Lower Dauphin School District Winter 2026

Know Your Schools

Important Information for the Residents of Lower Dauphin School District

Superintendent Message



Over the past six months, my superintendent Entry Plan focused on listening, learning, and engaging with our school community. I have spent time meeting with a wide range of stakeholders, visiting our buildings, as well as being present at many school and community events. These opportunities allowed me to build positive relationships while gaining a deeper understanding of the people, values, culture and organizational systems that make up our district.

Through these conversations and experiences, I have been able to learn more about the priorities, strengths and challenges of the Lower Dauphin School District.

"We will continue to honor the past, embrace the present, and look optimistically towards the future."

It is not often that the beginning of a superintendency aligns with the comprehensive planning process. Since September, a group of more than 60 stakeholders, including teachers, parents/guardians, community members, business owners, students and administrators met every other week to chart the course for Lower Dauphin over the next three years.

We sincerely thank each and every one of the participants for dedicating their time to this important work! Their collective efforts will serve as our focus and North Star as we navigate the course together.

(Continued on page 2)

Lower Dauphin Prepares for Facility Upgrades

Lower Dauphin School District's upcoming facilities improvement project stems from a comprehensive facilities study conducted by RLPS in 2024. The study evaluated building systems, infrastructure needs and long-term capital priorities across the district and laid the groundwork for a multi-year improvement plan.

Lower Dauphin School District will begin a series of major facility upgrades across the district this spring, with preliminary mobilization scheduled for March and construction starting in June.

Phase 1 of the district's facilities improvement plan includes projects at Lower Dauphin Middle School, East Hanover Elementary School, Nye Elementary School and the Falcon Field complex.

At Lower Dauphin Middle School, work will include significant site improvements tied to the Falcon Field stormwater project. The middle school parking lot will be redesigned and repaved, and the main drive will be reconfigured to improve traffic flow and safety. The Falcon Field project marks the beginning of construction on a new on-campus stadium. The district's agreement with HersheyPark Stadium for varsity football concludes after the 2026-27 season.

The construction of a stadium at Falcon Field will allow Lower Dauphin to host home football games and other events on campus moving forward. The projected completion date for the Falcon Field stadium is April 2027. We cannot wait for Friday Night Lights at the new Falcon Fields in fall 2027! This amazing facility will not only showcase our student-athletes but will serve as a hub for the entire community! This project is just one of the many pieces to the ongoing puzzle in our facility upgrades. We all look forward to creating memories, traditions, and school spirit for years to come.

The projected completion date for the Falcon Field stadium is April 2027.

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Superintendent Message Cont'd

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Our first priority was to revamp our mission and vision statements making them focused, future-ready and easy to recite. Our new, shared vision is *Every Falcon, Life Ready.* As an entire community, it is critical to ensure our kids leave our schools with the knowledge, skills, and dispositions necessary to enlist, enroll and/or employ. Our new mission statement, "We exist to educate, engage, support, and inspire our Lower Dauphin community," provides the empowerment for our just-cause. The comprehensive plan is grounded in three cornerstones that bring focus to our work and goals: Teaching and Learning, Data-Driven Decision Making, and Stewarding Our Valued Resources. Later in the newsletter, you will see a one-page infographic outlining our 70 page comprehensive plan, as well as a link to a highlight video demonstrating our vision and mission in action.

The biggest challenge our district faces is the complex matter of aging facilities and tight budgetary constraints. Our facilities are old, outdated, deteriorating and require immediate attention. Later in the issue, you will see an outline of our phased, long-range planning for facility improvements. The district also faces significant financial challenges, including multi-million-dollar deficits, declining enrollment and rising expenditures. These financial constraints require us to carefully manage revenue increases, reduce expenditures, and plan strategically for both staffing and facilities to ensure sustainable operations over the coming years.

One of the greatest strengths of Lower Dauphin is truly our people. Across our district, we are fortunate to have talented, dedicated, and knowledgeable support staff, educators and administrators who work hard every day to support our students. Our parents and community members consistently demonstrate pride and support for our schools. Most importantly, our students are exceptional! I continue to be blown away by their respect, integrity, kindness, intellect, compassion and drive. It is this collective commitment and sense of community that makes Lower Dauphin such a special place to work, learn, and grow. As we move forward together, we will continue to honor the past, embrace the present, and look optimistically toward the future.

Facility Upgrades Cont'd

(Continued from page 1)

Building system upgrades are also a major component of Phase 1.

