

# Proposed budget builds on student success, fiscal responsibility

Dear Gates Chili Community,

From engineering projects in our new tech spaces and performances on stage to achievements on the athletic fields and in our classroom, our Spartans continue to thrive across all areas of learning.

As we gear up for the 2025-26 school year, we remain focused on using every tool at our disposal to support student success and strengthen our community. The proposed budget for next year reflects that commitment. It continues to fund vital academic and enrichment programs, including kindergarten, Advanced Placement (AP) and dual-enrollment courses, athletics, clubs, instrumental music lessons and school plays and musicals — all of which are not required by the state but are essential to our students' well-rounded education.

This year's budget also encompasses more than \$200,000 in savings thanks to administrative restructuring, which aims to improve services and align resources to better support students and staff. Read more about these changes on page 13.

To support our ongoing efforts to invest wisely in our future, the Gates Chili Board of Education adopted a proposed spending plan for the 2025-26 school year of \$139,776,252 at its April 22 meeting. Under the proposed plan, the overall spending would increase by \$6,471,229, a 4.85% increase over the current budget. However, it is important to note that due to expiring PILOT agreements, the proposed tax levy is \$64,453,048, which reflects an approximate 2.42% increase that does not exceed the tax cap.

In addition to the budget proposition, voters will be asked to consider the purchase of new school buses, meanwhile, proposition 3 on the ballot proposes the creation of a capital reserve fund for future bus purchases. This forward-thinking financial tool will provide an additional savings of nearly \$200,000 in annual interest costs by reducing the need to borrow in future years.

Inside this newsletter, you'll find a full breakdown of the proposed 2025-26 budget (pages 2-5), information on Board of Education candidates (page 6), and highlights from a year of Spartan pride (pages 7-14). Please take a moment to review it ahead of the May 20 vote and join us to cast your ballot between 6:30 a.m. and 8:30 p.m. in the Spartan Field House at Gates Chili High School.

On behalf of the Gates Chili Board of Education, faculty and staff — thank you for your partnership and continued support.

Go Spartans!

Christopher J. Dailey  
Superintendent of Schools

@GatesChiliSuper  



### INSIDE THIS ISSUE: RETURN ON INVESTMENT

*Gates Chili CSD is grateful for the community's continued investment in the district. While the return on investment isn't measured in dollars, it can be measured in success and achievement. Throughout this issue, you will find how your investment is reaping great returns for students.*

**PROPOSED BUDGET INFORMATION** Learn more at [gateschili.org/vote](https://gateschili.org/vote)

# Three-Part Budget Summary

New York State requires school districts to present their budgets divided into three expenditure categories – administrative, program and capital.

**Total Budget: \$139,776,252**

Administrative	2024-25	2025-26
Amount	\$13,514,786	\$13,932,181
Percent of Budget	10%	10%

Provides overall general support and management services including employee benefits for administrative and clerical support staff, costs for administration and supervision of each of the six schools, staff development, business operations and central administration.

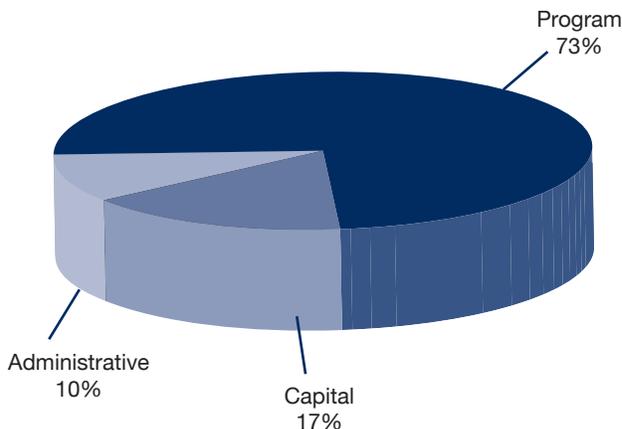
Program	2024-25	2025-26
Amount	\$96,156,801	\$101,835,971
Percent of Budget	72%	73%

Provides instruction and educational support services for the district's students. This includes the transportation costs, special education services and benefits for the instructional and non-instructional program staff.

Capital	2024-25	2025-26
Amount	\$23,633,436	\$24,008,100
Percent of Budget	18%	17%

Provides maintenance and custodial services for six schools, the surrounding property, utility services, debt service payments and benefits for maintenance and custodial staff.

## Proposed 2025-26 Three-Part Budget



## What's on the ballot?

Residents will vote on the following propositions:

### Proposition 1 – School Budget

The school budget proposition authorizes the Gates Chili Central School District to spend \$139,776,252 for school purposes during the 2025-26 fiscal year and to levy the necessary tax therefore.

### Proposition 2 – Bus Purchases

This proposition authorizes the purchase of school buses at a total cost of no more than \$2,460,000. New York State reimburses Gates Chili approximately 75% of the cost of bus purchases.

### Proposition 3 – Capital Reserve Fund

This proposition authorizes the creation of a capital reserve fund to finance future bus purchases which will save the district approximately \$200,000 annually in debt issuance and interest costs. This fund shall not exceed \$12,000,000 with a 10-year life.

### Board Candidates

Residents will vote to fill three (3) three-year terms on the Gates Chili Board of Education. Candidates, in ballot order, are Tanya Srbnovski, Jahmar Elliott, Andrea Minchella and Dr. Christine Brown Richards.

## Estimated Tax Rate

Equalization rates are estimated to be 100% for the towns of Gates and Chili. Due to the ongoing reassessment in the Town of Gates, we are unable to estimate tax rates for the 2025-26 school year. However, it is anticipated that as a result of the reassessment, the tax rates will be lower than the 2024-25 tax rates indicated below.

2024-25 tax rate	\$22.14
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# Where does the money come from?

