



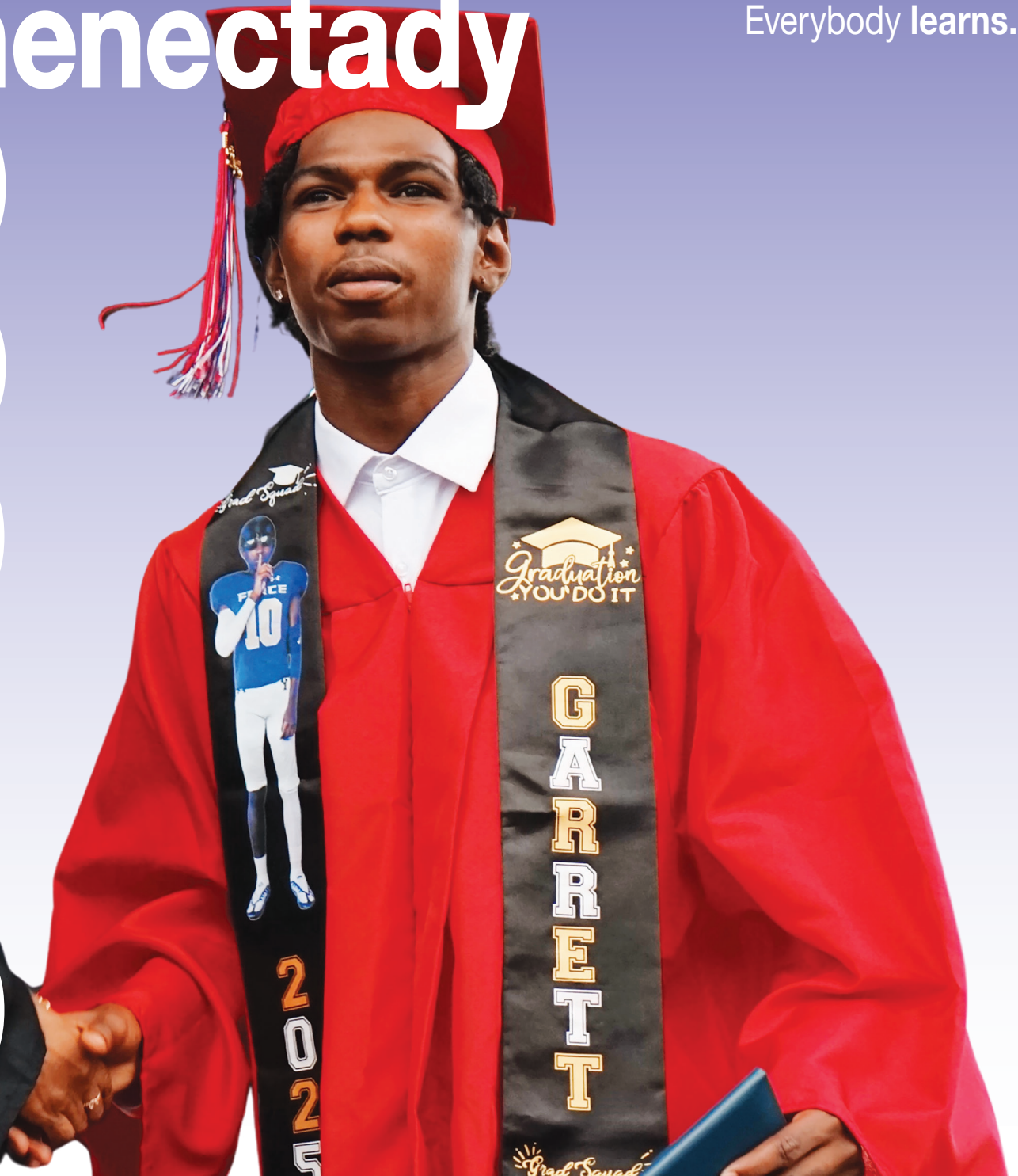
Schenectady City School District

Spotlight

Everybody counts.
Everybody learns.

