



# FOCUS ON FAIRLESS

Winter 2026

VOL. 33 • ISS. 2

## Superintendent's Message

Happy New Year! We are now halfway through the 2025–2026 school year, and soon we'll be preparing for Ohio State Testing, Spring Break, and Graduation. It's been a great year so far — our students and staff are truly SOARING!

Over the past year, the Ohio State Legislature worked to pass a new state budget and enact major property tax reform. Throughout this process, the Board of Education, Treasurer Phillips, and I actively engaged with legislators. We shared the unique needs of our school district through phone conversations, in-person meetings, and even by testifying before the House Ways and Means Committee. Our focus was to support meaningful, reasonable reform that protects local government services, including our schools.

Below is a summary of the major bills that were passed and how each will impact Fairless Local School District taxpayers:

### HB 96 — Ohio State Biennial Budget

When first proposed, this budget included changes to school funding that would have reduced funding for Fairless by millions of dollars. In its final form, the state budget will **flat fund Fairless** for the next two years, avoiding those cuts.

### HB 129

This law now includes Fairless' recently renewed **3.6 mill substitute levy** when calculating the **20 mill floor**. The 20 mill floor is the minimum amount of local property tax revenue a school district must collect to remain eligible for state funding. Fairless has been at that floor for many years (meaning we collect the lowest local amount allowed). Counting the substitute levy in this calculation may allow Fairless to rise off the 20 mill floor at the next property revaluation, which will slow the rate of growth in local property taxes.

### HB 186

This bill establishes an **inflationary cap** that limits how much property taxes can increase during a revaluation by tying the change to the rate of inflation.

### HB 335

This law applies an **inflationary cap to inside millage** as well. Inside millage refers to the portion of property tax that is **constitutionally authorized and does not require voter approval**. It is established by the county budget commission and can be up to 10 mills under the Ohio Constitution. This cap ties inside millage increases to the rate of inflation.

### What This Means for Fairless

In short:

- We expect **flat funding** from both the state and the local tax base.
- With the substitute levy renewal last November, voters approved a **stable revenue source for the next 10 years**.
- In anticipation of tight budgets, the Board previously adopted an expenditure reduction plan of about **\$800,000**, achieved through attrition and targeted reductions.
- Going forward, the district will continue to carefully evaluate staffing and expenditures as openings occur.

Our goals remain to:

- **Balance the budget every year**
- **Build reserves for maintenance and future needs**
- **Plan for flat budget growth in the years ahead**

Thank you for your ongoing support of our students, staff, and community.



# District News

## Welcome New Board of Education Members

Please join us in welcoming to the Board of Education, new members Mrs. Cathy Soehlen and Mr. Jordan Starcher who were elected in November!



## KINDERGARTEN SCREENINGS

IF YOUR STUDENT TURNS 5 BY AUGUST 18TH

REGISTRATION ON FINALFORMS  
OPENS FEBRUARY 1ST

[FAIRLESS-OH.FINALFORMS.COM](https://www.fairless-oh.com/finalforms)

ONCE YOUR ENROLLMENT IS COMPLETE (ALL FORMS ARE SIGNED AND ALL DOCUMENTS UPLOADED) IN FINALFORMS, YOU WILL BE SENT A LINK TO SIGN UP FOR A SCREENING DATE AND TIME.

SCHEDULED SCREENING DATES  
**APRIL 7TH**  
**MAY 7TH**

## FAIRLESS

New Students Only  
**Preschool Screening 2026-2027**

March 13, 2026 and  
March 27, 2026

AGE 3 OR 4  
BY AUGUST 1, 2026

CALL TO SCHEDULE  
**(330) 767-3577**  
CHOOSE OPTION 3

## Your Dollars at Work: A Budget Update

Here's a quick snapshot of our district's financial health this quarter, measured against our five-year forecast.

### Revenue

The district has received **45.27%** of the total annual revenue forecasted. This indicates the current progress in revenue collection for the fiscal year is **on pace** relative to the forecast.

### Spending Rate

Our current operational spending is **51.45%** of the total annual budget. Second-quarter expenditures of **\$4,644,489** are below the anticipated quarterly spending of **\$4,932,470**, placing us **on pace** relative to the forecast.

### General Fund Balance

Our cash reserves are **\$6,210,154**. This balance is **on pace** with the second quarter forecast.

