



# Highlights

BUDGET EDITION | 2023 - 2024



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Expenditures/Revenues

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Board of Education

## Budget prioritizes small class sizes, student wellness and data security

*On Tuesday, May 16, residents will consider a \$106.7 million budget for the 2023-24 school year that would keep average class sizes at 18 students per classroom in grades K-5 and 21-22 students per classroom at the middle school and high school.*

The proposed 2023-24 budget totals \$106,691,303, a \$3,993,303 increase compared to the current budget. The plan includes a proposed 2.3% tax levy increase, an amount BELOW the district's allowable tax cap (3.08%) and BELOW the annual rate of inflation (8.0%).

The budget is designed to support the district's four core values of academics, character, community and wellness.

"The pandemic brought unique challenges to schools and to our students," said Superintendent Jody Monroe. "The most important lesson we have learned as educators is that smaller

learning environments and personalized attention are the most essential tools we have for keeping students on the path to success."

The budget plan reinforces student wellness with the addition of a social worker to assist students and families through a partnership with the Saratoga Center for the Family. The budget also provides funding to help the high school maintain a cell phone free learning environment. The high school is set to begin using neoprene pouches known as Yondr pouches that are locked upon entry to the school. Students would keep their phones and personal devices in the locked pouches during the school day. The intent of the Yondr pouches is to increase student engagement and reduce distractions in the classroom.

Some of the most significant additions to the 2023-24 budget are in the areas of instructional technology and data security.

### BUDGET SNAPSHOT

2023-2024 PROPOSED BUDGET  
**\$106,691,303**

PROPOSED BUDGET INCREASE  
**\$3,993,303 or 3.89%**

TAX LEVY INCREASE  
**2.3%**

### Budget Vote:

- Tuesday, May 16
- 7 a.m. to 9 p.m.
- BCHS Gym A

### Board of Education Election (to fill three open board seats):

- Christine Beck
- Ewan McNay
- Holly Dellenbaugh
- Meredith Moriarty

Candidates are listed in the order they will appear on the ballot

### ESTIMATED TAX RATE CHANGES:

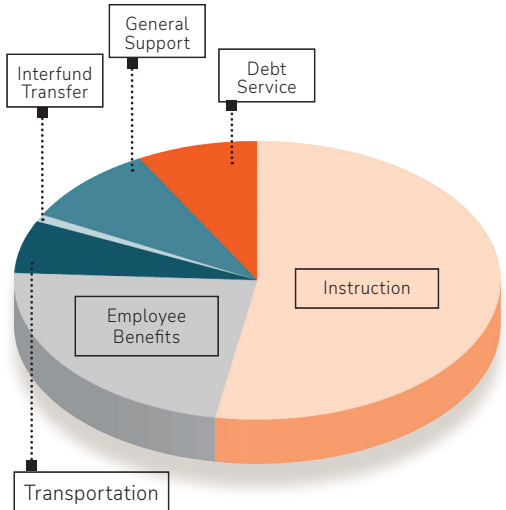
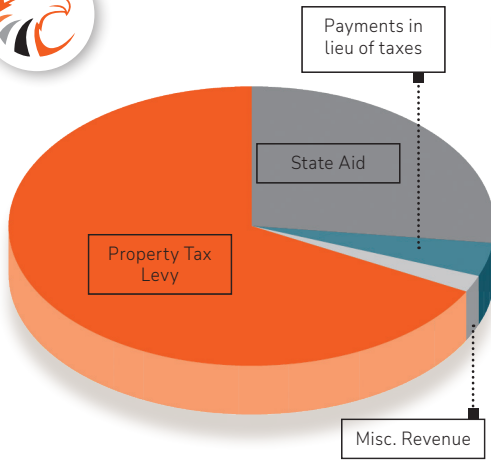
#### Town of Bethlehem

**+2.65% or \$56 more per \$100k**

#### Town of New Scotland

**-2.01% or \$46 less per \$100k**





**BUDGET VOTE:**  
**Tuesday, May 16**

**VOTE IN PERSON**  
**7 a.m. to 9 p.m.**  
**High School Gym A**

## 2023-24 budget questions and answers

- Q. What will the impact of the budget be on my 2023-24 tax bill?**

**A.** The 2023-24 school tax rate for residents living in the town of Bethlehem is estimated to increase 2.56%, or \$56 more per \$100,000 of assessed value. In the town of New Scotland, the school tax rate is estimated to decrease 2.01%, or approximately \$46 less per \$100,000 of assessed value. The rates fluctuate from year to year and from municipality to municipality. In the current year (2022-23), the school tax rate for New Scotland residents increased by 2.75%, while the tax rate for the town of Bethlehem decreased by 1.14%.
- Q. Why are the 2023-24 tax rates for homeowners only estimates?**

