

# HYDE PARK CENTRAL SCHOOL DISTRICT **CONNECTIONS**



## **Roman's Remarks**

The fall season is in full swing! It's one of my favorite times of year, the energy in our schools is high, and students are settling into routines, learning and connecting with one another.

As the days grow shorter and mornings get a little darker, we know it can sometimes be harder to start the day with energy and optimism. The change in season can bring new challenges, and that's okay. This month, as we recognize National Bullying Prevention Month, it's an important reminder of the power of kindness, empathy and encouragement. A simple smile or a kind word can brighten someone's day, especially when the world outside feels a little gray.

I am confident that our Hyde Park community will continue to lift each other up. Together, we can ensure that every student feels seen, supported and valued. Our staff is here to help families and students navigate these seasonal changes and keep mornings and school days bright. Let's continue to look out for one another, celebrate the season, and make kindness our daily habit.

With Hyde Park Pride,



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# FDR Senior Named Semifinalist in the 2026 National Merit Scholarship Program

Officials of National Merit Scholarship Corporation (NMSC®) announced the names of more than 16,000 Semifinalists in the 71st annual National Merit Scholarship Program, including FDR's own Roman Pemberton. These academically talented high school seniors have an opportunity to continue in the competition for some 6,930 National Merit Scholarships worth nearly \$26 million that will be offered next spring.

To be considered for a Merit Scholarship® award, Semifinalists must fulfill several requirements to advance to the Finalist level of the competition. About 95 percent of the Semifinalists are expected to attain Finalist standing, and approximately half of the Finalists will win a National Merit Scholarship, earning the Merit Scholar® title.

Over 1.3 million juniors in about 20,000 high schools entered the 2026 National Merit Scholarship Program by taking the 2024 Preliminary SAT/National Merit Scholarship Qualifying Test (PSAT/NMSQT®), which served as an initial screen of program entrants. The nationwide pool of Semifinalists, representing less than one percent of U.S. high school seniors, includes the highest-scoring entrants in each state. The number of Semifinalists in a state is proportional to the state's percentage of the national total of graduating seniors.

"It is very exciting to hear that Roman Pemberton has been named as a Semifinalist in the 2026 National Merit Scholarship Program," shared FDR Principal Michael Ruella. "Roman is an outstanding student that goes above and beyond for our school community. He is an active participant in our Building Leadership Team and serves on the FDR PTSA Board as our Secretary. The staff at FDR wishes Roman the best of luck and we hope to see him continue on to the finalist level of competition."

From over 16,000 Semifinalists, more than 15,000 are expected to advance to the Finalist level, and in February they will be notified of this designation. All National Merit Scholarship winners will be selected from this group of Finalists. Merit Scholar designees are selected on the basis of their skills, accomplishments, and potential for success in rigorous college studies, without regard to gender, race, ethnic origin, or religious preference.



# Attendance Awareness Month Ends, But Our Efforts Continue

September was Attendance Awareness Month, and our district has plenty to celebrate. Thanks to your partnership and dedication, we reduced chronic absenteeism by 5.2% last year, an incredible step forward and a true testament to what we can achieve when we work together.

While September has come to an end, we are still committed to building on that success and keeping the momentum going. Every student deserves the opportunity to learn, grow and thrive, and consistent attendance is one of the strongest predictors of academic success.

We also recognize that some students face real challenges that make attending school every day more difficult. That's why our district is committed to helping families overcome barriers such as transportation, health concerns and social-emotional needs.

Our counselors, social workers and attendance teams are ready to partner with families to find solutions that work. We can also connect families with valuable community resources for housing, food and childcare, and we offer academic and emotional support to re-engage students who may feel disconnected.

Together, we can continue to make a difference one school day at a time!



## Free Meals for All Students

During the current school year, our school district will be participating in the Community Eligibility Provision program, which provides no-cost meals to all students.

CEP is a federal provision that allows qualifying schools to provide free breakfast and lunch to all students. This option increases school meal participation by removing stigma, maximizes federal reimbursements, and eliminates unpaid school meal debt, all while upholding nutrition standards and meal quality.

