



CUFSD NEWSLETTER

MAY 2026

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FROM THE
SUPERINTENDENT

CATHERINE
O'HARA

As we reflect on the month of May and look ahead to the final weeks of the school year, there are many opportunities to celebrate student success, growth, and achievement. Thank you to the Chester community for your support of the 2026-2027 school budget and your continued investment in the future of Chester's students and our schools.

Among the many highlights of the spring was our annual STEAM & Art Expo, which celebrated student creativity, innovation, and achievement. Many thanks to Chester Academy Art teachers Marie Kriner and Alexis Joannides, Chester Elementary School Art teacher Emily Daunicht, CES STEAM and Robotics Specialist Jennifer Rende, and Chester Academy Technology teachers Tim Jordan and Jeff Rodman for their efforts in showcasing student creativity, innovation, and talent. The event provided an opportunity for students to share their learning with families and the community while highlighting the many ways creativity, problem-solving, technology, engineering, and the arts come together throughout our schools.

As we celebrate the accomplishments of our students and staff throughout the month of June, I am grateful for the continued partnership of our families, community members, faculty, staff, and Board of Education. The many achievements recognized this time of year are a reflection of what is possible when an entire school community works together in support of our students.

I look forward to seeing many of you at our upcoming Moving Up Ceremonies and as we celebrate the Chester Academy Class of 2026!

Voters approve CUFSD budget for 2026-27 school year

Voters approved a \$41,001,754 budget for the Chester Union Free School District's 2026-27 school year by an official 170-91 vote on Tuesday, May 19, 2026.

Additionally, one candidate was reelected to the Board of Education, Diane Arnett. Ms. Arnett's term will run from 7/1/26 - 6/30/29.

"On behalf of the Board of Education, we sincerely thank the Chester community for supporting the 2026-2027 budget," said Superintendent Catherine O'Hara. "The approved budget will expand early learning, advance innovative and career-connected opportunities, and strengthen safe learning environments across our schools. We appreciate the partnership and support of our parents, families, and community as we invest in opportunities that strengthen educational excellence and the future success of our students."

Full details of the 2026-27 budget remain accessible on our [Budget & Finance page](#).



STEAM Expo highlights innovation and creativity

Innovation and creativity were on display when families gathered for the annual STEM + Art = STEAM Expo on budget vote night.

Students of all ages showcased their talents and hard work in science, technology, engineering, the arts, and math. All these subjects play important roles in a child's education by encouraging collaboration, community, critical thinking and creativity. This initiative ties into the district's goal of providing innovative, data-driven and career-connected learning experiences by providing resources for students to further explore their passion through hands-on learning in an environment that encourages artistic and inventive thinking.



[Read more about the expo and see some photos here!](#)

IMPORTANT DATES

June 10
BOE Meeting

June 13
ACT Exam

June 17
Kindergarten Picnic

June 19
Schools Closed

June 24-26
Half Days for Students

June 12
CES Field Day

June 16
Pre-K Showcase

June 18
5th Grade Moving Up

June 23
8th Grade Moving Up

June 25
2026 Graduation



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CHESTER ACADEMY



FROM THE
CA PRINCIPAL

JOHN
FLANAGAN

As we move into the final weeks of the school year, we are excited to celebrate several special events with our students and school community.

Our Middle School Field Day took place on June 5 and was a fun-filled day for all. Students enjoyed a barbecue, exciting field games, a dunk tank, music provided by a DJ, and ice cream. It is always a highlight of the year and a wonderful opportunity for students to enjoy time together and celebrate a successful school year.

On June 8, we will hold the Class of 2026 Grad Walk at Chester Elementary School. This meaningful tradition gives our seniors the opportunity to take one final walk through the halls of their elementary school in their caps and gowns while our elementary students cheer them on. Although this event is not open to the public, photos and videos will be shared on the Chester Academy website for families and community members to enjoy. We also look forward to our Middle School Moving Up Ceremony on Tuesday, June 23, at 6:00 PM, as we celebrate our eighth-grade students and their transition to high school.

