

Our Vision
Every Learner, Together, World Ready

Classroom Chronicles

Winter 2025-26

UPCOMING EVENTS

DECEMBER 2025

- **Dec. 15:** Winter Concert 5:30 p.m.
- **Dec. 16:** Winter Concert 7 p.m.
- **Dec. 18:** Winter Concert 7 p.m.
- **Dec. 22 to Jan. 2:** Holiday Break

JANUARY 2026

- **Jan. 8:** BOE Meeting, 6 p.m.
- **Jan. 9:** Early Dismissal, 11:15 a.m.
- **Jan. 19:** No School, Martin Luther King Jr. Day
- **Jan. 20-23:** Regents Testing
- **Jan. 24:** Winter Ball, 7 p.m.

FEBRUARY 2026

- **Feb. 12:** BOE Meeting, 6 p.m.
- **Feb. 16-20:** Mid-Winter Break

MARCH 2026

- **March 6:** Early Dismissal, 11:15 a.m.
- **March 10:** Music in our Schools Concert, 7 p.m.
- **March 12:** BOE Meeting, 6 p.m.
- **March 18:** No School, Superintendent's Conference Day

District Embraces Geothermal and Solar for Energy Upgrade

The Canajoharie Central School District is embarking on a major energy upgrade designed to replace outdated fossil-fuel heating systems with modern, efficient technologies. The project will transition steam and hot-water boilers to geothermal and solar solutions that reduce both costs and lower our environmental impact annually.

At the center of the project is a transition from steam and hot-water boilers to geothermal and solar solutions. These renewable technologies were chosen to eliminate reliance on fossil fuels and leverage electricity-based systems.

Geothermal energy comes from heat stored beneath the Earth's surface that can be harnessed to produce electricity or provide heating and cooling for buildings. It was selected for this project because of its ability to draw on free thermal energy stored in the ground, requiring minimal energy input. Solar panels will generate electricity to power the geothermal system, which will also provide air conditioning to the district.

"This project represents a significant step forward in our commitment to sustainability," said Energy Manager Francis D'Ambrosio. "By investing in renewable energy, we're reducing our carbon footprint and creating long-term savings for the district."

Geothermal energy will serve the Nellis Athletic Center through vertical wells installed beneath the lower ball field, which will be restored after



Canajoharie High School's Spanish and Food Science classes teamed up for a special cooking lesson.

installation. Distribution lines and building connections will run through the mechanical room beneath the pool, and a new pump room—located in the former Nellis kitchen—will double as an educational space for students and visitors. Meanwhile, a solar array will be mounted on the roofs of Nellis, the middle school, and sections of the elementary school.

The retrofit will maximize existing infrastructure by using current piping and adding cooling coils to newer units, while replacing end-of-life room units with modern heating and cooling systems. Solar panels will be strategically placed on recently replaced roofs and sections due for replacement to optimize costs.

Voters approved the \$14 million capital project in May 2025. Phase 1 begins in summer 2026, with Phase 2 wrapping up by the end of summer 2027. Key milestones—such as design

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Merger Process Update: Next Steps and Focus Teams

The process of exploring a potential merger between the Canajoharie and Fort Plain school districts continues to move forward, guided by the CFP Development Panel. This panel has been meeting regularly to discuss key ideas, timelines and next steps as the steering group for this important process.

Focus Teams: Shaping the Future of the Combined District

Important questions about what a merger would mean for our students and community have been raised throughout the recent merger process. As a way of digging into these, we plan to convene a set of focus teams that will include both district representatives, subject area experts and you, the members of our community.

By coming together for this work, we believe we can best imagine our future and prepare to meet the interests and needs of our students—independently or as a merged district if that is what our communities choose. These groups will gather detailed information on key topics and prepare recommendations that will position us well to move forward if a merger is approved or regionalization efforts occur. One thing we know is that these topics will be part of the discussion now and in the future.

The Focus Teams will address the following areas:

- Cultural Integration: Traditions, celebrations, activities, athletics, and mascots.
- Educational Programming: Academic offerings, curriculum, plans for schools, and school configuration.
- Operational Planning: Transportation, facility usage, and school day schedule.
- Student-Centered Transition: Orientation, mentoring, and programs to support students.
- Staff-Centered Transition: Professional development, orientation, and staff supports.

Join a Focus Team!

Your voice and expertise are vital to this process! We are inviting all interested community members and

school stakeholders to apply to be a part of a Focus Team. This is an opportunity to contribute directly with the planning for our student's educational experience and success of a merged district or with regionalization efforts.

If you are interested in applying, please fill out the Google form available on the district website or via the QR code below. The first Focus Team meeting is scheduled for Wednesday, Jan. 7, 2026.

Mark your calendar: Straw Poll and Binding Vote

- Straw Vote (Advisory Referendum): Wednesday, June 4, 2026
 - This non-binding vote will assess the community's support for the merger proposal before proceeding to the final vote.
- Binding Referendum (Final Vote): Wednesday, July 29, 2026
 - If the binding merger vote passes, the merged district would officially begin operation for the 2027-2028 school year.

