



KINGSTON CITY SCHOOL DISTRICT

BUDGET ISSUE

2026

VOTE!

Tuesday, May 19 • 7 AM - 8 PM

CHECK YOUR POLLING PLACES! (See page 5)

KCSD announces Top Students for **CLASS OF 2026**



Valedictorian
Danica Louie

Salutatorian
Christopher
Vargas-Hubner

The Kingston City School District (KCSD) has announced Danica Louie as valedictorian and Christopher Vargas-Hubner as salutatorian for the Kingston High School (KHS) Class of 2026.

Danica, daughter of Town of Ulster residents Erin Lau and Donald Louie, MD, leads her class with a weighted grade point average (GPA) of 102.4198 while completing a rigorous course load of 11 Advanced Placement (AP) and two college-level courses.

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Proposed Budget Responds to Funding Changes While Maintaining Programs and Meets the Tax Cap

At its April 21 meeting, the Kingston City School District (KCSD) Board of Education unanimously approved a \$258,079,830 budget that was developed to maintain existing programs and services for all students while navigating the effects of a number of fiscal challenges.

The proposed budget reflects a 3.43% increase in spending over the current budget and results in a 4.04% tax levy increase, which is the allowable increase under this year's New York State tax cap calculation. The budget requires a simple majority voter approval.

Since the tax cap was introduced in 2012, this is the 15th consecutive year that the District has presented the voters with a spending plan that is at or below its NYS tax cap calculation, reinforcing the Board's long-standing commitment to fiscal responsibility.

Voters will head to the polls on **Tuesday, May 19 from 7 AM to 8 PM** to cast ballots on the budget and elect members to the Board of Education. District polling locations are listed on page 5 of this newsletter.

BALANCING PRIORITIES: STUDENTS AND TAXPAYERS

This year's proposed budget is built around a central priority: maintaining strong opportunities for students while remaining fiscally responsible to taxpayers.

Despite ongoing financial pressures, the plan:

- Preserves all current academic programs, including art, music, Advanced Placement, and college-level courses.
- Maintains curriculum initiatives such as Core Knowledge Language Arts (CKLA) and i-Ready.
- Ensures continued access to career and technical education through Ulster BOCES Career Academies at iPark 87.

- Sustains student support services, including school psychologists, social workers, and other support team members in every building—prioritizing not only academic success, but also addressing social and emotional needs.
- Maintains small class sizes

KEY CHALLENGES DRIVING THE BUDGET

The proposed budget was developed in response to overlapping challenges, including changes in State funding, declining enrollment, and rising costs.

Highlights include:

State Funding Changes: Due to changes in local property values driven by an influx of people moving into the area—which in turn increased housing prices—New York State has reclassified Kingston as a “high income, moderate needs” district.

While this designation reflects changes in property wealth, it does not fully capture the needs of the District's student population. KCSD continues to serve many high-needs students, including those receiving special education services and those experiencing housing instability.

In addition to this change in designation, the District is seeing reduced State funding in certain categories, even as student needs remain consistent. The decrease in student enrollment, along with the increase in property wealth has resulted in KCSD receiving less funding for expense-based state aid categories such as BOCES services, Transportation Aid and Special Education services.

Finally, in the 2026–2027 Governor's Budget, Foundation Aid, which is the District's largest source of State funding, is projected to increase by only

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CUSTOMER**

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The Kingston City School District does not discriminate based on race, religion, religious practice, disability, sexual orientation, gender, or any other legally protected status in regard to the employment opportunities or educational programs or activities which it operates. All inquiries regarding the Non-Discrimination policies and/or all complaints regarding violation(s) of these policies should be directed to the KCSD Title IX Officer, 21 Wynkoop Place, Kingston, NY 12401; or by calling Mary Beth Bonville at (845) 943-3057 or Stevie Creft at (845) 943-3819.

Newsletter Layout/Design

Ulster BOCES Community Relations

Supporting Student Success Through Literacy

The Kingston City School District (KCS D) is committed to ensuring that every child learns to read, and can use reading to learn more about the world. In our elementary school classrooms, students use Amplify Core Knowledge Language Arts (CKLA), a high quality literacy program designed to build strong readers, curious thinkers, and confident learners.

CKLA combines reading instruction with engaging topics in science, history, literature, and the arts. Students read, listen, and talk about meaningful texts while building vocabulary and background knowledge that helps them better understand what they read. In the early grades, the program provides clear and structured instruction in phonics, decoding, and fluency so students develop the strong foundation they need to become confident readers.

Students also spend time discussing ideas, asking questions, and writing about what they learn. These activities strengthen comprehension, communication skills, and critical thinking.

The program includes built-in support and enrichment so that all students can master grade-level learning and continue to grow. Families may notice their children using new vocabulary, talking more about what they are learning in school, and becoming more confident readers and writers.

