A School Newsletter for Your Community

Ellenville Central School District

BUDGET EDITION 2026

Ellenville Removed From State Education Department's *"Target District"* List

Both District Buildings Earn "Local Support and Improvement" Designation

The Ellenville Central School District (ECSD) has officially been removed from the New York State Education Department's (NYSED's) list of Target Districts, Superintendent Lisa Wiles has announced. In addition, both District buildings—the Elementary School and the Junior/Senior High School—have been identified as Local Support and Improvement (LSI) Schools, a designation that aligns with NYSED's former "Good Standing" status.

The new designation reflects the collective dedication of educators, interventionists, student support staff, and families who have worked to ensure that students attend school consistently, receive high-quality instruction aligned with the New York State Learning Standards, and benefit from the academic and social-emotional supports they need to thrive.

"This is a meaningful milestone for our school community, and one that reflects the tireless efforts of our entire team," said Wiles. "Together, we have demonstrated that focused, strategic work yields results."

While the District is celebrating this achievement, its leadership is emphasizing that LSI identification is progress, not a finish line.

"Our work remains especially critical for the student groups previously identified for support—students with disabilities and Black or African American students," Wiles declared. "Every one of us plays a role in ensuring that all students experience rigorous and responsive instruction, targeted intervention, and high expectations every single day."

The ECSD's School Improvement Plans outline clear, research-based strategies to support these priorities. Building leadership teams are working in close collaboration with Strategic Action Planning Committees to ensure that the implementation of these plans and strategies remains strong, aligned, and intentional.

"This work will continue to guide our instructional decisions, resource allocation, and daily practice," Wiles promised.

Proposed 2026-2027 School Budget Preserves Student Programs and Staff, Meets NYS Tax Cap

The Ellenville Central School District Board of Education is proposing a $71,634,079 budget for the 2026-2027 school year. This spending plan maintains all current academic programs while staying within the New York State (NYS) tax cap and qualifying for simple majority voter approval.

More than three-quarters of the proposed budget—75.4 percent—directly supports student programs. Administrative costs account for 12.9 percent, and capital expenses represent 11.7 percent.

The budget vote will be held on Tuesday, May 19, from 8 AM to 8 PM at the Ellenville Junior/Senior High School Media Center, located at 28 Maple Avenue. Full budget details are available throughout this newsletter and on the District's website at www.ecs.k12.ny.us. For questions about voting, contact the District Clerk at (845) 647-0100 or district.clerk@ecs.k12.ny.us.

Student Programs Preserved; Staffing Managed Responsibly

This year's budget maintains all current academic programs. As the District continues to monitor enrollment trends, staffing decisions were made thoughtfully—without layoffs. As staff retire, positions that are no longer needed at current enrollment levels are not refilled, allowing the District to reduce staffing through natural attrition.

"We continue to look carefully at our resources and our needs and make adjustments accordingly," said Superintendent of Schools Lisa Wiles. "Our priority remains ensuring every student has what they need to succeed, while being responsible stewards of the community's investment."

What's Driving the Budget Increase

The 2026-2027 budget represents an increase of $3,026,307—or 4.41 percent—over the current year. Several factors are driving this growth.

Health insurance costs are rising approximately 11 percent, reflecting national trends affecting employers across all sectors. Special education costs continue to increase as well, driven by tuition, transportation, and mandated related services for students with disabilities. Transportation costs are up, as are contractual salary obligations and pension contributions. Lastly, unfunded NYS mandates continue to place pressure on the budget.

Despite these pressures, the District has worked to minimize cost increases through reductions that don't impact student opportunities, such as decreasing Junior/Senior High School building expenses and administrative costs.

Revenues and State Aid

The District's proposed budget is supported by an estimated State aid package of $32,787,785—an increase of approximately 4.47 percent over the current school year, based on the governor's executive budget proposal. Foundation Aid, the primary source of State funding, is projected to increase by approximately 1 percent. Because the final State budget had not yet been enacted at the time this newsletter was prepared, these figures remain subject to change.

Federal aid will contribute an additional $1,565,922, reflecting new grant funding. Other local revenues—including "Payments in Lieu of Taxes" (PILOTs) and charges for services—provide additional revenue for the spending plan.

The District continues to meet its legal obligations related to claims filed under the New York Child Victims Act. Some of these costs are not covered by insurance and are absorbed directly in the general fund budget. The District remains committed to managing this impact as responsibly as possible.

Understanding the Tax Cap

The Board of Education has once again kept the proposed tax levy increase within the limit established by the New York State tax levy formula. While commonly called the "two percent tax cap," the actual calculation is more complex and varies each year based on multiple factors.

This year's proposed tax levy of $30,511,380 represents an increase of $1,193,036—or 4.07 percent—over the current year, and falls at or below the State-established cap. This means the budget qualifies for simple majority voter approval (50 percent plus one).

The District has a longstanding record of never exceeding the tax cap and remains committed to balancing fiscal responsibility with the programs and support that students depend on.

What if the Budget Doesn't Pass?

If the budget proposal is defeated, the Board of Education may choose to hold a second vote—on the same proposal or a revised version—or adopt a contingency budget. If a second vote also fails, a contingency budget is required by State law.

Continued on page 3

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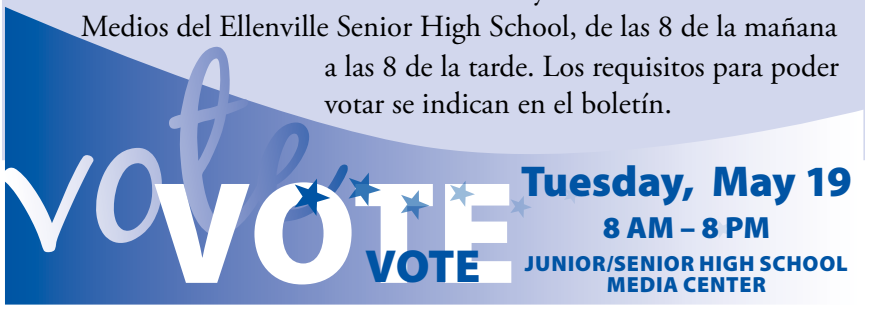
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¿Habla usted español? Desearía recibir un ejemplar en español del boletín del Distrito Escolar?

Puede recoger un ejemplar en español del boletín del Distrito Escolar Central de Ellenville en la Oficina del Distrito situada en el número 28 de Maple Avenue en Ellenville. También está disponible en español en el sitio web del Distrito en www.ecs.k12.ny.us. Si desea mayor información, por favor comuníquese con la Oficina del Distrito al (845) 647-0100 o a la dirección electrónica mhembdt@ecs.k12.ny.us.

Acuérdese de votar el martes 19 de mayo en el Centro de Medios del Ellenville Senior High School, de las 8 de la mañana a las 8 de la tarde. Los requisitos para poder votar se indican en el boletín.



2 Budget Summary 2026-2027

Message from the Superintendent

Dear Community Members:

Over the past several months, the Board of Education and I have worked carefully to develop a budget proposal for the 2026-2027 school year that continues to support high-quality programs for our students while remaining mindful of the financial impact on our community.