REVENUE SUMMARY		
Revenue Sources	2024-25 Adopted Budget	2025-26 Proposed Budget
Tax Levy	62,930,900	64,453,048
PILOTs (Payment in Lieu of Taxes)	1,468,802	1,248,275
Sales Tax	4,294,939	3,020,000
Tuition, Fees and Interest Earnings	1,905,927	2,315,000
Sale of Equipment, Material and Other	105,000	105,000
Miscellaneous and Refunds	1,170,000	1,260,000
State Aid	55,387,608	62,607,193
Federal Aid	135,000	140,000
Appropriated Fund Balance	2,906,847	1,750,000
Employee Benefit Accrued Liability Reserve	100,000	100,000
Employee Retirement System (ERS) Reserve	2,000,000	1,777,736
Tax Cert Reserve	100,000	100,000
Teachers Retirement System (TRS) Reserve	800,000	900,000
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$133,305,023</b>	<b>\$139,776,252</b>

# Where does the money go?

EXPENSE SUMMARY		
Budget Category	2024-25 Adopted Budget	2025-26 Proposed Budget
<b>Administrative Component - \$13,932,181 or 10% of the budget</b>		
Board of Education	41,095	50,995
Central Administration	396,650	561,700
Central Services	860,122	855,422
Employee Benefits	3,746,520	3,576,010
Finance	1,383,845	1,180,401
Instructional Administration	1,021,818	1,031,031
Special Items	1,866,663	1,883,663
Staff	1,036,925	1,582,913
Supervision of Schools	3,161,148	3,210,046
<b>Administrative Budget</b>	<b>\$13,514,786</b>	<b>\$13,932,181</b>
<b>Program Component - \$101,835,971 or 73% of the budget</b>		
Community Services	570,013	615,966
District Transportation	6,057,670	6,298,628
Employee Benefits	28,965,848	28,134,537
Staff Development	626,509	668,480
Instructional Services	59,936,761	66,118,360
<b>Program Budget</b>	<b>\$96,156,801</b>	<b>\$101,835,971</b>
<b>Capital Component - \$24,008,100 or 17% of the budget</b>		
Central Services	7,770,601	7,565,269
Employee Benefits	2,324,230	1,904,759
Special Items	15,000	11,000
Transfer to Capital Fund	100,000	100,000
Transfer to Debt Service Fund	13,423,605	14,427,072
<b>Capital Budget</b>	<b>\$23,633,436</b>	<b>\$24,008,100</b>
<b>Total Budget</b>	<b>\$133,305,023</b>	<b>\$139,776,252</b>



Learn more at [gateschili.org/vote](https://gateschili.org/vote) **PROPOSED BUDGET INFORMATION**

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<b>Overall Budget Proposal</b>	<b>Budget Adopted for the 2024-25 School Year</b>	<b>Budget Proposed for the 2025-26 School Year</b>	<b>Contingency Budget for the 2025-26 School Year *</b>
Total Budgeted Amount, Not Including Separate Propositions	\$133,305,023	\$139,776,252	\$139,167,285
Increase/Decrease for the 2023-24 School Year		\$6,471,229	\$5,862,262
Percentage Increase/Decrease in Proposed Budget		4.85%	4.40%
Change in the Consumer Price Index		2.90%	
<b>A. Proposed Tax Levy to Support the Total Budgeted Amount</b>			
	\$62,930,900	\$64,453,048	
<b>B. Levy to Support Library Debt, if Applicable</b>			
	\$	\$	
<b>C. Levy for Non-Excludable Propositions, if Available**</b>			
	\$	\$	
<b>D. Total Tax Cap Reserve Amount Used to Reduce Current Year Levy</b>			
	\$	\$	
<b>E. Total Proposed School Year Tax Levy (A + B + C - D)</b>			
	\$62,930,900	\$64,453,048	\$64,453,048
<b>F. Permissible Exclusions to the School Tax Levy Limit</b>			
	\$3,941,332	\$3,939,274	
<b>G. School Tax Levy Limit, Excluding Levy for Permissible Exclusions</b>			
	\$58,989,568	\$60,513,774	
<b>H. Total Proposed Tax Levy for School Purposes, Excluding Permissible Exclusions and Levy for Library Debt, Plus Prior Year Tax Cap Reserve (E - B - F + D)</b>			
	\$58,989,568	\$60,513,774	
<b>I. Difference: (G - H); (Negative Value Requires 60.0% Voter Approval - See Note Below Regarding Separate Propositions)</b>			
	\$0	\$0	
<b>Administrative Component</b>			
	\$13,514,786	\$13,932,181	\$13,704,481
<b>Program Component</b>			
	\$96,156,801	\$101,835,971	\$101,753,705
<b>Capital Component</b>			
	\$23,633,436	\$24,008,100	\$23,709,099

\* If a contingent budget is required, the Board of Education will review all areas of the budget to develop a contingency budget for the 2025-26 school year, pursuant to §2023 of the Education Law. Should the 2025-26 budget be defeated, the following items may be deleted: equipment purchases, free public use of buildings, instructional and non-instructional positions, to be identified.

To authorize the district to purchase and finance two (2) student wheelchair accessible buses, seven (7) 66-passenger buses, and five (5) 35-passenger buses, including necessary furnishing, fixtures and equipment and all other costs incidental thereto, and expend a total sum not to exceed \$2,460,000, which is estimated to be the total maximum cost thereof, and said amount, or so much thereof as may be necessary, be raised by the levy of a tax upon the taxable property of said School District and collected in annual installments as provided by Section 416 of the Education Law; and, in anticipation of such tax, obligations of said School District, in the principal amount not to exceed \$2,460,000, be issued.

To authorize the school district to establish a new ten-year capital reserve pursuant to Section 3651 of the Education Law in an amount not to exceed \$12,000,000 to be used for the acquisition of school buses, such reserve fund to be funded from (i) year-end budget surplus funds known as unassigned fund balance, as available, for the fiscal year ended June 30, 2025 and each fiscal year thereafter for the term of the reserve fund, (ii) transfers of excess monies from Board of Education designated reserves, (iii) amounts from budgetary appropriations from time to time, and (iv) New York State Aid received and made available by the Board of Education from time to time, all as permitted by law.



	Under the Budget Proposed for the 2025-26 School Year
Estimated Basic STAR Exemption Savings <sup>1</sup>	\$640

The annual budget vote for the fiscal year 2025-26 by the qualified voters of the Gates Chili Central School District, Monroe County, New York, will be held on Tuesday, May 20, 2025 at the Spartan Field House at Gates Chili High School, 1 Spartan Way, from 6:30 a.m. to 8:30 p.m. or by mail-in ballot. Mail-in ballots must be received by the district clerk no later than 5 p.m. on May 20 in order to be counted.

