2026

FERNDALE AREA SCHOOL DISTRICT

BUZZ FROM THE HIVE



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Mission, Vision, and Philosophy

Partnering with students, families, and the community in order to provide an exceptional education within a safe and inclusive environment that empowers our learners to achieve individual aspirations resulting in meaningful contributions to society.

Every child known, safe, inspired, challenged, and empowered.

Our school district has been referred to as a public school in a private school setting. Ferndale Area is proud of our academic accomplishments, our dedication to the personal growth of students, and the standard of excellence we maintain in professional practice.



Meet the Teachers

JSHS : August 20, 2026
Elementary : August 24, 2026

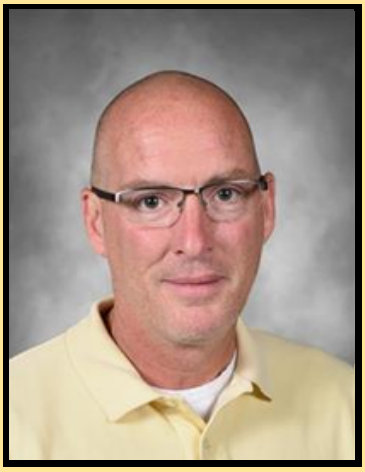
First Day of School

First Student Day : August 26, 2026

RETIREMENT

Dear Ferndale Area School District Community,

As I prepare to retire, I want to express my sincere gratitude for the opportunity to serve this district and community over the years. My time at Ferndale Area has allowed me to serve in several meaningful roles, including Elementary Principal, Director of Education, Junior-Senior High School Principal, and Assistant Superintendent. Each position gave me a different perspective on the incredible work that takes place across our district every day.



Dr. William Brotz
Assistant Superintendent / JSHS Principal

I have been fortunate to watch students begin their educational journey in our elementary school, grow through their middle and high school years, and ultimately walk across the stage at graduation. Being part of those milestones has been one of the greatest honors of my career. I have also had the privilege of working alongside dedicated teachers, support staff, administrators, families, and community members who care deeply about our students and the future of Ferndale Area.

Ferndale has been far more than a place to work. It has been a place filled with pride, tradition, resilience, and heart. The relationships built along the way and the memories made will always stay with me.

While it is difficult to say goodbye, I leave with tremendous appreciation for the students, staff, families, and community who have made this journey so special. Ferndale Area will always hold a special place in my heart, and I will continue to cheer for our students, staff, and Yellow Jacket community.

Thank you for allowing me to be part of your story.

Sincerely,
Dr. William J. Brotz

RETIREMENT



Mrs. Judy Virgin

Certified School Nurse

Saying Goodbye is Never Easy

As most of you know, the 2025-2026 school year was my last year as Ferndale Area's Certified School Nurse. It wasn't an easy decision to make, but it is one that I felt was at the right time. When I left the ICU at Conemaugh after 24 years in nursing, my coworkers could not believe I was leaving all the excitement of the ICU to hand out Ice packs and Band-Aids. Oh, how naive they were. No one can appreciate the knowledge and responsibility that comes with being a School Nurse until you become a School Nurse. This is the best job I have ever had since becoming a nurse 45 years ago. I can actually say that I loved coming to work every day.

First, I want to thank all the students who have passed through these halls over the last 21 years for allowing me to be part of their journey. I have always tried to treat the students with the love and care that I would give my own children. They have brought me so much joy and many memories over the years. I know that they have given to me more than anyone of them could ever imagine.

I want to thank the families of our district for allowing me the privilege of caring for your children. I have always been an advocate for every student who needed me to be there for them. I also hope that when you as parents needed me, I was there for you also. I have formed bonds with some of you that will not go away with me retiring.

I want to thank all my colleagues for being there for me with support and friendship over the years. I have seen a lot of the teachers and staff come and go, but we all supported the students and each other as a "Ferndale Family". I will miss so many of you, but I have formed many friendships that will last a lifetime.

