



ICHABOD CRANE CENTRAL SCHOOL DISTRICT

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INSIDE THIS ISSUE:

- ▶ Preserving Ichabod's Instructional Excellence
- ▶ How the Visual Arts Shape Student Success
- ▶ Key Stats: ICC By The Numbers

SCHOOL BUDGET

www.ichabodcrane.org

MAY 2026

VOTE

TUESDAY,
May 19, 2026
8 a.m. – 9 p.m.

Ichabod Crane
High School Gymnasium

2026-2027 BUDGET SUMMARY

Proposed Budget:
\$51,936,861

Budget-to-Budget Increase:
\$792,862 (1.55%)

Estimated Tax Levy
Increase:
2.71%

VOTERS TO DECIDE ON TWO PROPOSITIONS

1. Proposed Budget
2. Proposed Bus Purchases

LEARN MORE



Scan to learn more
about the 26-27 Budget



ADVANCING ICHABOD CRANE'S VISION:

A Budget for Academic Excellence and Financial Integrity

Ichabod Crane Central School District voters will head to the polls on May 19 to decide on a proposed \$51,936,861 budget for the 2026-27 school year. This proposal maintains the depth and richness of the district's K-12 instructional programs and support systems, ensuring stability despite a challenging financial climate.

"Our priority remained clear throughout this process: protecting our students and their programs," Superintendent Marie Digirolamo said. "This budget reflects a careful balance between financial responsibility and our unwavering commitment to providing a high-quality, well-rounded education for every student at Ichabod Crane."

New York State school districts are again grappling with insufficient state aid, declining enrollments and surging health insurance costs. **Michael Brennan, School District Leader of Business and Operations, emphasized while expenses continue to rise rapidly, revenues like NYS Foundation Aid have not kept pace.**

"This structural imbalance is hitting us and our neighbors alike," Brennan noted. "We've scrutinized every line item to ensure our programs and services are driven by student need, declining enrollment and other key data. The result is a budget that stays at the tax cap by streamlining operations, allowing us

to protect core instructional programs and support services."

Unanimously approved by the Board of Education, the proposed budget safeguards the district's premier instructional program, driven by the [Instructional Program Vision](#) and [Rider Goals 2027](#).

To bridge the funding gap, the proposed budget reduces 14 total positions – four positions through retirements and vacancies – and ten through staff reductions, including six teaching and four teaching assistant positions. This equates to \$1.4 million in savings from salaries and benefits.

To protect programs and staff, the district leveraged vacancies and retirements and made adjustments based on a 100-student enrollment drop since 2024. We also deferred non-personnel costs (supplies, equipment, conferences) and instituted a superintendent wage freeze.

Ichabod Crane district leaders, including the Board of Education, are also urging state officials to modernize the NYS Foundation Aid formula. They warn that without decisive action, districts statewide face deeper cuts, diminished programs and strained communities.

While navigating these external pressures, **the district has secured our core instructional programs for the coming year.** *(Continued on page 2)*

INVESTING IN A HEALTHIER ICHABOD CRANE: Why Wellness is Our Priority

At Ichabod Crane, wellness is more than a buzzword – it is a cornerstone of our mission. Our commitment is rooted in intentional, evidence-based programs led by highly-qualified professionals who are deeply dedicated to the health and success of our students, staff and the larger district community.