New York State requires CEP schools to collect information from families through the **CEP Household Income Eligibility Form**. The information gathered on this form is used for state education funding purposes. Also, individual families may be eligible for certain benefits based on the data collected through these forms. **Complete the form by scanning the QR code:**



Our school district is supported by the Capital Region BOCES Shared Food Services Team. Our participation in this service provides many benefits to our students and school community, including:



- Increased access to a wide variety of wholesome food choices.
- Optimized quality and customer service in our food service programs.
- Shared staff with expertise in school nutrition, including a registered dietitian and program specialists.

## Dining at Our District

The café provides dining services for students through the use of their student ID numbers. All the meals offered exceed the nutrition standards set by federal guidelines. The menu follows a seasonal rotation, with variations for fall, winter, and spring. The grain products served are whole grain rich, and there are daily vegetarian choices available for both breakfast and lunch. Every meal includes fresh fruits and vegetables, and students must select at least one at each meal. Milk is offered but is not required for K-12 students. Full meals are available, as well as daily à la carte choices.

## Food Service Family Portal

LINQ Connect allows families to view menus and manage student meal accounts. You can set up one-time payments, set spending limits, transfer funds between students, set low-balance notifications, and more. It's an easy way to manage meal payments without the hassle of sending cash into school. If you have any difficulties accessing your LINQ account, please contact LINQ support at [support@linqconnect.com](mailto:support@linqconnect.com).



## Local Sourcing

We strive to support New York State food producers. Our school district endeavors to utilize as many local farms and vendors as possible.

## School Breakfast

Students may select three to five breakfast items each day.

All students must select a fruit and/or 100% fruit juice at breakfast. Please refer to the website for daily menus.

## School Lunch

Daily entrée choices are a balance of traditional student favorites and global flavors to introduce students to new foods and cultural foodways. All students must select a fruit or vegetable at lunch. Alternate lunch options are available daily. Please refer to the website for daily menus.

If your child requires menu modifications due to allergies or other concerns, please contact your food service director.

Even though meals are free for students through the CEP program, there are other benefits that students may qualify for based on the information provided in the online Eligibility Form which can be found under “links” on ParentSqaure.

Students may qualify for scholarships, reduced AP exam fees, reduced musical instrument rentals and other benefits based on the information provided in the online Eligibility form. The District benefits when families complete the forms because it helps us to stay eligible for CEP, provides reduced tuition for students concurrently enrolled in Dutchess Community College classes and may make the district eligible for certain grants and additional state and federal aid.

## Student Leaders Speak on Success

Episode 2 of HPCSD’s official podcast, *Park and Listen!* is available now! This is our first student hosted episode. Led by senior Roman Pemberton and sophomore Amy Cruz, listeners get an inside look at hot topics such as study strategies, burnout and how to balance academics, extracurriculars and a social life.

Pemberton shared what life looks like excelling in academics and extracurriculars while maintaining a social circle and introducing the college application process into the mix. “You can’t do everything,” he shared. “You have to decide what is most important to you and spend your time accordingly.”

The duo discussed the importance of caring about academics while accepting that your grades do not define who you are, a sentiment that resonated deeply with our student population.

After discussing their lives as students, they spent some time discussing their hobbies and interests, touching on the importance of making time for the things you love to do in order to have energy and motivation to do harder things like sit down and study.

*Park and Listen!* is always accepting applications for student hosts! If your student is interested, have them fill out the form under “links” in ParentSquare.

## FDR student participates in moving 9/11 commemoration

Jaydenn Miller, a first year student in Dutchess BOCES' Security & Law class, and his classmates honored the over 400 first responders who died during the Sept. 11 terrorist attacks on the tragedy's 24th anniversary.

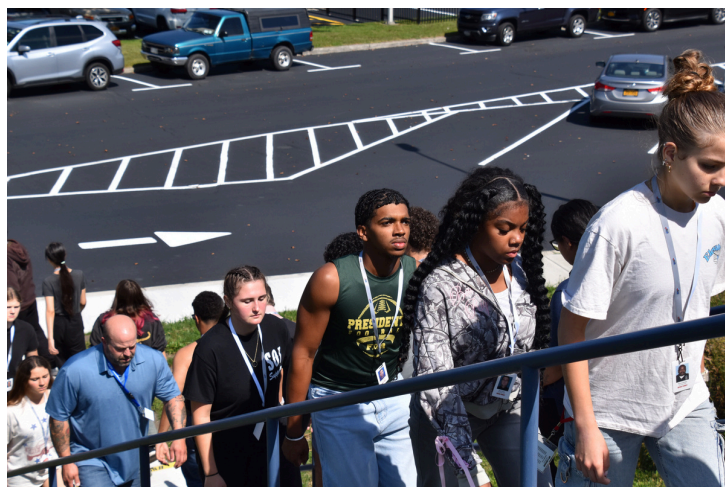
The students wore tags with pictures of police officers that died that day while walking over 400 steps on a stairwell leading down to the campus' Salt Point Center parking lot and later presented brief reports about the officers whose tags they wore. For a separate project, they interviewed people about their reflections of 9/11.

