

BOE adopts budget aimed at academic achievement, healthier community

Dear Gates Chili Community,

It's been a busy school year so far with Spartans everywhere making great strides in academics, arts, athletics and more! Now, as we move through the busy spring season, it seems like the 2024-25 school year is just around the corner!

Looking ahead to the new school year, we will continue to maximize academic achievement for each student and foster a culture of belonging that supports our learning community. Our proposed budget supports a list of programs and services that are vital to our students' educational experience but are not deemed mandatory by the New York State Education Department (NYSED), including kindergarten, teacher aides, elementary school librarians, elementary art and music instruction, school plays/musicals, instrumental lessons, extracurricular clubs, grades 7-12 interscholastic athletics, intramurals, and dual-credit and advanced placement (AP) courses, to name a few.

In addition to all of these wonderful programmatic offerings, this year, the district is seizing several opportunities to create a healthier, more sustainable community for the children in our care. Thanks to new incentives available, we will be able to promote safety while lessening our carbon footprint with the purchase of additional electric school buses. These buses will be purchased as part of our regular replacement cycle. The district is also exploring solar energy options that will help offset approximately \$1 million spent each year in electric energy costs.

While this type of energy project is fully funded by grants and voter approval is not required, the district is eligible for an additional 10% in state aid if our community gives their stamp of approval.

Therefore, to support the continued health, safety and education of all students and the betterment of our entire school community, the Gates Chili Board of Education adopted a proposed spending plan for the 2024-25 school year of \$133,305,023 at its April 16 meeting. Under the proposed plan, the overall spending would increase by \$4,752,608, a 3.70% increase over the 2023-24 budget. It is important to note that the proposed tax levy \$62,930,900 and does not exceed the tax cap, despite the increased cost of goods, services and labor over the past two years. This tax levy also reflects an average estimated 9.8% decrease on tax rates, based on tentative 2024 assessments and equalization rates.

This newsletter contains information about the 2024-25 budget on pages 2-5, information about candidates running for the Board of Education on page 6, as well as many stories of the outstanding successes and opportunities available to our students and staff. Please review it ahead of the May 21 vote. On behalf of the Gates Chili Board of Education, faculty and staff, we thank you for your continued support.

Go Spartans!

Christopher J. Dailey
Superintendent of Schools



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

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: \$133,305,023

Administrative	2023-24	2024-25
Amount	\$13,667,845	\$13,514,786
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.

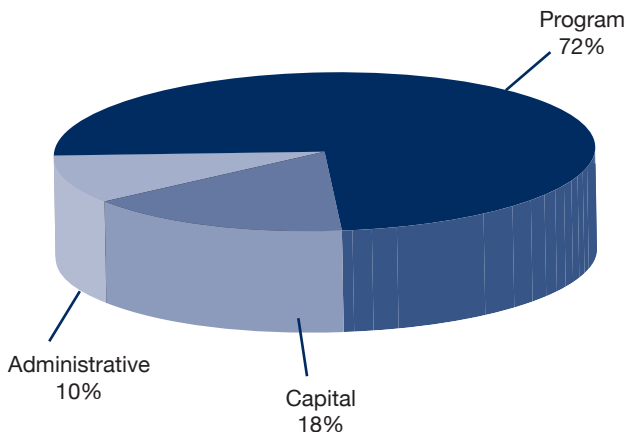
Program	2023-24	2024-25
Amount	\$92,097,290	\$96,156,801
Percent of Budget	72%	72%

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	2023-24	2024-25
Amount	\$22,787,280	\$23,633,436
Percent of Budget	18%	18%

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

Proposed 2024-25 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 \$133,305,023 for school purposes during the 2024-25 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 \$5,086,479. New York State reimburses Gates Chili approximately 75% of the cost of bus purchases.

Proposition 3 – Energy Performance Contract

This proposition would allow the district to receive an additional 10% in state aid towards its fully funded energy performance improvement project.

Board Candidates

Residents will vote to fill three Board of Education seats for three-year terms and one Board of Education seat for a two-year term. Candidates, in ballot order, are Kerri Keyes, Tanya Srbinovski, Robert Long, Joseph Rittler and Nicole Littlewood.

Estimated Tax Rate

Average estimated 2024-25 tax rates use tentative 2024 tax rolls. Equalization rates are estimated to be 77% for the Town of Gates and 100% for the Town of Chili.

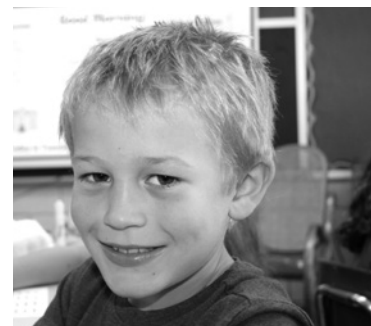
2023-24 Tax Rate	\$24.41
Average estimated 2024-25 tax rate based on estimated assessments	\$22.02

Where does the money come from?

REVENUE SUMMARY		
Revenue Sources	2023-24 Adopted Budget	2024-25 Proposed Budget
Appropriated Fund Balance	1,100,000	2,906,847
Employee Benefit Accrued Liability Reserve	100,000	100,000
Employee Retirement System (ERS) Reserve	1,550,000	2,000,000
Federal Aid Interfund Aid	135,000	135,000
Forfeitures and Refunds	1,170,000	1,170,000
PILOT Agreement	2,624,782	1,468,802
Sale of Equipment, Material and Other	105,000	105,000
Sales Tax	4,066,069	4,294,939
State Aid	55,351,646	55,387,608
Tax Cert Reserve	100,000	100,000
Tax Levy	59,954,918	62,930,900
Teachers Retirement System (TRS) Reserve	800,000	800,000
Tuition, Fees, Interest	1,495,000	1,905,927
Total	\$128,552,415	\$133,305,023

Where does the money go?