This year brings meaningful news worth celebrating. The Ellenville Central School District has officially been removed from the New York State Education Department's list of Target Districts, and both of our buildings have earned Local Support and Improvement designation—a reflection of the dedicated work of our educators, support staff, interventionists, and families. While we are proud of this milestone, we know that our work is far from finished, and we remain committed to ensuring that every student receives the rigorous instruction, targeted support, and high expectations they deserve. We invite you to read more about this milestone on page 1.

This year's proposed budget of $71,634,079 reflects a 4.41% increase over the current year's spending plan and carries a 4.07% increase to the tax levy—a figure that remains within the limits of New York State's tax cap.

Budget development this year has been shaped by rising health insurance costs, increased special education expenditures, transportation costs, contractual obligations, and contributions to retirement systems. Despite these pressures, we have worked to protect what matters most. All current academic programs are preserved, and staffing has been maintained through careful planning—managing necessary adjustments through attrition rather than layoffs.

Once again, we are utilizing our fund balance to help offset costs and reduce the burden on taxpayers, and we remain committed to identifying efficiencies wherever possible.

Please review the information in this newsletter carefully. If you have any questions or concerns, feel free to contact my office at (845) 647-0100.

Voting will take place on Tuesday, May 19, in the Jr/Sr High School Media Center. Polls will be open from 8 AM to 8 PM.

Thank you for your continued support of our students and schools.

Sincerely,
Lisa A. Wiles
Superintendent
Ellenville Central School District

2026-2027 Budget Summary

	ADMINISTRATIVE	PROGRAM	CAPITAL
Salaries	$4,648,259	$18,408,778	$1,937,902
Benefits	$2,871,126	$11,370,691	$1,196,999
Administrative	$1,070,215		
Elementary Program		$219,929	
Junior Senior High School Program		$338,383	
DW Curriculum & Instruction		$786,731	
DW Special Education		$5,816,605	
DW Athletics		$665,331	
DW Audio/Visual, CAI & ETV		$610,500	
Transportation		$5,464,199	
Capital			$5,010,394
BOCES	$524,602	$9,371,977	$214,387
Federal	$119,222	$987,849	
TOTALS	$9,233,424	$54,040,973	$8,359,682

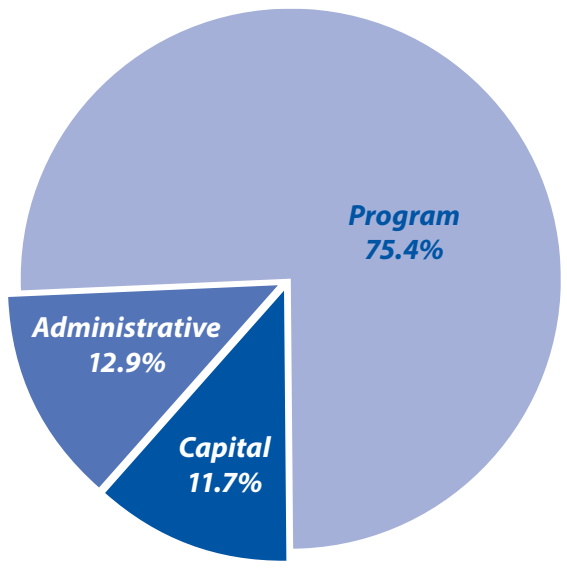
Total Budget
$71,634,079

Three-Part Budget

Program: This component includes salaries and benefits for all instructional staff as well as interscholastic athletics, co-curricular activities, and transportation.

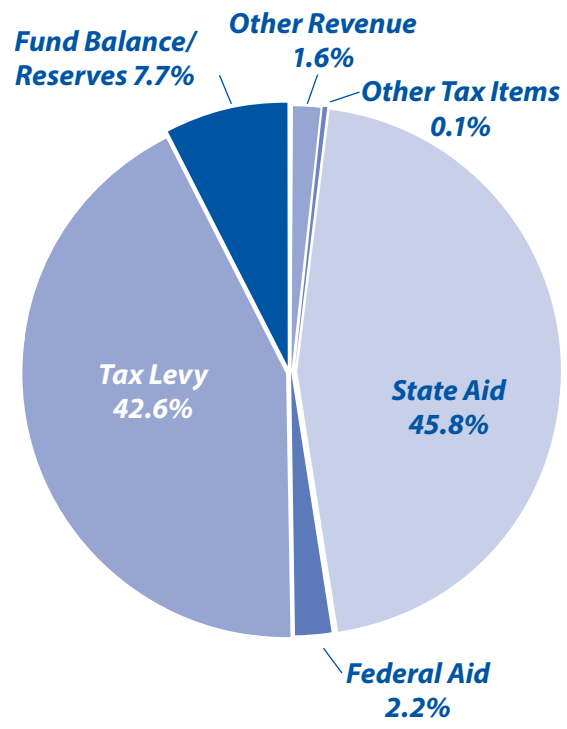
Capital: Included in this component are operational and maintenance costs, including custodial staff salaries and benefits, judgments and claims, and the payment of principal and interest for outstanding debt.

Administrative: This component consists of salaries and benefits for administrators, supervisors, and support staff, as well as business operations, personnel, school board, insurance, and legal services.



Revenue Sources

Revenue Sources	
Other Revenue	$1,150,000
State Aid	$32,787,786
Federal Aid	$1,565,922
Other Tax Items	$89,677
Tax Levy	$30,511,380
Fund Balance/Reserves	$5,529,314
TOTAL	$71,634,079



STAR Exemption Program

LOCAL ASSESSORS

Town of Wawarsing & Village of Ellenville
Renée Ozomek: 845-647-7800 x4

Town of Rochester
Jeremy Baracca: 845-626-0920 x2

Town of Mamakating
Michele Lagomarsino: 845-888-3000 opt. 5

The School Tax Relief (STAR) program that was passed by the Legislature in 1997 to provide school tax relief for owner-occupied primary residences is continued under the New York State budget.

STAR recipients receive the benefit in one of two ways. Recipients of the STAR **credit**, which is open to any eligible homeowner whose income is $500,000 or less, receive a check in the mail from the Tax Department to apply to their school taxes. The STAR **exemption**, which is closed to new applicants, involves a direct reduction on your school tax bill in the form of a property tax exemption.

Enhanced STAR, which provides increased savings, is still available to qualifying senior citizens ages 65 and older in both the credit and exemption programs.

For more information, contact your local assessor or visit **www.tax.ny.gov/star**

Estimated Tax Implications

Based on the information we have as of this date, the tax rate picture looks like this for a home with a market value of $100,000:	Average Assessment Market Value of $100,000	2025-2026 School Tax	2026-2027 School Tax	Annual Increase (Decrease)	Monthly Increase (Decrease)
Wawarsing (5082 parcels)	$60,000	$1,475.13	$1,535.01	$59.88	$4.99
Rochester (39 parcels)	$53,000	$1,475.13	$1,535.01	$59.88	$4.99
Mamakating (917 parcels)	$34,000	$1,475.13	$1,535.01	$59.88	$4.99

Due to rounding, numbers presented throughout this document may not add up precisely to the totals provided and percentages may not precisely reflect the absolute figures.

