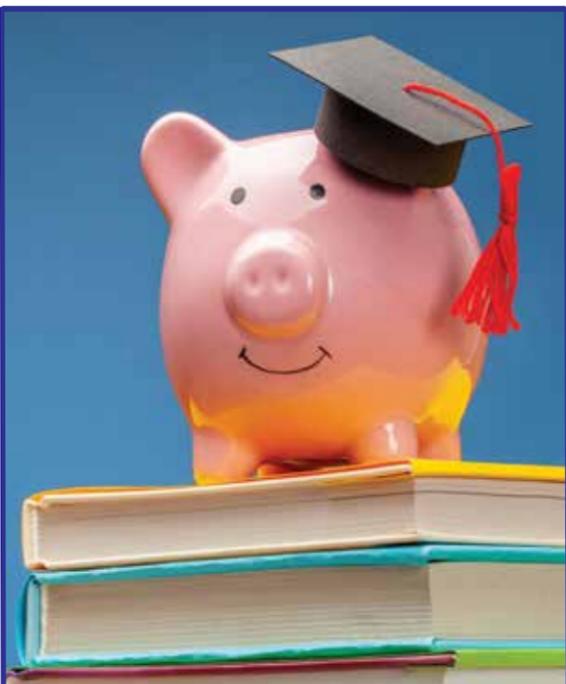


# Niagara Falls Your Public Schools

SPRING 2024 Community Newsletter Volume 10 Issue 3



## The Budget Issue

Despite the significant challenges in creating the 2024 – 2025 City School District of the City of Niagara Falls budget, the Board of Education has demonstrated remarkable resilience. This was particularly evident when the District received far less New York State Foundation Aid in New York State Governor Hochul’s budget than had been expected. For the 2023 – 2024 school year, the District received \$13 million in Foundation aid. That figure dropped by almost \$10 million this year to \$3.6 million.

The Board of Education’s proposed 2024 – 2025 school year budget, totaling \$190,992,049, represents a 5.23% increase over last year’s budget. This increase allows the District to maintain and grow its highly successful established programs without cutting any staff members.

Furthermore, the District spending plan maintains the tax levy at its current level for the tenth consecutive year.

As of this writing on April 12, 2024, the District expects \$183,784,639 in total revenues, leaving a budget gap of \$7,207,410 for 2024 – 2025. To bridge this gap without cutting programs or staff, the Board has proposed tapping into the District’s reserve funds. The construct of next year’s budget includes a formula that results in a “negative tax cap.” This rarity requires that the budget pass with a 60% plurality.

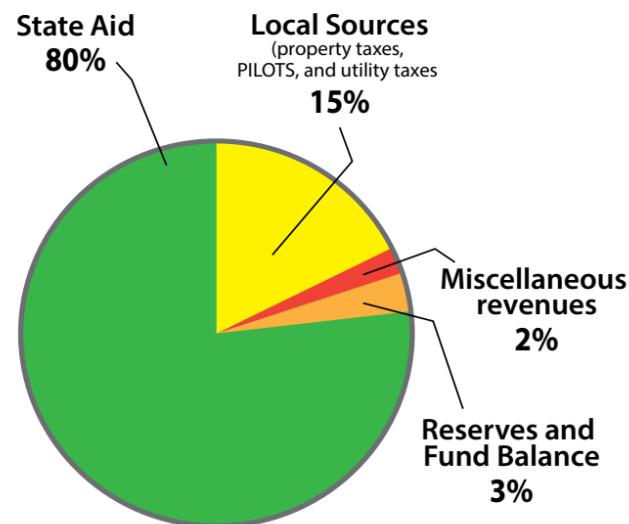
The tax levy will not change if the budget does not pass; however, the District will not be able to bus students who live fewer than one and a half miles from schools or purchase routine school supplies for students. In addition, anyone wishing to utilize the District’s facilities or fields must pay the total rental price upfront.

The District budget includes funds for new technology equipment. Students in grades three through six will receive laptops and new projector systems will be installed in all District schools.

