

BERNE - KNOX - WESTERLO



CENTRAL SCHOOL DISTRICT

At a glance:

2024-25  
PROPOSED BUDGET  
\$26,352,376

BUDGET INCREASE  
FROM 2023-24  
\$711,301 / 2.77%

2024-25  
TAX LEVY INCREASE  
\$563,114 / 5.09%

# BKW residents to vote on budget proposal on May 21

On May 21, Berne-Knox-Westerlo residents will decide on a proposed \$26,352,376 spending plan for the 2024-25 school year. Under the proposal, spending would increase by 2.77% from the current year. The proposed budget carries a 5.09% tax levy increase which is above the district's assigned tax levy "cap" of 4.35%. Budget approval requires a super majority of votes (60% plus one).

This budget includes the retention of the district's School Resource Officer, offers complete transportation schedules for the 2024-25 school year and includes the continuation of the Bulldog Club.

"The 2024-25 school budget continues our commitment to ensure our students experience a first-rate education while receiving all of the benefits of programs and support services within our district," said Superintendent of Schools Dr. Mundell. "At BKW, we are encouraged by our students' continued progress, from elementary to our secondary school, and are determined to build upon that success."

This year's proposed budget will concentrate on the addition of mental health support for students and will follow the district's five-year financial plan.

"The proposed budget will continue the development of our educational outreach and curriculum to prepare our students for future pathways, which could be through their entrepreneurial pursuits through Career and Technical Education programs or two- or four-year education options. Our commitment will always place our students in the best position possible within our available resources," said Dr. Mundell.

**Vote**  
 Tuesday, May 21  
 6 a.m. - 8 p.m.  
 ELEMENTARY CAFETERIA  
**Also on the ballot:**  
 See pg. 8 for a list of propositions.



At BKW, our students are eager to learn and be the best Bulldog they can be!



CENTRAL SCHOOL DISTRICT

# Budget Summary

2024-2025

## REVENUES:

WHERE THE MONEY COMES FROM

| CATEGORY        | 2023-24<br>BUDGETED | 2024-25<br>PROJECTED                  | 2024-25<br>CONTINGENCY |
|-----------------|---------------------|---------------------------------------|------------------------|
| Other Revenue   | \$587,014           | <b>\$684,500</b>                      | \$684,500              |
| Total State Aid | \$12,081,675        | <b>\$11,838,876</b>                   | \$11,838,876           |
| Reserves        | \$1,027,000         | <b>\$940,000</b>                      | \$940,000              |
| Fund Balance    | \$876,500           | <b>\$1,257,000</b>                    | \$1,257,000            |
| Tax Levy        | \$11,068,886        | <b>\$11,632,000</b>                   | \$11,068,886           |
| <b>TOTAL</b>    | <b>\$25,641,075</b> | <b>\$26,352,376</b><br>2.77% INCREASE | <b>\$25,789,262</b>    |

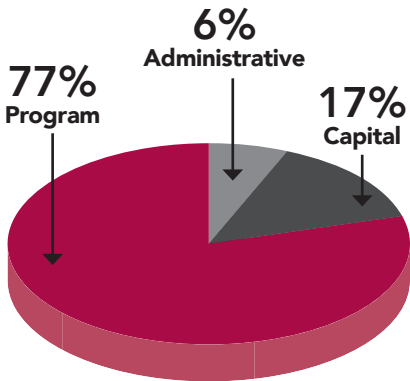
## EXPENDITURES:

