Preserving the Core of Arlington: A Balanced Path Forward

Dear Arlington Community,

It is an exciting time at Arlington with extensive efforts underway on many fronts. We have worked hard to create a 2026–2027 budget that will support Arlington's commitment to our community now and in the years ahead. Our primary goal was to maintain high-quality academic and co-curricular programs within safe, well-maintained facilities, while also minimizing the taxpayer burden. To that end, we are proposing a $278,650,000 budget for the 2026-2027 school year. This is a 3.96% increase over our current budget and will generate a 3.51% tax levy increase.

This budget acknowledges our economic reality without giving up the opportunities our children need to succeed. Unsurprisingly, we faced a very challenging environment in developing this budget. Inflationary pressures, particularly in healthcare, and constraints in state aid necessitated a deep review of expenses and priorities. We scrutinized individual programs and expenses to find savings and efficiencies, wherever possible.

To balance the budget, we eliminated 19 positions, utilized reserve funds, and reduced spending on equipment, supplies, and classroom furniture. While we will still offer traditional high school summer school for students who need it, we have halved the summer school budget by transitioning many students to a school-year credit recovery model. This ensures students receive the support they need to graduate while significantly reducing district costs.

As much as we are looking for cost efficiencies, we continue to take advantage of opportunities that benefit district families. This budget capitalizes on two significant initiatives:

Expanding Pre-Kindergarten (Pre-K): We are using increased state funding specifically earmarked for Pre-K to expand our successful Pre-K program with three additional classrooms. By expanding access, we are providing more four-year-olds with a strong academic start, while helping families save on childcare expenses.

Early College Access: The budget includes a one-time investment to partner with BOCES to offset the cost of tuition for college-level courses taken at the high school. While there is an initial cost in this year's budget, this program will be cost-neutral over time and will save our families thousands of dollars.

IMPORTANT BALLOT PROPOSITIONS

Beyond the main budget, you will see two other propositions on this year's ballot:

Annual Bus Proposition: We replace our school buses every 10 to 12 years to keep costs steady and our fleet reliable. Doing so supports our core mission by making bus costs predictable and avoiding wide cost swings that could impact our educational program year to year. See page three for more information.

Creation of a Capital Reserve Fund: We are proposing a new Capital Reserve Fund that allows the district to set aside up to $20 million over 20 years if and when funds become available from ongoing cost-saving efforts. There is no tax impact from creating this fund. Voters must approve any future expenditures from this fund. We have successfully used this type of fund in the past to help us save and pay for building repairs and smaller capital projects without additional tax increases.

Thank you for taking the time to review this budget edition of the Arlington Communicator. We encourage you to review the budget details on the district website as well. Your voice matters, so please remember to vote on May 19th.

Sincerely,



Phil Benante, Ed.D.
Superintendent
of Schools



Mary Anne Meaden
Arlington School
Board President

2026 Budget Vote *May 19 · 6 a.m.–9 p.m.*

Arlington Central School District
COMMUNICATOR
BUDGET ISSUE 2026



Congressional Medal of Honor recipient Charlie Johnson (Class of 1951).

Arlington's Memorial Day Commemoration and Charlie Johnson Awards Ceremony

Wednesday, May 27, 2026
6 p.m. at Arlington High School

The program includes:

- Remarks from
  - Retired Command Sergeant Major Ricky R. Davis
  - Samantha Simonetty, 2018 Charlie Johnson Award recipient and Specialist in the NYS Army National Guard
- Musical performances
- Presentation of the Charlie Johnson Awards and Scholarships
- A reading of the names of Arlington alumni who made the ultimate sacrifice, forever remembered on our Wall of Remembrance

On January 3, 2025, Charlie Johnson (AHS Class of 1951) earned the Medal of Honor for his bravery during the Korean War. He lost his life saving nine wounded soldiers, including classmate Donald Dingee. Today, the AHS Wall of Remembrance honors Charlie for eight core values: loyalty, brotherhood, selflessness, courage, compassion, responsibility, patriotism, and integrity.

Each year, Arlington High School presents the Charlie Johnson Award to graduating seniors who embody these values. Please join us as we remember our fallen heroes, celebrate Charlie Johnson's extraordinary valor, and recognize some of our outstanding AHS seniors. •

Driven to Succeed: Arlington Racing Builds More Than Just a Car

By Christina Tucker and Zion Wood, Arlington Racing Marketing Team



Arlington Racing Visual Communications Team

Arlington High School's new Winners Circle Project allows high school students to design, build, and market a race car. Students gain hands-on experiences that combine our interests in technology, engineering, marketing, video production, and math with the world of racing. In its debut year, Arlington's team of 40+ students competes against six area schools, including John Jay, Ketcham, and Roosevelt.