School District Budget Notice

OVERALL BUDGET PROPOSAL	Budget Adopted for the 2025-2026 School Year	Budget Proposed for the 2026-2027 School Year	Contingency Budget for the 2026-2027 School Year*
Total Budgeted Amount, Not Including Separate Propositions	$68,607,772	$ 71,634,079	$70,401,543
Increase/Decrease for the 2026-2027 School Year		$3,026,307	$1,793,771
Percentage Increase/Decrease in Proposed Budget		4.41%	2.76%
Change in the Consumer Price Index		2.63%	
A. Proposed Tax Levy to Support the Total Budgeted Amount	$29,318,344	$30,511,382	
B. Levy to Support Library Debt, if Applicable	$0	$0	
C. Levy for Non-Excludable Propositions, if Applicable **	$0	$0	
D. Total Tax Cap Reserve Amount Used to Reduce Current Year Levy	$0	$0	
E. Total Proposed School Year Tax Levy (A + B + C – D)	$29,318,344	$30,511,382	$1,193,036
F. Total Permissible Exclusions	$2,379,561	$2,377,270	
G. School Tax Levy Limit, Excluding Levy for Permissible Exclusions	$26,938,783	$28,134,112	
H. Total Proposed School Year Tax Levy, Excluding Levy to Support Library Debt and/or Permissible Exclusions (E – B – F + D)	$26,938,783	$28,134,112	
I. Difference: G – H (Negative Value Requires 60.0% Voter Approval – See Note Below Regarding Separate Propositions) **	$0	$0	
Administrative Component	$9,232,708	$9,233,424	$716
Program Component	$50,913,303	$54,040,973	$3,127,670
Capital Component	$8,461,761	$8,359,682	-$102,079

* Pursuant to section 2023 of the Education Law, the Board of Education will comply with all laws and regulations relative to declaring ordinary contingent expenses in the event of a contingency budget for the 2026-2027 school year. Salaries for professional educators and support personnel will be declared contingent expenses as well as costs necessary to maintain mandated educational programs, maintain and preserve District property, as well as costs to ensure the health and safety of students and staff. The tax levy can't be increased from the current year and the District would need to further reduce its budget by $1,232,536 to get to the State-required contingent budget or increase the use of reserves.

** Separate Propositions that are not included in the Total Budgeted Amount: (Tax Levy associated with educational or transportation services propositions are not eligible for exclusion and may affect voter approval requirements)

Description	Amount
No Separate Propositions	

Basic STAR Exemption Impact

Under the Budget Proposed for 2026-2027 School Year

Estimated Basic STAR Exemption Savings[1] **$575**

[1] The basic school tax relief (STAR) exemption is authorized by Section 425 of the Real Property Tax Law.

The annual budget vote for the fiscal year 2026-2027 by the qualified voters of the Ellenville Central School District, Ulster County, New York, will be held at Ellenville Jr/Sr High School in said district on Tuesday, May 19, 2026 between the hours of 8:00 am and 8:00 pm, prevailing time, at which time the polls will be opened to vote by voting ballot or machine.

Voting Information

When is the budget vote?
The school budget vote will be held on Tuesday, May 19, 2026.

Where can I vote?
The school budget vote will take place at the Junior/Senior High School Media Center. Polls will be open from 8 AM to 8 PM.

Who is eligible to vote?
To vote you must be:

- A registered voter in the Ellenville Central School District or for the general election;
- At least 18 years of age;
- A citizen of the United States;
- A resident of the District for a period of 30 days preceding the election.

I am a qualified voter but I will not be able to go to the school budget vote. How can I participate?
Applications for absentee and early mail ballots are available in the District Office, located at 28 Maple Avenue in Ellenville, and may be picked up between 8 AM and 4 PM Monday through Friday. Absentee and early mail ballots must be received by the District Clerk no later than 5 PM on the day of the vote.

Where can I find budget information?
Budget information is available on the District's website, www.ecs.k12.ny.us. If you have any questions about voting, please contact the District Clerk at (845) 647-0100, or by email at district.clerk@ecs.k12.ny.us.

Proposed School Budget Continued from page 1

Under a contingency budget, no tax levy increase is permitted. This would require the District to cut approximately $1,232,536 from the proposed budget, affecting programs and eliminating equipment purchases across the District. State law also restricts the types of allowable expenditures under contingency and eliminates the availability of free public use of District facilities.

Board of Education Election

In addition to the budget vote, registered voters will elect members to the Board of Education. There are five candidates running for the three available seats. Voters may also write in the names of individuals on the ballot. In total, voters may vote for three Board members.

The candidates, in the order they will appear on the ballot, are Cheryl LaSonde, Laura Villegas, Philip Mattracion, Steven A. Levine, and Willie Bruce, Jr.

Please Vote

The community is encouraged to participate in the school budget vote and Board of Education election on Tuesday, May 19, from 8 AM to 8 PM at the Ellenville Jr/Sr High School Media Center, 28 Maple Avenue. Signs and staff will be on site to assist, and ample parking—including accessible spaces—will be available for all voters.

Absentee and Early Mail ballot applications are available in the District Office from 8 AM to 4 PM and must be mailed at least seven days before the vote. Completed ballots must be received by the District Clerk no later than 5 PM on the day of the vote.

To verify voter registration, visit the Ulster County Board of Elections online voter registration lookup tool at www.ulstercountyny.gov/elections, or contact the District Clerk's office directly.

CHILD FIND

In an attempt to maintain a continual "Child Find" program, the Ellenville Central School District is committed to locating and identifying disabled youngsters residing within District boundaries, including preschool-aged children and those attending non-public schools. If you suspect your child has a disability, we urge you to share your concerns with your child's teacher or your school's Assistant Principal. We also encourage you to share any developmental concerns with your pediatric provider. For additional information, you may contact the District's Department of Special Education or Section 504 representative at (845) 647-0110 or (845) 647-0112.

Message from the Board of Education President

Dear Ellenville Central School District Residents:

The Board of Education and administration have worked diligently to develop this year's budget proposal, with two priorities guiding every decision: ensuring that our students continue to benefit from the full range of programs, services, and opportunities our District provides, and remaining mindful of the financial impact on our taxpayers.

We believe that the 2026-2027 budget proposal strikes this important balance. The proposed spending plan totals $71,634,079, reflecting a 4.41% increase over the current year's budget. The proposed tax levy increase of 4.07% remains within New York State's property tax cap—a standard this Board takes seriously as a responsibility to uphold year after year.

This year, we are also pleased to share that the District has been removed from the New York State Education Department's list of Target Districts. This is a testament to the commitment of our staff, students, and families, and it shows the investments we make in our schools are making a difference.

Above all, this budget proposal ensures that the quality of education our students and staff rely on and deserve will be maintained.

We encourage you to review the information in this newsletter and to participate in the upcoming budget vote and Board of Education election on Tuesday, May 19. As always, the Board remains committed to making decisions that serve the best interests of our children while keeping our financial responsibility to taxpayers front and center.

We're grateful for the opportunity to be able to work in this community.

Respectfully,
Philip S. Mattracion
President, Board of Education
Ellenville Central School District

Sample Ballot

Proposition 1

BE IT RESOLVED: That the Board of Education of the Ellenville Central School District be authorized to expend the sum of **$71,634,079** for the school year 2026-2027 and to levy the necessary tax required.

