

# IN

An IN Community Magazine

# Fox Chapel Area

## Fox Chapel Area Students Experience Real World of Work

PAGE 14



Fox Chapel Area School District  
2023-2024 Final Budget

PAGE 10

Summer Fun Guide

PAGE 42

Special Section: Real Estate

PAGE 49

# FOX CHAPEL AREA

## School News



### Fox Chapel Area School District

- 9 A Message from the Superintendent
- 10 Fox Chapel Area School District  
2023-2024 Final Budget
- 13 Safety Event Continues to Build Community Ties
- 14 Mock Town Teaches Real-World Skills
- 16 Graduates Ready for Next Journey
- 18 Student Art Gallery
- 26 Student-Athletes Headed to Next Level
- 28 Trevor Katz Helps Take Down Cancer
- 29 Student Mentors Help Ease  
Transition to High School
- 30 Fox Chapel Area School District Directory

## A MESSAGE FROM THE SUPERINTENDENT

Dear Fox Chapel Area Community,

The end of school ushers in the unofficial beginning of summer. It is a time full of not just outdoor fun and vacations, but of milestones, such as graduation. I find the commencement ceremony to be a personal source of great pride and one of the most exciting events of the school year. I look out at the graduates from the stage and think about these students, many of whom came to us as kindergartners. I think about how much they have grown, learned, and changed during these past 13 years. I see them looking happy for what they have just accomplished – and I know this feat took a team of people working together every day. I think about the parents and guardians who nurtured these students to help them become the young adults they are today. I think about the other family members who have influenced them throughout their lives. I think about the friends they have chosen – the family that they have picked for themselves. I think about our community that has supported and encouraged them.

I also think about our educators and how much they have not just taught our students academically, but how much they have cared for them. Everyone who works in our schools is there to help our students make better lives for themselves. I think about the custodians who clean up spills and do work many of us take for granted. I think about our cafeteria workers who feed our students and staff every day. I think about our secretaries who reassure our students with a simple smile or kind words. I think about our instructional and personal care assistants who help our students thrive. I also think about all the other school employees who help develop our students into the best versions of themselves.

As I look through the graduation photos taken at the ceremony, I see young adults who are about to embark on a grand adventure. For some of them, it will be their first time away from home for an extended period of time as they head to college. Some will go on to full-time jobs; some will enter the military. They all have so much ahead of them to look forward to in these next steps. I hope our newest graduates feel the Fox Chapel Area School District has provided them with a solid foundation on which they can build their futures.

I also find myself thinking about our youngest learners, the ones about to begin their time with the Fox Chapel Area School District. I hope that those parents and guardians know their children will be well taken care of by the nurturing adults in our schools. I hope they know that the teachers are already looking forward to greeting them on the first day of school. I hope they know that they matter, that they are important, and that they will love the learning journey upon which they are about to embark.

Although I don't want to rush summer, I hope everyone knows that we are already looking forward to the next school year! We will see you on August 29!

Sincerely,

Dr. Mary Catherine Reljac  
Superintendent



*I hope our newest  
graduates feel the  
Fox Chapel Area School  
District has provided  
them with a solid  
foundation on which they  
can build their futures.*



# FOX CHAPEL AREA SCHOOL DISTRICT 2023-2024 FINAL BUDGET

The Fox Chapel Area School Board adopted the 2023-2024 final budget at its regular business meeting on June 12, 2023.

|                    |                      |
|--------------------|----------------------|
| Total Revenues     | \$114,667,200        |
| Total Expenditures | <u>\$115,373,219</u> |
| Total Net Change   | -\$706,019           |

The district plans to balance the budget via a drawdown from the fund balance.

The 2023-2024 final budget reflects an increase of 1.5% to the millage rate, which will go from 20.4288 to 20.7352. The increase in millage is expected to add more than \$1 million in revenue each year. The millage increase falls below the 4.1% Act 1 index increase allowed by the state. Each mill generates approximately \$3.7 million for the school district.

The budget includes annual increases in tuition outplacement costs (4.5%) and rising medical (14%), dental (3%), and vision (3%) insurance premiums for staff. It also includes approximately \$622,000 in planned ESSER (Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief Fund) federal allocations. Plans for these funds include the purchase of textbooks, summer learning initiatives, after-school programs, reading and math intervention

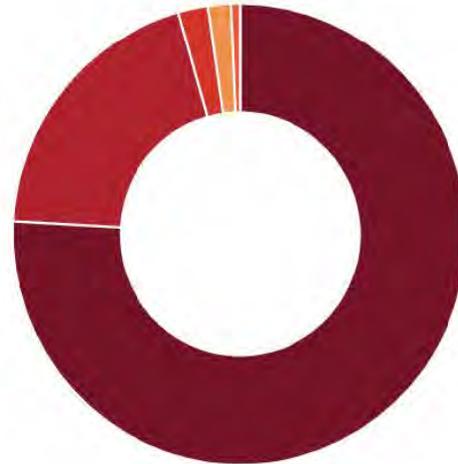
programs, and student and staff support services. ESSER funds must be spent by September 30, 2024.