**Summary** - The district's second-quarter financial data indicates that both revenues and expenditures are trending with the forecast. Based on this information, there are no immediate concerns regarding district funding at this time.

## Board of Education Approves the Next Phase of Renovation for Brideweser Stadium

At its January regular meeting, the Fairless Board of Education approved the next phase of renovation work to ensure that Brideweser Stadium is safe and usable for our community and guests. The first phase, which was completed in 2024 involved replacing all the wood in the home grandstands with aluminum, widening the access bridge, adding an ADA ramp and seating, and paving the area leading from the grandstands to the concessions/restrooms. The work was completed using permanent improvement funds that had been saved for the purpose of renovating the stadium.

The next phase of this work will focus on safety concerns with the visitors' grandstands and stadium lighting. The stadium lighting, which was installed in 1984 is original. Last year, the wood poles were tested and shown to have wood rot that would require replacement in the near future. The poles and light fixtures have long outlasted the expected life of stadium lighting. The total cost of removing the old poles, installing new concrete and steel poles, and installing the new fixtures is approximately \$435,000. The visitors' grandstands have a substantial amount of wood rot, are not ADA compliant, and also have code compliance issues that need to be addressed. Given the size and location of these stands, it is more economical to demolish the existing stands and replace them entirely with new, pre-engineered, all aluminum stands. The cost to demolish the old stands, install a new concrete base, and install the new stands is approximately \$380,000.

The Board has entered into an agreement with Beaver Constructors to manage this project which will start soon with work expected to be done in late Spring. The work will be funded using permanent improvement dollars that have been saved for this purpose.



## 2026-2027 Fairless Local School District School Calendar

### August

Open House & Back to the Nest  
18th- First Student Day Grades 1-6,9  
19th- First Student Day 1-12

AUGUST 2026						
S	M	T	W	Th	F	S
						1
2	3	4	5	6	7	8
9	10	11	12	13	14	15
16	17	18	19	20	21	22
23	24	25	26	27	28	29
30	31					

FEBRUARY 2027						
S	M	T	W	Th	F	S
	1	2	3	4	5	6
7	8	9	10	11	12	13
14	15	16	17	18	19	20
21	22	23	24	25	26	27
28						

### February

9th & 11th PT Conferences  
Evening  
15th- No School

### September

7th- Labor Day  
25th- No School

SEPTEMBER 2026						
S	M	T	W	Th	F	S
		1	2	3	4	5
6	7	8	9	10	11	12
13	14	15	16	17	18	19
20	21	22	23	24	25	26
27	28	29	30			

MARCH 2027						
S	M	T	W	Th	F	S
	1	2	3	4	5	6
7	8	9	10	11	12	13
14	15	16	17	18	19	20
21	22	23	24	25	26	27
28	29	30	31			

### March

12th - End of 3rd Nine Weeks  
(42 Days)  
22nd-29th- No School

### October

7th- PT Conferences Evening  
8th- PT Conferences All Day  
9th- Teacher Exchange Day  
12th- No School  
23rd - End of 1st Nine Weeks (44 Days)

OCTOBER 2026						
S	M	T	W	Th	F	S
				1	2	3
4	5	6	7	8	9	10
11	12	13	14	15	16	17
18	19	20	21	22	23	24
25	26	27	28	29	30	31

APRIL 2027						
S	M	T	W	Th	F	S
				1	2	3
4	5	6	7	8	9	10
11	12	13	14	15	16	17
18	19	20	21	22	23	24
25	26	27	28	29	30	

### April

### November

25th-27th- No School  
30th- Teacher Exchange Day

NOVEMBER 2026						
S	M	T	W	Th	F	S
1	2	3	4	5	6	7
8	9	10	11	12	13	14
15	16	17	18	19	20	21
22	23	24	25	26	27	28
29	30					

MAY 2027						
S	M	T	W	Th	F	S
						1
2	3	4	5	6	7	8
9	10	11	12	13	14	15
16	17	18	19	20	21	22
23	24	25	26	27	28	29
30	31					

### May

27th- Last Student Day  
27th End of 4th Nine Weeks  
(49 Days)  
27th End of Semester (91 Days)