At East Hanover Elementary School, Phase 1 of the HVAC project includes the installation of new chillers, new boilers and updated heating and cooling systems throughout the building.

At Nye Elementary School, crews will install a new chiller and replace HVAC systems throughout the building. Work at Nye is expected to be completed by the second week of August.


Rendering: Home Side

District officials anticipate Phase 1A work will be substantially completed by the end of the summer, ensuring all buildings are ready to welcome students for the first day of school Aug. 25.

Looking ahead, HVAC projects at Londonderry Elementary School and South Hanover Elementary School are scheduled to begin next year as part of the next phase of the district's long-term facilities plan.

District leaders said the multi-year effort is designed to modernize infrastructure, improve energy efficiency and enhance the overall student experience across the district.

Web https://www.ldsd.org

Your first source for school closings and school news



JROTC Cadets Continue to Grow Collegiate Pipeline

In just its third year, Lower Dauphin High School's JROTC program is already shaping the futures of its students in remarkable ways. Liam Samples, Caleb Espenshade and Gwen Meloy are charting paths toward Valley Forge Military College, with Caleb and Gwen following and earning exclusive scholarships to the prestigious institution next year.



JROTC members Caleb Espenshade and Gwen Meloy pose with former cadet and current Valley Forge student Liam Samples

Liams Samples, who graduated last year, is the first of the group to make the leap. Reflecting on his experience, he credits the program's structure and discipline for preparing him for college life. "If it wasn't for Colonel Goyette and JROTC, I wouldn't even be part of this program," he said. "The military lifestyle and the foundation it gave me really boosted my chances to earn a scholarship and eventually become commissioned."



For Caleb Epenshade and Gwen Meloy, the journey has been even more personal. Both grew up together, attending the Nye Elementary School and sharing countless milestones along the way. Now, they are preparing to continue their education side by side at Valley Forge on full scholarships.

"I didn't want a normal college life. I wanted something more structured, with the discipline of military life," said Epenshade. "JROTC has pushed me out of my comfort zone, and I know Valley Forge will give me that same opportunity to continue to grow and develop as a man and as a person."

Meloy echoed those sentiments, highlighting how JROTC prepared her for the next step. "JROTC has really prepared me for this. Coming in with preexisting knowledge is a big advantage," she said. "Caleb and I grew up together, so going through this process together has meant a lot. It's exciting to pursue our passions while embracing the structure of a military college."

The path to Valley Forge is rigorous. Applications include long-form essays, interviews with a lieutenant colonel at the college, and careful selection for limited scholarship spots. The process is competitive and emphasizes the leadership, discipline, and dedication cultivated in JROTC. With around 22 students chosen nationwide, earning a scholarship is a testament to the cultivated skills each have learned in the JROTC program.

Colonel Goyette, who has been a key mentor to all three students, described their achievements as a testament to the program's impact. "Seeing these students grow, challenge themselves, and succeed in ways they never imagined is exactly why we started JROTC here," he said. "It's incredible to see them take what they've learned and apply it to opportunities like Valley Forge."



For Epenshade and Meloy, the decision to attend a military college represents both academic and personal growth. Neither initially envisioned a traditional college path, but JROTC opened doors and instilled the confidence and structure needed to pursue higher education while embracing the values of service, discipline and leadership.

As Lower Dauphin's JROTC program continues to expand, the early successes of these students signal a promising future. In only three years, the program has already proven it can shape leaders ready to take on challenges both in and out of the classroom.

Comprehensive Plan 2026-2029



SCAN ME

Our Vision

Every Falcon, Life Ready

Our Mission

We exist to educate, engage, support, and inspire our Lower Dauphin community

Our Cornerstones

Data-Driven Decision Making

Use a consistent, districtwide data review process to inform instruction, programs, and resource decisions. Documented systems and practices support continuous improvement and ensure organizational coherence.

Teaching and Learning

Develop and improve efficacy of professional staff through an aligned system for curriculum review and selection of evidence-based resources, instructional supervision, and embedded professional learning.

Stewarding Valued Resources

Commit to a workforce vision, comprehensive and strategic recruitment, and the supportive retention of staff. Resources are intentionally coordinated with fiscally responsible budgeting procedures and long-range planning to advance the District's goals and priorities.

LOWER DAUPHIN SCHOOL DISTRICT



The cast of this year's high school Musical, "Joseph and the Amazing Technicolor Dreamcoat," brings the colorful story of Joseph and his famous coat to life on stage.