And finally, I have had 3 superintendents and too many to count principals in both buildings over the years. They have always respected me as not only the person with the medical knowledge, but also as a professional. For that I thank them. Ferndale Area School District will always hold a special place in my heart! - Judy Virgin

Ferndale Area School District

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Vice-President
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Administration
Ferndale Area School District
100 Dartmouth Avenue
Johnstown, PA 15905
814-535-1507

Superintendent of Schools
Mr. Jeffrey R. Boyer
Business Manager
Mr. David Gates

Ferndale Area Junior-Senior High School
600 Harlan Avenue
Johnstown, PA 15905
814-288-5757

Principal
Mr. Dane Domonkos
Assistant Principal
Mr. Bernard Conway

Ferndale Area Elementary School
100 Dartmouth Avenue
Johnstown, PA 15905
814-535-6724

Principal
Dr. *Amy Mykut*

2026-2027 PreK-12 School Calendar

The calendar for the 2026-2027 school year was adopted by the Ferndale Area Board of School Directors on February 25, 2026. The first day of school for students is August 26, 2026; the last day is June 1, 2027. Teacher In-Service days and Act 80 days are scheduled for August 20, August 24, August 25, September 21, October 12, January 18, February 15, March 15, and June 3.



August 20 ..... In-Service Day (No School)
August 24 ..... In-Service Day (No School)
August 25 ..... In-Service Day (No School)
August 26 ..... First Day for Students
September 4 - September 7 ..... Labor Day (No School)
September 21 ..... Act 80 Day (No School)
October 12 ..... Act 80 Day (No School)
November 10 ..... Parent/Teacher Conferences (No School)
November 11 ..... Veterans Day (No School)
November 26 - November 30 ..... Thanksgiving (No School)
December 24 - January 1 ..... Christmas (No School)
January 18 ..... Act 80 Day (No School)
February 15 ..... Act 80 Day (No School)
March 15 ..... In-Service Day (No School)
March 25 - March 29 ..... Easter (No School)
May 31 ..... Memorial Day (No School)
June 2 ..... Last Day of School
June 3 ..... In-Service Day (No School)

2026



SENIOR CLASS

The Class of 2026, led by co-advisors Mrs. Andrea Kreinbrook and Ms. Leigh Ann Dunn, had a busy school year.

In December, the seniors held the annual Santa's Workshop for the elementary students to get in some holiday shopping for family and friends.





SENIOR CLASS

In January, the junior and senior classes went to the U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum in Washington, D.C. The trip was made possible by the The Blanche Beerman Holocaust Museum Fund, managed by the Community Foundation for the Alleghenies.

On May 8, the Class of 2026 went on their Senior Trip to Hershey Park. Despite the temperatures being a little chilly, the students had a full day of fun and rides.





Senior Class



Junior Class

SENIOR CLASS

The Academic Awards Ceremony on May 14, celebrated the achievements of many seniors who are going on to college, trade schools, and the military.

On May 19, the students took their Senior Walk at the Elementary School. Accompanied by the K4 students, they toured the building and hung out at the playground before going to the gym for the traditional parachute game.

Commencement was held May 28, at Penn Highlands Community College. The graduates welcomed alumnus Trey McGough as their guest speaker.





KINDERGARTEN YEAR IN REVIEW: A YEAR OF ACADEMIC EXCELLENCE

This kindergarten year was filled with memorable experiences, exciting learning opportunities, and moments of growth that students will carry with them for years to come. Through our reading, math, science, and social studies programs, students explored the world with curiosity, imagination, and enthusiasm. This hands-on approach inspired children to ask questions, think critically, and make discoveries, helping to create a strong foundation for lifelong learning.

In math, students engaged with Eureka Math, which helped them build confidence and understanding through hands-on activities and real-world problem-solving. Whether counting, comparing, adding, subtracting, or exploring shapes, our kindergartners developed critical thinking skills in a fun and supportive environment. Spring Math was also a huge hit for our students this year.

