



CUFSD NEWSLETTER

MARCH 2026

HOME OF THE HAMBLETONIANS

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FROM THE SUPERINTENDENT

CATHERINE O'HARA

March began our 2026–2027 budget presentations, focused on Investing in Excellence through strengthening academic programs and staffing, advancing college and career pathways, expanding partnerships and communication, and optimizing infrastructure for safety, security, and sustainability.

March was also Music in Our Schools Month, providing an opportunity to celebrate the talent, dedication, and opportunities available to our students across the district. Our youngest musicians began learning recorder at the elementary school, and the Chester Academy drumline, which also recently performed at the March 4 Board of Education meeting, marched in the Goshen St. Patrick's Parade. In addition, the Chester Drama Club delivered an outstanding production of *The Little Mermaid*. Thank you to our students, staff, and community for supporting the arts and making these experiences possible. March also marked Women's History Month. Congratulations to the middle and high school students honored with the SUNY Orange Sojourner Truth Awards.

As we return from spring break, we look forward to the continued momentum and exciting work ahead. Please be sure to visit our website to stay informed on the progress of our Interscholastic Athletics Facility through the dedicated page, and to follow upcoming budget presentations and updates in the Budget and Finance section. Thank you for staying connected and for your continued support of our students, staff, and schools!

Chester Drama Club wows with spring musical production of *The Little Mermaid*

BRAVO! The entire cast and crew of *The Little Mermaid* deserve yet ANOTHER standing ovation for their hard work and stunning performances. The district is proud of the more than 100 student actors who took part, from both Chester Academy and Chester Elementary School!



The auditorium of Chester Academy was transformed into an under the sea adventure, as community members were mesmerized by the melodic talents of Chester Academy students during their performance of *The Little Mermaid* on March 20 & 21. Musical opportunities such as this play a pivotal role in fostering a passion for the arts while creating connections and friendships that will last a lifetime.

Senior Yamilet Lopez-Cortez, who played Ursula, sophomores Joseph Veltri and Liam Peterman, who played King Triton and Prince Eric and junior Jake D'Onofriio as Sebastian, discussed their roles and experiences participating in this year's spring musical, as well as how the arts has had a profound impact on them.

[You can read the entire article about the play and its leads, and see more photos from the production here!](#)

UPCOMING 26-27 BUDGET PRESENTATION SCHEDULE

APRIL 8, 2026

Undistributed Expenses, Central Services & BOCES Services

APRIL 21, 2026

Final Budget Overview & Board Actions

MAY 6, 2026

Legal Budget Hearing

MAY 19, 2026

Budget Vote

Tuesday, May 19, 2026

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

IMPORTANT DATES

April 8
BOE Meeting

April 10
Pre-K Registration Ends

April 21
BOE Meeting

April 28
Family Instructional Academy

April 9
CES Art Show & Cultural Night

April 14
Pre-K Lottery Opens

April 24-25
Elementary All-County Festival



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CHESTER ACADEMY



FROM THE
CA PRINCIPAL

JOHN
FLANAGAN

It's hard to believe that March is already coming to a close. As we head into spring, I would like to take a moment to recognize several outstanding accomplishments from our students and staff.

First, I want to extend a heartfelt congratulations to the cast and crew of *The Little Mermaid* for two incredible performances this past weekend. Under the direction of Mrs. Rachel Scali, the show was nearly sold out both nights, a true testament to the talent and dedication of everyone involved. Our students and crew members committed months of hard work to bring this production to life, and we are incredibly proud of their efforts.

I would also like to commend our Odyssey of the Mind team, which earned an impressive fourth-place finish at the state competition this past weekend. This achievement reflects their creativity, perseverance, and commitment throughout the season.

In addition, congratulations to our Mock Trial team for advancing to the next round of competition following their success at the county tournament held at OU BOCES. We wish them continued success as they move forward.

I hope everyone had a restful spring break. As we head down the final stretch of the school year we remind everyone to take advantage of extra help, ask your teachers if you are having difficulty, and to study hard for upcoming exams. Summer will be here before we know it!

Chester OMers strong at NY Odyssey of the Mind State Finals

Chester Academy's Odyssey of the Mind (OOTM) team delivered a performance that the entire school community can celebrate when they competed in the OOTM New York State Finals last weekend!