LD Unified Bocce Team gets Special Invite

Lower Dauphin's Unified Bocce Team was invited by Special Olympics Pennsylvania to play a Unified game during the Pennsylvania Department of Education Conference at the Hershey Lodge.

Student-athletes took to the court alongside representatives from the Pennsylvania Bureau of Special Education and the Pennsylvania Training and Technical Assistance Network, highlighting the spirit of Unified sports, bringing together students of all abilities to compete as teammates.

Lower Dauphin's Unified partners, team managers and line judges also played an integral role in the event, assisting with game operations and officiating. Their leadership helped ensure a seamless experience for participants and conference attendees alike.

The afternoon was marked by spirited competition, collaboration and a strong display of Falcon pride, as the team demonstrated the power of inclusion on a statewide stage.





Members of the Lower Dauphin Bocce team participate in an honorary game during the PA Department. of Education Conference.

Hour of Code Embraces AI Age

This year's Hour of Code theme focused on the Hour of AI, giving students an introduction to the basics of artificial intelligence. Through three hands-on, unplugged activities, students explored how AI systems work, including how they collect and learn from data, make predictions and power recommendation systems used on many popular digital platforms.

Students also discussed the importance of digital safety and responsible AI use, which involved activities like deciphering scenarios with the use of AI and why personal information should not be shared with AI tools.

The activities helped students build a foundational understanding of how artificial intelligence shapes many of the digital experiences they encounter every day. The overall experience encouraged curiosity, critical thinking and collaboration as students gained a foundational understanding of how artificial intelligence shapes many of the digital experiences, they encounter every day.



East Hanover students engage in AI activity during Hour of Code

District Welcomes New Staffers to Lower Dauphin

Joel Bookamer

Assistant Business Manager
District Office



Mr. Bookamer comes to Lower Dauphin after serving as the Assistant Business Manager for the Central Dauphin School District. He graduated from Slippery Rock University with a bachelor's degree in business administration. In his free time, he likes to work on house and wood projects.

Jacqueline DeWitt

Life Skills
Middle School



Mrs. DeWitt returns to Lower Dauphin after a stint with the Palmyra Area School District. She graduated from Cal. University of Pennsylvania and earned her master's degree in special education. She looks forward to her return to the district's Life Skills program. In her free time, she likes to read and hike.

Robert Horney, Jr

Business Manager
District Office



Mr. Horney comes to Lower Dauphin after serving as the Director of Business Services for the Central Dauphin School District. He earned his bachelor's degree in finance from West Chester University and his master's degree from LVC in Business Administration. He looks forward to supporting the mission and vision of Lower Dauphin. In his free time, he likes to grill and go to the beach.

Molly Kleinert

2nd grade Teacher
South Hanover



Ms. Kleinert comes to Lower Dauphin after completing her student teaching at Conewago Elementary. She earned her bachelor's degree in early childhood and special education from Elizabethtown College. She hopes to help students achieve their goals and build relationships with the community. In her free time she, likes to read, cook and watch sports.

Pat Weaver

Math Teacher
Middle School



Mrs. Weaver comes to Lower Dauphin after working for multiple districts. She earned her bachelor's and master's degrees in education from Millersville University. She hopes to build on the already-established success within the math department, while strengthening her students confidence. In her free time she likes hiking, biking, gardening and jet skiing.

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Falcon Fling Honors Outstanding Community Members

The Lower Dauphin Falcon Foundation welcomed community members, educators and supporters for the 16th annual Falcon Fling, an evening dedicated to celebrating those who make a lasting impact on the Lower Dauphin School District and the surrounding community.

A highlight of the annual event is the recognition of individuals whose service and dedication embody the spirit of Lower Dauphin. This year, the Falcon Foundation honored three individuals for their commitment to students and the community: Steve Messick, Kim Moran, and Christie Gamber.

Messick was recognized for his decades of service to youth athletics in the Hummelstown area. A Little League football coach for more than 30 years, he currently serves as the Director of Football for the Youth Falcons Football program. Messick has also been inducted into the Central Pennsylvania Football Association Hall of Fame and has spent years supporting young athletes both on and off the field, often opening his home and offering guidance to players in need. His long-standing involvement with the Fuzzy Few organization in Hummelstown further reflects his commitment to giving back to the community.



Community members Kim Moran, Steve Messick and Timothy Gamber receive community awards.