By investing in CKLA, the KCS D is strengthening literacy instruction and helping students build the knowledge, skills, and confidence they need for lifelong learning.



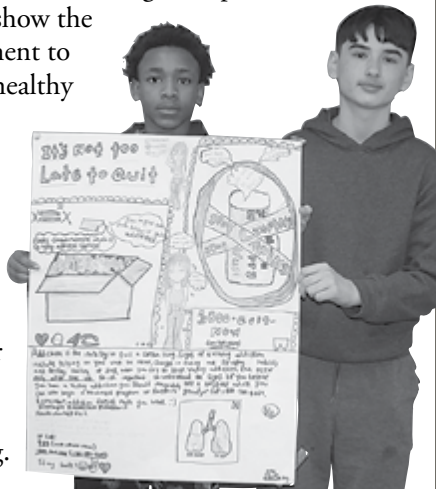
District Expands Efforts to Address Youth Vaping



The Kingston City School District (KCS D) is taking an active role in helping students and families understand the risks of vaping.

Students are also playing an important role in these efforts. In Lori DeMercurio's Health classes at M. Clifford Miller Middle School, students spent four weeks learning about the dangers of vaping. They then used what they learned to create their own anti-vaping posters. Each student shared their work with classmates, helping spread awareness among their peers.

These efforts show the KCS D's commitment to keeping students healthy and informed. By working together with families, community partners, and students, the district is creating a stronger approach to prevention and student well-being.



By working with community partners and involving students in learning, the district is building awareness and promoting prevention.

In February and March, the KCS D partnered with the Ulster Prevention Council to offer Hidden in Plain Sight, an interactive program for parents, caregivers, and community members. The program helped adults learn about current vaping trends among teens, including common devices and warning signs that can be easy to miss. Participants also learned about how vaping can affect both physical and mental health, and were given tools and tips to help them talk with their children about these risks.



Future Advocates: KHS Students Develop Legal Skills Through Mock Trial Club

Kingston High School students recently stepped into the courtroom for their latest Mock Trial competition, presenting the case *People vs. A. Carmen Erickson & Carson Blocker*. The fictional case centered on the alleged theft of used cooking oil and challenged students to analyze evidence and build persuasive legal arguments.

Students took on the roles of attorneys and witnesses, delivering opening statements, questioning witnesses, and presenting evidence before a panel of judges. Throughout the trial, team members relied on careful preparation, strong public speaking skills, and thoughtful strategies.

In a close and competitive round, Kingston earned a 48-47 victory over Saugerties, demonstrating the team's strong understanding of courtroom procedures and effective argumentation.

Programs like Mock Trial provide students with valuable opportunities to develop communication, collaboration, and critical thinking skills while exploring potential careers in law, government, and public service.



Miller Student's Quick Actions Save Fellow Student

M. Clifford Miller Middle School Grade 5 student Alexander Keizer demonstrated extraordinary courage and presence of mind during a routine lunch period.

While in the cafeteria, Alexander noticed a fellow student choking. Acting immediately, he called attention to the emergency, then performed abdominal thrusts, successfully dislodging the obstruction. His swift and decisive response potentially saved a life.

In recognition of his actions, Alexander was presented with the Eagle Eye Award on February 3. This award honors individuals who take the initiative to enhance the overall safety of the Kingston City School District (KCS D) or the broader community.

Alexander's bravery and composure reflect the values we strive to instill in all KCS D students. We are incredibly proud of his actions and grateful for his willingness to step in and help others in a moment of need.





Cooking Up Confidence at M. Clifford Miller Middle School

At M. Clifford Miller Middle School, the Mindful Mustangs Club is taking a hands-on approach to healthy living—one recipe at a time.

This year, the club launched an eight-week culinary program in partnership with The Sylvia Center, a New York-based nonprofit organization dedicated to teaching children and families healthy cooking and eating habits through hands-on culinary education. The organization works to build healthier communities and fight food insecurity by making nutritious cooking fun and accessible.

Each week, Sylvia Center chefs visit the school to guide students through a new ingredient, cooking method, or flavor—and every lesson ends with students making a dish of their own. From exploring plant-based recipes to experimenting with flavors they may never have tried before, students are discovering that healthy cooking can be both creative and exciting.

Through this partnership, the Mindful Mustangs are building practical life skills while developing a deeper appreciation for food, nutrition, and community. With each new dish, students walk away with a little more confidence—and maybe a new favorite recipe.

Kindergarten and Pre-K Registration Underway

Registration is now open for Kindergarten in the Kingston City School District. Children who will turn 5 years old on or before December 1, 2026, are eligible to enroll.

