

Crown Point Community School Corporation

we are CP

Volume 5, Issue 2
February 2026

Built at *home*:
CPHS alumni create local
manufacturing businesses

**SEA 1: WHAT
TO KNOW ABOUT
SCHOOL BUDGETS**

**CPCSC middle school
students serve our
community**

Discovery Awaits!
Kindergarten enrollment begins February 24

built at home

CPHS alumni power local manufacturing, bringing next generation with them



In Crown Point, success does not always mean leaving town. Two local, alumni-owned manufacturing companies - Alchemy Machining and Innovated Manufacturing - are building businesses from the ground up and creating skilled career opportunities right here at home.

Both companies were founded by CPHS graduates committed to American manufacturing, and both are intentionally hiring and mentoring the next generation of Crown Point students through CPHS's career programs.

Alchemy Machining, owned by CPHS graduate Stephen Cantrell, produces precision metal parts for industries including steel manufacturing and nuclear power. Cantrell credits CPHS's hands-on, technical education for preparing him to build a successful career and launch

his business locally. He now gives back by partnering with the CPHS internship program, hosting students like senior Nick Staciawa. Through his internship, Staciawa applies classroom learning, including Algebra II and Geometry, directly to real-world machining. "Without those courses and my machining classes at CPHS, I wouldn't be able to do the work here," he said.

That connection between academics and careers is intentional. CPHS's precision machining pathway, led by teacher Brian Trapp (recently honored with the Crossroads Chamber of Commerce Inspiring Educator Award), moves students from foundational concepts to advanced, industry-aligned skills. Graduates of the program are prepared to enter the workforce or continue their education through a partnership with Vincennes University.

Local business Innovated Manufacturing reflects a similar

pathway to success. The Crown Point-based company designs custom automation systems and industrial tooling that improve safety, efficiency, and consistency for manufacturers. Its projects include CNC machine tending, vision inspection, palletizing, and custom robotic solutions. The company was founded by CPHS engineering and robotics alumni Cameron Mucha and Daniel Crnokrak, along with Portage graduate Gage Bagwell. Mucha and Crnokrak were members of CPHS Robotics and competed as VEX Robotics Worlds Divisional Finalists.

CPHS engineering teacher and robotics coach Matthew LeBlanc emphasizes that the career pathway program prepares students for both college and the workforce, and Innovated Manufacturing is proof of what's possible: Mucha and Crnokrak graduated just three years ago in 2023.

Innovated Manufacturing has hired



Join the Crown Point High School Alumni Association for their annual Evening of Stars event! This year's banquet and Hall of Fame induction ceremony will be held on April 25, 2026 at the Design Barn. Tickets will be available online at www.cphsalumni.org.



other CPHS alumni, reinforcing a local talent pipeline. The company's mission centers on affordable, American-made manufacturing and community investment. As their website notes, success is measured not just by what a company builds, but by what it builds for others.

Check out this video of Alchemy Machining and the CPHS Intern Program!



Building a local employment pipeline is possible in large part to Crown Point High School's Internship Program which connects hundreds of students each year with local employers. The program provides meaningful work experience, and in 2026 it will expand to include summer internships. According to CPHS Associate Principal Lynn Alkire, this expansion will strengthen local connections while also helping students meet new state graduation requirements.

Alchemy Machining and Innovated Manufacturing are just two examples that demonstrate how a CPHS education, internships, and alumni leadership are building a stronger local workforce right here in Crown Point.

Photos - Top left: Senior Nick Staciawa at work at Alchemy Machining. Top right: The team at Alchemy, all CPHS graduates. Founder Stephen Cantrell is second from the left. Bottom right: The Innovated Manufacturing team visits CPHS robotics practice after school with a gift of new VEX Robotics equipment.

Even more interns at work - CPCSC communications intern and CPHS senior Cailin Ward contributed to the writing in this article.

The mission of the Crown Point High School Alumni Association is to develop and maintain a close relationship between Crown Point Community Schools, its constituents, and its alumni for their mutual benefit. The Association is committed to, and involved in, the support and well-being of Crown Point Community Schools and its alumni.

eat your veggies!

Grant program encourages elementary students to try fresh fruits and veggies

At three CPCSC elementary schools, students are being introduced to new foods like rainbow carrots, jicama, watermelon radishes, and Honeybell oranges. It's all part of a new program designed to make healthy eating engaging.

The Fresh Fruit and Vegetable Program is currently being piloted at Eisenhower, Solon Robinson, and Winfield elementary schools for students in kindergarten through fifth grade. As a pilot, the program allows the district to evaluate impact, logistics, and student response. The program is completely grant-funded, so it comes at no cost to families or the district.