OR
Schenectady

2024-25



Dear Schenectady Community,

It is with immense pride and gratitude that I share the 2025–2026 edition of Spotlight on the Schenectady City School District. This past year has been one of extraordinary progress, driven by the implementation of our Strategic Plan and a deep commitment to creating enriching, equitable, and secure learning environments for all students.

This publication showcases the impactful work guided by our Strategic Plan, which continues to serve as our roadmap for innovation and excellence. A key component of this work is our comprehensive Secondary Redesign initiative, developed to offer students a variety of personalized and meaningful pathways to success.

Over the past year, we made tremendous strides in both innovative programming and the revitalization of our facilities. We are especially excited to announce the opening of the Steinmetz Freshman Leadership Academy this fall. This new space is purposefully designed to cultivate leadership and provide a strong academic foundation for our ninth graders. The Academy joins our expanding portfolio of innovative programs, including Big Picture, now entering its third year, and our Early College High School, which continues to offer students the opportunity to earn college credit while still in high school.

We also continue to make major progress in improving our physical learning environments. We're pleased to announce the completion of renovations at Van Corlaer Elementary School, which will reopen this September with modern, student-centered learning spaces. The safety and well-being of our students and staff remain a top priority. This year, we implemented weapons detection systems at all secondary schools, a critical step in strengthening school safety. Academically, we are proud to report districtwide growth in English language arts and mathematics, reflecting the dedication of our educators and the hard work of our students and families. To better communicate student progress, we also redesigned our secondary report card, making it more transparent, informative, and helpful for families.

One of the highlights of this year is that we passed our seventh consecutive budget with no tax increase, approved with overwhelming community support. This achievement reflects both fiscal responsibility and strong community partnership.

None of this progress would be possible without the unwavering support of our entire Schenectady community. To our exceptional teachers and staff, thank you for your dedication, passion, and commitment to student success. To our parents, guardians, and caregivers your partnership and trust mean everything. To our community partners and volunteers, thank you for enhancing our schools in countless ways. And to our Board of Education, your leadership and vision continue to guide us forward.

As we look to the year ahead, we remain grounded in our mission to empower every student to reach their full potential and become responsible, engaged citizens and inspired by our shared belief in what's possible.

Leading with purpose. Educating with our hearts.

Thank you for your continued support of the Schenectady City School District.

Together, we are shaping the future

Sincerely,

Dr. Carlos M. Cotto, Jr.
Superintendent of Schools



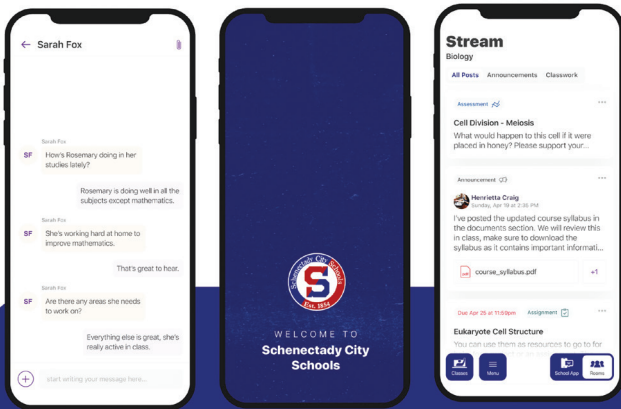
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Say "hello" to Parent-Teacher Chat

Chat Events Documents Stream Classes Notifications



Download the **Schenectady City Schools** app from the iOS App Store or Android Play Store and enable Notifications.

EVERYTHING Schenectady Schools, in your pocket.

Schenectady City School District is making it easier to stay in touch with teachers and class information from our Schenectady City Schools app. Using the app you can easily switch from district and school information to Rooms where you can see your student's classes and engage directly with teachers.