The 2023-2024 budget also includes a transfer of \$2.5 million into a capital reserve fund to be put toward the school board's Projects and Planning Committee's recommended multiphase Capital Projects Plan. Projects in the current phase of that plan include heating, ventilating, and air conditioning upgrades at Hartwood Elementary School; an indoor lighting project at Hartwood; and turf replacement on the baseball, softball, and multipurpose fields at the high school.

The 2023-2024 budget reflects costs of more than \$17 million for the Public School Employees' Retirement System (PSERS) employer contribution. This accounts for 15% of the overall budget. For 2023-2024, the PSERS board set an unprecedented decrease in contribution rates. The 2023-2024 employer contribution rate of 34% is a decrease from 35.26% in 2022-2023. Costs, however, are projected to increase again within two years. The state reimburses the school district 50% of the PSERS contribution, and that is reflected in the revenues section of the final budget.

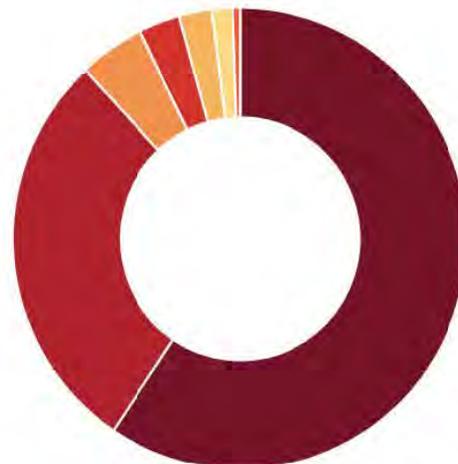
## Breakdown of Revenues

|                                |                      |
|--------------------------------|----------------------|
| Local Revenue (77.5%)*         | \$88,897,431         |
| State Revenue (20%)            | \$22,903,893         |
| Unassigned Fund Balance (1.3%) | \$1,500,000          |
| Federal Revenue (1.1%)         | \$1,305,876          |
| Other Revenue (0.05%)          | \$60,000             |
| <b>Total Revenues</b>          | <b>\$114,667,200</b> |



## Breakdown of Expenditures

|                           |                      |
|---------------------------|----------------------|
| Instruction (60%)         | \$69,076,580         |
| Support Services (28.8%)  | \$33,256,913         |
| Debt Service (4.6%)       | \$5,333,943          |
| Non-Instruction (2.8%)    | \$3,178,849          |
| Fund Transfer (2.2%)      | \$2,525,000          |
| Budgetary Reserve (1.3%)  | \$1,500,000          |
| Facilities (0.4%)         | \$501,934            |
| <b>Total Expenditures</b> | <b>\$115,373,219</b> |



\*Percentages are approximate due to rounding

**Gaming Funds Distribution**

On May 2, 2023, the Pennsylvania Department of Education notified the Fox Chapel Area School District that the district’s share of gaming funds will total \$1,850,491.31. The method of distributing these funds, as prescribed by Act 1, the Taxpayer Relief Act, will be via the implementation of the homestead exclusion. Under this provision, any property in the school district that was approved by Allegheny County as a homestead will have the lesser of its taxable value, or an estimated \$11,480 of its taxable value, excluded for the purpose of calculating school district real estate taxes for the 2023 tax year. The owners of the 7,798\* approved homestead properties in the district

will receive up to the equivalent of a \$238.04 reduction in their property taxes.

Property owners who currently do not have an approved homestead exclusion will have the opportunity to apply again when the district sends out letters to those homeowners in December 2023.

*\*Allegheny County has certified that there are 7,798 approved homestead properties in the Fox Chapel Area School District. If that number is adjusted by the county to include fewer or more properties, it could affect the amount of the final reduction.*

**Taxpayer Estimated Real Estate Tax Liability**

|                           | Without Homestead Exclusion | With Homestead Exclusion | Without Homestead Exclusion | With Homestead Exclusion | Without Homestead Exclusion | With Homestead Exclusion |
|---------------------------|-----------------------------|--------------------------|-----------------------------|--------------------------|-----------------------------|--------------------------|
| 2022 Assessed Value       | 100,000                     | 100,000                  | 225,250<br>Median Home      | 225,250<br>Median Home   | 500,000                     | 500,000                  |
| 2022 Homestead Exclusion* |                             | 11,703.33                |                             | 11,703.33                |                             | 11,703.33                |
| 2022 Net Assessed Value   | 100,000                     | 88,296.67                | 225,250                     | 213,546.67               | 500,000                     | 488,296.67               |
| 2022 Millage Rate         | 20.4288                     | 20.4288                  | 20.4288                     | 20.4288                  | 20.4288                     | 20.4288                  |
| 2022 Tax Liability        | \$2,042.88                  | \$1,803.80               | \$4,601.59                  | \$4,362.50               | \$10,214.40                 | \$9,975.32               |

|                           |            |            |            |            |             |             |
|---------------------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|-------------|-------------|
| 2023 Assessed Value       | 100,000    | 100,000    | 225,250    | 225,250    | 500,000     | 500,000     |
| 2023 Homestead Exclusion* |            | 11,480     |            | 11,480     |             | 11,480      |
| 2023 Net Assessed Value   | 100,000    | 88,520     | 225,250    | 213,770    | 500,000     | 488,520     |
| 2023 Millage Rate         | 20.7352    | 20.7352    | 20.7352    | 20.7352    | 20.7352     | 20.7352     |
| 2023 Tax Liability        | \$2,073.52 | \$1,835.48 | \$4,670.60 | \$4,432.56 | \$10,367.60 | \$10,129.56 |
| Annual Increase           | 30.64      | 31.68      | 69.01      | 70.06      | 153.20      | 154.24      |

- Actual median home value in 2022 was \$224,000.
- These amounts can be reduced by 2% if paid in full during the discount period.
- Senior citizens may qualify for a property tax rebate program available through the state.