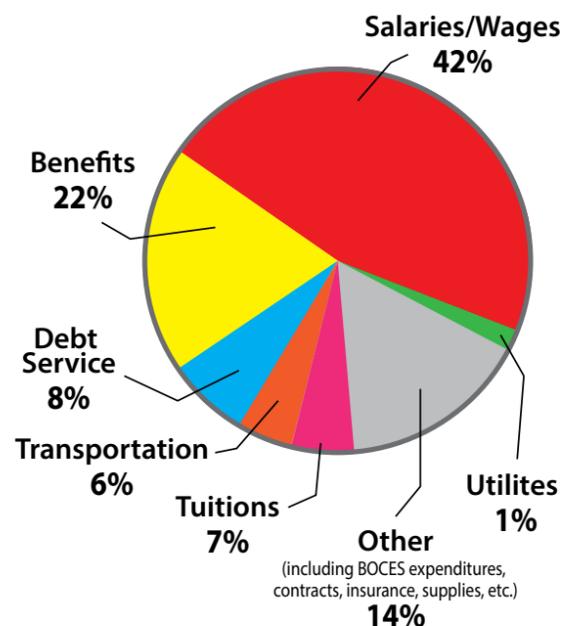
The District is constantly investing in school building safety and the 2024 – 2025 proposed budget calls for the continuation of five school safety officers and 30 safety officials.

Polls will be open at general election polling sites from **11:00 a.m. to 8:00 p.m. on Tuesday, May 21, 2024**. If you are unsure where to vote, please get in touch with District Clerk Judie Glaser at 716-286-4204

## 2024-2025 Budget Revenue



## 2024-2025 Budget Expenses



As of this printing, the NYS budget has not passed. All budget information is accurate as of April 12, 2024. We do not anticipate any substantive changes as a result of the NYS budget.

## Annual School District Election/Budget Vote

**VOTE**

The annual school board election/budget vote of The City School District of the City of Niagara Falls will be held on **Tuesday, May 21, 2024** to vote on the annual budget and the election of two Board of Education members.

There are two seats open on the Board of Education. The two candidates receiving the highest number of votes will each serve a full five (5) year term. Both terms commence July 1, 2024. Board membership is an unpaid position.

Petitions for nominating a candidate for the office of member of the Board of Education in the City School District of the City of Niagara Falls, New York, became available March 4, 2024 in the District Clerk’s Office (9:00 a.m. – 4:00 p.m.) at the Central Office Administration Building, 630 66th Street, Niagara Falls, New York.

Petitions were due to the clerk of the Board of Education on or before May 1, 2024 by 5:00 p.m. Petitions are required to be signed by at least 100 qualified voters of the City of Niagara Falls.



The  
Niagara Falls  
City School  
District  
Celebrates  
Juneteenth  
on Wednesday,  
June 19, 2024

## From the City School District of the City of Niagara Falls Superintendent Mark Laurrie



### 2024 – 2025 Budget

It's an exciting time for the City School District of the City of Niagara Falls.

We came back fresh from an extended spring recess; our city welcomed visitors who experienced the (cloudy) Path of Totality of the April 8, 2024, Solar Eclipse; we are gearing up for the Class of 2024 to accept their diplomas on the evening of Thursday, June 27, 2024, we have music concerts, the District Art Show, and so much more! And we have the budget. We need to be just as excited about the annual school budget vote as we are about everything that makes spring unique. We cannot adequately educate our children without a robust, solid spending plan, providing them with the skills and knowledge they need to experience a full life.

The 2024 – 2025 budget was one of the most challenging of all budgets I have been a part of since I became superintendent. The District received far less New York State Foundation Aid in New York

State Governor Hochul's budget than had been expected. For the 2023 – 2024 school year, the District received \$13 million in Foundation aid. That figure dropped by almost \$10 million for the 2024 - 2025 school year to \$3.6 million.