Rooms can be accessed via the web and from our district app, which is available for free and can be used from both Apple and Android phones.

 Follow Schenectady City School District

 Check us out:
@SCSSchools

 Instagram account:
schenectadycityschoolidist

 YouTube Channel:
Schenectady City School District

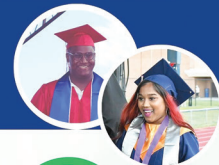
Catch up on stories you may have missed by visiting our YouTube channel

Schenectady

2030 STRATEGIC PLAN

Student & Graduate Success

Every student in the Schenectady City School District will have the academic capacity and skills that prepares them for life and career success.



EFFICIENT SYSTEMS AND EQUITABLE RESOURCES



Ensure the financial sustainability, facilities maintenance, and equitable resource allocation to ensure students and personnel have access to safe learning environments.



PARTNERSHIPS WITH FAMILIES & COMMUNITY

Build strong partnerships with family and community members, enhance after-school programming, and expand the community school model to support student learning.



PASSIONATE PEOPLE



Recruit, train, and support a world-class workforce focused on growth, wellness, and continuous improvement for the benefit of students and families.



Scan this code to learn more about the 2030 Strategic Plan.

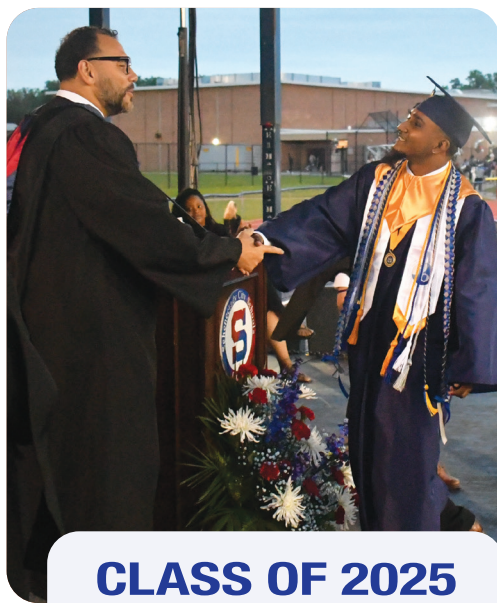
**EVERYBODY COUNTS.
EVERYBODY LEARNS.**

Schenectady 2030

The Board of Education adopted the 2024-2030 "Schenectady 2030" Strategic Plan on October 23, 2024. You can review the plan by scanning the code above. The District worked with Schenectady stakeholders to develop a plan that is designed to be high-level and to provide over-arching system goals guided by the vision of the Schenectady City School District.

The district will continue to set annual goals, strategies, and progress monitoring measures aligned to the strategic plan in an effort to validate actions, monitor progress, and consider adjustment.

What is a Strategic Plan? A strategic plan is a tool that defines where we want to go and what actions we need to take to achieve those goals. It's a map for our school district's growth and how we plan to get there. It provides clear direction for decision-making, resource allocation, evaluation, fostering alignment, and accountability across all levels of the organization.



CLASS OF 2025 Top 10 Students

1. Richard Chunilal
2. Patricia Wilkin
3. Brian Hernandez
4. Sherry Ye
5. Jasper Sendra
6. Kenneth Cabrera
7. Stani Saldana
8. Jayda Palmer
9. Krystal Ragubir
10. Raymond Franco



Class of 2025 Graduation

» **Richard Chunilal - Valedictorian, Class of 2025**

"Graduating high school is no small achievement. It demands resilience, focus, and strength. Characteristics that were pushed to the very limits by our circumstances. Our paths were far from normal. As we step into the next stages of our lives, we enter a world full of perils that are honestly quite scary. It is impossible to know what the future holds. When you feel afraid, powerless, or weak, remember the strengths that brought you to this moment. The creativity, skills and supports that drive you. Remember that you have the power to shape the future because you are the future. Remember that no matter what is thrown at you, you are resilient and strong. Despite the hardships, I would not be where I am today without the opportunities that I received at Schenectady High. Opportunities in groups like the National Honor Society and International Baccalaureate have given me the tools and skills that make me confident that the only thing holding me back is myself."



