

IN

An IN Community Magazine

Fox Chapel Area

***'Something Rotten!'* on FCAHS Stage**

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A MESSAGE FROM THE SUPERINTENDENT

Dear Fox Chapel Area Community,

Celebrating Public Schools Week across the country at the end of February provided an opportunity to recognize the power and promise of public education. In the Fox Chapel Area School District, it also offered a meaningful moment to reflect on what makes our schools strong – a community that unites in support of students, guided by the pillars that shape our work each day.

Those pillars – purpose, passion, care, and community – serve as the foundation of our district. They influence the way we teach, learn, and connect.

Purpose drives our commitment to helping every student discover their strengths and direction. Passion fuels curiosity, creativity, and a love of learning in our classrooms. Care ensures that students feel supported, valued, and known. Community reminds us that education is a shared responsibility strengthened by the partnerships among schools, families, and the broader Fox Chapel Area school community.

While Public Schools Week invites us to celebrate the important work happening in our schools today, it also encourages us to look forward. The Fox Chapel Area School District recently finalized its next comprehensive plan, a process designed to help guide our priorities and direction in the next few years. This effort brought together voices from across our school community – including students, families, school board members, educators, staff, and community partners – to reflect on where we are today and where we will go next.

Through thoughtful discussion and collaboration, those voices examined our strengths, identified opportunities for enhancement, and considered how our programs, resources, and learning environments can continue to evolve to meet the needs of our students. The goal is not only to outline strategic priorities, but also to ensure that our future planning reflects the values that define our district.

The comprehensive planning process provided an important opportunity to listen, learn, and build together. By engaging a wide range of perspectives, we can thoughtfully consider how best to support student success, strengthen our programs, and continue preparing learners for an ever-changing world.

Public education thrives when communities share a commitment to their schools' success.

At Fox Chapel Area, that shared commitment is evident every day in the dedication of our educators and staff, the support of our families, and the enthusiasm of our students. As we continue our planning going forward, know that purpose, passion, care, and community will remain at the heart of our daily work.

Thank you for your continued partnership in supporting our students and schools.

Sincerely,

Dr. Mary Catherine Reljac
Superintendent

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NEW SOCIAL WORKER SUPPORTS STUDENTS, PROVIDES TOOLS BEYOND CLASSROOM

When Fox Chapel Area School District welcomed social worker Jamie Heffler in August, it gained someone whose journey was shaped by life experience, resilience, and a deep commitment to helping others.

Her journey to social work was anything but linear.

After graduating from Shaler Area High School and Edinboro University with a bachelor's degree in communications, Ms. Heffler began working in sales at radio stations in Pittsburgh. While she enjoyed the work, it didn't take her long to realize something was missing.

"I absolutely loved it, but I never really felt fulfilled," she says.

During that time, she began nannying for several families in the area. Today, some of the children she once cared for are students at Fox Chapel Area High School, something she finds special.

One conversation during her days as a nanny stayed with her, she says. A father from one of the families she worked for encouraged her not to wait to pursue the future that she wanted.

"He told me, 'Three years will pass regardless. It is up to you what you do in those three years that matters.'"

Not long after that, a deeply personal loss helped clarify her calling.

"In 2011, I lost my best friend to suicide, and that changed everything for me," Ms. Heffler says. "I always felt like I was supposed to do more to help others, and losing her set everything in motion."

She returned to school, earned a master's degree in social work from California University of Pennsylvania, and is now a licensed clinical social worker. She lives in Millvale with her husband, who works in the drug and alcohol field, and their five cats.

In a school setting, social workers provide mental health support, help connect families with outside resources, and serve as a bridge between home, school, and community providers. They also facilitate small groups focused on topics such as anxiety, depression, self-esteem, bullying, and mental health awareness.

"Social anxiety has increased, and many students are forming friendships online rather than with the people sitting next to them in school," Ms. Heffler says. "Helping students find healthy balance and connection is really important."

She says that for her, the most meaningful moments often come quietly, such as when a student who may have been hesitant to seek help begins to trust the process.

Ms. Heffler says she is especially grateful for the strong sense of support that defines the Fox Chapel Area community.

"The students and staff here are incredible," she says. "We are fortunate to have principals, teachers, counselors, staff, and school resource officers who truly care about our students."

Just as meaningful to her is the way the broader community supports one another.

"It takes a village," she says. "And we have an amazing one."

FCASD ADOPTS NEW COMPREHENSIVE PLAN



The Fox Chapel Area School District's new three-year comprehensive plan focuses on growth, innovation, and opportunity, while being rooted in its pillars of purpose, passion, care, and community.

Among the areas of focus in the new comprehensive plan are determining what key skills students need to learn while in school; identifying additional innovative ideas to elevate the district's success; examining the most effective ways of supporting the overall wellness of the school community; implementing practices to make students feel genuinely valued; expanding partnerships and/or collaborations outside of the traditional education setting to enhance student opportunities; and examining ways to strengthen partnerships with families and the community.

Dr. Mary Catherine Reljac, superintendent of the Fox Chapel Area School District, said the process was intentionally collaborative and forward-thinking.

"Our comprehensive plan represents who we are and what we aspire to be," Dr. Reljac said. "It honors the traditions that make Fox Chapel Area special, while ensuring we are preparing our students for a rapidly evolving world."

The new plan was shaped by a process open to all district stakeholders and followed months of engagement with families, staff, and community and business representatives through multiple steering committee meetings and focus group sessions. Focus group attendees were asked eight core questions about each of the district's four pillars, which emerged from the steering committee meetings.

- What is the purpose of school?
- What key skills do students need to learn while in school?
- If you could implement one innovative idea or change to elevate our district's success, what would it be?
- How can we be the No. 1 choice for education?
- What do you believe are the most effective ways of supporting the overall wellness of our school community?