☐ **Yes** ☐ **No**

Board of Education

(Vote for any THREE)

The three candidates with the greatest number of votes will be elected to serve three-year terms commencing July 1, 2026 and expiring on June 30, 2029.

- ☐ Cheryl LaSonde
- ☐ Laura Villegas
- ☐ Philip Mattracion
- ☐ Steven A. Levine
- ☐ Willie Bruce, Jr.
- ☐ _____
- ☐ _____
- ☐ _____

NOTICE OF NON-DISCRIMINATION

The Ellenville Central School District does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, national origin, creed, religion, marital status, sex, age, sexual orientation, or disability, in admissions, participation, employment, its programs and activities. The following persons have been designated to handle inquiries regarding the non-discrimination policies: Carl Pabón: (845) 647-0123 and Kelly White: (845) 647-0107.



Ellenville Pre-K Program Hosts Winter Celebration

To kick off the new year, Ellenville Elementary School Pre-Kindergarten families gathered for the program's annual Winter Celebration, which welcomed the new semester with creativity and community.

Students began the festivities with a winter song before diving into the main event: crafting! Families and staff worked side by side on snowflake ornaments, cotton-bellied penguins, and marshmallow-topped snowmen. (A few mini-marshmallows may have gone missing along the way!)

Grade 6 student volunteers joined in to help our youngest learners, bringing enthusiasm and big-kid energy to the crafting tables. Hot cocoa and cookies kept everyone fueled throughout the afternoon.

Thank you to all the families, staff, and Grade 6 helpers who made this celebration so special!

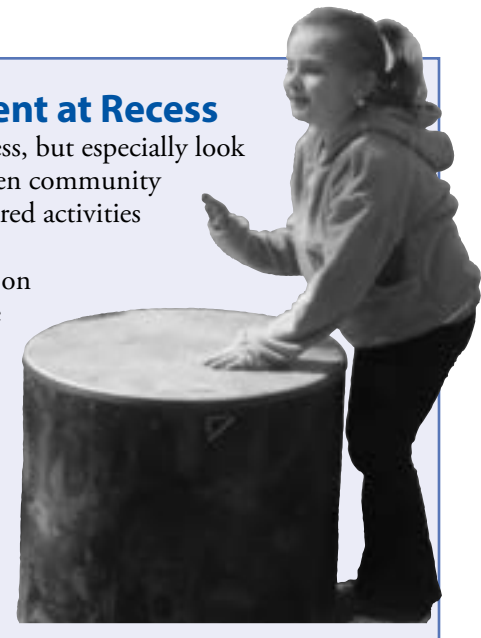




Wild Earth "Drums" Up Excitement at Recess

Ellenville Elementary School students love recess, but especially look forward to it on Tuesdays and Thursdays, when community partner Wild Earth brings hands-on, nature-inspired activities straight to our school.

A recent visit followed a musical theme based on "Music in Our Schools" month, which takes place in March. Students gathered around a drumming circle, practiced with different instruments, and took part in a lively version of "musical stepping stones," hopping from one stone to the next to the beat of a drum, as one child after another was removed from the game.



Based in High Falls, the Wild Earth program helps students form strong connections to themselves, each other, and our environment. By engaging in nature-themed activities, students not only learn new skills, but also develop a deeper sense of gratitude, respect, and commitment to taking care of the planet.

Thank you to Wild Earth for making recess an adventure—and for reminding our youngest learners that joy, creativity, and connection can be found just about anywhere, and to always follow the beat of their own drum.





Assembly Channels Emotion into Art

In February, Ellenville Elementary School students experienced "Emotion Into Art"—a multimedia assembly and "live art" demonstration led by artist and educator Tom Varano. He had previously performed the assembly for the Jr/Sr High School.

Varano captivated the audience by painting on site, starting each canvas upside down before flipping it to reveal iconic subjects like Martin Luther King Jr. and the Statue of Liberty—drawing plenty of "wows" from the crowd.

Varano also wove in a powerful message using the letters "B.I.G." as a framework for success—meaning the Books you read, the Individuals you surround yourself with, and the Goals you set. Students left inspired to believe in their own potential, reminded that courage, perseverance, and the pursuit of their dreams are within reach.

Students Show There is "No Place for Hate" in Their School!

Elementary School students participated in a powerful anti-bullying activity as part of their annual "No Place for Hate" school-wide initiative.

The activity began with age-appropriate read-alouds in each classroom. Students in Pre-Kindergarten through Grade 3 listened to ***What if Everybody Said That***, a book by Ellen Javernick and Colleen Madden, while students in Grades 4-6 heard ***Bully B.E.A.N.S*** by Julia Cook. These stories led to discussions about bullying, friendship, and how students can create a safe and welcoming environment for everyone.

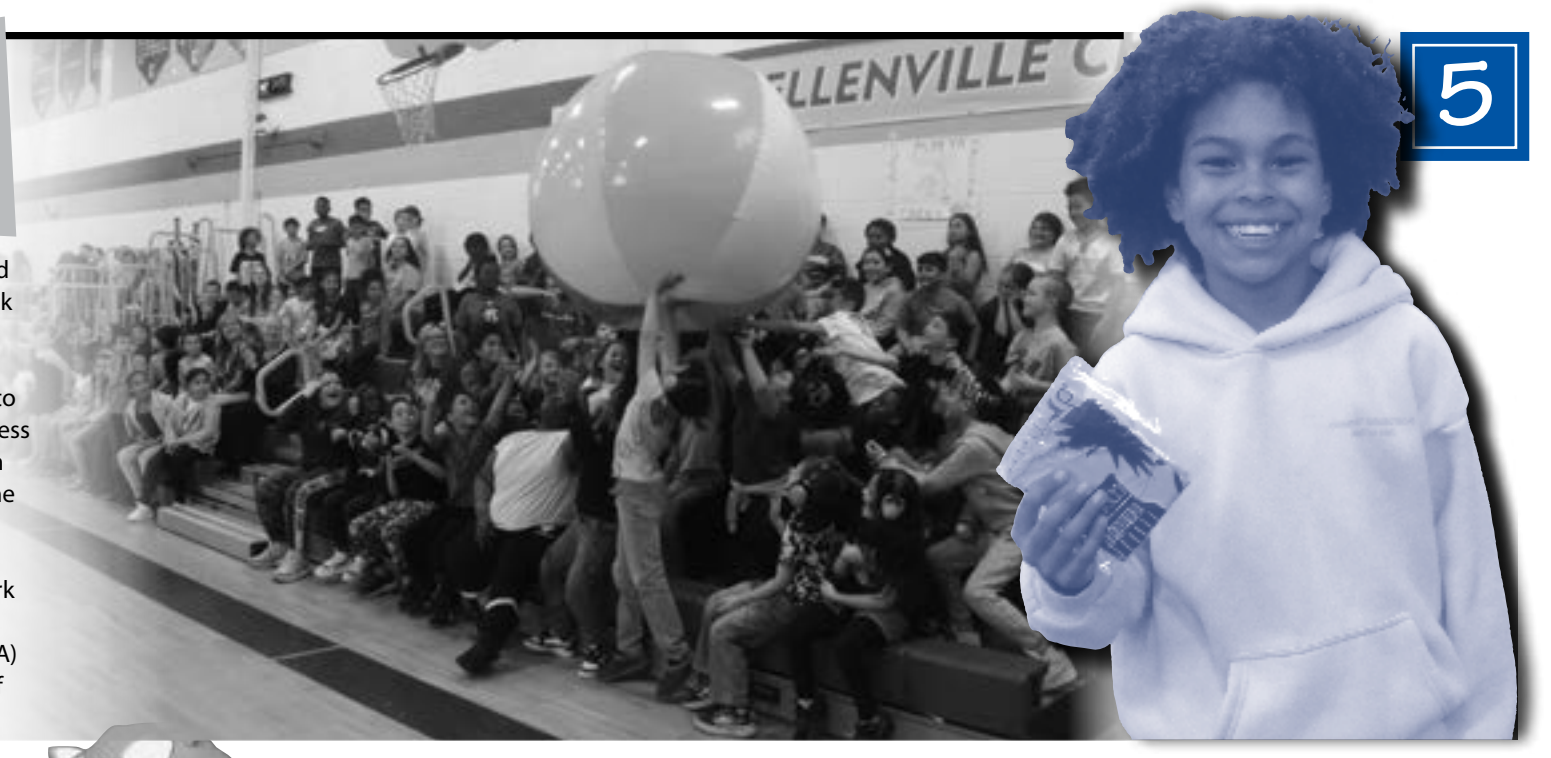
Next, each student wrote a personal message on a colored strip of paper, pledging specific ways they would work to prevent bullying in their school. Students were given the opportunity to share their messages with classmates if they chose to do so. These individual strips were then linked together to form long paper chains—a visible symbol of the school community's united stand against bullying.