*\*The homestead exclusion amount is reduced from last year due to an increase in the number of approved properties divided by the same allocation of funds from the previous year. More information about the homestead exclusion can be found at <https://dced.pa.gov/local-government/property-tax-relief-homestead-exclusion>.*

**Future Challenges**

- The Fox Chapel Area School Board Projects and Planning Committee recommended and approved a multiphase Capital Projects Plan, which is expected to cost upward of \$25.5 million during the next six to seven years. The 2023-2024 budget includes a transfer of \$2.5 million into a capital reserve fund to be put toward projects in the current phase of that plan. Those projects include many internal upgrades at all of the district’s buildings, except Kerr Elementary, which is newly built. Some projects include upgrades to boilers, hot water heaters, HVAC improvements, and indoor lighting projects, as well as continuing improvements to athletic fields and resurfacing of the tennis courts at the high school.

- The contribution to PSERS continues to be a challenge for all school districts in Pennsylvania.
  - The employer contribution rate is set by PSERS trustees, not by the district.
  - The district anticipates paying more than \$45 million in PSERS contributions during the next five years.
- COVID-19 and its economic impact for the current and future budget years continue to be an uncertainty. While federal ESSER funding was made available to help offset costs, it will be exhausted by September 30, 2024. Expenses that were able to be covered by federal dollars will then need to be paid for through local funding.

Continued on next page >



## Budget Summary for the General Fund

|  | Actual<br>2020-2021     | Actual<br>2021-2022     | Estimated<br>2022-2023  | Final Budget<br>2023-2024 |
|--|-------------------------|-------------------------|-------------------------|---------------------------|
| <b>Revenues</b>  |                         |                         |                         |                           |
| Current Real Estate Taxes  | \$66,628,784.86         | \$68,658,976.79         | \$70,863,833.17         | \$72,107,170              |
| Other Real Estate Taxes  | \$91,323.26             | \$275,851.38            | \$166,745.96            | \$167,000                 |
| Act 511 Taxes  | \$9,632,463.71          | \$10,665,322.19         | \$10,504,008.54         | \$10,560,100              |
| Delinquent Taxes (Real Estate & Act 511)                                       | \$2,490,043.96          | \$2,652,812.64          | \$2,477,092.24          | \$2,525,000               |
| Other Local Income   | \$784,854.83            | \$1,482,393.14          | \$3,056,423.96          | \$3,538,161               |
| Basic Instructional & Operating Subsidy  | \$5,527,328             | \$5,852,819.56          | \$6,783,750.21          | \$6,998,526               |
| Revenue for Specific Educational Programs                                      | \$2,417,751.76          | \$2,452,856.66          | \$2,512,808             | \$2,540,000               |
| Other State Revenue  | \$14,124,954.37         | \$12,650,250.89         | \$13,610,552.53         | \$13,365,367              |
| Federal Revenue  | \$1,558,319.29          | \$3,886,549.84          | \$2,317,008.94          | \$1,305,876               |
| Other Financing Sources  | \$232,998.44            | \$203,601.92            | \$548,887.35            | \$60,000                  |
| <b>Total Revenues</b>  | <b>\$103,488,822.48</b> | <b>\$108,781,435.01</b> | <b>\$112,841,110.90</b> | <b>\$113,167,200</b>      |
| Available/Unassigned Fund Balance<br>(Less Portion to be Utilized as Drawdown) |                         |                         |                         | \$1,500,000               |
| <b>Total Revenue Available<br/>(Includes Fund Balance Utilization)</b>         | <b>\$103,488,822.48</b> | <b>\$108,781,435.01</b> | <b>\$112,841,110.90</b> | <b>\$114,667,200</b>      |
| <b>Expenditures</b>  |                         |                         |                         |                           |
| Instruction  | \$59,744,530.69         | \$63,156,699.08         | \$66,474,989.14         | \$69,076,580              |
| Support Services   | \$29,076,506.99         | \$31,916,865.23         | \$31,917,396.46         | \$33,256,913              |
| Non-Instructional  | \$2,400,902.14          | \$2,926,842.33          | \$2,888,770.31          | \$3,178,849               |
| Facilities   | \$589,679.04            | \$331,006.56            | \$1,342,996.55          | \$501,934                 |
| Debt Service/Refund of Prior Year Receipts                                     | \$5,556,031.04          | \$5,990,014.27          | \$5,691,511.70          | \$5,333,943               |
| Capital Projects Fund Transfer   | \$2,826,219.25          | \$675,924.50            | \$5,225,000             | \$2,525,000               |
| <b>Total Expenditures</b>  | <b>\$100,193,869.15</b> | <b>\$104,997,351.97</b> | <b>\$113,540,664.16</b> | <b>\$113,873,219</b>      |
| Budgetary Reserve<br>(Drawdown from Unassigned FB)                             |                         |                         |                         | \$1,500,000               |
| <b>Total Budgeted Expenditures<br/>(Includes Reserve)</b>                      | <b>\$100,193,869.15</b> | <b>\$104,997,351.97</b> | <b>\$113,540,664.16</b> | <b>\$115,373,219</b>      |
| <b>Total Net Change<br/>(Revenues Less Expenditures)</b>                       | <b>\$3,294,953.33</b>   | <b>\$3,784,083.04</b>   | <b>-\$699,553.26</b>    | <b>-\$706,019</b>         |

