COXSACKIE-ATHENS
Central School District

Inspiring Extraordinary Success

The Riverhawk Report

Coxsackie-Athens Central School District | 2026-27 Quarter 1 Newsletter



A MESSAGE FROM THE SUPERINTENDENT

Dear C-A Families and Community,

The first quarter is behind us, and what I've seen in our buildings are classrooms full of students who are learning, and adults working hard to make that learning more consistent from one room to the next. Some of what you'll read here is visible from the road: new parking, new playgrounds. Some of it is quieter but matters just as much: how we train and support our staff, how we communicate with you, and how we look after each student's day-to-day experience. Thank you for the welcome you've given me. I'm glad to be here.

Dr. Dan Kalbfliesh, Ed.D. Superintendent of Schools

Newsletter Highlights

Planning for the Future

Student Opportunities

School Improvements

Our Schools

Coxsackie Elementary

EJA Elementary

Coxsackie-Athens Middle School

Coxsackie-Athens High School

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Our Board Goals for 2026-27

At its retreat, the Board of Education narrowed its focus to three areas: Human and Fiscal Resources, Communication, and Student Experience. We are now working to turn each area into specific, measurable goals for the full Board to adopt. Below is what we measured in the first month, and where we have nothing to report yet.

Human and Fiscal Resources

This goal is about making sure we can hire, keep, and support the people who work with our students, and that we manage our budget and buildings responsibly. Since August 27, our staff have received about 60 hours of professional development and coaching. Teachers, counselors, psychologists, clerical staff, and aides and assistants have all taken part, with training led by Questar III BOCES, our principals, and our district coordinators.

Teacher sessions focused on how we support students at different levels of need and on making our curriculum line up from grade to grade. Coaching has centered on reviewing student data and getting new instructional programs off the ground. Aides and assistants trained on supporting teachers, protecting confidentiality, and actively supervising students, and our clerical staff learned Infinite Campus tools that save them time.

We are also working on shared routines for how teacher teams meet and use data together. That work is just beginning, and we have no results to report yet.

The district just completed a comprehensive enrollment study to see what enrollment will look like in the next 5 years. The study highlighted a 32% decline in student population (a loss of 514 students) between the 2000–01 and 2025–26 school years. Utilizing a cohort survival statistical model that tracks local live birth data and grade-to-grade transition ratios, the report projects that enrollment will continue to decrease through the 2031–32 school year. Key drivers behind this drop include aging

local demographics—where 84% of the district's population is not school-aged—a significant rise in homeschooling (increasing from 28 to 95 students over ten years), and broader regional population decline. Additionally, worsening housing affordability and a severe scarcity of rental properties contribute directly to the enrollment decline by preventing young families with children from moving into the area. The study notes that proposed residential developments, such as the 360-unit United Mobile Properties (UMH) project set to start in 2028, will yield only modest gains (around 33 children per 100 units) and will not offset the overall downward trend. To navigate these ongoing pressures, the report emphasizes the need to monitor the efficacy of the district's current elementary school reconfiguration, track local housing and birth trends, and establish a long-range strategic plan spanning district finances, staffing, and facility operations.

Student Experience

This goal covers the day-to-day experience of students at CE, EJA, the Middle School, and the High School: academically, socially, and emotionally.

Communication

We want information from us to be easy to find, and we want to hear from you. A communication survey for families and staff was sent out in early November. It will give us our first baseline, and we will share what we learn.

We know that having information spread across several platforms makes it harder than it should be to find what you need. Visits and interactions on our website have risen significantly this fall and we will continue to post updates there as a central hub of news and events. The district is exploring new ways to streamline communication, and we will share these ideas with you after we review the results of the communication survey.



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Attendance

Last year, by June, about one in six students at CE (17%) and EJA (18%) had missed enough school to be considered chronically absent. At the Middle School it was about one in four (26%), and at the High School nearly one in three (31%). A single month is too short to compare fairly, because a student has to miss a share of the year to count, so we will report again once we have more of the year behind us.

