

2026-2027 **BUDGET**



Greater Johnstown SCHOOL DISTRICT

VOTE

Tuesday, May 19
11 a.m. to 8 p.m.
Johnstown High School
Auditorium Lobby

Annual budget vote set for **May 19**

Proposed \$47,291,679 spending plan enhances robust programming slate

On Tuesday, May 19, residents of the Greater Johnstown School District (GJSD) will vote on a proposed \$47,291,679 spending plan for the 2026-2027 school year. The proposal includes a 3.49% (\$440,655) tax levy increase—the sixth consecutive year the levy has remained at or below the cap, requiring a simple majority for approval. Polls will be open from 11 a.m. to 8 p.m. in the lobby of the Johnstown High School auditorium.

The proposed budget reflects a 4.73% (\$2,134,862) spending increase from the current year, driven primarily by debt service for ongoing capital improvements to District facilities. These costs are largely offset by increased building aid generated from prior capital projects.

Just over 58% of the budget comes from state aid, with Foundation Aid as the largest share. GJSD is projected to receive a 1% increase in Foundation Aid (\$175,855), which falls short of meeting the growing needs of the District and its students. To maintain a balanced budget, the District will utilize \$5,041,076 from its fund balance and reserves.

“Strategic long-range planning, careful stewardship of resources, and a focused commitment to operational efficiencies have strengthened and stabilized the District’s financial position,” said Superintendent Alicia D. Koster.

“Our ability to sustain this progress depends on meaningful increases in state funding. Without it, our long-term financial plan will face increasing strain, especially as costs for non-discretionary items such as health insurance, contractual obligations and utilities continue to rise,” she added.

Despite these challenges, the spending plan prioritizes investments to expand opportunities and support all students. At JHS, a new dedicated Learning Center will provide tutoring, credit and grade recovery, peer mentoring, and additional academic support. A new district-wide Family Resource Center at Warren Street will offer educational resources and community-based services designed to help remove barriers to student success (read more on page 4).

The District continues to offer a wide range of high-quality opportunities that support growth and success for every student. Through thoughtful planning and responsible resource management, GJSD is expanding its academic programs, extracurriculars, and student support to meet diverse interests and needs. These include drivers education, Unified Sports, an early career and technical education (CTE) program for ninth- and 10th-grade students, continued development of the business program at JHS, and the addition of a Future Business Leaders of America chapter.

Students will benefit from expanded College in the High School opportunities, electives aligned to the Portrait of a Graduate at JHS and Knox Middle School, and the continued implementation of Conscious Discipline at the primary level (read more on page 3). A renewed focus on STEAM, project-based learning and agricultural education will continue across grades pre-K through 12.

The District will also realize cost savings through attrition, as four retiring teachers’ positions will not be filled following a review of programmatic needs.

(continued on page 2)

BY THE NUMBERS

\$47,291,679

Proposed 2026-27 budget

4.73% (\$2,134,862)

Year-to-year spending increase

3.49% (\$440,655)

Year-to-year tax levy increase,
which is at the allowable
New York state tax levy
cap increase



A message from Ms. Alicia D. Koster, *Superintendent of Schools*



As I conclude my first year as superintendent, I am filled with pride and gratitude to be part of such a dedicated and supportive community. Each day, I am inspired by the exceptional professionals across our District.

Our administrators and teachers are deeply committed to our students, focused not only on academic excellence, but also on supporting the whole child. Our support staff work tirelessly to maintain safe, welcoming, and efficient environments where students learn and educators

thrive. Every member of the GJSD team plays an essential role in advancing our shared goals and contributing to student success.

Our responsibility is simple and profound: ensuring that every decision reflects what is best for our students. By keeping students at the center of all we do, we remain grounded in our purpose and focused on the right priorities. This guiding principle has shaped the development of the proposed 2026-2027 spending plan.

Each year, our school budget represents more than numbers – it reflects our shared values, community priorities, and our collective investment in the future of our students. I am proud to present a budget that continues our commitment to educational excellence, responsible financial stewardship, and meaningful experiences for every student. Throughout this newsletter, you will see how the District is working to provide a wide range of high-quality academic programs, extracurriculars, and student supports designed to meet the diverse needs and interests of all learners.