**A.** The school district only controls the tax levy. The levy is the total amount of money the district collects from local taxpayers to support its schools. Other factors that change annually impact tax rates and in turn, your tax bill. These include the total assessed value of taxable properties in your town and the equalization rates that are determined by New York State to level assessment values between municipalities within a school district. Assessment data from each town are not finalized until the summer. Final rates are set in August.
- Q. Why is the district only purchasing one electric bus as part of this year's bus proposition?**

**A.** The decision to purchase one additional electric bus is based on an impending state mandate and the district's commitment to reducing carbon emissions. New York State is mandating that all school districts have zero-emission bus fleets by 2035. Prior to the mandate, in May 2021, BC voters overwhelmingly approved the purchase of five electric buses. That purchase was aided by \$1 million in federal grant funding. A sixth electric bus was approved in 2022. The district is awaiting new state and federal incentives to reduce the cost of electric buses so it can increase the number of electric buses it can purchase. The current estimated cost of an electric bus, at \$404,774, is significantly higher than a diesel bus. As with all bus purchases, the purchase amount will be offset by state aid. The state will reimburse the district for 68% of the cost of borrowing for the bus purchase for a final cost to local taxpayers of \$129,528 for one electric bus.



# ON THE BALLOT BUS PROPOSITION

A bus proposition will appear on the May 16 ballot as a separate proposition from the school budget. The proposal would allow the district to purchase three vehicles at a cost of \$533,720. The proposition, as listed on the ballot, will total \$568,720. This amount includes a \$35,000 contingency for supply chain issues.

The purchase would include one 70-passenger electric bus and two 8-passenger Suburban-type vehicles for student transportation. Approximately 68% of the cost of borrowing for the purchase is covered by state aid, resulting in a final cost to the district of \$170,790 for the three vehicles.

This year's bus purchase continues the momentum towards an electric bus fleet with the addition of a seventh electric bus in the district.

All school districts in New York state will be required to have fully electric bus fleets by 2035.



## School District Budget Notice

Overall Budget Proposal	Budget Adopted for the 2022-23 School Year	Budget Proposed for the 2023-24 School Year	Contingency Budget for the 2023-24 School Year *
Total Budgeted Amount, Not Including Separate Propositions	\$102,698,000	\$106,691,303	\$105,099,338
Increase/Decrease for the 2023-24 School Year		\$3,993,303	\$2,401,338
Percentage Increase/Decrease in Proposed Budget		3.89%	2.34%
Change in the Consumer Price Index		8.00%	
A. Proposed Levy to Support the Total Budgeted Amount	\$69,233,000	\$70,824,965	
B. Levy to Support Library Debt, if Applicable	N/A	N/A	
C. Levy for Non-Excludable Propositions, if Applicable **	N/A	N/A	
D. Total Tax Cap Reserve Amount Used to Reduce Current Year Levy	N/A	N/A	
E. Total Proposed School Year Tax Levy (A + B + C - D)	\$69,233,000	\$70,824,965	\$69,233,000
F. Total Permissible Exclusions	\$3,040,754	\$3,175,738	
G. School Tax Levy Limit, <u>Excluding</u> Levy for Permissible Exclusions	\$66,295,097	\$68,192,868	
H. Total Proposed School Year Tax Levy, <u>Excluding</u> Levy to Support Library Debt and/or Permissible Exclusions (E - B - F + D)	\$66,192,246	\$67,649,227	
I. Difference: G - H (Negative Value Requires 60.0% Voter Approval - See Note Below Regarding Separate Propositions) **	\$102,851	\$543,641	
Administrative Component	\$9,363,396	\$10,098,719	\$9,723,719
Program Component	\$77,928,526	\$81,705,998	\$80,899,633
Capital Component	\$15,406,078	\$14,886,586	\$14,475,986
* A contingency budget would result in a reduction of approximately \$1.6M in budgetary appropriations including the potential elimination of new or upgraded equipment, curtailing of professional development and in-service training allocations, elimination of vacant instructional positions which may result in increased teacher to student ratios or limitations in course availability, decreases to student supplies and resources, and delayed implementation of information and technology security safeguards.			
		DESCRIPTION	AMOUNT
		Bus Purchase	\$568,720
** 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)			
<b>Under the Budget Proposed for the 2023-24 School Year</b>			
Estimated Basic STAR Exemption Savings <sup>1</sup> (Town of Bethlehem)			\$593
Estimated Basic STAR Exemption Savings <sup>1</sup> (Town of New Scotland)			\$600