For the reflections project, Miller interviewed his aunt as she worked at the World Trade Center but did not come to work that day. He wore a tag of New Jersey State Police officer James W. Parham who died doing what he loved – serving others.

“Walking the steps felt good to do knowing that we were honoring people who gave their lives to help others,” Miller said. “We’re starting off the program with something honorable and memorable.”

Class instructor Steve Price noted that this commemoration memorialized the victims and taught students, who were born years after 9/11, about what was lost that day.

“Kids in this generation really need to know what happened that day and know what the country went through,” Price said. “It’s another history lesson for them, whereas we all lived it and we just want to pass that experience on to them.”





## North Park Rocks Out with Jared Campbell

Get out your tiny air guitars, Jared Campbell is back!

Last week, students were treated to an energetic and inspiring performance by award-winning singer-songwriter Jared Campbell. Known for his powerful messages wrapped in catchy tunes, Campbell uses music to teach children the importance of respect, kindness and staying true to themselves.



The sounds of laughter, singing and clapping echoed through the halls as students joined in on Campbell's songs, dancing and waving their hands in the air. "The kids love this assembly," said Principal Megan D'Alessandro. "He's so engaging with the students. They're always singing along and smiling from start to finish."



Campbell, who travels to schools across the country to share his music and message, said returning to North Park was just as fun for him as it was for the students.

"Returning to North Park Elementary was such a treat for me because the students and staff are so amazing," he said. "During my performances with them, all of the students showed so much respect and engagement that it made my job easy. I hope all of the students walked away feeling valuable and ready to take on the world making great decisions."



The assembly is part of North Park Elementary's ongoing focus on social-emotional learning and character education. Events like these reinforce the school's commitment to creating a positive and inclusive environment where every student feels supported.



The morning ended with big smiles, loud applause and plenty of air guitar solos. "It's one of those days students will remember," D'Alessandro said.

A big thank you goes out to the North Park PTA for making this special event possible!

## Heads Will Turn! FDR Drama Club Prepares *The Legend of Sleepy Hollow* for the Fall Drama



There is a chill in the air and the leaves are turning, can you think of a better time for a spooky story? The FDR drama club has you covered!

The FDR drama club is hard at work rehearsing for their fall drama, *The Legend of Sleepy Hollow*, a classic tale that takes place right here in the Hudson Valley! Following an average small town as they welcome newcomer Ichabod Crane, this play balances comedy and suspense perfectly making it suitable for a variety of audiences.



Student Reagan Andros said that rehearsing for *The Legend of Sleepy Hollow* is a new and exciting challenge for her. "I've been in musicals, which have music and big dance numbers that do a lot to tell the story and keep the audience engaged. This is totally dependent on the actors to keep the audience engaged."

"I can't wait to see how we do the Headless Horseman. I think that's going to be super cool for the audience too," said Andros.



To further prepare for their performances, the cast recently visited the historic Sleepy Hollow Cemetery to gain inspiration. Students explored the grounds, learned more about the tale's origins and the region's rich history and gathered at the graveside of author Washington Irving, who penned the classic story.

The production of *The Legend of Sleepy Hollow* will take the stage at FDR on Thursday, Nov. 7, at 7 p.m., and Friday, Nov. 8, at 2 p.m. Community members are invited to attend and support the talented cast and crew as they bring this timeless story to life!

# HPCSD's Artist and Musician of the Month

## Cayden Lewis (KAY-den LOO-uhs)

Cayden (9th Grade: F.D. Roosevelt HS) is a talented artist whose commitment and dedication are evident in every one of her creations. From her self-directed sketchbook practice to her work in Fashion and Ceramics courses at FDR, Cayden works hard and puts her best effort forth. She is a contributing member of the studios, always keeping her space clean and materials organized. She uses resources to problem-solve whenever she encounters a challenge and is not afraid to persevere and learn new skills. While you will most likely find her drawing detailed works in her sketchbook, Cayden's sewing projects and clay pieces also showcase her capability and creativity.



