



CUFSD NEWSLETTER

FEBRUARY 2026

HOME OF THE HAMBLETONIANS

[CLICK HERE TO VIEW NEWS AND ANNOUNCEMENTS](#)



FROM THE SUPERINTENDENT

CATHERINE O'HARA

As February comes to a close and we move into March, we begin our annual discussions surrounding the development of the 2026-2027 district budget. Parents, families, and community members are invited to learn more about the district's priorities through a series of upcoming budget presentations.

This year's budget planning is guided by three priorities: Strengthening Academic Excellence through Programs and Staffing; Advancing College and Career Pathways, Partnerships and Communication; and Optimizing Infrastructure for Safety, Security and Sustainability.

Together, these priorities reflect our continued commitment to supporting all students in a learning environment where every student feels safe, valued, respected, and empowered to reach their highest potential.

Aligned with our vision and our student-centered, future-focused, and team-driven mission, these investments support the knowledge, skills, and experiences reflected in our Portrait of a Graduate.

As we look ahead to March, Daylight Saving Time begins this weekend. Don't forget to set your clocks ahead one hour on Sunday! Thank you, as always, for your continued partnership and support of our students and schools.

Investing in Excellence: 2026-2027 Budget Priorities for Student Success

The development of the 2026-2027 Chester Union Free School District budget is guided by the district's vision, mission, and Portrait of a Graduate, ensuring that resources remain focused on supporting student learning and future success.

This year's budget proposal centers on three key priorities: Strengthening academic excellence through programs and staffing; Advancing college and career pathways through partnerships and communication; and optimizing infrastructure for safety, security, and sustainability.

Together, these priorities support strong academic opportunities, meaningful future pathways, and safe learning environments that allow our students to grow and succeed.

As part of the annual budget development process, the district will continue to review key components of the proposed budget during upcoming Board of Education meetings. These presentations provide the community with an opportunity to learn more about how resources support student programs, services, and district operations leading up to the **May 19 Budget Vote**.

CHESTER GRADUATES ARE

- Effective Communicators
- Dynamic Collaborators
- Innovative Problem Solvers
- Digital Strategists
- Ethical Citizens
- Empowered Learners

2026-2027 Budget Priorities
Investing in Excellence

- Strengthening Academic Excellence through Programs & Staffing**
Data-driven instructional priorities, professional development, and strategic staffing to maximize student learning and achievement.
- Advancing College & Career Pathways, Partnerships & Communication**
Future-focused education through business & community partnerships and integrated communication platforms.
- Optimizing Infrastructure for Safety, Security & Sustainability**
Facility security, energy-efficient improvements, and technology upgrades that safeguard and modernize student learning environments.

2026-2027 Budget Presentation Schedule

- MARCH 4:** Budget Priorities & Financial Overview
- MARCH 18:** Instructional Programs, Student Support Services & Technology
- MARCH 25:** Facilities, Transportation & Athletics
- APRIL 8:** Undistributed Expenses, Central Services & BOCES Services
- APRIL 21:** Final Budget Overview & Board Actions
- MAY 6:** Legal Budget Hearing
- MAY 19:** Budget Vote

Tuesday, May 19, 2026

BUDGET VOTE and **Vote for One Board of Education Seat**

IMPORTANT DATES

March 9
Spring JV & Varsity Sports Begin

March 17
No School - Conference Day

March 23
Pre-K/K Registration Begins

March 30 - April 3
Spring Break

March 14
SAT

March 20-21
School Musical

March 26
Family Instructional Academy

CHESTER ACADEMY



FROM THE
CA PRINCIPAL

JOHN
FLANAGAN

It's hard to believe it's already March! As we head into a busy and exciting stretch of the school year, there is so much to celebrate at Chester Academy.

Tickets for The Little Mermaid are now on sale! You won't want to miss this unforgettable "Under the Sea" adventure featuring 135 talented students in grades 4-12. Performances will take place on Friday, March 20 and Saturday, March 21 at 7:00 PM at Chester Academy. With full Broadway costume rentals, a professional Broadway-quality sound system, and a live pit orchestra, this spectacular The Little Mermaid production promises an evening of outstanding entertainment. Audiences will enjoy classic favorites brought to life through tap, dance, and a variety of musical genres.

Tickets are \$13 for students and seniors and \$15 for adults, with reserved seating available. Online ticket sales close 12 hours before showtime. Any remaining tickets will be sold at the door for \$20, so don't wait—secure your seats today! We hope to see you there!

We would also like to thank all of the parents who attended our Junior Parent Information Night on February 26. Your partnership and involvement are greatly appreciated. Families who were unable to attend can access the presentation on the Chester Academy website under High School Guidance.

Finally, we are excited for the Class of 2026 Senior Trip to Orlando, Florida from March 12-16. Thirty-four students and six chaperones will be staying at the Universal Orlando Resort and visiting both Universal and Disney parks.

CUFSD DRAMA CLUB
PRESENTS...
THE LITTLE MERMAID
ON MARCH 20 & 21



Students wrap up Black History Month with a celebration of cultures

Chester Academy's auditorium recently hosted the Black History Month Showcase, a vibrant event highlighting the diverse backgrounds and talents of the student body. Originally established by Dayanara Garcia, the district's Director of Curriculum, Instruction & Communication, the Multicultural Club and the assembly were founded to amplify student voices and build a sense of belonging.