» The Class of 2025 diploma presentation was live streamed on the district's YouTube Channel and is available for viewing any time.

» **Patricia Wilkin - Salutatorian, Class of 2025**

"Graduating high school is a momentous accomplishment. Every single graduate here should be immensely proud of themselves. Whatever your past holds, whatever your future holds, be proud of yourself. Whatever experience you've had these past four years, appreciate every laugh you shared with friends, every class you looked forward to, and every teacher who inspired you."



YouTube Channel:
**Schenectady City
School District**

Smart Transfer Graduates

10 Schenectady seniors earn college degrees while in high school

Located at Center City in downtown and at SUNY's main campus, the Schenectady Smart Transfer Early College High School is a grant-funded program that allows high school students to obtain associate's degrees while earning their high school diplomas. In 2025, ten Schenectady graduates completed the program, earned their degrees and can transfer to a four-year college to complete their bachelor's degree.

Funded by New York State Education Department, Smart Transfer is a partnership between SUNY Schenectady, University at Albany, SUNY Delhi and Schenectady High School. Students apply and are accepted in 8th grade after undergoing a multi-stage application process and then participate in a rigorous 6-week summer program at SUNY Schenectady.

Graduate Spirit Walks Class of 2025 grads celebrate with elementary students

Leading up to the last day of school, members of the graduating class were invited to participate in a "Grad Walk" at each of the district's elementary schools. The grads boarded buses that made eleven stops all across Schenectady that allowed each elementary school to celebrate in their own unique way. The grads were invited to participate in music class, play tag on the playground, and take home signs and t-shirts to commemorate the event. Next year the plan is to make the walk bigger and better, with more ways to celebrate the grads.



Senior awarded full scholarship through QuestBridge Program

Schenectady High School senior Raymond Franco has been awarded a full four-year scholarship to Boston University through the highly competitive QuestBridge National College Match program.

Out of over 25,500 applicants, only 2,627 students were matched with a college partner. Raymond's scholarship will cover tuition, housing, meals, and other expenses—allowing him to fully focus on his education and future without financial burden.

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Spotlight on Partnerships

School Connections

The Schenectady City School District and the City Mission of Schenectady have a strong partnership through the School Connections program, which provides essential items like clothing, shoes, and school supplies to students in need. This program is part of the City Mission's broader community support efforts and is facilitated through the district's Community Schools initiative.

Families can access these resources by contacting their school's parent liaison, who can then connect them with the City Mission's distribution center.

Home Depot Father's Day Workshop

In June, Keane Elementary partnered with Home Depot Kids workshop to honor our incredible fathers and father figures. Families built planters, sailboats, toolboxes, race cars, and hot air balloons together. These small moments build big memories. A special thank you to Michelle (Home Depot) and our ECHS students for volunteering their time and helping our families walk away with core memories together. Here's to celebrating connection, laughter, and the important role fathers play in our school community!



\$1 Back to School Haircuts

Over Labor Day weekend, the District partnered with the Schenectady Foundation, the fire and police departments, and One Schenectady to offer \$1 back to school haircuts at three different locations over the long weekend.





YouTube Channel:
Schenectady City
School District

Spotlight on Safety

Secondary schools address school safety and climate concerns

The safety and well-being of students, staff, and visitors is always a top priority for the Schenectady City School District. When the school community raised concerns early in the 2024-2025 school year, the district was quick to respond by holding events to gather feedback and discuss how safety could be enhanced.