The district also offers eight Universal Pre-Kindergarten (UPK) programs. The programs, which operate five days a week, have both full-day and half-day options to support family schedules. To qualify, children must live within Kingston City School district boundaries, be 4 years old on or before December 1, 2026, and be eligible to attend public school Kindergarten the following year. While the initial lottery has already been completed, any remaining openings will be filled on a first-come, first-served basis.

The Registration Office is located in the Meagher Administration Building at 21 Wynkoop Place in Kingston and is open Monday through Friday from 8 AM to 4 PM. Spanish language assistance is available on Wednesdays and Thursdays between 9:30 AM and 1:30 PM. Families can contact the office by emailing registration@kingstoncityschools.org or calling 845-943-3093.

For registration forms and a list of required documents, please visit kingstoncityschools.org/departments/registration.



Turning Pages into Ballots at Edson Elementary School

Students at Harry L. Edson Elementary School participated in an authentic voting experience that connected literacy with civic engagement. In collaboration with the Ulster County Board of Elections, students engaged in a simulated election as part of the Kingston City School District's annual "Mock Caldecott" project.

For this unique election, picture books were on the ballot. Students across all grade levels cast their votes for their favorite titles using official voting booths and ballot machines, mirroring the procedures used in real elections. The process allowed students to move through each step of voting, from entering the polling station to submitting a ballot and receiving an "I Voted" sticker.

The Mock Caldecott project is a key component of the district's literacy and media literacy curriculum. Each year, elementary school students read, evaluate, and discuss newly published picture books, applying critical thinking skills to analyze literary elements such as theme, illustration, and audience appeal. The voting component reinforces these skills by requiring students to form and support their opinions before making a final selection.

By combining literature study with a real-world civic process, this initiative strengthens both analytical thinking and civic understanding, giving students a meaningful opportunity to apply their learning in an authentic context.

VOTE!

Tuesday, May 19
7 AM - 8 PM

CHECK YOUR POLLING PLACES!
(See page 5)

Robert Graves Students Join Battle Against Hunger

For the fifth consecutive year, Robert Graves Elementary School hosted its beloved "Bagged Hunger" program, rallying students to donate cereal boxes to the People's Place Food Pantry in support of those facing food insecurity.

True to tradition, the 331 donated boxes—a new all-time record—were first arranged into an elaborate domino run at the center of the gym for the entire school to witness. One lucky student had the honor of setting things in motion, triggering a chain reaction that swept across the gym for nearly a full minute before the final box tumbled down. The crowd absolutely erupted!



BUDGET SUMMARY 2026-2027

The annual budget vote for the fiscal year 2026-2027 by the qualified voters of the Kingston City School District, Ulster County, New York, will be held at Edson Elementary, George Washington Elementary, J.F. Kennedy Elementary, Myer Elementary, Robert Graves Elementary, Chambers Elementary, and Crosby Elementary Schools in said district on Tuesday, May 19, 2026 between the hours of 7:00 AM and 8:00 PM, at which time the polls will be opened to vote by voting ballot or machine.

School District Budget Notice

OVERALL BUDGET PROPOSAL	Budget Adopted for the 2025-2026 School Year	Budget Proposed for the 2026-2027 School Year	Contingency Budget for the 2026-2027 School Year*
Total Budgeted Amount, Not Including Separate Propositions	\$249,522,500	\$258,079,830	\$254,608,475
Increase/Decrease for the 2026-2027 School Year		\$8,557,330	\$5,085,975
Percentage Increase/Decrease in Proposed Budget		3.43 %	2.04%
Change in the Consumer Price Index		2.63%	
A. Proposed Tax Levy to Support the Total Budgeted Amount	\$125,791,600	\$130,877,575	
B. Levy to Support Library Debt, if Applicable	\$0	\$0	
C. Levy for Non-Excludable Propositions, if Applicable **	\$0	\$0	
D. Total Tax Cap Reserve Amount Used to Reduce Current Year Levy	\$0	\$0	
E. Total Proposed School Year Tax Levy (A + B + C - D)	\$125,791,600	\$130,877,575	\$125,791,600
F. Total Permissible Exclusions	\$8,322,399	\$9,691,762	
G. School Tax Levy Limit, <u>Excluding</u> Levy for Permissible Exclusions	\$117,825,009	\$121,185,813	
H. Total Proposed School Year Tax Levy, <u>Excluding</u> Levy to Support Library Debt and/or Permissible Exclusions (E - B - F + D)	\$117,469,201	\$121,185,813	
I. Difference: G - H (Negative Value Requires 60.0% Voter Approval - See Note Below Regarding Separate Propositions) **	\$355,808	\$0	
Administrative Component	\$21,156,664	\$21,124,022	\$20,824,022
Program Component	\$206,066,750	\$203,987,824	\$202,816,468
Capital Component	\$25,299,086	\$32,967,985	\$30,967,985

*Statement of assumptions made in projecting a contingency budget for the 2025-26 school year, should the proposed budget be defeated pursuant to Section 2023 of the Education Law: Adoption of a contingency budget would significantly restrict the district's ability to maintain current programs and services and would require reductions focused on discretionary and non-mandated expenditures. These reductions could negatively affect educational opportunities, extracurricular offerings, and support services available to students during the 2026-2027 school year. For example, only mandated transportation would be made available for students.