<sup>1</sup> The basic school tax relief (STAR) exemption is authorized by section 425 of the Real Property Tax Law.

## STAR Exemption

The School Tax Relief (STAR) program provides eligible homeowners in New York State with relief on their property taxes. Whether you receive the STAR exemption or the credit, there are two types of STAR benefits:

### Basic STAR

- available for owner-occupied, primary residences
- the income limit for the Basic STAR credit is \$500,000 (the income limit for the Basic STAR exemption is \$250,000)
- based on the first \$30,000 or \$30,020 of the full value of a home

### Enhanced STAR

- Provides an increased benefit for the primary residences of senior citizens (age 65 and older) with qualifying incomes:
  - \$98,700 or less for the 2024-25 school year,
  - \$107,300 or less for the 2025-26 school year
- based on the first \$86,100 of the full value of a home for the 2025-26 school year

For more details about STAR exemptions and credits, go to [gateschili.org/STARExemption](http://gateschili.org/STARExemption)

	2025-26 Estimated STAR Values	
	Gates	Chili
Basic STAR Exemption	\$30,000	\$31,460
Enhanced STAR Exemption	\$86,100	\$87,020

## Veterans' Exemption

This exemption provides relief to wartime, combat and disability veterans. Veterans must apply for this exemption with their town assessor's office. For more details, go to [gateschili.org/VeteransExemption](http://gateschili.org/VeteransExemption)

	Assessed Value	Maximum Assessment of
Wartime Veteran Exemption	15%	\$9,000
Combat Exemption	add'l 10%	\$6,000
Disability Exemption	per individual	\$30,000



## Capital Outlay Exclusion Project

A Capital Outlay Exclusion Project is a small renovation project of up to \$100,000 that's included in the district's annual budget and eligible for state aid. This approach helps the district make the most of local tax dollars, with approximately \$79,600 expected to be returned in aid during the 2026-27 school year. As part of this year's proposed budget, Gates Chili plans to use these funds for targeted improvements at Gates Chili Middle School. The work includes replacing select interior and exterior doors, hardware and related construction to address aging conditions and enhance security and performance. By completing this work as part of a capital project, the district avoids covering the full cost and continues a long-term strategy to fund additional mini-renovation projects each year using building aid.

## ▶ Bit of Budget

Still have questions about the budget process and all the information in this newsletter? Check out the district's award-winning video series, "A Bit of Budget with Dr. Ball!" To watch this year's three-part series, go to [gateschili.org/BitOfBudget](http://gateschili.org/BitOfBudget) or use your phone's camera to scan the QR code.



## Ambassadors finish fourth year

The Gates Chili Budget Ambassador program wrapped up on March 20 after another productive year of budget development education and discussion. Ambassadors met for two three-hour sessions on March 6 and March 20. During each session, participants engaged in discussion on the budget development process and where funds are generated and allocated in the budget each year. Thank you to all the budget ambassadors for their participation in this important process.

## Elecciones: 20 de mayo

Si desea leer o acceder esta información en español, visite [gateschili.org/Vote](http://gateschili.org/Vote) o escanee el código QR con la cámara de su teléfono móvil.



Learn more at [gateschili.org/vote](http://gateschili.org/vote) **PROPOSED BUDGET INFORMATION**

# Candidates for Board of Education

Three candidates will be elected to the board at the annual district vote on Tuesday, May 20, 2025. Successful candidates will earn a three-year term from July 1, 2025 to June 30, 2028. Below are statements from each candidate, in ballot order, about their experience and interest in serving on the board.

## Tanya Srbinovski



Tanya Srbinovski is in her second year on the Gates Chili Board of Education. A lifelong resident and 2003 graduate of Gates Chili High School, she and her husband, also an alum, are raising two children in the district. Tanya is deeply invested in family and community engagement and has served in school PTOs and on district committees,

and she volunteers on Board committees for policy, operations, finance, and audit. Tanya holds a history degree from SUNY Brockport and works in the Instruction Office at Spencerport Central School District. She is an advocate for educators and believes in ensuring that teachers and staff have the resources, support, and professional respect they need to do their jobs effectively. She understands that when educators are supported, students thrive. Tanya is committed to ensuring that all Gates Chili students, staff, and families are supported and empowered to succeed.

## Jahmar Elliott



A Gates Chili community member for over 20 years, Jahmar Elliott and his wife Marina are proud Spartan parents of four, whose educational journey began at Paul Road Elementary. As a long-time supporter of our youth, Jahmar's oldest son played Jr. Spartans basketball and is currently a member of the Spartan Varsity team.

Professionally, Jahmar leverages extensive experience from large HR environments at our region's leading employers and currently serves as Director of HR Strategic Initiatives at the University of Rochester. With a business degree from RIT's Saunders College of Business, Jahmar is a passionate advocate for education, deeply invested in our students and families, and committed to serving the Gates Chili Central School District.

## Andrea Minchella



Andrea Minchella and her husband Jonathan have lived in the Gates Chili Central School District for 15 years. Their two sons attend Walt Disney Elementary School and previously attended the District's UPK program at Imagination Childcare Academy (ICA). Andrea has worked as a tax auditor for New York State for the last 10 years, having

received her graduate & undergraduate degrees with honors from Rochester Institute of Technology. Andrea is an active volunteer, serving as Parent President of the Walt Disney PTO, while continuing to support ICA in several capacities. She organizes annual craft show fundraisers for both schools, and serves as a District Budget Ambassador, District Equity Team member and Walt Disney School Improvement Team member. Andrea previously served as a docent at Seneca Park Zoo, educating visitors, holding several board positions, and organizing fundraising events to support conservation. The Minchella family can often be found around town attending clubs at the Gates Public Library, enjoying programs offered by the Gates & Chili recreation centers, & participating in classes offered by Gates Chili Continuing Education. Andrea is excited to become more involved with the school district's inner workings & do her part to ensure the continued growth of our community.