EXPENSE SUMMARY		
Budget Category	2023-24 Adopted Budget	2024-25 Proposed Budget
Administrative Component - \$13,514,786 or 10% of the budget		
Board of Education	38,995	41,095
Central Administration	365,000	396,650
Central Services	1,438,092	860,122
Employee Benefits	3,659,002	3,746,520
Finance	1,454,011	1,383,845
Instructional Administration and Staff Development	918,302	1,021,818
Specialty Items	1,809,826	1,866,663
Staff	1,010,164	1,036,925
Supervision of Schools	2,974,453	3,161,148
Administrative Budget	\$13,667,845	\$13,514,786
Program Component - \$96,156,801 or 72% of the budget		
Community Services	465,240	570,013
District Transportation	5,871,845	6,057,670
Employee Benefits	28,808,645	28,965,848
Instructional Administration and Staff Development	504,789	626,509
Instructional Services	56,186,771	59,936,761
Transfer to Special Aid Fund	260,000	0
Program Budget	\$92,097,290	\$96,156,801
Capital Component - \$23,633,436 or 18% of the budget		
Central Services	7,262,547	7,770,601
Employee Benefits	2,291,295	2,324,230
Specialty Items	10,000	15,000
Transfer to Debt Service Fund	13,123,438	13,423,605
Transfer to Capital Fund	100,000	100,000
Capital Budget	\$22,787,280	\$23,633,436
Total Budget	\$128,552,415	\$133,305,023



Learn more at gateschili.org/vote **PROPOSED BUDGET INFORMATION**

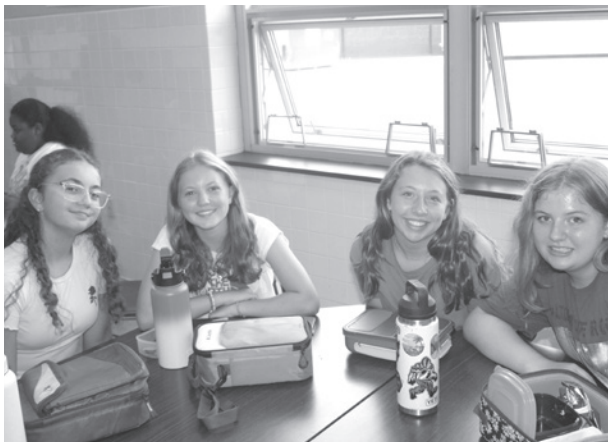
PROPOSED BUDGET INFORMATION Learn more at gateschili.org/vote

Overall Budget Proposal	Budget Adopted 2023-24	Budget Proposed 2024-25	Contingency Budget 2024-25*
Total Budgeted Amount, Not Including Separate Propositions	\$128,552,415	\$133,305,023	\$132,300,104
Increase/Decrease for the 2023-24 School Year		\$4,752,608	\$3,747,689
Percentage Increase/Decrease in Proposed Budget		3.70%	2.92%
Change in the Consumer Price Index		4.12%	
A. Proposed Tax Levy to Support the Total Budgeted Amount			
	\$59,954,918	\$62,930,900	
B. Levy to Support Library Debt, if Applicable			
C. Levy for Non-Excludable Propositions, if Available**			
D. Total Tax Cap Reserve Amount Used to Reduce Current Year Levy			
E. Total Proposed School Year Tax Levy (A + B + C - D)			
	\$59,954,918	\$62,930,900	\$62,930,900
F. Permissible Exclusions to the School Tax Levy Limit			
	\$3,728,301	\$3,941,332	
G. School Tax Levy Limit, Excluding Levy for Permissible Exclusions			
	\$56,226,617	\$58,989,568	
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)			
	\$56,226,617	\$58,989,568	
I. Difference: (G - H); (Negative Value Requires 60.0% Voter Approval - See Note Below Regarding Separate Propositions)			
	\$0	\$0	
Administrative Component			
	\$ 13,667,845	\$ 13,514,786	\$ 13,514,786
Program Component			
	\$ 92,097,290	\$ 96,156,801	\$ 95,151,882
Capital Component			
	\$ 22,787,280	\$ 23,633,436	\$ 23,633,436

* If a contingent budget is required, the Board of Education will review all areas of the budget to develop a contingency budget for the 2024-25 school year, pursuant to §2023 of the Education Law. Should the 2024-25 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 school district to undertake the acquisition of school buses, at an estimated maximum aggregate cost of \$5,086,479, before trade-in value, and an estimated net aggregate cost of \$2,505,979 after such trade-in value, potential rebates, and/or incentives, and that such costs, or so much thereof as may be necessary, shall be raised by the levy of a tax to be collected in annual installments; and, in anticipation of such tax, debt obligations of the school district as may be necessary not to exceed \$5,086,479 shall be issued, or the School District may enter into an installment purchase contract if the board of education determines that it is in the best interest of the School District to finance the purchase in that method.

To authorize the district to receive an additional ten percent (10%) of aid from the State of New York in connection with an Energy Performance Contract, the voters of the District hereby approve certain energy conservation improvements to be made at various District facilities pursuant to Article 9 of the Energy Law, at an estimated cost not to exceed \$20,000,000, which is to be paid for from various sources, including, but not limited to, energy cost savings, State and Federal aid, rebates, grants, and other funds that may become available with no resulting cost to the District.



	Under the Budget Proposed for the 2024-25 School Year
Estimated Basic STAR Exemption Savings ¹	\$671

The annual budget vote for the fiscal year 2024-25 by the qualified voters of the Gates Chili Central School District, Monroe County, New York, will be held on Tuesday, May 21, 2024 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 21 in order to be counted.