** Separate Propositions that are not included in the Total Budgeted Amount: (Tax Levy associated with educational or transportation services propositions are not eligible for exclusion and may affect voter approval requirements)

Description	Amount
There are no additional propositions for the 2026-27 Budget Vote	\$0

Basic STAR Exemption Impact

Under the Budget Proposed for 2026-2027 School Year

Estimated Basic STAR Exemption Savings¹

\$613

¹ The basic school tax relief (STAR) exemption is authorized by Section 425 of the Real Property Tax Law.

Proposed School Budget Continued from page 1

approximately 1%, a level that does not keep pace with rising operational costs in today's economy.

Rising Costs Outpacing Revenue: Just as our families are experiencing in their own households, the District is also experiencing rising operational costs. Key cost drivers include:

- Salaries and contractual obligations
- Health insurance and employee benefits
- Transportation, including fuel and maintenance
- Special education services and placements
- BOCES programs and operational costs

Declining Enrollment: There are approximately 900 fewer students today than in the 2019-2020 school year. This creates complex budgeting conditions.

While fewer students can reduce spending in some areas, many fixed and operational costs remain the same.

Since enrollment level is a factor in calculating State Aid, fewer students also means less State funding.

At the same time, the cost of operating schools—staffing, transportation, utilities, facilities, and programming, particularly for special education services—are increasing.

STRATEGIES TO MAINTAIN STABILITY

Fewer students create a challenging reality: *as enrollment declines, resources must be realigned to match the number of students being served.* Other key strategies include:

- Strategically applying fund balance and reserves to reduce immediate impact
- Reviewing operational efficiencies, including transportation and programming
- Evaluating opportunities to provide more Special Education services in-district
- Review of appropriate staffing levels

COMMITMENT TO LONG-TERM FISCAL RESPONSIBILITY

While the proposed budget balances revenues and expenses for the upcoming school year, the Board of

Ballot

PROPOSITION 1: 2026-2027 Budget

Shall the Board of Education of the Kingston City School District, Ulster County, New York, be authorized to expend the sums of money which will be required for school district purposes for the 2026-2027 School Year, in the total amount of \$258,079,830.00 (the Budget), and to levy the necessary sum against the taxable real property in the School District.

YES NO

ELECTION OF BOARD OF EDUCATION TRUSTEES:

To elect four (4) members to the Board of Education, as follows:

Three (3) members for 3-year terms, from July 1, 2026 to June 30, 2029, and one (1) member for a 1-year term, from July 1, 2026 to June 30, 2027.

Candidate names are listed in the order they will appear on the ballot.

- Erika Bernabei Middleton
- Rita M. Worthington
- Marc Rider
- Suzanne Jordan
- Michael Detweiler
- Anthony Fitzpatrick
- Louisa Solomon

Write-In Candidates are permitted.

Education continues to focus on long-term planning and efficiency to ensure the District remains financially stable into the future. Ongoing work includes:

- Reviewing transportation systems and bus routes
- Evaluating summer school program offerings
- Identifying opportunities to bring some out-of-district placements for special education services back into the district

“These efforts are part of a broader commitment to strengthening the district for the future—while continuing to deliver on our mission of ‘all students, all of the time,’” said Dr. Padalino.

WHAT HAPPENS IF THE BUDGET IS NOT APPROVED

If voters do not approve the budget, the Board may present the same or a revised proposal for a second vote on **Tuesday, June 16.**

If the budget is defeated a second time, the District must adopt a **contingency budget.**

Voter Qualifications

Qualification requirements for voters:

- Citizen of the United States
- At least 18 years old
- Resident of the school district for the past 30 days
- Not otherwise ineligible to vote

No person shall have the right to register for or vote at any school meeting or election who would not be qualified to register for or vote at an election in accordance with the provisions of Election Law §5-106.