"Even before I joined, there was such a legacy of inclusion and celebration here." Led by President Jonalema Blessing Williams and club officers, the event embodied the club's mission to promote awareness and diversity.

Advisor, Chester Academy ENL teacher Charlotte Pietropaolo, guided the showcase to highlight how science, history, art, and music intersect with culture, rather than simply presenting a talent show.

[Read the full story here.](#)



Magnificent mathletes and great grapplers

Hard Work + Teamwork = Success! The math team, made up of students in grades 6-9 competed in the Mid-Hudson Valley Jr. High Math League Playoffs. Thank you to math team advisor Alexis Mack, whose leadership and commitment guide and inspire this talented group of students.

The Girls Wrestling Team made history with its largest group ever, competing in more tournaments and earning All-Section honors for Natalie Perez-Santiago. Ashley Griffin and Natalie Perez-Santiago moved up in all-time wins. The Boys Team grew to 25 wrestlers, won its division, and had a record nine Section placers. Elvin Momanyi set a new wins record. Both teams showed unity, sportsmanship, and pride for Chester.

[Read more about the Hambos wrestling teams here.](#)



Two students move on to regional round of Scripps Spelling Bee

Congratulations Adair Navarrette Hernandez and Sawyer McElroy for advancing to the regional round of the Scripps National Spelling Bee, which will take place at OU BOCES on March 10. Regional winners advance to the 2026 Scripps National Spelling Bee near Washington, DC. Join us in wishing Adair and Sawyer the very best as they prepare for the next round.

Chester is cheering, c-h-e-e-r-i-n-g, cheering for you!



CHESTER ELEMENTARY



FROM THE
CES PRINCIPAL

MARY KATE
BOESCH

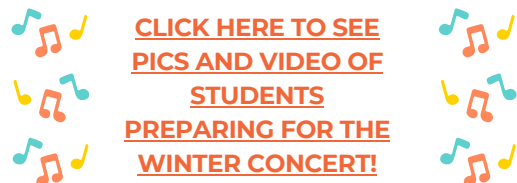
February was a busy and exciting month at CES! We celebrated our students at the February PBIS Assembly on Friday, February 27th. During the week of February 23rd, we embraced learning and community through our annual Multicultural Spirit Week, where students proudly represented their heritage, celebrated Black History Month, participated in Multicultural Show and Tell, shared kindness for National Random Acts of Kindness Day, and showed their Chester pride in school colors.

We are hard at work planning a special Multicultural Evening in April, which will coincide with our Around the World themed Art Show. Families will soon receive information about ways to participate.

Academically, the second marking period report cards were released, and Honor Roll and Hard Work Hero recipients will be announced in early March.

At CES we value our strong community partnerships. In February, Mr. Hallock's class welcomed ICU nurse Joel Mondesir for an engaging "Germ Detective" lesson, and our Master Gardeners returned to help fifth graders begin pollinator garden preparations. It may not quite feel like it yet, but Spring is just around the corner!

Thank you to our PTA and SEPTSA for spreading Valentine's cheer and supporting staff wellness this winter!



Students connect generations with heartfelt handwritten messages

Chester students spread kindness and connection recently, when they participated in *National Write a Letter to An Elder Day* on February 26.

District Library Media Specialist Catherine Inclendon spearheaded the month-long initiative at Chester schools, with the goal of bringing together students across grade levels to write uplifting letters and cards to seniors at Glen Arden, assisted living, Chester Senior Center, and Chester recipients

of Meals on Wheels. The letter-writing campaign gave students opportunities to practice empathy, kindness, and active citizenship, all while making a positive impact on the lives of local elders.

National Write a Letter to An Elder Day was created to encourage people of all ages to reach out to senior members of their communities and families to combat isolation and loneliness among older adults. [Read the entire article here.](#)



Authors embrace peer workshoping and give their very first book reading

Mr. Hallock's 2nd graders took center stage as proud authors during their How-To Writing Publishing Party. Our young literary luminaries shared their polished final drafts with classmates, showcasing everything they've learned about informative writing, clear directions, and strong sequencing.

From how to build the perfect snowman and make a warm cup of hot cocoa to caring for a kitten and creating a bracelet, students wrote with purpose and voice. Peers listened closely and offered thoughtful "glows and grows," celebrating strengths while providing kind, constructive feedback.

The activity demonstrated the students' growth in informative writing and meeting the New York State Next Gen Learning Standards through an authentic peer review process. [See a gallery from the reading here.](#)



Green thumbs up to our budding gardeners

Throughout the year, fifth graders work with members of the Master Gardener program of Cornell Cooperative Extension of Orange County, learning how to cultivate and sustain a thriving pollinator garden. They explore the science behind soil health, plant selection, and the vital role pollinators play in maintaining a balanced ecosystem.

Their most recent activity was learning about winter sowing, from how to prep seeds during colder months, and why winter preparation strengthens germination and supports successful spring planting. [Read more and see pics of their progress.](#)