Now, colorful paper chains showcasing students' commitments to kindness and inclusion adorn hallways throughout the school, serving as a daily reminder of the power of standing together against bullying. The activity reinforces the District's ongoing social-emotional learning (SEL) efforts to foster a safe, supportive, and inclusive environment where every student feels valued and protected.





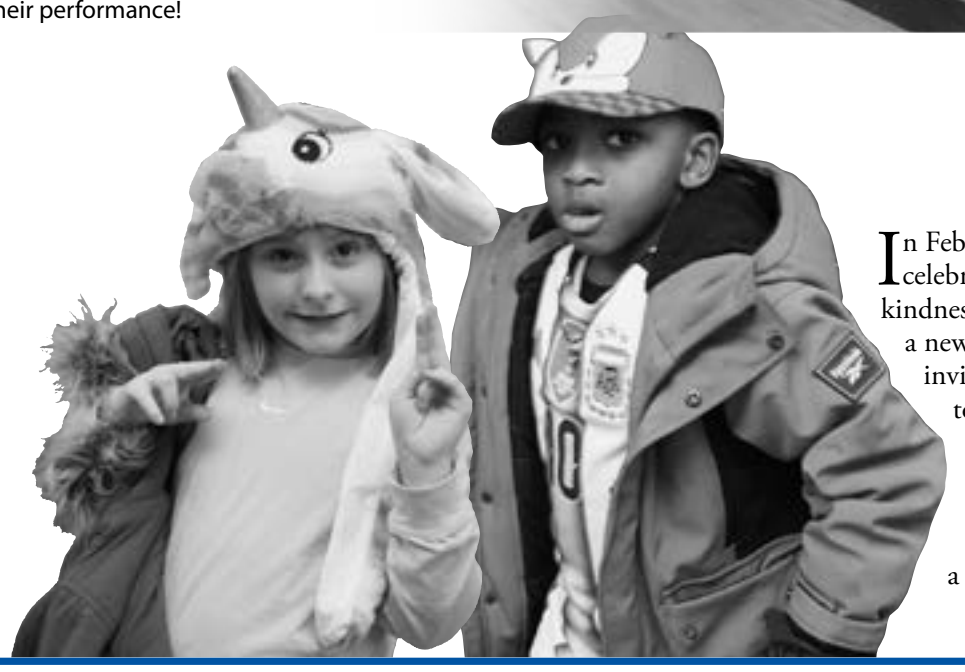
Students Rally to Rock their Tests!



Ellenville Elementary School students packed the Jr/Sr High School gymnasium for a "Rock the Test" pep rally ahead of upcoming State assessments.

The event featured friendly competitions to get students fired up, including blow-up mattress racing and "Pass the Hoop," a team challenge in which players passed a hula hoop down the line without releasing each other's hands. Winners took home prizes.

Grade 5 students headed into the New York State Science Test on April 15, and students in Grades 3-6 took the English Language Arts (ELA) assessments on April 22 and 23. We're proud of their performance!



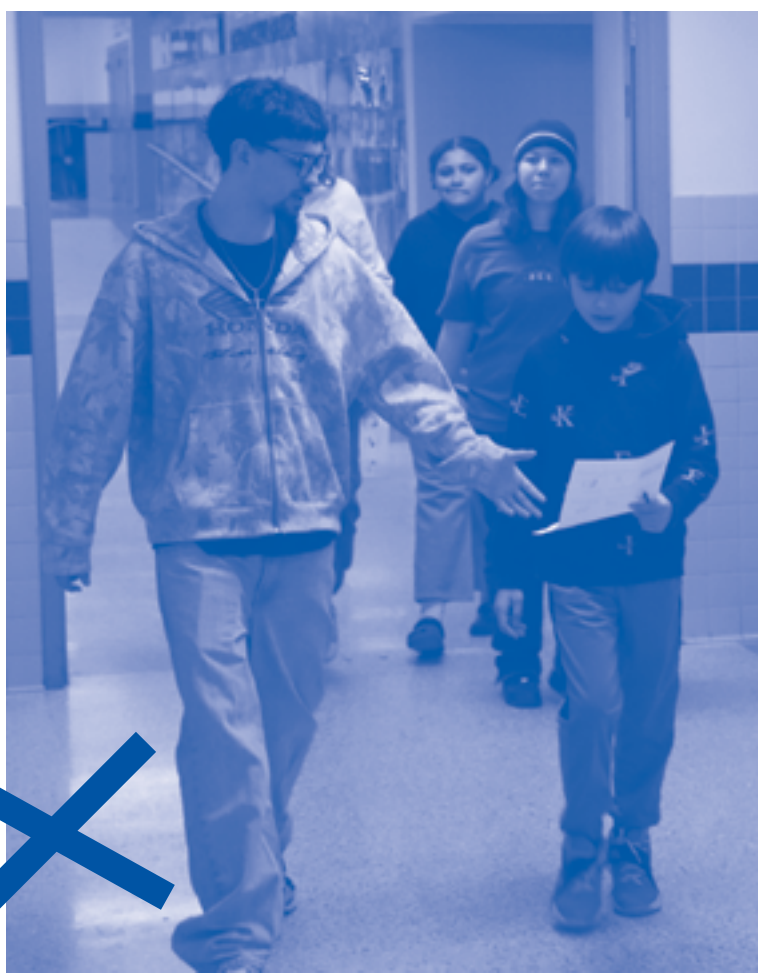
Hats Off to Kindness at Ellenville Elementary School



In February, Ellenville Elementary School students and staff celebrated "P.S. I Love You Week," a spirit-filled initiative dedicated to kindness, community, and mental health awareness. Each day brought a new theme—from "Hats Off to Kindness" (pictured here), which invited students and staff to don their favorite caps and beanies, to "Spread the Love," which filled the school with hearts and the color red, to "P.S. I Love You," which inspired participants to wear purple to close out the special week.