The annual budget vote for the fiscal year 2023-24 by the qualified voters of the Bethlehem Central School District, Albany County, New York, will be held at Bethlehem Central High School in said district on Tuesday, May 16, 2023 between the hours of 7:00am and 9:00pm, prevailing time in the school district, at which time the polls will be opened to vote by voting ballot or machine. Absentee ballots must be received by 5 p.m. on May 16, 2023.

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

### Q. Why is the district reducing some teaching positions?

A. Total enrollment in grades K-8 is expected to decline by 60 students for the 2023-24 school year. While the decline is mostly concentrated in grades K-2 and 6-8, the decrease means existing sections of classes such as art, music and physical education will no longer be needed, resulting in reductions of one part-time position in each of these areas. There will be no impact on student opportunities due to these reductions. At BCHS, there has been a steep decline in student interest in Latin as a World Language elective and there is no longer enough student demand to support the continuation of Latin as an elective. The 1.0 FTE teaching position in this area will be reduced.

### Q. What happens if the budget is defeated?

A. If a budget is defeated, the district has three options: put the same budget before voters a second time; put a revised budget before voters; or adopt a contingent budget. When a contingent budget is adopted, the district is required to levy no more taxes in the coming year than it did in the current year – a 0% tax levy increase. A contingency budget for 2023-24 would result in a reduction of approximately \$1.6M in appropriations. These reductions could include: new or upgraded equipment, professional development and training, vacant instructional positions, student supplies and resources, and the implementation of information and technology security safeguards.





## BETHLEHEM CENTRAL BY THE NUMBERS

6

Bethlehem Central School District has been named the #1 school district in the Greater Capital Region six years in a row by the *Albany Business Review*.

12

Only 12 students in the U.S. who study Spanish were awarded an all-expenses paid cultural immersion trip to Costa Rica by the American Association of Teachers of Spanish and Portuguese.

The group includes BC student Gabriel Martin, a junior. Martin also had a poem he wrote published in the national Spanish language magazine *Albricias*. Senior Jack Newell was also published in *Albricias* this year, winning a first place prize for prose.

24

24 students from BCMS participated in the regional Odyssey of the Mind competition in March. Odyssey of the Mind is an international problem-solving competition that stresses creative thinking, perseverance and teamwork. Of the four teams competing, three advanced to the NYS tournament.

200

A total of 200 student-athletes from BCMS and BCHS are participating in outdoor track & field this spring.

You can follow all spring athletics on Twitter @BCSDAthletics. Go Eagles!

205

BCHS boys basketball coach A.G. Irons reached a milestone of 200 career wins this year (205 overall). Irons has been coaching the team for 16 years and has 20 years of coaching experience at BC. Irons also teaches social studies, is the advisor for Student Senate and runs the district's Weekend Backpack Program.

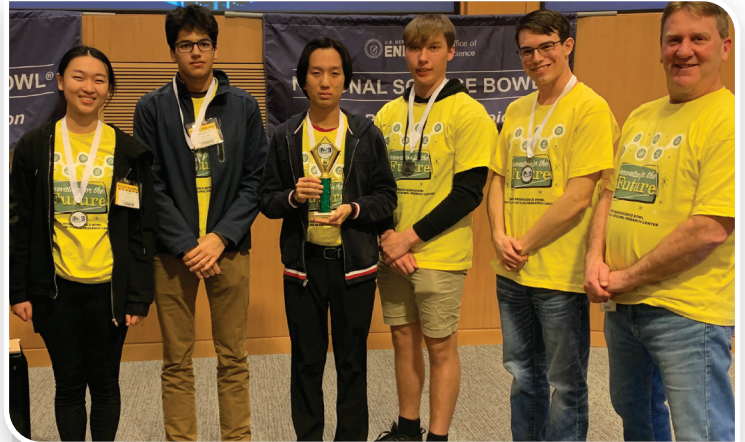
562

562 students recently performed as part of the 2023 District Choral Festival featuring Broadway star and TV actor Joe Carroll. The March concert series marked the first time a BC Music Festival has been held since 2019 due to the pandemic. The music festivals, which feature students from elementary, middle school and high school levels, have been a BC tradition since 1978.