The plan maintains existing programming while making thoughtful, strategic investments in key areas identified through ongoing assessment of student and family needs. These include the creation of a district-wide Family Resource Center at Warren Street Elementary and a new Learning Center at Johnstown High School, both designed to have a direct and lasting impact on student success. Following the successful implementation of Conscious Discipline at Pleasant Avenue this year, we are excited to expand this initiative to Warren Street Elementary in the fall.

As we prepare for the full implementation of New York State's Portrait of a Graduate model, we are emphasizing academic vertical alignment across all four school buildings. This ensures that instructional practices and learning experiences are intentionally connected from our earliest grades through graduation, providing a cohesive educational journey for every student.

This budget is firmly rooted in our mission to equip students with the knowledge, skills, and opportunities they need to succeed. Nearly 70% of the budget is dedicated to student programming, including instruction, student services, transportation, and expanded educational opportunities. Key initiatives include:

- A new Learning Center to support academic success and credit recovery
- A Family Resource Center offering educational and community-based resources
- Expanded CTE opportunities for ninth- and 10th-grade students
- Driver's education programming
- Unified Sports programs
- Growth in business and college-level coursework
- Expanded electives aligned to the Portrait of a Graduate for grades 5-12
- Continued investment in STEAM, project-based learning, and agricultural education for grades pre-K through 12

The District remains focused on strengthening its instructional foundation through comprehensive instructional planning, professional learning in areas such as the Science of Learning and artificial intelligence, and continued emphasis on social-emotional learning through frameworks like Conscious Discipline.

The spending plan supports ongoing capital and facilities improvements, including future planning for significant upgrades to our school buildings. These investments ensure safe, modern learning environments while maintaining fiscal responsibility through strategic use of reserves and state building aid.

As always, we remain committed to transparency and community engagement throughout this process. Your voice helps shape the future of our District. Thank you for your continued support of the Greater Johnstown School District and for your shared commitment to our students and community.

Grounds of Kindness Initiative at Warren Street

At Warren Street Elementary, Mrs. Merritt's Friday "Grounds of Kindness" coffee cart blends learning with community. Students run the cart, take orders and handle money, turning each sale into a real-world math lesson that builds confidence and independence. They greet staff, strengthening social and communication skills through conversation. Students also write thank-you cards to improve their writing. Proceeds support classroom projects, materials, and incentives that keep students engaged. More than a fundraiser, the cart fosters responsibility, teamwork, and belonging, while learning about character, relationships, and practical life skills.



Annual Budget Vote Set for May 19 (continued from page 1)

"I am proud of the program expansions in next year's budget and equally proud of the fiscal efficiencies reflected," Koster said. "With careful and deliberate attention to operational effectiveness supporting teaching and learning, the District continues to strategically align administrative responsibilities, instructional assignments, and support staff to advance its vision as a regional model of educational excellence for all students."

As in previous years, the budget includes a \$100,000 capital outlay project to be completed within the school year, allowing the District to receive full building aid the following year. This work will continue water infiltration remediation and classroom renovations on the ground floor of Knox.

In a separate proposition, voters will consider a "Small Ill Capital Project" not to exceed \$2.5 million. The project will be funded entirely with unspent cash from recently completed capital projects and will have no tax impact. The scope includes replacing lighting towers and fixtures at Knox Field, along with continued ground-floor work at Knox. Pending approval from the New York State Education Department, work is expected to start this summer and conclude in the fall (read more on page 6).

Also on the ballot, voters will elect two members to the District's seven-member Board of Education. Please visit the GJSD website for more information.

Pleasant Avenue transforms school culture through Conscious Discipline

Pleasant Avenue Elementary (grades PK–1) has seen a significant cultural shift this year through its building-wide adoption of Conscious Discipline, a research-based, adult-first approach to behavior and learning. Led by outgoing Principal Cory Cotter, who was recently appointed Director of Elementary Instruction, the initiative helps educators respond with calm, connection, and skill-building.