WHERE THE MONEY GOES

| CATEGORY          | 2023-24<br>BUDGETED | 2024-25<br>PROJECTED                  | 2024-25<br>CONTINGENCY |
|-------------------|---------------------|---------------------------------------|------------------------|
| General Support   | \$1,075,466         | <b>\$1,080,686</b>                    | \$959,005              |
| Operations        | \$1,270,028         | <b>\$1,279,010</b>                    | \$1,255,993            |
| Instruction       | \$10,887,478        | <b>\$11,975,974</b>                   | \$11,722,908           |
| Transportation    | \$1,485,410         | <b>\$1,571,167</b>                    | \$1,495,442            |
| Employee Benefits | \$7,691,004         | <b>\$7,335,450</b>                    | \$7,245,825            |
| Debt Service      | \$3,231,689         | <b>\$3,110,089</b>                    | \$3,110,089            |
| <b>TOTAL</b>      | <b>\$25,641,075</b> | <b>\$26,352,376</b><br>2.77% INCREASE | <b>\$25,789,262</b>    |

## THREE-PART BUDGET:

New York law requires school districts to present their budgets divided into three expenditure categories— program, administrative and capital—and compare them to the previous year’s costs. BKW's three-part budget is as follows:



| CATEGORY   | 2023-24<br>BUDGETED              | 2024-25<br>PROJECTED                    | 2024-25<br>CONTINGENCY           |
|--|----------------------------------|---|----------------------------------|
| <b>Program</b><br>Includes salaries and benefits of all teachers and staff who deliver pupil services (guidance, health, library/ media, etc.), textbooks, equipment, extra-curricular activities, athletics, and transportation costs (excludes bus purchases). | \$19,779,831<br>77.14% OF BUDGET | <b>\$20,474,073</b><br>77.69% OF BUDGET | \$20,058,757<br>77.78% OF BUDGET |
| <b>Administrative</b><br>Includes salaries and benefits of administrators, supervisors, and administrative clerical staff, public information, printing, curriculum and staff development, school board costs, general insurance and professional fees.          | \$1,484,537<br>5.79% OF BUDGET   | <b>\$1,589,204</b><br>6.03% OF BUDGET   | \$1,464,423<br>5.68% OF BUDGET   |
| <b>Capital</b><br>Includes salaries and benefits of maintenance and custodial staff, debt service on buildings and school bus purchases, utilities, tax certiorari and court-ordered costs.  | \$4,376,717<br>17.07% OF BUDGET  | <b>\$4,289,099</b><br>16.66% OF BUDGET  | \$4,266,082<br>16.54% OF BUDGET  |
| <b>TOTAL</b>   | <b>\$25,641,075</b>              | <b>\$26,352,376</b>                     | <b>\$25,789,262</b>              |



CENTRAL SCHOOL DISTRICT

# Required School District Budget Notice

2024 - 2025

| 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  | \$25,641,075                               | \$26,352,376                                | \$25,789,262                                    |
| Increase/Decrease for the 2024-25 School Year   |  | \$711,301                                   | \$148,187                                       |
| Percentage Increase/Decrease in Proposed Budget   |  | 2.77%                                       | 0.58%   |
| Change in the Consumer Price Index  |  | 4.12%                                       |   |
| A. Proposed Levy to Support the Total Budgeted Amount   | \$11,068,886                               | \$11,632,000                                |   |
| 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)  | \$11,068,886                               | \$11,632,000                                | 11,068,886                                      |
| F. Total Permissible Exclusions   | \$249,677                                  | \$378,703                                   |   |
| G. School Tax Levy Limit, <u>Excluding</u> Levy for Permissible Exclusions  | \$11,142,517                               | \$11,171,321                                |   |
| H. Total Proposed School Year Tax Levy, <u>Excluding</u> Levy to Support Library Debt and/or Permissible Exclusions (E – B – F + D) | \$10,819,209                               | \$11,253,297                                |   |
| I. Difference: G – H (Negative Value Requires 60.0% Voter Approval –See Note Below Regarding Separate Propositions)**               | \$323,308                                  | \$(81,976)                                  |   |
| Administrative Component  | \$1,484,537                                | \$1,589,204                                 | \$1,464,423                                     |
| Program Component   | \$19,779,821                               | \$20,474,073                                | \$20,058,757                                    |
| Capital Component   | \$4,376,717                                | \$4,289,099                                 | \$4,266,082                                     |