### See how our gardens grow at BCMS

If you've ever been lucky enough to enjoy the harvest from the Bethlehem Middle School gardens, you know how much work there is to do during the growing season. Our BCMS Garden Club and club advisor, Asst. Principal Mark Warford, deserve our thanks for their efforts. We can't wait to see what bounty they bring us this year.



### BC Science Bowl team wins second place at regionals

Congratulations to (l to r) Eva Ho, Nikhilesh Radosevich, Justin Mo, Griffin Andrews, Owen Karmel and coach Paul O'Reilly on the team's second place finish at the regional level of the National Science Bowl.



### Real cats get real food in experiment at Slingerlands

Using scientific methods third graders Kaelan K. and Oaklee K. proved their hypothesis that cats would likely choose salmon or tuna over bread, eggs or cheese in the "real food" experiment they created for the annual science fair. Special thanks goes out to Bonkers, Mazzy, Ivan, Cleopatra Jones, Darth Vader and the rest of our students' feline friends for a job well done.





**Sometimes a friend is all you need**

The most popular duo at the high school these days are the school's therapy dogs, Maia and Charlie. The pups have become fixtures at the school, providing comfort and support to students (and sometimes staff) when they need it most.



**Unified Bowling celebrates successful season**

On Mar. 10, BC's Unified Bowling team celebrated its successful season with one another and with a big turnout of faculty and staff who joined the team for some bowling action of their own. The team won first place in the 2023 Section 2 tournament. Unified teams promote inclusion, tolerance, and acceptance of all students. BC also has a Unified Basketball team that competes in late spring.



**Elsmere celebrates its Blue Ribbon status**

On Feb. 28, students and staff at Elsmere Elementary gathered to celebrate the school's 2022 National Blue Ribbon School honor from the U.S. Department of Education. It is the second time the school has received the national honor. Pictured from l to r: Elsmere PTA Co-President Sarah Patterson, Deputy Superintendent Dave Hurst, Superintendent Jody Monroe, Board of Ed President Holly Dellenbaugh, Board VP Meredith Moriarty, and Principal Kate Kloss.



**For the love of music at Hamagrael**

Hamagrael music teacher Courtney Giampaolo recent introduced the ukulele to her students. The result: a new appreciation and understanding of music for the mini-rockstars. Scan the QR code or visit [bethlehemschools.org](http://bethlehemschools.org) to learn more about this fun lesson.



**Mysterious visitor brightens Eagle kindergarten day**

Students in Ashley Carkner's class at Eagle were surprised to find that a mischievous "leprechaun" had visited their classroom overnight in March. The unexpected visitor made quite a mess with green footprints and glitter left behind. They were all left smiling when they found that the leprechaun also left them each a pinwheel to enjoy!



**Women in the Trades month recognizes BC student**

Alexis Wright, a BCHS junior who attends Welding & Metal Fabrication classes as part of BOCES Career and Technical Education (CTE) was recognized in March as part of Women in the Trades Month. "I like working with my hands and learning new skills. I also like working with power tools. I want to be an underwater welder." Learn more about Alexis and CTE using the QR code above.





## ON THE BALLOT BOARD ELECTION

### Christine Beck



Christine Beck of Glenmont is seeking a fourth term on the Board of Education. A district resident for 22 years, Beck is a senior internal auditor for Privileged Underwriters Reciprocal Exchange. Beck is also a parent of three children who are all BCBS graduates.

### Ewan McNay



Ewan McNay of Glenmont is seeking a first term on the Board of Education. A district resident for 15 years, McNay is an associate professor of behavioral neuroscience at the University at Albany. McNay is also a parent of two children: a graduate of BCBS and a current student at the high school.

## ELECT THREE BOARD OF EDUCATION MEMBERS

In person voting at  
BCBS in Gym A  
Tuesday, May 16 from  
7 a.m. to 9 p.m.

### Holly Dellenbaugh



Holly Dellenbaugh of Delmar is seeking a third term on the Board of Education. A district resident for 16 years, Dellenbaugh is a self-employed attorney. Dellenbaugh is also a parent of three children: a BCBS graduate and two current students, one at the high school and one at the middle school.