- What school practices make students feel genuinely cared for?
- What partnerships or collaborations outside of traditional education could we explore to enhance student opportunities?
- How can we strengthen partnerships with families and with the community?

"One of our greatest strengths as a district is our willingness to listen to one another and work side by side," Dr. Reljac said. "Collaboration is how we ensure every decision reflects our pillars and values, and moves us forward. When families, staff members, and community partners come together with a shared sense of purpose, we don't just solve problems – we create possibilities."

Along with the comprehensive plan, the district will also update its strategic vision. Work on the strategic vision will continue during the next several months.

The Fox Chapel Area School Board approved the new comprehensive plan at its March regular board meeting. The Pennsylvania Department of Education requires all school districts to complete a comprehensive plan every three years.

To view the district's comprehensive plan, please visit www.fcasd.edu/about-us/comprehensive-plan.



Dr. Sue Mariani, superintendent of the Duquesne City School District, talks about the district's artificial intelligence work as Dr. Mary Catherine Reljac, Fox Chapel Area School District superintendent, and Dr. Neil English, Riverview School District superintendent, look on during a panel discussion led by Dr. Megan Collett (left), executive director of instructional and innovative leadership for the Fox Chapel Area School District.

TECHNOLOGY CONFERENCE DRAWS 600 TO FOX CHAPEL AREA

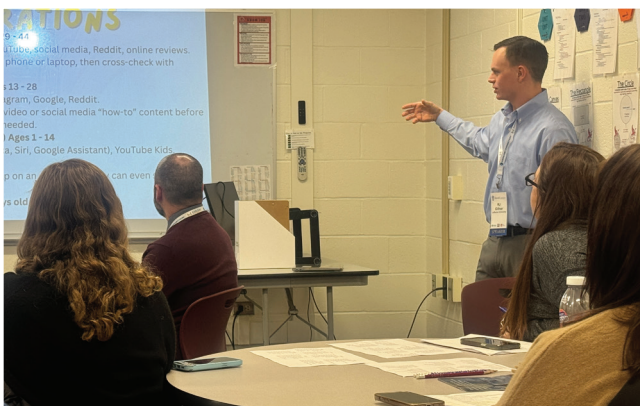
The Three Rivers Educational Technology Conference (TRETc) drew more than 600 teachers, K-12 administrators, industry experts, and higher education decision-makers to Dorseyville Middle School in January through a partnership between the Fox Chapel Area School District and the Pittsburgh Technology Council. The event, "Rewiring Learning: Building Bridges & Strengthening Connections," aimed to advance the integration of educational technology through speakers, interactive sessions, and panel discussions. Topics focused on the use of artificial intelligence, creating a cyber workforce, hands-on robotics, coding in the classroom, and makerspaces as innovative learning hubs.

The day also featured a showcase where students highlighted their STEAM-themed projects.

Jeff Remington, the STEM outreach liaison for the Penn State Center for Science and the Schools, and a nationally and globally recognized education leader, presented the keynote address.



Eric Curts, a technology integration specialist for the Stark Portage Area Computer Consortium and an award-winning blogger, discusses how to create Gemini Gems during a session.



RJ Gillner gives a presentation on generational sticking points in technology. Gillner facilitated the session with his mother, Cathie, a computer science teacher at Dorseyville Middle School.



Mike Zula, a consultant for the Partnership to Advance Responsible Technology, speaks with superintendents and principals from across Western Pennsylvania.

FCASD NAMED PURPLE STAR SCHOOL



Fox Chapel Area School District Director of Literacy Dr. Dana Simile accepted the district's Purple Star School designation as part of the Standards Aligned System (SAS) Institute, sponsored by the Pennsylvania Department of Education in Hershey, in December. Also featured in the photo are Amy Lena, the deputy secretary for the state Office of Elementary and Secondary Education, and Brian Campbell, director of the Bureau of Curriculum, Assessment, and Instruction.

The Fox Chapel Area School District was awarded a Purple Star School designation by the Pennsylvania Department of Education. Fox Chapel Area's designation runs January 2026 through December 2029.

Purple Star Schools is a program that supports military-connected children as they relocate to new schools due to a parent's/guardian's change in duty station. This designation is given to Local Education Agencies (LEAs) and schools for their commitment to serving active-duty military families and students through efforts such as designating a military liaison and providing a transition initiative.

To achieve Purple Star School designation, LEAs and schools must meet multiple criteria, including designating a staff member

as a military liaison, detailing how the LEA or school identifies military-connected students, maintaining a publicly accessible webpage to provide resources for military-connected students and their parents/guardians, and providing a transition initiative led by students.



"I am proud that the Fox Chapel Area School District has earned the Purple Star designation," said Superintendent Dr. Mary Catherine Reljac. "It shows that we have a commitment to not just the educational needs, but also to the social and emotional needs of students from military families. We have dedicated resources to help not just these children, but their families, during times of transition."

More information about the Purple Star Schools program can be found at <https://militarychild.org/programs-and-initiatives/purple-star-schools/>.

FCASD SEEKS COMMUNITY EXPERTISE

The Fox Chapel Area School District is seeking community members to serve on the Fox Chapel Area School Authority and the Resource Planning Advisory. The School Authority provides insight into facilities projects in the district. The Resource Planning Advisory assists with long-range financial planning and monitors financial trends.

Individuals interested in either group should send a résumé to Superintendent Dr. Mary Catherine Reljac at marycatherine_reljac@fcasd.edu.



The Bottom Brothers





'SOMETHING ROTTEN!' ON FCAHS STAGE

Approximately 110 Fox Chapel Area High School students presented the spring musical, "Something Rotten!", a comedy set in the 1590s that follows two brothers who are playwrights struggling to compete with William Shakespeare. After a soothsayer reveals the future of theater is musicals, the brothers set out to write the world's first one. The only problem? They misunderstand and write a musical about ... an omelet.