## Dr. Christine Brown Richards



Hello to my Gates Chili students, Families and community! Allow me to introduce myself! I am the proud mother of two GC graduates, and the proud aunt of two current students. I am a Rochester native, with extensive learning in the field of Education and a member of various professional organizations. Education is in my blood,

and I am grateful to use my skills to work for our families of Gates Chili. I am excited to serve the community by putting our children and their education first! In my current tenure as a board member, we have accomplished great things for our students and families. We have made great strides with our equity and inclusion work; pushed our curriculum and instruction forward and continued to do what is best for all students and families while creating a welcoming environment! If given the opportunity to serve again, I will continue to do the work that sets Gates Chili apart and makes ensures our students receive all they deserve! I am still student centered, still family focused and still committed to the community!

A blue banner with a white checkmark over the word 'VOTE'. Below the banner, the text reads: Tuesday, May 20, 6:30 a.m. to 8:30 p.m., Spartan Field House at Gates Chili HS.

**VOTE**

Tuesday, May 20  
6:30 a.m. to 8:30 p.m.  
Spartan Field House at Gates Chili HS

# GC makes *electric bus history* again

Gates Chili is once again “leading the charge” in sustainable student transportation. The district recently began receiving 10 additional electric school buses, gradually expanding its existing fleet of five. Among the new arrivals is a major milestone: the first electric school bus in New York State equipped with a wheelchair lift.



“This investment reflects our continued commitment to innovation, sustainability and equity,” said Superintendent Christopher Dailey. “Each new electric bus represents progress for our students, our environment and our future.”

ride, especially for students with sensory sensitivities,” said Director of Transportation Matt Helmbold. “This is about offering an inclusive transportation experience that meets the needs of all students.”

Each electric bus is zero-emission and can travel more than 100 miles per charge. The quieter ride has become a welcome feature for many students.

The purchase of the new buses was made possible thanks to a combination of grants. Gates Chili made history in 2022 when it became the first upstate district to debut electric school buses. With this latest expansion, the district remains a state leader in clean, student-centered transportation.

“Electric buses are incredibly quiet, which allows for a calmer, less stressful

## RETURN ON INVESTMENT

### Transportation

- In an effort to recruit and retain bus drivers, the district approved a new starting rate of up to \$28 per hour for drivers.
- Gates Chili was recognized as a leader in sustainability, having been recognized by Greater Rochester Clean Cities (GRCC) for its leadership in incorporating electric school buses into its transportation fleet.
- Although not required by law, all Gates Chili school buses are outfitted with seatbelts to ensure student safety when riding to and from school.



### Facilities

- In 2024, a thousand more visitors used district facilities—with roughly 9,600 using the fitness center and indoor track and another 2,200 using the pool with their community membership.
- Neil Armstrong, Paul Road and Walt Disney elementary schools are now easier for families and visitors to navigate thanks to new signage installed on those campuses.
- Earlier this year, district residents voted to approve a capital project aimed at keeping Gates Chili facilities “Future Ready” by addressing the aging infrastructure across buildings.



## Capital Project Update

Construction continues on both phases of the district’s capital project, Building Brighter Futures. Phase 1 of the project is about two-thirds of the way complete, with phase 2 now actively underway.

new multipurpose fields at the middle school has been delivered and will be installed this spring. Grading and drainage work continues to prepare the area for use in the near future.

Crews are nearing completion of the technology spaces at Gates Chili High School. Work this spring includes the brick masonry exterior and mechanical systems installation, along with painting and wall tiling finishes. At the middle school, staff and students recently moved into newly renovated technology, art and health classrooms, clearing the path for work on music classrooms to begin. The music wing demolition is nearing completion as the crews start to prepare for the new foundations.

Crews are also making visible progress at Florence Brasser Elementary School. In addition to completing storm drain work, steel framing and interior work is underway for the relocation of the main office, OT/PT and faculty areas. These updates support improved safety and accessibility. The entire project remains on track for completion in 2026.

As part of phase 2, site work on the main campus is also progressing. Lighting for the

Meanwhile, the district’s newly approved capital project, Future Ready, is still in the design stage. For the latest updates on both of these capital projects, visit [gateschili.org/CapitalProject](https://gateschili.org/CapitalProject).



**RETURN ON INVESTMENT**

**Grades UPK-5**

- This fall, GC launched “What I Need” or “WIN” time, which provides time for students to receive enrichment, remediation or skills reinforcement based on their needs.
- GC elementary schools offered more than 84 clubs this year, including new offerings such as Taylor Swift Club, Mindfulness Club and Board Game Club, as well as tried and true leadership opportunities like Student Council.
- In preparing for the 2025-26 school year, the district was able to offer every Universal Prekindergarten (UPK) applicant a spot in their preferred program



**Library and literacy**

- Gates Chili has expanded comprehensive literacy training to secondary staff members to equip them with the knowledge and tools to be literacy and language experts.
- Librarians are helping to support literacy instruction in buildings by expanding their own understanding of how students learn to read and ensuring libraries are equipped with stories to reinforce or extend lessons in the classroom.
- Spartans are readers! So far this school year, students districtwide have checked out almost 80,000 books, accessed nearly 70,000 digital resources and almost 6,000 audio and e-books.

# Armstrong empowers families with tools for student success

Neil Armstrong Elementary School connected families with community partners during their first ever Community School Event on April 3. With refreshments, games for the kids, a photo-op, and plenty of resources to learn from, there was something for everyone. The event featured three insightful presentations aimed at empowering families with tools to support their children's education: "Boosting Literacy at Home," "Math Made Easy," and "Navigating the Digital World." These sessions provided valuable strategies and tools to help parents enhance their students' learning experience.



# Kindness in action: Panthers give back

You're never too young to make a difference in your community, as demonstrated by two remarkable Panthers, Tessa B. and Rihab M., fifth-grade students in Ryan Fitzgerald's class at Paul Road Elementary School.

Their journey began in December 2024, just before the holiday season, when Tessa and Rihab felt a deep empathy for children in the hospital. They wanted to spread some holiday cheer to those facing tough times.

Motivated to give back, Tessa and Rihab launched a bracelet sales fundraiser. Using their free time, they designed and crafted unique bracelets, selling them in their neighborhoods and at school. Their collection included holiday-themed designs, Kindness Week-inspired bracelets, and even custom orders.