### December

21st-31st- No School

DECEMBER 2026						
S	M	T	W	Th	F	S
		1	2	3	4	5
6	7	8	9	10	11	12
13	14	15	16	17	18	19
20	21	22	23	24	25	26
27	28	29	30	31		

JUNE 2027						
S	M	T	W	Th	F	S
		1	2	3	4	5
6	7	8	9	10	11	12
13	14	15	16	17	18	19
20	21	22	23	24	25	26
27	28	29	30			

### June

### January

1st- No School  
8th - End of 2nd Nine Weeks (41 Days)  
8th - End of Semester (85 Days)  
18th- No School  
29th- All Employees

JANUARY 2027						
S	M	T	W	Th	F	S
					1	2
3	4	5	6	7	8	9
10	11	12	13	14	15	16
17	18	19	20	21	22	23
24	25	26	27	28	29	30
31						

■ No School

■ First and Last Student Day

■ Graduation

175 Student Days

# High School News



## Fairless Students Perform in Macy's Thanksgiving Day Parade

Fairless band students **Violet Kryah**, **Blake Hess** and **Isabela Arth** proudly represented Fairless by marching in the Macy's Thanksgiving Day Parade as members of the Macy's Great American Band. The students spent an exciting weekend in New York City, rehearsing and performing alongside talented musicians from across the United States. This unforgettable experience provided valuable learning opportunities and memories that will last a lifetime.



## Falcons Finding Their Voice: Speech & Debate Gearing Up for State Qualifiers

The Fairless High School Speech and Debate team is proving that you don't need a decades-long legacy to make a major impact. Now in only its second year, the program has quickly become a notable team of critical thinking and competitive spirit under the leadership of advisor **Mary Hammel**.

### Small Team, Big Results

With a dedicated roster of five students, the team has spent the winter attending multiple tournaments. Their hard work is already yielding historic results for our district. A highlight of the season so far is **Riley Brothers**, who placed 7th overall in a recent competition. This impressive finish earned Riley an automatic bid to the State Tournament, a significant milestone for our young program.

### A Grueling January Schedule

To reach the state level, students typically need to earn four bids throughout the season. To chase those remaining spots, our Falcons are entering a "marathon" of competition.

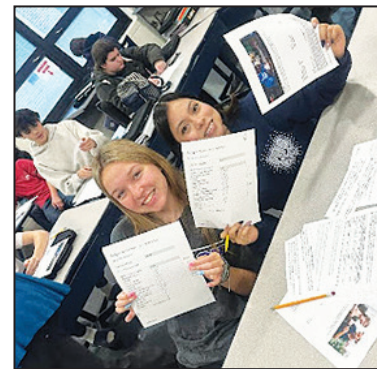
The team headed to Norton to compete, marking the start of a busy stretch where they were on the road most weekends in January. Following the January 10 tournament, the team took a well-deserved breather on the 17th before diving back into competition to prepare for the State Qualifier on February 7.

### Building a Legacy

While the competition is fierce, the true value of the program lies in the skills these five students are building. From researching complex policy issues to mastering the art of persuasion, they are developing the leadership and communication skills necessary to succeed long after they leave Fairless.

## Fairless High School Students Get a Taste of the "Real World"

Fairless High School is proud to celebrate the successful completion of a hands-on *Real World Financial Literacy Simulation*, which served as the culminating experience for Financial Literacy students this semester. This 90-minute activity functioned as the course capstone, allowing students to meet Ohio's Financial Literacy standards through meaningful, real-world application.



During the simulation, students navigated realistic financial scenarios that required them to apply classroom concepts to everyday decision making. The impactful experience was led by teacher Chad Butcher in partnership with community member Anna Frank of First Commonwealth Bank.

Fairless High School extends sincere gratitude to **Anna Frank** and **First Commonwealth Bank** for their continued support and dedication to student learning. By bridging the gap between the classroom and the real world, this partnership helps ensure that Fairless graduates are financially prepared and confident as they transition beyond high school.

## Seniors and Kindergartners Build Connections Through “Senior Buddy” Program

Fairless High School seniors recently took a special trip back to where it all began—Fairless Elementary School. As part of a new initiative designed to connect the district’s oldest and youngest learners, seniors visited kindergarten classrooms in small groups of three to spend meaningful time with their future fellow alumni.

During the visit, seniors introduced themselves and shared what it means to be a high school student preparing for graduation. They led a themed read-aloud followed by a hands-on snack activity, working together with kindergartners to create festive “turkeys” using treats such as Oreos. This mentorship opportunity helped kindergarten students connect with their future selves while gaining a glimpse of the goals they can achieve as they progress through the district.