\* 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. - Should the proposed budget be defeated pursuant to Section 2023 of the Education Law, the projecting contingency budget for the 2024-2025 school year will require staffing reductions (2 teachers, 3 aides, 1 administrative assistant). The contingency budget also eliminates annual salary increases for non-union employees, eliminates the SRO, graduation at the Egg, afterschool programs, late bus runs, field trips, limits overtime, cuts supplies, reduces IT assistance as well as other non-contingent expenses necessary to provide the minimum services legally required to operate & maintain school buildings and the educational program, preserve the property of the district and ensure the health & safety of students and staff.

\*\* 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) – No separate propositions up for a vote on Tuesday, May 21, 2024

| Description | Amount |
|-------------|--------|
|             |        |
|             |        |
|             |        |

**Under the Budget Proposed for the 2024-25 School Year**

|   |       |
|---|-------|
| Estimated Basic STAR Exemption Savings <sup>1</sup> | \$441 |
|---|-------|

The annual budget vote for the fiscal year 2024-25 by the qualified voters of the Berne-Knox-Westerlo Central School District, Albany County, New York, will be held at the BKW Elementary School in said district on Tuesday, May 21, 2024 between the hours of 6:00am and 8:00pm, prevailing time in the BKW Elementary School cafeteria, at which time the polls will be opened to vote by voting ballot or machine.

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



CENTRAL SCHOOL DISTRICT

## Project-based learning creates growth for students



Fourth grade students are experiencing a different perspective through project-based learning, while observing new ways to learn and communicate.

Throughout the school year, students at BKW continue to build upon their growth by engaging in areas of our curriculum that drive their ability to learn, lead, and succeed. One process that keeps students engaged is project-based learning in the classroom. It's here that learning takes a personal approach allowing students to think creatively while building upon their classroom activities.

"We use project-based learning to identify a question and work backward to obtain the answer," said BKW Elementary fourth grade teacher Mrs. Richards. "It's during that process that students begin to learn, understand, and appreciate how they are concluding their responses. Once a project is established, you can feel the student's eagerness to understand how we get from point A to Z."

In the elementary building, fourth grade students are learning and implementing their classroom experience with real-time activities tied to their schoolwork. Each year, teachers in the elementary building identify ways to contribute to their student's success. Whether it's gaining access to instructional materials, accessing engaging projects to follow their coursework, or obtaining additional supplies to reach a child's potential -- district teachers go above and beyond for our school community. Project-based learning follows this approach.

### So, what exactly is project-based learning?

Project-based learning (PBL) allows students to independently seek solutions to problems presented by their teacher. The instruction allows an

expansive opportunity for increased problem-solving skills to develop while following a teacher's instruction to complete a project. Project-based learning allows students to own their research and strengthens their ability to ask questions to further develop their listening skill sets. The district is utilizing this program to maximize the combination of a classroom experience with real-world situations for students.

"At the elementary level, it's important to begin introducing project-based learning to prepare our students to expand their knowledge moving forward," shared Superintendent of Schools Dr. Mundell. "This type of learning gives them the independence to become engaged in the learning process. The results have been positive and students are eager to research new projects to explore."



CENTRAL SCHOOL DISTRICT

## UPK is building confidence and skills for today's classroom

Creating the first steps for our earliest learners is important for their development within our district. The ability to engage, develop, and keep positive social engagement is key to building successful students. At BKW, that process starts with the Universal Pre-K program. It's here that those students become introduced to the proper learning techniques in their first classroom environment. The Universal Pre-K program creates opportunities for incoming students to receive access to prekindergarten services and support to prepare them moving forward.

"We are fortunate to introduce our Universal Pre-K students to a well-equipped staff and curriculum to build their pathway to be successful students," said Superintendent of Schools Dr. Mundell. "This program builds their confidence and provides resources to build their learning experience to excel through our secondary school."

