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Erie 1 BOCES
JOURNAL

Fall | 2026

SPECIAL EDITION

Portrait of a Graduate

Preparing future-ready students



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E1B Journal

Fall 2026 Special Edition

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Western New York community leaders share some advice during the E1B Connect panel presentation.



Students at the 2nd Annual Clay Throwdown practice creativity, critical thinking, and communication.

Dear Erie 1 BOCES Community,

Welcome to this special edition of the E1B Journal, highlighting Erie 1 BOCES' work in support of the New York State Portrait of a Graduate.

In July 2025, the New York State Board of Regents adopted the Portrait of a Graduate as a unifying vision for the knowledge, skills, and dispositions students need to succeed in college, careers, civic life, and beyond. Developed through the NY Inspires initiative, the Portrait of a Graduate reflects input from thousands of stakeholders across New York State. The Portrait identifies six interconnected attributes: Academically Prepared, Creative Innovator, Critical Thinker, Effective Communicator, Global Citizen, and Reflective and Future Focused.

At Erie 1 BOCES, we see these attributes reflected in the work taking place across our organization every day. Our role as a regional convener gives us a unique opportunity to support school districts in preparing students, educators, and the community for what comes next. That means helping students meet academic expectations while also developing the ability to think creatively, communicate effectively, and build meaningful relationships. The pages that follow provide examples of how our organization is supporting those six principles.

We invite you to explore the examples in this publication and see the Portrait of a Graduate not simply as a future destination, but as a vision already taking shape in our classrooms.

With appreciation for your partnership,

Michael Capuana, Ed.D.
District Superintendent/CEO
Erie 1 BOCES



Erie 1 BOCES leaders tour the Instructional Services Expansion site with representatives from Buffalo Construction Consultants and Benderson Development.



A new portrait of student success

In July 2025, the New York State Board of Regents formally adopted the New York State Portrait of a Graduate as part of NY Inspires, a statewide plan to reimagine public education and better prepare students for life after school.

You may have heard the phrase “Portrait of a Graduate” in conversations around schools over the past year. While it may sound like something that only applies to high school seniors, the idea is much bigger than graduation day. Developed through the NY Inspires initiative, the Portrait of a Graduate reflects input from thousands of stakeholders across New York State who shared their perspectives through community forums and surveys. Together, these efforts defined the skills students should build throughout their school experience so they are prepared for the world ahead.

Academics remain an important part of that picture, but they are not the only measure of student success. New York’s Portrait of a Graduate focuses on six connected attributes: being academically prepared, a creative innovator, a critical thinker, an effective communicator, a global citizen, and reflective and future focused. In simple terms, it recognizes that students need more than memorized facts to succeed.

They need to solve problems, communicate clearly, think deeply, and understand different perspectives to truly thrive.

As NY Inspires moves forward, families may begin to see changes in how students learn and show what they know. You may notice tests being replaced with projects or portfolios among other assessment options. New York State Commissioner of Education Dr. Betty Rosa stated, “NY Inspires does not eliminate statewide tests or accountability. It simply recognizes that a single exam shouldn’t determine a student’s future.” The long-term goal is to create more flexible pathways that honor different student strengths and better reflect real-world learning. Districts are charged this year with refining their local assessment strategy to support this work.

Erie 1 BOCES is proud to support this work both within our own schools and across the region. In this edition of the E1B Journal, you will see examples of how Erie 1 BOCES students are already living the skills reflected in the Portrait of a Graduate every day.

Regionally, Erie 1 BOCES is also working alongside administrators and educators from our 19 component districts through professional development, collaboration and planning connected to NY Inspires. As this important work continues, we look forward to helping schools prepare students not only for graduation but for the real world ahead!



Academically Prepared

A New York State high school graduate demonstrates a strong foundation in the New York State learning standards and has the knowledge and skills needed for success in college, careers, civic engagement, service, and life.



Creative Innovator

A graduate uses imagination, curiosity, and flexible thinking to solve problems creatively, develop new ideas and products, and adapt to changing circumstances and challenges.



Critical Thinker

A graduate analyzes information thoughtfully, evaluates evidence, and identifies patterns and connections across different content areas to address complex issues and better understand the world.



Effective Communicator

A graduate shares ideas clearly and confidently through speaking, writing and different types of media, while also listening to and engaging with diverse audiences and perspectives.



Global Citizen

A graduate acts responsibly and ethically in local, global and digital communities, using civic knowledge, skills, and mindsets to support sustainability and contribute positively to a culturally diverse, democratic society.



Reflective and Future-Focused

A graduate reflects on their strengths and areas for growth, sets meaningful goals, builds supportive relationships, and makes responsible decisions that support social, emotional, and mental well-being.



Academically Prepared: preparing students for tomorrow

The careers of tomorrow require more than technical skills; they require adaptable learners, strong partnerships, and educational experiences that evolve alongside industry. Through Industry Ready NY, Erie 1 BOCES is helping shape that future.