Additional information about the 2023-2024 final budget can be found at [www.fcasd.edu/budget](http://www.fcasd.edu/budget).

# SAFETY EVENT CONTINUES TO BUILD COMMUNITY TIES

A little rain didn't stop the members of the Fox Chapel Area community from turning out in a big way at the district's second annual Community Safety Event.

Led by the district's school resource officers, the event included bike repairs, car seat checks, booths and demonstrations by municipal first responders, games, giveaways, and the popular bike rodeo led by Kerr Elementary school resource officer Scott Bailey, who is also an Aspinwall patrolman.

"The safety event is another way for our school resource officers to give back to the community," says Joe Kozarian, Fox Chapel

Area School District's chief of police and safety and security coordinator. "Students and their families take away more than just safety information. They get a chance to interact with first responders and build a rapport with them."

Officer Kozarian is grateful for the participation, cooperation, and enthusiasm of municipal first responders for the annual event.

"We are fortunate to have such strong ties with local police and fire departments, and EMS companies," he says. "Of course, that's invaluable in the event of an emergency, but it's also essential to building a strong school community."





## MOCK TOWN TEACHES REAL-WORLD SKILLS

**T**hough they have years to go before beginning their careers, fourth-graders across the Fox Chapel Area School District recently got to experience a day on the job.

Students traveled to Junior Achievement's JA BizTown in South Fayette Township, a fully interactive mock town that simulates the day-to-day functions of thriving communities. Led by volunteers, the program aims to teach financial literacy, ignite entrepreneurial thinking, and help youths build job skills.

Before visiting JA BizTown, students engaged in four units of study to prepare for the culminating simulation, which had students working in a storefront, earning a paycheck, managing a checking account, and selling goods. Students took on roles such as CEO, store manager, chemist, health care worker, disc jockey, construction worker, and police officer. The storefronts represent well-known Pittsburgh-area companies.

"It was exciting to see these young learners engage in JA BizTown," says Dr. Ashley Constantine, Fox Chapel Area School District's executive director of elementary education and instruction. "The real-world experiences cultivated through this curriculum and the visit to JA BizTown are sure to build skills for success, not just in their careers, but life, too."





## GRADUATES READY FOR NEXT JOURNEY

A total of 324 Fox Chapel Area High School seniors graduated Sunday, June 4, 2023, at a ceremony at Soldiers & Sailors Memorial Hall & Museum in Oakland. The student speakers at the ceremony were graduating seniors Lawrence Liu and Blaz Vavpetic.





# Fox Chapel Area

## HIGH SCHOOL

Pages 18-25 feature an art gallery with student work from the 2022-2023 school year.