The proposed 2026-27 budget preserves this essential work by supporting:

- **Ichabod Cares:** the district's comprehensive internal safety net program
- **Student Support Services:** robust K-12 psychology, social work and school counseling departments
- **Social-Emotional Learning (SEL):** integral investments in the foundational skills students need to thrive
- **Lifelong Learning:** continued support for our Adult Education Program, keeping our community engaged, connected and healthy

According to Nicole Curura and Caitlin Doyle, the district's full-time, on-campus social workers, prioritizing student well-being is the key to long-term success: *"Wellness is the foundation upon which all academic and personal growth is built. By prioritizing mental and emotional health within our schools, we aren't just helping students through a difficult day, we are teaching them skills that will serve them throughout their lifetime. Our work is about creating a culture where students themselves ensure that their peers feel seen, supported and empowered to succeed."*



The budget proposal sustains funding for both social work positions. Their daily contributions are multi-faceted, encompassing everything from routine individual and group counseling to crisis intervention. They also oversee **CarePortal, the newest addition to the Ichabod Cares initiative.**

This innovative platform connects students and families with local community support the moment a need arises. Managed regionally by Justice For Orphans and thanks to a partnership with local houses of worship, this collaboration ensures our students and families receive vital resources, ranging from clothing to household necessities, with speed and confidentiality.

A Proactive Approach to Financial Responsibility

Investing in wellness is not only the right thing to do for our people – it is the smart thing to do for our taxpayers. By focusing on preventative health and early intervention, we reduce the long-term costs associated with crisis management and intensive services. This proactive stance is essential at a time when rising health insurance premiums and economic pressures challenge school budgets across New York State.

"During these difficult financial times, we must lead with both compassion and financial responsibility. By maintaining our commitment to holistic wellness, we are taking a proactive, cost-effective approach to community

health," Superintendent Marie Digirolamo said.

"Prioritizing these preventative supports helps us stabilize our long-term finances and ensures that, even as we make difficult budgetary decisions, we continue to direct our essential resources where they matter most: toward the well-being and success of our students, staff and community members."

A Budget for Academic Excellence and Financial Integrity

(Continued from page 1)

2026-27 Proposed Budget Highlights include:

Academic Innovation & STEAM (Science, Technology, Engineering, the Arts, Mathematics)

- Inquiry-based learning using Smithsonian science kits and K-8 STEAM Labs with a dedicated STEAM Teacher
- Support for the High School's Discovering Computer Science course, with new expanded options available next year to fulfill the second-semester requirement
- Full implementation of evidence-based, rigorous K-5 Mathematics curriculum
- Development of K-5 Standards-based Report Cards

Pathways & Excellence

- K-12 Program Reviews in Science, Math, Music and World Languages to ensure modern, high-quality coursework and curricula
- Specialized literacy training for all faculty to bridge language gaps for English Language Learners and to improve outcomes for all students
- Continued support for the NYS Seals of Biliteracy and Civic Readiness programs
- International Scholars Program and opportunities for students to travel abroad

Student Opportunities & Wellness

- Ichabod Cares (the district's internal safety net program), Adult Education and Wellness Committee
- New clubs, intramurals and launch of Girls Varsity Flag Football Team
- Middle and High School Advisory periods (providing time for student mentorship and peer connection)
- Outdoor classrooms, MS & HS student IT help desks and enhanced cafeteria offerings

As you read on, we dive deeper into several impactful programs supported by the 2026-27 budget proposal. This edition spotlights the continued growth of our **K-12 STEAM initiatives** and the evolution of **Discovering Computer Science** at the High School. We also offer an insider's look at the essential role the **visual arts** play in our students' education and development, all through the lens of the Instructional Program Vision and Rider Goals 2027.

The 2026-27 budget proposal is a strategic investment designed to sustain Ichabod Crane's premier academic program, while remaining mindful of our taxpayers. Residents are encouraged to stay informed and participate in the vote on May 19 to help shape the future of our students and our schools.

A BUDGET BUILT FOR DISCOVERY: Expanding Hands-on Learning K-12

Ichabod Crane offers a rich instructional program that empowers students to choose their own paths. From foundational K-12 STEAM initiatives to our commitment to developing global citizens, the 2026-27 budget proposal sustains these core opportunities, ensuring students have the resources to explore, create and succeed.