Together, Ellenville Elementary School is building a culture of kindness—one vibrant day at a time.

X Marks the Spot: Mentorship Program's Annual Scavenger Hunt Returns



In February, the Ellenville Mentorship Program held its annual scavenger hunt at the Jr/Sr High School. During this much-loved event, Grade 12 mentors accompanied their Grade 6 mentees as they received an innovative, spirited introduction to their future school.

Along the way, students met staff and uncovered unique facts—from how many elephants are hiding in the library, to the location of Elaine Pfeffer-Burns' STEAM (science, technology, engineering, arts, and mathematics) classroom, to who works in the Main Office. Lucky teams may have even walked away with a joke from Principal Carl Pabón!

This year's program boasts its biggest enrollment to date, with 41 senior mentors and 65 Grade 6 mentees paired together for a full year of bonding and fun learning activities.

Welcome to the building, Class of 2031!



Ellenville Elementary School Celebrates Read Across America Day

Back in March, Ellenville Elementary School celebrated Read Across America Day, with teachers, administrators, and special guests visiting every classroom to read aloud to students.

Among the special guests were Spanish Honor Society members from the Jr/Sr High School, each of whom brought or chose a beloved picture book to share. We appreciate our readers' dedication to literacy and our students' enthusiasm for the celebration!



Ellenville Elementary School Builds Up to 100 Days of Learning

After two snow days pushed back the celebration, Ellenville Elementary School students finally marked their 100th day of school on February 24—and it was worth the wait!

Students marked this milestone by leaning into a construction theme, donning hard hats and wearing safety colors like orange and yellow to signal all the hard work they've put in this year. They tackled "100" activities like stacking cups and connecting LEGO bricks, bringing their best builder energy to the classroom.

From the ground up, our students and staff constructed the perfect celebration, laying a strong foundation for the next 80 days of learning!

Ellenville Students Stand Up for Students at My Brother's Keeper Conference

The Ellenville Central School District congratulates two seniors, Henry Jones and Caleb Norat Roldan, who represented the District with distinction at the 2026 Stand and Deliver Conference for the New York State My Brother's Keeper (MBK) Fellows Program, held February 12-13 in Albany.

The conference brought together 124 students recognized as New York State MBK Fellows. These young men, from across the State, all spent their senior year developing leadership skills and building service projects that benefited their schools and communities. As part of the yearlong program, the fellows participated in a Statewide "Master Mind" reading series, which entailed meeting weekly to discuss literature relevant to their development and their post-secondary plans.


Caleb Norat Roldan

Caleb led his debate team to a first-place victory before the New York State Board of Regents chancellor and State education leaders, arguing in favor of artificial intelligence (AI) as a beneficial resource to society. When asked about the value of AI in learning, Caleb reflected that it supports "learning capabilities and being able to help us get more creative with critical thinking skills."

Henry and Caleb also presented their joint service delivery project, a book club for Grade 2 students designed to, as Henry put it, "foster a love for reading and boost those grades."


Henry Jones

Ellenville extends a heartfelt thank-you to MBK Mentors Noelia Santiago and John Paulsen and School & Community Engagement Coordinator Frank Mulhern, whose time and dedication were instrumental in guiding Henry and Caleb through this experience.

As Board of Regents Chancellor Lester W. Young, Jr. has said about the program's merits, "New York State My Brother's Keeper is more than a program—it's a movement that is changing lives by empowering young people to lead with purpose, and nurturing the next generation of changemakers dedicated to equity."

Congratulations, Henry and Caleb, for your leadership and your commitment to helping our community thrive.

ELLENVILLE SPORTS HIGHLIGHTS

Kudos to This Year's Scholar-Athlete Teams

To qualify as a scholar-athlete team, 75 percent or more of the team must earn a grade point average (GPA) above 90 percent. Congratulations to the following teams for their outstanding commitment to academics and athletics:

Fall: Cross Country, Girls Soccer, Volleyball, Boys Soccer, Boys Golf, and Girls Tennis
Winter: Boys Track and Girls Track

Ellenville's Intramural Program Hits New Heights

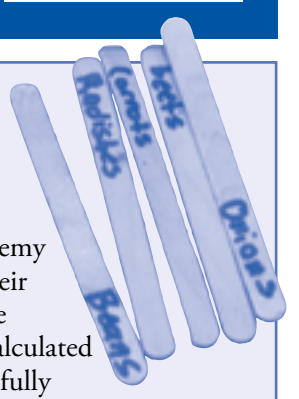
Building on the success of programs like *Girls in Sports Day*, Ellenville's intramural sports program continues to grow! This year's record participation numbers tell the story:

- Wrestling: 34 boys and girls in Grades 4-6
- Volleyball: 40 girls in Grades 4-6
- Softball: 31 girls in Grades 4-6
- Soccer: 34 boys and girls in Grades 3 & 4

WAY TO GO, BLUE DEVILS OF ALL AGES!



Planting Seeds of Knowledge at Ellenville P-TECH Academy



Ellenville P-TECH Academy students recently got their hands dirty—but not before doing the math! Students calculated trough dimensions and carefully charted seed numbers and spacing before planting a variety of leafy greens, mini vegetables, and herbs.

The hands-on gardening is just one part of "Seeds of Knowledge: Cultivating Ecological Harmony," an ambitious year-long, cross-curricular project that fosters STEAM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Art, and Mathematics) skills with real-world applications. In Science, students test soil and water, analyze human impact on the environment, and explore how healthy ecosystems support life. In Math, they calculate percent yield and use equations to design and optimize their garden layout—the same strategies professional farmers use. In English Language Arts (ELA), students research, read, and write about sustainability and Indigenous traditions, building toward a New York State Regents Argument Essay. In Social Studies, they explore the history of the Ellenville area and the Native communities who have cared for this land, comparing past and present approaches to environmental stewardship. And through Technology, students use digital tools to track growth, collect data, and, ultimately, create presentations that synthesize their learning.

Through collaboration and mentorship, P-TECH students are discovering how the past can guide us in creating a more sustainable future. We can't wait to watch these seedlings—and our students—continue to grow!