Molly Krajcovic  
Grade 9



Rachel Milchek - Grade 11



Gabriel Nosik  
Grade 9



Alexandra Sroufe  
Grade 11



Nicholas Clump  
Grade 10

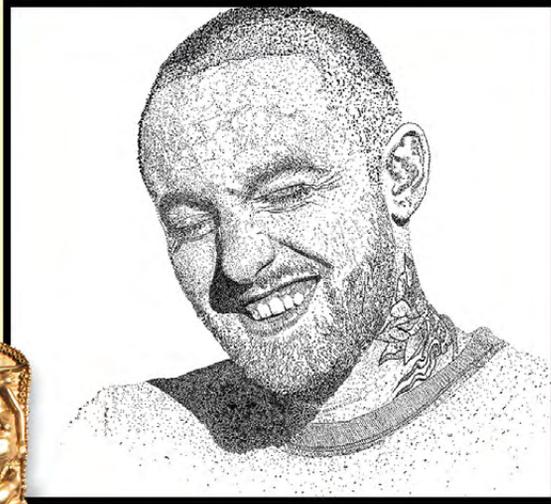


Hannah Smith - Grade 10



Jacob Martin  
Grade 12

Cian Conry - Grade 11



Nick Goodman - Grade 11

Peyton Shema - Grade 12



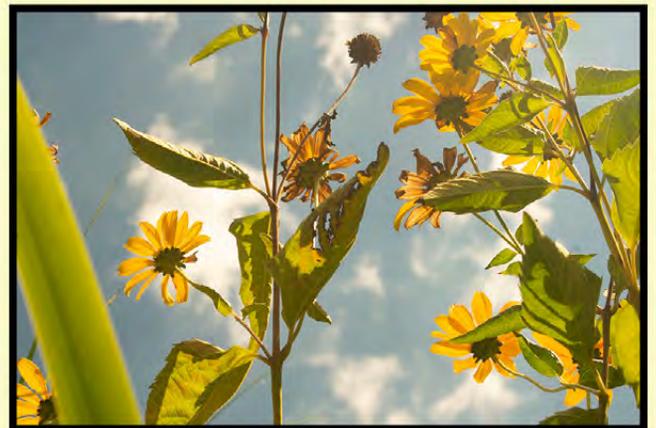
Mason Friday  
Grade 10



Diego Marshal - Grade 12



Marley Pistella - Grade 12



Paris Kulikowski - Grade 10



Ciarra Perez  
Grade 9



Adele Grady  
Grade 9

# Dorseyville

## MIDDLE SCHOOL

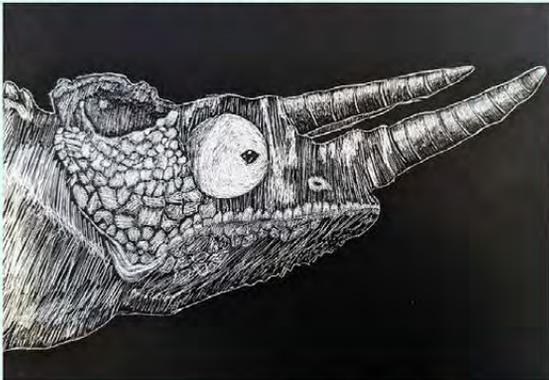
Tyler Stocker - Grade 6



Sadie Stephenson - Grade 8

Luke Stauffer - Grade 6

Laken Gaspard - Grade 8



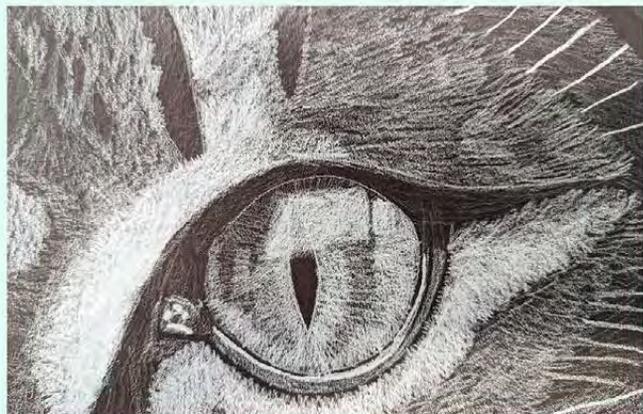
Ella Eisner - Grade 8



Santiago Alvarez Vasquez  
Grade 7



Stella Miller - Grade 6



Logan Helbling - Grade 8

Ryder Malone - Grade 6



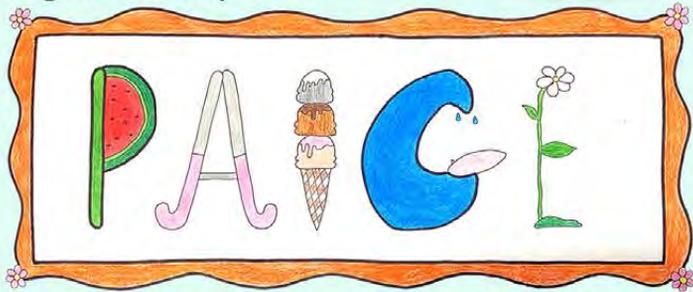
Alyssia Gaucin - Grade 7



Edward Kratsa  
Grade 8



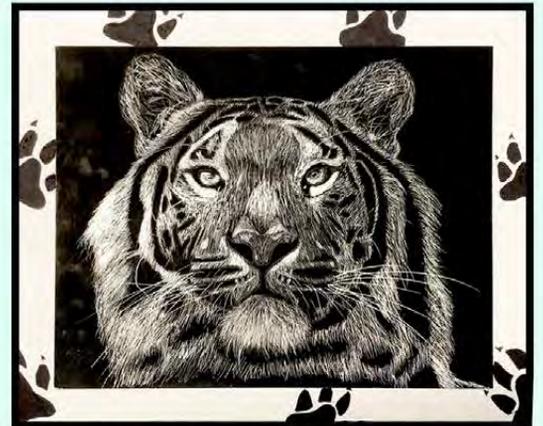
Paige Maheshwary - Grade 6



Annabel Berkowitz - Grade 7



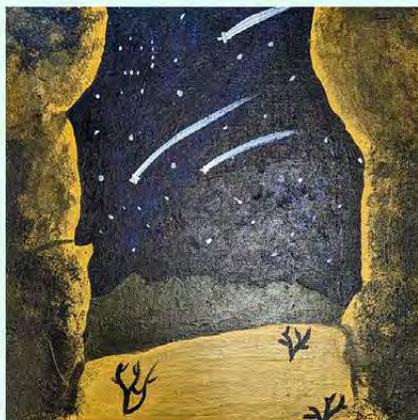
Ava Wegley - Grade 8



Victoria Macklin - Grade 8



Lucia McElwain - Grade 8



Emma Smith - Grade 8



Rei Dehus  
Grade 7

# Fairview

## ELEMENTARY SCHOOL



Amelia Quimby - Grade 3



Thatcher Garrison  
Grade 3



Delaney Frank - Grade 5



Gabriel Jacobs - Grade 2



Asher Resnick - Grade 4



Elena Brown  
Grade 4



Abigail Cicero  
Grade 1



Elizabeth Corpman  
Kindergarten



Jack Ettinger  
Grade 2



Hattie Abel - Grade 1



Mason Merriman  
Kindergarten



Liza Maheshwary  
Grade 5

Rosie River - Kindergarten



Louise Diethorn  
Grade 1



Maria Elena Mady  
Grade 2

Zoe Horwitz  
Grade 1



Ryder Savko - Grade 2



Drew Brindza  
Grade 5



Nadiya Romonovich  
Grade 4



Calder Mattich  
Grade 4



Beren Ozen - Kindergarten



Theodore Shaffer - Grade 3

Grayson White - Grade 1



Ariana Salitrik  
Grade 3



Maya Fill  
Grade 5

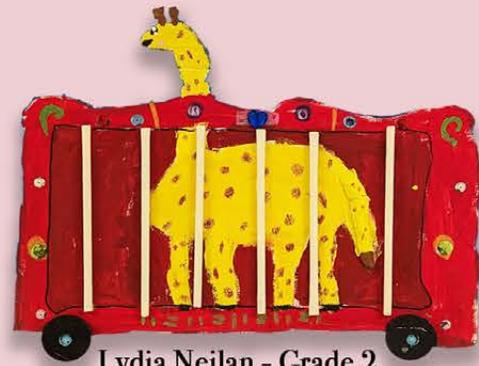


# Hartwood

## ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

# Kerr

## ELEMENTARY SCHOOL



Lydia Neilan - Grade 2



Jameson Kelly  
Kindergarten

Kai'Mir Moye - Grade 4



KoriLynn Sudbury - Grade 5



Samantha Bowles - Grade 1



Cameron Casile  
Pre-Kindergarten



Kai Taylor  
Grade 5



Sofia Dinh  
Grade 4

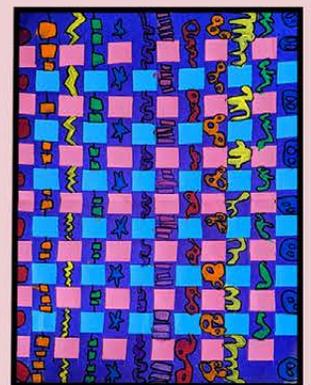


Paisley McKee  
Kindergarten



Aydin Abdulally  
Grade 3

(Close-up of animal  
from carousel above)



Lucy Ferda - Grade 2



Owen Lupetin - Grade 1