Despite a challenging financial landscape, this proposal prioritizes the district's hallmark programs. While not exhaustive, the following list highlights key focus areas for the 2026-27 school year:

- **Continued STEAM Growth:** maintaining our interdisciplinary approach with a dedicated K-5 STEAM teacher, specialized Primary and Middle School Labs and advanced offerings in the High School STEAM Wing
- **Computer Science and Digital Fluency:** expanding our Siena College-partnered Discovering Computer Science course to offer greater flexibility. Starting in 2026-27, students may fulfill their second-semester credit through engineering, technology and fine arts courses
- **K-5 Interactive Math:** funding our evidence-based, interactive mathematics curriculum to foster collaborative, real-world problem-solving and exploratory learning
- **Building Global Citizens:** strengthening our Portrait of a Rider through continued investments in World Language and English as a New Language (ENL) instruction, the International Scholars and NYS Seal of Biliteracy programs

"My priority is making sure our students have the opportunities they need to thrive here and succeed after graduation. This budget reflects a lot of hard work and feedback from our students, families and staff, ultimately maintaining our instructional program across all grades. This is no easy feat in today's financial environment. It's about balancing our current reality while keeping our students at the center of every decision we make," said High School Principal Craig Shull, who has worked at the district for more than 20 years.



Our High School STEAM Wing remains a hub of student innovation. Popular offerings include Design and Drawing for Production, where students transition from foundational Engineering Technology to advanced 3D rendering and functional prototyping. These projects come to life in our wood and metal labs. Other specialized courses include Architectural Design, Aerospace Engineering I & II and a variety of woodworking and metalworking electives.

At the elementary level, the proposed budget strengthens our commitment to integrated, hands-on learning, aligned with the Instructional Program Vision. Kara DiMarino will transition into a dedicated K-5 STEAM Teacher role, building on her success as the district's Math and Science Instructional Coach and her work establishing the Primary School's popular STEAM Lab.

Under her leadership, students are engaging in Nurtured in Nature, an immersive program bringing standards-aligned lessons into the natural world. Mrs. DiMarino is also hosting STEAM Days to spark curiosity and teamwork through robotics and structural engineering activities tailored for our younger learners.

These programs represent more than just line items in a budget. They are the building blocks of a future-ready education. By maintaining these pathways, the district ensures that every student remains equipped to lead, innovate and succeed in an ever-changing world.

Excelling in Academics & Athletics



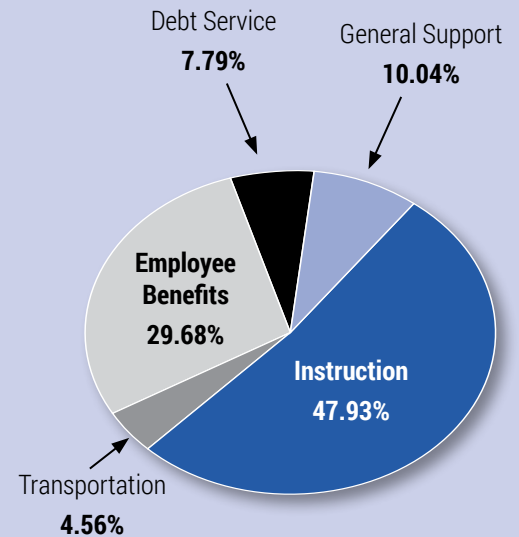
The Ichabod Crane Athletics Department, its teams and individual athletes had a year of outstanding athletic and academic achievement. During the fall and winter seasons, the New York State Public High School Athletic Association named **14** of our teams as Scholar-Athlete Teams and presented **177** Individual Scholar-Athlete Awards. Each award requires maintaining an academic average above 90.

