Northern Colorado, and an Educational Specialist degree from the University of Colorado. Additionally, she is certified in New York State as a School Administrator and a School District Administrator.

She is a Pittsford-Sutherland graduate and lives in Pittsford with her husband and has two adult children.

(Superintendent Michael Pero to retire - Continued from page 1)

"Superintendent Pero's early retirement notice gave the Board the opportunity to conduct a thorough and deliberate hiring process," added Robin Scott. "After exploring various options and consulting with search experts last summer and this spring, the Board interviewed and unanimously agreed to hire Ms. Cutaia. It was her exemplary body of work over time within PCSD that led the Board to this decision.

"The Board is confident that Ms. Cutaia is someone we know and trust to lead the District, uphold its values, and continue putting students first," said Scott.

Succession planning and administrative hiring have been central to the strategic vision of PCSD. Over the past 18 months, the District has made significant strides in strengthening its leadership team, appointing new Assistant Superintendents for Instruction and Business, as well as new directors of Finance, Athletics, and Food Services. In addition, four new principals have joined Pittsford schools, bringing fresh perspectives and deep commitment to student success.

PCSD takes great pride in its ability to attract exceptional leaders from outside the organization while also fostering internal talent. By promoting capable and dedicated staff from within, the District not only builds leadership capacity but also preserves and leverages valuable institutional knowledge. This balanced approach supports continuity, innovation, and long-term success for our students and school community.

(Transportation Efficiency Study - Continued from page 1)

What Families Can Expect

As changes are implemented, families may potentially notice:

- Slightly longer bus rides for some students by 1-10 minutes
- Adjusted pickup times and bus stop locations based on new routing
- Different bus drivers than in previous years

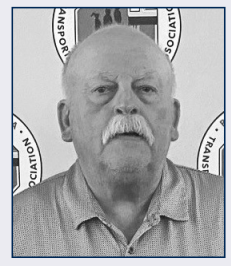
Despite these changes, the District assures families that they will continue to receive estimated pickup and drop-off times prior to the start of the school year.

The Transportation Efficiency Study is ongoing and the District plans to communicate all updates to families in advance via the StopFinder© app.

For more information about the efficiency study or StopFinder©, parents and guardians can contact the Transportation Department or visit the Pittsford Schools website for more information: *https://www.pittsfordschools.org/departments/transportation*.

2025 Transportation Employee of the Year

Congratulations to Pittsford Schools' bus driver Don Peterson who was named 2025 Road Transport and Safety Agency (RATSA) Employee of the Year. With more than 15 years at Pittsford Schools, he is beloved by students, families, teachers and staff. "He is always happy, friendly and willing to help with a positive attitude," said PCSD Transportation Director Carla Grove.



Don Peterson

New Heat Mitigation Protocols Implemented to Protect Students

In an effort to enhance student safety and ensure a productive learning environment, the Pittsford Central School District has adopted a series of heat mitigation procedures in accordance with New York State Education Law. The measures aim to address the growing concern over excessive indoor temperatures during warmer months. These new measures will be in place starting in September 2025.

The District's new guidelines outline specific actions to be taken when temperatures inside student-occupied classrooms and support spaces rise above 82°F. Using a standardized method of measurement, school staff will monitor classroom conditions with approved devices.

Heat Mitigation Efforts Begin at 82°F

When a room reaches 82°F, staff will implement a range of strategies to "relieve heat-related discomfort." These include turning off overhead lights, encouraging frequent water breaks, using classroom and personal fans, etc. The District has confirmed that all student spaces are or will be equipped with electric fans.

88°F Threshold Triggers Student Relocation

In alignment with new legislation, 88°F is now considered the maximum safe indoor temperature for classrooms and support areas. When this threshold is reached and conditions allow, schools must enact relocation plans for both students and staff. Potential responses could include moving classes to air-conditioned or cooler spaces.

What Parents Can Do

Parents can partner with the District in ensuring our students remain safe and comfortable during school hours. Here are a few recommendations to keep in mind on warmer days:

- Encourage your child to bring a water bottle and drink water regularly throughout the day, even if they don't feel thirsty. Avoid sugary or caffeinated beverages.
- Lightweight, loose-fitting, and light-colored clothing helps keep the body cool.
- Apply sunscreen before leaving the house to provide protection for outdoor activities.

For more information on the new heat policies, families can contact their school's principal.

Winter & Spring Sports Bring Home Numerous Championship Titles

Winter

The Winter 2024/25 Season concluded with five team Section V titles, nine individual Section V titles and numerous All State, All County and All Greater Rochester athletes. **Team Section V Champions**: Pittsford Girls Alpine, Pittsford Ice Hockey, Pittsford Boys Swimming & Diving, MHS Boys Indoor Track and Field, and SHS Girls Basketball. **Individual Section V Champions:** Pittsford Wrestling - Zach Gerby and Samson McKissick Staley; Pittsford Boys Swimming & Diving - Elliott Cunniffe, Kosta Oluic, Rigo Cunningham, Gage Van Quekelberg, Billy Sanderson, Michael Kusch, and Calvin Braun.