"As a district, we are very fortunate to offer two full-day Pre-K classes to our community," said BKW Universal Pre-K Teacher Ms. Prescott. "Not every district has this opportunity. It has made a noticeable difference for our youngest learners."

### How does our program build these steps?

#### Preparing students for learning

By participating in a Universal Pre-K program, students begin to create the building blocks for learning in the classroom. From day one, students learn appropriate social behavior in connecting with their classmates, while observing proper learning methods to keep their young minds prepared for future classroom experiences. In addition, students begin to experience

and develop social-emotional skills to build future success throughout their journey at BKW.

#### Introduction to new friends and classmates

With a new learning environment comes the opportunity to be introduced to students from differing backgrounds. Students meet new classmates, forge friendships, and begin to understand that students are different from themselves. In addition, students also gain a better understanding that each student learns differently and brings their contribution to a new learning environment.

#### Increasing opportunities for success

By accessing a Universal Pre-K program, students can work on their



BKW's UPK program encourages positive relationship-building and introduces new ways for students to begin their pathway in a hands-on learning environment.

earliest skill sets to encourage their progress before entering kindergarten and beyond. Universal Pre-K programs provide access to resources and instruction to prepare them for learning in today's classroom with high-quality opportunities to learn and grow.



It's never too early to meet new friends and begin your learning journey.



CENTRAL SCHOOL DISTRICT

## Mentors create a positive environment for students

Mentoring can make a significant impact on a student's educational pathway. Not only that, but mentoring can play a significant role in supporting the work being done in the classroom and at home. In what can be described as a passing of the torch, secondary school students can create friendships and mentor younger elementary students as they begin their final preparation in high school.

"At BKW, we are committed to our school community and work to provide the resources and programs to enable students to become both socially and academically successful," said BKW

Secondary School Principal Mrs. Kane. "This program allows students to create a partnership with a fellow student and provide a sounding board or guidance for a younger student in their final year of elementary school."

In general, statistical data shows the merits of mentoring - whether from an adult to student or peer-to-peer - and the benefits that come from success in school work. The benefits range from better grades, communication on obstacles or stress in school, and opportunities to reach their desired pathways.



Mentors create opportunities to help others become better. At BKW, that effort extends from grade to grade.



### Noteworthy 2023-24 Achievements:

- ★ Continued to see student achievement surpass state and national performance
- ★ Hosted first-ever Esports tournament
- ★ Raised over \$1,400 for Ronald McDonald House of Capital Region
- ★ PPS Director Susan Sloma named Outstanding Administrator by CASDA (Capital Area School Development Association) in recognition of her work with Student Services
- ★ Created a Drone Operation Program
- ★ Boys and Girls Varsity Basketball teams named Hudson Division Champions
- ★ NYS Education Department visit to view our ESports program and discuss the creation of New York State's first ESports CTE (Career and Technical Education) pathway
- ★ The creation of the first ever Girl's Varsity Golf Team at BKW



CENTRAL SCHOOL DISTRICT

## Changing Curriculums: A forward-thinking approach to engaging today's students for tomorrow's economy

At Berne-Knox-Westerlo Central School District, there's an approach already taking place in preparing students to drive new ideas and create engaging programs to prepare them to accept challenges in a college setting or Career Technical Education environment. With a campus enrollment of 674 students, some may categorize BKW as being on the border of a lower to mid-sized school district. But they are playing at a major league level in developing engaging curriculums that are being highlighted for tomorrow's careers. Esports is one of those areas. In the past few years, the district has introduced an Esports curriculum that is gaining interest from students and is laying the framework for additional bandwidth for students to become engaged in the classroom. It's even bringing students back into the fold who were otherwise disengaged from the day-to-day classroom experience.