What makes the program unique is both timing and approach. Fresh fruits and vegetables are served outside of the cafeteria at snack time rather than breakfast or lunch, reinforcing the idea that healthy foods are part of everyday routines, not just cafeteria meals. Students are exposed to a wide variety of produce, from familiar apples and bell peppers to less common items like papaya and candy cane beets.

Teachers encourage students to simply try new items while also reinforcing that it's okay to not like certain foods. Solon Robinson Elementary kindergarten teacher Leah Naumovic shared she's been impressed with students' willingness to try new foods. "I always joke because I have a hard time getting my own children to try new things, but I can get an entire class of kindergarteners to try at least a couple of bites." In Naumovic's room, students patiently wait to try their snacks all together so their reactions don't impact others either way. And the strategy is pretty effective: about half of the class said they enjoyed eating beets!

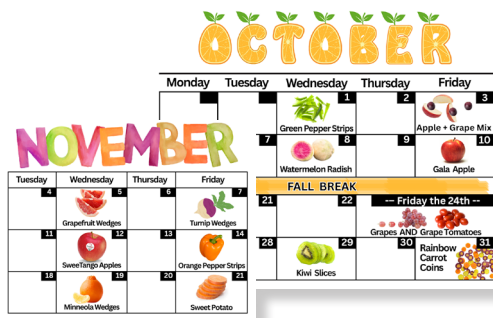
Families are also enjoying hearing about the program at home from their children. "Both of my sons have really enjoyed the fruit and veggie program," said Kaylee Holt, a parent at Solon Robinson Elementary School. "One of my boys is a very picky eater and has even been encouraged to try new foods with his peers. They're always excited to tell us what they tried and if it was thumbs up or thumbs down."

That peer-supported environment is by design. Students try new foods together and learn that it's okay to have preferences while still being open to new experiences. No child is required to eat anything; they are simply encouraged to try.

The program also incorporates simple, age-appropriate nutrition education through short classroom conversations and morning announcement fun facts. This educational component happens without disrupting instructional time. Teachers are not asked to plan lessons, source food, or manage logistics. Their role is simply to support the experience and encourage conversation, making the program a natural fit within the school day. Snacks even arrive to each classroom pre-packaged and sorted thanks to help from students at the CPCSC Education Center.

From an implementation standpoint, ease matters. "This program has to take place outside the cafeteria, per the grant requirements. It's meant to be educational for students and their teachers," said Christine Clarahan, CPCSC Director of Food Services. "The entire point is to expose children to fruits and vegetables they may not have had before, and to help them see what those items look like in their natural state, the same way they would in a grocery store."

Clarahan notes that the impact often extends beyond the classroom. "The greatest thing to hear is when students, teachers, or even our own food service staff tell me they purchased something from the grocery store because they liked trying it during snack time," she said.



Teachers receive online resources including a calendar that illustrates which fresh produce items are distributed on which days. Nutritional posters and daily announcements provide extra information for teachers to include in their classrooms.



Yay or Nay?

Students review some of the fresh produce they tried first semester.

Mixed reactions at Eisenhower Elementary in 5th grade. Clarissa said it was "okay."

Avery was all smiles at first, but quickly realized it was a 'no' for her.



Daikon Radishes

Not bad! Julian, Jovanny and most of their 4th grade classmates enjoyed these.

Cucumber Slices



"Nope!" - Brady, Solon kindergartener

"I love them!" - Karman, Solon kindergartener



Candy Cane Beets



Food Service

Part-time positions that match school hours! Food service openings include cafeteria monitors, aides, and kitchen staff. Find more information or apply online at www.cps.k12.in.us/cafe.

See all of our open positions online!



join
the
TEAM!

Transportation

CPCSC has openings for bus drivers, bus monitors, and substitute bus drivers. Full time positions with benefits are available. Driver pay begins at \$25.53 an hour. CPCSC provides all training and will pay for your CDL! Find more information or apply online at www.cps.k12.in.us/busdriver





CROWN POINT COMMUNITY
SCHOOL CORPORATION

Teacher of the Year

Nominations
open through
March 1st



Crown Point Community School Corporation is accepting nominations for the Teacher of the Year, Administrator of the Year, and Employee of the Year who will serve during the 2026-2027 school year. Nominations are open through March 1, 2026.

Students, former students, parents, colleagues, administrators, or members of the community may nominate a CPCSC teacher, administrator, and/or support employee. There is no limit to the number of nominations per person, but you must complete a separate nomination form for each nominee.

Winners are announced in May. Visit www.cps.k12.in.us/teacheroftheyear for more information or to submit a nomination.