We encourage all stakeholders to stay informed and participate in this important process and visit our website for information. We will also be sending monthly updates during that time.

QR code to sign up for a Focus Team:



Welcome to our new staff members

We are thrilled to welcome the newest members of our Canajoharie Central School District team. These individuals' talents, energy, and dedication will help us continue providing exceptional learning experiences for our students. Each of you brings unique skills and perspectives that strengthen our community. Thank you for choosing to join us on this journey.

- Lindsay Noles - High School Math
- Darin Lynch - Middle School Science
- Alexis Fisher - Kindergarten Teacher
- Trey Stover - High School Guidance Counselor
- Sherry Becker - Middle School Monitor
- Jeff Sanders - Building And Maintenance
- Debra Jones- Part Time Custodian

Energy

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completion, NYSED submission, cost estimates, and funding procurement—are already achieved.

Future plans include battery storage for a microgrid at Nellis Athletic Center, enabling the facility to operate independently during power outages and serve as a 24/7 community relief center during extreme weather. Long-term maintenance will involve staff training, modern equipment for easier upkeep, and design choices that minimize ongoing costs.

"Pairing geothermal with solar is a smart move," D'Ambrosio said. "Solar energy peaks when cooling demand is highest, so this combination maximizes efficiency and cost savings."

Community and Educational Benefits

Beyond energy savings, the project enhances environmental health, which supports student achievement and staff well-being—making the district more attractive to top talent. Importantly, funding ensures zero taxpayer impact, and as a community-based initiative, benefits extend beyond the school.

The pump room will become a hands-on learning space where students can explore renewable energy systems through features like a glass hallway, color-coded piping, a real-time energy dashboard, and educational displays.

"This isn't just an energy project—it's an educational opportunity," added Superintendent of Schools Dr. Nick Fitzgerald. "Students will be able to see firsthand how renewable technologies work and why they matter."



The new tax bill drop box is shown outside of the Canajoharie High School.

New Secure Drop Box Makes Tax Payments Easier and More Convenient

A new tax bill drop box has been installed to make paying your taxes easier and more convenient.

The secure drop box is located at the entrance to the Canajoharie High School and is available 24 hours a day, seven days a week. District residents can now submit their school tax bill payments at any time that works best for them, without waiting in line or worrying about office hours.

To use the drop box, simply place your payment in a sealed envelope and include your bill stub to ensure proper processing. Please do not place cash into the drop box.

Payments will be collected regularly and processed promptly, so you can feel confident that your submission is safe and secure. This new option is part of our ongoing effort to improve services and provide residents with flexible, reliable ways to manage their tax obligations.

If you have any questions about using the drop box or need assistance, please contact the district office at 518-673-6300.

We appreciate your cooperation and look forward to serving you better with this added convenience.



NEWS FROM CANAJOHARIE CENTRAL SCHOOL



A message from the Superintendent

When we look back at the past few months, one word comes to mind: gratitude. Our community came together to support a vision for the future, and because of your approval of the December 2025 capital project, we are taking a bold step forward. This project isn't just about bricks and mortar—it's about creating spaces where students can thrive, educators can innovate, families can feel proud of the schools that serve them and allow for robust community use.

Our community's vote of confidence means safer, more modern facilities, improved learning environments, and resources that reflect the needs of today's students. It's a commitment to excellence and equity, and we couldn't have done it without you. Thank you for believing in our mission and for investing in the future of education.

As you know, our district continues exploring a potential merger and regionalization efforts with the Fort Plain—a process that will shape the educational landscape for years to come. This is a big decision, and it's one we want to make together. That's why we're inviting you to be part of the conversation.

We're forming Focus Teams to dive into key topics such as academics, transportation, extracurricular activities, and community identity. These teams will ensure that every voice is heard and every concern is addressed. Whether you're a parent, a student, a staff member, or a community partner, your perspective matters. Joining a Focus Team is a chance to influence decisions that will impact generations of learners.

In addition to these Focus Teams, we'll be hosting information sessions throughout the coming months. These sessions will provide updates, answer questions, and

offer a space for open dialogue. We know that change can bring uncertainty, and we want to make sure you have the facts you need to feel confident about the path ahead. We will be announcing the official information session dates in the near future.

Here's how you can get involved:

- Sign up for a Focus Team: Visit our website or use the QR code on page 2 and choose the area that interests you most. Your input will help shape recommendations and guide planning.
- Attend an information session: Check the schedule online or in the postcard that will be mailed in Spring 2026. Bring your questions, ideas, and concerns—we're ready to listen.
- Stay connected: Follow us on social media and subscribe to email updates so you never miss an opportunity to participate.

The merger discussion is about more than logistics; it's about building a stronger, more resilient educational community. Together, we have the opportunity to create a district that offers expanded opportunities, shared resources, and a unified vision for success.

Thank you again for your trust and support. The Dec. 2025 capital project is just the beginning. With your continued engagement, we can ensure that every decision reflects the values and aspirations of the people who matter most—you.

Let's keep the momentum going. Sign up, show up, and speak up. The future of our schools is in our hands, and together, we can make it extraordinary. Our students deserve nothing but the best.