It's all part of a transformative initiative introduced by Superintendent of Schools Dr. Mundell. "At BKW, we are concentrating on the skill sets and programs that can evolve with other areas of study. For instance, through the Esports program, a student has the opportunity to build a gaming system with their own creativity. That process can then be applied within their English classroom curriculum. How so? That same student creating a gaming platform can now learn how to prepare and develop a business plan to accompany their newly created gaming product. And so, it goes. It's making learning fun and creative, while quietly building their interest in other programs and curricula within their secondary school."

As with any generational shift, we continue to see the evolution of industries and careers ebb and flow. Some shift due to the needs of our society or community needs, while others are a direct result of technology improving or becoming obsolete due to improvements in workflow and productivity. We view it as growth and it's creating pathways to align new

*"At BKW, we are concentrating on the skill sets and programs that can evolve with other areas of study."*

DR. TIMOTHY MUNDELL,  
SUPERINTENDENT OF SCHOOLS

methods of instruction to benefit our communities, large or small. It's also reshaping how we view STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math) in school districts, and its impact on how curriculums are being built to improve learning, and more importantly, our students. If you've noticed in some of the recent trade articles, social media chatter, and conversations surrounding the education sector, curriculums are beginning to adjust to those economic needs. Esports is an emerging factor in those conversations.

According to research provided by VentureBeat <https://venturebeat.com/about/>, the Esports audience size has grown year-over-year between 2019 and 2021. In 2019, there were an estimated 197 million Esports enthusiasts. And a further 200.8 million occasional Esports

viewers. In 2021, these figures grew to 234 million Esports enthusiasts. To put things in perspective, 234 million Esports enthusiasts would slot in between the population of Indonesia (#4) and Pakistan (#5) for the total world population. That's big.

If there's any indication that Esports is presenting a major economic factor moving forward, there's this tidbit from the Los Angeles Business Journal from earlier this year: Last year the global esports market was valued at just over \$1.4 billion, and it's forecast to grow to as much as \$1.9 billion in 2025. In 2021, the largest share of esports market revenue came from sponsorships and advertising. In total, global esports revenue from sponsorships and advertising reached \$641 million.

Districts across New York state are continuing to develop curriculum opportunities to prepare students to enter this market while enabling them to become stronger in the classroom. A win-win for all involved and possibly a precursor for additional industries to inspire opportunities for students in today's learning environment.

### Board of Education

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Editor, Richard Meddaugh  
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**2023-24  
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**BERNE-KNOX-WESTERLO**

**CENTRAL SCHOOL DISTRICT**

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**BUDGET 2025**

**BERNE – KNOX – WESTERLO**

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**CENTRAL SCHOOL DISTRICT**

**VOTE:** Tuesday, May 21, 6 a.m. - 8 p.m.  
ELEMENTARY CAFETERIA

**ON THE BALLOT:**

**PROPOSITION 1**

Vote on a \$26,352,376 proposed budget for the 2024-25 school year.

**VOTER ELIGIBILITY**

All voters must be U.S. citizens, age 18 or older, and residents of the district for at least 30 days prior to the vote. Advanced registration is NOT required. You may be asked to show proof of residency (such as a valid ID that lists your address) when voting.

**BOARD ELECTION**

Elect one member of the Board of Education to a three (3) year term commencing on July 1, 2024, and expiring June 30, 2027, to succeed Lisa Joslin whose term expires on June 30, 2024.

**ABSENTEE BALLOTS**

Absentee ballot voting is available. The new Early Mail Voter Act effective Jan. 1, 2024, also allows for early voting via mail without any reasons needed for voting early. You must fill out an application to vote by early voting or absentee ballot. There are separate applications for voting by early voting or absentee ballot, but the application process and deadlines are the same for both.

To receive an application, contact the District Clerk Anne Farnam at (518) 872-1293 ext. 5133. If you would like a ballot mailed to you, your application must be received by 5 p.m. on May 14, 2024. If you plan to pick up your ballot, your application must be received by 5 p.m. on May 20, 2024. The completed ballot must be received by 5 p.m. on May 21, 2024.



No matter the grade level, students are recognized for doing their best and giving their all.