Nominate a
teacher, support
professional, or
administrator!



On any given afternoon in Crown Point, middle schoolers are hard at work after school collecting food for local families, donating socks for veterans, or delivering cookies to thank local first responders. While these acts of service may appear simple, research shows that experiences like these play a role in shaping adolescents' social and civic development. At Colonel Wheeler Middle School and Taft Middle School, student service clubs are intentionally helping students grow into engaged, compassionate citizens while strengthening their community.

At Colonel Wheeler Middle School, Builders Club provides students with structured opportunities to lead and give to others. Sponsored by teacher Jill Vagner, the club is part of the Kiwanis Service Leadership Program and is designed specifically for middle school students who are beginning to define who they are and how they want to contribute.

"Middle school students have such big hearts and genuinely want to help others," Vagner said. "This is the age when they really begin to understand that their actions matter and that they can make a difference."

Throughout the year, Builders Club students plan and carry out a wide range of service projects. For eight years, they have supported Café Fresco's "No Empty Seats" program, which provides Thanksgiving meals and groceries to local families. Another project supports residents at Colonial Nursing Home with comfort items and contributes to local non-profit Phil's Friends by donating items for cancer care packages. One of the students' favorite projects is delivering cookies to local police officers, firefighters, city employees, and postal workers to express gratitude.

These experiences align closely with research on high-quality service learning. According to the University of



Minnesota, teen participation in service-learning experiences is associated with increased civic responsibility, stronger connections to community, and growth in leadership and social skills among students. Studies also show that service learning supports positive relationships between students and adults, which is particularly important during early adolescence.

Vagner sees those outcomes firsthand. “The students in Builders Club are often the first ones to stay after class to help a teacher or volunteer for other programs in the building,” she said. “I truly see a connection between service learning and a positive school culture.”

At Taft Middle School, service is similarly embedded into student life through National Junior Honor Society and Student Council initiatives. Sponsored by teacher Joy Grogloth, Taft’s National Junior Honor Society leads monthly service projects that benefit local and national causes. These include food drives for St. Vincent de Paul and the Winfield Food Pantry, Socks for Vets benefiting the VA Clinic, fundraising for childhood cancer research through St. Baldrick’s, and participation in UNICEF’s Trick-or-Treat campaign.

Taft Middle School 7th grader Lexi Schaafsma said NJHS is important to her because it provides access to help her community. “I get to spend time with my friends giving back to other people, so I really like that NJHS gives us a place for that.”

“Middle school is a powerful time for students to be involved in service because they are actively shaping their identities,” Grogloth said. “They are becoming

growing local leaders

more empathetic and more aware that their actions can have real impact.”

Service-learning research from the National Youth Leadership Council indicates that middle school students who engage in meaningful service opportunities demonstrate increased empathy, social awareness, and a stronger sense of purpose. These experiences also support increased teamwork, responsible decision-making, and self-awareness, all of which are critical for young teens.

Grogloth has seen these benefits extend beyond individual students. “When students work together toward a shared goal, they develop a sense of unity and pride,” she said. “That sense of ownership carries over into the classroom throughout the school day, helping create a positive school culture rooted in compassion and responsibility.”

For students, the lessons of service are deeply personal. “It is important to give back to others because everyone should be treated equally,” said Colonel Wheeler student Ryan Papas. “If you get treated well, you have to pay that back.” Another student, Andrew Hillman, shared, “It is a way of showing kindness and respect to our community.”

Left: Colonel Wheeler Builders Club students drop off food donations at Cafe Fresco for their annual “No Empty Seats” event. Below: Taft NJHS students collected hundreds of socks for veterans. 7th grader Amanda Campos said this was her favorite service project. “I didn’t know that it was something they needed,” she said. “I like that I could give something so specific and important to them.” Below right: Builders Club students donated cleaning and hygiene supplies to the City of Crown Point’s annual program that supports local families.



Understanding the Impact of SEA 1

Indiana's new funding law reshapes school budgets. What does it mean for Crown Point Schools?

Indiana's public schools will soon enter a new financial landscape. Senate Enrolled Act 1 (SEA 1) changes how property taxes are calculated, and those changes will affect public school districts throughout the state. Crown Point Community School Corporation is not alone in facing these shifts. Districts large and small, urban and rural, will need to adjust.