Elon Brecher - Grade 3

Luca Greenberg - Grade 1



Gabriella Chittur - Grade 2

Robin Shaeffer  
Grade 4



Reese Ploucha  
Kindergarten

Ella Mohn - Grade 5



Claire Cooney  
Grade 1



Graham Squires - Grade 2



Bennett Blank- Kindergarten

Clara Troutman - Grade 3



Clark Squires  
Grade 4



Cooper Filipek - Grade 5

# O'Hara

## ELEMENTARY SCHOOL



## STUDENT-ATHLETES HEADED TO NEXT LEVEL

**T**welve recent Fox Chapel Area High School graduates who signed and/or committed to further their academic and athletic careers at the collegiate level were honored at a special recognition ceremony in April.

As part of the celebration, Fox Chapel Area School District Athletic Director Michael O'Brien expressed how proud he is of the athletes for the time, dedication, and hard work they have put into their sports. He also reminded the athletes that, in addition to what they have sacrificed, they also have had the support of parents and guardians, other family members, friends, and coaches along the way.

"You have all been part of the journey and should be commended for being such a positive and consistent support system," he said. He reminded the athletes to thank their parents and guardians for all of the rides to practices and games, all the athletic events they have sat through (in various weather conditions), and the encouragement they have offered.

He reminded the student-athletes that their future will hold good days and bad days, that their coaches from high school care about them, that they should lean on those who love them, and to never give up.

Some of the Class of 2023's accomplishments are:

- During the last four years, the class participated in more than 1,100 athletic contests as a combined group and won more than 700 of those competitions.
- Nineteen out of 26 teams qualified for the WPIAL and/or the PIAA playoffs during the 2022-2023 school year.
- Six teams were named section champions, and four had undefeated records in their sections during the 2022-2023 school year.
- The girls swimming and diving team was the WPIAL runner-up.
- The Fox Chapel Area High School cheerleading squad qualified for nationals for the first time in school history.
- Sophie Shao ended her high school career as the most decorated swimmer in school history with a total of 28 medals from WPIAL and PIAA competitions.
- Team QPA awards went to the girls swimming and diving, and boys cross country teams, each with a 4.0 QPA.
- The cumulative QPA this year for all of the varsity teams was 3.9.