ELECTION DISTRICTS & VOTING PLACES

NO. 1	Ward 1 Districts 1, 2 & 3	EDSON ELEMENTARY 116 Merilina Ave. Kingston, NY
	Ward 2 Districts 1 & 2	
	Town of Ulster Districts 1, 6 & 13	
NO. 2	Ward 3 Districts 1, 2, 3	GEORGE WASHINGTON ELEMENTARY 67 Wall Street Kingston, NY
	Ward 4 Districts 1 & 2	
	Ward 5 Districts 1 & 2	
	Ward 9 District 1	
NO. 3	Ward 7 Districts 1, 2 & 3	J. F. KENNEDY ELEMENTARY 107 Gross Street Kingston, NY
	Ward 8 Districts 1, 2 & 3	
	Ward 9 Districts 2 & 3	
	Town of Ulster Districts 3 & 12	
NO. 4	Town of Hurley Districts 2, 4, 6 & 8	MYER ELEMENTARY 231 Millbrook Ave. Hurley, NY
	Town of Rosendale Districts 1, 4 & 5	
	Town of Ulster District 4	
	Town of Marletown District 5	
NO. 5	Town of Esopus Districts 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6 & 7	ROBERT GRAVES ELEMENTARY 345 Mountain View Ave. Port Ewen, NY
	Town of Rosendale Districts 2 & 3	
NO. 6	Ward 2 Districts 3 & 4	CHAMBERS ELEMENTARY 945 Morton Blvd. Kingston, NY
	Ward 5 District 3	
	Ward 6 Districts 1, 2 & 3	
	Town of Ulster Districts 5, 8 & 10	
NO. 7	Town of Kingston District 1	CROSBY ELEMENTARY 767 Neighborhood Road Lake Katrine, NY
	Town of Saugerties Districts 5, 10 & 12	
	Town of Ulster Districts 2, 7, 9, 11 & 14	
	Town of Woodstock Districts 3 & 6	

Visit New York State Board of Elections' polling place search at <https://vicntsdata.com/home/ulster> to confirm your election district based on your home address.



Creativity is Blooming at George Washington Elementary School!

Students in Kelly Mathis' class at G. Washington Elementary School have been hard at work on a special art and literature project—and the results are truly something to celebrate!

Each student created their own collage inspired by the night sky, incorporating owl sketches and striking black backgrounds to set the scene. While the collages shared a common theme, each one had its own personality and flair. Then came the magic: the class came together to find inspiration in their diverse artworks before collaborating on the writing of an original poem.

The result? "Night Owl"—a charming, playful poem that captures exactly the kind of wonder that great art can inspire:

We look at the moon, and very soon an owl sings a tune. He sings a hoot, he looks so cute on the roost.

A Celebration of Poetry and Student Voices at E. C. Myer Elementary School

At E. C. Myer Elementary School, Grade 4 students in Kelsey Dexter and Lauren Puig's classes recently turned their classroom into a stage—and the results were something special.



As part of their Core Knowledge Language Arts (CKLA) Unit 3 studies, students wrote their own original poems on a wide variety of topics, drawing from their own experiences, interests, and imaginations. Each student crafted multiple poems before selecting their favorite to share at a special Poetry Celebration with classmates and family members.

The event was more than just a reading—it was also a showcase of growth. Students stepped up one by one to read their work aloud, demonstrating not only their developing writing skills but also their confidence as public speakers.

Through this unit, young writers discovered that poetry is a powerful way to express who they are. With every word chosen and every line read aloud, the students of Myer Elementary School showed just how much heart they bring to their learning.

Bailey Students Work on Building a Better Future

Students in Wendy Lamb's class at J. Watson Bailey Middle School have been getting hands-on with some seriously cool science—learning real engineering skills by building their own fully functional renewable energy sources, including working windmills and solar panels!

Using kits from Engineering Tomorrow, a non-profit organization focused on broadening access to engineering, students designed and built their own solar-powered and wind-powered turbine prototypes—all while trying to keep their costs as low as possible, just like real-world engineers do!

This innovative program introduces students to the benefits of renewable energy and challenges them to think critically about the future of our planet. We love seeing our students think, build, and innovate!



VOTE!

Tuesday, May 19 • 7 AM - 8 PM

Under a contingency budget, the District would be required by law to:

- Reduce non-mandated programs.
- Limit educational opportunities, extracurricular activities, and support services.
- Provide only legally required transportation.
- Eliminate equipment purchases.
- Charge fees for community use of school facilities.

ABSENTEE & EARLY MAIL BALLOT VOTING INFORMATION

To obtain an Absentee or Early Mail Ballot, an eligible voter must first fill out an application, which can be printed from the district's website, picked up from the District Clerk, or requested by mailing a letter to the District Clerk.

Completed applications may be returned to the District Clerk in person or by mail. Upon receipt of a completed application, a ballot will be issued.

- If the voter is requesting to have a ballot sent to

them by mail, applications must reach the District Clerk by **May 12**.

- If the voter is collecting their ballot in person, applications must be received by **May 18**.
- Completed ballots must be received by **5 PM on May 19** in order to be counted.

NOTE: The application for an Absentee Ballot requires an applicant to provide a qualifying reason. Early Mail Ballots are available without reason to any eligible voter.