¹ 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:
 - \$93,200 or less for the 2023-24 school year,
 - \$98,700 or less for the 2024-25 school year
- based on the first \$84,000 of the full value of a home for the 2024-25 school year

For more details about STAR exemptions and credits, go to gateschili.org/STARexemption

	2024-25 Estimated STAR Values	
	Gates	Chili
Basic STAR Exemption	\$24,900	\$30,000
Enhanced STAR Exemption	\$69,720	\$84,000

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

	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 one valued at up to \$100,000 that is included in the annual district budget that is eligible for state aid. This type of mini renovation project helps to make the most of the district's tax dollars, with the district receiving approximately \$81,000 back from the state the following year. If this work was not performed as part of a capital project, the district would incur the full cost of the work. As part of this year's proposed budget, the district plans to put those funds towards the replacement of select windows at Gates Chili High School. This is part of a long-range strategy in which the building aid returned in the following year will continue to fund additional mini-renovation projects as a regular part of the district's budget.

Get dinner on campus the day of the vote!

Tuesday, May 21
5-7 p.m.
Gates Chili High School

Chef's Catering will be serving a variety of dinner options benefiting the Gates Chili Education Foundation. To see a menu, go to gateschili.org/GCEF

Budget Ambassadors wrap up fourth year

The Gates Chili Budget Ambassador program wrapped up on March 14 after another productive year of budget development education and discussion. Ambassadors met for two three-hour sessions and 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.



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 or use your phone's camera to scan the QR code.



Learn more at gateschili.org/vote

PROPOSED BUDGET INFORMATION

Board of Education Candidates

Four candidates will be elected to the board at the annual district vote on May 21, 2024. The three candidates with the highest number of votes will serve a three-year term beginning July 1, 2024 through June 30, 2027 and the candidate with the fourth highest number of votes will serve a one-year term beginning May 22, 2024 through June 30, 2025. Below are statements from each candidate, in ballot order, about their experience and interest in serving on the board.



Kerri Keyes

Kerri Keyes is an Injury Prevention Specialist at Rochester Regional Health where she has worked for 20 years. She has served on the Gates Chili Board of Education for the last 6 years, participating on the Finance, Facility and Audit committee, Ad Hoc, DIT, and served as co-chair of the Monroe County School Boards Association Information Exchange committee. Kerri and her husband, Phil, of 23 years, have two sons. Aaron is a 2021 Gates Chili graduate and attends the University of Buffalo for architecture. Craig is a current freshman at Gates Chili. The family is active in Boy Scouts and the music/theatre program at Gates Chili. Kerri is a proud GC alumnus and has lived in the district most of her life. She is eager to continue to serve on the Board of Education.



Joe Rittler

Joe Rittler is the owner of two small businesses: one specializing in political consulting, the other in agricultural products. Joe holds a B.S. degree in Political Science from SUNY Brockport. Joe has long been active in the community, volunteering with the Center for Disability Rights and engaging in various levels of local government. Joe has previously worked for the Monroe County Legislature where he was responsible for assisting with the review and oversight of a nearly one-billion-dollar budget as well as ensuring contracts were subject to proper oversight. Joe and his wife have three children, each of whom attend Walt Disney Elementary School. Joe and his family have lived in Gates for more than ten years.



Tanya Srbinovski

Tanya is currently serving her first year on the Board of Education. A proud Class of 2003 alumna, Tanya has lived in the district her whole life. She and her husband, Seamus, met in high school and have two children enrolled in the district. Tanya is also a member of the Walt Disney PTO and the District Equity Team, and she serves as secretary of the GCMS PTO. She volunteers her time with these committees and is a staunch advocate of public education, caring deeply about the success of our students. She graduated from SUNY Brockport with a bachelor's degree in history and is an Administrative Assistant with the Instruction Office in Spencerport. Her experience as a board member, a parent, spouse of a teacher, and member of multiple PTOs/committees, she understands the importance of fostering a supportive and inclusive educational environment. Her experience and dedication to public education make her a powerful advocate for the success of all students, faculty, and staff in the district.



Nicole Littlewood

Nicole Littlewood is the mother of two boys, a 16-year resident of the district, and a current member of the Gates Chili Board of Education. She has enjoyed contributing to the success of Gates Chili students through her service on committees including the District Equity and Ad Hoc Committee. As a longtime advocate for all learners, Nicole believes that every student deserves an equitable and inclusive education that encompasses academics, physical movement, social-emotional learning, and extracurricular activities. An educator for 22 years and a graduate from SUNY Geneseo, Nicole began her career in the Rochester City School District as a special education and math teacher. After almost a decade in the classroom, she became a coordinating administrator for special education, focusing on curriculum, data analysis, and working closely with student teams. Nicole then transitioned to Monroe-2 Orleans BOCES, where she led the alternative high school. Most recently, Nicole returned to RCSD, working with youth ages 17-21, that are striving to obtain their diploma in a non-traditional setting. Nicole's children attend Gates Chili Middle School and Paul Road Elementary School, and are engaged members of the school community, participating in sports, clubs, and performing arts.



Robert Long

Rob was elected to the school board June 2020. Rob is a 1998 graduate of Gates Chili and serves on the Safety/Security Committee. After GC Rob attended Gannon University where he received a B.A. in Criminal Justice. Rob is employed by the Town of Gates Police Department holding the rank of Chief of Police. Rob is in charge of the day-to-day operations of the Gates Police Department. Rob is the current President of the Gates Chili Community Connections (GC3) non-profit group.

VOTE

Tuesday, May 21 • 6:30 a.m. to 8:30 p.m.
Spartan Field House at Gates Chili High School

Gates Chili awarded additional funding for *electric school buses*

Gates Chili has been approved to receive additional incentives to cover the cost of more electric school buses (ESBs)!