The proceeds from their fundraiser were donated to Ronald McDonald House Charities, a nonprofit organization dedicated to providing critical services that help families with children undergoing medical treatment. In addition, Tessa and Rihab crafted a batch of bracelets for the staff at the Ronald McDonald House, so they could distribute them to children in the hospital who might need a little extra joy.

With an entrepreneurial spirit, they created a full marketing campaign — posting colorful homemade flyers in school hallways, hosting special sales events, and strategically setting up shop in high-traffic areas each morning to attract eager buyers. Their kindness extended beyond the sales as well.



“Sometimes, when we knew someone was buying multiple bracelets to give to friends, we'd offer them a free one as a thank you for spreading kindness,” said Tessa.

On April 1, Assistant Principal Kim Doty joined Tessa, Rihab and Fitzgerald as they visited the Ronald McDonald House to personally deliver their donation. During their visit, they toured the facility and learned about how their contribution would help families with children receiving care at local hospitals.

Thanks to their hard work and popular products, Tessa and Rihab raised nearly \$650 through bracelet sales. A generous contribution from the Cory Doty Foundation brought their total donation to \$800.

“We never imagined we would raise so much money,” said Rihab.

In a serendipitous moment on the tour, the group discovered a room featuring artwork created by students from Gates Chili, a reminder that kindness and creativity know no bounds.

# Middle school minds, community-changing ideas

Sixteen Gates Chili Middle School students put their critical thinking caps on — and it paid off in a big way. These young changemakers were selected to compete in the 2025 Monroe County Civics Bee after penning winning essays that tackled real community issues with thoughtful, solution-driven proposals.

At the March 10 event, the GCMS students buzzed through two rounds of fast-paced trivia before the top five finalists took the stage to present their ideas to a live panel of judges. The result? A clean sweep for GCMS!

Jessica D. placed third, Daniel R. earned second, and Dante C. claimed the top prize. All three are now headed to the state competition this May, bringing their smarts, spirit and Spartan pride with them. With a knack for identifying local issues and a boldness to offer solutions, these students aren't just preparing for the future — they're already shaping it. Congratulations, Spartans!



## GCMS builds on success with new structure

For more than a decade, Gates Chili Middle School's community-based model has helped students build strong relationships in a smaller learning environment. Now, as enrollment shifts and student needs evolve, the school is making thoughtful adjustments to ensure every student has equitable access to academic programs and support services.

Beginning in September 2025, GCMS will transition to a grade-level team structure, allowing for more balanced class sizes, improved scheduling flexibility, and expanded opportunities for enrichment and intervention. This shift builds on the strengths of the current model while enhancing efficiency and student support.

Under the new structure, students will benefit from:

- Consistent teacher collaboration within each grade level
- Greater access to electives and academic pathways
- Smoother transitions between classes thanks to reduced hallway traffic

School leaders are committed to a seamless transition and have held multiple information nights for family members already this spring. They will share more information throughout the spring and summer and students prepare to head back to school this fall.

## Summer meals move to the high school

Gates Chili is proud to once again host the USDA Summer Meals Program this summer! Summer meals will kick off on Monday, July 7 and run through Friday, Aug. 8 at Gates Chili High School. Hours and menus will be shared in mid-June at [gateschili.org/SchoolNutrition](https://gateschili.org/SchoolNutrition).



## RETURN ON INVESTMENT

### Grades 6-8

- This April, between 30-50 students attended weekly "Poetry Pop-ups" to read and write various types of poetry ahead of the Gates Public Library's annual poetry contest.
- GCMS launched Delta Math, a new platform that helps students practice and reinforce math skills to meet state learning standards.
- The middle school hosted its first homecoming pep rally this fall, giving students the opportunity to connect over fun games and school spirit.



### School nutrition

- This year, Gates Chili students again had access to free breakfast and lunch every day in GC cafeterias.
- The GCMS Student Council partnered with School Nutrition to put on a Food Rodeo, giving students the opportunity to sample new food items from six different vendors and provide feedback about which items should be added to the school lunch menu.
- The School Nutrition team is gearing up for another summer of free meals after having served a total of more than 25k meals to children in our community in the summer of 2024.



**RETURN ON INVESTMENT**

**Grades 9-12**

- The Class of 2025 will be the first to graduate with Latin honors, with 17 earning Summa Cum Laude, 26 earning Magna Cum Laude and 39 earning Cum Laude honors.
- New this year, seniors have the chance to explore an array of career paths through new English electives, including Public Speaking, Creative Writing, Introduction of Education, Film as Literature, Multimedia and Communications, and Literature and Language.
- Gates Chili is proud to offer a credit recovery program for high school students who need extra support earning graduation credits.



**Student support**

- Gates Chili has begun a partnership to increase the number of diverse, high-quality mental health providers in high-need schools.
- Neil Armstrong became the district's first Community School this year, helping to integrate academics, health, social services and family engagement to support student success and strengthen the school community.
- This school year, the district administered its first-ever social-emotional assessment to students in grade 3-12 in order to help school teams identify students' social-emotional strengths and needs to best guide support and intervention.

# Spartans shine at SkillsUSA state championships

Gates Chili students showcased their skills and leadership at the 2025 New York State SkillsUSA Leadership and Skills Championships, held April 23-25 at the New York State Fairgrounds in Syracuse.

Representing Gates Chili through Monroe 2-Orleans BOCES Career and Technical Education (CTE) programs, Racelyn L. (Auto Body and Collision Repair Technology) earned a silver medal in Collision Repair Technology. Meanwhile, junior Xavier W. (Dental Assisting) was elected as a 2025-26 New York State SkillsUSA Officer. He will serve as an officer at large after completing officer training at the national conference this June in Atlanta.



Xavier W.



Racelyn L.

Leadership activities were also a major focus of the event. Ethan S. (Culinary Arts) represented the BOCES 2 CTE chapter as a delegate, along with eight other CTE students from across the region. In addition, Gates Chili students Aaron P. and Ariel T. applied their Criminal Justice program skills by serving on the event's Security Corps team.