The seven-member team – Emma O'Leary, Chloe Gossai, Emily Kaseta, Stella Dunne, Charlotte Neuhaus, Kristof Neuhaus, and Sawyer McElroy – worked tirelessly throughout the season under the guidance of coach Jennifer O'Leary, with Chester Elementary School Principal Mary Kate Boesch serving as the district's Odyssey of the Mind Coordinator.

The team put on a great performance and placed an impressive 4th out of 19 teams in their problem. It was an absolutely fantastic showing on one of the biggest stages out there for creative problem-solving!

[Read the story and see more pics here!](#)



Girls varsity wrestling team celebrates best season yet

Four years ago, Chester Academy's girls wrestling program included only two or three athletes. This season, eight determined grapplers took to the mats – its deepest roster yet – and delivered a season worth celebrating!

"It's awesome to see... where it was four years ago to where it is now," said Jimmy Ehlers, Chester's boys varsity wrestling coach who handles administrative duties for both teams.

"Especially being such a small school, other schools can get hundreds of kids trying out, and we're just trying to walk down the hallway and get kids to try."

This season, those efforts paid off, as the team competed at tournaments across the region, including Dutchess County, Westchester, Scarsdale, and NYAC. Chester wrestlers managed to place throughout the season at these very competitive tournaments.

[Read the full article here!](#)



23 students honored with annual Sojourner Truth Awards

Twenty-three Chester students were honored at SUNY Orange's annual Sojourner Truth Award ceremony, recognizing their achievements in academics, leadership and service.

The mission of the awards align with Chester's own commitment to fostering a learning environment that values diversity, equity and inclusion – one where every student feels safe, valued, respected and empowered to reach their full potential.

[See the list of recipients here!](#)



CHESTER ELEMENTARY



FROM THE
CES PRINCIPAL

MARY KATE
BOESCH

March has been a vibrant and exciting month at Chester Elementary School! We proudly celebrated Music in Our Schools Month, which was beautifully kicked off by our CES Band and Chorus Concert at the end of February. Our students' talent and dedication were truly on display.

Our celebration of the arts continued with the district-wide theater production of The Little Mermaid. We are especially proud of the many CES 4th and 5th grade students who participated. This experience gave them the opportunity to be part of a large-scale production, and we are thrilled to hear that many are now inspired to continue pursuing theater.

On March 26th, we held our PBIS assembly, where many students were recognized in the Winner's Circle and enjoyed spinning the prize wheel. It was a joyful celebration of positive behavior and strong character.

Spring has officially sprung at CES! On March 25th, our 5th grade students worked alongside the Master Gardeners to begin early spring preparations in our pollinator garden.

We also opened Pre-K and Kindergarten registration on March 23rd. Pre-K registration closes April 10th, followed by the lottery on April 14th.

We look forward to seeing families at our Around the World Art Show and Multicultural Night on April 9th!

Pre-K & Kindergarten registration open for 2026-27 school year

Kindergarten: parents should complete an online registration packet prior to scheduling an appointment. Packets are also available at the Registrar's Office, at the elementary school, and may be requested by email.

Universal Pre-K: to be eligible for a UPK spot, your child must reside in the district, have a birth date between 12/2/21 and 12/1/22, and turn four years old on or before 12/1/26. UPK applications accepted until 3 pm on Friday, April 10, 2026.

[Go here for more details and links to both the Kindergarten and UPK registration pages.](#)

Third grade students begin musical exploration with Recorder Karate program

Third-graders have been learning to play the recorder using the Recorder Karate program, an engaging, student-centered approach that helps young musicians build skills while having fun.

Students work at their own pace and receive extra help from their music teacher and their peers during each music class. They begin by learning the basics – how to hold the recorder and produce a proper sound – before progressing to reading notes on a page and matching them with the correct finger placements needed to play songs.

As students advance through the program, their progress earns them different color belts, the same way martial arts students track their level of understanding and expertise.

[Read the whole article here!](#)



Chester Elementary welcomes professional author for literacy lessons

Students at Chester Elementary School recently had the chance to engage in some unique literacy learning, when they enthusiastically welcomed professional author, Eric Luper, to their school!

Best known for his popular "Key Hunter" series for young readers, Mr. Luper brought his passion for storytelling to the elementary school, engaging students across all grade levels in an exploration and celebration of reading and writing. The day was organized by third-grade teacher Amy Carola and was the culmination of months of preparation.

In the weeks leading up to Mr. Luper's visit, many teachers read the author's books aloud to their classes to spark excitement.

[Read the story and see more pics from Mr. Luper's visit here!](#)