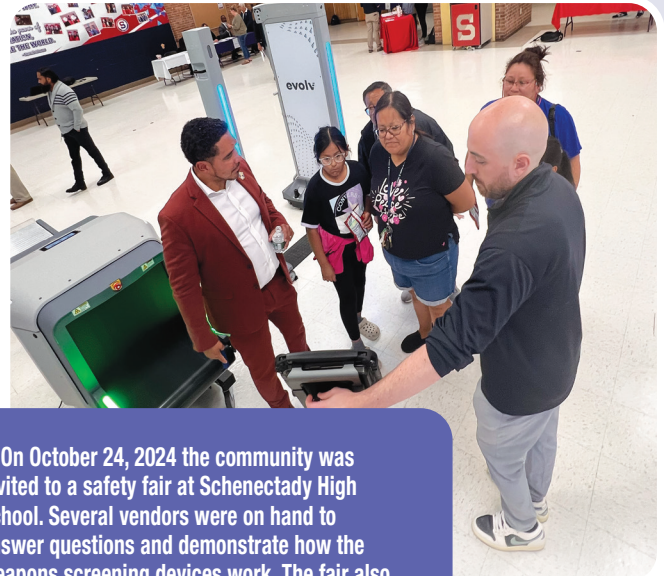
After collecting input from all stakeholders, the Board of Education approved a four-tiered plan designed to enhance safety and the school climate. The plan includes:

- Comprehensive Support for Mental Health and Well-being
- Expansion of Staff, Resources, and Services
- Intentional Professional Development for Stakeholders
- Weapons detection technology to help ensure a safe and secure learning environment

Before implementing weapon screening systems in the schools, district leaders held a safety fair in October providing the school community an opportunity to learn about available systems and their features.

The district then partnered with two companies and began planning for the implementation of weapon screening and bag scanning technology in each of our secondary schools.

The systems were installed at Schenectady High School after the winter recess, and the three middle schools following the February break.



On October 24, 2024 the community was invited to a safety fair at Schenectady High School. Several vendors were on hand to answer questions and demonstrate how the weapons screening devices work. The fair also provided an opportunity for members of the school community to provide input.



After analyzing feedback from the community, the district installed MIS Security's RONIN Weapons Detection Systems with Linev xray bag scanners. Training was provided to our school safety teams by the companies.



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SPOTLIGHT ON PASSIONATE PEOPLE

» As part of the district's "Schenectady 2030" Strategic Plan initiative, passionate employees, exemplary teachers, and successful graduates were recognized on the district's website and social media channels.

The district aims to have a community of professionals who are passionate about education and the success of students from Schenectady. By highlighting the hard work and determination of these successful employees, teachers, and alumni, the district hopes to inspire those traits in the students of Schenectady.

» Congratulations to the more than 70 community members recognized during the 2024-25 school year. Scan the QR code to view the teachers, employees, and alumni who were celebrated.



We all play a part in student and graduate success

The Schenectady City School District adopted its latest strategic plan, "Schenectady 2030", on October 23, 2024.

This plan outlines the district's vision and goals for the next six years and is supported by four key pillars:

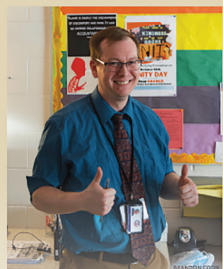
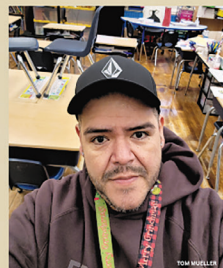
- **Student and Graduate Success:** Equipping students with the academic skills and capacity for successful lives and careers.
- **Passionate People:** Recruiting, training, and supporting a dedicated workforce focused on growth, wellness, and continuous improvement.
- **Partnerships with Families and Community:** Building strong relationships with families and community members, expanding after-school programs and community school models.
- **Efficient Systems and Equitable Resources:** Ensuring financial stability, maintaining facilities, and allocating resources equitably to create safe learning environments.