The Class of 2026!



The members of the first Fox Chapel Area High School Class of 2026 are front row, left to right, Katelyn Ecker, Kelly Dayton, Corey O'Toole, Avonlea Teaderman, Allie Coen-Reyer, Chanel Brun, and David Avila. Back row, left to right, are Elias Grim, Keagan Graham, Mason Biernesser, Nathan Bernesser, Bryce Suranovich, Christian Risinger, Danyal Raza, and Ryan Roper. Not pictured are Ruby Adams, William Marchese, and Harran Zureikat.

FCAHS' FIRST GRADUATING CLASS OF 2026

In mid-January, 18 Fox Chapel Area High School students celebrated a huge milestone by becoming the first graduating class of 2026. More than 100 family members, educators, school board members, staff, and friends were there to celebrate with them.

As part of the ceremony, Fox Chapel Area High School Lead Principal Dr. Michael Hower reminded the students of the importance of graduation, calling it a "monumental day." He

also noted that, on that day in history, Martin Luther King Jr. was born.

"It was his leadership and conviction, and his dedication to a purpose, that led to some amazing things," he told the students and guests, while reminding the graduates that they also have the ability to make an impact. "Work collaboratively together to achieve a common goal. Listen, collaborate, find common ground moving forward. Be the light that does that."



HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS COMPETE IN JUNK KOUTURE WORLD FINALS

Fox Chapel Area High School seniors Raina Guzman and Claire Conti were selected to represent the United States in Ireland at the Junk Kouture World Final.

Their creation was one of 10 chosen from hundreds of student submissions from across the nation. As part of the competition, Raina and Claire used crocheted plastic bags, Styrofoam egg cartons, and repurposed jewelry to create a dress they named "Ostara."

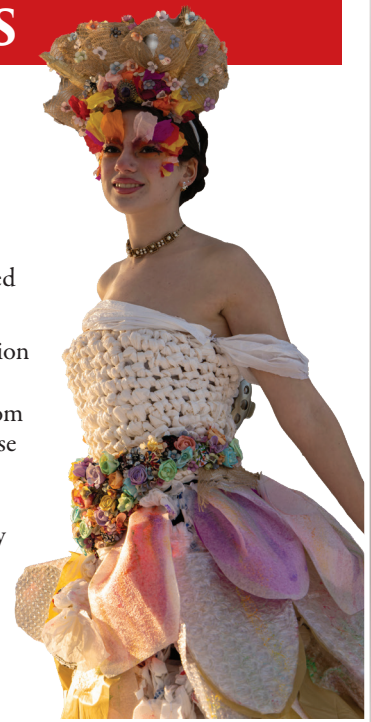
The 10 entries chosen for the World Final stood out for their ingenuity, storytelling, and commitment to sustainability. The national competition, based out of New York, was held online in May. The World Final was held in The Helix in Dublin at the end of February.

At worlds, Raina and Claire competed alongside 60 teams of finalists from Ireland, the United

Kingdom, France, Italy, the United Arab Emirates, and the United States.

Additionally, Fox Chapel Area seniors Lily McLaughlin and Ayla Ojanen, who made the World Final last school year, made it to this school year's national contest. They were assisted by senior Katie Siddons.

Junk Kouture is a sustainable fashion competition open to students ages 13-19 that challenges young people to create high-fashion designs from 100% recycled materials. The creations showcase the creativity, innovation, and environmental consciousness driving the next generation of changemakers. The competition is organized by Junk Kouture Operations Ireland Ltd. and is the largest sustainable fashion competition for young people.



HATS OFF TO READING!

Elementary classes in the Fox Chapel Area School District celebrated Read Across America Week, an annual nationwide initiative designed to promote literacy, encourage a love of reading, and highlight diverse books for children and teenagers. Established in 1998 by the National Education Association, it often features schoolwide events, guest readers, and themed activities for young students.





FOX CHAPEL AREA POLAR PLUNGE TEAM RAISES NEARLY \$31,000

*Total Most of Any School in Pennsylvania
for 4th Consecutive Year*

A group of Fox Chapel Area High School and Dorseyville Middle School students raised \$30,881 in the 2026 Cool Schools Polar Plunge. For the fourth consecutive year, the total raised by Fox Chapel Area's team was the highest amount collected by a team in Pennsylvania. The money raised will support Special Olympics Unified Sports teams at Fox Chapel Area and across the state, which promote inclusion through competitive experiences. During the past four years, the Fox Chapel Area Polar Plunge team has raised \$152,888.

Donations can still be made to Fox Chapel Area's team at <https://give.specialolympicspa.org/team/790101>. Once again, a Fox Chapel Area family matched a portion of the donations given to the team.

The Fox Chapel Area High School and Dorseyville Middle School students participated in the Pittsburgh Cool Schools Polar Plunge on February 27 at Acrisure Stadium.



AFTERNOON OF SERVICE BENEFITS MANY

Students and staff at Dorseyville Middle School participated in the school's annual Afternoon of Service in early February. Again this year, each DMS teacher picked a service project for an organization or nonprofit of their choice, and students volunteered at one of the sessions. This year's event highlighted a partnership between DMS and the A.W. Beattie Career Center. Staff at A.W. Beattie designed and cut new boards for Blue Run Trail, which is adjacent to Dorseyville Middle School, and students painted the boards for installation at the trailhead.





HARTWOOD STUDENTS HONOR SCHOOL BOARD

Hartwood Elementary School third-grade students showed their appreciation for the hard work and dedication of the Fox Chapel Area School Board in honor of the Pennsylvania School Boards Association School Director Recognition Month in January.