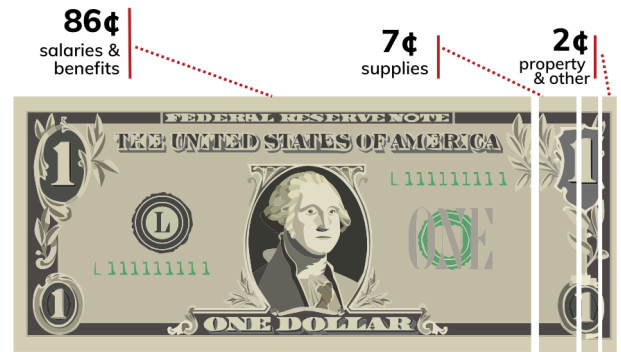
SEA 1 was designed to provide property tax relief for homeowners. The law will significantly reduce the net assessed value of homes across Indiana over the next several years. Net assessed value is the taxable amount of a property after deductions. When that value drops, the amount of revenue school districts and other taxpayer-supported entities can raise locally through property taxes drops, too.

Because Indiana school districts rely on property tax revenue for certain core funds, SEA 1 will create multi-year budget constraints. These constraints will start impacting district finances in 2026 and deepen every year through 2031.

SEA 1 reduces two key local funding sources: property-tax revenue for operations and property-tax revenue that supports the Referendum Fund. Because referendum collections are tied to assessed values, when those values fall, the referendum will not generate as much income, even though the community recently voted to renew it.

That's why CPCSC's May 2025 referendum renewal, while still essential, will not yield what it was expected to before SEA 1 passed. The voter-approved rate was set in December 2024 (before the legislative session), meaning CPCSC could not accurately predict SEA 1's future effects. While SEA 1 doesn't erase the community's "yes" for the referendum, it reduces the value of that yes.

CPCSC Expenses by the Dollar



86% of CPCSC's expenses in the education, operations, and referendum funds are spent on salaries and benefits for staff. As a service agency, the majority of our funds are spent on the individuals who provide services to our students. Of that 86%, 2.8% is spent on district administrators.

5¢
purchased services

What seem like small changes add up to a larger budget impact for public schools. Here are just some of the changes CPCSC has experienced in the last few years.

Universal Vouchers

With no income cap for families who use vouchers for private schools, approximately \$3.5 million has been diverted from CPCSC to private schools. These schools are not required to publicly report or be audited on the use of taxpayer dollars that support these vouchers.

Slower Enrollment Growth

Despite new housing locally, Crown Point's enrollment is relatively flat: new students are offset by graduates because most empty nesters choose to stay in their homes. Enrollment growth is far less than many assume.

The 2025 referendum was a renewal of existing support first approved by the community in 2011 and renewed in 2018. Nearly 83% of voters chose to continue that investment in 2025. CPCSC's current referendum funds teacher stipends for extracurricular activities, class-size reduction teachers, school nurses, and safety initiatives.

To read more about how upcoming property tax changes will impact the referendum, CPCSC has posted a "Letter to Our Community" at www.cps.k12.in.us/budget. The letter from school board president Brian Smith and superintendent Dr. Terrill provides a summary of why SEA 1 undercuts the support approved by the community.

Across Indiana, districts will be working through the same questions: How do we maintain the student experience and achievement families expect when local revenue is changing? How do we keep schools strong while adapting to new state rules?

CPCSC is approaching these questions deliberately, with decisions guided first by student well-being and achievement. Reviews are happening across programs and services, and communication will continue through district updates, building leaders, and public budget hearings, which are posted on the CPCSC website and are available to watch on the district's YouTube channel.

SEA 1 will shape school funding for years to come. Understanding how it works is the first step in protecting what matters most: strong schools that serve students and our community well. CPCSC will continue to share updates, financial resources, and a place to ask questions at www.cps.k12.in.us/budget, including the community letter about the referendum fund and ongoing FAQs.

Know the Funds

Indiana school budgets are organized into separate funds (sometimes called "buckets"). Each fund has its own rules about where money comes from and how it can be spent. This matters because even when a district has money in one bucket, state law can prevent it from being used in others. Senate Enrolled Act 1 will have major effects on the Operations and Referendum Funds.

Education Fund



Focuses on instruction-related needs like teachers and supplies, funded by state tuition support. CPCSC continues to be one of the lowest funded districts per-pupil in the state: in the bottom 7%.

Operations Fund



Covers day-to-day costs to run the district like transportation and utilities, funded by property taxes. In its current form, SEA 1 will have major implications for operations.

Referendum Fund



Supports community-approved priorities like arts and safety, funded by voter-approved property taxes. The community generously renewed CPCSC's referendum in May 2025, but its impact will decrease under SEA 1.

Debt Service Fund



Finances major capital projects like building renovations, funded by a mortgage-like system. All of CPCSC's recent projects were done without a referendum, and no education fund money was used. Debt service cannot be used to cover needs in other funds.