The plan emphasizes inclusivity and equity, with new strategic priorities set within each pillar to accelerate goal achievement and address equity gaps. The plan was developed with input from various stakeholders, including students, parents, staff, and community members, through listening sessions and surveys. Top priorities identified during this process included safety, programs and services, rigorous curriculum, high-quality teachers, and a positive school culture.





YouTube Channel:
**Schenectady City
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Colleen Keough Named 2025 New York State Teacher of the Year

The New York State Board of Regents named Colleen Keough, a second-grade teacher at Hamilton Elementary School, the 2025 New York State Teacher of the Year. This prestigious honor is awarded annually to an educator who exemplifies a deep passion for teaching, strong community engagement, and an exceptional impact on students' lives.

Ms. Keough has dedicated her entire 16-year career to the Schenectady City School District. She began as a first-grade teacher at Paige Elementary, later taught fourth grade at Hamilton, and now teaches second grade at the same school. Known for her dedication and leadership, she has received several awards, including the district's 2024 Teacher of the Year and the 2023 Passionate Educator Award.

In addition to her classroom excellence, Ms. Keough actively supports school and community initiatives. She works with volunteer programs like Reading is Fun and the Foster Grandparent Program, and is heavily involved in school committees. She also helped establish a Parent Teacher Organization, launched a school store, ran book fairs, and brought back the school mascot, Hammy, to boost school spirit.

Her leadership extends beyond academics. She organizes donation drives, supports health and safety efforts, and connects families to critical resources in times of need.

As New York's Teacher of the Year, Keough will serve as a statewide ambassador for educators and is now the state's nominee for the National Teacher of the Year Program.

Chancellor Lester W. Young Jr., Commissioner Betty A. Rosa, and NYSUT leaders praised her commitment, compassion, and lasting impact, calling her a beacon in education and a role model for teachers statewide.



District Teacher of the Year

YouTube Channel:
**Schenectady City
School District**



Pamela Eighmie, a math teacher at Schenectady High School, was named the Schenectady City School District 2025 Teacher of the Year on Wednesday, December 18, 2024. Superintendent Dr. Carlos M. Cotto, Jr., during a surprise announcement at Schenectady High School with Eighmie's family members, students, and colleagues present.

Eighmie has been teaching math in the Schenectady City School District for 26 years. She's built relationships and has had a lasting impact on the hundreds of students that she has taught over the years. Students say that her classroom is welcoming, calm, a safe space, and a haven where they always feel supported. Students describe Eighmie as generous, selfless, attentive, kind, caring, and an amazing teacher. Many shared that they respect Eighmie and that she changes every life she touches. Colleagues laud her ability to connect with students.

Eighmie's colleagues say she is supportive, a mentor, passionate, compassionate and has a unique ability to connect with students. "Her knowledge, consistency and willingness to support students through challenges have made her one of the district's most loved and respected teachers," said Brian Ledbetter, My Brother's Keeper Program Specialist who is also a former student of Eighmie. "I am just one example of the countless students that have benefited from crossing paths with Ms. Eighmie."

Combat Robotics Club

Schenectady High's Combat Robotics Club Sparks Innovation and Creativity

The Schenectady Combat Robotics Club at Schenectady High School is giving students hands-on experience in the exciting world of combat robotics. Founded by English teacher Mr. Davis, the club introduces students to STEM through designing, building, and battling their own robots. On June 9, 2025, the club hosted its first-ever Robot Rumble during A and B lunch periods — serving as a final project for the class. The event crowned two students, Amir and Davon, as the school's first Robot Rumble champions.

During the 2024-25 school year, the club made its third annual visit to National Havoc, a competitive combat robotics league in Norwalk, Connecticut. Two students qualified for the main tournament, marking another major milestone for the program.

Student voices highlight what makes the club special. Senior Bri shared, "What got me interested in robotics was that there weren't many women — or women of color — involved, so I decided to be that change." Seeram Ramdeo was amazed by the design process: "I was just working on this on the computer... now it's in my hands, now in the arena. That's insane!"

