



HIGHLAND FALLS-FORT MONTGOMERY CENTRAL SCHOOL DISTRICT

HF-FM FOREFRONT

District Quarterly Newsletter

FEBRUARY 2026

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Office of the Superintendent

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DISTRICT UPDATES

As we continue through the 2025-2026 school year, the Highland Falls-Fort Montgomery Central School District remains focused on a clear and purposeful direction guided by our theme: Lead the Change. Embrace the Challenge. Inspire Excellence. This theme reflects our commitment to continuous improvement, thoughtful leadership, and ensuring that student success remains at the center of all we do.

Our district goals this year emphasize academic excellence, meaningful professional collaboration, and strong partnerships with families and the community. Through aligned curriculum, data-informed instruction, and ongoing professional learning, we are working to support every student while empowering staff and strengthening connections across our school community.

This quarterly newsletter is one way we celebrate and share that work. Each building has its own page in this edition, highlighting the innovative programs, accomplishments, and positive experiences taking place throughout the district. We hope these stories provide a snapshot of the many ways our students and staff are leading, growing, and inspiring excellence every day.



Lead the Change, Embrace the Challenge, Inspire Excellence

Superintendent Student Advisory Panel:

Leading the Change: Student Voices at the Table

Superintendent McElduff has served the Highland Falls-Fort Montgomery Central School District for the past 10 years, and many current high school students were once under his leadership at Fort Montgomery Elementary School or Highland Falls Intermediate School. As part of the district's commitment to continuous improvement and student voice, Superintendent McElduff established monthly Superintendent Student Advisory Panel meetings to engage students as partners in shaping the future of James I. O'Neill High School and the district as a whole.

During the November meeting, Superintendent McElduff met with junior and senior students to discuss artificial intelligence in education. Students were highly engaged and shared thoughtful insights about both the opportunities and challenges AI presents, including concerns about future careers and job security. They recognized the importance of learning how to use AI responsibly and effectively, noting its value in organizing ideas, studying, and enhancing writing when used appropriately. Students recommended that the district explore instruction focused on ethical use, real-world applications, and potential risks.

In December, Superintendent McElduff met with freshman and sophomore students to reflect on their transition to high school. Students shared that the increased workload was challenging, particularly homework, and expressed interest in earlier career exploration to better inform course selection and future planning. They highlighted how high school has strengthened their communication and time-management skills as they balance academics, athletics, and extracurricular activities, and spoke positively about the expanded day program as an important support. Feedback from these conversations will help inform future opportunities and supports for students across the district.

HIGHLAND FALLS-FORT MONTGOMERY CSD MISSION & VISION STATEMENT

The Mission of the Highland Falls-Fort Montgomery Schools is to provide enriching, safe and meaningful educational experiences that build a strong foundation for our diverse student body. The HFFMCS D is a school community focused on developing students as lifelong learners equipped with critical thinking and problem solving skills necessary to navigate and shape the future.



www.hffmcsd.org



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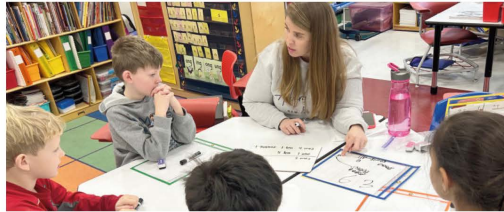
P.O. Box 287 Highland Falls, NY 10928



HIGHLAND FALLS-FORT MONTGOMERY CSD

UPCOMING EVENTS

- 2/11- PTP Polar Ice Skating Party
- 2/26- 1st Grade Animal Diorama Exhibit, 10am
- 2/26 & 2/27- Parent-Teacher Conferences Half Day
- 2/26- Evening Parent-Teacher Conferences
- 3/4- Kindergarten Reading Cafe
- 3/21- PTP Science Fair
- 5/13 Spring Picture Day
- 5/21- Field Day (5/28 Rain Date)



Learning comes to life in math small groups as students work together and build confidence with their teacher, Ms. Carroll.



Mrs. Lennon's Pre-K students practiced problem solving and teamwork while having fun sledding on a sunny, winter day.

STAFF SPOTLIGHT



Marny Moscatello
School Nurse

Nurse Marny is a dedicated member of our school community. She takes pride in caring for our students and staff in and out of the nurse's office.