The students are all part of the school's JAMBethekindkid program, a club that is built on the concept of spreading kindness and helping others. They expressed their gratitude for all that the school board does for students and staff in the district. The students also shared some ways the JAM program connects to the district's four pillars of purpose, passion, care, and community, as well as the positive attributes board members demonstrate each day.

"We see how much you care about our schools, students, and teachers. Thank you for being leaders who show us what kindness and generosity look like," Emery Frank said. "Thank you for recognizing that students have different interests and needs."

"Thank you for encouraging all members of the Fox Chapel Area School District to help us grow and learn using the pillars to success as a guide," said Benjy Farkas.

The students thanked the board for supporting important programs, such as JAM.

"You have modeled the nature of giving and supporting those around you with the important work you do for our school community," said Jaden Choi. "In a similar way, the JAM organization provides us with the chance to support and give to people in our school and community by spreading kindness and supporting local charities."

The students talked about the school board's passion for ensuring the district continues to grow and thrive, and about the JAM club members' passion for using their creativity to spread kindness and help others.



"The 46 members are dedicated to helping those around them, even giving up recess once per week to attend our group meetings," Oona Grashow said.

The group also told the board that they learn care through a safe, supportive learning environment.

"Our JAM-packed closet provides an additional resource for our Hartwood family by providing some basic necessities for anyone in our building who may need them," Benjy said.

The students said they enjoy building connections with other students and making an impact on the world around them. The students of Hartwood have supported UPMC Children's Hospital, Light of Life Rescue Mission, Ronald McDonald House Charities, Meals on Wheels, and Animal Friends, among others.

"We are so grateful for everything you do to make the Fox Chapel Area School District a place where we feel safe, supported, and ready to learn," Olive Hughes shared.

Each school board member received a personalized fox keychain and a fingerprint fox magnet, both made by the students.

TELETHON RAISES MORE THAN \$101,000 FOR FOX FAMILIES CARE



Fox Chapel Area School District students held their 36th annual telethon December 23, 2025, and raised \$101,001! This year's total brings the money raised by Fox Chapel Area students and staff to nearly \$1.4 million during the last 36 years for various local and regional charities.

The telethon raised money for the local organization Fox Families Care and involved students, families, and staff from all six schools in the district. This year, anonymous donors through Fox Families Care matched donations up to \$50,000.

The telethon was coordinated by the Fox Chapel Area High School Fox Leadership Council and the high school's video production students, who plan and produce the event.

Fox Families Care is an organization that works to bridge the gap between the needs and resources of children and families in the Fox Chapel Area School District. The group invests in the needs of local children and works directly with the district, in conjunction with other community partners.

Donations to Fox Families Care can be made anytime at <https://www.foxfamiliescare.org/donate>.





FRESHMEN ELLIE LANGE, DELANEY O'TOOLE MAKE IMMEDIATE IMPACT

It's not often high school athletes make their mark in school history so early in their careers, but ninth-grade swimming standouts Ellie Lange and Delaney O'Toole have done just that.

Both Ellie and Delaney excelled at the WPIAL Class 3A championships, held February 26 and 27 at Trees Hall at the University of Pittsburgh. Ellie won gold in the 200 individual medley (IM), and Delaney placed first in the 50 freestyle and the 100 backstroke. Both were also part of the 400 freestyle relay team that set a school record and won first place at WPIALs, as well as the first-place 200 medley relay team.

Their success continued at the PIAA Class 3A Swimming & Diving Championships at Bucknell University March 11 and 12. Ellie won gold in the 200 IM, and Delaney placed first in the 100 back. Each added a silver medal – Ellie in the 500 free and Delaney in the 50 free – and both were part of the 400 free relay that took second and set a team record at PIAAs. Delaney was also on the 200 free relay team that captured a bronze medal and also set a team record at states.

Coach Bailey Bonnett, herself a standout high school and college swimmer and an Olympic trials qualifier during her collegiate career, says the two athletes have a lot in common.

"Both Delaney and Ellie have such a gritty and racing mindset, and are very determined," she says. "They believe in themselves, and they care a lot about the team. Every time they step on the block, they are ready to give everything they've got."

Obviously, that mentality has produced tremendous results.

This season, Ellie made history in the 500 free, while Delaney set team records in the 100 backstroke and 50 and 100 free, breaking her own record in the 50 free at PIAAs. Both were part of the 400 free relay team that set a team record at PIAAs, and Delaney was part of the 200 free relay that notched a team record at states.

Ellie qualified for seven WPIAL championship individual events, while Delaney qualified six times. Both swimmers made the cut in the 200 free, 50 free, 100

butterfly, 100 free, and 500 free. Ellie also made the cut in the 100 breaststroke and 200 IM, and Delaney qualified in the 100 back. Ellie and Delaney each swam four events at PIAAs, the maximum number allowed in the competition.

"I love the sport of swimming and want to be the best at it that I can be," Ellie says. "I think the feeling of having a big drop or getting a cut is one of the best things in the world."

Family Support Buys Delaney O'Toole

Delaney entered high school with an already impressive résumé, including five top-10 national rankings in her age group.

She says one particular race stands out: breaking 23 seconds in the 50 free after a flat start. That record was formerly held by Foxes alumna Sarah Pasquella, who now swims for the University of Michigan.

"Knowing the caliber of Sarah and after swimming with her for years in club, it feels like a great accomplishment to be able to break her records," Delaney says.

Delaney gives a lot of credit for her development to her older sister, Payton, a 2023 Fox Chapel Area graduate who now swims for Ashland University in Ohio.

"Payton has given me so much great advice in and out of the pool, not only in her words, but also her actions," Delaney says of her sister. "She's always been a great role model to me and many others."