It emphasizes that children learn best when they feel safe and supported, while adults need the same conditions to foster meaningful change.

The initiative has been so successful that Cotter will lead its expansion to grades 2-4 at Warren Street Elementary next year, with staff training already underway. Cotter says activities will evolve to be age-appropriate, but the core concepts will remain the same.

Conscious Discipline teaches essential life skills such as empathy, emotional awareness, and respectful communication, while fostering a sense of belonging by framing the school as a “family.” This is reinforced through “family trees” displayed throughout the building and by adults modeling positive interactions.

Daily routines play a key role. Mornings begin with optional personalized greetings from Cotter, including a “fish lips” wave, pinky handshake, or hug, along with intentional eye contact to build connection. Classrooms also implement “Brain Smart Starts,” structured meetings with greetings, movement or breathing exercises, and positive goal-setting to help students regulate emotions and prepare for learning. These routines set a positive, connected tone for the day.

Emotional identification and

self-regulation are central. Students learn to recognize and express their feelings, reducing frustration-driven behaviors. Tools like Active Calming Stations and classroom Calming Corners support independent regulation, shifting discipline from punitive to restorative.

The program also includes play-based learning, such as Baby Doll Circle Time, to teach empathy, and uses tools like the Time Machine Mediation Mat to guide students in resolving conflicts calmly and effectively.

Read more on the GJSD website: https://bit.ly/GJSD_ConsciousDiscipline





WHAT'S ON THE BALLOT?

Vote YES or NO

Proposition #1	Proposition #2
<p>Proposed 2026-2027 Budget</p> <p>The District asks voters to decide on a \$47,291,679 proposed budget for the 2026-2027 school year, with a tax levy increase of 3.49%, which is at the District's allowable tax levy cap as determined by the state's tax cap formula and will require a simple majority approval (over 50%).</p>	<p>Small III Capital Project</p> <p>Voters will be asked to approve an expansion of the capital and energy efficiency projects approved on November 15, 2022 to authorize the use of remaining funds for a "Small III Capital Project," not to exceed \$2.5 million. The project includes upgrades to lighting fixtures and the replacement of lighting towers at Knox Field, and renovations to the ground floor of Knox Middle School. It will be fully funded with existing cash reserves and will have no impact on taxes. While the funds are already available, voter approval is required to use them.</p>
<p>YES</p> <input type="radio"/>	<p>YES</p> <input type="radio"/>
<p>NO</p> <input type="radio"/>	<p>NO</p> <input type="radio"/>

Development of business program at JHS

A program enhancement supported by the 2026-27 budget is the continued development of the JHS business department. Last year, GJSD teacher Christine Krempe was appointed to lead the department, where she has refined curriculum and programming to better align with student interests, real-world demands, and Portrait of a Graduate requirements.



JHS currently offers half-year electives including personal finance, career exploration, and sports and entertainment marketing, along with additional business courses through Distance Learning such as accounting, business law, marketing, essentials of entrepreneurship, and hospitality and tourism.

Beginning next year, personal finance will be offered as a College in the High School course through FMCC, allowing students to earn three college credits.

Krempe connects classroom learning to real-world experiences through visits to local businesses such as Townsend Leather, Benjamin Moore and the Fulton Montgomery Regional Chamber of Commerce. Students in sports marketing attended Sports Business Day at MetLife Stadium, where they toured the facility and explored career pathways.

JHS will also launch a NYS-sanctioned Future Business Leaders of America (FBLA) chapter, where students will participate in competitions, attend conferences, and develop leadership skills. Students are already developing a business plan for a school store they plan to open next year.

Johnstown opens Family Resource Center

Johnstown families will soon have a centralized location to access support and resources with the creation of the District's Family Resource Center. The center will be housed at Warren Street Elementary and managed by the District's newly appointed Director of Elementary Instruction, Assessment, and Family Engagement, Cory Cotter.



"This is meant to be a partnership between school and home," Cotter said. "We're creating a welcoming space where families can learn how to navigate their child's educational journey and support their students' learning."