This program provides us with practical lessons through real-world initiatives. Students collaborate and innovate, learning skills such as design, building, marketing, writing, media, advertising, and leadership that are rarely captured in traditional classrooms. We also work with industry professionals who serve as mentors.

Arlington Racing built a strong presence on Instagram, Facebook, and YouTube. The visual communications team produced video updates and "The Pit Stop," a YouTube podcast featuring interviews with students, teachers, and mentors.

The team managed several successful initiatives, including a "Pie in the Face" event (where Arlington students donated cash to see their favorite teachers and staff members get pie'd in the face) and a "Launch-A-Thon" that raised over $5,800. By securing sponsorships from local businesses, we also learned about professional networking and relationship building. These funds helped us purchase automotive supplies, camera equipment, and other tools for running a successful business.

We have taken a variety of technical field trips, such as to the Turtle Invitational Car Show and a NYC Entrepreneurship Conference. This spring, we will visit Factory Five Racing in Wareham, MA, where our kit cars are manufactured. These trips introduce students to a range of industries and career paths through a professional, hands-on environment.

Participating in Winners Circle has had a major impact on every team member. Team President Derek Mueller noted that managing a race team provides a unique "safe space where [students] are allowed to fail and grow from mistakes." This was echoed by Vice President Cami Aquino, who reflected, "This year has been a rollercoaster, but the team has come together as friends, and overall, as a family. Arlington Racing has motivated everyone on the team."

In April, we hosted our first car show, showcasing old-fashioned vehicles, along with our student-built car and Arlington Racing merchandise. This spring, Arlington Racing will compete against the other local Winners Circle teams at Lime Rock Park. Stay tuned to see if we are crowned champions. •

2026 Budget Vote *May 19 · 6 a.m.–9 p.m.*

2026/2027 Bus and Equipment Proposition

ON MAY 19, RESIDENTS WILL VOTE ON THE FOLLOWING REPLACEMENT VEHICLES AND EQUIPMENT:

- 10 Seventy-one (71) Passenger Propane Buses
- 4 Thirty to thirty-four (30-34) Passenger Vans
- 4 Eighteen to twenty (18-20) Passenger Vans
- 4 Seven (7) Passenger Minivans
- 2 Wheelchair Vans
- 2 Transit Maintenance Vans with Uplift
- 1 Ford F-350 Truck or equivalent with plow

The total proposition is $3,400,000, to be bonded over five years. Bus costs totaling $3,194,000 qualify for a 65% State Transportation Aid reimbursement. The net local share is $1,108,318.

SAFETY AND FLEET MANAGEMENT

The Arlington Transportation Department is responsible for the safe transit of students. To maintain safe, reliable vehicles that meet all NYS Department of Transportation (DOT) requirements, the District follows a predictable replacement cycle for vehicles that reach 10–12 years of age or show significant mileage and rust.

Adhering to this schedule provides:

- Fiscal Responsibility: Prevents spikes in repair costs and emergency leasing fees.
- Budget Predictability: Ensures consistent year-to-year costs for taxpayers.
- Purchasing Power: Utilizes a bond to maximize state aid and our buying power.

WHAT IF THE BUS PROPOSITION DOES NOT PASS?

If the bus proposition does not pass, it will be harder to plan the District's budget in the future. If we wait to purchase these vehicles, we will face higher costs next year when we have to replace even more of the fleet. This interruption makes it difficult to maintain a consistent spending plan from one year to the next. Older buses are also more expensive to fix and are more likely to fail state safety inspections. Spending more on repairs and rentals means there is less money available for our schools and students. •





This year, Lagrange Middle School brought the spooky and kooky *The Addams Family* to the stage, while Union Vale Middle School took a trip down the rabbit hole with *Alice in Wonderland.*



Cast members of the AHS Admiral Players brought the magic of Arendelle to life during their hit spring production of *Frozen.*

WANT MORE BUDGET DETAILS?

Visit the Arlington website www.arlingtonschools.org

- Voter information
- Complete budget details
- Full bus proposition details
- Budget Video
- Board of Education candidate bios



Welcome, Class of 2039!

Kindergarten Registration for the 2026/2027 School Year is open!

Kindergarten registration for the 2026/2027 school year is underway! To enroll for the upcoming year, children must be 5 years old by December 1, 2026.

Most families should have already received a registration packet in the mail. If yours hasn't arrived, please call Central Registration at (845) 227-1821 so we can get one to you. The paperwork is also available under "Student Registration" on our website at www.arlingtonschools.org.