Mrs. Alexandra Hansen, Fort Montgomery Elementary School Principal

New Principal Joins FMES

The district is pleased to welcome Mrs. Alexandra Hansen as the new principal of Fort Montgomery Elementary School. Mrs. Hansen brings a strong background in elementary education and a deep commitment to student growth, staff collaboration, and family partnerships.

Mrs. Hansen has served in education for 17 years in a variety of roles, most recently as Dean of Students at HFIS, where she focused on fostering positive school culture, supporting students' social-emotional development, and working closely with teachers

and families. Her experience has strengthened her belief that schools are most successful when students feel safe, supported, and excited to learn. Prior to her role this year, Mrs. Hansen served as the AIS Math teacher at FMES, and also spent many years as a classroom teacher outside of the district. A proud graduate of the HFFMCSD, Mrs. Hansen is honored to return to the community that helped shape her own educational journey. She values the strong traditions of the district and is deeply committed to giving back to the community she now serves as an educational leader. As principal, Mrs. Hansen

is committed to creating an environment where every child feels known and valued, and where staff are supported in their important work. During the remainder of the school year, her focus will be on building relationships, listening and learning from the school community, and continuing the strong instructional practices already in place.

Mrs. Hansen is excited to rejoin the FMES community and looks forward to partnering with families and staff to support student success. She feels honored to serve in this role and is eager to continue building a welcoming, positive school culture for all.



Trixie visiting with Mrs. Franchini's Kindergarten class.

Paws for a Cause

In collaboration with Hudson Valley Paws for a Cause, therapy dog Trixie visits with students at FMES. All of the dog/handler teams are registered therapy teams, as well as certified Reading Education Assistance dogs. Spending time with the therapy dogs helps students manage stress, build empathy, and practice kindness in a supportive, caring environment. Students also spend time reading to the dog which builds their confidence and literacy skills.

Attendance / Positive Data Highlights

Positivity Project Award Recipients

Students at FMES continue to build strong character through the Positivity Project by learning and practicing positive character traits such as kindness, perseverance, and gratitude. Weekly, students focus on a different trait, learning through videos, picture books, class discussions and other engaging activities. Each trimester, students who demonstrate these traits are recognized through student awards, celebrating their positive choices and contributions to our school community. The recipients for the first trimester are: Kane Bolak, Kole Bolak, Sterling Delano, Rubianna Duran, Kae'dyn Gaskin, Jimmy Guhnay, Oberia Haines, Victoria Hoffmann, Ryma Issad, Mackenzie Lerch, Aurelia Montanile, Ennelly Sky Pena-Gonzalez, Ayden Raza, Emily Rivadeneira-Murillo, Adalynn Shuman, and Liam Whigham.



Highland Falls Intermediate School



Students participated in the State Assembly Competitions.



Students & staff participated in multiple positive culture building events.



5th-8th grade students participated in our annual winter concert consisting of both band and chorus members.



3rd Grade Teachers developed a grade community library for students to access.

Homework Club

HFIS launched a Homework Club to give all students a supportive space for extra help and academic growth. The club currently runs four days a week, with hopes of expanding in the future. We have already seen tremendous success and positive engagement from students.

iReady

Students have been teamed up and are competing for an exciting end-of-year prize! Grades 3 & 6, 4 & 7, and 5 & 8 are racing to see which group can complete the most i-Ready hours. The team with the highest total hours by the end of the year will win a special prize!

UPCOMING EVENTS

- 2/16 - President's Day - No School
- 2/17 - Lunar New Year - No School
- 2/26 & 2/27 - Parent/Teacher Conferences
- 2/27 - PTP - Grades 6-8 Flower Power Dance
- 3/17 - Conference Day - No School
- 3/21 - Science Fair
- 3/30 - 4/3 - Spring Recess - No School
- 4/12 - Grades 7/8 Spring Concert (Rain Date 4/13)
- 4/22 - Half Day of School
- 5/25 - Memorial Day - No School

STAFF SPOTLIGHT

Mary Papa

School Secretary

Mrs. Papa is truly the heartbeat of HFIS, always supporting students and staff with kindness, dedication, and a smile on her face.

STUDENT SPOTLIGHT

Kenya Okoth

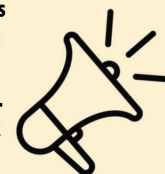
8th Grade

Kenya consistently carries a positive attitude and is always helpful, showing a genuine willingness to support others whenever needed.