Alyssa, a senior, joined after a connection with Mr. Davis in English class. "He told me about the club, and I stayed because I liked it." Kenny added, "It let me be creative and build what I wanted without limits."

Mr. Davis, who began competing with his sons in 2019, continues to compete and continues inspiring students through innovation, competition, and creativity.



Student Board Reps

1. Joyce Akhelume
2. Jahnyce Sotomayer
3. Cole Bogdanowicz-Wilson
4. Stephan Sukar
5. Isaiah Roberts

» *Student voice is an important part of Student and Graduate Success, pillar one of our Strategic Plan. Student Board of Education representatives is one way that district leadership hears from students who represent their peers. Superintendent Cotto and the Board of Education met with these scholars throughout the school year gathering feedback on weapons detection systems, cell phone use in school, and redesigning the secondary report card.*



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Steinmetz Freshman Leadership Academy Set to Open

In an effort to ease the transition from middle school to high school, the Schenectady City School District is launching the Steinmetz Freshman Leadership Academy for the 2025-2026 school year. Nearly 500 incoming ninth-graders will be the first students to learn in the newly renovated building.

This program is designed to provide a smaller, more supportive learning community with a dedicated staff and a robust support system. The academy will focus on helping students adjust academically, socially, and emotionally, laying a strong foundation for future achievements.

The curriculum will feature “Freshman Experience Courses”, which are designed to be engaging and relevant. These courses will allow students to explore different interests and career fields before they choose a “Leadership Community Pathway” in tenth grade. The academy will also offer a variety of clubs and sports to help students feel connected to their school community.



Construction at Van Corlaer Elementary School began in July 2024 and was completed just in time for the school year to begin in 2025. Students who normally attend Van Corlaer attended Fulton School. This work is included in the SCSD Revitalization Plan 2030.

» **New Turf Field at Mont Pleasant:** In October, the district held a ribbon-cutting at the new athletic facility located at Mont Pleasant Middle School. The project included a new turf field and eight-lane rubberized track, bleachers to seat nearly 2,000 spectators, plus a brand new concession stand and restroom facilities. An expanded parking lot for Mont Pleasant Middle School was also constructed next to the field.





2024-25

Blue Roses Theatre Company performances:

- Sometimes The Rain, Sometimes the Sea
- Vampire Cowboy Trilogy
- School of Rock
- Surprise: A Series of Student-written Plays



"Dancing in the Streets" a music video project created by City As Our Campus students attending the Sayles School of Fine Arts Musical Theatre Program at Proctors, highlights their performance at the Downtown Schenectady Holiday Parade and all of the work that went into preparing for it. The students worked with alumni (2002) and Broadway Associate Choreographer, Brittney Griffin to choreograph the routine.



2024 Athletic Hall of Fame

Three members inducted during September ceremony

- The Schenectady City School District Athletic Hall of Fame honored 2024 inductees James D. Thomas, Jr., Ray Johnson, and Tom Chestnut during a dinner and induction celebration in September, 2024 at Rivers Casino & Resort.



Legacy tribute for "3-Peat" champion XC team

- The 2024 Legacy Tribute honored the cross-country teams from the Schenectady City School District that won three consecutive State championships from 1956 through 1958.
- The 1956 Nott Terrace team was coached by Athletic Hall of Fame Member Bill Leonard.



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YouTube Channel:
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SCSD Education Foundation

43 teachers receive grants in 2024-25

Partnering with families and the community is one of the district's four pillars and one of those partnerships is with the Schenectady City School District Education Foundation.

The Schenectady City School District Education Foundation is a local non-profit that partners with the school district to enhance learning opportunities for students. Since 2006, the foundation has awarded more than \$550,000 in grants to classrooms. In the 2024-2025 school year alone, almost \$60,000 was awarded to 43 teachers across the district.