Once you have completed your paperwork, call Central Registration to schedule an appointment to complete the registration process. We are operating by appointment only to ensure every family gets the time they need.

We are excited to provide your child with a warm, enriching, and engaging kindergarten year. We look forward to welcoming the Arlington High School Class of 2039 as they begin their journey! •



Kindergarteners celebrated the 100th Day of School in style, trading their backpacks for canes and curls to look like 100-year-olds.

2024 Building Project Update

Since the community approved the 2024 Educational Master Facility Plan (EMFP) to improve our schools, our District has moved from drawing up designs to preparing for construction. We are working closely with architects, building managers, and construction firms to start the first phase of construction this summer.

THE CAPITAL PROJECT IS ROLLING OUT IN THREE PHASES

Phase 1: Expansion of LaGrange Middle School

Phase 2: Addition to West Road Intermediate School

Phase 3: Renovations at Remaining District Schools

PHASE 1: LAGRANGE MIDDLE SCHOOL (LMS)

Following a successful review by the State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) and the New York State Education Department (NYSED), the LMS project has reached a major milestone. We expect construction of the new wing at LMS to begin this summer, 2026. We anticipate that the new wing will be completed in 2028, and the full project will be completed in 2029.

- Construction will begin with the building addition. By completing the new wing first, we create "swing space" that allows students to move into modern classrooms while we renovate older sections of the building.
- To maintain a safe learning environment, the team is implementing "urban-style" protected walkways and hard barriers to separate construction zones from student areas.
- To manage parking, the District is paving a portion of the front lawn, which will serve as a permanent parking solution for future school events.

PHASE 2: WEST ROAD ELEMENTARY (WEST)

We are in the final planning phase for the building addition at West Road School, which will allow us to combine Traver and West Road into a unified K-5 elementary school. We expect construction to begin this fall, 2026, with an anticipated completion date in 2029.

- The new facility will feature an inclusive playground, a modernized media center, and an expanded gymnasium designed for both school and community use.
- Environmental and wetland studies were completed this winter. We are currently coordinating with New York State to upgrade the site's septic and water infrastructure. This critical step must be completed before the actual building construction begins.
- New state energy codes require us to incorporate solar power in the plans. We are exploring building a ground-mounted solar field, which is easier to maintain and more efficient than putting solar panels on the roof.
- Superintendent Dr. Phil Benante continues to work with NYS Assemblymember Didi Barrett and the governor's office to advocate for special legislation to increase the state's cost allowance for the West Road project. This would maximize the state aid returning to local taxpayers.

PHASE 3: REMAINING DISTRICT SCHOOLS

To ensure the highest level of fiscal responsibility, the District is waiting to proceed with Phase 3 (infrastructure updates at remaining schools) until the final bids for Phases 1 and 2 are received. This strategy allows us to use actual market pricing to finalize the Phase 3 scope, ensuring we maximize every dollar of the remaining budget.

We are excited to see these improvements move into the construction phase. As we proceed, the District remains committed to transparency and financial accountability. We will continue to manage every dollar of this community investment with the goal of providing the best possible facilities for our students while remaining accountable to our taxpayers. •

Scan the QR code to visit our Capital Project Hub on the District website and get more detailed information, planning meeting summaries, and a glossary of construction terms.



An architectural rendering capturing the primary facade and entrance design of LaGrange Middle School.



Superintendent Dr. Phil Benante met with Assemblymember Didi Barret to advocate for legislation to increase funding for the West Road project. This effort aims to maximize state aid and reduce the cost to local taxpayers.

A Resounding Success: The 2nd Annual Skilled Trades Fair

On February 11, Arlington High School hosted its 2nd Annual Skilled Trades Fair. Partnering again with Dutchess County Executive Sue Serino, the event underscored our commitment to every student's future. This year's fair featured over 80 local vendors and attracted approximately 1,000 students and families from across the county.



STUDENT-LED AND STUDENT-FOCUSED

What makes this fair unique is the incredible level of student involvement. It was an event developed with students, not just for them. A dedicated student planning team worked for months preparing for the fair. From the initial concept to the final cleanup, our students demonstrated the very professional skills—leadership, organization, and communication—that the trades celebrate. On the night of the event, more than 65 student volunteers assisted vendors and guided families.

In addition to thanking our amazing students, we extend our gratitude to County Executive Serino and her team, as well as the Arlington High School faculty and staff who supported our students. Thank you to the industry professionals for investing their time on behalf of the next generation of talent.