Finally, the Chester Academy High School Graduation Ceremony will take place on Thursday, June 25, at 6:00 PM on Chester Academy Field, weather permitting.

Congratulations to our seniors, we wish them great success and happiness as they begin their next chapter.

Congratulations to Class of 2026 Top 10



This outstanding group of Chester Academy students exemplify excellence, leadership, character, dedication, and Hambletonian Pride! This year's academic Top 10 is made up of students who inspire others through their hard work, positive impact, and commitment to excellence both inside and outside the classroom.

Chester Academy celebrates academic award winners for the 2025-26 school year

Chester Academy proudly recognized its middle school and high school scholars for outstanding academic achievements during the 2025-26 school year! More than 160 students were recognized over two separate ceremonies for the exceptional dedication, perseverance, and intellectual curiosity they demonstrated throughout the year.

[Read the full list of this year's award winners here!](#)



Chester musician steps into spotlight at Meadow Blues Coffee

On Friday evening of Memorial Day weekend, Chester Academy seventh grader Sawyer McElroy took a giant step in his young music career, taking the stage to lead a band through his first featured jazz gig! The concert took place at Chester's beloved music venue, Meadow Blues Coffee, which was standing-room-only by the time Sawyer and his quartet took the stage.



Sawyer was joined by his uncle, Chris Bishop, on guitar; his private music teacher (and former Chester Elementary School band teacher), Brandon Sparkman, on electric bass; and Chester parent Gregg Piller on drum kit. For Sawyer, it was a chance to share the music he loves, performing mostly classic jazz standards.

[Read the whole story here!](#)

CHESTER ELEMENTARY



FROM THE
CES PRINCIPAL

MARY KATE
BOESCH

May was a wonderful month at CES, filled with celebration, learning, and many special moments together. One of the highlights was Teacher Appreciation Week, where our amazing PTA and SEPTSA truly spoiled the staff at CES each day with thoughtful surprises, delicious food, treats, and fun activities. Their generosity and support made the week incredibly meaningful, and we are so grateful for all they do for our school community.

Our students in grades 3-5 have now completed all New York State testing for the year. We are proud of their hard work, perseverance, and effort throughout the testing season.

Our PBIS Assembly on May 18th was another exciting event as we celebrated so many students in the Winners Circle, watched students spin the wheel, and recognized staff members with staff shout-outs. It was a great reminder of the positive culture we continue to build at CES.

With the warmer weather arriving, students are enjoying more time outdoors during recess, and many teachers have taken learning outside. Classes have especially enjoyed spending time in the CES Pollinator Garden as it comes into full bloom.

As we move into June, we have so many exciting events ahead; Field Day, the Kindergarten Picnic, Pre-K Showcase, 5th Grade Moving Up, and celebrations throughout the building.

What a fun time to be a kid at CES!

Students learn about nature at Hudson Highlands State Park Preserve

Our Chester Elementary School kindergartners had an unforgettable adventure at the Hudson Highlands! During the engaging "Who Lives at the Pond?" program, our youngest learners explored the wonders of nature, discovering the fascinating plants and animals that call the pond ecosystem home. From curious observations to hands-on learning, this field trip brought classroom learning to life in the most exciting way!



We are always creating experiences that spark curiosity, inspire exploration, and help our students become lifelong learners! [See more photos from the field trip here!](#)

Academy students visit their book buddies for story time

Juniors and seniors from Ms. Daly's Intro to Health Careers class have been making weekly visits to the elementary school as part of a 6-week reading buddy program designed to foster connection, mentorship, and community across our district. Through shared stories, smiles, and meaningful conversations, these Chester Academy students are building relationships with our elementary learners and modeling the power of kindness and leadership... all while supporting literacy. [Learn more about the program and see photos here!](#)



Principal Boesch teaches metamorphosis with Pollinator Garden residents

Kindergartners enjoyed a special visit from Principal Boesch, who brought science to life with an exciting real-world Monarch Butterfly metamorphosis experience!

Mrs. Boesch shared photos and stories of monarch caterpillars she collected from the milkweed in our very own CES Pollinator Garden.

[Learn more about the lesson and see photos here!](#)