As of this writing, the District expects to receive \$183,784,639 in total revenues on a budget of \$190,992,049, leaving a budget gap of \$7,207,410 for 2024 – 2025. To bridge this gap without cutting programs, staff, or raising taxes, the Board has proposed utilizing the District's reserve funds. The construct of next year's budget includes a formula that results in a "negative tax cap." This anomaly requires that our budget must pass with a 60% plurality.

If the budget does not pass, the District will be forced to make some significant changes. The tax levy will remain unchanged, but the students and community will notice a difference in the services the District can provide. For instance, the District will no longer be able to bus students who live within one and a half miles of schools, and routine school supplies

for students will no longer be provided. Additionally, anyone wishing to use the NFCSD's facilities or fields will be required to pay the total rental price upfront.

The District budget includes funds for new technology equipment because our students must stay caught up in this constantly changing area. Students in grades three through six will be able to utilize new laptops, and new projector systems will be installed across the District.

Nothing comes before the safety of our children. Students can't learn if they are afraid of violence happening in their schools. The District is constantly investing in school building safety, and the 2024 – 2025 proposed budget calls for the continuation of five school resource officers and 30 safety officers.

Polls will be open at general election polling sites from **11:00 a.m. to 8:00 p.m. on Tuesday, May 21, 2024.** If you are unsure where to vote, please get in touch with District Clerk Judie Glaser at 716-286-4204

### School District Budget Notice

Overall Budget Proposal	Budget Adopted for the 2023-24 School Year	Budget Proposed for the 2024-25 School Year	Contingency Budget for the 2024-25 School Year *
Total Budgeted Amount, Not Including Separate Propositions	\$ 181,504,208	\$ 190,992,049	\$ 190,748,549
Increase/Decrease for the 2024-25 School Year		\$ 9,487,841	\$ 9,244,341
Percentage Increase/Decrease in Proposed Budget		5.23%	5.09%
Change in the Consumer Price Index		4.1%	
A. Proposed Levy to Support the Total Budgeted Amount	\$ 25,828,989	\$ 25,828,989	
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)	\$ 25,828,989	\$ 25,828,989	\$ 25,828,989
F. Total Permissible Exclusions	\$ 2,020,085	\$ (254,829)	
G. School Tax Levy Limit, <u>Excluding</u> Levy for Permissible Exclusions	\$ 23,846,511	\$ 24,361,773	
H. Total Proposed School Year Tax Levy, <u>Excluding</u> Levy to Support Library Debt and/or Permissible Exclusions (E - B - F + D)	\$ 23,808,904	\$ 26,083,818	
I. Difference: G - H (Negative Value Requires 60.0% Voter Approval - See Note Below Regarding Separate Propositions) **	\$ 37,607	\$ (1,722,045)	
Administrative Component	\$ 21,481,444	\$ 23,143,904	\$ 23,143,904
Program Component	\$ 122,920,992	\$ 132,636,946	\$ 132,568,446
Capital Component	\$ 37,101,772	\$ 35,211,199	\$ 35,036,199

\* Provide a statement of assumptions made in projecting a contingency budget for the 2024-25 school year, should the proposed budget be defeated pursuant to Section 2023 of the Education Law.

Contingent budget is established pursuant to Section 2023 of Education Law. Board of Education will develop contingent budget based upon state law.

Description	Amount
\$	
\$	
\$	
\$	

\*\* 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)

*NOTE TO SCHOOL DISTRICT BUSINESS OFFICIALS: Please submit an electronic version (Word or PDF) of this completed form to: <a href="mailto:amscmgts@nysed.gov">amscmgts@nysed.gov</a>	Under the Budget Proposed for the 2024-25 School Year
Estimated Basic STAR Exemption Savings <sup>1</sup>	\$ 363.00

The annual budget vote for the fiscal year 2024-25 by the qualified voters of the City School District of the City of Niagara Falls, Niagara County, New York, will be held at general election polling sites in said district on Tuesday, May 21, 2024 between the hours of 11:00am and 8:00pm, prevailing time in

## Powerful lessons in our own backyard

Theresa Mannarino's classroom and after-school club students at LaSalle Preparatory visited the Power Vista in early winter. Their visit was twofold: first, to see the decorated trees that included their handy work, and second, to experience and tour the fascinating, free educational venue located right in Niagara Falls that many students had never been to before.