Ellenville P-TECH Students Practice the Art of the Interview



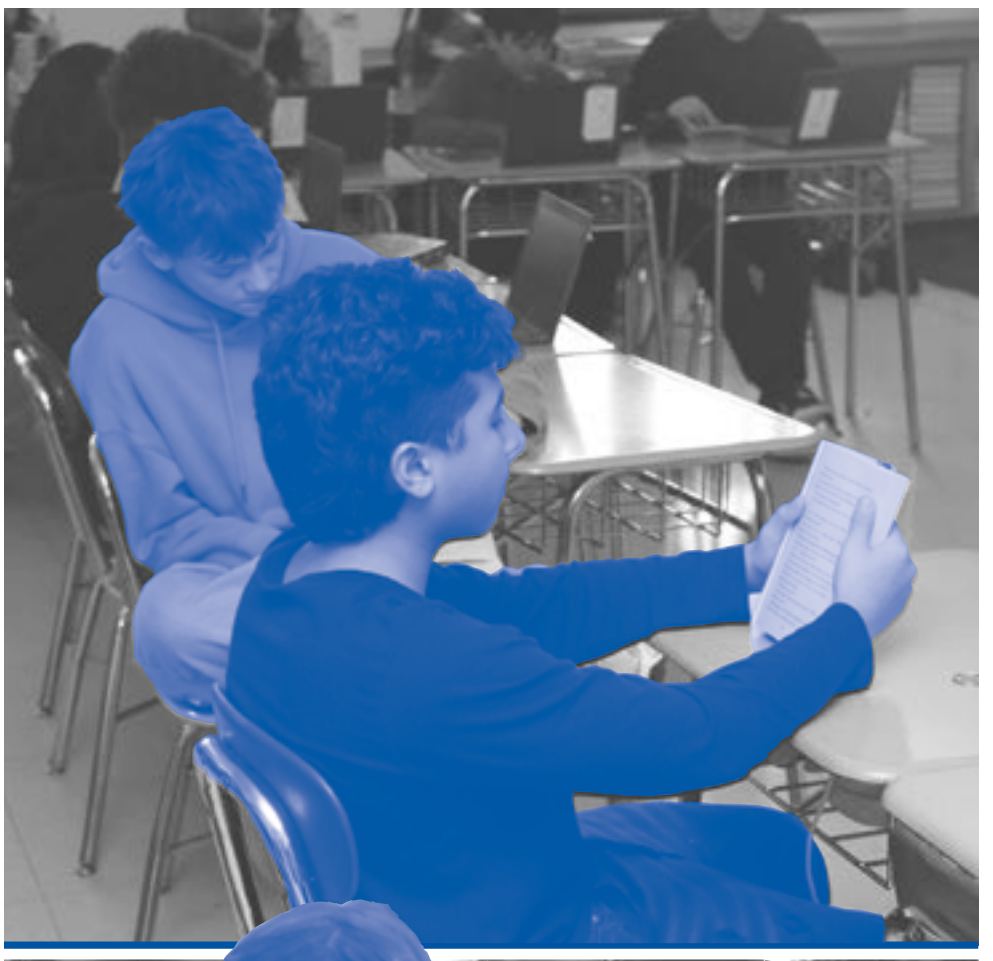
Ellenville P-TECH Academy students got a head start on their professional futures during a recent class presentation by Nicole Petrakis of Here's Help Staffing & Recruiting. Petrakis walked students through best practices for presenting themselves professionally, whether they're pursuing a summer job, part-time work, or future career opportunities.

Following the presentation, student volunteers, who were dressed in interview-ready attire, participated in mock interviews and received personalized feedback. We're confident our students will put these skills to work and find opportunities worthy of their talents.

Ellenville Junior High School Students Compete in "Reading Rumble"

Ellenville Junior High School found a novel way to encourage reading and spark a love of literacy—through a little friendly competition! Throughout February, students cracked open some covers as part of the Reading Rumble. In the class competition, teachers set aside dedicated time for students to read books of their choice, which could be any genre, from memoirs to graphic novels, thrillers to historical nonfiction—and more! Individual competitors tracked the number of pages they had read on their own at home as well.

At the March Junior High meeting, the biggest page-turners—students who had read the most pages, both as a class and individually—were recognized for their achievements. Congratulations, and keep those pages turning through the school year!



Ellenville Puts on Purple for Military Children

On April 15, the Ellenville Central School District joined communities across the country for Purple Up! Day—a national initiative honoring some of the military's most unsung heroes: military children. Purple represents all branches of the armed forces, blending the blues of the Air Force, Navy, Space Force, and Coast Guard with the Army's green and the Marines' red—a symbol of unity and support for military kids everywhere. Ellenville students and staff answered the call, donning purple to stand in solidarity with military families in our community and beyond.

Ellenville Musicians Combine Forces for District-Wide Concerts

Ellenville Music students made this year's "Music in Our Schools Month" one to remember! Two celebratory concerts held in March drew the community together in the Junior/Senior High School auditorium.

First, on March 4, the District-Wide Band Festival brought instrumental groups from across the District to the stage. Performing separately were the Junior High School Jazz Band, Senior High School Jazz Band, Fifth Grade Band, Sixth Grade Band, Seventh and Eighth Grade Band, and Symphonic Band—before all musicians joined together for a stirring performance of "Sweet Caroline."



On March 11, the District-Wide Choral Concert filled the auditorium with voices from across the District. Performances by the Grade 5-6 Chorus, the Grade 7-8 Concert Choir, the Fortissimos, and the Grade 9-12 Festival Choir culminated in a joyful, combined performance of "We Are the Children."

Congratulations to all of our talented student performers, and thank you to the community for your support!



FROM ELEANOR TO LADY BIRD: AN AUTHOR BRINGS HISTORY HOME TO ELLENVILLE



In March, author Shannon McKenna Schmidt visited Ellenville Junior/Senior High School for a presentation and Q&A session. Schmidt shares a special connection with our school as the sister of Assistant Principal Meredith Smith!

Schmidt is the author of several books, including ***The First Lady of World War II: Eleanor Roosevelt's Daring Journey to the Front Lines and Back*** and ***You Can't Catch Us: Lady Bird Johnson's Trailblazing 1964 Campaign Train and the Women Who Rode with Her***. As it turns out, Ellenville has a historical connection to both of these remarkable First Ladies. Highlighting those ties, Librarian Lynne Golliher created a display showcasing Eleanor Roosevelt's commencement address to Ellenville's Class of 1957 as well as Lady Bird Johnson's attendance at the 1966 groundbreaking of Ellenville Regional Hospital.

Schmidt shared her journey from English major to publishing professional to world-traveling freelance writer and author, describing how her love of travel and writing connect all of her books. She spoke passionately about the women at the heart of her most recent work, noting that she has "always been interested in stories about trailblazing women in history—women who didn't let barriers hold them back."

After her presentation, Schmidt opened the floor to student questions, which covered how to conduct historical research, how to find motivation, and how to approach the publishing process. A few lucky students even went home with signed copies of her books after correctly answering history trivia questions.

Ellenville thanks Shannon McKenna Schmidt for sharing her journey as a writer, as well as the empowering stories of two extraordinary women!

College Biology Students Present at 22nd Annual Current Events Symposium

Ellenville High School's College Biology II students took center stage this spring, presenting original research at the 22nd Annual Current Events Symposium. The two-day event, held March 25 and 26 in the High School Media Center, gave students the opportunity to explore cutting-edge topics in modern biology and share their findings with an audience of peers, staff, and community members.

The symposium reflected the breadth of contemporary biological science. Presenters tackled such diverse topics as a bacterial approach to cancer therapy; the environmental impact of fracking; regeneration in axolotls (a kind of salamander); the development of lupus treatments; and RNA nanotechnology. Other presentations focused on urban wildlife, natural selection in modern humans, and the relationship between language and the brain..

The presenters were current Grade 11 and 12 students earning college credits through the Ellenville Collegian program. College Biology teacher Jennifer Schoonmaker sees the symposium as an opportunity that extends well beyond the classroom. "The presentations fulfill the college independent research requirement, but they also show us where the most current scientific research fits into our coursework and society, as well as help cultivate critical public speaking skills," she said.

