

# ROAR



## Every Student, Every Day, Every Opportunity!

### Black Tiger News

May 2023

#### Greetings!

I am pleased to share with you our latest publication of ROAR. This publication is the result of the hard work and dedication of our team to provide you with important information about our district. We want to ensure that you are informed about the latest developments in our district, and we hope that this publication will serve as a valuable resource for you. We have included updates on our building project, student accomplishments, extracurricular activities, and school safety efforts. If you would like to learn even more about our schools, please check out the State of the Schools address on our district YouTube channel, @CuyahogaFallsCitySchools.

We also want to take this opportunity to thank our dedicated staff, students, and families for their continued support. Your commitment to our district helps us to provide the best education possible for our students. I am honored to be a part of such a vibrant and forward-thinking community, and I am committed to continuing to work with our students, families, and community members to ensure that our schools remain the best they can be. We value your input and look forward to continuing to work together.

In this edition, we will provide you with updates on the progress of the construction project and will continue to do so as the work evolves. We are to see the transformation that is taking place, and we know that the end result will be a state-of-the-art facility that our entire community can be proud of. I want to extend a heartfelt thank you to our construction team for their hard work and dedication. They have put in countless hours to make this project a success, and we are grateful for their commitment to excellence. We encourage the community to check in on the new campus with our live webcam which can be found on the district's YouTube channel. Go Black Tigers!



Congratulations to Ellie Brustoski for breaking the high school record in high jump this spring! At the conclusion of this season, she will have earned 15 letters in varsity sports and be added to the Athletic Hall of Fame!



Congratulations to senior Mackenzie Kramer, for scoring over 1,000 points during her CFHS career in basketball!



**Andrea Celico, Ph.D.**  
Superintendent

### UPCOMING EVENTS

#### May

- 02 PD Day-Voting in buildings  
No school for students
- 10 Board of Education Meeting
- 12 Early Release Day
- 23 Graduation Day
- 24 Board of Education Meeting
- 25 Last Day for Students
- 26 Last Day for Staff
- 29 Memorial Day

#### June

- 14 Board of Education Meeting
- 19 Juneteenth Holiday:  
Offices Closed
- 28 Board of Education Meeting



# 6-12 Grade Campus



Construction activities at the new 6-12 grade campus have made continued progress through the winter months. Weather has been very favorable for the extensive work needed to prepare the site for construction of the building's walls and foundations this spring. The site grading and stormwater detention system were completed in 2022. Underground utility installations, asphalt paving, and grass seeding will continue through this spring, which will help to keep the site draining and less muddy throughout the remainder of construction. Additionally, you will see the installation of aggregate piers around the footprint of the building – another important milestone of the early site work schedule.

The main building construction will commence in May of this year. The first major activity is installing the building's concrete footers, which will be followed by the installation of underground utilities. This summer, you will start seeing masonry-bearing wall construction in select areas of the building.

Our construction team has been working diligently to ensure that every aspect of the project is executed with precision and care. The foundation and groundwork for the campus is taking shape beautifully, and the stadium and auditorium plans are progressing according to schedule. Our new building will open during the 2025-2026 school year.

The project is \$19M over budget but that will not deter us from meeting our goal of providing our students with the resources, technology, and opportunities they deserve. While this figure is staggering, with the supply chain issues and inflation, we were anticipated to be close to 40% over budget, but due to our cost saving strategies, we cut that percentage in half!

We have worked diligently to save money and to make concessions where we could without compromising the integrity of the building or the assurances we made to the community. Recognizing we have done all we can in reductions, we are methodically exploring ways to gain revenue. Proceeds from the bond and COPs issue are/will be invested.

Many districts that have undertaken facilities improvement projects over the last two years are finding themselves in the difficult position of needing additional funds in order to complete their building programs. Even with the best plans that include adequate contingencies, rising costs on everything from fuel to materials to labor are hitting budgets hard. Design and construction firms are reporting year-over-year cost increases of a minimum of 15% and as high as 30% on a cost-per-square-foot basis.

So what are we to do? Obviously, one answer is to value engineer the project downward to live within the original estimated cost. Unfortunately, this may not only be painful, but, in many cases, impractical. There are a limited number of concessions to be made. At some point, we will begin to impact the commitment made to residents as it relates to the final product. Rarely, if ever, would a district want to go back on the ballot to request additional funds for a project already approved by voters. For many districts, the solution is to combine these cost-saving efforts with additional borrowing to supplement the voted bond issue. The most common method to borrow for these types of projects is a capital lease (also called a lease purchase or COPs).

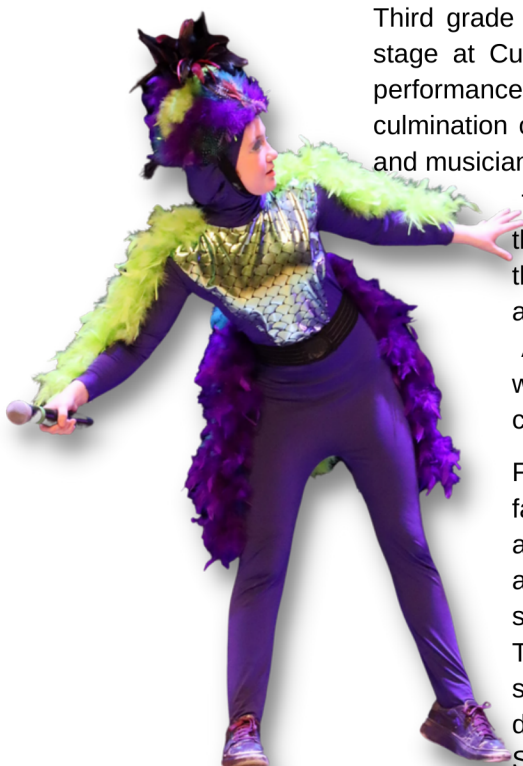




Although COPs are different from a bond issue, the mechanics of a COPs issue are very similar to bonds. Under a lease-purchase agreement, the school district makes regular payments of principal and interest over a period of time for the acquisition and use of the property. Some districts also generate capitalized interest that produces sufficient funds to pay the costs of issuance as well as generating additional funds to give the district time to work the debt service into their budget.