Launched through a statewide collaboration supported by a \$3.7 million grant awarded to the University at Buffalo, Industry Ready NY expands a proven model that connects students with hands-on learning, industry mentors, and career opportunities in high-demand fields. Erie 1 BOCES joins Broome-Tioga BOCES, Otsego Northern Catskills BOCES, Champlain Valley Educational Services (CVES BOCES), and Ulster BOCES in building stronger pathways between education and employment across New York State.

“This initiative reflects the strength of partnership,” said Michael Capuana, Ed.D., district superintendent and CEO of Erie 1 BOCES. “By working together, we are creating clear pathways for students to move from the classroom into high-demand careers. This is about aligning education with opportunity and ensuring students are ready for what comes next.”

At the heart of the initiative is a shared vision: preparing students not just for today’s jobs, but for the careers and industries that will define the future. By strengthening partnerships with regional employers and aligning educational experiences with workforce needs, students gain valuable exposure to real-world environments while developing the knowledge, skills, and confidence to succeed in an ever-changing economy.

Each participating BOCES will tailor implementation to meet the needs of its region while maintaining a shared vision and coordinated strategy.

“This model has demonstrated success in connecting students to careers,” said Anedda Trautman, assistant superintendent of instructional services at Erie 1 BOCES. “Expanding this work allows us to scale those results and support more students in achieving strong outcomes after graduation.”

Future Ready Centers will serve as hubs where educators, business leaders, and students come together to explore career pathways, participate in authentic learning experiences, and strengthen connections between the classroom and the workplace. By investing in innovative partnerships today, Industry Ready NY is helping students envision what’s possible tomorrow, creating a stronger workforce, stronger communities, and a brighter future for New York.



**INDUSTRY
READY NY**

PREPARING TALENT.
POWERING INDUSTRY.



Erie 1 BOCES Associate Director of Career and Technical Education, Simone Klubek (second from the right), celebrates alongside partners at the Industry Ready NY launch event.



Creative Innovator:

Erie 1 BOCES Home School Monitoring Service (HSMS) has completed the rollout of the myOneFlow platform to home-schooling families at participating districts. This innovation brings personalized educational planning and progress monitoring into a more accessible, connected platform, helping HSMS meet students where they are—recognizing that learning can take many forms and that students need individualized pathways to reach their goals. This service enhancement helps create a more connected and responsive home-schooling experience that supports individualized learning, encourages ongoing reflection on progress, and helps students work toward long-term educational goals.



Critical Thinker:

Student Startups is hosted by Erie 1 BOCES in partnership with University at Buffalo, challenges students to turn original ideas into real-world solutions. Through the competition, students identified problems, developed innovative businesses, and pitched their ideas to a panel of judges. Students from across the region demonstrate creativity, critical thinking, and entrepreneurship. Through the process, students are empowered to think beyond traditional classroom boundaries, take risks, and explore how their ideas can create meaningful impact in their communities. The 2026 Student to Startup competition was won by a Depew High School student whose business idea helps local anglers connect with the tackle and resources they need for a successful day on the water!



Effective Communicator:

Erie 1 BOCES Arts in Education program hosts **Theatre Jam**. This day-long youth conference is for students who are interested in or participating in theatre programs. The event gives students opportunities to express ideas, collaborate with peers, and share their unique perspectives through theatre, dance, and storytelling. Throughout the day, students create and perform original skits, learn choreography, and participate in workshops focused on scriptwriting, performance, and telling their own stories. These experiences helped students build confidence, strengthen verbal and nonverbal communication skills, and learn how creative expression can connect with and inspire an audience.





Global Citizen:

Filling buckets, building community



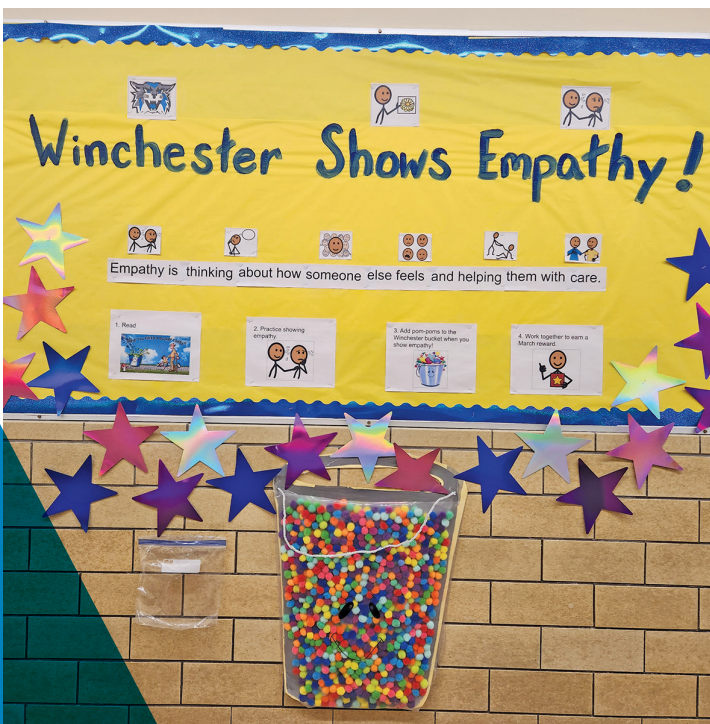
Small acts of kindness can make a big difference, and students at Winchester Academy proved just that. As part of the school's monthly character education initiative, students focused on empathy, exploring what it means to understand and care about the thoughts, feelings, and experiences of others. To put those lessons into practice, Winchester Academy launched a "Fill the Bucket" Empathy Challenge, encouraging students to recognize opportunities to support, encourage, and show compassion to those around them.