This year, the students were tasked by the Cayuga Garden Club to paint and decorate miniature birdhouses that would adorn their tree on the bridge leading to the exhibit area. Last year, the Garden Club purchased two purple martin bird houses that were placed on school grounds in attempt to create a new habitat for the migrating bird species who rely solely on humans for housing due to resident invasive birds.

Mrs. Mannarino's students have been working with the Empowered Schools, providing activities and challenges for students to learn about power and generate change, such as their "Last Out, Lights Out" program. This allows them to make better choices in and for their future.



The ability to visit the Power Vista, understand the mighty resource the Niagara River provides, and learn about how our choices and habits impact the environment has raised awareness among these students. This powerful partnership has helped build connections and aid in developing community awareness and activism to make essential changes toward addressing and fulfilling energy needs.

# Hockey is the best medicine

Lockport/Niagara Falls Hockey Program (LNF) members spent an educational and exciting day at the KeyBank Center in Buffalo on March 13, 2024. The student-athletes watched a Sabres team gameday practice. They then had an open discussion on mental health with Eric Kussin, founder of the #SameHere Global Movement.

Students learned that mental health applies to all humans. In contrast, in some media forums, mental health is viewed through an “us and them” mentality with disorder labels or health diagnoses attached. The open discussion led by Kussin showed all attendees that mental health touches everyone in many ways. With the help of the Sabres organization, this vital message of mental health awareness through #SameHere and “all in it together” can positively impact our local fanbase in Western New York.

The Lockport/Niagara Falls Hockey Program would like to express a special thank you to the Mental Health Advocates of WNY for their invitation and the Buffalo Sabres organization for providing the conversation space, lunch for all attendees, and two tickets to the Sabres vs. Red Wings game that night.

To top off the day, six members of the LNF Varsity team participated in the Sabres intermission shootout. Niagara Falls’ Carson Robins, Vinny Yorio, Jacob Lively, Matthew Catanzaro, Athan Bailor, and Lockport goalie Anthony Bernardi represented the team in defeating Clarence 3-1 in the shootout.



# LaSalle Robotics Dominates Northern New York VEX IQ Championships

On March 9, the LaSalle Robotics team again showcased their dominance at the Northern New York VEX IQ Full Volume State Robotics Championships. For the sixth consecutive year, LaSalle Robotics claimed the title of Northern NYS VEX IQ Robotics Champions. With seven teams competing, the school's dedication to robotics excellence was evident.

Two standout teams, “Warcraft Mavericks” (Larry Smith, Austin Moore) and “The 2 Stouges” (Kyle Dean, Kendall Dean), earned their tickets to the World Championships in Dallas by clinching the Teamwork Champions title. Their hard work and dedication paid off as they secured victory after a long day of intense competition.

**Results:**

- Teamwork Champion: Warcraft Mavericks (Larry Smith, Austin Moore) and The 2 Stouges (Kyle Dean, Kendall Dean)
- Teamwork 2nd Place: Machine Mavericks (Kevin Galko, Willie Mills, Tamseel Tanweet)
- Design Award: The 2 Stouges (Kyle Dean, Kendall Dean)
- Robot Skills 2nd Place: Machine Mavericks (Kevin Galko, Willie Mills, Tamseel Tanweet)

In addition, the Niagara Falls High School Wolverines Robotics team put up a commendable performance at the Northern New York State VRC Over Under Championships. Despite being only their second year as a competitive team, they showcased exceptional skills and determination.

**Results:**

- Team 1716 A: Lucus Chamberlain, Aiden Chase, Micheal Mettler, and Jacob Yost
- Team 1716 M: Gennarino Briglio and Jayden Huang



Both teams performed well in the qualification matches, ranking 17th and 15th respectively. Though they fell short of qualifying for the World Championships, their achievements were commendable.