The Skilled Trades Fair serves as a bridge between the classroom and the workforce. By connecting directly with industry leaders, our students gained valuable insights into high-demand careers and the resources needed to pursue them. •

2026 School Board Elections

On May 19, Arlington voters will elect three members to the Board of Education. Current trustees Linda Gaines, Ed.D., Jeff Haight, and Eileen Snook are seeking reelection. They are the only candidates on the ballot.

Those elected will serve a three-year term beginning July 1, 2026. For additional information regarding their professional backgrounds and community involvement, visit www.arlingtonschools.org.



Eileen Snook



Linda Gaines, Ed.D.



Jeff Haight

AHS Announces 2026 Valedictorian and Salutatorian

Arlington High School is proud to announce Courtney Foltz as the 2026 Valedictorian and Alexander Kolt as the 2026 Salutatorian. Both students have demonstrated exceptional academic achievement alongside a strong commitment to leadership and character.





This fall, Courtney is attending Penn State University Park, where she has been accepted into the prestigious Schreyer Honors College to major in Premedicine. Her school counselor, Scott Jakubek, noted that her impact extends far beyond her GPA:

> *"Courtney brings academic excellence, personal integrity, and an inclusive spirit that has enriched our classrooms, teams, and organizations alike. Through her compassion and dedicated leadership, Courtney has contributed greatly to our school community and, above all, values the relationships she has made along the way."*

Alexander plans to attend Binghamton University to pursue a degree in Accounting. His counselor, Sandi Tolworthy, praised his work ethic:

> *"Alexander Kolt is a driven and independent thinker who is deeply committed to continuous self-improvement. His dedication to learning, balanced perspective, and drive to make a meaningful impact set him apart as a remarkable member of our school community."*

Congratulations to both Courtney and Alexander on their incredible achievements! •

2026 Budget Vote *May 19 · 6 a.m.–9 p.m.*



We Believe

that potential can only be attained through commitment, resilience and high expectations.

What Happens if the Budget is Defeated?

Under New York State law, if the proposed school budget is defeated on May 19, the Board of Education has three options:

1. Resubmit the original budget for a re-vote on June 16.
2. Present a revised budget for a vote on June 16.
3. Adopt a contingency budget.

If the budget is defeated a second time, the Board of Education is required by law to adopt a contingency budget. State law mandates that under a contingency budget, a district's tax levy cannot exceed the previous year's levy (a 0% tax levy increase).

For the Arlington Central School District, a contingency budget would require a further reduction of $5.625 million from the currently proposed budget.

To reach the mandated 0% tax levy cap, the district would be required to eliminate or reduce several areas of spending, including:

- Eliminating all new equipment purchases, except for instructional technology
- Further reducing staff
- Reducing educational programs
- Eliminating certain student materials and supplies
- Eliminating capital expenditures
- Reducing student extracurricular activities •

A Double Victory for Our Student-Athletes

Success in high school sports is often measured in points and trophies, but for two Arlington High School seniors, it is also defined by leadership and community service. This year, the National Interscholastic Athletic Administrators Association (NIAAA) has named Courtney Foltz and Braden Cassidy as the Section 1 and New York State scholarship winners.



The NIAAA scholarship recognizes student-athletes who balance exceptional academic records with sportsmanship and community service. Each year, one male and one female athlete from New York State and Section One receive this scholarship.

COURTNEY FOLTZ: LEADING WITH HEART

Courtney, the Class of 2026 Valedictorian, is a powerhouse on the field and in the classroom. A captain of the soccer team and a track athlete, she also dedicated time to the Unified Bowling Team, a program that joins people with differing abilities on the same team.

Her leadership extends beyond the scoreboard. Courtney tutors peers in algebra, mentors Poughkeepsie High School music students, and volunteers with Hope on a Mission, a local outreach program that provides meals and essential items to people experiencing homelessness. Reflecting on a difficult loss in the 2024 State soccer championship, Courtney noted that the experience taught her the value of support. "I realized that I don't have to constantly rely on myself," she shared. "I have a circle that deeply cares for me, no matter if I win or lose."

BRADEN CASSIDY: BUILT ON COMMUNITY

Braden, who ranks in the top 5% of the senior class, has made his mark through baseball and bowling. He serves as the secretary of the Student Athletic Council and is an active member of the Interact Club, a student-led organization that works with the LaGrange Rotary on a variety of community service projects, including running the Arlington Pantry that provides food for food-insecure students. Braden's commitment to his sport is matched by his desire to give back; he serves as both an umpire and an assistant coach for LaGrange Little League. In his award-winning essay, Braden emphasized how athletics shaped his character and his connection to Arlington. "The sports that I chose to participate in gave me purpose," he wrote, noting that the time management skills and lifelong friendships he gained were the true highlights of his high school career.