The program also supports the district’s Portrait of a Graduate by highlighting the leadership, communication, and collaboration skills seniors develop while mentoring younger students. This visit marked the first of four planned interactions for the school year, and we look forward to watching these relationships continue to grow.

A special thank you to the Fairless Elementary kindergarten teachers, K–2 Instructional Coach Pam Smith, and Senior Class Advisor Mrs. Vasiliades for coordinating this meaningful experience. Their collaboration made this impactful cross-building connection possible for our students.



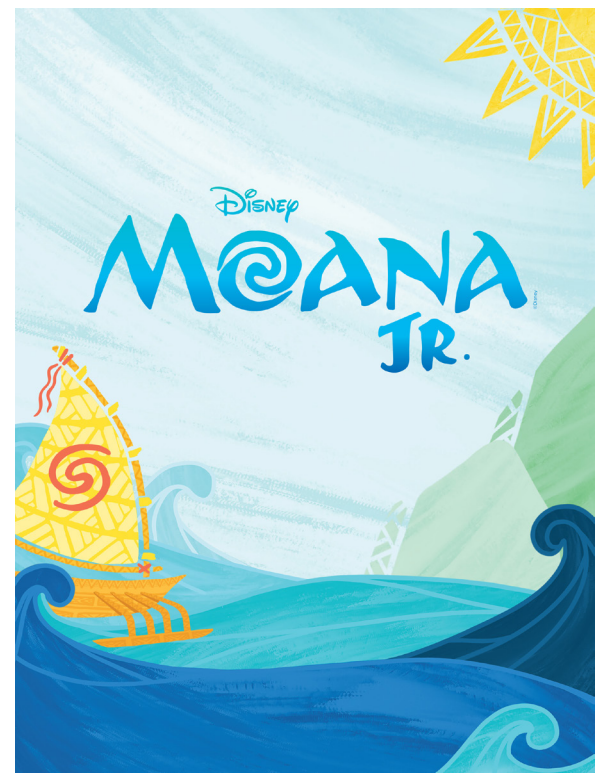
## Fairless High School Playhouse Presents *Disney’s Moana Jr.*

The Fairless High School Playhouse is excited to announce its upcoming spring musical production, *Disney’s Moana Jr.* This beloved story will take audiences on an unforgettable journey as our talented students bring the spirit of Motunui to life on stage.

Based on the popular animated film, *Moana Jr.* follows a courageous young heroine who answers the Ocean’s call and sets out on a daring mission to save her people. Audiences can look forward to vibrant costumes, imaginative sets, and powerful performances as students sing and dance to iconic songs by Lin-Manuel Miranda, including *How Far I’ll Go*, *Shiny*, and *You’re Welcome*.

Following last year’s highly praised production of *Annie*, the Fairless Falcon Playhouse is proud to once again highlight the dedication and talent of our performing arts students. This family-friendly musical promises to be an entertaining and inspiring experience for all ages.

**Performances will take place at the Lucinda J. Frailly Performing Arts Center on April 10 and 11.** Be sure to mark your calendars and join us for an evening filled with adventure, courage, and self-discovery. Ticket information will be announced soon—we look forward to seeing you there!



# Alumni News

## Distinguished Fairless Falcon Award Nomination Form

**Nominee:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Address:** \_\_\_\_\_ **City:** \_\_\_\_\_ **State:** \_\_\_\_\_ **Zip:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Phone Number:** \_\_\_\_\_ **Email:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Year of Graduation:** \_\_\_\_\_ **Years of Employment:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Achievements:**

**Professional Career:**

**Community Service:**

**Military Service:**

**Submitted By:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Address:** \_\_\_\_\_ **City:** \_\_\_\_\_ **State:** \_\_\_\_\_ **Zip:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Phone Number:** \_\_\_\_\_ **Email:** \_\_\_\_\_

Procedure: Anyone may submit nominations to the selection committee by written form. Form must be legible in order to be considered. **Please send to:** Superintendent, Fairless Local Schools, 800 7th Street, SE, Brewster, OH 44613. Nominations should be received by March 31, 2026.

Additional pages may be attached if needed.

# Athletic News

## Winter Sports Off to an Exciting Start at Fairless

The winter sports season is in full swing at Fairless High School, and our student-athletes are proudly representing the Falcons with dedication, teamwork, and sportsmanship. Whether on the court or on the mat, Fairless teams are competing with energy and determination as they move through the heart of their schedules.