### Meredith Moriarty



Meredith Moriarty of Delmar is seeking a third term on the Board of Education. A district resident for 11 years, Moriarty is an attorney and partner at the law firm of Smith Hoke, PLLC. Moriarty is also a parent of three children: two students at Elsmere Elementary School and a student at the middle school.



On June 2, watch for a special edition of **The Spotlight** newspaper featuring members of the **BCBS Class of 2023**

## ARTIST'S CORNER STUDENT PHOTOGRAPH WINS AWARDS



BCBS photography students Drew Koller and Jacob Bloom were recently honored at the Albany Center Gallery's 24th annual High School Regional Juried Exhibition. Koller's photograph of Jacob Bloom entitled "Contemplation" received two top awards at the exhibit, which included 550 works from students at 25 local high schools. The photo was submitted by art teacher Marielle Martin.

One of the two awards was the Brendan Fahy Bequette Fund award which was presented by Assemblymember Pat Fahy and B. Wayne Bequette in honor of their late son, Brendan, who passed away from cancer at age 25. The

fund provides grants to support young artists. Fahy and Bequette are pictured in the photo (at left) with Jacob and Drew at the awards ceremony. The award came with a cash prize and each student received a copy of the book "The Photographs of Brendan Fahy Bequette." Koller's photograph also won the Nicky Lightz Spotlight Award.





# ParentSquare to streamline school-to-home communications



In 2023-24, the Bethlehem Central School District will be using ParentSquare—a simple and unified school-to-home communication platform that will help ensure all parents have the opportunity to actively participate in their children’s education. ParentSquare will replace School Messenger for emergency and district-level communications and will also be used by schools, teachers and coaches to connect with families. A soft rollout of BC’s ParentSquare will take place in May and June of this year.

By unifying multiple tools into one communications app and service, ParentSquare will offer a seamless experience for parents and staff. Parents will be able to keep track of news and activities from all their children’s schools in one place.

ParentSquare also offers two-way, real-time language translation so families can communicate with their child’s school and teacher quickly in their home language. There is also a convenient mobile app that means more accessible communication. Parents and guardians will be contacted directly by the district with information on how to access and customize ParentSquare on their computer or on their mobile device.

Community members who receive messages from Bethlehem CSD via School Messenger will still be able to receive news and information. Visit [bethlehemschools.org/parentsquare](http://bethlehemschools.org/parentsquare) for more information.

## A closer look at tax rates...

### Estimated Tax Rates

	2022-23 FINAL	2023-24 ESTIMATED	% CHANGE
Town of Bethlehem	\$21.27	\$21.83	2.65%
Town of New Scotland	\$22.58	\$22.12	-2.01%

**Tax rates for 2023-24 are estimates only.** Often the tax rates differ between towns because of equalization rates set by the New York State Office of Real Property Services. The equalization rate for the Town of Bethlehem is currently at 75% (down from 86%). The equalization rate for the Town of New Scotland is currently 74% (down from 81%). The district sets final tax rates in August, after the towns finalize assessment figures and the state confirms equalization rates. The rates and estimated changes shown here DO NOT reflect any STAR or other tax exemptions that may reduce individuals’ school tax bills.

## WHAT’S NEW IN THE PROPOSED BUDGET

### Instructional

- Add 1.0 FTE elementary instructional coach to support K-2 teachers with phonics and reading instruction
- Add 1.0 FTE instructional technology coach to support teachers integrating technology in the classroom
- Reduce 0.5 FTE music position based on lower enrollment
- Reduce 0.5 FTE art position based on lower enrollment
- Reduce 0.9 FTE physical education teaching position based on lower enrollment
- Reduce 1.0 FTE world language (Latin) teaching position based on student demand/enrollment
- Increase enrichment funding to challenge students academically outside of the regular school day

### Student Services & Opportunities

- Add mental health services available to students and families through the Saratoga Center for the Family
- Add 0.5 FTE clerical support in the middle school counseling center
- Add one hour per day of morning

- hall monitor support at the middle school
- Add 0.5 FTE clerical support in the library and main office at Eagle Elementary School
- Add intramural programs at elementary and middle school levels
- Add advisor for Odyssey of the Mind program at BCMS
- Add a football coach at the modified level to meet student demand
- Add support for teams who must travel to compete at NYSPHSAA championship levels
- Rent fields for use by sports teams displaced while onsite field improvements are ongoing as part of the 2021 Capital Project