We recognize this news may be concerning to our community, but one thing we can assure you of is that we will deliver the building, the promises, the hopes and dreams of our stakeholders and students. A state of the art facility that includes a beautiful stadium, auditorium, and black box theater will be delivered as imagined.

It will take some sacrifices on our part, but we will make sure that our students are provided the opportunities and experiences they deserve without asking taxpayers for any additional money or funds! We will continue to provide updates about the project as we receive them. In our June ROAR, we will provide a timeline for construction as the structure begins to take shape this summer.



Third grade students from all six elementary schools convened on stage at Cuyahoga Falls High School on March 23 for a special performance of *The Hummingbird*. This performance marked the culmination of a 30 week in-residency program with teaching artists and musicians from the non-profit organization, ArtSparks.

The story of *The Hummingbird* is a parable about doing the best you can while trying to make a positive impact on the environment. In addition to dancing, students created art from recycled materials for the set of the show. ArtSparks partnered with Sabertooth Public Art to work with the district elementary art teachers to design and create set pieces that were also environmentally friendly.

For the first time, two performances were available for families to attend. Students performed for nearly 1,600 audience members for the new evening performance. In addition to each school being a featured character in the story, students from the ArtSparks scholarship program, TNT and XD, lead dancers and audiences through the story. This marks the eighth year ArtSparks has offered dance education to students in the Cuyahoga Falls City School District.

## ArtSparks Dance.Music.Joy.



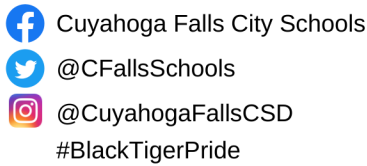
The Cuyahoga Falls Robotics team, comprised of students from Bolich and Roberts Middle Schools competed in the 2023 NEOTech Robotics Competition on March 14th, which was a part of the NEOTech Technology Conference sponsored by NEOnet. They competed in three events: Bot Ball, Mini-Sumo and Maze, and won first place overall!



Nine students from Cuyahoga Falls High School won first place in the 22nd Annual Miniature Bridge Building Competition hosted by the Summit County Engineer's office. Three teams competed and all three teams placed in the top 10!



## Follow Us on Social Media



## Safety in Our Schools

Ensuring a safe and secure learning environment for students and staff is essential for the Cuyahoga Falls City School District. The District has been increasing security measures on all campuses this school year. As a result of several grants, including approximately \$500,000 from the Ohio Facilities Construction Commission Safety Grant. With these funds, the district is planning to purchase new equipment which will enhance safety features in our buildings. All buildings have also had the front door cameras replaced to assist office workers in identifying visitors at the buildings.

With the support of the Board of Education, maintaining a safe environment for students and staff has been a priority for Superintendent Andrea Celico since her arrival in the district. As part of the restructuring of administrative positions at the board office, additional security responsibilities were added to the Director of Technology and Security, held by Ryan Huch. In addition, the district has created a part-time position to manage and coordinate all aspects of district safety and security. The Security Supervisor will manage the building safety equipment, crisis plans, and serve as the primary school division liaison with local, state, and federal public safety agencies on all matters related to school safety, among other duties. The Security Supervisor will begin their duties this summer and work closely with Ryan Huch, Director of Technology and Security.

On March 21st, the district partnered with the Cuyahoga Falls Police Department, FBI, Summit County Prosecutor's Office, and Stow Municipal Court to present a program on online safety to all middle school and high school students. CFPD Officer Ted Davis began his presentation by stating, "We take our job to keep you safe very seriously every single day." Throughout the presentation, presenters reminded students that anything posted online could be retrieved and is not private. FBI Supervisory Special Agent Doug Porrini explained, "Your phones are like your fingerprints we can use to identify the source of the threats. We will find out who and where the post was created." As a result of the positive feedback from families on this presentation, the district is planning on repeating this program again at the beginning of the 2023-2024 school year and making it available to families to encourage communication about the importance of online safety outside of school.

The Cuyahoga Falls City School District seeks to proactively support all students and families in order to promote student growth and achievement. Mental health and emotional well-being are critical to providing a safe and nurturing learning environment. In addition to the safety of the physical learning environment, Cuyahoga Falls City School District has addressed the safety and wellness of our students through several programs and resources. Holly Merkle, Coordinator of Wellness and Success, has worked with administrators to oversee the implementation of suicide and violence prevention programs.

The program, Ruling Our Experiences (ROX), was launched in our middle schools this school year to provide techniques and resources for our female students so they can learn how to be confident and control relationships, experiences, and decisions. At the high school level, the new program, Sources of Strength, provides a proactive strategy for older students for suicide prevention, substance abuse, and violence. We provide social-emotional learning lessons for our students in K-8, celebrate student achievements with our Positive Behavioral Intervention Supports (PBIS) system, and partner with Red Oak Behavioral Health. We have also increased the number of school counselors at the elementary level, and added three school social workers to address the mental health needs of our students.