The center will host family activity nights, giving students structured, intentional time with their families while strengthening those connections in a fun environment. Families will be offered workshops and classes, along with resources to improve students' school readiness and attendance. Families in need will be connected to resources for food, clothing, mental health support, and more.

Superintendent Koster reiterated the district's commitment to the whole child, citing the Family Resource Center as a critical component. "Our goal is to increase student success by empowering families and addressing home-based barriers that impact academic achievement. This will help us connect with and engage families as partners in their child's education," she said.

Although the center will serve all students and families in pre-K through 12, there are plans to host activities for early learners who are not yet enrolled in pre-K. Ideas include monthly story hours and group playtime. The center will

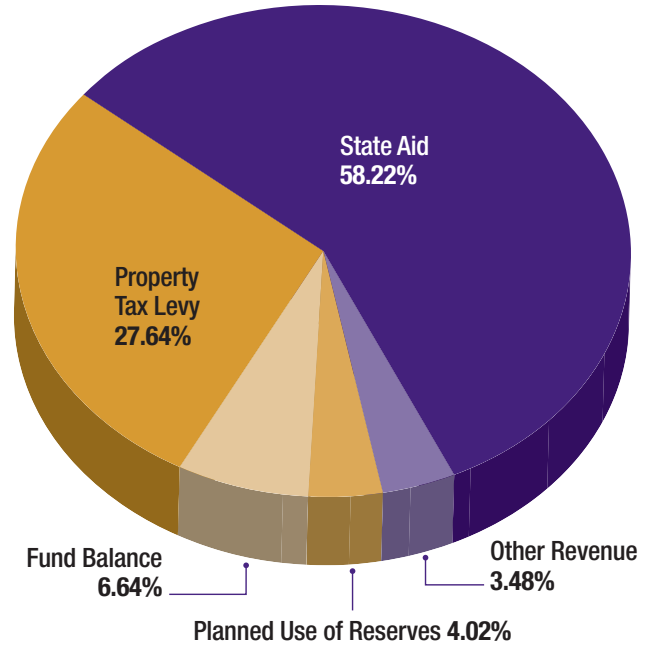


also serve as a centralized hub for the district's "Holiday Helpers" initiative.

The grand opening for the Family Resource Center is tentatively planned for August 20 as part of a district-wide "Welcome Back to School" event. Stay tuned for more details.

District Revenues

Nearly 60% of Johnstown's revenue comes from **state aid**, most of which is Foundation Aid, intended to support day-to-day operations. Other state aid is expense-based aid, which provides partial reimbursement for certain prior-year expenditures like transportation, BOCES and special education services. Another revenue source is the **tax levy**, which is the amount of money expected to be collected in taxes from property owners in the district. **Fund balance** is unassigned money that a district may appropriate to balance the budget (budgeted revenues must equal budgeted expenses). Fund balance reserves are similar to a savings account. They allow a district to save for unexpected expenses, and contribute to its long-term fiscal health. In general, it is best to minimize the use of reserves for regular operating expenses. **Other local revenue** includes tuition, classroom rentals and facility use fees.