The BOCES 2 CTE SkillsUSA chapter also received top honors during the awards ceremony, being named a Model of Excellence for the second time in three years — the highest recognition a SkillsUSA chapter can earn. In total, BOCES 2 CTE students brought home 11 medals, including five first-place finishes, and celebrated the election of one student to a state officer position.

## Spartans showcase style, culture in first-of-its-kind cultural fashion show

Hundreds of Gates Chili High School students took a trip around the world—no passport required — during the school's first-ever Cultural Fashion Show on April 10.

More than 50 Spartans stepped onto the Gates Chili Performing Arts Center (GCPAC) stage, transforming from students into storytellers of tradition and identity. They wore vibrant, traditional garments representing cultures from across Latin America, the Caribbean, the United States, the Middle East, Ukraine, Asia and Africa. Every outfit was student-styled, bringing heritage to life through color, fabric and flair.



"It's about embracing who we are and showing others the beauty in our culture," said senior Laila G., one of the event's hosts and a participant representing the Congo.

The event also included performances — from line dancing to step performances, and an energetic, interactive set by African drumming group WOMBA. The event was organized to promote inclusivity, representation and pride among the school's diverse student body. With hundreds of students in the audience and teachers joining students onstage, the Cultural Fashion Show was a powerful reminder that fashion can be more than style—it can be a symbol of unity.



## BUILDING A CHAMPIONSHIP CULTURE: Track and field teams run toward excellence

It's been a championship season for Spartan Indoor Track and Field, filled with record-breaking performances, standout individual efforts, and above all, a strong sense of team.

The girls' team brought home the Class A2 Sectional Championship, with top finishes from Lauren R. (55m hurdles), Kira P. (high jump), and Heidi T. (pole vault). The boys' team placed second, with Kaleb G. earning a sectional title in high jump. Together, the boys and girls were crowned Division 2 Monroe County champions, showing the power of teamwork, depth, and discipline across events.

A total of four athletes qualified for the state championships — Jonathan B. (55m hurdles), Noah L. (pole vault), Heidi T. (pole vault), and Kira P. (high jump) — while the boys shuttle hurdle relay team of Anthony V., Jonathan B., Bradyen S., and Hunter F. earned All-American status after placing fourth at Nike Nationals.

Spartan student-athletes also made history this season, breaking five school records. Head Coach Patrick Tindal credits the team's success to a culture of commitment and collaboration, having shared that he is "very proud of the dedication our



student-athletes put in this season, leading to so many great performances. A big thanks to our coaches for their guidance along the way."

Among the many talented student-athletes, seniors Heidi T. and Noah L. stood out in the pole vault — an event they've both pursued since ninth grade. Their growth and passion reflect the values of perseverance and excellence that define the Spartan program.

"You have to keep working at it," said Noah, who will continue competing at Roberts Wesleyan University this fall. "I start jumping before the season even begins. I've gone to camp every summer to stay sharp and consistent."

Heidi, who plans to attend Binghamton University, emphasized the unique nature of the sport, "It's a niche event because it's not just about using your body. You have to connect with the pole and constantly refine your technique."

Still, both student-athletes agree that the heart of the program lies beyond the medal count.

"The track and field community is truly one of a kind," said Noah. "You get to know everyone so well at the meets. It's such a close-knit group and being part of it is amazing."



## RETURN ON INVESTMENT

### Athletics

- So far this school year, 11 fall and winter athletic teams and 154 student-athletes were recognized with Scholar Athlete awards, honoring average team GPAs and individual GPAs of 90% or higher.
- More than 26 Gates Chili student-athletes played three sports this school year, with one student even playing four sports.
- A whopping 14 Spartan teams qualified and competed in various sectional contests, with two earning Monroe County championships, including the Girls' Track and Field team winning the Section V Championship.



### Health and safety

- The Safety and Security team rolled out a new tool to help staff manage school safety plans and communicate during emergency situations.
- Thanks to capital reserve funds for security infrastructure, elementary schools are being outfitted with new electronic door locks that enhance building safety while supporting quick, controlled access for staff during everyday operations and emergency situations.
- More than 220 staff members districtwide are CPR-certified, including administrators, physical education teachers, athletic coaches, health office staff, security workers, bus drivers and bus attendants.

## GC grad to lead PE, health and athletics

Gates Chili is excited to welcome Lisa Young as the district's new director of physical education, health and athletics! Young, a Gates Chili graduate, returns to her roots from the Attica Central School District, where she served as athletic director, physical education teacher and coach. She will officially join the Spartans in the new school year and will oversee physical education and health instruction while leading the district's athletic programs.



**RETURN ON INVESTMENT**

**Music, arts and dance**

- For three straight years, Gates Chili has been named in the Best Communities for Music Education by the NAMM Foundation.
- Gates Chili student artwork reached new audiences this year, from a statewide exhibit at Roberts Wesleyan and a local exhibit at Image City Neuberger Gallery in Rochester.
- Spartan musicians are soaring, with students having been selected for All-County ensembles, a NYSSMA adjudication, and even a commissioned choral piece debuting this year.



**Technology and innovation**

- The tech team has worked to strengthen the district's cyber and data security through several systematic upgrades, which better protects students, staff and their data.
- The technology department has been reorganized to create better efficiencies—resulting in technology support tickets being resolved more quickly.
- The tech team is supporting a new piece of technology in school main offices that allows families and visitors to communicate with main office staff in more than 100 different languages.



**‘Mary Poppins’ soars to record-breaking success**

Gates Chili High School Musical Theatre’s production of “Mary Poppins” was a supercalifragilisticexpialidocious record breaker. This spring’s show — based on the iconic Disney movie — sold nearly 2,000 tickets, the most ever for a Gates Chili musical production.



Like the film, the stage musical calls for some characters to fly. To pull it off, the production team brought in professionals who specialize in performer flying effects. They used a theatrical rigging system to make Mary and Bert — played by senior Fiona C. and junior John C., respectively — float above the stage. While the crew regularly uses the rigging system to bring in set pieces and curtains for most productions, this marked the first time cast members have ever taken flight.

In addition to the high-flying stunts, the production featured classic songs from the film, like “A Spoonful of Sugar” and “Chim Chim Cher-ee” — all brought to life on stage by a cast of 58, which included two GCHS teachers and a dog, a crew of 25, a pit orchestra of 12 musicians, and an eight-member production team, five of whom are Gates Chili alumni.