You may remember that Gates Chili was the first district locally and across upstate NY to add ESBs to its fleet in June 2022. Those first two buses were purchased thanks to grant funds available through the New York State Energy Research and Development Authority (NYSERDA). In the years since, NYSERDA offered additional grants and the district purchased three more for a total of five ESBs in the district. Now that additional incentives are available, the district is planning to purchase more ESBs as part of its regular bus replacement plan.

“If not for clean funding initiatives like this, electric school buses would be out of our reach,” explained Assistant Superintendent for Business Dr. Mitchell Ball. “We proudly

embrace the move to zero-emission buses, which add value for our community and take steps to address our impact on the environment.”

The district’s current five ESBs are on the road every day to and from school. The buses have a range of more than 100 miles when fully charged, which works well for the majority of the district’s bus routes.

The district’s plan for bus replacements this year includes the purchase of nine 66-passenger ESBs and one 66-passenger ESB with a wheelchair lift, as well as one 66-passenger and three 35-passenger conventional diesel engine buses. In addition to the environmental, economic and safety benefits to the school community, this would make Gates Chili the first district in New York State to add to its fleet an ESB that is equipped with a wheelchair lift.

Capital Project Update

Construction is officially underway on the district’s current capital project!

A groundbreaking ceremony at Gates Chili High School on Feb. 27 paved the way for work to begin on the high school’s new Family and Consumer Sciences (FACS) and technology classrooms. More than 30 people were in attendance for that ceremony, including students and teachers from both programs.

Other work at the high school includes the relocation of district office staff to the high school, the addition of restrooms near the Gates Chili Professional Learning Center (GCPLC) and priority building conditions work. While construction is underway, visitors to the district’s main campus will notice parts of parking lots G, H and I at the high school are blocked off.

Meanwhile, phase one of work at Gates Chili Middle School will begin in the coming weeks with the renovation of music and technology classrooms there. Phase two of the project includes work at Florence Brasser Elementary School, the creation of a multipurpose turf complex near the middle school, and general building upkeep such as upgrades to heating and ventilation units and other regular maintenance. That phase is currently awaiting approval from the New York State Education Department (NYSED).

Voters approved this no-tax-impact capital project in February 2022. The entire project is expected to be completed in 2026. For updates on this capital project, visit gateschili.org/CapitalProject.



RETURN ON INVESTMENT

Facilities

- Many elementary students are exploring all that Gates Chili facilities have to offer by having kickball tournaments in the Spartan Field House and pool parties in the natatorium!
- Gates Chili’s main campus got a major upgrade to signage, helping visitors identify and navigate to important points of interest and parking lots.
- Gates Chili is looking to improve energy performance that could save the district \$1 million in annual energy costs by installing solar panels.



Transportation

- Gates Chili now has the infrastructure in place to support 20% of its school bus fleet, making it possible to continue to lessen its carbon footprint with more electric buses.
- As part of bus driver retention efforts, the transportation break room got an overhaul this year, complete with new paint, furniture and activities to help bus drivers build community between their routes.
- The district’s nearly 90-bus fleet is now protected by upgraded security at the entrance to the Gates Chili Transportation and Facilities Center.



RETURN ON INVESTMENT

Grades UPK-5

- Schools are continuing to grow their catalogue of extracurricular activities based on student interest, adding options such as flag football, wiffle ball, dance, storytelling, geography and more!
- Gates Chili is gearing up to host its 11th year of Universal Prekindergarten (UPK), partnering with Monroe 2-Orleans BOCES and Imagination Childcare Academy to offer the free program to district families.
- Many teachers are participating in Learning Labs, giving them the opportunity to visit classrooms in different schools as they work to implement new learning and instructional practices aligned with the science of reading.

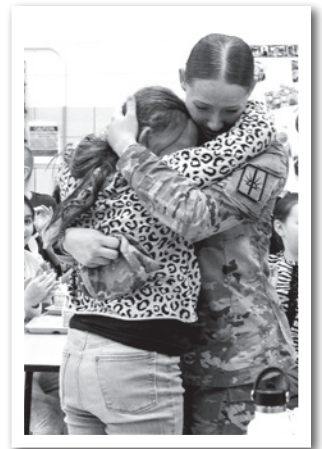
Library and Literacy

- Each elementary school took part in a 'One School, One Book' initiative, allowing all grade levels to share a collective reading experience and enhance the joy of reading.
- With more than 100 different library resources available, Gates Chili staff and students are on pace to use 81,791 print books, 7,765 audio and e-books, 99,474 uses of digital databases, 12,117 hands-on maker experiences this school year.
- After reading Omar Mohamed's autobiographical book, "When the Stars are Scattered," sixth-graders had the opportunity to make real-life connections during a meeting with the author to learn more about his story and fleeing from war to a refugee camp.

Disney Dragons welcome heroes home

The month of March was filled with heartwarming reunions at Walt Disney Elementary School.

On March 22, fifth-grader Emily P. received an unexpected reunion during lunchtime. Emily's older sister, U.S. Army Servicewoman Abigail, who had been deployed during the past year, walked into the cafeteria to surprise her younger sister. The cafeteria erupted with cheers from students as the sisters tearfully embraced after months apart.



Meanwhile, days later, Disney Dragons also welcomed home their P.E. teacher Vinny Candileri, who was stationed in Poland from June 2023 to March 2024. Candileri, who is a member of the U.S. Army Reserves, was serving in Operation European Assure Deter Reinforce. Students and staff are thrilled to have Coach Candileri back home.



Swinging into action: Bears advocate for new swing set

Brasser Bears are flying high on the school's new swings thanks to a big push from student council.

The campaign for a new swing set began last school year. While Brasser's primary playground, used by younger students, had its own swings, the swings used by third-, fourth- and fifth-graders were older and deteriorating and had to be removed due to safety concerns. The Brasser Student Council set out on a mission.