Absentee Ballots are automatically sent to those registered as permanently disabled with the Ulster County Board of Elections. These ballots are mailed the first week of May.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

Voting, Absentee and Early Mail Ballot, and Board of Election Questions:

Karen Seery, District Clerk
Phone: (845) 943-3003
Email: kseery@kingstoncityschools.org

District Budget Questions:

Sharifa Carbon, Assistant Superintendent for Business
Phone: (845) 943-3040
Email: scarbon@kingstoncityschools.org

Online Resources:

Visit kingstoncityschools.org/budget for:

- Budget Presentations
- Board of Education candidate details
- Additional information about the budget and Board of Education vote



Capital Project Update

The Kingston City School District's voter-approved 2023 Capital Project is well underway—and the scope of improvements coming to every school in the district is substantial.

Work began in earnest during the 2025 Spring Break with preparatory efforts at Edson Elementary and Bailey Middle Schools, including crawl space abatement, ceiling removal for mechanical and electrical coordination, and select reconstruction to lay the groundwork for the busy summers ahead.

Phase One the work, which runs through Summer 2026, centers on Edson and Bailey. At Edson, this includes the addition of a secure vestibule, renovation of the administrative suite, replacement of exterior curtainwall windows, and upgraded classroom air conditioning. Bailey is receiving the same window and A/C upgrades, with more extensive renovations to follow in Phase Two.

Phase Two (Spring 2026–Summer 2027) brings sweeping improvements to both Edson and Bailey—including restroom renovations, kitchen upgrades, Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA)-compliant hardware and handrails, new security vestibules, refreshed interiors, modernized electrical and plumbing systems, and expanded air conditioning to gyms, cafeterias, and auditoriums, among many other improvements.

From there, the project expands across the entire district. **Phases Three through Five** (Summer 2026–Summer 2029) bring the same commitment to safety, comfort, and accessibility to George Washington, Chambers, Myer, Graves, JFK, Miller, and Crosby Elementary Schools—with each building receiving tailored upgrades including secure vestibules, updated HVAC and ventilation, ADA improvements, cafeteria and restroom renovations, and modernized electrical and mechanical systems.

Across all five phases, the project prioritizes three consistent goals: safety and security (secure vestibules and updated fire and alarm systems at every building), comfort and air quality (air conditioning and modern ventilation district-wide), and accessibility (ADA-compliant upgrades throughout).

For a complete breakdown of improvements at every school—along with photos of work in progress—visit kingstoncityschools.org/ourdistrict/capital-project.

KCSD announces Top Students for CLASS OF 2026

Continued from page 1

In addition to her academic achievements, Danica has demonstrated leadership across multiple student organizations. She serves as president of Peer Tutoring, Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS) Ambassadors, and Girls Who Code. Through her work with PBIS, she has helped organize initiatives to strengthen student engagement, including a middle school club fair and school-wide events aimed at building school spirit.

A dedicated athlete, Danica has been a member of the Varsity Girls Lacrosse team since her freshman year and competes at the travel level. She was named a 2025 USA Lacrosse Academic All-American and earned recognition on the Section 9 All-Star Team. She will attend the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT), where she plans to study Biology and continue her athletic career on the Women's Lacrosse team.

Salutatorian Christopher Vargas-Hubner, son of Lake Katrine residents Luciana and Manuel Vargas, has earned a weighted GPA of 102.2016 while completing 13 AP and two college-level courses.

Chris has been actively involved in a range of academic and extracurricular programs. He spent four years competing in Science Olympiads, earning regional honors including first place in Fossils and second place in Tower Building. He also served as president of the Computer Science Club and contributed to PBIS initiatives at KHS.

Outside of school, Chris participated in the YMCA Farm Project, where he engaged in hands-on agricultural work as well as community-based projects and design initiatives.

Chris will attend MIT this fall, where he plans to pursue engineering, with interests in environmental and mechanical fields. He will join his older sister, Lisa Vargas-Hubner, a 2024 KHS graduate currently studying at MIT.

High School principal Dr. Rachael Scorca praised both students not only for their academic accomplishments, but also for their character and contributions to the school community. "They're incredibly motivated, high-achieving students, but also really good people," she said. "They embody what it means to be hardworking, kind, and community-focused."

The Kingston City School District congratulates Danica and Chris on their achievements and the positive impact they have made on the Kingston High School community.

"Farm Fresh Fridays" Bring Local Flavor to Elementary Cafeterias



Students across the Kingston City School District (KCSD) are enjoying fresh, locally grown foods through the district's Farm Fresh Fridays program.

Held monthly in all seven elementary schools, the program features a "Harvest of the Month" sourced from Hudson

Valley farms with support from the Rondout Valley Growers Association. The KCSD Food Services then incorporates these ingredients into school meals, preparing them in creative ways for students to try.