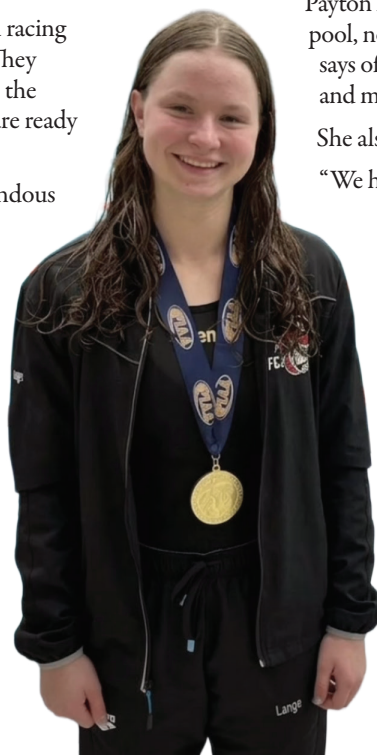
She also credits Ellie for motivating her in the pool.

"We have been racing next to each other for as long as I can remember, and it is always such good competition," she says. "We always push each other to perform our best, especially because Ellie has great sportsmanship, no matter the race or outcome."

Summer Swim Turns into Passion for Ellie Lange

Ellie also has strong familial ties to the Fox Chapel Area swimming program. Her grandfather swam for the Foxes and was the 1965 WPIAL champion in the 50 free.

Although Ellie didn't spend her earliest years in the Pittsburgh area, her family moved back to her mother's hometown. Soon after moving



back, she joined a local summer swim club to meet new friends. That decision helped shape her passion for the sport and her friendships with the people she now swims with on her high school team.

One of those early friendships was forged with Delaney.

"I have known Delaney for almost as long as I have been swimming," she says. "She is an incredibly gifted swimmer, and it is fun to finally be on the same team after seeing each other at meets and competing against each other for so long."

Ellie has also proven her own talent. As an eighth-grader, she earned her first junior national cut in the 1650 freestyle.

"I was shocked when I looked up at the board and saw my time because I was more focused on getting cuts in some other events," she recalls.

This season, her focus remains on personal improvement. She says, "Ultimately, swimming is about beating yourself, and I definitely want to see how I have improved," she says.

At the same time, she is thrilled with the supportive Foxes' team environment and the collective positive energy.

"The atmosphere on this team has been amazing," Ellie says. "The group has done a phenomenal job of welcoming me. I think there is incredibly strong leadership and coaching, making it a fun and supportive environment."



WPIAL Medalists and PIAA Qualifiers & PIAA Medalists

**State Qualifier + New School Record*



WPIAL Girls

Girls 200 Yard Medley Relay* – 1st Place
Cameryn Brindza, Ellie Lange, Josie Stanczak, Delaney O'Toole

Girls 200 Yard Freestyle
Charlotte Rusche* – 2nd Place
Maren Shelkey-Bray* – 5th Place
Nico Ressler* – 6th Place

Girls 200 Yard IM
Ellie Lange* – 1st Place
Cameryn Brindza* – 9th Place

Girls 50 Yard Freestyle
Delaney O'Toole* – 1st Place (22.97)+

Girls 100 Yard Butterfly
Josie Stanczak* – 4th Place

Girls 200 Yard Freestyle Relay* – 2nd Place
Josie Stanczak, Tuuli Airik, Norah Kovach, Charlotte Rusche

Girls 100 Yard Freestyle
Charlotte Rusche* – 5th Place
Josie Stanczak* – 6th Place

Girls 500 Yard Freestyle
Ellie Lange* – 3rd Place
Nico Ressler* – 5th Place
Maren Shelkey-Bray* – 6th Place

Girls 100 Yard Backstroke
Delaney O'Toole* – 1st Place (54.13)+
Cameryn Brindza* – 4th Place

Girls 400 Yard Freestyle Relay* – 1st Place (3:27.38)+
Ellie Lange, Nico Ressler, Charlotte Rusche, Delaney O'Toole

WPIAL Boys

Boys 50 Yard Freestyle
Owen Nguyen* – 8th Place (tie)

Boys 100 Yard Butterfly
Nathan Agens* – 5th Place (51.20)+
Arman Alborzi – 6th Place

Boys 200 Yard Freestyle Relay* – 6th Place
Arman Alborzi, Hayden Kang, Owen Nguyen, Nathan Agens

Boys 400 Yard Freestyle Relay – 6th Place (PIAA Alternate)
Arman Alborzi, Hayden Kang, Owen Nguyen, Nathan Agens

1 Meter Diving
Gosha Pistsov* – 4th Place

PIAA Girls

Girls 200 Yard IM
Ellie Lange – 1st Place

Girls 50 Yard Freestyle
Delaney O'Toole – 2nd Place (22.81)+

Girls 200 Yard Freestyle Relay – 3rd Place (1:34.67)+
Josie Stanczak, Tuuli Airik, Charlotte Rusche, Delaney O'Toole

Girls 500 Yard Freestyle
Ellie Lange – 2nd Place (4:51.82)+

Girls 100 Yard Backstroke
Delaney O'Toole – 1st Place (54.15)+

Girls 400 Yard Freestyle Relay – 2nd Place (3:25.04)+
Josie Stanczak, Ellie Lange, Charlotte Rusche, Delaney O'Toole



JOHN REHAK: BUILT BY ADVERSITY

Senior Returns to Form, Leads Foxes

John Rehak was a force on the Foxes basketball team – a top scorer, a tireless hustler, and a versatile leader who could play all guard positions, get the ball to the hoop, and work the post, if needed. He also possesses a basketball IQ well beyond his years, something his coaches admire and respect. Given all that, it's hard to believe basketball wasn't his first athletic passion.

That distinction belonged to ice hockey, which John played for many years growing up.