Both basketball programs have been battling hard this season. The **girls' basketball** team currently holds a 6-6 record, while the **boys' basketball** team stands at 2-8 as they continue to compete through a challenging conference schedule. A standout moment of the season occurred during a victory over Manchester, when **Bailee Espenschied** made Fairless history by setting a new school record with seven three-point field goals in a single game, an impressive display of skill and precision.

On the mats, the Falcon **wrestling program** has started the season in dominant fashion. Both the boys' and girls' wrestling teams have shown tremendous grit and determination, earning a perfect 5-0 record in dual matches so far. The excitement will continue to build as the Falcons prepare for the upcoming "Dual in the School" match against rival Tuslaw later this month, an event sure to bring high energy and school spirit.

We are incredibly proud of all our winter student-athletes and wish them continued success, health, and strong finishes to their seasons.



## Fairless Sophomore Excels at Nike Cross Nationals

Congratulations to **Brice Fuller** on his outstanding performance at the Nike Cross Nationals. Brice finished 22nd in the nation with an impressive time of 15:32.5, competing against the top 201 high school cross country runners from across the United States. His remarkable achievement on such a prestigious and highly competitive stage is a testament to his dedication, talent, and hard work.



# Middle School News



## Cafe' 140 Continues with Help from Friends, Old and New

Fairless Middle School's own Mr. Ferrell's famous Cafe' 140 continues its tradition of planning, cooking, and serving up delicious lunches for the staff each month. This year, Ferrell's class has a little extra help in the form of MS student council members and former Ferrell students who visit their favorite former teacher to help. Each grade level of MS student council members take turns working in Cafe' 140. This is not only a great help but it also allows Mr. Ferrell's students spend time with students outside their classroom. The student council members

help with cooking, serving, and cashier duties. In addition to the student council, Cafe' 140 brings former Ferrell students back from FHS to share their experience and expertise.

As always, Mr. Ferrell does an amazing job leading his students in developing life skills while providing a wonderful hot lunch once a month for staff. If you haven't tried his lunches, they are delicious and reasonably priced and lunches can be packed to go. Plus purchasing goes toward providing valuable learning experiences for FMS MH students.

## Pie-ning for a Good Laugh? You're in the Right Place!

Our outstanding pie sellers earned the exciting privilege of "pieing" the middle school band and choir directors in the face, and there was plenty of laughter to go around!

- Students who sold 25–34 pies earned the opportunity to pie Mrs. Brunckhart or Mrs. Barkan: Owen Everhart, Piper Freeman, Lana Hale, Vivian Hollstein, Noah Smith, Mia Webber, Gracie Haines, Lily Foster, and Kenlee McCracken.



- Students who sold 35–49 pies earned the chance to pie Mr. Smith: Morgan Miller and Hannah Wentling.

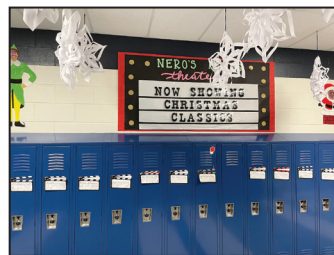
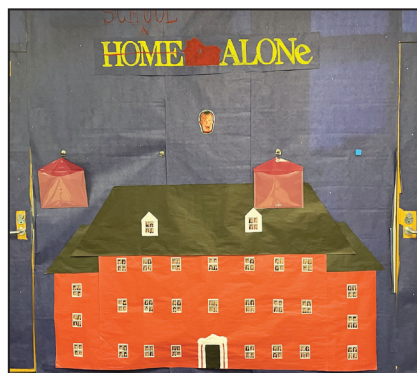
- Students who sold 50 or more pies earned the ultimate reward—pieing two directors: Parker Hood and McKaylin Cupples.

That's a lot of pie and an incredible effort! Congratulations to all of our amazing pie sellers, and thank you for making this fundraiser such a memorable success.

# Staff and Students Battle for Holiday Decorating Glory

The middle school proudly showcased its holiday spirit during an energetic and highly competitive hallway decorating contest. The creativity and effort on display were so impressive that outside judges were brought in to help determine a winner.

On Wednesday, December 17, four judges from FHS and FES toured the five decorated hallways to cast their votes. With the competition proving too close to call, additional help was enlisted. Our entire fifth-grade class from FES was invited to tour the building, admire the festive displays, and share their opinions.



