



The Panther Post

#WithMontiPride

MONTICELLO CENTRAL SCHOOL DISTRICT // BUDGET 2026-27 // VOLUME 12

VOTE

Tuesday, May 19
Polls open 8 a.m. to 8 p.m.

Budget At-A-Glance

Proposed budget:
\$106,931,092

Proposed School
Tax Levy:
\$47,100,000

Tax Levy Change:
\$1,227,900
2.68%

Proposed budget change:
\$3,408,516
3.29%

Also on the ballot:

Election of Board of
Education Members
(see page 14)

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Budget Proposal

Monticello school budget vote and Board of Education election will be held May 19

Proposed 2026-27 budget is below tax cap, focused on long-term sustainability, and supports student success

On Tuesday, May 19, residents of the Monticello Central School District will vote on the 2026-27 school budget, and elect four members to the Board of Education. The \$106,931,092 spending plan represents a 3.29% increase over the current year's budget and continues the district's focus on fiscal responsibility, student success, and long-term sustainability.

Proposed budget is below tax cap, percentage of the budget funded by taxpayers decreases

The district's primary goal during the budget planning process is to carefully balance fiscal responsibility with a continued commitment to student success. Monticello CSD strives to minimize tax levy increases while keeping the portion of the budget funded by the tax levy under 50%.

The proposed tax levy is \$47.1 million, a 2.68% increase from the prior year. While the district was eligible to increase the levy by a higher percentage (3.99%) under New York State's tax cap formula, it chose to remain below that threshold, continuing its long-standing effort to reduce reliance on property taxes.

As a result, approximately 44.05% of the proposed budget is funded by the tax levy, with the remaining 55.95% supported by state aid and other revenue sources such as BOCES refunds and fund balance.

Rising costs in several areas, including out-of-district special education placements, transportation, utilities, and insurance premiums, presented challenges during the budget development process. Despite these pressures, the district maintained its commitment to fiscal restraint through careful planning and prioritization.

Meeting Student Needs, Maintaining Strong Operations

The 2026-27 budget proposal reflects continued investment in key operational needs and student services.

The plan accounts for increased costs related to special education placements, transportation for out-of-district programs, and necessary facility upgrades to the heating system at the Duggan Elementary School.

The Duggan Elementary School building continues to play an important role in the community as both a polling location and a community center leased by the Town of Bethel. The lease generates revenue for the district, helping to offset operational costs and reduce the financial burden on local taxpayers.

Under the terms of the lease agreement, the district is responsible for maintaining the building, including its heating systems. According to the district's building condition survey, the current heating systems have reached the end of their useful life and require replacement. The planned upgrades will install more energy-efficient systems, helping to lower long-term heating costs while allowing the district to continue generating revenue through the facility's community use.

These investments are essential to meeting the needs of students requiring out-of-district placements and transportation, while also maintaining safe, reliable

district facilities that support community partnerships and protect long-term value for taxpayers.

At the same time, the district continues to align its financial decisions with long-term strategic goals, ensuring resources are directed where they have the greatest impact on students.

Thoughtful Reductions to Preserve Stability

To remain within the tax levy limit, the district identified a series of reductions and cost-saving measures, taking into account declining enrollment and building/department needs.

These include the reduction of six vacant teaching positions, as well as reductions in supplies, contractual services, and instructional materials across the district. All personnel reductions are through attrition or retirement, not layoffs. All current staff and faculty members are accounted for in the proposed spending plan.

By making these targeted adjustments, the district aims to preserve core academic programs and maintain stability in the classroom, while managing overall costs.

Looking Ahead

The proposed budget reflects Monticello's long-term commitment to financial stability and responsible stewardship of taxpayer resources. Through strategic planning, careful reductions, and continued maximization of funding sources, the district has developed a spending plan that supports students while remaining mindful of the community's tax burden.

As enrollment trends continue to shift and costs evolve, Monticello remains focused on delivering a balanced budget that positions the district for continued success in the years ahead.

Voting Locations

- 📍 **Thompson/Monticello - District #1**
Robert J. Kaiser Middle School
45 Breakey Avenue • Monticello, NY
12701
- 📍 **Rock Hill - District #4**
Rock Hill Fire Department
61 Glen Wild Road • Rock Hill, NY
12775
- 📍 **Bethel - District #2**
Duggan Community Center
3460 Route 55 • White Lake, NY
12786
- 📍 **Forestburgh - District #5**
Forestburgh Town Hall
332 King Road • Forestburgh, NY
12777
- 📍 **Mamakating - District #3**
Emma C. Chase School
28 Pennsylvania Avenue
Wurtsboro, NY 12790

If you have a question about where you should vote, call 845-794-7700, ext. 70523, or visit our budget webpage to use the PollFinder tool at monticelloschools.net.

Community

CALENDAR

VISIT OUR WEBSITE FOR MORE INFORMATION

MAY

- 19 – Budget Vote & Election, All District Polling Locations, 8 a.m. – 8 p.m.
- 20 – Board of Education Meeting, Budget Results Adopted, RJK Middle School, 7:30 p.m.

JUNE

- 4 – Board of Education Meeting, RJK Middle School, 7:30 p.m.
- 25 – Board of Education Meeting, RJK Middle School, 7:30 p.m.
- 28 – Board of Education Meeting, RJK Middle School, 7:30 p.m.

JULY

- 2 – Board of Education Meeting, Reorganization Meeting at 6 p.m., followed by Regular Meeting at 7:30 p.m., RJK Middle School
- 16 – Board of Education Meeting, RJK Middle School, 7:30 p.m.

AUGUST

- 6 – Board of Education Meeting, RJK Middle School, 7:30 p.m.
- 20 – Board of Education Meeting, RJK Middle School, 7:30 p.m.

GO RNER

FIRST DAY OF
2026-27
SCHOOL YEAR:
SEPT. 8



★ Hall of Distinction ★

The Monticello Central School District Hall of Distinction honors highly successful alumni, former Board of Education members and former employees who have achieved distinction, outstanding accomplishments or made significant contributions within their school, family, career, community and/or personal lives. The 2025-26 inductees were Alex Cabrero, Class of 1993, and Daniel L. Briggs, Class of 1970.

The committee is currently accepting nominations for the induction class of 2026-27. A ceremony will then be held in the fall of this year to celebrate the newest inductees. More information and a nomination packet are available on the Hall of Distinction webpage located on monticelloschools.net under "About Us". All nomination forms must be submitted by Aug. 1, 2026 to be considered for the 2026 inductee class.