Andrew Begg – Golf  
John Carroll University



Talia Bugel – Swimming  
Bucknell University



Emmanuel Drappatz – Swimming  
Alfred University



Philipp Drappatz – Swimming  
College of Wooster



Zachary Johnston – Baseball  
Juniata College



Roman Mason – Football  
Duquesne University



Molly McNaughton – Soccer  
PennWest California



Landyn Moore – Football  
Western Michigan University



Makayla Mulholland – Soccer  
Appalachian State University



Payton O'Toole – Swimming  
Ashland University



Sophie Shao – Swimming  
Brown University



Hunter Taylor – Softball  
University of Pittsburgh-Greensburg



## TREVOR KATZ HELPS TAKE DOWN CANCER

**F**oxes wrestler Trevor Katz has many strong attributes. He was recently named the Western Pennsylvania Positive Athlete in wrestling and was an academic All-American. He has participated in the sport since elementary school, and this season, the senior was named a captain of the team. For the second year, Trevor medaled at sections, advanced to the WPIAL Class 3A individual competition, and earned several medals during the past few years at the highly competitive Allegheny County Wrestling Championships.

Trevor credits much of his success to the discipline and grit he has developed from his hundreds of grueling practices and matches over the years that tested his strength, endurance, confidence, and will to succeed.

This spring, Trevor took on a new kind of challenge when he signed up to raise money for the Leukemia & Lymphoma Society (LLS) and applied many of the principles he learned through wrestling. When the final tally came in, Trevor had set a new student fundraising record of \$250,000 for the region, which comprises a five-state area. In recognition of his efforts, Trevor was named a Student Visionary of the Year for 2023.

Throughout the campaign, Trevor got help from his wrestling teammates and many generous people from the Fox Chapel area and beyond. He says going outside the realm of athletics and raising money for children with blood cancers was a very satisfying experience. "I believe going into the community outside of sports is very important. I have been really inspired by the children who have to battle cancer at such a young age."

Trevor's success in helping these families comes from a deep-rooted respect from what he has learned as a wrestler.



"In wrestling, you can never give up," says Trevor. "I thought wrestling was tough, but when I see these children help their parents remain positive during one of the toughest battles they'll ever face, it definitely was something harder than anything I've ever done in my life. It's been really special seeing them always happy. A lesson these very sick kids taught me is that no matter what it is, you need to try your hardest. If you do that, you won't live with any regrets. So, when it came to my campaign, I thought, 'How can I go halfway when they are fighting their hardest each day?'"

Trevor's concern for others doesn't surprise his head wrestling coach, Michael Frank.

"From a leadership standpoint, Trevor stepped up as team captain and helped bridge the gap between the coaching staff and a very young team," says coach Frank. "He showed them the work ethic that is necessary to find success both on and off the mat. Additionally, Trevor was the wrestling team leader with a 4.3 QPA over his high school career."

Trevor's interest in philanthropy is personal. His cousin was diagnosed with chronic myelogenous leukemia in 2003 when she was only 11 years old, and it was his father who started a family tradition of raising funds for the LLS. Now in remission 20 years later, his cousin's life was saved by a medicine that was developed through LLS research.

"It is truly amazing how people remain positive through the toughest of trials," Trevor says. "I did this because of the true fighters and heroes who have inspired me through their battles with cancer."

# STUDENT MENTORS HELP EASE TRANSITION TO HIGH SCHOOL

A new student mentorship program aims to show freshmen that they're not alone in what can be a difficult transition to high school, not just academically, but socially and emotionally, too.

The Students for Success initiative grew from an idea proposed by recent Fox Chapel Area High School graduate Zachary Sullivan, who attributed his success in high school to the mentorship and advice he received from his older brother. Knowing that not everyone has the benefits of an older sibling, he felt that developing a program in which older students could offer advice to younger peers on a regular basis would result in increased confidence, resilience, and achievement for all involved. A group of students received training through the national Coaching Boys Into Men program and Crisis Center North, which provides free empowerment workshops.

While the initial group of student mentors had just high school football players, it has burgeoned to include students involved in various clubs who come from diverse backgrounds, a point of pride for faculty sponsor Anthony Griggs, who oversees the program alongside gifted support facilitator Lisa Gibson.

"Just from personal experience, I know you don't get anywhere alone," says Mr. Griggs, a personal care assistant at the high school and an assistant Fox Chapel Area football coach.

"This is a timely moment in students' lives in terms of making life decisions and for creating an identity. Kids need some confirmation that they are heading in the right direction, and it's valuable to have peers who are interested in guiding their thinking and helping them navigate their new environment."

The group's first outreach event took place in the spring. A number of high school football players traveled to Dorseyville Middle School to meet with their younger counterparts. The older students talked to eighth-graders about things they wished they had known before coming to high school and answered any questions they had – down to what the best lunch is in the high school cafeteria.

"The DMS kids really enjoyed it, and we had a great turnout," said senior tight end Troy Susnak, who will lead the program during the next school year. "It was good that we let them know that we're here when they get to the high school. A lot of kids, when they come up, don't know what to do or who to ask, or are apprehensive, so we tried to ease some of those tensions."