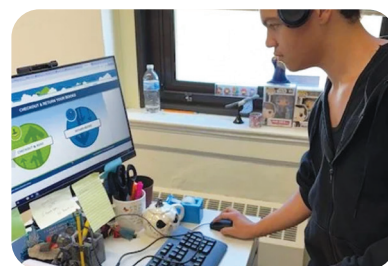
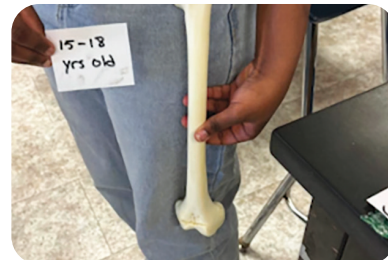
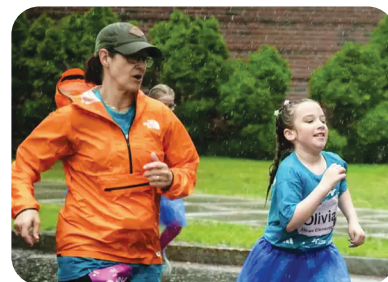
Grant Highlights from 2024-2025

Girls on the Run: Grants covered travel and registration fees for teams from Howe and Paige schools, allowing students to participate in this positive youth development program.

Forensics Bone Lab: Schenectady High School students can now study forensics in greater detail using grant-funded replica skeletal bones to determine age, sex, ancestry, and trauma.

BPL Library: Students in Big Picture Learning classes at Washington Irving Educational Center created their own library. They selected books that interested them, and then unpacked, labeled, and shelved the new books.

Positive Behavior Trophies - Yates Elementary School is using high-quality trophies as a monthly positive motivation incentive for classes. The winning class gets to display the trophy in their classroom. The program has had a positive impact on student attendance.



LET'S TALK!

The Schenectady City School District is committed to fostering positive relationships with its community by maintaining an open line of communication. The district has a platform called **Let's Talk!** that allows parents, staff, students, and community members to share their thoughts and concerns anytime, from anywhere.

This tool is available 24/7 and provides an opportunity for individuals to communicate with a team dedicated to assisting with specific topics. You can access **Let's Talk!** in two ways:

- Text: Send your message to (518) 900-7318
- Website: Find the **"Let's Talk!"** tab on the right side of the district's official website

HR recognitions:

The Service, Employee Recognition, and Extra Mile Awards are three key employee recognition initiatives in the Schenectady City School District that celebrate the dedication, passion, and impact of our staff.

- The Service Award recognizes employees for their years of dedicated service to the district. Milestones are acknowledged with appreciation and gratitude, reinforcing the value of long-term contributions to student success and institutional continuity.
- The Employee Recognition Award honors outstanding staff who exemplify excellence in their daily work, cultivate a positive and inclusive school culture, and play a vital role in advancing the success of their team, the district, and our vision.
- The Extra Mile Award honors individuals who consistently go above and beyond their role to support students, colleagues, and the school community. These recipients exemplify initiative, positivity, and a deep commitment to our shared mission.



Schenectady Senior Named CTE Student of the Year by SkillsUSA

An aspiring animal trainer with a passion for the arts has been named SkillsUSA Student of the Year by Capital Region BOCES.

Nadia Nunn (SHS 2025) was presented the honor during the Career and Technical Education Center Awards and Scholarship celebration in June. It's the second year in a row a Schenectady student has received the honor at Capital Region BOCES.

The SkillsUSA Student of the Year honor is given to a student who best exemplifies SkillsUSA by their leadership and service to others, participation in all facets of the organization, and dedication and diligence to their vocation.

Nadia will attend SUNY Cobleskill this fall in pursuit of an animal sciences degree with a SkillsUSA Area III scholarship to put towards her education.



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Schenectady City School District

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2024-25 Board of Education

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Schenectady City School District



2024-25