Student council officers Tim W., Baraah Z., Arianna C. and Anna K. started by consulting their student council advisors and building administrators, who helped set up a meeting with Gates Chili Assistant Superintendent of Business Dr. Mitchell Ball. Impressed by the students' advocacy, Dr. Ball tasked



them with conducting research on swing sets at Gates Chili's three other elementary schools. Based on their research, they concluded swinging is one of the most popular playground activities

among Gates Chili elementary students. It was enough to convince the district to grant their request.



On March 12, Brasser cut the ribbon on its new swing set. And although Tim, Baraah, Arianna and Anna, who are now sixth-graders at Gates Chili Middle School, don't get to enjoy the swings every day, they are still proud of the student council's accomplishment and what it means for all current and future Brasser Bears.

"I think that we made a really big difference in making the kids happy," said Baraah. "My sister goes to the elementary school, and she loves them. She's like, 'I love the swings. Thank you for doing this for us!'"

"It shows other kids when they get to be on student council that they can try and make changes for the school," added Tim. To read more about the clever ways in which students conducted their research, go to gateschili.org/BrasserAdvocacy.

New elective brings *new opportunities*

In a whirlwind of excitement and civic pride, Gates Chili Middle School students took center stage at the inaugural Civics Bee on March 11.

This contest was not just any ordinary competition — it was a buzzing hive of activity aimed at igniting the flames of civic engagement among the next generation of American leaders. The Civics Bee drew a swarm of participants from across Monroe County ready to display their knowledge of democracy and community involvement in the civics competition.

It wasn't mere luck that earned two Spartans placement within the top five out of a total of 19 students in the competition. It was a result of their hard work and learning in their new civics elective. The new course helps students gain the tools and knowledge needed to actively participate in their community and government.

"The class is unique because it is centered upon community involvement and student engagement," explained social studies and civics teacher Lynsey LaMorte.

"Civics is a class where we can express how we think about our society and how we can contribute to it even at our young age," said Milo M.



While exploring topics like how the government works and citizens' responsibilities, students also discover ways to use their knowledge in real-life situations, such as community projects and local advocacy efforts. This hands-on approach not only reinforces students' understanding of civics, but it also instills in them a sense of control and empowerment.

Fusion of art and social studies honors

Harlem Renaissance

Students at Gates Chili Middle School celebrated Women's History Month by paying homage to the women behind the Harlem Renaissance Movement.



Students' participation in the Women's Empowerment March, an annual initiative by the New School, set the stage for lessons and projects of the same theme that combined art and social studies.

In Cherie Spoto's social studies class, seventh- and eighth-grade students researched women of the Harlem Renaissance and hosted a mock dinner party to share what they learned with each other. To help with their presentations, they created a placemat with talking points, a mask of their chosen figure and came up

with an artifact to represent them.

Meanwhile in Amy Cocuzzi's art class, sixth-graders learned about American sculptor Selma Burke, best known for her portrait of

President Franklin D. Roosevelt, which is believed may have been the model for his portrait on the dime. To cap off the lesson, students selected an inspiring woman and designed a coin using their image. Art class also gave seventh- and eighth-graders the chance to create pop art portraits of Harlem Renaissance women.

To learn more about this collaboration between art and social studies and see photos of student artwork, go to gateschili.org/Renaissance.

RETURN ON INVESTMENT

Grades 6-8

- The GCMS Outdoor Club was named Eclipse Ambassadors by the Rochester Museum and Science Center and spent this school year educating the school community about the once-in-a-lifetime total solar eclipse that happened on April 8.
- The middle school added a Hillside Work-Scholarship Program for students in grades 7-8, which has given students the opportunity for college and career exploration, field trips, social skill building and academic support.
- In a collaboration between student council and school nutrition, students took part in a third year of recipe-related challenges at the middle school — this year, tackling dessert creations that were sampled and voted on by students and staff.

Multiculturalism

- The middle school's Multicultural Club has been focused on learning about different people, languages, and cultures through student and staff presentations about Macedonia, Nepal, Yemen, American Sign Language (ASL) and more!
- More than 55 high school students are working towards earning the New York State Seal of Biliteracy, showing a language proficiency in English plus one or more of eight different languages.
- This spring, students at Armstrong, Disney and GCHS experienced a special performance and visit by the Saakumu Dance Troupe from Ghana, during which they learned about traditional and contemporary Ghanaian dance, music and culture, promoting holistic cross-cultural experiences.

RETURN ON INVESTMENT

Grades 9-12

- This year, the high school launched video morning announcements led by students, as well as "The Spartan Scoop," a monthly e-newsletter to keep families informed and connected.
- Students and staff a part of the HS Equity Team have been working to unite the school community through student-led faculty meetings and other events focused on promoting diversity, equity and inclusion throughout the building.
- GCHS is offering the NYS Seal of Civic Readiness for the first time, with more than 50 students having applied for the diploma endorsement. Stay tuned to read about this year's honorees in the graduation issue of this newsletter!

Technology

- Staff are practicing their phishing reporting skills thanks to a large-scale phishing awareness campaign to increase awareness and educate staff on how to keep district systems safe from phishing attempts.
- The tech department has been increasing automation between various systems and upgrading older technology to allow students and staff quicker access to resources in the classroom.
- New digital signs are now available in all buildings, which allow many options for presentations, video, scheduling of programming, and the ability to show different content on different hallway and office displays.

Class of 2024 Top 20

Congratulations to the top 20 ranked seniors from the Class of 2024, according to their weighted GPA. The seniors' academic achievements were announced and celebrated at the annual Top 20 breakfast on April 17.