Each school is supported by a team of volunteers who offer samples to all students, including those who bring lunch from home. After tasting, students share their opinions through a vote that asks whether they love it, like it, or feel it is not for them.

The program has been a rousing success, with many students discovering new foods and flavors they might not have tried otherwise.

Farm Fresh Fridays are made possible through a collaboration between the KCSD Food Services, the Rondout Valley Growers Association, Land to Learn, and Cornell Cooperative Extension Ulster County. Together, these partners are helping to connect students with fresh food and local agriculture in meaningful ways.



A Little Piece of the Olympics Came to Chambers Elementary School

This year's Winter Olympics may have happened far from Kingston, but that didn't stop Chambers Elementary School from bringing the magic of the games right into its own gymnasium.

In a celebration that had students buzzing with excitement, the school hosted its very own Olympics-inspired opening ceremony—complete with national flags, marching, and national anthems playing as each country was announced. Every student carried a flag representing their own family's country of origin, making the parade of nations a

genuine reflection of the school's wonderfully diverse community.

But the highlight of the morning? A special visit from someone who knows the Olympic stage firsthand.

Former Chambers Physical Education Coach Phil Brown—a two-time USA Olympic Wrestling alternate—returned to the school to share stories from his journey through the qualifying process. Coach Brown's message was simple but powerful: the Olympics aren't just something you watch on television. They're something you work toward.

For the students marching proudly around that gymnasium, flags in hand, it may have been a school event—but it felt like something a little bigger than that. And who knows? One of those marchers just might be participating in an opening ceremony for real someday.





Kingston High School's *Once Upon a Mattress* Was Royally Good Fun

Kingston High School's Musical Theatrics program delighted audiences this March with their production of *Once Upon a Mattress*. The beloved Broadway musical, a

hilarious reimagining of the classic fairy tale *The Princess and the Pea*, followed the spirited and unconventional Princess Winnifred as she battled a series of outrageous challenges to prove her royal worth—and win the heart of her prince.

Under the direction of Band Director Jacqueline Geraci, student performers, musicians, and crew members came together to

bring this laugh-out-loud comedy to life, complete with show-stopping musical numbers, colorful costumes, and unforgettable characters. With one of the only all-student pit orchestras in the area, Kingston High School once again set the standard for high school musical theater. It was a feel-good, family-friendly production that was not to be missed!

Students Bring Ancient Rome to Life with Classroom Quiz Competition

All roads lead to Ancient Rome—and this past March, they led straight to John F. Kennedy Elementary School!

Grade 3 classrooms transformed into competitive arenas as students faced off in a team quiz game centered on Ancient Rome, part of their ongoing Amplify Core Knowledge Language Arts (CKLA) curriculum unit. Teams went head-to-head answering questions spanning key figures and events from one of history's most influential civilizations—including Julius Caesar and the rise of the Roman Empire.

The energy in the room was hard to miss. Students came prepared, with answers that reflected weeks of focused study, and the friendly competition kept engagement high from start to finish.

Leading the charge was Instructional Coach Emily Zifchak, who supported and facilitated the games

throughout the event. Her hands-on involvement helped turn what could have been a standard review session into something students were genuinely excited about.

The quiz game is part of JFK Elementary School's use of the CKLA program, a knowledge-building curriculum designed to deepen students' understanding of history, literature, and language arts through rich content and storytelling. Read more about CKLA on page 2.



Senior Citizen Property Tax Exemption Expanded

The Board of Education recently approved an expansion of the Senior Citizen Property Tax Exemption, increasing income eligibility to align with Ulster County and allowing more qualifying residents age 65 and older with limited income to receive tax relief.

For current recipients who submitted their annual renewal by the March 1 deadline, updated exemption levels will be automatically reflected in the September 2026 school tax bill.

Eligible residents who are not currently enrolled may apply through their local assessor's office for the next tax cycle. Applications are processed through local assessors in accordance with New York State guidelines and timelines. The deadline to apply for the 2027 school tax year is March 1, 2027.

For more details, including income eligibility guidelines, please visit our website at kingstoncityschools.org/departments/school-taxes/senior-tax-exemption



Young Designers Shine at Meagher Pre-K Fashion Show

In the Universal Pre-Kindergarten program at Meagher, learning often takes shape through creativity, exploration, and hands-on discovery. Students recently celebrated the end of their fashion-themed learning unit by participating in a fabulous classroom fashion show, proudly walking the "runway" to showcase their original designs.

Each class explored a different theme as students designed and created their own outfits. Along the way, they learned about textiles and

materials used in clothing design, gaining hands-on experience with fabrics such as wool, cotton, and silk.

The project encouraged imagination while helping students understand how clothing is made and how different materials can be used in creative ways.