Reading and Math

Our fall iReady benchmark checks show a mixed picture compared with this time last year. In reading, the share of students at or above grade level rose in 5 of 13 grade levels while in math, 3 of 13 grade levels. This snapshot is a comparison of fall assessments from one year to the next. This does not look at growth of students' achievement. We will report on that as the year progresses. These compare different groups of students at the same point in the year, and one check is one snapshot. Additionally, our state assessment data is still embargoed and cannot be shared yet. This data indicates that our efforts to focus on quality teaching and learning are indeed in the best interest of students.

Exploring College Opportunities

This fall, the High School Counseling Office welcomed representatives from 16 colleges and universities to meet with interested students. These visits gave C-A seniors a chance to ask questions and learn more about the college application process, campus life, academic programs, financial aid and scholarships, and what to expect in their first year of college. Over two months, more than 40 seniors signed up to take advantage of these valuable opportunities as they begin planning their next steps.

More ways to belong

At Coxsackie Elementary, 41 students joined Mural Club and 26 joined Makerspace. TREX follows when Makerspace's ten sessions end, and a Girls Running Club starts at the end of October. At EJA, the Girls Run Club, led by Ms. Gokey and Mrs. Pacuk has 9 girls participating. Club members are also assisting with the building-wide Turkey Trot with Coach Heaney. Board Game Club meets weekly and currently has 8 students enrolled. Let Grow Play, a before-school play club, continues to meet on Mondays and Wednesdays with 14 students currently participating.

At CAMS, there are 13 different opportunities for students to engage and belong in. Of those clubs, NJHS, Chess Club, MS Student Council and MS Drama Club each have a membership of 50 or more students. The Middle School staff prides itself in being responsive to students and as such, we have started an informal Ally club for students who feel they do not belong. Our first meeting was on November 6. We expect the membership in this club to grow over time, as word spreads.

At Coxsackie-Athens High School, we are proud of the many opportunities available for students to get involved, explore their interests, develop leadership skills, and build connections with their peers. Our clubs continue to provide meaningful opportunities for students to find their place and make a difference in our school community.



We are excited to see so many of our high school students getting involved in clubs and extracurricular activities! Our students have a variety of opportunities to explore their interests, build friendships, develop leadership skills, and connect with their school community. Current participation includes 20 students in National Honor Society (with 16 additional students preparing for induction), 4 in Inclusivity Club, 7 in Freshman Class, 14 in Sophomore Class, 24 in Junior Class, and 4 Senior Class officers. Our other clubs are also seeing great participation, with 35–40 students in Drama, 29 in HOPE, 28 in FFA, 26 in Interact Club, 50+ in Outdoor Club, 20 in Women in Science, and 29 in Varsity Club, whose participation varies by season, but had 29 participants this fall. We are also excited about new opportunities, including our newly forming Art Club and Political Debate Club, which currently has one member. It is wonderful to see students finding ways to get involved, discover new interests, and make connections beyond the classroom. We encourage all students to find a club or activity that interests them and become part of our school community!

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Checking in on Students

This fall, students are taking a short wellbeing check-in, the first of three planned for this year.

Physical Building

This fall a team has been walking through each building and classroom giving feedback from the perspective of the students. This is aimed to improve how students experience school.

Transportation Adjustments

The Stopfinder app is coming soon! This new tool will provide parents and families with greater visibility into their children's daily bus transportation, helping them stay informed about bus routes and arrival times. We anticipate launching the app this winter, just in time to help families prepare for the colder months and minimize time spent waiting outdoors. More information about accessing and using the app will be shared as the launch date approaches.

The District Transportation Department has expanded bus stop availability within areas previously designated as the "walk zone" to provide additional transportation options for families who prefer not to have



their children walk to school, particularly during inclement weather. Families residing within the walk zone who would like to explore available transportation options are encouraged to contact the Transportation Office for more information.

To address student behavior concerns and promote a safer, more positive riding experience, the Transportation Department, in collaboration with First Student drivers and district administration, has implemented an assigned seating process on school buses. We appreciate our community's continued partnership and support in teaching students the importance of school bus safety and respectful behavior.