Textbooks and Supplies

A 2023 state law changed how school districts collect money for textbook and curricular materials. CPCSC has collected approximately \$2 million less every year under this new law.

Exceptional Ed Growth

While overall enrollment is flat, Exceptional Education enrollment has grown at nearly twice the rate of non-exceptional education students, driving significant increases in specialized staffing and service costs.

Service/Utility Increases

Even with 10% reduction in energy use, CPCSC's utility costs are up more than \$1 million over the past two years. Like most homeowners and businesses, rising costs are impacting public schools.

bulldog bakery grows



Top: Roenick assembles pens for the Bulldog Bakery merchandise orders. The pens are pet-themed and come in a variety of colors. Bottom: Austin cuts fabric for dog toys, which students make themselves to practice using household tools and completing multi-step instructions.

The well-loved Bulldog Bakery program is growing! What started with a simple lineup of homemade dog treats in 2021 has taken a step forward this year as students expanded their products and creative responsibilities.

The growing collection of merchandise now includes dog toys, Bulldog Bakery magnets, and pet-themed keychains, pens, and bookmarks. Every item is designed and crafted by students, ensuring they have ownership of the work from start to finish. Teacher Megan Virosztko explained that “Students guide the creative direction of what we make, and that is intentional. When they create the artwork and the product ideas, the items reflect their interests and abilities. It also helps them understand how their individual contributions matter to the program.”

With each new product, students take on new layers of learning. They practice following multi-step directions, processing orders, collaborating with peers, and safely using household tools such as scissors and irons. Virosztko notes that the expansion of products was designed to both support student strengths and encourage them to try new skills. This combination allows students to grow at a comfortable pace while still challenging themselves.

Students also enjoy showcasing their work. Once a week, they visit a CPCSC building to sell their items to staff, and before the holidays, they offer products to their own families who get to see firsthand the progress students have made. At each building, staff look forward to visits from the students and buying new merch alongside the student-created treats that started a few years ago.



Now hiring paraprofessionals!

Paraprofessionals help students with disabilities in small group or 1-to-1 settings. They work directly with teachers to support the needs of students' learning and behavior goals. If you are interested in working with students to make a difference in our school community, find more information or apply online at www.cps.k12.in.us/para.

discovery awaits

Welcome, Class of 2039! If your child will be five years old on or before August 1, 2026, and you live in the district boundaries, we invite you to enroll for kindergarten starting February 24th at www.cps.k12.in.us/kindergarten.

1 Enroll online February 24 through March 6

Visit our website at www.cps.k12.in.us to complete the enrollment form.

Check your email for info to create your PowerSchool account before Step 2. Existing families can add their child to their current PowerSchool account.

If you are a Bulldog Buddies Preschool family, you are already enrolled and don't need to complete the form. Your child's future school will contact you with next steps.

2 Visit your school and bring your documents

Your child's school will contact you to schedule an appointment in April or May where you and your child will meet one of our teachers and a school administrator. Important information about the year ahead will be shared.

You must bring your required documents to be copied at this visit.

3 Complete annual registration in late July

Log back into your PowerSchool account to complete the annual returning student forms. Your school will provide information about back to school events in early August.

Visit our website or scan the QR code to access our complete kindergarten parent/guardian guide.



KINDERGARTEN ENROLLMENT BEGINS FEBRUARY 24TH

Documents You Will Need to Bring to Your Child's School:

- Child's birth certificate
- Child's immunization records
- Guardian's valid driver's license or state ID with an in-district address
- Custody documents or divorce decrees (if applicable)
- Proof of residency:
 - Home deed/mortgage/contract/property tax bill OR lease/rental agreement with current dates
 - Two of the following with the guardian's name and address: utility bill (water, internet, electric, etc.), tax return, car payment, or pay stub. Address cannot be a P.O. box.



CPCSC students must reside in-district. Check your address via our website if you are not sure whether you live in the CPCSC boundaries.



CROWN POINT COMMUNITY SCHOOL CORPORATION

1050 S. Main Street, Crown Point, IN 46307

save the DATE

Please check your school's website, social media, or newsletter for more information about each item below.

- **February 24** - Kindergarten enrollment begins (see inside back cover)
- **March 1** - Teacher of the Year nominations due (see page 6)
- **March 30-April 3** - Spring Break
- **May 4-8** - Teacher/Educator Appreciation Week
- **June 2** - CPHS Graduation (rain date June 3)

Find us on social media and online at www.cps.k12.in.us



presents



March 13-15, 21-22, 2026
Tickets at cphs.ludus.com