Congratulations to Courtney and Braden! •

2026/27 School District Budget Notice

OVERALL BUDGET PROPOSAL

	Budget Adopted for the 2025/26 School Year	Budget Proposed for the 2026/27 School Year	Contingency Budget for the 2026/27 School Year*
Total Budgeted Amount, Not Including Separate Propositions	$ 268,025,000	$278,650,000	$273,025,120
Increase/Decrease for the 2026-27 School Year		$10,625,000	$5,000,120
Percentage Increase/Decrease in Proposed Budget		3.96 %	1.87%
Change in the Consumer Price Index		2.63%	
A. Proposed Levy to Support the Total Budgeted Amount	$160,413,543	$166,038,423	
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)	$160,413,543	$166,038,423	$160,413,543
F. Total Permissible Exclusions	$5,654,962	$7,441,692	
G. School Tax Levy Limit, Excluding Levy for Permissible Exclusions	$155,758,921	$158,596,731	
H. Total Proposed School Year Tax Levy, Excluding Levy to Support Library Debt and/or Permissible Exclusions (E – B – F + D)	$154,758,581	$158,596,731	
I. Difference: G – H (Negative Value Requires 60.0% Voter Approval – See Note Below Regarding Separate Propositions) **	$1,000,340	$0	
Administrative Component	$24,241,518	$26,252,681	$24,512,667
Program Component	$210,792,323	$217,070,073	$213,185,207
Capital Component	$32,991,159	$35,327,246	$35,327,246

* The following is a statement of assumptions made in projecting a contingency budget for the 2026/27 school year, should the proposed budget be defeated, pursuant to Section 2023 of the Education Law. The projected contingency budget for the 2026/27 school year would be the proposed budget less $5,624,880. These reductions would be made by eliminating all new equipment (except state-aided equipment), reducing staff, reducing programs, eliminating certain raises, eliminating certain materials and supplies for students, reducing extracurricular activities, and reducing capital expenditures.

** List 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
Proposition #2 – Purchase of School Buses and Equipment	$3,400,000

	Under the Budget Proposed for the 2026/27 School Year
Estimated Basic STAR Exemption Savings[1]	$727

The annual budget vote for the fiscal year 2026/27 by the qualified voters of the Arlington Central School District, Dutchess County, New York, will be held at School Election District #1 – Arthur S. May School, School Election District #2 – Traver Road Primary, School Election District #3 – Overlook Primary, School Election District #4 – Noxon Road Elementary, School Election District #5 – Beekman Elementary, and School Election District #6 – Vail Farm Elementary school(s) in said district on Tuesday, May 19, 2026 between the hours of 6:00am and 9:00pm, prevailing time in the Arlington Central School(s), at which time the polls will be opened to vote by voting machine.

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

2026 Budget Vote *May 19 · 6 a.m.–9 p.m.*

Our Mission

is to empower all students to be self-directed, lifelong learners, who willingly contribute to their community, and lead passionate, purposeful lives.

Arlington Central School District

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Your Voice Matters! Don't Forget to Vote!

TUESDAY, MAY 19, 2026 • 6 A.M.– 9 P.M.

WHO CAN VOTE?

To be eligible to vote, you must be a U.S. citizen, 18 years of age or older, and a district resident for at least 30 days before the vote. If you are already registered for general elections (local/federal/state), you are automatically registered for all school district elections.

WHERE TO VOTE

Not sure where to vote? Scan the QR code below to look up your specific polling site.

District 1 – Arthur S. May School
District 2 – Traver Road Primary
District 3 – Overlook Primary
District 4 – Noxon Road Elementary
District 5 – Beekman Elementary
District 6 – Vail Farm Elementary

VOTE EARLY BY MAIL

You no longer need a specific reason to vote by mail! Follow these three steps:

1. Request an Application: Download it via the QR code below or call the District Clerk at (845) 486-4460 ext. 20119.
2. Submit Your Application:
   - By May 12: If you want your ballot mailed to you.
   - By May 18: If you plan to pick up your ballot in person.
3. Return Your Ballot: All completed mail-in ballots must be received by 5:00 PM on May 19.

QUESTIONS?

Contact the District Clerk at (845) 486-4460 ext. 20119.

Scan to find your polling place and download mail-in applications

Philip Benante, Ed.D.
Superintendent of Schools

BOARD OF EDUCATION
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ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICE
144 Todd Hill Road
LaGrangeville, NY 12540
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Visit Our District Website at
www.arlingtonschools.org