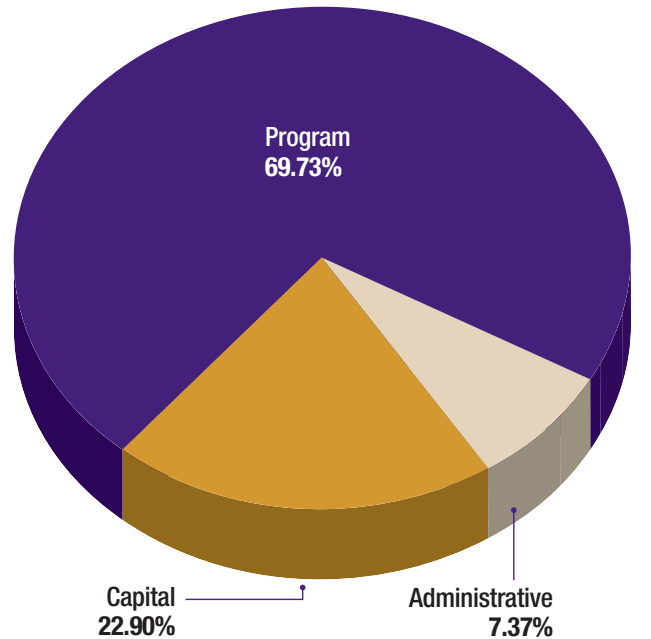


Projected Revenues

Revenue	Approved 2025-26	Proposed 2026-27	\$ Change	% Change
State Aid	\$25,931,963	\$27,532,286	\$1,600,323	6.17%
Property Tax Levy	\$12,632,818	\$13,073,473	\$440,655	3.49%
Fund Balance	\$3,117,608	\$3,141,076	\$23,468	0.75%
Use of Reserves	\$1,800,000	\$1,900,000	\$100,000	5.56%
Other Revenue	\$1,674,428	\$1,644,844	-\$29,584	-1.77%
Total	\$45,156,817	\$47,291,679	\$2,134,862	4.73%

District Expenditures

Nearly 70% of Johnstown's expenditures go directly toward programs for students. The **program component** of the budget includes instruction, special education services, health and counseling services, library and educational technology, extracurricular activities and bus transportation. The **capital component** includes building administration, maintenance of school buildings and grounds, utilities, and debt related to renovation and repair projects. The **administrative component** includes costs for central administration, public meetings, mailings and communications, records management, legal services, liability insurance, auditing and business office expenses.

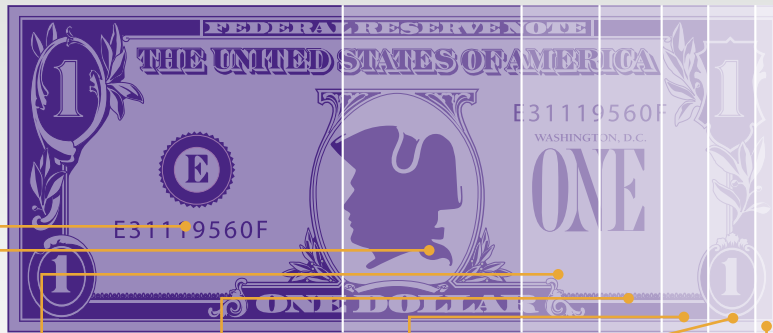


Projected Expenditures

Expenditures	Approved 2025-26	Proposed 2026-27	\$ Change	% Change
Administrative	\$3,459,165	\$3,487,027	\$27,862	0.81%
Capital	\$9,126,301	\$10,828,351	\$1,702,050	18.65%
Program	\$32,571,351	\$32,976,301	\$404,950	1.24%
Total	\$45,156,817	\$47,291,679	\$2,134,862	4.73%

Where the Money Is Spent

For every dollar Johnstown spends...



About **43 cents** goes directly to classroom instruction.*

About **23 cents** is spent on employee benefits.

About **10 cents** goes to debt service.

About **8 cents** goes to operating schools.*

About **6 cents** goes to transporting students to and from school and school-related activities.

About **6 cents** goes to the administration of our schools' programs and services.*

About **3 cents** supports other instructional activities.*

About **1 cent** goes to extracurricular and athletic offerings for students.*

*without employee benefits allocated

Remarkable year for Johnstown student-athletes

Highlighted by state titles, milestones & postseason success

Johnstown student-athletes enjoyed an outstanding year, marked by strong team performances in postseason competition and remarkable individual achievements.

Among the top individual performances came from junior **Carson**

Cheney of the GJSD boys alpine ski team. His success earned him a spot on the Section 2 Alpine Ski State Team, where he captured the Boys' Giant Slalom title at the NYSPHSAA Alpine Ski Championships



at Bristol Mountain. He recorded a winning combined time of 2:02.58 to claim the New York State championship.

Johnstown juniors **Jonny Swartwout** and **Matthew Livingston**



had dominant wrestling seasons, each earning a berth in the NYSPHSAA State Wrestling Tournament at MVP Arena in Albany. After a second-round loss to the eventual state champion, Swartwout



– seeded 16th at 144 pounds – worked through the consolation bracket to finish eighth in New York State (Division 2). He also earned his 100th career varsity win. Both Livingston and Swartwout are excellent role models for the District's youth wrestling program.