With the high school transitioning to a Latin Honors System in 2025, this is the last year for Top 20. Beginning next year, the high school will be more aligned with college practices and students will be recognized as summa cum laude, magna cum laude or cum laude graduates. ★



1. Michael Ringelberg
2. Brownwyn Lucyszyn
3. Elizabeth Runion
4. Alyssa Kilner
5. Joseph Colabufo
6. Tyla Jackson
7. Savana Henry
8. Dylan Wanzenried
9. Bridget Gardner
10. Ethan List
11. Adriana Ferrara
12. Catherine Tran
13. Linda Nguyen
14. Alex Nguyen
15. Michelena Aiosa
16. Lily Sweeney
17. Kailey Tran
18. Margaret Amesbury
19. Bryanna Smith-Dillio
20. Alexa Ferrara

Well!
dove!

Fish are Friends: for the Aquarium Club at GCHS

A fin-tastic club at Gates Chili High School is hooked on learning about aquatic life, and members are eager to share their passion with the Gates Chili school community.

The high school's Aquarium Club is responsible for taking care of fish and maintaining tanks in the high school atrium. This state-of-the-art science wing was constructed in 2007 and rededicated in 2008. It features six tanks full of freshwater and saltwater creatures, including fish and turtles.

"I joined Aquarium Club when I was in ninth grade, and since then it's become my favorite thing. If I had not joined, I would not be heading in the direction I am," said club president and senior Lily M., excited about her plans to study marine science at Orange Coast College in California following graduation.

The club has been planning a new initiative to highlight the various critters in these tanks. Keep an eye out for "Tank Talk" posts on the GCHS Instagram page, @gateschilihs, to learn more about the creatures that call the high school atrium home.





BUILDING A CHAMPIONSHIP CULTURE: Spartans kick off another season of Girls Flag Football

Since the team's inaugural season last year, interest and competition for girls varsity flag football at Gates Chili has only grown stronger. Of the 22 student-athletes on the roster, there are 16 seniors on the team, with 15 returners from last season bringing experience back to the field.



"The competition has become fierce and competitive, with teams playing to win and coaches coaching to win," said Coach Jason Benham. "The sport takes toughness and physicality, even though there's no contact." Despite the fierce competition, the team is having a lot of fun with the sport.

"We're all super supportive of each other, it's a good team environment," said co-captain Alexa F. "The team has grown so much, and we all try to be understanding and encouraging if someone messes up," added co-captain Trelani H.

The introduction of girls flag football at Gates Chili is timely, as the sport continues to grow in popularity on the national stage. The NFL has promoted the sport, it has been introduced at the collegiate level and it will even premiere as a new competition in the 2028 Olympic Games in the United States.

"I think it's really important for girls to be able to play football and open up to new sports and opportunities," shared co-captain Megan M. The introduction of girls flag football has not just been about scoring touchdowns, but also about empowering young female athletes. Benham, who is retiring at the end of this school year, shared this experience has been particularly meaningful, expressing, "Coaching the girls has been really fun for me. I've coached girls' basketball and other sports, but being able to share my true passion in another season has been really cool."



Spartan football gets a new coach



Gates Chili is proud to welcome Andre Fontenette as the new varsity football coach! Fontenette's leadership comes just months ahead of the retirement of longtime teacher and high school football coach Jason Benham! Fontenette is a graduate of Churchville-Chili High School and played college football at Syracuse University. He has coached football at the high school and collegiate level, including at SUNY Brockport, Wagner College, University of Maine, Campbell University and McQuaid Jesuit High School. Outside of football, Fontenette works as a mitigation specialist with the Monroe County Public Defender's Office.

RETURN ON INVESTMENT

Physical Education and Athletics

- So far this school year, 15 fall and winter athletic teams and 140 student-athletes were recognized with Scholar Athlete awards, honoring average team GPAs and individual GPAs of 90% or higher.
- Approximately 250 more elementary students from all four elementary schools had the chance to hone their swimming and water safety skills this year, thanks to the expansion of the swimming unit to fourth grade.
- Gates Chili elementary schools have been working to align PE and health instruction to meet standards in a proactive and consistent way that is developmentally appropriate for each grade level.

Health and Safety

- The high school and middle school worked together with Delphi Rise counselors to host "Hidden in Plain Sight," a drug prevention program for families to learn to spot signs of possible substance use and risky behavior.
- The high school piloted an electronic hall pass system they will be launching in the 2024-25 school year to help manage the time students spend outside of the classroom during instructional hours.
- The district hired a director of safety and security to support the increased focus on and needs of safety and security including safety planning and oversight and the day-to-day management of a growing security staff.

RETURN ON INVESTMENT

Music, Arts and Dance

- The middle school production of “Finding Nemo Jr.” and the high school production of “The Addams Family” built the musical, stage and theatre prowess of almost 130 total students!
- Gates Chili continued ARTS Partners, its award-winning partnership with the Rochester Broadway Theater League by taking more than 400 students to live performances of “Annie” and “Ain’t Too Proud” and giving GC artists the opportunity to showcase artwork related to the shows in the theater!
- This year, students at the high school learned about and paid homage to Historically Black College and University customs with the debut of a new majorette dance team and step team.

Student Support

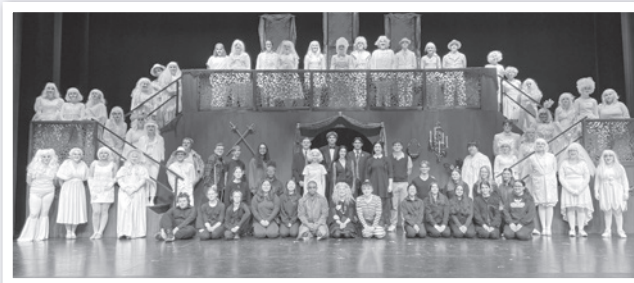
- Gates Chili is working to implement the community school model at Neil Armstrong in the 2024-25 school year, which focuses on connecting families to important resources, services and learning opportunities.
- The student support services department is working with several outside agencies to advance the district’s mental health systems through access to professional development, technical assistance and ongoing coaching.
- In an effort to respond to students’ varying needs, nearly 100 staff members are now equipped with important skills to prevent and/or de-escalate negative behavior in school thanks to Therapeutic Crisis Intervention (TCI) training.