Spring

The Spring 2024/25 Season concluded with six team Section V titles, one NYS title, and numerous individual All State, All County and All Greater Rochester athletes.

Team Section V Champions: MHS Baseball, MHS Boys Golf, MHS Boys Tennis, MHS Boys and Girls Outdoor Track and Field, and SHS Softball.

Team State Champions: MHS Baseball.

2025 PTSA Honorary Life Membership Awards

Congratulations to the recipients of the Pittsford Central PTSA 2025 Honorary Life Membership Awards: Todd Benz, Chris Compson, Brett Daggs, Carrie Green, Paul LeVan, Joann Mezzoprete, Michelle Moranz, Brian Regan, Kristin Rohlfs, Katie Wells, and David Wikiera. They were celebrated at a ceremony on April 24 with live music by Pittsford students and refreshments.

PTSA® everychild. onevoice.



Board of Education Honors Pittsford Pride Recipients

Nine students received the Pittsford Pride Citizenship Recognition Award during the May 13, 2025, Board of Education Meeting for demonstrating excellent citizenship and positive leadership. Congratulations to the following students: **Sullivan Brown,** Gr. 7, Barker Road Middle School; **Achille Cavatassi**, Gr. 4, Park Road Elementary School; **Matthew Deckman**, Gr. 4, Mendon Center Elementary School; **Ruby Ellicott**, Gr. 5, Thornell Road Elementary School, **Lulu Hess,** Gr. 4, Jefferson Road Elementary School, **Madelyn Kraus**, Gr. 8, Calkins Road Middle School, **Prathiksha Mangalasubaskaran**, Gr. 12, Mendon High School, **Fiona McCarthy**, Gr. 5, Allen Creek Elementary School, **Alexander Wu**, Gr. 12, Sutherland High School.



Construction Update – Phase Two Begins

During this past school year, the capital project that residents approved in March 2023 quickly moved into phase two where plans have been finalized, and construction has begun. Construction trailers with temporary fencing and changes in parking lots to allow for construction materials and equipment are the most visible signs of all the current work and future work that will be occurring year-round over the next three years.

Safety and security is the number one priority during construction. Each school's entrance has been upgraded to include a more secure double-door vestibule. Intruder locks have been installed in large assembly areas and emergency generators have been installed at schools that previously weren't equipped with them (Jefferson Road, Mendon Center and Park Road Elementary Schools).

In the coming months, each elementary school will have unutilized rooms repurposed to improve space utilization. New spaces will be dedicated to mental health and counseling services, and for more efficient storage. Allen Creek's gymnasium roof will also be recoated to prevent leaks.

The secondary schools will receive the bulk of the renovations which have already begun – ahead of schedule. Here's an overview of what to expect:

Mendon High School

A two-story addition for science and language classrooms will be built on the north side of the building. The existing science classrooms will be renovated for safety purposes and will align with the Sutherland High School facilities.

The main office and mental health suite will be remodeled. Certain spaces will be repurposed to accomplish this.

The gymnasium vestibule and entrance corridor along with the auditorium lobby will receive new flooring. Additional doors with card reader access to limit access to the building during athletic events will be added. Additionally, the team room will be renovated.

Outdoors, the existing tennis courts will be removed and replaced with new courts. Restrooms and team rooms will be added to the stadium, and drainage will be improved in the baseball outfield. Lastly, the existing flag pole will replaced.



Sutherland High School

Sutherland's sewer lines will be replaced after many years of issues. Sanitary work will be conducted in the crawl space and the generator will be replaced.

The old tennis courts will be refurbished and converted to pickleball courts, new tennis courts will be constructed, and drainage improvements will be made to the outfield of the baseball and softball fields.

Barker Road Middle School

The most significant work will be done to Barker Road Middle School. The cafeteria and kitchen areas will be reconfigured to provide a more open "commons" space for students.

Classrooms will be added in spaces that used to be the small gym and existing technology area. The pool will be converted into a multiple purpose room with some space allocated to the new cafeteria/serving area. The band room and large group instruction room will be relocated and renovated to better match what's available at Calkins Road Middle School. Renovations will also be made to the main office, mental health and nurses' suites.

Tennis courts will be removed and replaced with a track-like surface for physical education classes and team practices.

If you visit any of our campuses, please abide by the revised parking areas and follow all posted signage for your safety. We look forward to seeing our schools transformed and updated as these projects progress.

NYS Approves Universal Free Meal Program: Pittsford to Evaluate Options



On May 9, 2025, New York State lawmakers approved a Universal Free Meal Program for K–12 students. PCSD is currently awaiting detailed guidance from the State Education Department and will soon survey families to gauge interest and help inform next steps.

In 2013, Pittsford exited the National School Lunch Program after negative feedback from families and students regarding federal meal mandates introduced in 2012 that limited food choices and the flexibility to offer and prepare fresh, whole foods. Changes to the National School Lunch Program have occurred since that time, and as the District considers the potential transition back to a state-supported program, there are several important factors we are reviewing. Pittsford CSD receives a lower amount of federal and state meal reimbursement (subsidy) due to higher-than-average household incomes. Additionally, only about 4% of families currently qualify for free meals under current federal guidelines. This means Pittsford may receive less state and federal reimbursement than other districts, and any uncovered costs could fall to local taxpayers. Families that qualify for free and reduced lunches receive free meals under the local plan.