IMPORTANT ANNOUNCEMENT

State Assessments

State assessments will be coming up end of April/ beginning of May. Be on the lookout for more information.





HIGHLAND FALLS-FORT MONTGOMERY CSD

UPCOMING EVENTS

- 2/10 - NHS Induction Ceremony
- 2/25 - Reading Buddies visiting FMES
- 3/13 - 3/15 - Spring Musical
- 3/18 - Early Dismissal, Parent Teacher Conferences
- 4/11 - JROTC Military Ball at IKE Hall
- 4/15 - JROTC Change of Command
- 4/15 - Spring Arts Festival and Concert
- 4/21 - Purple Up Day (Tentative)
- 4/22 - JROTC Award Ceremony
- 4/28 - Senior Scholarship Awards
- 5/13 - Academic Awards
- 5/19 - Spring Social (Tentative)
- 5/22 - Senior Sunrise
- 5/28 - Prom
- 6/2 - Pops Concert (Tentative)
- 6/16 - Senior Class Trip
- 6/17 - Regents Begin
- 6/22 - Graduation Rehearsal
- 6/23 - Graduation at IKE Hall

STUDENT SPOTLIGHT

Allison Aguilar, 10th Grade



Allison was one of two contest winners for the first annual Winter Concert Program front cover drawing. Her drawing was featured in the Winter Concert program.

Chloe Caraballo, 10th Grade



Chloe was one of two contest winners for the first annual Winter Concert Program front cover drawing. Her drawing was featured in the Winter Concert program.

IMPORTANT ANNOUNCEMENT



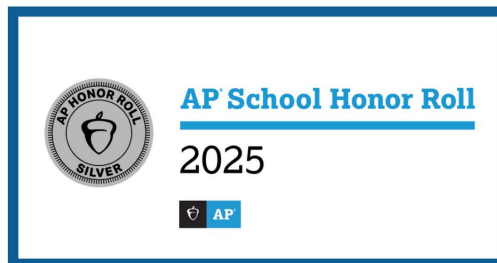
AP Exams

AP Exams will take place from May 4-15.

James I. O'Neill

Building Highlights

- Prior to Winter Break the JIO community was treated to a wonderful Winter Concert led by Ms. Amina Thomas, Band Director and Mr. Lucas Rau, Choral Director.
- Three O'Neill students who participate in the Career and Technical program at BOCES played an instrumental role in creating a tiny home for a Veteran in need. This home was loaded up on the truck on December 18th and delivered to the Rumshock Veterans' Foundation in Port Jervis, NY.



JIO earns Silver Badge Distinction

JIO earned the Silver Badge Distinction through College Board's AP School Honor Roll Program. The AP School Honor Roll recognizes schools whose AP programs are delivering results for students while broadening participation. Schools can earn this recognition annually based on criteria that reflect a commitment to increasing college-going culture, providing opportunities for students to earn college credit, and maximizing college readiness.

MAY & JUNE EVENTS

MAY

- May 22 - Half Day
- May 25 - No School (Memorial Day)

JUNE

- June 18 - Early Dismissal (PreK-8 Only, Professional Development)
- June 19 - No School (Juneteenth)
- June 26 - Rating Day / Last Day of School

Athletics



Athletics Update

The Highland Falls-Fort Montgomery Central School District is pleased to welcome Brooks W. Alexander, who joined the district as Director of Athletics on December 1, 2025. We look forward to continued growth and success under his leadership.

The winter sports season is underway, with James I. O'Neill High School competing in bowling, basketball, alpine skiing, indoor track, and competitive cheerleading. Highland Falls Intermediate School has also begun its modified basketball season.

Varsity Boys and Girls Basketball have had an impressive start, with both teams reaching the finals of their holiday tournaments and opening league play undefeated. Competitive Cheerleading is preparing for its first competition on January 24 at Highland High School, while bowling teams continue training for upcoming matches.

Indoor Track athletes performed strongly at a recent meet at Rockland Community College, earning several top-four finishes, and the Alpine Skiing team opened the season with a solid showing at Mount Peter. Modified basketball teams also began the season with opening-game victories and strong participation.

We are proud of the dedication and sportsmanship of our student-athletes, coaches, and families as the winter season continues. **Go Raiders!**