### Technology, Facilities & Communication

- Replace aging hardware, including Chromebooks, per replacement cycle; purchase software updates
- Create a Security Operations Center within the district to help prevent cyberattacks and protect student data and other sensitive information
- Hire and train a data web architect and senior systems administrator to

- replace key individuals who will be retiring
- Replace School Messenger with ParentSquare to streamline school-to-home communication
- Replace Optigate employee portal with SchoolFront portal
- Install Avigilon door alert system (see p. 8) at BCMS
- Implement Yondr pouches to create a phone-free learning environment at the high school
- Replenish pandemic response equipment and supplies
- Add videography services

### Transportation

- Add a 1.0 FTE telematics specialist to monitor school bus data to improve fleet safety and manage maintenance
- A separate bus proposition to purchase three vehicles, including one electric bus (see p. 6)



## -BUDGET STORY CONTINUED FROM: PAGE 1

Technology in the proposed budget includes upgrades to software used in the classroom and a scheduled replacement of student Chromebooks which takes place for every student every four years. In 2023-24, this means that devices at three grade levels are due to be replaced. The district is also planning a new Security Operations Center to provide 24/7 network monitoring, protection, detection, investigation, and response to threats to cybersecurity.

The Technology Department has been piloting a new filtering system that includes a robust alert system when students engage in online behavior on school devices that references self-harm or harm to others. This system would continue in the new school year.

The proposed budget plan was developed during several weeks of public meetings that began in February.



700 Delaware Avenue, Delmar, New York 12054

**Board of Education**

Holly Dellenbaugh, President  
 Christine Beck, Vice President  
 Willow Baer  
 Meredith Moriarty  
 Katherine Nadeau  
 Robert Tietjen  
 John Walston

**Superintendent of Schools**

Jody Monroe

**Deputy Superintendent**

David Hurst, Ph.D.

**Chief Business and Financial Officer**

John McPhillips

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Produced in cooperation with the Capital Region BOCES Communications Service.

**Focus on student safety**

**New door alert system at BCHS included in budget**

The proposed 2023-24 budget includes a \$100,000 capital outlay for a new Avigilon Door Status Monitoring System at the high school. The new alert system would immediately alert staff if an exterior door is propped open or ajar during the school day. The alert system allows for a prompt response so the door can be closed and locked or repaired, if needed.

The new door alert system would be integrated with the Avigilon security camera and access control systems which were installed across the district as part of the most recently completed bond project. A separate security system monitors exterior doors at night when buildings are closed or otherwise not occupied.

The new door alert system would be installed first at the high school and the system would then be integrated at other schools using operational funds, state and federal resources and future capital projects.



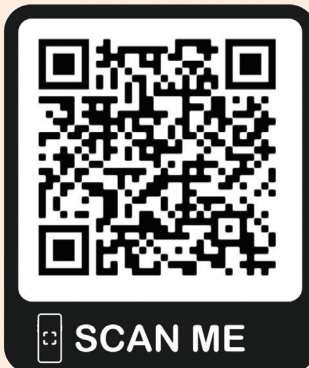
**VOTER ELIGIBILITY & ABSENTEE BALLOTS**

To vote, you must be at least 18 years old, a U.S. citizen and a resident of the Bethlehem Central School District for at least 30 days prior to the vote. You do NOT need to be registered to vote. If you need an absentee ballot, contact District Clerk Brittany Barrett by email at bbarrett@bethlehemschools.org or by phone at 518-439-7098.

**NOW HIRING FOR THE 2023-24 SCHOOL YEAR!**

Our BC faculty and staff have the power to positively impact the lives of our students in many ways. As a teacher, as an aide to students with disabilities, as a bus driver or attendant, custodian or lunchtime staff member...each person plays an important role in our school. Please consider joining our BC team! We have full-time, part-time and substitute positions available.

Scan the QR code below or visit [www.bethlehemschools.org](http://www.bethlehemschools.org)



**Vote in person:**

- Tuesday, May 16
- 7 a.m. to 9 p.m.
- High School Gym A
- 700 Delaware Ave. in Delmar

**What will I be voting on?**

- A proposed budget for the 2023-24 school year with a 2.3% tax levy increase
- Three members of the Board of Education who will serve three-year terms (through June 30, 2026)
- A proposal to purchase three new vehicles (including one electric bus)