The District is also assessing the impact universal meals could have on current operations. A significant increase in meal participation may require additional staffing, kitchen capacity, and logistical planning.

Looking Ahead, Pittsford CSD looks forward to NYS releasing more details regarding the Universal Free Meal Program and working with families, administration and staff to determine our path forward. As more detailed guidance becomes available from New York State, the District will continue to collaboratively assess all options and communicate updates. Our priority remains the same: to make decisions that best serve our students' health, well-being, and educational success.



Badge-based Entry for Junior and Seniors

As another layer of security, PCSD is implementing a secure student ID-entry system for students in grades 11 and 12 who have qualified and been approved for lunch dismissal. Each student's school ID will work with an automated badge-entry system that will better enable Mendon and Sutherland High Schools to monitor which students are out of the building at any given time. The badges will only scan at the student's assigned high schools' main entrance where there is a single point of entry through the double door vestibule system.

Communication with greater detail will be shared to families of 11th and 12th grade students prior to the start of the 2025-26 school year.

(Cellphone Laws - Continued from page 1)

Personal Responsibility and Device Security

Students are responsible for securing their devices. Locker combinations should not be shared, and the District is not responsible for lost or stolen items.

Student Discipline for Accessing Internet-Enabled Devices During the School Day

Violations of this policy will result in disciplinary or remedial action, progressive in nature. Examples include a warning, parent/guardian meeting, confiscation of devices, detention, alternate storage areas, and in-school suspension, in accordance with District Code of Conduct. The District is prohibited from suspending a student solely for accessing internet-enabled devices in violation of this policy.

More Work Needs to be Done

This summer, our Board of Education, administrators, teacher and parent leaders will be working on regulations to address the following:

- Supports for students, recognizing that being connected during the day is a habit
- Best way to enforce a progressive discipline concept, knowing that this is a significant change in practice
- How to address other distractions such as movies, games, ear buds, music, etc.
- Practices for securing phones / devices
- How to assess if changes, where permitted, need to be made in policy

New Standards for Lead Levels in Drinking Water

The District is required to periodically conduct water tests for lead levels in the drinking water. Based on revisions to Public Health Law §1110, lead action levels have been reduced from 15 parts per billion (ppb) to 5 ppb. The District is now mandated to conduct additional water testing no later than December 31, 2025, and post copies of the results and remediation plans on the District website.

Phase 1 of the testing was conducted on March 13, 2025. This phase included testing 79 corridor drinking fountains and ice machines at all schools. None were found to have readings above the new NYSDOH action level.

Phase 2 was conducted in June. Testing encompassed all remaining (non-posted) applicable drinking water outlets in all schools. These tests determined and documented which applicable drinking water outlets require posting of non-potable signage, including showers, bathroom sinks, science sinks, art sinks, custodial sinks, external hose bibs, etc.

As expected, some existing water sources that previously "passed" now "failed" due to the lower requirement for the levels – from 15 ppb down to 5 ppb. The same can be said for new water sources that hadn't previously been tested and/or posted. The District will take action as required by public health law to comply with these new standards.

The District has an obligation to provide drinking water within the revised guidelines and will ensure compliance in all areas where necessary. In all other areas, signs will be posted indicating that the water source is non-potable.

Congratulations Class of 2025









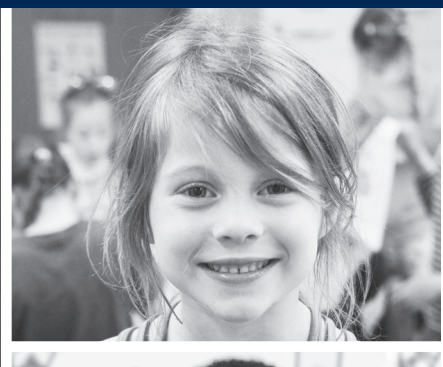
The Pittsford Central School District does not discriminate in access, admission, employment, or treatment of participants in any of its programs and activities on the basis of race, religion, age, sex, color, handicapping condition, or ethnic or national origin. This is in compliance with Title IX, OCR Guidelines, and other applicable federal and state laws and regulations. Inquiries regarding compliance issues may be addressed to: Shawn Clark, Assistant Superintendent for Human Resources, Administration Building, Pittsford Central Schools, 75 Barker Road, Pittsford, New York 14534.

State and National Award Winning Publication

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Pittsford
School District News

Summer 2025

- Superintendent Pero to Retire; Shana Cutaia to Assume Role Dec. 1
- School Budget Passes - Thank You Voters!
- 2025 Outstanding Seniors
- Capital Construction Update
- New Cellphone Law for NYS Schools
- Laura Hefner Named Special Education Coordinator
- Transportation Efficiency Study Underway
- NYS Approves Universal Free Meal Program: PCSD to Evaluate Options