ICC BY THE NUMBERS

- 2.71** Percent tax-levy increase in the proposed 2026-27 budget
- 19** Players on Ichabod Crane's Inaugural Girls Varsity Flag Football Team
- 30** Students earned the NYS Seal of Biliteracy since 2021
- 31** High School Students joined peers from **60** countries at the Harvard Model UN Conference this year
- 34** Student Performers & Crew Members (plus 40 adult crew members) in Crane Acting Troupe's Production of Grease
- 51** Athletic Teams and Clubs available for students 7-12
- 74** Percent of Students K-12 Received Breakfast and/or Lunch in March 2026
- 6,967** Dollars Raised by Primary School Students for READ for Ronald McDonald House
- 53,932** Views on our top Facebook and Instagram post of 2025-26
- 276,790** Breakfasts and Lunches served in 2024-25 across K-12
- 503,536** Miles traveled by District Buses in 2024-25

EXPENSES:

Account Group	2025-26	Proposed 2026-27	Change (\$)	Change (%)
General Support	\$5,007,737	\$5,208,559	\$200,822	4.01%
Instruction	24,607,712	24,898,160	290,448	1.18%
Transportation	2,245,032	2,368,380	123,348	5.49%
Employee Benefits	15,284,558	15,417,263	132,705	0.87%
Debt Service/Transfers	3,998,960	4,044,499	45,539	1.14%
Grand Totals	\$51,143,999	\$51,936,861	\$792,862	1.55%



THREE-PART BUDGET:

By law, school districts must divide their budget into three components – program, administrative and capital – and compare them to last year’s amounts. Ichabod Crane’s three-part budget breaks down as follows:

PROGRAM	2025-26	2026-27
Amount	\$38,374,793	\$38,708,195
% of total	75.03%	74.53%

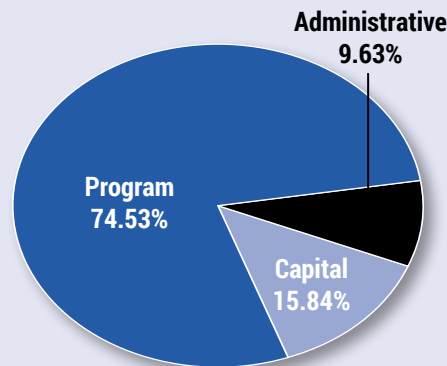
INCLUDES: salaries and benefits of teachers, school counselors, aides, nurses, social workers, psychologists, speech therapists, teaching supplies, equipment and textbooks, library and instructional computer funds, athletics and transportation (except bus purchases).

CAPITAL	2025-26	2026-27
Amount	\$8,055,936	\$8,225,693
% of total	15.75%	15.84%

INCLUDES: debt service on buildings, bus purchases, tax certiorari and court-ordered costs, operation and maintenance costs, including salaries and benefits of custodial staff, supplies, utilities, repairs and renovations.

ADMINISTRATIVE	2025-26	2026-27
Amount	\$4,713,270	\$5,002,973
% of total	9.22%	9.63%

INCLUDES: salaries and benefits of administrators, supervisors and administrative clerical staff, public information and printing; insurance costs, legal expenses and Board of Education expenses.



BUS PURCHASES: Proposition 2, if approved, authorizes the district to purchase four gas buses, totaling \$653,506.

2026 Board of Education Candidates

District residents will have the opportunity to vote for three Board of Education seats on May 19. The candidates, listed in the order they will appear on the ballot, are Betsy Thorleifson, Kelly Firmbach and Christopher Scoville. Each position is for a three-year term starting July 1. Further candidate information can be found online:

www.ichabodcrane.org/board-of-education

VOTER INFORMATION

VOTER ELIGIBILITY

You are eligible to vote in the district’s annual Budget Vote and Board of Education Election if you are a U.S. citizen, at least 18 years old, and a resident of the school district for at least 30 days prior to the vote.

VOTER REGISTRATION

You must be registered before you are permitted to vote. You are already registered if you have:

- Voted in a district election, such as the Budget Vote and Board of Education Election, within the last four (4) years
- Voted in a general election as a district resident within the last four (4) years

ICCSID residents may register to vote with the District Clerk from 8 a.m. to 4 p.m. in the district’s Central Office. To vote in a district election, including the annual Budget Vote and Board of Education Election, registration must be completed at least five days prior.