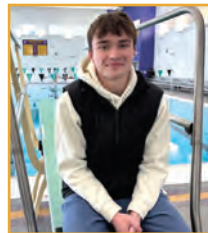
Ryan Fallis

(aka "Bulldog"), a freshman, had a phenomenal bowling season, earning a spot in the NYSPHSAA State Bowling Tournament



as one of six bowlers selected to represent Section 2 (Division 2) in Syracuse. He was a key contributor to Johnstown's dominant bowling team, which captured back-to-back WAC division and tournament titles and compiled an impressive 115-5 record over the past two seasons under coach Dave Hayward.

Senior **Marcus Scofield** graduates from Johnstown High School as the reigning record holder in the 11-dive event, posting an outstanding score of 444.80. He also secured his second consecutive Section 2, Division 2 diving



championship this year.

Many teams excelled this year, achieving notable success in the postseason.

The boys soccer team, anchored by an impressive group of nine seniors, brought a wealth of experience and leadership. That veteran presence proved invaluable, guiding the team to the Section 2, Class B quarterfinals.

The Sir Bills boys varsity basketball team also benefited from strong chemistry and experience, with a core group of six seniors leading the way to the Section 2, Class B semifinals.

The Lady Bills girls varsity basketball team featured a youthful roster, with no senior leadership. Despite their youth, the team showed determination and resilience, winning their first-round sectional game and advancing to the quarterfinal round of the Section 2, Class B tournament. With that valuable experience now behind them, the future looks bright for continued growth and success.

This past fall, the Lady Bills varsity field hockey team advanced to the quarterfinals in sectional play and senior **Gabby Chase** notched her 100th career goal.



Tax-neutral "Small III Capital Project" to update lighting at Knox Field

Voters will be asked to consider a "Small III Capital Project" not to exceed \$2.5 million. The project will be fully funded using remaining funds from recently completed capital projects, resulting in no additional tax impact. Although the funds are already available, voter approval is required to authorize their use.

The proposed work includes replacing the four lighting towers at Knox Field and upgrading outdated HDI metal halide fixtures to modern LED systems. These improvements will enhance reliability, provide broader field coverage and improve nighttime visibility for community events and athletic games, while also supporting higher-quality video streaming.

This upgraded lighting will operate with significantly lower energy consumption and reduced maintenance needs. With instant-on capability, adjustable dimming for practices versus games, and improved control of glare and light spill into surrounding neighborhoods, LED lighting will create a safer, more flexible, and more community-friendly environment.

The project scope will also include work at the Knox Middle School, continuing water infiltration on the ground floor and associated classroom renovations. Pending approval from the New York State Education Department, work is expected to start this summer and conclude in the fall.



Overall Budget Proposal	Budget Adopted for the 2025-26 School Year	Budget Proposed for the 2026-27 School Year	Contingency Budget for the 2026-27 School Year *
Total Budgeted Amount, Not Including Separate Propositions	\$45,156,817	\$47,291,679	\$46,851,024
Increase/Decrease for the 2026-27 School Year		\$2,134,862	\$1,694,207
Percentage Increase/Decrease in Proposed Budget		4.73%	3.75%
Change in the Consumer Price Index		2.63%	
A. Proposed Levy to Support the Total Budgeted Amount	\$12,632,818	\$13,073,473	
B. Levy to Support Library Debt, if Applicable	\$0	\$0	
C. Levy for Non-Excludable Propositions, if Applicable **	\$0	\$0	
D. Total Tax Cap Reserve Amount Used to Reduce Current Year Levy	\$0	\$0	
E. Total Proposed School Year Tax Levy (A + B + C - D)	\$12,632,818	\$13,073,473	\$12,632,818
F. Total Permissible Exclusions	\$1,299,294	\$1,444,779	
G. School Tax Levy Limit, <u>Excluding</u> Levy for Permissible Exclusions	\$11,333,523	\$11,628,694	
H. Total Proposed School Year Tax Levy, <u>Excluding</u> Levy to Support Library Debt and/or Permissible Exclusions (E - B - F + D)	\$11,333,523	\$11,628,694	
I. Difference: G - H (Negative Value Requires 60.0% Voter Approval - See Note Below Regarding Separate Propositions) **	\$0	\$0	
Administrative Component	\$3,459,165	\$3,487,027	\$3,487,027
Program Component	\$32,571,351	\$32,976,301	\$32,535,646
Capital Component	\$9,126,301	\$10,828,351	\$10,828,351