Mr. Griggs says he keeps in mind a Dr. Seuss quote to impress upon his players and others he mentors through Students for



*"Kids need some confirmation that they are heading in the right direction, and it's valuable to have peers who are interested in guiding their thinking and helping them navigate their new environment."*

*— Anthony Griggs, Faculty Sponsor,  
Students for Success Program*

Success: "To the world, you may be one person, but to one person, you may be the world."

"I hope that Fox Chapel Area can set the tone with this program," Mr. Griggs says. "I want students to realize how they overcame and how they persevered, and how they can change others through their experiences. I want them to feel pride not just for their school; I want them to see how they can help their community, help their nation, and how they can help the world at that point. Helping others will be a benefit no matter what direction they take, and if they learn to extend a hand, they'll be OK."

He credits the efforts of both Zachary and Troy in bringing the program to fruition and seeing that it will continue to thrive and grow, starting when school resumes in August.

"These are remarkable and instrumental young men," Mr. Griggs says. "Through their exceptional ideas, we're going to empower mentors with the concepts that we want to share in the short term, such as visualization, time management skills, perseverance, and the importance of communication. These are all building blocks for success."

*Fox Chapel Area High School sophomore Laila Golla contributed to this article.*



# FOX CHAPEL AREA SCHOOL DISTRICT DIRECTORY

## District Administration

611 Field Club Road  
 Pittsburgh, PA 15238  
 412/963-9600  
 www.fcasd.edu  
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 Deputy Superintendent: David McCommons, Ed.D.  
 Business Manager: Kimberly Pawlishak

## District Resource Staff

Executive Director of Elementary Education and Instruction: Ashley Constantine, Ed.D.  
 Executive Director of Secondary Education and Instruction: Matthew Harris, Ed.D.  
 Director of Special Education and Pupil Services: Timothy Mahoney, Ed.D.  
 Executive Director of Instructional and Innovative Leadership: Megan Collett, Ed.D.  
 Director of Literacy: Dana Simile  
 Director of Student Achievement and Instructional Verification: Stephen Edwards, Ed.D.  
 Director of Ancillary Services: Daniel Breitreutz  
 Chief of School Police/School Safety and Security Coordinator: Joseph Kozarian  
 Director of Athletics: Michael O'Brien  
 Coordinator of Communications: Bonnie Berzonski  
 Community Engagement Specialist: Jill Leonard

## FOX CHAPEL AREA SCHOOLS

### Fairview Elementary School

738 Dorseyville Road  
 Pittsburgh, PA 15238  
 412/963-9315  
 Principal: Susan Kreit

### Hartwood Elementary School

3730 Saxonburg Boulevard  
 Pittsburgh, PA 15238  
 412/767-5396  
 Principal: Rachel Fischbaugh, Ed.D.

### Kerr Elementary School

341 Kittanning Pike  
 Pittsburgh, PA 15215  
 412/781-4105  
 Principal: Paul Noro, Ed.D.

### O'Hara Elementary School

115 Cabin Lane  
 Pittsburgh, PA 15238  
 412/963-0333  
 Principal: Kristy Batis, Ed.D.  
 Program Principal: Katelyn Toth

### Dorseyville Middle School

3732 Saxonburg Boulevard  
 Pittsburgh, PA 15238  
 412/767-5343  
 Principal: Jonathan Nauhaus  
 Program Principal:  
 Laura Miller, Ed.D.

### Fox Chapel Area High School

611 Field Club Road  
 Pittsburgh, PA 15238  
 412/967-2430  
 Lead Principal:  
 Michael Hower, Ed.D.  
 Program Principal (A-L):  
 Daniel Lentz, Ph.D.  
 Program Principal (M-Z):  
 John McGee, Ph.D.

## FOX CHAPEL AREA SCHOOL BOARD



Front row, left to right: Adam G. Goode (2025 – Region III); Eric G. Hamilton, Treasurer (2023 – Region I); Marybeth Dadd, President (2023 – Region III); Ronald P. Frank, Vice President (2023 – Region II); Vanessa K. Lynch, Assistant Secretary (2023 – Region II); and Ariel Zych (2025 – Region II).

Back row, left to right: Amy B. Cooper (2025 – Region I); Katie Findley (2023 – Region I); Paul Giuffre, Solicitor; Dr. David P. McCommons, Deputy Superintendent; Dr. Mary Catherine Reljac, Superintendent; Kathleen Anuszek, Board Secretary; and Kimberly Joi Andrews (2025 – Region III).

For more information, visit [www.fcasd.edu/schoolboard](http://www.fcasd.edu/schoolboard).

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The Fox Chapel Area School District is an equal rights and opportunity school district. The school district does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, age, creed, religion, gender, sexual orientation, ancestry, national origin, or handicap/disability. The district shall make reasonable accommodations for identified physical and mental impairments that constitute disabilities, consistent with the requirements of federal and state laws and regulations.

Additional information pertaining to civil rights, school district policies, and grievance procedures can be obtained by contacting the compliance officers listed below between 8 a.m. and 4 p.m. Monday-Friday. This notice is available from the compliance officers in large print, on audiotape, and in Braille.

Title IX: David P. McCommons, Ed.D.  
 (412/967-2456)

Section 504 and ADA: Timothy A. Mahoney, Ed.D.  
 (412/967-2435)

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