From the start of school, we hit the ground running in ELA with great intensity learning letters, letter sounds, high frequency words, and comprehension skills. Students did a book comparison of three different versions of The Three Little Pigs. Students compared how the books were different and the same and even voted on their favorite version. That is just one example of how their love for reading developed this school year.

In April, students enjoyed a memorable visit to Vale Wood Farms, where they explored farm life and learned how dairy products are produced. One of the most exciting moments for the class was realizing that this is the very same farm that supplies the milk cartons served at school. The interactive experiences brought learning to life, sparking excitement and helping students develop a greater appreciation for agriculture and the natural world.

We wrapped up the year with our heartwarming "You Are Special" Celebration, honoring each child's unique journey through kindergarten. This event gave students the chance to share their favorite memories, reflect on their growth, and be recognized for the wonderful individuals they are.

It was a year filled with learning, laughter, friendship, and discovery, and we are so proud of all our kindergarten stars!

Mrs. Black and Mrs. Riffle
Kindergarten Teachers



MTSS PROGRESS UPDATE: BUILDING STRONG FOUNDATIONS FOR STUDENT SUCCESS

As we reflect on the 2025–2026 school year, we are proud to share the tremendous progress our students and staff have made through our Multi-Tiered System of Supports (MTSS) framework.

This year, our focus was clear: strengthen Tier 1 instruction and address the root causes that were preventing students from reaching their full potential. Rather than simply responding to gaps after they appeared, we worked collaboratively to identify barriers to student success and improve the quality of instruction and support available to every learner.

This work required a true team effort. Teachers, specialists, interventionists, and support staff came together to build stronger connections across subject areas and create a coordinated system of support for students. By aligning our efforts and sharing expertise, we developed a powerhouse network dedicated to helping every child succeed.

While we recognized there was significant work ahead of us, our staff embraced the challenge with dedication and purpose. Through data-driven decision-making, targeted interventions, and a commitment to continuous improvement, we have seen encouraging results across all grade levels.

We are excited to report that every grade level, from Kindergarten through 6th grade, moved in the right direction toward our district goal of having 80% of students at or above benchmark and 20% of students below or well below benchmark. This progress reflects not only academic growth but also the strength of our collaborative approach and our unwavering commitment to student achievement.

Although our journey is not complete, this year's accomplishments demonstrate what is possible when an entire school community works together toward a common goal. We celebrate the hard work of our students, families, teachers, specialists, interventionists, and staff members who made this progress possible.

As we look ahead, we remain committed to refining our practices, strengthening Tier 1 instruction, and ensuring every student receives the support they need to thrive. Together, we will continue building on this momentum and creating even greater opportunities for success in the years to come.

Maeve Hrabosky (MTSS Coordinator) & Jenn Gorzelsky (Reading Specialist)

ELEMENTARY LEGO LEAGUE

Twelve students, in grades four to six, represented Ferndale Elementary at this year's Lego League Challenge Competition at Central Cambria on January 31, 2026. Students met regularly during the months of October through January to prepare a presentation and coding missions using a robot built from Lego SPIKE Prime kits. The team demonstrated First Inspires Core Values: Discovery, Innovation, Impact, Inclusion, Teamwork, and Fun. The team was awarded third place for Robot Design.













CHIEF SCIENCE OFFICERS STEM SATURDAYS

Chief Science Officers (CSOs) are selected from grades seven through twelve. This year, FAJSHS had four CSOs and two honorary CSOs. CSOs design an action plan to implement throughout the 2025-2026 school year. This year our CSO group selected engaging STEM activities to then plan and implement with Ferndale Elementary students in grades K-6 on selected Saturdays throughout the school year. CSO's participate in Leadership Training Institutes at the IU08, visit various STEM-based careers, and advocate for implementing STEM in the school district.