Moran, a speech and language pathologist at East Hanover Elementary School, was honored for her dedication to supporting students and families. Over the past three years, Moran has built a reputation for always putting students first, managing one of the district's largest caseloads while continuing to volunteer her time to support students and colleagues. Known for making speech therapy engaging and welcoming, Moran has created a space where students feel supported and eager to learn.

The foundation also recognized longtime educator Christie Gamber posthumously. Gamber served the Lower Dauphin School District for more than 30 years, most notably as a first-grade teacher at East Hanover Elementary School. Throughout her career, she helped shape the early educational experiences of generations of students, welcoming them into the classroom with patience, warmth and a deep love for teaching. Her impact continues to be felt throughout the school community.

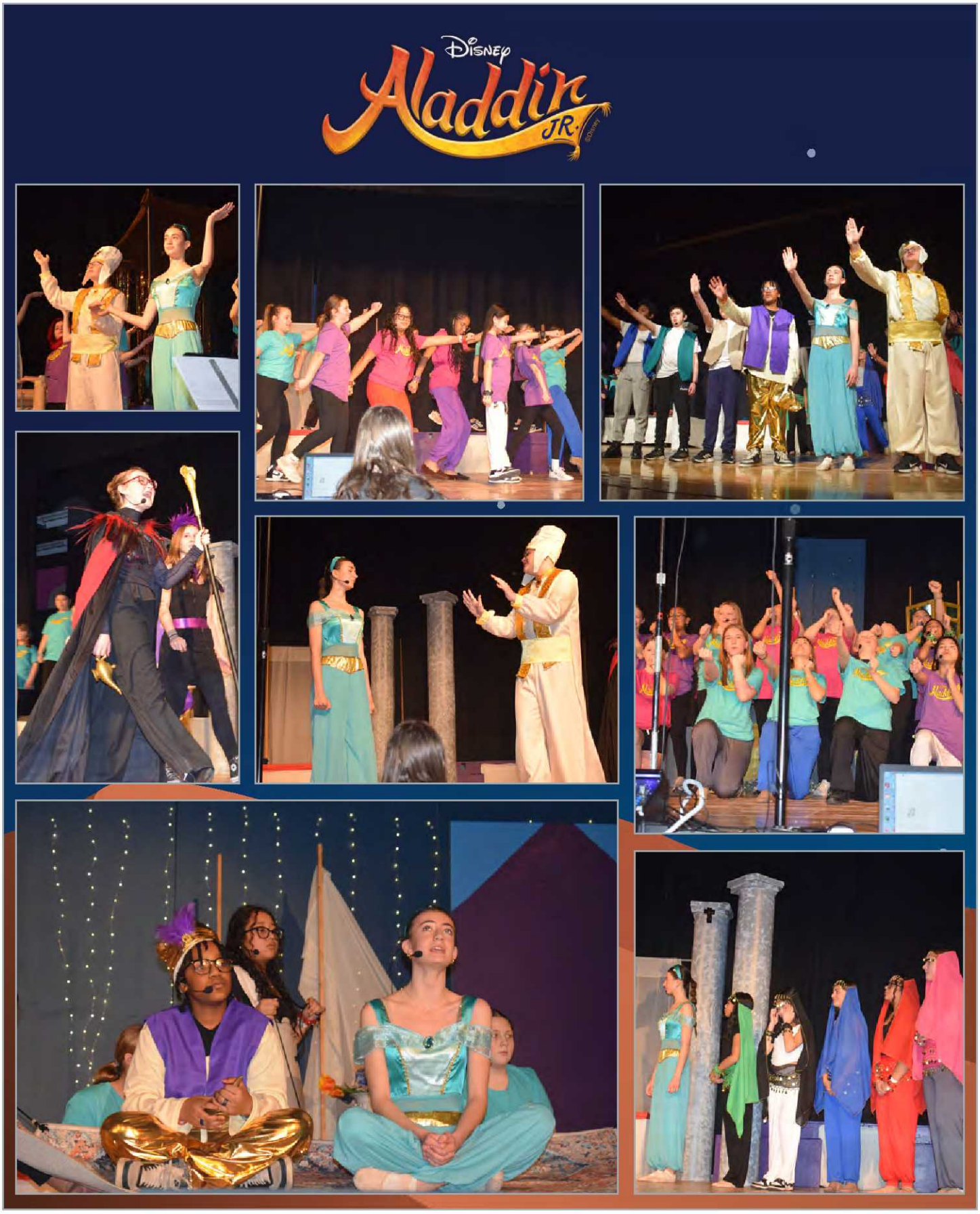
The Falcon Fling serves as one of the Falcon Foundation's signature events and supports its ongoing mission to enhance educational opportunities across the district. Through grants, camps and other initiatives, the foundation works to provide innovative learning experiences for Lower Dauphin students.