Looking to Give Back?

We are fortunate to be surrounded by a community that cares! We are frequently asked by many generous community organizations and individuals how they can contribute to support our students. Here are some current needs in our buildings:

➤ Kenneth L. Rutherford Elementary School/Robert J. Kaiser Middle School/George L. Cooke Elementary School:

The Kenneth L. Rutherford Elementary School, George L. Cooke Elementary School and Robert J. Kaiser Middle School are accepting donations for their programs that support students at risk for hunger. All three schools are in need of non-perishable food items.

KLR and Cooke are also accepting donations of toiletries to stock their community closets, which provide hygiene products or a change of clothes for students in need.

Donations may be dropped off during regular business hours at any school. For more information, please contact the school's main office.

➤ Emma C. Chase Elementary School:

The Emma C. Chase Elementary School recently took over the Cans for Kids program. Started several years ago by the Woods family, Cans for Kids enables community members to drop off refundable cans and bottles to collection bins placed around town. All proceeds from these collections support the Chase school. Bins are located on Sneed Street, Pine Street and First Street in the village of Wurtsboro, and there is also a bin at the Chase school. The school is also accepting donations of non-perishable food for its backpack program.

➤ St. John Street Preschool

The St. John Street Preschool is always grateful for donations of pants, underwear, socks and shoes to help support toilet learning in our youngest Panthers.

SNAP Supports Student Success and Strengthens Our Schools - Are You Eligible?

The Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) helps ensure students have access to the nutritious food they need to learn, grow, and succeed in school. SNAP also benefits our district by supporting additional funding that helps enhance programs and resources for students.

Families who qualify receive monthly grocery benefits that can be used at local stores. To find out if you may be eligible, visit mrelief.com or text "Food" or "Comida" to 74544.

To learn more, or apply, please visit: <https://www.foodhelpny.org/>



CONNECT WITH US!

Are you a community member who wants to stay in touch with the most up-to-date news and events from the district? Use the QR code, or visit our website to sign up to receive district news via email.



Superintendent's Message

Dear Monticello community:

As we approach the May 19 budget vote, I want to thank our Monticello community for its continued engagement, feedback, and support that help guide our work. This year's proposed budget reflects a careful balance of maintaining strong programs for students while remaining mindful of our responsibility to our taxpayers.

Similar to many other school districts in New York, we continue to experience declining student enrollment and minimal increases in state aid that do not match inflation. We are committed to right-sizing our operations to balance these with the needs of our students. We also, to the greatest extent possible, do our best to avoid any staff layoffs.

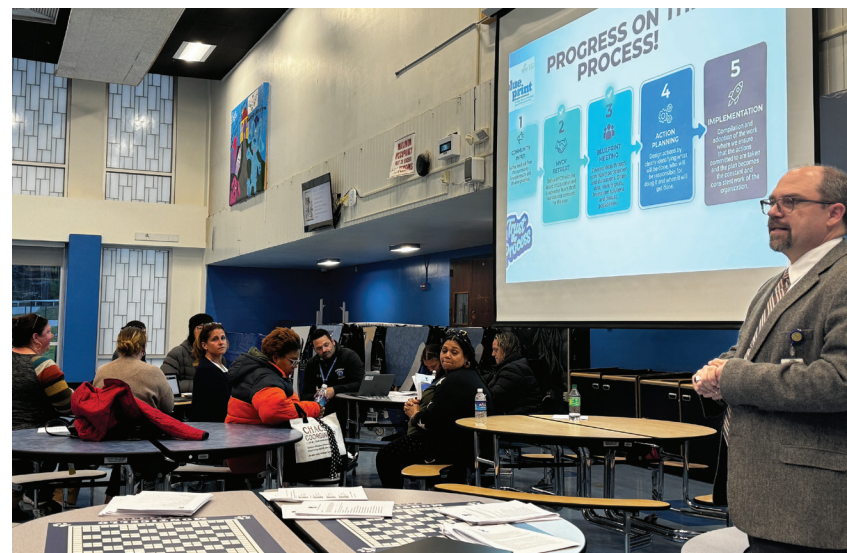
Declining enrollment impacts state aid and staffing needs, while rising costs, particularly in special education placements, transportation, utilities and insurance, place additional pressures on our budget. Despite these challenges, the Board of Education, administration, and teacher leaders have worked hard to make thoughtful, strategic decisions. Reductions included in this proposed budget are the result of attrition and retirement, not layoffs, allowing us to preserve stability for our staff and maintain core programs for students.

For example, this budget would eliminate four (4) elementary teaching positions that would become vacant through retirement. Even with these reductions, estimated class sizes in kindergarten through 5th grade would average between 17 and 21 students. The elimination of a vacant middle school music position will still allow us to continue opportunities for students to pursue the individual arts assessment pathway (IAAP), take Advanced Placement music courses, have regular and similarly-sized music lessons, and have middle school music class sizes ranging from 15 to 17 students per class.

This proposed budget also supports essential student services and operational needs, including transportation for out-of-district programs and necessary upgrades to our facilities, such as improvements to the heating system at Duggan Elementary School. Out-of-district special education placement costs have increased significantly. We estimate these costs—including transportation—to increase by approximately \$1.47 million. The boiler and fuel tank replacements at Duggan Elementary School are necessary to ensure continued and safe operations of the facility. It is presently leased by the Town of Bethel.

Beyond the budget, we are excited about the progress happening across the district. Construction on Ed Kennedy Field is complete, and work on Panther Stadium is well underway (see p. 11). This major transformation to our athletic facilities is a visible reminder of the community's investment in our schools and the opportunities we strive to provide for students. We are also grateful for last year's voter approval of the \$10 million capital reserve fund, which will play an important role in helping offset the cost of future capital improvements and reduce the financial impact on taxpayers over time.

This year, we have also taken important steps to update our district's strategic plan. Through ThoughtExchange and in-person planning sessions, we have gathered input from students, staff, faculty, families, and community members. That feedback is helping to shape our "Blueprint for Excellence:" our new district goals and strategic plan which will guide our priorities, decision-making and investments in the years ahead. We look forward to sharing the finalized mission, vision, and goals with our community in summer 2026.



As part of our strategic planning process, community members, staff, faculty, students, Board of Education trustees and other stakeholders gathered for a "community planning session to help prioritize the district's needs and goals.