MATH COUNTS

Three eighth grade students attended Math Counts Competition at UPJ on Saturday, February 21, 2026. Students competed in Sprint, Target, and Team Rounds against other districts in the Johnstown Chapter.





MATH 24 CHALLENGE

Ferndale Area Junior High was represented by five students - three eighth graders and two seventh graders - for the Intermediate Unit 08's Math 24 Challenge hosted by St. Francis University. Students spent several weeks practicing for the challenge with single digits, double digits, and variable cards.



MINI-THON

The 2025-2026 Junior Class organized Ferndale Area JSHS's first Mini-Thon on February 27-28, 2026. The event was in conjunction with Four Diamonds - State College. They kicked off the event with a Coin War earlier in the month. The winning homeroom (Dr. Fosbrink) participated in 'Pie the Principal' which included both Dr. Brotz and Mr. Boyer. Total contributions to Four Diamonds, fundraising, sponsorships, and donations were $6,899..







Before and After Pie-ing Dr. Brotz and Mr. Boyer (Dr. Fosbrink's 8th grade homeroom)

MINI-THON

Students participated in a 12-hour event of dancing, activities, and staying on their feet to simulate the fatigue those with cancer endure through every day activities.













PENN STATE UNIVERSITY'S THON

Junior Class Officers attended Penn State University's THON at the Bryce Jordan Center in February, from the view of a Four Diamonds suite.PSU's THON was the inspiration behind FAJSHS's first Mini-THON.



PENN STATE HEALTH GOLISANO CHILDREN'S HOSPITAL

Junior Class Officers toured Penn State Health Golisano Children's Hospital. Four Diamonds supports kids with cancer treated at the hospital, providing superior care and support to families.







PROM

The 2026 Prom was held at Hinckston Run Farm this year on Friday, May 1, 2026. Music and entertainment, along with an exciting photo booth, were provided by DJ Jack Labarko, Inc. The event was catered by Anthony's Restaurant, Banquet, & Catering.







INTERACT CLUB

The Interact Club was busy making a positive impact in our school and community this year. We kicked things off by welcoming new members at our induction breakfast, then spread some fall fun by decorating trunks and handing out candy at the elementary school's Trunk or Treat. As the holiday season approached, members collected food and turkeys to create Thanksgiving baskets for district families and partnered with FCA to hold a food drive for the district food pantry. Our service continued with hands-on volunteering at the Cambria County Backpack Project, packing weekend food bags for students in need. During the holiday season, members also decorated a Christmas tree at the Russell House for their free, community open house event, collected items to create Stockings for Soldiers for troops, volunteered at the mall for Toys for Tots, and rang bells for the Salvation Army Red Kettle Campaign. Members also collected and double-bagged grocery bags for the Backpack Project. Interact also participated in Hoops for Hunger, a charity basketball tournament raising funds for the Cambria County Backpack Project. We were proud of the generosity and dedication our members continued to show!

- Kimberly Karcher

5K COLOR RUN/WALK

2025-2026 Junior Class Officers hosted a 5K Color Run/Walk to raise money for Four Diamonds. The event was held at Ferndale Borough Park on May 30. This event concluded this year's drive to raise awareness for childhood cancer and contribute to Four Diamonds.



STUDENT ARTICLES

As a senior at Ferndale Area High School, I was asked to write an article about my experience here. We were given many topics that this could be about. After careful consideration, I have decided to spotlight a teacher who has inspired me. Mrs. Mullen is a History teacher at our school; she also teaches side classes such as Intro to Psychology, Sociology, and History of Warfare. I have taken each one of these classes this year and can say I have been able to do well.

At the start of the year, I knew I had the potential to have better grades. By helping me understand the assignments given and always pushing me to be better, Mrs. Mullen helped push me to my best ability, and now I have the best grades I have had all year. Not only is she educated and a really good teacher, but she is one of the teachers that cares about students on a personal level and actually cares about our everyday problems. Yes, other teachers care, but Mrs. Mullen actively asks questions in class on how to help students and possibly make our experience here better. It is not only the students she cares about, but our overall school community too. This is only Mrs. Mullen's second year, and she has already come up with several ideas to improve the school. She actively takes input from students and takes account of our worries, too.