* Provide a statement of assumptions made in projecting a contingency budget for the 2026-27 school year, should the proposed budget be defeated pursuant to Section 2023 of the Education Law. The District cannot levy any more than the 2025-2026 fiscal year, resulting in a zero percent cap, thereby diminishing our ability to maintain a stable, and consistent long range financial plan and continue to offer a comprehensive academic program, given the escalating costs for healthcare, retirement, and other contractual obligations. GJSD is also prohibited in spending on community use of facilities, without a fee, new equipment purchases, nonessential maintenance, non-emergency capital expenditures, and student supplies. Further, the District would be required to explore reducing critical instructional positions necessary to advance our academic program and support the social-emotional needs of our students.

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

Description	Amount
Knox Field Lighting Replacement Project paid for by unspent capital funds from the EPC and Medium Capital Projects.	\$2,455,754

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

	Under the Budget Proposed for the 2026-27 School Year
Estimated Basic STAR Exemption Savings ¹	\$447

The annual budget vote for the fiscal year 2026-2027 by the qualified voters of the Greater Johnstown School District, Fulton County, New York, will be held at the Johnstown High School in said district on Tuesday, May 19, 2026 between the hours of 11:00 am and 8:00 pm, prevailing time in the Johnstown High School, at which time the polls will be opened to vote by voting ballot or machine.

Johnstown students offered Early CTE Pathways program

Next school year, 30 ninth-and 10th-grade students from JHS will be among the first in the region to participate in the Early Career and Technical Education (CTE) Pathways program through HFM BOCES. The program offers two primary areas of study: Intro to Construction and Intro to Healthcare and Human Services.

Johnstown students will join peers from across the region, including Gloversville and Amsterdam, for half-day programs at the HFM campus. Each pathway runs for one semester, allowing students to explore two career fields over a full school year. Participants will also earn high school credit.

Within the construction pathway, areas of study include architectural and civil engineering, construction, planning and development, and introduction to skilled trades. The

healthcare and human services pathway offers options such as behavioral and mental health, biotechnology research and development, community and social services, healthcare and administration, personal care services, and physical health.

“In the last decade, CTE programs have grown increasingly popular among juniors and seniors across our region, so expanding access to ninth-and 10th-grade students helps fill an important need,” said JHS Principal Nick Snow. “Exploring career pathways early allows students to connect classroom learning to real-world opportunities and begin discovering where their interests and strengths can lead them.”





District Offices
Johnstown High School
1 Sir Bills Circle
Johnstown, NY 12095
www.johnstownschoools.org

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2026-2027 SCHOOL BUDGET

VOTE

Tuesday, May 19
11 a.m. to 8 p.m.
Johnstown High School
Auditorium Lobby

\$47,291,679
Budget proposal
for 2026-2027
school year

Go to www.johnstownschoools.org/budget-school-taxes/ for more information.



Absentee Ballots & Early Mail Voting

Qualified voters may vote by absentee ballot or participate in early mail voting if they are unable to vote in person on May 19. Voters must first fill out an application with the district clerk. There are separate applications for early mail voting or absentee ballot, but the application process and deadlines are the same for both. Applications are available on the District website or by contacting the district clerk, Larraina Carpenter, at (518) 762-4611, ext. 3119. Completed ballots must be received by the District by mail or drop-off no later than 5 p.m. on May 19. Go to the District website for more information and specific deadlines.

Board of Education Election

Voters will elect two members to the Board of Education for three-year terms to begin on July 1, 2026. Please visit the District website for information about the candidates running for two open seats on the Board of Education.