Each year, the foundation awards grants to faculty, staff, students and community members through two application cycles. These grants support creative and impactful programs and materials that benefit students across the district and strengthen educational opportunities within the Lower Dauphin community.

The evening not only celebrated those being honored but also highlighted the strong partnership between schools and the community.



LOWER DAUPHIN IS HIRING.
For more information visit: *ldsd.org/employment*



The students of the middle school brought the magic of Agrabah to life in this year's Musical, "Aladdin Jr.", dazzling audiences with colorful costumes, energetic songs and a story full of adventure, friendship and wishes come true.

Falcons Put Pen to Paper During Winter Signing Day

Sixteen athletes, sixteen new chapters. During our Winter Signing Day ceremony, we celebrated a powerhouse group of seniors as they officially committed to their respective colleges.

Softball

Lyllee Schmidt: Lyllee is the daughter of Ryan and Brandy Schmidt. She is a 4-year member of the softball team. In addition, Lyllee is involved with Special Olympics, Chic-Fil-A Leadership academy, and Mini-THON. She plans to attend Community College of Baltimore County Catonsville to study sports management.

Carissa Wenner: Carissa is the daughter of Tom and Jill Wenner she is a 4-year member of the softball team where she earned Mid-Penn All-Conference recognition in 2025 as a junior. She is also involved in Volunteen, Mental Health awareness club, and National Honor Society. Carissa plans to attend Farleigh Dickinson University-Florham to study physical therapy and continue her softball career.

Jayden White: Jayden is the daughter of Cara and Jeremie White. She is a 4-year member of the softball team. Jayden is also involved with French National Honor society, best buddies and Mini-THON. She plans to attend Penn State Beaver to study criminal justice.

Anece Zubler: Anece is the daughter of Jason Zubler and Devon Weidner. She is a 4-year member of the softball team. In softball, she earned Mid-Penn All-Conference accolades as a junior in 2025. Anece is also involved with special Olympics. She plans to attend Penn State Berks to study early childhood education.

Lacrosse

Will Gray: Will is the son of Shane and Sarah Gray. He was a 2-year member of the wrestling team and 4-year member of the boys lacrosse team. On the lacrosse team he serves as captain and earned Mid-Penn All-Star accolades as a junior. He is also involved in national honor societies and volunteers for Cocoa Packs. Will plans to attend Alfred University to study engineering.

J.T. Tywalk: J.T. is the son of Nick and Diane Tywalk. He was a 2-year member of the soccer team and a 4-year member of the boys lacrosse team where he is a varsity letter winner. In addition, he is involved with numerous national honor societies and class council. J.T. is planning to attend Juniata College to major in chemistry.

Cody Woodring: Cody is the son of John and Jana Woodring. He is a 4-year member of the boys lacrosse team. He earned Mid-Penn All-Conference accolades and holds the record for most goals scored. Cody also is involved with Best Buddies and Special Olympics. He plans to attend Desales University to study criminal justice.

Football

Matteo Cangialosi: Matteo is the son of Rocco and Michelle Cangialosi. He's a a 4-year member of the football team. Matteo served as captain and earned Mid-Penn All-Conference accolades as a senior. Matteo is also involved with Special Olympics and Best Buddies. He plans to attend Elon University to major in business.

Baseball

Braedyn Danner: Braedyn is the son of Daniel Danner and Dawn Fogelsanger. He is a 4-year member of the baseball team where he earned Mid-Penn All-Conference accolades as a junior in 2025. Braedyn is also involved with Best Buddies. He plans to attend Kutztown University to continue his academic and baseball career.

Max Hoopes: Max is the son of Dave and Jessica Hoopes. He is 4-year member of the baseball team where he earned Mid-Penn All-Conference recognition as a junior in 2025. Max plans to attend Ursinus College to major in finance and continue his baseball career.

Gavin Westerberg: Gavin is the son of Mike and Leann Westerberg. He is a 2-year member of the baseball team. Gavin is also involved with Special Olympics and Best Buddies. He plans to attend Northampton Community College to major in exercise science.