John's mother, a former high school basketball and track standout, introduced him to the game early. She often took him to a park in Aspinwall to play and practice shots, and she taught him the details of the game. Still, he wasn't interested in giving up hockey. It wasn't until middle school that John seriously considered joining the basketball team, something his sixth-grade social studies teacher at Dorseyville Middle School, Daryl Natali, encouraged him to do. Mr. Natali became a significant influence in John's life, both academically and athletically, and played a big role in helping him develop confidence on the court.

"Mr. Natali would come to school an hour early, and we would play basketball at 7 in the morning, getting more practice in," John recalls of his former coach. "He's the one who taught me to see other people's perspectives, and that helped me to become a better leader and person."

Another major factor solidified basketball as John's top sport. In eighth grade, varsity head coach Zach Skrinjar recognized his promise, along with that of current seniors Anderson Dockey and Max Melocchi, and moved them up to the high school's freshman team. That season was pivotal, not only for John but also for the entire program, as the varsity team defied the odds and captured the 2022 WPIAL Class 6A championship.

The excitement of that entire season was thrilling, but it also taught John about the amount of work and level of commitment it takes to compete at the highest level. Since then, strong communication with his coaches and teammates has been critical to his growth, along with detailed preparation before each game.

"He talks a lot to me on the sidelines during practices and talks to me about the team and upcoming opponents," says coach Skrinjar, now in his 17th year at the helm of the program. "John sees the game as a coach does, and I appreciate his insights. He definitely has coaching in his future if that's something he would want to pursue."

Assistant coach Gabe Skrinjar adds, "John really sets the tone with his defense and his encouragement of his teammates, especially the younger ones with less varsity experience. He's always talking to them and giving them insight, positivity, and support. His teammates feed off his energy and want to follow in his footsteps. He's been very successful in driving to the

hoop and scoring, while also picking up fouls on his opponents on his way to score."

That energy extends beyond the court. In addition to his responsibilities with the team, John holds dual-enrollment status at Fox Chapel Area High School and Penn State Greater Allegheny in McKeesport. He spends his mornings taking college courses and his afternoons going to his high school classes, followed by practices or games.

So far, John has accrued 15 college credits, and by graduation, he will have earned 27 credits, giving him a good head start as a college undergraduate next year.



Tough Challenge

What was supposed to be a celebratory night – John's first appearance as a starter in his sophomore year – turned into a nightmare. On January 12, 2024, during the Foxes' home opener against Woodland Hills, the audience fell silent as John collapsed on the court. Nearly 20 minutes passed before he was helped off the court, after suffering a very serious leg injury: a broken tibia and fibula. The injuries were so severe that he was sidelined for eight months.

"I have never seen anything like his injury," says coach Zach Skrinjar. "Being by him and sitting with him on the court waiting for medical attention was a surreal feeling."

John says the challenge made him a better version of himself.

"I thought, 'Why pout about it; let me do something to change it and become an impact for the team in another way.' I really

"I thought, 'Why pout about it; let me do something to change it and become an impact for the team in another way.' I really think just observing the game, picking up small details, and listening to the coaches translated over to me becoming a leader."

– John Rehak, on the season-ending injury he suffered as a sophomore



think just observing the game, picking up small details, and listening to the coaches translated over to me becoming a leader."

John returned to the team after a few weeks, but on the sidelines, a difficult adjustment after earning a starting position. It was then that he learned how to assume a different, but just as important, role.

"I was always out looking to be part of the team and help any way I could," John says. "I was just looking at the game very differently, and it transformed into how I look at the game now. I've seen how we play what little things we can do better."

He recalls his first game back as a junior.

"I was very rusty, but I remember one of the first things I did was to take charge," John says. "I tied the game, got a steal, and got a layup to win the game. I was very afraid it would be a mental struggle, but the coaches around me told me to do what I've done my whole life, and I'd be fine."

Roaring Back

It's now John's senior year, and the 6'2" guard made his presence felt early and often this season.

He scored a buzzer-beater in the final seconds of the Foxes' game versus Shaler Area, when he drove the ball full court and shot a layup that won the game for the Foxes, 64-63. His finesse earned him a shoutout from Takeover Hoops, which selected his game-winning shot as one of the WPIAL's Top 5 Plays of the Week.

The WPIAL Class 6A Section 1 schedule was a difficult one this season, with many talented and improved teams vying for top billing. John says this group of Foxes players had really good chemistry on and off the court.

"We know each other well, and the four seniors have bonded the most. But the entire team spent a lot of time doing shooting drills and finishing drills. Every day, we all worked on our games to get better."

Even as the team's leading scorer, John didn't crave the limelight.

"Growing up, I was never big on scoring, and I still don't care about scoring; that's just my personality," he says. "I just wanted us to learn how we could get the win and how to make the game better."





All Fox Chapel Area School District
families and residents welcome!

Safety, Health & Wellness Event

Saturday, April 18, 2026

10 a.m. - 2 p.m.
Aspinwall Municipal Parking Lot
241 Freeport Road, Aspinwall



FREE!

Wellness screenings
Touch-a-truck area
Bike helmets
Bike rodeo w/police
Car seat checks
Food & treats

Sponsored by the Fox Chapel Area
School District & its school resource
officers; the boroughs of Aspinwall,
Blawnox, Fox Chapel & Sharpsburg;
Indiana & O'Hara townships; and all
municipal police in the FCASD

For more information:

Jill Leonard
(412) 967-2453
jill_leonard@fcasd.edu



2025-2026 FACTS & FIGURES

2025-2026 STUDENT ENROLLMENT

ELEMENTARY SCHOOLS (K-GRADE 5)

Fairview Elementary School.....	401
Hartwood Elementary School.....	404
Kerr Elementary School.....	436
O'Hara Elementary School.....	758
Total Elementary Enrollment.....	1,999

SECONDARY SCHOOLS (GRADES 6-12)

Dorseyville Middle School (6-8).....	981
Fox Chapel Area High School (9-12)	1,366
Total Secondary Enrollment.....	2,347
Total District Enrollment	4,346

CLASS OF 2025

The total number of graduates in the Fox Chapel Area High School Class of 2025 was 338. The percentages of 2025 graduates entering some type of postsecondary education were as follows:

Four-Year Colleges	257 or 76%
Two-Year Colleges/Other.....	31 or 9%
Total Continuing Education.....	288 or 85%

AVERAGE SAT SCORES

	Evidence-Based	
	Reading & Writing	Math
Class of 2025	623	616
Class of 2024	613	615
Class of 2023	611	606
Class of 2022	608	613
Class of 2021	611	618

A total of 225 members (67%) of the Class of 2025 took the SAT during their junior or senior year. The national average scores for all 2025 graduates taking the test were 521 in evidence-based reading and writing and 508 in math.