A very special thank you goes out to Richard Clark for all of his hard work this season on helping the robotics program achieve such great success. Also, a thank you to coaches Alan Stockings, Daniel Schiesser, and Alisha Coddington.

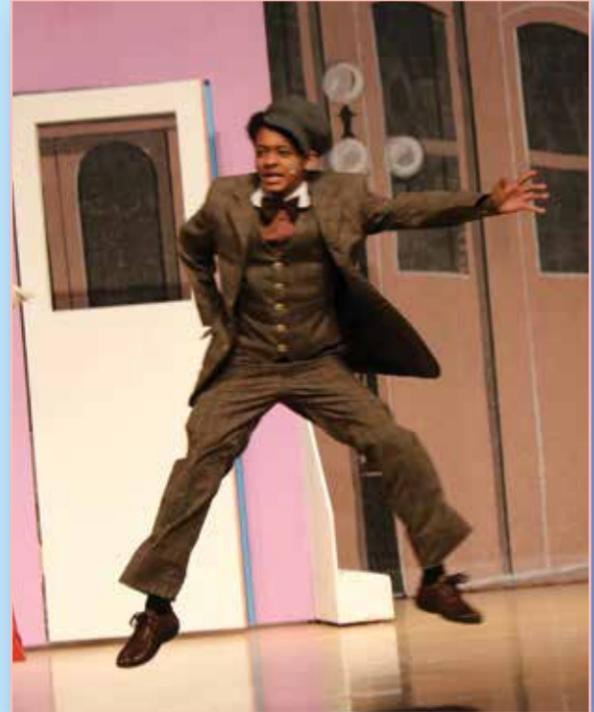
The journey to success was not without its challenges, as demonstrated at the Adirondack Classic on February 24. Despite the early morning start and long day of competition, LaSalle Robotics teams exhibited resilience and collaboration, earning impressive results:

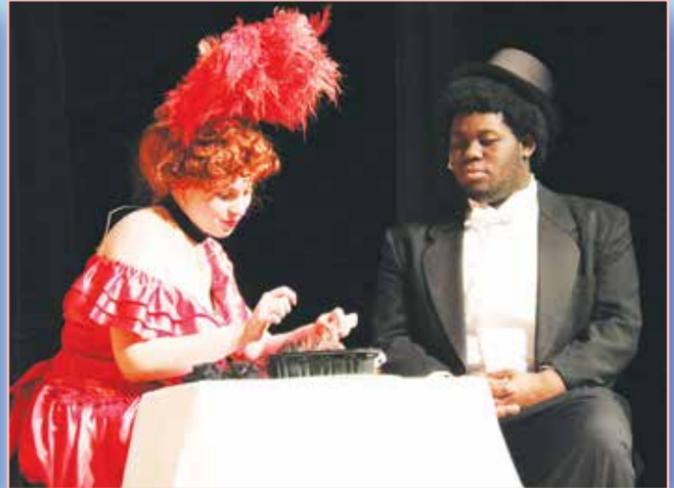
- Teamwork Champion: Billy's Parents (Kylie Skrowronek, Arrianna Kessler)

- Teamwork 2nd Place: Cash Cows (Jacob Jeffords, Landon Forgette)
- Robot Skills Champion: 3 Amigos (Liliana Esposito, Emily Masker, Ava Novak)

Thank you to the coaches Mike McGrath, Ed Wisniewski, Madison DalPorto, and Richard Clark and everyone involved in supporting the robotics program. LaSalle Robotics remains a powerhouse in the world of robotics, setting the bar high for future competitions and aspiring teams.

# *Hello,* **Dolly!**





# The NFCSD celebrates Black History Month - February 2024



## NFHS Winter Spirit Week recap

By: Isabella Maynard, Community Relations Intern, 12th grade Niagara Falls High School



February 12 – 16, 2024, was an incredible week at Niagara Falls High School (NFHS)! The NFHS Winter Pep Assembly and Spirit Week have ended, leaving behind a trail of memories and a renewed sense of school spirit. Here's a recap of the events that unfolded.