As part of our commitment to future-focused planning, the district is exploring ways to expand opportunities for students while using resources more efficiently. This includes pursuing extended school day funding to provide additional time for enrichment and academic support, as well as developing elementary special education classroom options that would allow more students to be served within our buildings in their least restrictive environment. This approach helps meet students' individual needs closer to home, strengthens connections with their school community, and can reduce the high costs associated with out-of-district placements

Financial responsibility is not only about managing the budget that is within our control; it extends to reviewing external contracts, legislation, proposals and mandates that impact our schools, and advocating when we believe they do not align with the best interests of our community. We remain in regular contact with officials at the state and local government level to lobby for fair outcomes for both our students and our taxpayers.

The proposed budget represents a thoughtful, balanced approach to meeting today's needs while planning for the future. It reflects our commitment to student success, responsible stewardship of resources, and partnership with the community.

Thank you for your continued support of the Monticello Central School District.

With Monti Pride,
Matthew T. Evans, Ed.D.
Superintendent of Schools

@WithMontiPride
 @MonticelloCSD
 @MonticelloCentralSchoolDistrict

HIGHLIGHTS FROM OUR FALL AND WINTER SPORTS SEASONS

#WithMontiPride

From little Panthers to future players: building a strong connection to sports in Monticello

Building early awareness of sports opportunities helps students begin to see where they might belong before they ever step onto a team. Introducing different sports at a young age allows students to explore what's available, recognize their interests, and start to picture themselves participating when the time comes. That familiarity can make the transition into middle school athletics feel more accessible, and a lot less intimidating.

In Monticello, that exposure is happening through connections between high school athletes and younger students across the district.

Monticello High School athletes visited the St. John Street preschool for a Dr. Seuss read-a-long with our tiniest Panthers. They went out of their way to make the stories fun and engaging, and the younger students talked about the event for weeks, excited to recap the "big kids" visit and talk about what sports they want to play when they become "big kids."



Now in its second year, the student-led Student Athlete Advisory Council (SAAC) organized a SAAC Day at the Emma C. Chase Elementary School and Kenneth L. Rutherford Elementary School. High school athletes visited these two schools to showcase different sports, talk about their experiences, and lead engaging activities that highlight what each sport involves. While younger students won't officially join teams until middle school, these interactions help build excitement, spark curiosity, and give them a clearer understanding of the opportunities waiting for them in the years ahead.



Five Monticello High School Alpine Skiers competed at the New York State Public High School Athletic Association (NYSPHSAA) Skiing State Championships at Bristol Mountain on Feb. 23 and 24:

- Christian Bastone
- Madelyn Cavello
- Annabella Caycho
- Giuliano Francisco
- Samuel Rein

At the championships, the boys team – Christian Bastone, Samuel Rein and Giuliano Francisco – took second place.



Monticello High School Wrestler Dion Knight competed in the New York State Public High School Athletic Association (NYSPHSAA) Wrestling Championships held in late February in Albany.



On Friday, Dec. 19, members of the Monticello girls modified volleyball team, along with Josie Wilson, head coach; James Luckey, and assistant coach; Sierra Smith, officially presented Megan Evans Garnet Health's manager of philanthropy with a check for \$300 to benefit Garnet Catskills' Oncology Department.

The team raised the money through a "Pink Out" game earlier this year, where team members wore pink, accepted donations and held a bake sale to raise awareness and support for breast cancer research and treatment.

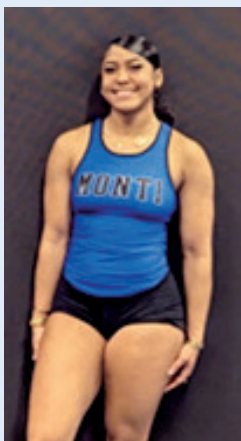
We are grateful to our athletes, staff and community for helping to support this important cause!



Monticello High School Nordic Skier Baya Titus competed at the New York State Public High School Athletic Association Skiing Championships presented by Sports Page Ski Shop at Bristol Mountain Ski Resort in Bristol, NY, on Feb. 23 and 24.



Monticello High School seniors Reagan Zangla & George Gachechiladz were named as Orange County Interscholastic Athletic Association (OCIAA) Scholar Athletes for the 2025-26 school year. This annual award is presented by the OCIAA to one female and one male student from each OCIAA school, who ranks in the top 20 percent of his or her class, participates in at least one varsity sport, and is an above-average athlete who demonstrates outstanding citizenship.



Monticello High School Athlete Gabby Almonte competed at the NYS Indoor Track Championships at the Ocean Breeze Athletic Complex in Staten Island, where she placed 10th in the 55, setting a new personal record.



Five fall and five winter athletic teams were named as scholar athlete teams by the New York State Public High School Athletic Association (NYS PHSAA). Teams that earn this distinction must have 75% of their members maintain an overall average of 90% or better throughout the season. Congrats to the following scholar athlete teams:

FALL

- Boys Cross-Country
- Girls Cross-Country
- Girls Tennis
- Girls Soccer
- Cheerleading

WINTER

- Girls Alpine Skiing
- Boys Alpine Skiing
- Boys Indoor Track
- Girls Indoor Track
- Nordic Skiing

Monticello High School was also named as a school of excellence by NYS PHSAA, with more than 75% of our athletic teams earning the scholar athlete distinction.

PERFORMING ARTS HIGHLIGHTS

#WithMontiPride

From their first experiences with recorders and concerts in elementary school, to advanced performance and theory at the high school level, Monticello Central School District students are immersed in a comprehensive performing arts program that spans music, dance, and theater. With a strong balance of in-class instruction and co-curricular experiences, Monticello's music program empowers students to explore their interests, develop their talents, and grow as confident performers and creators. Here are some highlights from our performing arts department this year.



Kenny Walz shines at All-State

Kenny Walz was selected to play double bass in the NYSSMA All-State String Orchestra, held in Rochester, NY in December. This invitation provided Kenny with the opportunity to work with some of the top musicians in NY State throughout a weekend-long rehearsal which culminated in a final concert. When asked about his experience, Kenny commented that he was so inspired by the high level of musicianship from his fellow student performers, as well as the new concepts and techniques introduced by the world-class conductor.



Five musicians participate in Zone 9 Area All State Music Festival

Five Monticello High School student musicians participated in the 2025 Zone 9 Area All State Music Festival, held in Cornwall in November: Kenny Walz and Emiliano Lima (String Orchestra), Emily Pine (Treble Chorus), and Jovi Roosa and Kiamesha Camacho-Torres (Concert Band). The festival includes top music students from Sullivan, Orange, Ulster, Rockland and Greene counties.



Robert J. Kaiser Middle School Performing Arts students brought Mary Poppins to life on stage with a production of Mary Poppins, Jr. in November.