Fall 2026 Athletics Report

Season Overview and Highlights

The Fall 2026 athletic season at Coxsackie-Athens featured several notable accomplishments, including strong postseason representation, academic achievement, and continued success in promoting sportsmanship. Seven of our fall athletic programs qualified for sectional competition, with both boys and girls soccer, golf, girls volleyball, and boys cross country, girls tennis earning postseason appearances. The girls tennis team continued its success by capturing the Patroon Conference championship for the second consecutive year.

Academic achievement remained an important point of pride for our athletic department. Seven fall programs, boys soccer, girls soccer, girls volleyball, golf, girls tennis, cross country, and field hockey all qualified as Scholar-Athlete teams, recognizing the commitment of our student-athletes to balancing academic responsibilities with athletic participation. Additionally, our field hockey program earned the Mid-Hudson Athletic League (MHAL) Section IX Conference Sportsmanship Team award, reflecting the positive representation of Coxsackie-Athens by our student-athletes and coaches.

Overall, the fall season demonstrated the value of interscholastic athletics in providing students with opportunities to compete, develop leadership skills, and represent their school and community.

Student Participation and Enrollment Trends

Student participation continues to be an important area of focus for the athletic department as the district experiences declining enrollment. During the Fall 2026 season, 210 of our 516 students in grades 7–12 participated in fall athletics, representing approximately 41% of our secondary student population. This is a decrease from the 45% participation rate recorded during the fall of 2025.

The decline is particularly significant because fall has traditionally been our largest athletic season in terms of the

number of sports and participation opportunities available to students. Our current seventh-grade class has just 65 students enrolled, which presents additional challenges as we look toward future participation numbers and the sustainability of certain programs.

While these numbers reflect the challenges associated with a smaller student population, the department remains committed to providing meaningful athletic opportunities for as many students as possible. Continued monitoring of participation trends and proactive planning will be essential to maintaining a strong and sustainable interscholastic athletic program.



Football Program Update

The 2026 football season presented significant challenges for both our varsity and modified programs. Low participation numbers, combined with player availability and safety considerations, ultimately resulted in shortened seasons for both teams.

The varsity program was unable to continue its season after concerns arose regarding the number of available players and the ability to safely field a team. Similarly, the modified program was forced to forfeit its final game after player availability dropped below the minimum needed to compete safely.

These decisions were difficult but necessary to prioritize student-athlete safety. The circumstances surrounding this season have prompted the district to evaluate the future direction of the football program. Discussions are underway regarding potential options, including a cooperative program with another district or alternative playing formats that may provide a sustainable path forward. A parent forum was held to gain input about the future. Also, students in the current

program were surveyed about their opinions of how to move forward.

As the district evaluates these options, several factors will need to be considered, including student interest, participation numbers, player safety, program structure, and budgetary implications. The financial costs associated with maintaining a standalone program or pursuing a cooperative arrangement will be an important part of the decision-making process. The department's priority is to identify a responsible, sustainable solution that preserves opportunities for interested students while balancing the district's educational, financial, and operational considerations. There will be a presentation at the November board of education meeting and a decision at the December meeting.

Girls Cross Country

The girls cross country program also faced participation challenges this fall and was unable to field a complete team. Three student-athletes competed individually throughout the season, representing Coxsackie-Athens at meets despite not having enough participants to meet the league's minimum team requirements. As a result, the team was unable to score points in league competition. The commitment of these three athletes to continue competing is commendable, but the situation highlights the impact that declining participation can have on both team competition and overall program opportunities.

JV Girls Soccer

For the third consecutive year, the district was unable to field a JV girls soccer team due to insufficient participation numbers. Although the program saw its strongest participation numbers in recent years, with 39 student-athletes participating, the total was still not enough to support separate varsity, JV, and a modified team.

Looking ahead, this will likely remain a challenge for the 2027 season, as the program is expected to graduate 13 student-athletes. The department will need to monitor participation and assess the available roster numbers to determine whether a JV team can be supported next fall. Maintaining a JV program is important for providing additional opportunities for

player development and helping build the long-term sustainability of girls soccer at Coxsackie-Athens.