PROFESSIONAL STAFF STATISTICS

NUMBER OF PROFESSIONAL STAFF

Elementary	171
Secondary	184
Total	355

MASTER'S OR DOCTORATE DEGREE OR EQUIVALENT

Elementary	75%
Secondary	82%

AVERAGE YEARS OF TEACHING EXPERIENCE

Elementary	17 Years
Secondary	22 Years

THE COMMUNITY

The Fox Chapel Area School District is located in a dynamic suburban community about 11 miles northeast of downtown Pittsburgh. The district includes six municipalities (the boroughs of Aspinwall, Blawnox, Fox Chapel, and Sharpsburg, and the townships of Indiana and O'Hara) representing a wide range of social, economic, cultural, and religious backgrounds. The schools provide a comprehensive array of educational opportunities to serve the needs of this diverse population and to meet the high expectations of its residents. The district encompasses an area of about 36 square miles with approximately 29,000 residents.

THE SCHOOL DISTRICT

The Fox Chapel Area School District is a nationally recognized, award-winning school district that produces high student achievement, with a motivated and professional faculty and an involved and caring administration. There are six schools in the district.

MISSION

The Fox Chapel Area School District exists to maximize learning, achievement, and growth through a focus on educating the whole student.

VISION & PILLARS

The Fox Chapel Area School District will engage students in a learning community that values belonging and focuses on the education of the whole student through four pillars for success:

- Purpose: Learning and teaching through inclusive, standards-aligned, and culturally responsive approaches that meet the needs of all students, while monitoring growth and success through a data-informed approach for continuous improvement
- Passion: Providing students with authentic learning experiences that motivate them to pursue their interests with a focus on educating the whole student
- Care: Fostering safe and supportive learning environments that value the diversity, individuality, social and emotional wellness, and belonging of all students
- Community: Partnering and collaborating with the community

VALUES

- Respect: Valuing self and others; caring for one's environment; and pride in positive actions
- Responsibility: Accountability; taking ownership of what you do; and listening and following through
- Integrity: Doing the right thing, even when no one is watching; being honest with self and others; and trustworthiness in thoughts, words, and actions



2026-2027 Fox Chapel Area School District Calendar

August 2026				
3	4	5	6	7
10	11	12	13	14
P	FC	P/C	P	P
17	18	19	20	21
FC				(4)
24	25	26	27	28
31				

September 2026				
	1	2	3	(9)
X	7	8	9	(13)
	14	15	16	(18)
X	21	22	23	(22)
28	29	30		

October 2026				
			1	(27)
			2	(32)
5	6	7	8	9
12	13	E/+	15	(37)
19	20	21	22	E/C(42)
26	27	28	29	R(47)
			30	

November 2026				
E/CONF	CONF/+			(51)
2	3	4	5	6
9	10	11	12	(56)
16	17	18	19	(61)
23	24	E/+ (64)	X	X
X	30			

December 2026				
	1	2	3	(68)
7	8	9	10	(73)
14	15	16	17	(78)
21	22	(81)	X	X
X	X	X	X	
28	29	30	31	

January 2027				
				X
				1
4	5	6	7	(86)
11	12	13	14	(90)
P	18	19	20	FC
				R(94)
				(99)
25	26	27	28	29

February 2027				
1	2	3	4	(104)
8	9	10	11	(109)
P	15	16	17	(113)
22	23	24	25	(118)
				26

March 2027				
1	2	3	4	(123)
8	9	10	11	(128)
15	16	17	18	E/C(133)
X	X	X	X	X
22	23	24	25	26
29	30	31		

April 2027				
			1	R(138)
			2	(143)
5	6	7	8	9
12	13	14	15	(148)
19	20	21	22	(153)
26	27	28	29	(158)
			30	

May 2027				
3	4	5	6	(163)
10	11	12	13	(168)
17	18	19	20	(173)
24	25	26	27	(178)
X	31			

June 2027				
	1	K/E	3	E/C(182)
FC	P	P/C		R
7	8	9	10	11
14	15	16	17	18
21	22	23	24	25
28	29	30		

1st Grading Period – October 23 – 42 days

2nd Grading Period – January 14 – 48 days

3rd Grading Period – March 19 – 43 days

4th Grading Period – June 4 – 49 days

November 2 – Elem/Sec Early Dismissal &

Parent-Teacher Conference Day

November 3 – Parent-Teacher Conference Day

(No School for Students)

June 4 – Last Day for Students = 182 Days

(unless makeup days are required)

June 9 – Last Day for Professional Staff = 195 Days

(unless makeup days are required)

First Semester	
8/11-13	New Teacher Induction Days
8/17, 20, 21	Professional Development Days
8/18 & 24	Full Clerical Days
8/19	Professional Development/Clerical Day
8/25	First Day for Students
9/7	Labor Day
9/21	Fall Break
10/14	Elem/Sec Early Dismissal
10/23	Elem/Sec Early Dismissal & Clerical Day
11/2	Elem/Sec Early Dismissal & Parent Teacher Conference Day
11/3	Parent Teacher Conference Day
11/25	Elem/Sec Early Dismissal
11/26-30	Thanksgiving Break
12/24-1/1	Winter Break