Monticello High School's Performing Arts Department staged a rousing performance of the classic Rodgers and Hammerstein's Cinderella in March.



Music students throughout the district were selected to participate in the SCMEA All County Music Festival in Liberty. Monticello students were represented in each of the ensembles, which included Elementary Chorus, Middle School Band, Junior High Jazz Band, Junior High Mixed Chorus, Junior High Treble Chorus, Senior High Orchestra, and Senior High Band.



Monticello's Tri-M Music Honor Society Chapter recently traveled to NYC for a Broadway performance of Operation Mincemeat.

Monticello's close proximity to New York City provides a unique advantage, giving our students access to live, world-class performances just a short trip away. These experiences deepen their understanding of musical techniques, inspire creativity, and bring classroom learning to life in a meaningful way. This year, middle and high school music students enjoyed performances at Lincoln Center, Broadway and the Metropolitan Opera House.



Whether they performed in the Sullivan County Government Center's Series, or for their communities at school, our music and dance students throughout the district brought the holidays to life with their art.



Monticello has once again been honored as a "Best Community for Music Education" by the National Association of Music Merchants (NAMM) Foundation. Now in its 26th year, the Best Communities for Music Education designation is awarded to districts that demonstrate outstanding achievement for providing music access and education to all students.

OUR GOALS:

OUR VISION

This Board aspires to build a world-class community of schools, and be a district of choice.

OUR MISSION

This Board's mission is to ensure that each learner is future-ready by providing empowering educational experiences.

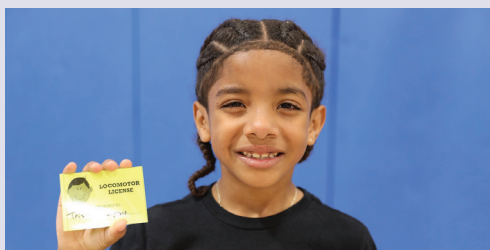
This Board will provide a holistic education comprised of extensive curricular and extra-curricular experiences that empower each individual student to conquer challenges, develop talents, and discover passions, while sustaining rigor and achieving evidence-based academic growth.



After helping plant vegetables and learning about nutrition and healthy food choices with Mr. Lankau and Ms. Kennedy last school year, Kenneth L. Rutherford Elementary School students saw that effort pay off when they returned to school in September ready to harvest their crops. Throughout the fall, these vegetables were used in the school lunches, and when spring returns, the seeds will go back into the earth. This ongoing cycle helps students better understand where their food comes from while reinforcing healthy habits, responsibility, and hands-on learning that connects directly to their everyday lives.



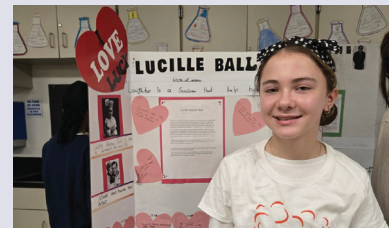
Students and their families gathered in the Emma C. Chase Elementary School gymnasium for STREAM Night – a night of fun, celebrating hands-on learning and imaginative problem solving. Organized by school librarian Patti Andersen, the voluntary event invited students to design and build their own arcade-style games using recycled materials. The challenge encouraged participants to combine science, technology, reading, engineering, art and math skills while thinking creatively about how everyday materials could be repurposed. By designing, building and sharing their games, students demonstrated problem-solving skills, perseverance and teamwork, all while having fun with their families and classmates.



Students in Ms. Monroe and Mr. DiCerbo's physical education classes at George L. Cooke Elementary earned their "locomotor licenses" after demonstrating key movement skills. Locomotor skills—such as running, jumping, hopping, skipping and sliding—help children move from place to place and build the foundation for future physical activity. After watching demonstrations, students practiced each skill while moving around the gym with hula hoops. Once completed, each student received an official license. The activity supported balance, coordination, strength and confidence, while encouraging teamwork and active play. Experiences like this help students build lifelong healthy habits, showing that every jump, skip and sprint supports both physical and mental growth.



Recent graduates from Monticello High School's Classes of 2024 and 2025 returned to speak with current juniors and seniors during a College and Career Talk hosted by the guidance department. Representing a range of post-secondary paths, including community college, SUNY schools, private colleges and trade careers, the alumni shared firsthand insight on transitioning after high school. Because they were recently in the same classrooms, their advice felt especially relevant, covering topics like financial aid, campus life and career decisions. Students were highly engaged, asking questions throughout the session and continuing conversations afterward, gaining practical, real-world perspectives to help guide their next steps.



Sixth-grade students at Robert J. Kaiser Middle School brought history and inspiration to life during a Living Museum project in their ELA classes.

Under the guidance of Ms. Volpe and Ms. Tonkin, students researched individuals they admire or find interesting. Each student created a display highlighting key moments from their person's life, including important achievements, famous quotes, family background, and the impact they made.

Staff and students were invited to visit the classrooms and explore the exhibits, where each student presented their research to guests who stopped by. Many participants fully embraced the experience by dressing up as the person they studied.



St. John Street's UPK students took part in an engaging, bootcamp-style literacy experience designed to build early reading skills. Led by a visiting educator, the session focused on phonetic awareness, vocabulary, rhyming and letter recognition through movement, music and hands-on activities. Students dressed up, worked as teams and rotated through interactive stations, including an obstacle course where they applied what they learned by identifying letters, sounds and colors. The high-energy format helped strengthen confidence, listening skills and engagement, turning foundational literacy instruction into a fun, memorable experience. By the end, students were actively demonstrating new skills while building excitement around learning.

This Board will strive to build authentic relationships rooted in trust, transparency and two-way communication with all constituents. We will actively seek avenues to partner with local organizations and agencies to increase our network of resources to improve and support life-long learning opportunities for our community.



Kenneth L. Rutherford Elementary School students visited The Care Center at Sunset Lake in Liberty, where they performed, and spent time with the residents. They also delivered 120 fleece lap blankets, made with care by Rutherford staff, students and families. Each one was a simple way to bring a little extra comfort, and let residents know they're being thought of.

Opportunities like this mean a lot on both sides. Our students get to connect with members of the community in a meaningful way, and residents get to enjoy some company, music, and conversation. It's a great reminder of how strong our community is when people come together for one another.