## Dalia Sewsankar (Dalia Sue-sang-car)

Dalia Sewsankar (5th Grade: North Park Elementary) is a hard working student with a positive attitude, she shows her creativity and her compassion for others every day and Dalia has a smile that lights up the music room when she enters. She is constantly striving to learn new songs and techniques on her cello. “Music can make you feel all different emotions. My favorite part of playing the cello is when the entire orchestra comes together. I especially love music when my Papa goes into his music education mode and teaches me different types of music through the generations,” says Dalia.

This week she came to her lesson and played a song for her teacher. She had learned “You Are My Sunshine” by ear and combined it with the fiddle tune they had learned last year. Mrs. Ely writes: “It is such a pleasure to work with Dalia, watching her grow musically. Congratulations, Dalia!”





## FDR's School Spirit Shines at Annual Pep Rally

Cheers, laughter and community overflowed from the gymnasium during the pep rally on Friday, Sept. 26. Waving handmade signs and celebrating, the FDR students and staff came together for an afternoon to remember. This annual event is a testament to the uplifting and involved community at FDR and in our district.

The sense of unity was felt strongly by all, but especially by the football team who had its homecoming game that evening. Starting quarterback and Senior Class President SJ Kakish said, "It shows us that the whole community is behind us, and their support drives us to do our best." That shared feeling was present throughout the event's festivities. The crowd cheered as teams ran through a tunnel of cheerleaders, students competed in games and the band played cheerful tunes.

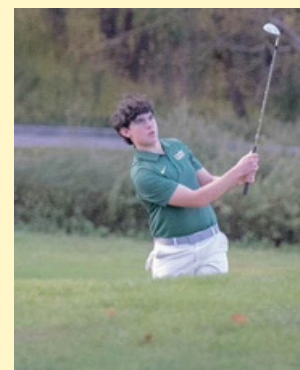
"Homecoming isn't merely an annual gathering to demonstrate our pride, it's a vibrant, living testament to our community's belief that every student, every family and every staff member deserves to be seen, respected and celebrated exactly as they are," said Superintendent Dr. Pedro Roman. "What gets me excited is how it perfectly blends our past with our future potential. Hyde Park Pride is about celebrating our past, present and future, as we pave the way for the limitless possibilities for every child in our district."

## SEPTEMBER ATHLETES OF THE MONTH



### Autumn McRae, Varsity Volleyball

As a Junior, Autumn has led the team in kills, even tying a school record of 26 kills in a game. In addition, she has accumulated over 20 aces, 10 blocks and 70 digs.



### Sam O'Shea, Boys Golf

Senior Sam O'shea shot a season low 37 at Dinsmore Golf Course, leading his team to a victory over Red Hook.

### Varsity Cheer

The Varsity cheer team competed at its first competition in Dover and placed highest overall! Congrats!

### Varsity Volleyball

The Girls Varsity Volleyball team has had an impressive start to the season, winning 7 games this month.

### Varsity Girls Soccer

After a slow start to the season, the team went on to gain 4 wins over the last 2 weeks of September



by Annika Hietanen, Sept. 26, 2025. Varsity cheerleaders laughing before an exciting afternoon at the pep rally.

by Annika Hietanen, Sept. 26, 2025. Seniors Luke Dakin and Brennan Paul competing in the "Pop the Balloon" game.



by Annika Hietanen, Sept. 26, 2025. Varsity Football running through a tunnel of cheerleaders as the final team announced.

# ANNOUNCEMENTS

The next Saturday Academy will be held Nov. 1, 2025. Saturday Academy is designed to offer enriching experiences for all ages. Our goal is to design programs and activities that families may not have the opportunity to experience elsewhere. Children must be accompanied by a guardian.

The Hyde Park Family Resource Center will be celebrating its one year anniversary Oct. 16, at 6p.m. Join us for cupcakes, exciting giveaways and an opportunity to meet your school liasons!

The Friends of the Hyde Park Library are hosting a CIA-prepared dinner on Oct. 18, to raise money for Hyde Park Library's building project. The dinner will take place at the United Methodist Church of Hyde Park, at 1 Church St. Tickets are \$45 per person and can be purchased at the circulation desk of the Hyde Park Library during business hours or on their website.