Second Semester	
1/15	Full Clerical Day
1/18	Martin Luther King Jr. Day & PD Day
2/15	Presidents' Day & PD Day
3/19	Elem/Sec Early Dismissal & Clerical Day
3/22-26	Spring Break
5/31	Memorial Day
6/2	Kennywood Day (Tentative) & Elem/Sec Early Dismissal
6/4	Last Day for Students
	Elem/Sec Early Dismissal & Clerical Day
6/6	Commencement
6/7	Full Clerical Day
6/8	Professional Development Day
6/9	Professional Development/Clerical Day

I	New Teacher Induction Day
C	Clerical Day
FC	Full Clerical Day
	(No School for Students)
P	Professional Development (PD) Day
	(No School for Students)
E	Elem/Sec Early Dismissal
X	Holiday/Break/No School
+	Act 80 Day
CONF	Parent Teacher Conference Day
K	Kennywood Day (Tentative)
R	Report Cards Available

April 26-May 7 shaded areas indicate PSSA testing windows. January 4-15 and May 17-28 shaded areas indicate Keystone Exams testing windows. Refer to the FCASD website (www.fcasd.edu) for specific grades tested in each time frame.

Makeup days, if necessary, will be added on to the end of the school year, beginning June 7, 2027.

Please consult building and website calendars for building-level early dismissal dates, school activities, and other special events.

APPROVED 2.9.26

FOX CHAPEL AREA SCHOOL DISTRICT DIRECTORY

District Administration

611 Field Club Road
Pittsburgh, PA 15238
412/963-9600
www.fcasd.edu
Superintendent: Mary Catherine Reljac, Ed.D.
Deputy Superintendent: David McCommons, Ed.D.
Director of Finance: Ryan Manzer

District Resource Staff

Executive Director of Elementary Education and Instruction: Ashley Constantine, Ed.D.
Executive Director of Secondary Education and Instruction: Matthew Patterson, Ph.D.
Director of Special Education and Pupil Services: Timothy Mahoney, Ed.D.
Executive Director of Instructional and Innovative Leadership: Megan Collett, Ed.D.
Director of Literacy: Dana Simile, Ed.D.
Director of Student Achievement and Instructional Verification: Stephen Edwards, Ed.D.
Director of Ancillary Services: Daniel Breitreutz
Chief of School Police/School Safety and Security Coordinator: Joseph Kozarian
Director of Athletics: Michael O'Brien
Coordinator of Communications: Bonnie Berzonski
Community Engagement Specialist: Jill Leonard

FOX CHAPEL AREA SCHOOLS

Fairview Elementary School

738 Dorseyville Road
Pittsburgh, PA 15238
412/963-9315
Principal: Susan Kreit

Hartwood Elementary School

3730 Saxonburg Boulevard
Pittsburgh, PA 15238
412/767-5396
Principal: Rachel Fischbaugh, Ed.D.

Kerr Elementary School

341 Kittanning Pike
Pittsburgh, PA 15215
412/781-4105
Principal: Katelyn Toth

O'Hara Elementary School

115 Cabin Lane
Pittsburgh, PA 15238
412/963-0333
Principal: Kristy Batis, Ed.D.
Program Principal: Kevin Smetak

Dorseyville Middle School

3732 Saxonburg Boulevard
Pittsburgh, PA 15238
412/767-5343
Principal: Jonathan Nauhaus
Program Principal: Laura Miller, Ed.D.

Fox Chapel Area High School

611 Field Club Road
Pittsburgh, PA 15238
412/967-2430
Lead Principal: Michael Hower, Ed.D.
Program Principal (A-L): Michelle Young, Ph.D.
Program Principal (M-Z): Nicole Smith, Ed.D.

FOX CHAPEL AREA SCHOOL BOARD



Front row, left to right: Adam G. Goode (2029 – Region III); Eric G. Hamilton, Treasurer (2027 – Region I); Marybeth Dadd, President (2027 – Region III); Ronald P. Frank, Vice President (2027 – Region II); and Vanessa K. Lynch, Assistant Secretary (2027 – Region II). Back row, left to right: Paul Giuffre, Solicitor; Ariel Zych (2029 – Region II); Katie Findley (2027 – Region I); Dr. Mary Catherine Reljac, Superintendent; Dr. David P. McCommons, Deputy Superintendent; Amy B. Cooper (2029 – Region I); Dr. Jessica Haselkorn (2029 – Region III); and Kathleen Anuszek, Board Secretary.

Region I covers all of Sharpsburg Borough and Wards 2, 3, and 4 of O'Hara Township; Region II covers Districts 2, 4, and 5 of Fox Chapel Borough and all of Indiana Township; and Region III covers all of Aspinwall Borough, Blawnox Borough, Wards 1 and 5 of O'Hara Township, and Districts 1 and 3 of Fox Chapel Borough.

School board meetings are typically scheduled for the first and second Mondays of each month at 7 p.m. The public is invited to attend. For more information and meeting locations, visit www.fcasd.edu.

COMPLIANCE STATEMENT

The Fox Chapel Area School District does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, religion, sex, national origin, age, disability, and/or any other basis prohibited by law, and prohibits discrimination, including harassment, in any employment practice, education program, or activity that it operates. Individuals may report concerns or questions to the Title IX coordinator and/or the Section 504 and Americans with Disabilities (ADA) coordinator. The notice of nondiscrimination is available at www.fcasd.edu.

Title IX: David P. McCommons, Ed.D.
(412/967-2456)

Section 504 and ADA: Timothy A. Mahoney, Ed.D.
(412/967-2435)

Address: Fox Chapel Area School District
611 Field Club Road
Pittsburgh, PA 15238