Students at the George L. Cooke Elementary School met some integral members of our community, and their trucks, at the school's Touch-a-Truck Day. Volunteers from local businesses and first responder agencies parked throughout the school's bus loop. Students explored trucks and equipment, met drivers and operators, and learned how these vehicles support the community. The event connected classroom learning to real-world experiences while highlighting different careers. It also strengthened community ties by bringing local organizations into the school, creating an engaging, interactive day that encouraged curiosity, conversation and a better understanding of the roles people play in keeping the community running.



Members of the Wurtsboro Fire Department and Bloomingburg Fire Company visited the Emma C. Chase Elementary School for a Fire Safety Assembly.

Students gathered in the playground to learn important safety tips, watch some of the fire equipment in action, and hang out with crowd-pleaser Dally the Dalmatian – Wurtsboro Fire Department's official mascot. Dally and crew headed over to our youngest students' classrooms to pass out some special gifts, courtesy of the Wurtsboro Fire Department Auxiliary: coloring sheets and their very own personal fire hats!



Monticello High School held a meaningful Veterans Day assembly to honor those who have served in the United States Armed Forces. The program began with recognition of district staff who are veterans, followed by a presentation on the history of Veterans Day by Civil Air Patrol cadets. National Honor Society members shared the significance of the "Table for One" tribute, and local Boy Scouts demonstrated a ceremonial flag folding. Students also learned the history of "Taps," and the assembly concluded with guest veteran speakers who shared their personal experiences in service.

Sixth-grade students from Robert J. Kaiser Middle School enjoyed a perfect fall day at Kelder's Farm, a local favorite in the community. Students explored outdoor activities and took home hand-picked pumpkins or apples, making the experience both fun and memorable.

The trip highlighted the value of learning through real-world experiences while strengthening connections to our community.



Students in Ms. Frausto's class at the St. John Street UPK program hosted an apple pie-making party, inviting families and friends to join in the experience. Guests dropped by to assemble "pies," alongside the students, creating a warm, hands-on opportunity for connection and shared learning. The event brought together families, staff and community members in a welcoming classroom environment, strengthening relationships, and celebrating time spent together.

This Board will foster an inclusive culture that sparks community pride, emphasizes kindness and respect and ensures that all students, staff and visitors are valued and supported in safe, secure, orderly and clean appropriately effective facilities.

SCHOOL culture & climate

With a little help from Monticello High School students, Santa, Mrs. Claus and a slew of his helpers spread joy to the preschool students at the St. John Street School. Organized by Monticello High School's Food and Toy Drive Committee, Santa and his friends dropped by the school to read stories, play games, and give high-fives.



While it may have looked like Santa was visiting a sea of Grinches (due to the fact that his visit coincided with the school's "Grinch Day" during Spirit Week), the students were all on the "nice list" and received a special goodie bag from the big guy, himself.



Thanksgiving is all about spending time with the ones you love – and for the students in Ms. Crofoot's class at the Emma C. Chase Elementary School, that meant reconnecting with some old friends! Several students who had previously been in Ms. Crofoot's class had moved to Ms. Roselli's class at the George L. Cooke Elementary School.

The two teachers planned a Charlie Brown "Friendsgiving" to reconnect the students with their former classmates, and the students spent the day celebrating with a host of activities, culminating in a fun Charlie Brown-themed "dinner" – complete with pretzels, jelly beans, toast, milkshakes and a very special "turkey" that was filled with popcorn!



Kenneth L. Rutherford Elementary School hosted its annual Multicultural Night, bringing families together to celebrate the diverse cultures and traditions within the school community. The evening began with a shared meal, followed by interactive activities including dance lessons, trivia, crafts and games. Students created posters highlighting their cultural backgrounds, which were displayed throughout the gym. The event also featured lively performances by Monticello High School students Nashlye Caraballo-Lalane, Dymond Rosa and Isaiah Sanchez, along with a traditional Mexican folk dance by Colores de mi Tierra. Attendees left the with a strong sense of connection, pride and community.



Monticello High School's pep rally brought the building together for a high-energy celebration of school spirit. The bleachers were filled with students cheering for their friends and classmates as they competed in a slew of fun activities, such as dodgeball, musical chairs, dance offs, and of course – the fan favorite, the just!



Reading Specialist Cyrena DiCio led an activity at Robert J. Kaiser Middle School to reinforce the school's motto: Be Respectful, Be Responsible, Be Safe. As part of the lesson, she asked students to reflect on what it means to embody these values and how they might look both inside and outside of school. Together, the students generated a variety of examples that demonstrated safety, respect, and responsibility in action. They took turns recording their ideas on charts, which were then reread several times to help students internalize the concepts. The activity served as an inspirational and unifying experience, encouraging students to live out the school's guiding principles in their daily lives.



George L. Cooke Elementary School's second annual Winter Fun Day brought the whole school together for a shared day of outdoor and indoor activities. Planned in part by student "Nature Ambassadors," the event encouraged leadership, teamwork and student voice. The day fostered strong relationships among students and staff, promoting joy, connection, and outdoor learning in all weather!

This Board will fortify its financial assets through long-term, strategic planning aimed to consistently maximize district improvements while minimizing taxpayer impact.

CAPITAL IMPROVEMENT PROJECT UPDATES

In May 2024, resident voters in the Monticello Central School District approved a capital improvement project to improve safety and security at the George L. Cooke and Kenneth L. Rutherford Elementary Schools, replace the district's deteriorating athletics facilities, and make needed repairs and restorations at the St. John Street Community School and Monticello High School. Since the project's approval, the district's facilities team, along with our architect, and construction teams, have been hard at work implementing the new projects.

FINANCIAL
responsibility



Athletic Facilities

The new track and field at Ed Kennedy Field is now complete. Featuring a synthetic turf field, an expanded eight-lane track, and signature "Monti blue" branding, the facility provides a safer, more performance-ready space for athletes.

Construction continues on the new "Panther Stadium," which will feature a 1,000-seat grandstand, pressbox, restroom and locker facilities, a new field house and a video scoring board. The facility is expected to be in use by our athletes in the fall of 2026.

Once completed, Panther Stadium and the renovated Ed Kennedy field will create new opportunities for Monticello Central School District to host regional track meets, large-scale sporting events and of course, our own graduation ceremonies in a modern, state-of-the-art facility.



Elementary Classroom Upgrades

Construction at George L. Cooke Elementary School and Emma C. Chase Elementary School was completed in the summer of 2025, bringing bright, refreshed learning spaces to both buildings. The upgraded classrooms feature new flooring, ceilings with energy-efficient LED lighting, updated sinks and cabinetry, and added storage casework to better support daily instruction. The original storefront windows have also been replaced with reinforced, fire-resistant classroom doors, enhancing safety while maintaining a welcoming feel. Together, these upgrades create more comfortable, modern environments for student learning, and teaching innovation.