**GCHS band and chorus students blend music and movie *magic in Orlando***

Gates Chili High School students traveled to the Sunshine State to shine as movie musicians.

In April, more than 170 band and chorus students, along with about 20 chaperones, spent three days at Universal Orlando as part of the STARS Performance Program. While the group had a blast in Universal’s theme parks, the real highlight of the trip was the Music and the Art of Foley workshop, where students experienced a day in the life of a film sound designer. Before travelling to Florida, they prepared a musical selection from the animated movie “Despicable Me” to be performed and professionally recorded during the workshop. After recording the music, they recorded ambient sounds and selected digital sound effects, which were incorporated along with their vocals and instrumentals into scenes from the movie.

The workshop was designed to align with the National Core Arts Standards and was produced by prominent composer and arranger Robert W. Smith.



# Staff Spotlight: a well-rounded formula for life and learning



**Don Kirsch**  
**Math Teacher**  
**Gates Chili**  
**High School**

Originally from Western New York, Don Kirsch has taken a winding, intentional path to the classroom—one that's helped shape his dynamic approach to teaching and coaching.

Kirsch began his career in Denver, where he spent nearly a decade discovering his voice as an educator. Along the way, he developed a love for the outdoors, picking up hobbies like fishing, skiing and hiking in the mountains. When it was time to return home to New York, he taught at Rochester Prep before ultimately becoming a Spartan. Now in his second year at Gates Chili, Kirsch teaches geometry and algebra at the high school, bringing a perspective that blends creativity, culture and connection.

His road to education wasn't linear. Originally interested in engineering and later business, Kirsch found his calling through coaching and a growing desire to work more closely with students.

"I love building a culture and community within the classroom," he said. He described teaching as a form of "world-building" where students feel seen and inspired to grow.

"From my experience teaching in different places, I've found that the best schools embrace the culture and community

around them and use it in their educational approach," he explained. At Gates Chili, he's inspired by the collective effort to evolve with the community and meet students where they are.

After transitioning from middle school to high school, Kirsch values the deeper conversations he's able to have with older students.

"In high school, students are exploring who they want to be as adults," he said. While math is the core subject he teaches, Kirsch also makes time to help students build soft skills, like communication and navigating life with confidence. Outside the classroom, Kirsch is reconnecting with his love of sports by coaching modified baseball—a return to working with younger students that brings a renewed sense of energy and purpose.

Both in the classroom and the dugout, his life philosophy is centered on balance and intentionality.

"My mom once told me, 'No one can do it all,'" he shared—a mantra that helps him stay grounded. Kirsch structures his time around three core priorities: family, profession and personal ambitions. Whether it's supporting his wife and two young children, investing fully in his students, or focusing on his triathlon training, he commits deeply to each role.

"I'm trying to squeeze as much out of life as possible," he smiled.

With a passion for learning, a heart for students and a clear sense of purpose, Kirsch exemplifies what it means to be a well-rounded educator—and a lifelong learner.

## Leadership and organizational changes strengthen district efficiency

Gates Chili Central School District is making strategic leadership and organizational updates to strengthen efficiency, enhance services, and save more than \$200,000. These changes, which began taking effect March 31, continue through July 1 and allow the district to maximize leadership capacity while remaining fiscally responsible. These updates, driven by retirements, resignations, and strategic realignments, ensure that district resources are allocated where they are needed most. For more details, visit [gateschili.org/Restructuring](https://gateschili.org/Restructuring).

### RETURN ON INVESTMENT

#### Professional learning

- Gates Chili staff increased their knowledge and use of data-driven insights to support student progress during weekly and monthly instructional meetings and the district's two first-ever Data Days.
- Staff districtwide have expanded their knowledge and understanding of effective universal instruction over the course of more than 20,000 professional learning hours since July 1!
- More than 20 staff members at the high school and middle school became champions of restorative practices this year, after participating in the district's first-ever cohort aimed at building restorative skills to better support students.

#### Workforce support

- The Human Resources, Business and Technology departments collaborated to streamline and automate several steps in the onboarding process for new staff—saving approximately four to six hours per new employee.
- The district is making creative use of space throughout the district to store more than 300 boxes of records that were previously stored off-site—saving the district nearly \$30,000 a year.
- Hundreds of staff members have taken steps to better health during a hydration challenge, mindfulness classes, yoga classes and a step challenge—all part of Spartan Strong, the district's new staff wellness initiative.

**RETURN ON INVESTMENT**

**Communication and connection**

- The launch of ParentSquare has transformed school-to-home communication this year, improving accessibility for 92% of families while streamlining messaging and increasing operational efficiency across the district.
- Communication across the district continues to evolve, with the 2024-25 school year producing 12 print and digital newsletters, 280+ social media posts, 21 web stories so far—highlighting student and staff achievements while keeping the school community informed and engaged.
- A redesigned district website is on the way! Set to launch in June 2025, the new site will feature a cleaner, more accessible design, making it easier for families, staff and students to find the information they need.

**Community and culture**

- Walt Disney Elementary School fostered a sense of belonging amongst its autism community during the school's first-ever Neurodiversity Dinner, a sensory-friendly dine-in event for autistic students and their families.
- Approximately 30 families in our community have been positively impacted by the support provided by the Gates Chili Food Pantry.
- In addition to processing 370 volunteer applications districtwide, Gates Chili was proud to host nearly 1,500 community members in one or more of the almost 500 Continuing Education courses offered.

**GC PRIDE Award**

Gates Chili CSD is proud to recognize students, staff and community members who go above and beyond on behalf of the district and its students. The GC PRIDE Award stands for and honors professionalism, respect, innovation, dedication and excellence. Congratulations to all the recipients for February, March and April.