- Connor Szarka

My name is Joseph Prave and I play basketball. My team and I have had a rocky start, but now we are dominating on the court every game. But there's more to this basketball season than just winning for me. As a senior, this is my last run with my favorite people. My brothers from elementary school—we have been a solid friend group the whole way out, on and off the court. This season is pretty sentimental for the reason being that this is my last time playing organized basketball with the ones I love.

Basketball isn't the only thing I have done with my friends. We also went and walked through the Holocaust Museum together; this touched my heart in a way knowing that after this year some of us won't see each other or even talk to each other as much as we do now. Coming to school everyday knowing my friends are going to be there makes my life easy and school even easier. This senior year has been a lot to remember, but I know it's going to be hard to not look back at and tear up a little.

- Joseph Prave

STUDENT ARTICLES

This past month I was given the opportunity to build a booby trap in my History of War class. Mrs. Mullen assigned this work, telling us she would pick one person to create theirs. I tried to make mine the best, hoping to get picked. She ended up picking mine. She even went out and bought me silly string cans to use for it. I spent multiple class periods working on it to try and perfect it. In the end, it wasn't perfect, but it worked.

The concept of the trap was in a locker. With the action of opening the locker to set the trap off. Once you opened the locker, a book would fall directly onto the silly string to spray someone. I did have to adapt to the actual locker since it was completely different than what I drew out. For example, I originally had a book wedged in the locker. I ended up using 40 books, stacked up, to get my platform for the silly string right. That is just one of the adaptations I used. In the end, it did spray, just not as much as I wanted it to. This assignment was to help us be creative and for us to think outside the box. It also tied into war. We were learning about the Vietnam War, seeing that it had many booby traps.

- Delaney McKendree

This year's basketball season has been the time of our lives. From our coach, Mr. Reckner, to every single one of our teammates and fans, we have been having an unbelievable time together. We started off slowly, facing various challenges like injuries, but we never let that get us down. Now, we have finally got hot and are now winning with ease. Our team chemistry is through the roof, since we have all played with each other for years. Something about this season has felt very different, and it does not feel like a team. Instead, it feels like a family. We are winning with excitement and confidence, just showing how far we have come since the first game of the season.

Some of our best memories have not even been on the court; instead, it has been the bus rides that could be the highlight of all of our years. From the bus ride to Belleville to the bus ride right to Conemaugh Valley, we are always having fun and joking around. This team has become more than basketball. It is an everlasting relationship with each other and all the memories we have created. We all played in our first double-overtime game and are experiencing new things each night, whether it's in practice or a game. This season is one we will never forget, not because of the game, but instead because of the family we have become.

- Ethan Prisk

STUDENT ARTICLES

It's crazy to think that I have only a couple weeks left of playing high school basketball. At first I was like, "The season just started, I still have time to enjoy everything while going through the motions of life." Then it was, "There's still ten games left, that's a lot and the end isn't anywhere near yet." Now the realization is setting in that there really is only a couple of games left and although that hurts, I wouldn't trade it for anything. Being able to go through my whole high school career with this team was an unbeatable experience.

Last year's team and this year's team were my favorite of my four years playing high school basketball. Nothing can beat the long bus rides with the team, the bonding moments, and just the overall feeling of having a successful team and season. As of right now we are hoping to finish the season 12-9 and then make something happen in district playoffs. The same thing happened last year and we won some games in the playoffs that we weren't expecting to. Even if we can't win in the playoffs, the fun moments with the team, the close games where the bench and crowd are involved, and the unbreakable bonds the sport has built between me and some of the people I know are something that could never be matched. Although it's almost time to move on with life, I would do it all over again if I could.

- Chance Washington

2026

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