The winner was officially announced on Friday before winter break, with the eighth-grade hallway claiming victory. Due to the incredibly close results and the outstanding effort put forth by all participants, the entire staff will be treated to a pizza lunch in appreciation of their hard work and dedication.

This event was not only a fun and collaborative experience for our middle schoolers, but also a meaningful opportunity for our fifth-graders to preview life at FMS. For many incoming sixth-graders, this visit marked their first time in a school building other than the elementary school they have attended for the past several years. Experiences like this help ease the transition and highlight the welcoming, creative environment we continue to build each day.

What a wonderful way to kick off winter break!

# Elementary School News



## Second Grade

Our second-grade students recently assumed the role of mentors, presenting their research on tree bark characteristics to their Kindergarten friends. This inter-grade collaboration provided a valuable opportunity to refine public speaking skills. Students practiced clear communication, scientific explanation, and professional presentation techniques while sharing their observations.

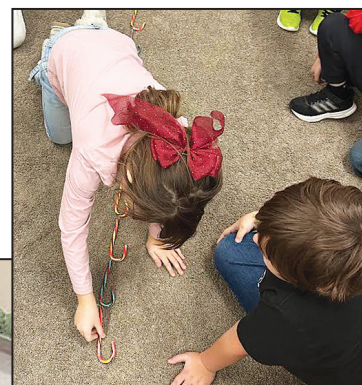


## Preschool

Our littlest Falcons enjoyed performing for their families and friends at the annual PreK Christmas Program.

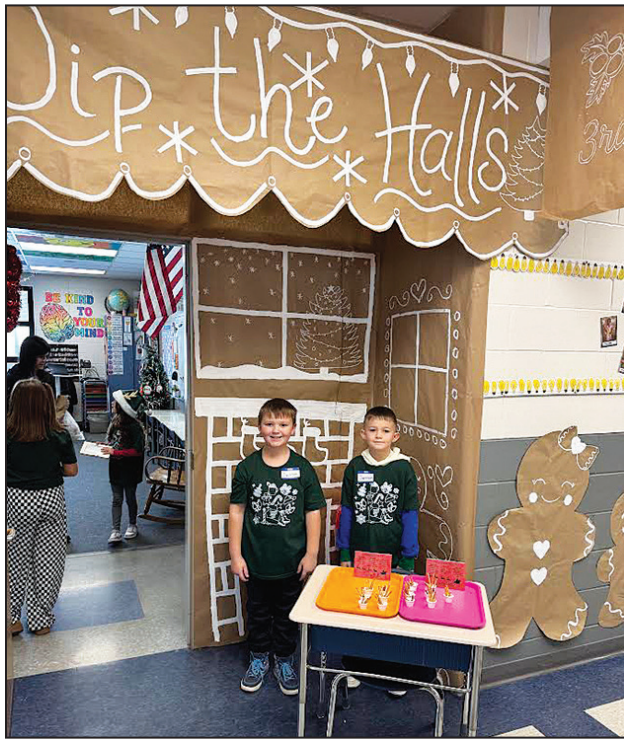
## First Grade

First-grade students applied their developing measurement skills in a hands-on activity using candy canes as non-standard units of measure.



By practicing estimation and adhering to measurement rules, our young Falcons engaged with foundational mathematical concepts in an interactive and memorable way.





### Third Grade

On December 5, our third-grade classrooms were transformed into a vibrant holiday marketplace. Students enthusiastically applied key economic concepts as they designed products, set prices, and explored supply and demand in a hands-on way.

We are proud to share that these young entrepreneurs raised an impressive \$3,944.61. All proceeds were donated to Fairless Helping Fairless, reflecting our students' strong work ethic and heartfelt commitment to supporting local families.



### Fourth Grade

Fourth-grade students enjoyed cozy moments of reading during our Christmas celebrations. Throughout the month of December, all students participated in the Read by the Fireplace event held in the cafeteria. During this special time, students created their

own bookmarks and either read independently or listened to stories shared by their teachers, making reading a memorable and festive experience for everyone.



## Fifth Grade

During the holiday season, the FES Choir shared their talents and holiday spirit by performing for residents at Brewster Park and Altercare in Navarre. The students sang festive carols, passed out flowers, and spent time visiting with residents, bringing joy and meaningful connection to the community.

Our students participated in Winter Stations, where they embarked on an exciting trivia quest. Working through a series of questions, students cracked combination lock codes to earn a sweet holiday prize, making learning both engaging and festive.