From screen to stage: *The Addams Family* frights and delights

Gates Chili High School Musical Theatre brought TV’s creepiest family to life on the Gates Chili Performing Arts Center (GCPAC) stage this spring.

Audiences packed the house for the group’s production of “The Addams Family,” a musical comedy based on the fictional ghoulish family. A cast and crew of more than 70 students transformed the stage into the Addams’ gothic mansion to perform more than 20 musical numbers, including the iconic theme song from the TV show. Students took on the roles of Gomez, Morticia, Fester, Wednesday, Pugsley, Lurch and their ghostly ancestors, among others.

Before the curtain went up, cast members got the opportunity to preview the production on Fox Rochester’s morning show, “Good Day Rochester.” To see that appearance, go to gateschili.org/AddamsGDR.



Gates Chili jazz musicians make melodies in 'Music City'

Jazz came alive for more than 60 students during an unforgettable experience to 'Music City' this spring! The four-day trip to Nashville in late April provided students in the GCHS Jazz Band exciting opportunities, including the chance to perform outside of the Country Music Hall of Fame. The ensemble performed a piece that they commissioned in honor of the trip, titled "In Old Ozark Village," composed by Joey Stempien. The group also had the opportunity to take part in a recording session in RCA Studio B, where famous musicians like Elvis Presley, Roy Orbison and Dolly Parton recorded music. Other highlights from the trip include listening to the Nashville Symphony, a riverboat cruise and getting to enjoy the local cuisine.

Staff Spotlight



Vara Morley
Teaching Assistant
Florence Brassier
Elementary School

Vara Morley is passionate about helping students learn and grow, which is how she found her place at Florence Brassier Elementary School. With a background in social work, Morley's journey to becoming a teaching assistant was unexpected.

Morley graduated from Roberts Wesleyan University with a bachelor's degree in social work. She started her career at the non-profit Hillside Family of Agencies, helping students manage behavioral and academic needs. While she loved working with students, after 13 years

at Hillside, she was ready for a new opportunity.

"I heard about the teaching assistant position at Florence Brassier from some co-workers who worked in the district," Morley explained. "I knew I still wanted to work with kids and was excited about the opportunity."

Morley has been at Brassier for more than a year now and finds the position to be incredibly rewarding. Her role as a teaching assistant is wide-ranging with every day being a new experience. She is excited that she has the chance to work with different students, helping manage behavioral needs, while also taking on a teaching role by filling in for teachers when needed.

She shared that starting a new role can be nerve-wracking, but she is thankful for how warmly she has been welcomed into the Brassier family.

"I am so grateful that I was able to join this incredible school," Vara said. "I am passionate about helping students reach their potential and I enjoy seeing them grow and learn."

Hanning receives national honor



Disney art teacher Kelly Hanning has been recognized nationally by the National Art Education Association! The NAEA named her the 2024 Eastern Region Elementary Art Educator, making her one of only a handful of art educators to have been selected for this national honor!

Hanning has been a teacher at Gates Chili since 2016. In that time, she provided students with several high-profile authentic art experiences, including the creation of murals at Walt Disney Elementary School, a fashion show connected to career prospects and many other collaborative art projects focused on self-expression

through art. Hanning also serves as a teacher leader, overseeing curriculum for elementary art in the district. She is also a practicing artist, routinely showcasing her own work in galleries around town.

"Kelly is not only a gifted artist, but also an extraordinary educator," shared Troy Olin, assistant superintendent for instruction. "In the classroom, she inspires students to bring their art to life. Meanwhile, outside of the classroom, she is a tireless advocate for the students she serves and a demonstrated leader in our district. We could not be more proud to have Kelly on our team."

Hanning was presented with the award at the NAEA National Convention in Minneapolis, Minnesota in early April.

RETURN ON INVESTMENT

Equity and Inclusion

- Gates Chili was proud to provide school supplies for students in grades K-8 this year.
- In an effort to remove barriers and increase access to information, the district is moving all school-to-home communication to ParentSquare in the 2024-25 school year. Check out the graduation issue of this newsletter this summer for more details!
- Ahead of the Rochester total solar eclipse on April 8, Gates Chili provided all students and staff with eclipse glasses to safely watch the once-in-a-lifetime view.



Professional Learning

- More than 100 professional learning in-service courses were offered in-house to staff this school year, including book studies, collegial circles, culturally responsive teaching, the science of reading and more.
- Gates Chili partnered with Children's Institute to support professional learning cycles for administrators and staff to deepen their understanding of restorative practices.
- This year's theme of Connecting the Dots to Equity has driven the focus for the two superintendent's conference days where all staff spent time collaborating and learning together.

RETURN ON INVESTMENT

School Nutrition

- This year, Gates Chili was approved for the Community Eligibility Provision (CEP), which allowed all students to eat free breakfast and lunch at school every day for a total of 500,000+ meals served so far!
- In an effort to incorporate more student choice in school meals, the school nutrition department is introducing parfaits and smoothies to the breakfast menu this spring.
- Seniors at the high school provided valuable feedback during a weeklong menu survey, resulting in the addition of tikka masala with naan bread to the menu.