*February recipients: GCMS students Allison A., Dakota B., Danalize G., Lucas L., Milo M., Malaya N. and Brielle R.*



*March recipients: Walt Disney students Wynn I., Alina S. and Castiel S.; Walt Disney staff members Michelle Knapp and Michele Saphine; Walt Disney parent Andrea Minchella.*



*April 8 recipients: GCHS student-athletes Noah L. and Heidi T.*



*April 22 recipients: School Nutrition staff member Carmen DelCorvo and GC Wellness Committee member Katie Elkins*

**Disney art teacher makes a splash at national diving championships**

Elizabeth Tripp shines in the classroom and on the diving board. The Walt Disney Elementary School art teacher recently capped off an impressive collegiate diving career with a trip to the NCAA Division III Swimming and Diving Championships in Greensboro, North Carolina this March. Representing Nazareth University, Tripp competed in both the 1-meter and 3-meter diving events, finishing 20th on the 1-meter and 28th on the 3-meter. Following the championships, she was named the Empire 8 Women's Diver of the Year — for the second time in her career. Tripp joined Nazareth's swimming and diving team as a freshman and competed this season — her fifth and final year with the team — as a graduate student.



*Photo credit: Michael Strauss*

**Serving up support at the annual staff volleyball tournament**

Staff from all four Gates Chili elementary schools came together for the third annual staff volleyball tournament on April 10, held in the Spartan Field House. The exciting event served as a fundraiser for the GC Education Foundation and the GC Food Pantry. To show their support for their home school, spectators were asked to donate a food item and \$1 or contribute \$5. Thanks to the generosity of all involved, the tournament raised \$500 and collected six large boxes of food for these important causes. The competition was fierce, but the Paul Road Panthers ultimately took home the trophy. A big thank you to everyone who participated and contributed to making this event a success!



*Champion Paul Road Panthers*

# Gates Chili Central School District · 2025-26 · At-a-Glance District Calendar

- KEY**
- First Day of School for Students (Gr. P-12)
  - No School for Students (Gr. P-12), All Staff Report
  - No School for Students (Gr. P-12) and All Staff
  - No School for Students (Gr. P-12) and 10-Month Staff
  - No School for Students (Gr. P-5)
  - No School for Students (Gr. 6-12)
  - Half Day for Students (Gr. P-5)
  - Half Day for Students (Gr. 6-12)
  - Half Day for Students (Gr. P-12)
  - NYS Gr. 3-8 Assessments
  - NYS Regents Exams

**JULY 2025**  
July 4 (Fri) .....Independence Day

**AUGUST 2025**  
Aug. 26-27 (Tues-Wed)..... Superintendent's Conf. Days

**SEPTEMBER 2025**  
Sept. 1 (Mon)..... Labor Day  
Sept. 2 (Tues)..... First Day of School for Students  
Sept. 24 (Wed)..... Conf. Day

**OCTOBER 2025**  
Oct. 10 (Fri)..... Superintendent's Conf. Day  
Oct. 13 (Mon)..... Columbus Day/Indigenous People's Day

**NOVEMBER 2025**  
Nov. 11 (Tues)..... Veterans Day  
Nov. 26-28 (Wed-Fri)..... Thanksgiving Recess

**DECEMBER 2025**  
Dec. 8 (Mon)..... P-5 Parent Teacher Conf. / Conf. Day  
Dec. 19 (Fri)..... P-5 Parent Teacher Conf. / Conf. Day  
Dec. 22-31 (Mon-Wed)..... Holiday Recess  
Dec. 25 (Thur)..... Christmas

**JANUARY 2026**  
Jan. 1 (Thur)..... New Years Day  
Jan. 1-2 (Thur-Fri)..... Holiday Recess  
Jan. 19 (Mon)..... Martin Luther King, Jr. Day  
Jan. 20-23 (Tues-Fri)..... NYS Regents Exams  
Jan. 23 (Fri)..... Conf. Day

**FEBRUARY 2026**  
Feb. 4 (Wed)..... Conf. Day  
Feb. 13-20 (Fri-Fri)..... Mid-winter Recess  
Feb. 16 (Mon)..... President's Day

**MARCH 2026**  
March 20 (Fri)..... Superintendent's Conf. Day  
March 30-31 (Mon-Tues)..... Spring Recess

**APRIL 2026**  
April 1-6 (Wed-Mon) Spring Recess  
April 3 (Fri)..... Good Friday  
April 14-15, 21-22, 28-30 ..... 3-8 Assessment Window

**MAY 2026**  
May 5-7 (Tues-Thur)..... 3-8 Assessment Window  
May 25 (Mon)..... Memorial Day

**JUNE 2026**  
June 9-10 (Tues-Wed)..... NYS Regents Exams  
June 17-25 (Wed-Thur)..... NYS Regents Exams  
June 19 (Fri)..... Juneteenth  
June 25 (Thur)..... Last Day for Students  
June 26 (Fri)..... Conf. Day/Last Day for 10-Month Staff

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*NOTE: There are 186 required days for faculty and 181 required days for students. If there are more than two emergency closing days, it may be necessary to adjust school days in May and/or June.*

**APPROVED- Feb. 25, 2025**



**GATES CHILI CENTRAL SCHOOL DISTRICT**

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New York School Public Relations Association

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**Elecciones: 20 de mayo**

Si desea leer o acceder esta información en español, visite [gateschili.org/Vote](http://gateschili.org/Vote) o escanee el código QR con la cámara de su teléfono móvil.



**Proof of Residency**

The school district may require all persons offering to vote at the budget vote and election to provide one form of proof of residency pursuant to the Education Law §2018-C. Such form may include a driver's license, a non-driver identification card, a utility bill or a voter registration card. Upon offer of proof of residency, the school district may also require all persons offering to vote to provide their signature, printed name and address.

**Voter Eligibility**

Anyone who is at least 18 years old, a U.S. citizen and a resident of the Gates Chili Central School District for at least 30 days prior to the Tuesday, May 20, 2025 vote, is eligible. You do not need to be registered to vote, but you must bring identification and proof of residency.

**Absentee Ballots**

Residents unable to vote because of disabilities, illness, travel or other reasons listed as valid under election law, may request applications for absentee ballots at Gates Chili District Office, 1 Spartan Way, Door 73, or by calling the Gates Chili District Clerk Condenssa Brown at 247-5050 ext. 12101. Once the application is approved, an absentee ballot will be mailed or can be picked up. Completed absentee ballots must be received by the district clerk's office no later than 5 p.m. on Tuesday, May 20, 2025.



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