### Spirit Week:

**Monday** - Barbie vs. Oppenheimer Day: The NFHS halls were filled with pink and power suits as students embraced the unique theme of Barbie vs. Oppenheimer. From glamorous Barbie dolls to brilliant scientists channeling Oppenheimer, it was a day of creative expression and imagination.



**Tuesday** - Generation Day: It was a blast from the past as freshmen transformed into adorable babies, sophomores toddled around as toddlers, juniors stepped into the shoes of parents, and seniors aged gracefully into old age. Each generation brought its charm and nostalgia to the halls of the high school.

**Wednesday** - Time Travel Day: Students embarked on a journey through time, dressing for the past or the future. From the 1990s to futuristic societies, the halls were filled with an eclectic mix of fashion. It was a day to explore endless possibilities and envision different eras.



**Thursday** - Tropical vs. Winter Wonderland: The battle between summer and winter was on as students dressed for their favorite weather. Some embraced the warmth of tropical paradise with Hawaiian shirts and sunglasses, while others cozied up in winter gear, sporting scarves and mittens. It was a clash of seasons, but everyone brought their own sunny or snowy vibes.

**Friday** - School Spirit Day: Blue and gold flooded the halls as students proudly displayed their Wolverine pride on School Spirit Day. It was a sea of school colors as students celebrated our unity and support for our teams. The day culminated in a spirited pep rally, fueling excitement for the upcoming games and events.

## Bloneva Bond Primary flips over students with good attendance

Bloneva Bond Primary School hosted a "Celebrating Your Presence" attendance pep rally on Wednesday, February 28, 2024, in the school auditorium. The Niagara Falls High School Wolverine Cheerleaders performed, and students with 0-2 absences were awarded a medalion. Bloneva Bond Primary School proudly recognized the attendance achievement of its students.



# Winter Pep Assembly

*By Isabella Maynard, Community Relations Intern, 12th grade NFHS*

The Niagara Falls High School (NFHS) auditorium was buzzing with excitement as students gathered on Friday, February 16, 2024, for the NFHS Winter Pep Assembly. Students and faculty cheered on our winter sports teams and celebrated their outstanding achievements this season. In particular, our basketball team had an exceptional year, demonstrating incredible teamwork, skill, and determination on the court that took the team to the New York state championships.

But basketball isn't the only sport that has shone brightly during the winter 2024 sports season. The NFHS bowling team rolled their way to success, showcasing precision and finesse with every frame. Wolverine swimmers made waves in the pool, demonstrating their dedication to excellence. Cheers to the NFHS cheerleading squad, as they brought energy and spirit to every competition while also uplifting our sports teams and rallying the crowds. Our indoor track and field team was amazing this season, with runners who broke record times and showed great agility. The NFHS Wolverine wrestlers grappled their way to victory with strength and perseverance.

Thank you to everyone who helped make Spirit Week and the Winter Pep Assembly resounding successes. NFHS will keep the spirit alive and make the rest of the school year just as memorable!



# Up and Atom!

The annual elementary Science Fair and STEM Expo showed science is fun

For some, it made for a bad hair day; for others, it was a chance to flex their robotics skills, and others took a virtual reality trip. For all to enjoy, "it" was the 5th Annual Elementary Science Fair and STEM Expo on March 13, 2024, at Harry F. Abate Elementary School.

The science fair was for students across the Niagara Falls City School District (NFCSD) in grades 4-6. The students completed projects independently and were judged at this event by volunteers from Thermo Fisher Scientific. Congratulations to all of the winners:

**4th Grade**

- Derek Copelin 1st Place
- Zoe Bellavia 2nd Place
- Soha Ulhay 3rd Place
- Joclynn Fernandez Honorable Mention

**6th Grade**

- Blake Copelin 1st Place
- Roberto McGrady 2nd Place
- Frank Bellavia 3rd Place
- Ayana Love Honorable Mention

**5th Grade**

- Mason Mettler 1st Place
- Audrey Anthony 2nd Place
- Henry Johnston 3rd Place
- Allen Cowart Honorable Mention
- Carmelo Dolson Honorable Mention

The STEM expo was for students across the District in all grades k-12.