Community

- With nearly 4,000 views per month, the Gates Chili E-newsletter is helping shine a light on news and updates from around the district, as well as highlighting important awareness and heritage month celebrations that represent Gates Chili students and staff.
- In 2023, more than 8,600 district residents utilized the fitness center, indoor track and pool at Gates Chili High School, as part of the district's community membership – up approximately 1,000 visitors over last year!
- Gates Chili offered more than 540 continuing education courses, attended by nearly 1,200 participants, including nearly 100 new drivers who completed the Driver Education program!

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:

Paul Road students Maria A., Aubrianna B., Anthony C., Blake K., Alina L., Reed L., Laila P., Ryan R., Manny S., Katerina V. and Paul Road staff members Linda Andrews, Catherine Mahaney, Dr. Sarah Ryan and Cameron Scharf



March recipients:

Walt Disney students Cameron G., Mia H., ElyJah K., Emiah L., Savannah M., Ja'Ziyah T. and Myalee W.



April recipients:

Neil Armstrong students London L., Joye L., Jacob M. and Eric U., and Neil Armstrong staff members Kimberly Burgholzer and Cassidy Dailey

Volleying for a good cause

Staff from Gates Chili's four elementary schools served up some stiff competition during a round-robin volleyball tournament on April 18 in the Spartan Field House. The event was a fundraiser for the Gates Chili Education Foundation and the Gates Chili Food Pantry. To cheer on their home school, spectators could pay \$5 per ticket or \$1 with a donated can of food. In the end, the Brassier Bears took home the trophy and the tournament raised more than \$775 for the GCEF and collected eight boxes of canned goods for the food pantry.



Band Together:

A Celebration of Music in our Community

Enjoy Gates Chili's first-ever community music festival on

**Sunday, June 9
from 12:30-6 p.m.**

Gates Chili Performing Arts Center

featuring food trucks and performances by local bands including the Gates Chili Community Concert Band!

Gates Chili Central School District · 2024-25 · 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 2024
July 4 (Thur).....Independence Day

AUGUST 2024
Aug. 27-28 (Tues-Wed).....Superintendent's Conf. Days

SEPTEMBER 2024
Sept. 2 (Mon)..... Labor Day
Sept. 3 (Tues)..... First Day of School for Students

OCTOBER 2024
Oct. 2 (Wed)..... Superintendent's Conf. Day
Oct. 11 (Fri)..... Superintendent's Conf. Day
Oct. 14 (Mon)..... Columbus Day/Indigenous People's Day

NOVEMBER 2024
Nov. 11 (Mon)..... Veterans Day
Nov. 27-29 (Wed-Fri)..... Thanksgiving Recess

DECEMBER 2024
Dec. 9 (Mon)..... P-5 Parent Teacher Conf. / Conf. Day
Dec. 20 (Fri)..... P-5 Parent Teacher Conf. / Conf. Day
Dec. 23-31 (Mon-Tues)..... Holiday Recess
Dec. 25 (Mon)..... Christmas

JANUARY 2025
Jan. 1 (Wed)..... New Years Day
Jan. 1-3 (Wed-Fri)..... Holiday Recess
Jan. 20 (Mon)..... Martin Luther King, Jr. Day
Jan. 21-24 (Tues-Fri)..... NYS Regents Exams
Jan. 24 (Fri)..... Conf. Day
Jan. 29 (Wed)..... Lunar New Year

FEBRUARY 2025
Feb. 5 (Wed)..... Superintendent's Conf. Day
Feb. 17 (Mon)..... President's Day
Feb. 17-21 (Mon-Fri)..... Mid-winter Recess

MARCH 2025
March 28 (Fri)..... Superintendent's Conf. Day

APRIL 2025
April 14-18 (Mon-Fri)..... Spring Recess
April 28-30 (Mon-Wed)..... 3-8 Assessment Window

MAY 2025
May 1-9 (Thur-Fri)..... 3-8 Assessment Window
May 26 (Mon)..... Memorial Day

JUNE 2025
June 4 (Wed)..... NYS Regents Exams
June 10 (Tues)..... NYS Regents Exams
June 17-25 (Tues-Wed)..... NYS Regents Exams
June 19 (Thur)..... Juneteenth
June 20 (Fri)..... Class of 2025 Commencement
June 25 (Wed)..... Last Day for Students
June 26 (Thur)..... Conf. Day/Last Day for 10-Month Staff

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. 6, 2024

JULY 2024

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AUGUST 2024

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JUNE 2025

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Free meals to continue this summer!

Gates Chili is proud to once again host the USDA Summer Meals Program this summer! Summer meals will kick off on July 8 and run through Aug. 9. Hours, locations and menus will be shared in mid-June at gateschili.org/SchoolNutrition.



Proof of Residency

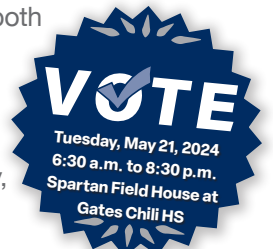
The school district may require all persons offering to vote at the budget vote and election to provide one form of proof of residency pursuant to the Education Law §2018-C. Such form may include a driver's license, a non-driver identification card, a utility bill or a voter registration card. Upon offer 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 21, 2024 vote, is eligible. You do not need to be registered to vote, but you must bring identification and proof of residency.

Absentee Ballots and Early Mail Voting

Gates Chili residents who are unable to appear at the vote due to travel, illness, or other qualifying circumstances may apply for absentee or early mail voting ballots. Go to gateschili.org/vote to download an application for one of these ballots. If the ballot is to be mailed to the voter, applications must be received by the district clerk by 4 p.m. on Tuesday, May 14, 2024. If the ballot is to be picked up by the voter, applications must be received by the district clerk by 4 p.m. on Monday, May 20, 2024. In both cases, completed ballots must be returned to the district clerk by 5 p.m. on Tuesday, May 21, 2024.



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