Soccer

Brady Heffleger: Brady is the son of Jason and Karen Heffleger. He is a 4-year member of the soccer team where he served as team captain and earned Mid-Penn All-Star accolades as a senior. Brady is also involved with numerous honor societies, FCA and Tops Soccer. He plans to attend Lebanon Valley College to major in accounting.

Astin Lehman: Astin is the son of Taiten and Amy Lehman. He played one season on the boys' soccer team and is involved with national honor societies and Tops Soccer. Astin is also a member of the PA Classics MLS Next Club team. He plans to attend East Stroudsburg University to major in finance.

Field Hockey

Laurel Unger: Laurel is the daughter of Steve and Amanda Unger. She is a 4-year member of the field hockey team where she earned Mid-Penn All-Conference recognition as a senior. Laurel also volunteers with Best Buddies and LD youth field hockey. She plans to attend Bloomsburg University to major in health sciences

Swimming

Elise Brelsford: Elise is the daughter of Matt and Gina Brelsford. She is a two-time Mid-Penn Championship and District Championship qualifier. She is also involved with Mini-THON. Elise plans to attend Ursinus College to major in psychology.

Mia Pegher: Mia is the daughter of Kim Pegher and the late David Pegher. She is a 4-year member of the swim team. Mia is also involved with numerous national honor societies and serves as a board representative on the Lower Dauphin Communities that Care committee. Mia plans to attend Lebanon Valley College to study physical therapy.



Regala Takes Home Spelling Bee Championship

Seventh-grader Eryneese Regala claimed first place at the annual Lower Dauphin Middle School Spelling Bee, outlasting her final two competitors in a spirited championship round to secure the title.

Regala sealed the victory by correctly spelling "gardenia," the winning word in what organizers described as a highly competitive event. She earned a $25 prize for her first-place finish.

Ally Koser, a sixth-grader, finished second and received $20, while eighth-grader Ava Bailey placed third and earned $15.

The spelling bee remains a longstanding Lower Dauphin tradition, drawing strong participation each year and showcasing the academic excellence of middle school students. As always, this year's competition featured multiple, challenging rounds before narrowing to the final three contestants.



Regala poses with classmates after winning spelling bee

The event celebrated not only the winners, but all participants who demonstrated preparation, perseverance and poise under pressure.

Senior Audrey Adams Named Microsoft Word Champ

Lower Dauphin senior Audrey Adams has been named Pennsylvania State Champion in Microsoft Word after earning a score of 976 out of 1,000 on the certification exam.



Adams' top finish marks the second, consecutive year a Lower Dauphin student has earned first place in Microsoft Office testing at the state level, continuing a strong tradition of excellence in business and technology education.

"I was kind of shocked when I heard I had won," Adams said. "It was a good feeling and I'm excited to potentially go to Nashville for the national competition."

As state champion, Adams is eligible to compete at the national competition, which will be held in Nashville, Tennessee, later this year. The event brings together top-performing students from across the country to demonstrate advanced proficiency in Microsoft Office applications.

Business Education teacher Christie Stankiewicz praised Adams for her dedication and preparation, noting that her achievement reflects both individual commitment and the strength of Lower Dauphin's technology curriculum.

With another state title secured, Lower Dauphin will look to build on its back-to-back success as Adams prepares for the opportunity to represent Pennsylvania on the national stage.



Lower Dauphin senior Audrey Adams works on Microsoft Office project.

Know Your Schools is published four times a year for the residents of Lower Dauphin School District.

District Office	717-566-5300
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Londonderry Elementary School	717-944-9462
Nye Elementary School	717-566-0300
South Hanover Elementary	717-566-2564
Informaline:	717-566-5320

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Lower Dauphin School District

Calendar of Upcoming Events

MARCH

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				

6 2-hour Early Dissmissal (In-Service) - End of Second Trimester (Elem)

16 Schools Closed (In-Service, Act 80)

30 End of Marking Period 3 (MS/HS)

APRIL

			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		

1 1/2 Student Day

2 Schools Closed

3 Schools & Offices Closed

6 Schools Closed (In-Service) - 3rd Weather Make-up Day

MAY

					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						

1 2-hour Delayed Opening (In-Service Day)

5 Mid-Marking Period (MS/HS)

25 Schools & Offices Closed (Memorial Day)

JUNE

	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			

4 Commencement

5 Last Student Day (1/2 Day, no lunch)