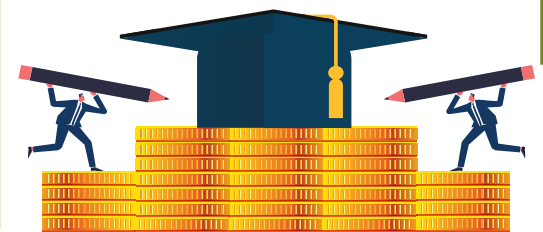
Similar classroom upgrades at the Kenneth L. Rutherford Elementary School will begin in summer 2026, and are expected to be completed when students return in September.



UP NEXT Summer 2026

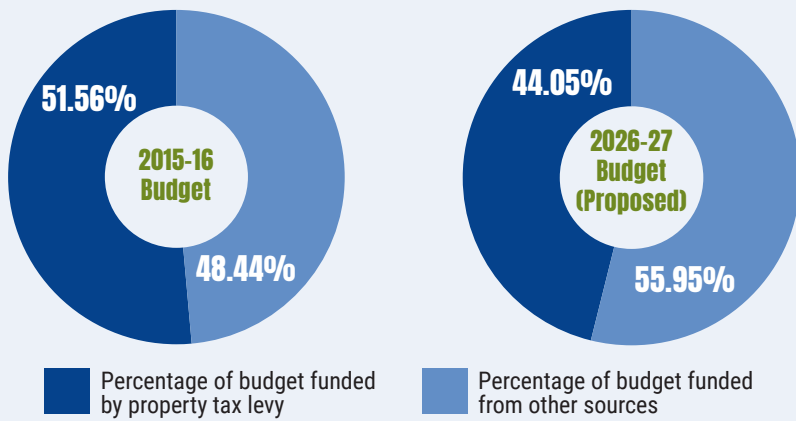


- Classroom renovations at Kenneth L. Rutherford Elementary School
- Renovations to the façade at the 22 St. John Street building
- Installation of energy-efficient windows in the Monticello High School library



BUDGET HIGHLIGHTS

Taxpayer burden has decreased by 7.51% since 2015-16



The district has historically worked to progressively shrink the percentage of the budget funded by the taxpayers, while aggressively pursuing alternative revenue streams. In the 2015-16 school year, the tax levy funded 51.56% of the budget. In the proposed 2026-27 budget, the tax levy would fund 44.05% of the budget, a decrease of 7.51%

Board of Education Election

In addition to considering the 2026-27 budget, voters will also elect four members to the Board of Education.

Seven candidates are seeking election to four seats. Voters will choose one candidate for each seat, as illustrated on the official ballot printed below.

Candidate statements are available on the budget webpage on the district's website: www.monticelloschools.net



OFFICIAL BALLOT

Below is the exact ballot that voters will see at the polls on May 19.

PROPOSITION 1

Yes No

Shall the budget of \$106,931,092, for the 2026-2027 school year be adopted and the requisite portion thereof in the amount of \$47,100,000, be raised by taxation on the taxable property of the Monticello Central School District?

OFFICES	1 TRUSTEE For Three (3) Years Seat held by Helen Jersey (Vote for One)	2 TRUSTEE For Two (2) Years Seat held by Heather Fassell (Vote for One)	3 TRUSTEE For Three (3) Years Seat held by Wendy Galligan-Weiner (Vote for One)	4 TRUSTEE For Three (3) Years Seat held by Roberto Bravo-Colon (Vote for One)
MONTICELLO CENTRAL SCHOOL DISTRICT	<input type="checkbox"/> 1A Dacey-Ann Blake	<input type="checkbox"/> 2A Tamika Harris	<input type="checkbox"/> 3A Wendy Galligan-Weiner	<input type="checkbox"/> 4A Logan Morey
MONTICELLO CENTRAL SCHOOL DISTRICT	<input type="checkbox"/> 2B Helen Jersey	<input type="checkbox"/> 2B Heather Fassell		<input type="checkbox"/> 4B Roberto Bravo-Colon
MONTICELLO CENTRAL SCHOOL DISTRICT	Write-in Candidate _____	Write-in Candidate _____	Write-in Candidate _____	Write-in Candidate _____

3-Part Budget Fiscal Year: 2026

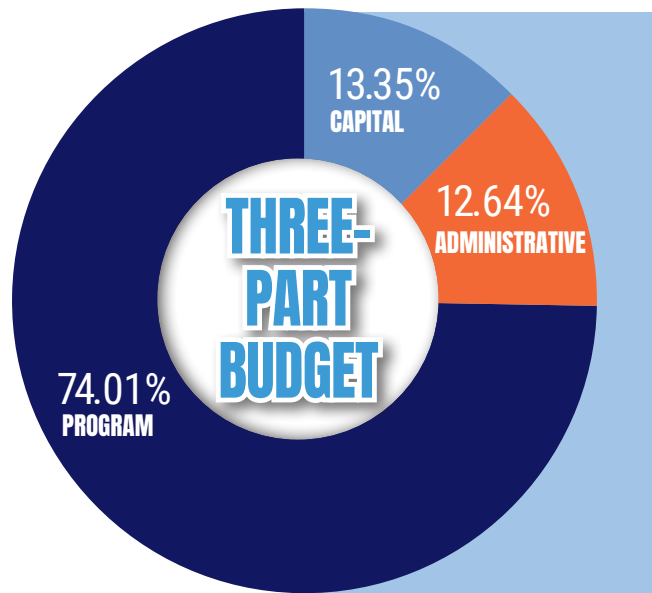
State Function	Description	2026-27 Proposed Budget	2025-26 Adopted Budget
ADMINISTRATION			
1010	Board Of Education	\$60,500	\$60,000
1040	District Clerk	\$62,563	\$60,755
1060	District Meeting	\$48,240	\$47,640
1240	Chief School Administrator	\$358,883	\$343,950
1310	Business Administration	\$887,257	\$822,523
1320	Auditing	\$86,500	\$84,500
1330	Tax Collector	\$44,420	\$47,420
1380	Fiscal Agent Fee	\$20,000	\$20,000
1420	Legal	\$285,000	\$280,000
1430	Personnel	\$279,425	\$277,256
1460	Records Management Officer	\$15,000	\$15,000
1480	Public Information and Services	\$144,759	\$147,200
1670	Central Printing & Mailing	\$110,000	\$110,000
1910	Unallocated Insurance	\$480,000	\$442,000
1920	School Association Dues	\$16,000	\$15,000
1950	Assessments on School Property	\$30,000	\$30,000
1981	BOCES Administrative Costs	\$1,517,848	\$1,518,293
2010	Curriculum Development and Supervision	\$1,024,937	\$1,039,779
2020	Supervision-Regular School	\$4,091,279	\$3,832,258
2070	Inservice Training-Instruction	\$75,000	\$80,000
2110	Teaching-Regular School	\$293,000	\$293,000
9000	Employee Benefits	\$3,583,894	\$3,492,361
Total Administration		\$13,514,505	\$13,058,935