Experiences like this reflect Meagher's approach to learning. Curiosity, creativity, and exploration help our youngest students to build confidence and discover new ways to express themselves.

VOTE!

Tuesday, May 19 7 AM - 8 PM

CHECK YOUR POLLING PLACES!

(See page 5)



KCSD Students Earn Top Honors at SkillsUSA Competition

The Kingston City School District (KCSD) is proud to celebrate its Ulster BOCES students who competed in the 2026 SkillsUSA Regional Competition. A national program that helps students build real-world job skills, SkillsUSA brings together students, teachers, and industry leaders to prepare young people for careers through hands-on learning and competitions.

The event took place on February 28 in Valhalla, New York, where students from across the region tested their skills in areas like Culinary Arts, CNC Milling, Prepared Speech, and more. In total, 103 students from Ulster BOCES Career Academies at iPark 87 earned medals. The team brought home 50 medals in an impressively strong showing that featured eight first-place, 23 second-place, and 19 third-place finishes. KCSD students who earned honors included:

First Place: Aliana Ramsay (Internetworking), Luis Bautista Sanchez (Additive Manufacturing), and

Jacob Sauers (CNC 3 Axis Milling)

Second Place: Grant Nam (Action Skills Basic), Genevieve Cozza (Esthetics), Kirra Rogers (Prepared Speech), Milly Santos Castellanos (Quiz Bowl), Ashor Raal and Adriel Villa (Additive Manufacturing), Evan Zheng (Automated Manufacturing), and James DeWitt (CNC 3 Axis Milling)

Third Place: Giana Lindhorst (Cosmetology Quiz Bowl), Hayley Nace (Esthetics), Tobias Whitaker (Extemporaneous Speaking), and Christian Melecio (Internetworking)

Many of these students moved on to the State competition, which was held in late April in Syracuse. KCSD is proud to support hands-on learning opportunities and career-training programs that prepare students for success in school and beyond. Congratulations to all who competed!

A Breakthrough State Meet for Kingston Girls Cross Country



This past fall, Kingston High School's Girls Cross Country team closed out a strong season with an impressive showing at the New York State Public High School Athletic Association (NYSPHSAA) Cross Country Championships held at Queensbury High School. Competing against the top runners in the State, the Tigers demonstrated remarkable progress and determination.

Returning athletes Hazel Lewis, Charlotte McFarland, and Maeve Paul each delivered standout performances, significantly improving upon their finishes from the previous year's State meet. All three runners moved up substantially in the rankings, highlighting both their individual growth and the strength of the program.

Their efforts marked one of the team's most notable State meet performances in recent years and served as a fitting highlight to a successful fall season for Kingston athletics.



Boys Swimming Makes Waves in Historic Season

The Kingston High School Boys Swimming and Diving team made program history this winter, capturing the Section 9 Championship with an impressive team score of 321 points. The victory marked the program's first Section 9 championship title since the 1980s.

The meet presented an early challenge for Kingston, as the team entered the swimming portion of the competition trailing by 89 points after the diving events. Undeterred, the swimmers responded with strong performances throughout the meet, steadily closing the gap with each event and relay.

The team secured the championship with a dramatic come-from-behind victory in the 400 Free Relay, sealing an exciting finish and completing an outstanding performance at the meet.

The Section 9 title capped a remarkable season for Kingston, which included an undefeated 9-0 dual

meet record, the OCIAA Division 1 championship, two new school relay records, and several New York State Public High School Athletic Association (NYSPHSAA) qualifying swims.

The historic season continued at the NYSPHSAA Boys Swimming and Diving Championships at Ithaca College, where junior Mason Crowley made program history by becoming the first Kingston swimmer ever to win a State title. Crowley captured the 100-yard freestyle crown with a blazing time of 44.22 seconds, breaking his own school record and setting a new Section 9 mark in the process.

Together, the team's Section 9 championship and Crowley's individual State title highlight a landmark year for Kingston swimming and reflect the dedication, teamwork, and perseverance of the Tigers' student-athletes and coaching staff.



Creativity Across Classrooms

Grade 1 students from E.R. Crosby Elementary School ventured to Kingston High School (KHS) to take part in a special art experience with James Scheffel's Creative Crafts class. The visit marked the final step in a collaborative project that began at the beginning of this school year.

As part of the Core Knowledge Language Arts (CKLA) curriculum, students in Ellen Venditti's and Jessica VanValkenburgh's classes created imaginative monster drawings during their "Specials in Sync" Art class with teacher Michelle Weiss. The drawings were then shared with Scheffel's high school students, who brought the monsters to life as three-dimensional creations.

During the visit, KHS students proudly presented the finished artwork to the first graders, creating a memorable moment for both groups. The project gave students a chance to share their creativity while connecting across grade levels.