ABSENTEE & EARLY MAIL VOTER BALLOTS

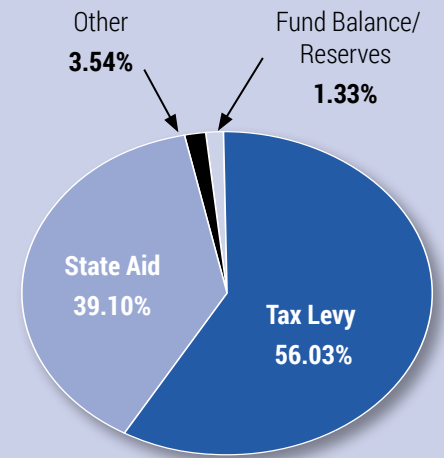
Any district resident who wishes to vote early, or who will be unable to vote in person, may request an absentee ballot or early mail voter ballot.

Applications for absentee/early mail ballots must be received by the District Clerk by May 12, 2026, if the ballot is to be mailed to the voter – or by May 18, 2026, if the ballot will be picked up at the district’s Central Office. **Completed absentee ballots and early mail voter ballots must be received by the District Clerk no later than 5 p.m. on May 19, 2026.**

For assistance, please contact District Clerk Mindy Potts at 518-758-7575 ext. 3001 or mpotts@ichabodcrane.org.

REVENUE:

Revenue Budget	2025-26	Proposed 2026-27	Change (\$)	Change (%)
Tax Levy	\$28,333,107	\$29,102,240	\$769,133	2.71%
State Aid	19,740,003	20,306,434	566,431	2.87%
Other: Rents, Tuitions, Misc.	1,803,000	1,838,187	35,187	1.95%
Fund Balance/Reserves	1,267,889	690,000	-577,889	-45.58%
Grand Totals	\$51,143,999	\$51,936,861	\$792,862	1.55%



BEYOND THE CANVAS:

How Ichabod Crane's Art Programs Build Life Skills

The Arts at Ichabod Crane are woven into the fabric of the student experience, with the 2026-27 budget proposal reinforcing the district's dedication to these creative pathways. These programs are impactful resources for mental well-being, social connection and the kind of innovative problem-solving that students carry into their adult lives.



Senior Malia March, an artist since childhood, has taken full advantage of the district's wide-ranging offerings, enrolling in over ten courses including Ceramics, Sculpture, Photography and Graphic Design.

"I don't believe there is a single art class I have taken here that I haven't enjoyed," Malia shared. "Ichabod Crane's art program is a way for people to express themselves, de-stress from a demanding academic schedule and celebrate the diversity of our student body."

Malia credits her time in the studio with fostering her creativity, confidence and problem-solving skills. "I genuinely believe that I would not be

the same person without the art classes I've taken in High School."

She also noted the school provides a level of access to specialized art supplies and tools, as well as professional guidance that many students wouldn't find elsewhere.

"I would never have been exposed to mediums like charcoal or ceramics without these classes and those have become some of my favorite ways

to create," she said.

The influence of the Arts at Ichabod Crane has even defined Malia's post-graduation goals. She plans to study welding at Hudson Valley Community College.

"It might sound like a leap from the art room," Malia said, "I want to use those skills to create and sell metal sculptures alongside my ceramic work." Her story is a testament to how the district's investment in the arts equips students with the versatility and vision to build their own futures.

For Junior Riley Powell, the High School art classes are a rare opportunity to "breathe a little" and find balance through hands-on learning.



Riley has navigated a wide range of the district's offerings, from the technical side of Photography to the academic depth of Art History: Pre-History to 14th Century.