CAPITAL			
1620	Operation of Plant	\$4,079,726	\$3,993,068
1621	Maintenance of Plant	\$2,669,318	\$2,056,639
1930	Judgments and Claims	\$5,000	\$5,000
1964	Refund on Real Property Taxes	\$40,000	\$40,000
5510	District Transportation Services	\$800,000	\$700,000
9000	Employee Benefits	\$1,734,961	\$1,690,650
9711	Serial Bonds-School Construction	\$4,040,788	\$4,151,438
9731	Bond Antic Notes-School Construction	\$381,077	\$0
9732	Bond Antic Notes-Bus Purchases	\$0	\$0
9785	Install Purch Debt-State Aided Hardware	\$254,906	\$426,578
9788	Leases	\$172,865	\$172,865
9950	Transfer to Capital Fund	\$100,000	\$100,000
Total Capital		\$14,278,641	\$13,336,238

State Function	Description	2026-27 Proposed Budget	2025-26 Adopted Budget
PROGRAM			
1420	Legal	\$2,000	\$2,000
1910	Unallocated Insurance	\$55,000	\$55,000
2070	Inservice Training-Instruction	\$75,500	\$115,500
2110	Teaching-Regular School	\$22,144,516	\$22,407,732
2250	Prg For Sdnts w/Disabil-Med Elgble	\$23,858,316	\$21,819,401
2280	Occupational Education(Grades 9-12)	\$2,483,235	\$2,485,824
2330	Teaching-Special Schools	\$372,000	\$374,000
2610	School Library & AV	\$415,601	\$416,193
2630	Computer Assisted Instruction	\$2,094,074	\$2,083,319
2805	Attendance-Regular School	\$157,021	\$150,015
2810	Guidance-Regular School	\$1,072,266	\$1,061,676
2815	Health Srvc-Regular School	\$614,377	\$547,176
2820	Psychological Srvc-Reg Schl	\$393,172	\$372,963
2825	Social Work Srvc-Regular School	\$816,417	\$941,075
2830	Pupil Personnel Srvc-Special Schools	\$260,636	\$202,130
2850	Co-Curricular Activ-Reg Schl	\$273,400	\$274,700
2855	Interscholastic Athletics-Reg Schl	\$978,187	\$900,994
2870	School Store Fund	\$0	\$0
5510	District Transport Srvc-Med Elgble	\$4,881,047	\$5,186,342
5530	Garage Building	\$103,550	\$101,375
5540	Contract Transportation-Med Elgble	\$0	\$0
7310	Youth Program	\$0	\$0
8070	Census	\$28,926	\$28,035
9000	Employee Benefits	\$17,883,705	\$17,426,953
9901	Transfer to Other Funds	\$0	\$0
9901	Transfer to School Food Service Fund	\$0	\$0
9901	Transfer to Special Aid Fund	\$175,000	\$175,000
Total Program		\$79,137,946	\$77,127,403

BUDGET COMPONENT SUMMARY				
	2026-27 Proposed Budget	% of Budget	2025-26 Adopted Budget	% of Budget
Administration	\$13,514,505	12.64%	\$13,058,935	12.61%
Capital	\$14,278,641	13.35%	\$13,336,238	12.88%
Program	\$79,137,946	74.01%	\$77,127,403	74.50%
Total	\$106,931,092	100.00%	\$103,522,576	100.00%

For more information about the 2026-27 proposed budget, please visit our website www.monticelloschools.net



By law, school districts must divide their proposed budgets into three portions – administrative, capital and program – and compare them to the current year’s amounts. Monticello’s three-part budget breaks down as follows:

	Proposed 2026-27	Budgeted 2025-26
ADMINISTRATIVE Amount:	\$13,514,505	\$13,058,935

The administrative component includes all administrative salaries, benefits and office and program costs for directing and supervising all instructional activities of the district.

	Proposed 2026-27	Budgeted 2025-26
PROGRAM Amount:	\$79,137,946	\$77,127,403

The program component includes salaries and benefits for classroom teaching personnel, instructional materials, supplies and services, interscholastic sports, extracurricular programs and transportation.

	Proposed 2026-27	Budgeted 2025-26
CAPITAL Amount:	\$14,278,641	\$13,336,238

The capital component includes all costs for facility maintenance operations, including salaries and benefits of plant operations staff, supplies, utilities, capital expenditures, debt service and purchase of transportation vehicles. Contractual leases that were included in the program budget for installment purchases and leases are now included in the capital budget.

REVENUES ► Where the money comes from

REVENUE	Proposed 2026-27	Budgeted 2025-26
Charges for Services	\$200,000	\$200,000
Other	\$4,188,000	\$3,875,000
Interest Income	\$720,000	\$500,000
Medicaid	\$300,000	\$300,000
State Aid	\$53,197,750	\$51,525,476
Fund Balance	\$1,225,342	\$1,250,000
Tax Levy	\$47,100,000	\$45,872,100
TOTALS	\$106,931,092	\$103,522,576

EXPENSES ► Where the money goes

EXPENSES	Proposed 2026-27	Budgeted 2025-26
Employee Salaries	\$43,808,694	\$43,238,701
Benefits	\$23,202,560	\$22,609,964
BOCES	\$18,066,381	\$17,486,470
Program Support	\$12,958,379	\$11,518,878
Equipment	\$1,252,437	\$1,161,937
Materials and Supplies	\$2,518,005	\$2,480,745
Debt Service	\$4,676,771	\$4,578,016
Transfer to Capital and Special Aid Funds	\$275,000	\$275,000
Lease of 60 Jefferson St. Admin Offices	\$172,865	\$172,865
TOTALS	\$106,931,092	\$103,522,576

Q. WHAT HAPPENS IF VOTERS REJECT THE PROPOSED 2026-27 SCHOOL BUDGET ON MAY 19?

Under New York State Education Law, if voters defeat their school district budget in May, a district has three options.