District participants included:

- Sister School STEM classes showcasing robotics and coding activities
- Prep School Technology showcasing 3D printing and drones
- Niagara Falls High School (NFHS) showcasing STEM coursework
- Elementary robotics competition between Maple Avenue Elementary School and GJ Mann Elementary School to showcase the Vex Robotics after-school programs
- Prep School Vex Robotics program
- NFHS Vex Robotics program
- Virtual Reality activities, including activities about the April 8, 2024 Eclipse!

The District's community partners set up interactive stations.

The participants included:

- Aquarium of Niagara
- Buffalo Museum of Science
- New York Power Authority
- Thermo Fisher Scientific

The New York Power Authority provided just enough electricity for those who chose to lift their hair high, sticking straight up to the ceiling in all sorts of wild beehive hairdos that left some participants with a bad hair day.

Thank you to all who participated in and made the 5th Annual Elementary Science Fair and STEM Expo a huge success.



# 2024

# MAY

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
			1	2	3	4
5	6 Advanced Placement Exams Begin	7	8 5:30 p.m. – BOE Review Meeting – Public Hearing on Budget	9	10	11
12	13 6:00 p.m. – NFHS PEG Meeting	14	15	16 5:30 p.m. – BOE Regular Meeting	17 AP Exams End; NYS CBT Testing Window Ends	18
19 19-23 Wolverines Spirit Week	20	21 Board and Budget Vote	22 8:00 p.m. – BOE Statutory Meeting	23 7:00 p.m. NFHS Spring Choir Concert Pep Rally	24 No Teachers/ No Staff No Students	25
26	27 Memorial Day Holiday No Students No Staff	28 5:00 p.m. HJK PEG Meeting 5:15 p.m. – DPC Meeting (Social Meeting, location TBD)	29	30 5:00 p.m. – Hyde Park PEG Meeting	31	

# 2024

# June

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
						1
2	3	4 Algebra Regents Exam	5	6	7 CES Student of the Month Celebration	8
9	10 6:00 p.m. NFHS PEG Meeting	11	12	13 5:30 p.m. – BOE Review Meeting	14 CES Flag Day Ceremony	15 Senior Class Day Parade and Picnic
16	17	18 Regents Exams begin 3rd Trimester Marking Period Closes	19 Juneteenth Observance No Students No Staff	20 5:00 p.m. – Hyde Park PEG Meeting CES PreK Moving Up Day 5:30 p.m. – BOE Regular Mtg.	21 6:30 p.m. – Senior Prom CES Fun Day	22
23 30	24 Last Day to Enter Grades	25 Last Day for Students/ 10 Month Associates Regents Exams End Last Day for Head Start Students	26 Rating Day – No Students/ Last day for teachers	27 6:00 p.m. – NFHS Graduation Ceremony	28 Report Cards Printed	29

HFA - Abate School    GJM - Mann School    LPS - LaSalle Prep    NFHS - Niagara Falls High School    UPK - Universal Pre-Kindergarten  
 CES - Cataract Elem.    BBP - Bloneva Bond Primary    CEC - Comm. Ed.    BOE - Board of Ed.    NFT - Niagara Falls Teachers  
 HJK - Kalfas School    GPS - Gaskill Prep    PAC - Performing Arts Center at NFHS    SCD - Superintendent's Conference Day    DPC - District Parent Committee



2023-2024  
Board of Education  
www.nfschools.net



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**Michael Capizzi**  
481-2312



**Clara Dunn**  
998-4539



**Paul Kudela**  
308-1819



**Nick Vilardo**  
946-8522



**Mark Laurrie**  
Superintendent  
286-4190 (w)



On February 9, students at Henry J. Kalfas celebrated the Chinese/Lunar New Year, the Year of the Dragon, by wearing red and parading through the school hallways with their dragon masks!

**Red signifies GOOD LUCK for 2024!**

**THE PUBLIC IS WELCOME**  
at all Board of Education Meetings.