Congratulations to all 11 presenters on staging an informative, thought-provoking, and highly successful symposium!



Ellenville Students Medal at SkillsUSA Competition

Two Ellenville Central School District students brought home medals from the 2026 SkillsUSA Regional Competition, held February 28 in Valhalla, New York.



Miguel Caba II and Nisean Abney each earned third place finishes, competing against students from across the region in timed, skills-based contests. Both students are enrolled in Career and Technical Education programs through Ulster BOCES. Miguel competed in CNC 3 Axis Milling and Nisean in Information Technology Services.

SkillsUSA is a national organization that partners with schools and industry to prepare students for careers in technical, skilled, and service occupations. Regional competitions like this one give students the opportunity to demonstrate their abilities in real-world, hands-on settings.

Congratulations to Miguel and Nisean on representing Ellenville with excellence!

ELLENVILLE ANNOUNCES TOP STUDENTS FOR CLASS OF 2026

The Ellenville Central School District (ECSD) is proud to announce that Joshua LaVerdure is the valedictorian of the Class of 2026 and Scott Ramos is this year's salutatorian. These outstanding students have earned the top two honors through exceptional academic dedication, diverse participation and leadership in extracurricular pursuits, and a commitment to making the most of their time at Ellenville Junior/Senior High School.



Valedictorian
Joshua LaVerdure



Salutatorian
Scott Ramos

Joshua, the son of Robert and Brenda LaVerdure of Ellenville, leads his class with a weighted grade point average (GPA) of 98.191. He will receive an Advanced Regents diploma with Mastery in both Science and Math. Over the course of his high school career, he completed seven Advanced Placement (AP) and college-level courses, including AP World History: Modern, College Biology I and II, Pre-Calculus, Syracuse University Project Advance (SUPA) American History, AP United States Government & Politics, Calculus I, and College English. In addition, he sat for independent AP exams in Biology and Pre-Calculus.

Joshua has also been an active member of the school's Music program, performing with the District Choir, and making a memorable appearance in this year's school musical, ***Footloose***, as Cowboy Bob. Outside of school, he works as a line cook. A turning point for future career decisions came in Jennifer Schoonmaker's Advanced Biology course. "It kind of just resonated with me," Joshua said. "I just decided to go with it…see where it goes." In the fall, Joshua will attend Harvard University, where he plans to study Biology, with an intention to pursue Medicine.

Scott, the son of David and Heather Ramos of Ellenville, earned his rank as salutatorian with a weighted GPA of 97.887. He will receive an Advanced Regents diploma with Mastery in Science. He completed nine AP and college-level courses, including Global History I/Pre-AP, AP World History: Modern, Pre-Calculus, SUPA American History, AP United States Government & Politics, Calculus I, College Biology I and II, College English, and Spanish 4. He credits both Ryan McIntyre's AP World History course and Brian Fediuk's Technology classes as among his most memorable classroom experiences.

Scott also earned the New York State Seal of Biliteracy after delivering a presentation in Spanish, a distinction that recognizes students who have demonstrated proficiency in English and at least one other language. Another notable accomplishment was presenting "A Big Fracking Problem" at the Jr/Sr High School College Biology Symposium, where he shared his next-level research with fellow students and teachers as part of his college-level coursework.

A certified lifeguard, Scott spends his summers working at the Ellenville Public Pool—a role that reflects both his sense of responsibility and his love of staying active. Speaking of staying active, Scott competed as a Varsity Soccer player and captain, earning recognition as team MVP, and participated in Track and Field. In the fall, Scott will attend Providence College, where he plans to explore his interests before declaring a major.

Both students reflected on the qualities that helped them succeed. Joshua emphasized the importance of showing up: "Really the best advice I can give is to just come to school in the first place. You miss a day, you're going to miss something." Scott offered a complementary perspective, encouraging younger students to maintain balance. "You can't take it so seriously that it overwhelms everything else. Focus, but stay balanced."

Jr/Sr High School Principal Carl Pabón spoke warmly of both honorees. "I'm honored to have had the opportunity to know Joshua and Scott," he said, describing them as intellectually curious and guided by integrity, with focused mindsets and hearts that are sensitive to the needs of others. Of Joshua, he said, "His free spirit and passion for learning is infectious. He is going to have a tremendous impact in the field he is planning to study." Scott, he added, is "a forward-thinking, humble, and solutions-driven individual who will shine in whatever field he plans to study."

The ECSD congratulates Joshua LaVerdure and Scott Ramos on their formidable achievements and wishes them every opportunity in the future.

Top 10

Ellenville Junior/Senior High School is pleased to announce the Top 10 seniors of the Class of 2026!

1. Joshua LaVerdure - Valedictorian
2. Scott Ramos - Salutatorian
3. Lyla Denman
4. Braelyn Peavey
5. Jonathan Coniker
6. Shyann Diaz
7. Alyssa Shaikh
8. Madison Noval
9. John Henry
10. Robert McDowell III

We are extremely proud of all of our hard-working seniors!

Capital Project Update

The Ellenville Central School District has made significant progress on its 2024 Capital Project, with one of its most visible upgrades now complete: new public address (PA) systems have been installed in both the Elementary School and the Junior/Senior High School, delivering clearer, more reliable communication across the campus.

The new PA systems were among the first major components of the 2024 Capital Project to be implemented, following the District-wide infrastructure groundwork laid in recent years. Replacement of the District's phone system is also underway, with old and new systems running in parallel during the transition to ensure uninterrupted communication.

Additional 2024 Capital Project work includes the replacement of the main water line from the village into the High School—an important infrastructure upgrade that supports the long-term needs of the campus.

Looking ahead, the District is making major investments in its athletic facilities. The football field is being converted to artificial turf, and the six-lane track is being expanded to eight lanes—an upgrade that will allow Ellenville to host sectional, regional, and league meets for the first time. The pool and poolhouse will also see improvements as part of this phase of the project, and will be available for summer programming.

"These upgrades are going to be transformative—not just for our athletes, but for the entire community," said Athletic Director Matthew Salamone. "An eight-lane track opens doors we haven't had before, and having facilities we can be proud of makes a real difference for our students and for Ellenville as a whole."

While the fields are being completed, the Class of 2026's graduation ceremony on June 26 will be held in the Jr/Sr High School auditorium. Next year, students, families, and the broader community will enjoy fully renewed facilities ready for competition, events, and community use.

The District continues to share updates on Capital Project progress at Board of Education meetings and on the District website at www.ecs.k12.ny.us.

Footloose

Drama Club's Production of Footloose *Transforms Stage into Exhilarating Dance Floor*

The Ellenville Senior High Drama Club brought down the house recently with two electrifying performances of ***Footloose***—and they earned every twist and twirl!

The beloved musical follows Ren, a big-city teenager who moves to a small town where dancing has been banned, and sets out to change things one catchy song at a time. Despite losing 13 rehearsals to wintry weather this season, our cast and crew showed up, worked hard, and delivered a show that had the audience dancing in their seats.

From the infectious music to the high-energy choreography, it was clear these students poured their hearts into every step. When the curtain rose, Ellenville cut loose—and it showed!

Congratulations to the entire Drama Club, and a heartfelt thank-you to the directors, staff, and families who cheered them on every step of the way. We couldn't be prouder!