It can:

- ✓ Resubmit the same proposal for a revote;
- ✓ Submit a revised proposal for a revote; or
- ✓ Adopt a contingent budget.

If it resubmits a proposal and the proposal is rejected a second time, it must adopt a contingent budget.

According to state law, a contingent budget prevents the district from spending money on particular expenses, including community use of school facilities (unless all costs are reimbursed to the district); new equipment purchases, non-essential maintenance, capital expenditures (except in emergencies) and certain field trips and student supplies. Therefore, the district would need to remove \$1,421,581 worth of buses, equipment, training, supplies and materials, as well as unrepresented employee salary increases if it adopted a contingent budget.



What are EQUALIZATION RATES and why are they used?

A tale of two houses, two towns, one school district, and two tax bills

Town A and Town B are different towns within the same school district. The house in Town A and the house in Town B recently sold for the same amount. So, the two houses have the same market value and should pay the same amount in school taxes.

However, Town A and Town B use different assessment practices, which means that the houses have different assessed values – and assessed values are used in the computation of property tax bills. Therefore, for the houses in Town A and Town B to pay the same in taxes, the tax rates (per \$1,000 of assessed value) must be different for each town.

The process of equalization is used to determine these tax rates. Essentially, full market value serves as a common denominator, or equalizer, in the process of setting tax rates.

Equalization rates indicate the ratio of the assessed value to market value in the municipality. They are used in an effort to fairly apportion the share of taxes when a taxing jurisdiction, such as a school district, contains multiple municipalities. They are designed to ensure that owners of properties with similar full market values pay an equivalent amount of taxes.



TAX BILL – HOUSE IN TOWN A

Full Market Value:	\$250,000
Equalization Rate:	74.00
Assessed Value:	\$185,000
Town Tax Rate:	\$27.03 per \$1,000
Total Taxes Due:	\$5,000



TAX BILL – HOUSE IN TOWN B

Full Market Value:	\$250,000
Equalization Rate:	100.00
Assessed Value:	\$250,000
Town Tax Rate:	\$20.00 per \$1,000
Total Taxes Due:	\$5,000

In this example, House A and House B pay an equivalent amount of taxes due to the different tax rates.

Remember: Assessed value × $\frac{\text{Tax Rate}}{1,000}$ = Total Tax Bill

In the example given, **properties in Town A are assessed at 74 percent of full market value** (an equalization rate of 74) and **Town B properties are assessed at full market value** – an equalization rate of 100.

School districts calculate the total full market value of all properties in each municipality. Equalization rates allow them to determine the share of the tax levy to be paid by each town, a necessary step to calculating tax rates for each town. The process is designed to:

- Fairly apportion the tax levy among the municipalities in a school district; and
- Ensure that the amount of taxes paid by owners of similar properties in the district is similar – regardless of the town and its assessment practices.

Board of Education

Timothy Crumley, *President*
 Wendy Galligan-Weiner, *Vice President*
 Roberto Bravo Colon
 Heather Fassell
 Todd Grodin
 Melinda Gwiozdowski
 Helen Jersey
 Ashley Rielly
 Meghan Stalter

Student Board Members

Reagan Zangla
 Evan Chen (Alternate)

District Administration

Superintendent of Schools
 Matthew T. Evans, Ed.D.

Assistant Superintendent for Business
 Lisa Failla

Assistant Superintendent for Curriculum and Instruction
 Theresa Carlin

District Public Information Officer
 Courtney Bonfante



CENTRAL SCHOOL DISTRICT
 60 Jefferson Street, Suite 3, Monticello, NY 12701

**BUDGET
 EDITION
 2026**

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BUDGET EDITION 2026

MONTICELLO CENTRAL SCHOOL DISTRICT // BUDGET 2026-27 // VOLUME 12 // PAGE 16

**School
 District
 Budget
 Notice**

VOTE!

**May 19
 8 a.m.
 to 8 p.m.**

**Voting Locations:
 See page 1**

For more information
 about the 2026-27
 proposed budget,
 please visit our website
www.monticelloschools.net

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	\$ 103,522,576	\$106,931,092	\$105,509,511
Increase/Decrease for the 2026-27 School Year		\$3,408,516	\$1,986,935
Percentage Increase/Decrease in Proposed Budget		3.29%	1.92%
Change in the Consumer Price Index		2.63%	
A. Proposed Levy to Support the Total Budgeted Amount	\$45,872,100	\$47,100,000	
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)	\$45,872,100	\$47,100,000	\$45,872,100
F. Total Permissible Exclusions	\$4,038,029	\$4,453,388	
G. School Tax Levy Limit, <u>Excluding</u> Levy for Permissible Exclusions	\$41,834,071	\$42,646,612	
H. Total Proposed School Year Tax Levy, <u>Excluding</u> Levy to Support Library Debt and/or Permissible Exclusions (E - B - F + D)	\$41,834,071	\$42,646,612	
I. Difference: G - H (Negative Value Requires 60.0% Voter Approval - See Note Below Regarding Separate Propositions) **	\$0	\$0	
Administrative Component	\$13,058,935	\$13,514,505	\$13,345,361
Program Component	\$77,127,403	\$79,137,946	\$78,895,509
Capital Component	\$13,336,238	\$14,278,641	\$13,268,641

According to state law, a contingent budget prevents the district from spending money on particular expenses, including community use of school facilities (unless all costs are reimbursed to the district), new equipment purchases, non-essential maintenance, capital expenditures (except in emergencies) and certain field trips and student supplies. If the district adopted a contingent budget it would need to remove \$1,421,581 worth of buses, equipment, training supplies and materials, as well as unrepresented employee salaries.

Description	Amount
Buses	\$800,000
Equipment	\$452,437
Materials, Supplies and Purchased Services	\$89,062
Unrepresented employee salary increases	\$80,082

Under the Budget Proposed for the 2026-27 School Year

Estimated Basic STAR Exemption Savings ¹	\$350
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The annual budget vote for the fiscal year 2026-27 by the qualified voters of the Monticello Central School District, Sullivan County, New York, will be held at Robert J. Kaiser Middle School, Dr. Duggan Community Center, Emma C. Chase Elementary School, Rock Hill Fire Department and Forestburgh Town Hall in said district on Tuesday, May 19, 2026 between the hours of 8:00am and 8:00pm, prevailing time in the Robert J. Kaiser Middle School, Dr. Duggan Community Center, Emma C. Chase Elementary School, Rock Hill Fire Department and Forestburgh Town Hall at which time the polls will be opened to vote by voting ballot or machine.

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