Modified Field Hockey

The district was unable to field a modified field hockey team this fall due to insufficient student participation. Despite efforts to offer the program, the number of students expressing interest was not enough to support a team.

The varsity field hockey program continued to compete, and its recognition as the MHAL Section IX Conference Sportsmanship Team was a positive reflection of the program and the district. However, the absence of a modified team highlights the challenges of sustaining developmental-level programs as enrollment and participation numbers decline.

Moving forward, the department will continue to assess student interest and participation opportunities to determine whether the varsity and modified teams can be offered in future seasons.

Capital Project, Phase 1

Phase 1 of the capital project got underway this summer, and the last two months brought visible results.

West Entrance Parking Lot is Finished

The lot behind the Middle School gym was completed the week before school started and is now in use by middle school staff and the school community. The work wasn't without a surprise. As of our August 31 update, crews had found a problem with water coming from the existing pipes, and the affected pipes had to be replaced. That work did not delay the finish.

Middle School Roof Repairs are Complete

While crews were on the roof, they found some additional areas that will need attention in the future. Those repairs are planned for Phase 2.



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Both Elementary Playgrounds are Open

Some of the new equipment arrived late, so the elementary playgrounds stayed closed for the first week of school. We know that was disappointing for students and families.

- Coxsackie Elementary held its ribbon-cutting on September 21. Principal Nicole Biette welcomed students and the community, and CE students spoke and cut the ribbon.
- Edward J. Arthur Elementary celebrated on October 21 with a relay race on the new equipment, followed by a ribbon-cutting led by Principal Jim Martino and students. Town officials, village trustees, the town supervisor, and the mayor joined us.

These projects exist because our voters approved them. Thank you.

Capital Project Phase 2

Phase 2 is expected to begin in spring/summer 2027. Scope of work includes asbestos abatement in our elementary buildings, and kitchen renovations. More information will be shared as this phase of the project gets closer.

Stories from Our Classrooms

Calm, Steady Support: Bruno Joins Our Team

After the Board approved the district's therapy dog policy, C-A now has its first approved Animal-Assisted Intervention team: Leslie Reinisch, our School Psychologist and CSE Chairperson, and her certified partner dog, Bruno. This is a clinical specialist and a trained dog working together, not an occasional visit. For a student who is guarded, anxious, or reluctant to come in the door, Bruno can be the way in. He complements the supports we already have and does not replace them.

Learning on the River

Our 5th and 6th graders spent a day at Riverside Park in Coxsackie learning about the Hudson. They met real river workers who showed how they net and study fish, learned how the tides work, and built their own water filters. High school students from Mr. Hudson's class joined and helped throughout the day. Students saw how what they learn in class connects to jobs right here in our community.

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Hands-on Experience Before Graduation
Three C-A students, Skye Anatriello, Danica Fornicola, and Michael Styga, took part in the Questar III BOCES Youth Apprenticeship Program this summer, earning at least 200 hours of paid, on-the-job training. Skye's summer led to a part-time job with Eagle Associates in Coxsackie, where owner Erik Hoglund describes her as attentive and eager to learn.

Apple Distinguished Schools, All of Them
Apple has recognized all of our schools as Apple Distinguished Schools for 2026-2029. Our approach is simple: technology should make learning more creative and more thoughtful, and it should not become a distraction.

Also this Quarter
Local firefighters from Athens and Coxsackie visited our elementary students for Fire Prevention Week. Middle schoolers tried rugby with a coach from NY Rugby and enjoyed the Black Cat Carnival. Our seniors prepared for their next steps with college preparation seminars held by our guidance counselors. Our food services team brought new healthy options to the cafeteria during national school lunch week. And we held a districtwide evacuation drill on October 2 as part of our ongoing safety preparedness.



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Coxsackie-Athens Central School District, 24 Sunset Blvd, Coxsackie, NY 12051 | 518-731-1700