While many focus on the physical output of art, **Riley has found that the program's true value lies in the social environment it creates. The art room provides a space for collaboration and dialogue.**

"The most fundamental skills I feel I've learned are social skills," Riley reflected. "Whether I am working with a partner or discussing the development of my own work, these classes have taught me to be more open to others and their opinions."

The experiences of students like Malia and Riley highlight that the Ichabod Crane Arts Department is far more than a sequence of courses; it is a foundational training ground for the next generation of thinkers, creators and professionals. The 2026-27 budget proposal maintains these programs, which play an essential role in student development by fostering creativity, discipline and leadership.

#ICHABODCARES: For students to excel, they must feel supported and well-nourished. The **Ichabod Cares** program serves as our internal safety net, providing food, clothing, toiletries and more to our students and families. Additionally, we prioritize student health through the **National School Breakfast and Lunch Program, which provides two nutritious meals daily to every student at no cost**, regardless of economic status. These are just two of the many ways we ensure our students have the essentials they need to thrive. **For more info, visit: www.ichabodcrane.org/ichabod-cares**



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- Christopher Scoville
- Valerie Spensieri
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CENTRAL ADMINISTRATION

- Marie Digirolamo, *Superintendent*
- Lucas Christensen, *Assistant Superintendent*
- Michael Brennan, *School District Leader of Business and Operations*

DISTRICT OFFICE

518-758-7575

www.ichabodcrane.org

Produced by Questar III Communications Service

NON-DISCRIMINATION COMPLIANCE STATEMENT: The Ichabod Crane Central School District hereby advises students, parents, employees, and the general public that it offers educational opportunities including vocational opportunities without regard to sex, race, color, national origin, handicap or religion. Inquiries regarding this non-discrimination policy may be directed to: Title IX Compliance Officer, Lucas Christensen, and Section 504 Compliance Officer, Peg Warner, at 758-7575, Ichabod Crane Central School District, Valatie, NY 12184. A copy of the "In Compliance with Section 1.4 (a)" is available in the Superintendent's Office.

ICHABOD CRANE CENTRAL SCHOOL DISTRICT BUDGET NOTICE

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	\$ 51,143,999	\$51,936,861	\$51,091,728
Increase/Decrease for the 2026-27 School Year		\$792,862	\$-52,271
Percentage Increase/Decrease in Proposed Budget		1.55 %	-0.10%
Change in the Consumer Price Index		2.63%	
A. Proposed Levy to Support the Total Budgeted Amount	\$28,333,107	\$29,102,240	
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)	\$28,333,107	\$29,102,240	\$28,333,107
F. Total Permissible Exclusions	\$1,213,457	\$1,292,138	
G. School Tax Levy Limit, <u>Excluding</u> Levy for Permissible Exclusions	\$27,119,650	\$27,810,102	
H. Total Proposed School Year Tax Levy, <u>Excluding</u> Levy to Support Library Debt and/or Permissible Exclusions (E - B - F + D)	\$27,119,650	\$27,810,102	
I. Difference: G - H (Negative Value Requires 60.0% Voter Approval - See Note Below Regarding Separate Propositions) **	\$0	\$0	
Administrative Component	\$4,713,270	\$5,002,973	\$4,920,133
Program Component	\$38,374,793	\$38,708,195	\$38,078,665
Capital Component	\$8,055,936	\$8,225,693	\$8,092,930

* Provide a statement of assumptions made in projecting a contingency budget for the 2026-27 school year, should the proposed budget be defeated pursuant to Section 2023 of the Education Law.

Description	Amount
Proposition 2: Four (4) Gas Buses	\$653,506

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

Estimated Basic STAR Exemption Savings ¹	Under the Budget Proposed for the 2026-27 School Year \$437
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The annual budget vote for the fiscal year 2026-27 by the qualified voters of the Kinderhook school district, Columbia County, New York, will be held at The Ichabod Crane High School in said district on Tuesday, May 19, 2026 between the hours of 8:00am and 9:00pm, 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.