Each act of empathy helped "fill the bucket," bringing the entire school community one step closer to a shared goal. Whether it was offering a helping hand to a classmate, using kind words, including others, or showing patience and understanding, every positive action contributed to a culture where everyone felt valued.

By the end of the challenge, students had successfully filled the bucket and earned a well-deserved celebration, a delicious cookie made especially for the occasion by instructor Eric Kraft and his Baking and Pastry Arts students at the Potter Career and Technical Education (CTE) Center.

The partnership between Winchester Academy and Potter CTE added another meaningful layer to the celebration. While Winchester Academy students were recognized for their kindness and empathy, CTE Baking and Pastry Arts students had the opportunity to use their talents to give back, demonstrating how acts of service can strengthen connections across Erie 1 BOCES programs.

At Winchester Academy, students are learning that being a global citizen doesn't always require grand gestures. Sometimes, it begins with a kind word, a helping hand, or a simple act of compassion that inspires others to do the same. Through initiatives like the "Fill the Bucket" challenge, Winchester Academy continues to foster a school culture where empathy isn't just taught; it's practiced every day.





Reflective and Future-Focused: Technology for a new era of learning

As schools across the state begin preparing for the future of learning through NY Inspires and the Portrait of a Graduate, the Western New York Regional Information Center (WNYRIC) is looking ahead to support the technology needed for these changes. As a regional leader in this work, WNYRIC is collaborating with Regional Information Centers (RICs) across New York State through a consortium known as RIC One. Together, the RICs are advocating for technology and technology vendors to align their tools and services with the goals of NY Inspires.

Through NY Inspires, students will increasingly be asked to show their learning in multiple ways. This may include competencies, projects, presentations, capstones, credentials, work-based learning, service-based learning, and other meaningful experiences. This shift moves beyond simply recording course completion or test scores. Instead, schools will need systems that can capture a fuller picture of what students know and are able to do. That change creates new needs for student information systems, data warehouses, reporting tools, learning records, and future transcript solutions.

At the same time, RIC One in partnership with the New York State Department of Education will continue improving data analysis tools and dashboards, so districts can better understand student learning, progress and readiness. Preparation is underway to help districts understand what data may be needed and how to use these tools.

Instructional software will also continue to evolve to support new learning models, including tools for portfolios, performance-based assessments, learning standards and Portrait of a Graduate attributes. WNYRIC will support districts through the procurement and contract process for instructional software vendors, helping ensure tools are secure and able to support future needs.

By preparing now, WNYRIC is helping districts identify where current systems may need to change and begin building a technical foundation. Through statewide collaboration, these efforts will help make learning more visible, personalized, and connected to student success.



Building a campus designed for every student

Construction advances on Erie 1 BOCES' new Instructional Services Expansion site

Erie 1 BOCES is continuing to transform a former commercial property at the corner of Walden Avenue and Dick Road in Depew into a centralized, state-of-the-art campus designed to serve students of all abilities. The Instructional Services Expansion was launched in response to growing demand for specialized educational services, increasing student referrals, and limited capacity across Erie 1 BOCES' existing facilities. The new campus will bring multiple programs together in one comprehensive location and is expected to open in September 2027.

Construction has continued to move forward throughout the summer and early fall. Gymnasium expansions are taking shape, while flooring, roofing, and classroom framing continue across the building. Foundations and exterior work are also progressing around the campus' six interior courtyards, providing a clearer picture of the innovative learning environments to come.

The project is about more than creating additional space. Purpose-built classrooms, therapeutic areas, sensory features, accessible outdoor spaces, and a Family Resource Center will create an environment where students can learn, grow, and build independence.



Construction on the Erie 1 BOCES Instructional Services Expansion project continues to progress steadily, with foundations and siding now in place for all six courtyards and the gymnasium spaces, further bringing the vision for the new campus to life.



Members of the Special Education Advisory Council tour the Expansion site and learn more about the specialized learning spaces and interior courtyards.



To stay up to date on this exciting project, please visit e1b.org/expansion



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Winchester Academy staff welcome students back
on the first day of school.



E1B Instructional Services staff pose for a picture to celebrate Erie 1 BOCES Day.