

NewsHub

The quarterly newsletter of your Erie's Public Schools

Inside:

Career & Tech Ed students help shape local workforce

Pre-K & Kindergarten registration now open for 2024-2025

EPS students flex their entrepreneurial muscles

Erie's Public Schools

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Erie, PA 16502

www.eriesd.org

Brian J. Polito,
Superintendent



Erie's Public Schools officials, school administrators, and Erie School Board members were among those invited to take part in a groundbreaking ceremony for the new Edison Elementary School.

Construction starts on Edison *\$35.5M new school is district's first in 26 years*

Erie's Public Schools in May broke ground on a \$35.5 million new Edison Elementary School on East Lake Road, the first new construction of a school in the district in more than 25 years.

Staff, students and invited guests gathered for a celebration that was about much more than hard hats, earth-moving equipment and shovels, Superintendent Brian J. Polito said.

With the construction of a new Edison, "we celebrate more than a fulfillment of our promise to make sure all of our schools are warm, safe and dry spaces for our students to learn and our staff to work," Polito said. "We celebrate a step toward equity. We celebrate a tangible investment in our students, our families, and our community that will have ripple effects for generations to come, and that is no small achievement.

"A building is not just a building when it has the power to shape lives for the better, and make no mistake, the new Edison Elementary School will do just that," he said.

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District invests \$35.5M in Erie's lower east side

New Edison Elementary School will have 'ripple effects for generations to come.'



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The new school, set to open in time for the start of the 2025-26 school year, will replace the current aging Edison Elementary School, which serves roughly 500 students in pre-kindergarten through fifth grade on Erie's lower east side. Renderings drawn by district HHSR Architects/Engineers call for a modern building that will include spacious classrooms, a separate cafeteria and gymnasium (the current school has one space used for both purposes), a courtyard, and additional space for parking, busing and student pick-up and drop-off.

Erie School Board President Jay Breneman addressed the crowd, both in his role as board president and as a parent.

"As parents, we entrust our most precious treasures to the care of our schools, knowing that within these walls, they will be surrounded by dedicated educators who will not only teach them academic subjects but will also serve as mentors, role models, and sources of inspiration," Breneman said.

Superintendent Brian Polito said the investment in the new Edison would pay off for generations to come.

"So, as we break ground today, let us do so with a profound sense of gratitude for the opportunities this new Edison Elementary School will provide for our children."

Principal Diane Sutton thanked all involved before she introduced Niriya Stallworth, a fifth grade student who has attended Edison since first grade. Niriya spoke about all the things she will miss about the old Edison.

"First, the classrooms. We've all spend a lot of time here from learning to playing games," Niraya said. "Second, the cafeteria where we have tried many different foods. Third, the nurse's office. The place where you always get help when you don't feel good. Last, but not least, I will miss the entire building because I've been here since 1st grade and have many great memories.

"I will miss the teachers, staff, and the Edison building, but I'm happy that the kids can experience something new."



Edison Elementary School Principal Diane Sutton introduces fifth-grader Niriya Stallworth.

Budding Entrepreneurs

Ice House students bring ideas to life

The challenges ranged from the trivial (residue from sticky notes) to the most consequential (gun violence).

Those and other issues – and the question of how to address them – were the focus of an April event that brought together seventh graders from Erie’s three middle schools: Strong Vincent, Wilson and East.

The students had been participating in the nationally recognized Ice House Entrepreneurship program, which aims to help students identify a challenge or problem, develop an entrepreneurial mindset, and expand their individual potential.

At April’s culminating event, held at Strong Vincent, students had the opportunity to display and present their projects and demonstrate what they learned.



Ice House students from three EPS middle schools display their work during a culminating event in April.

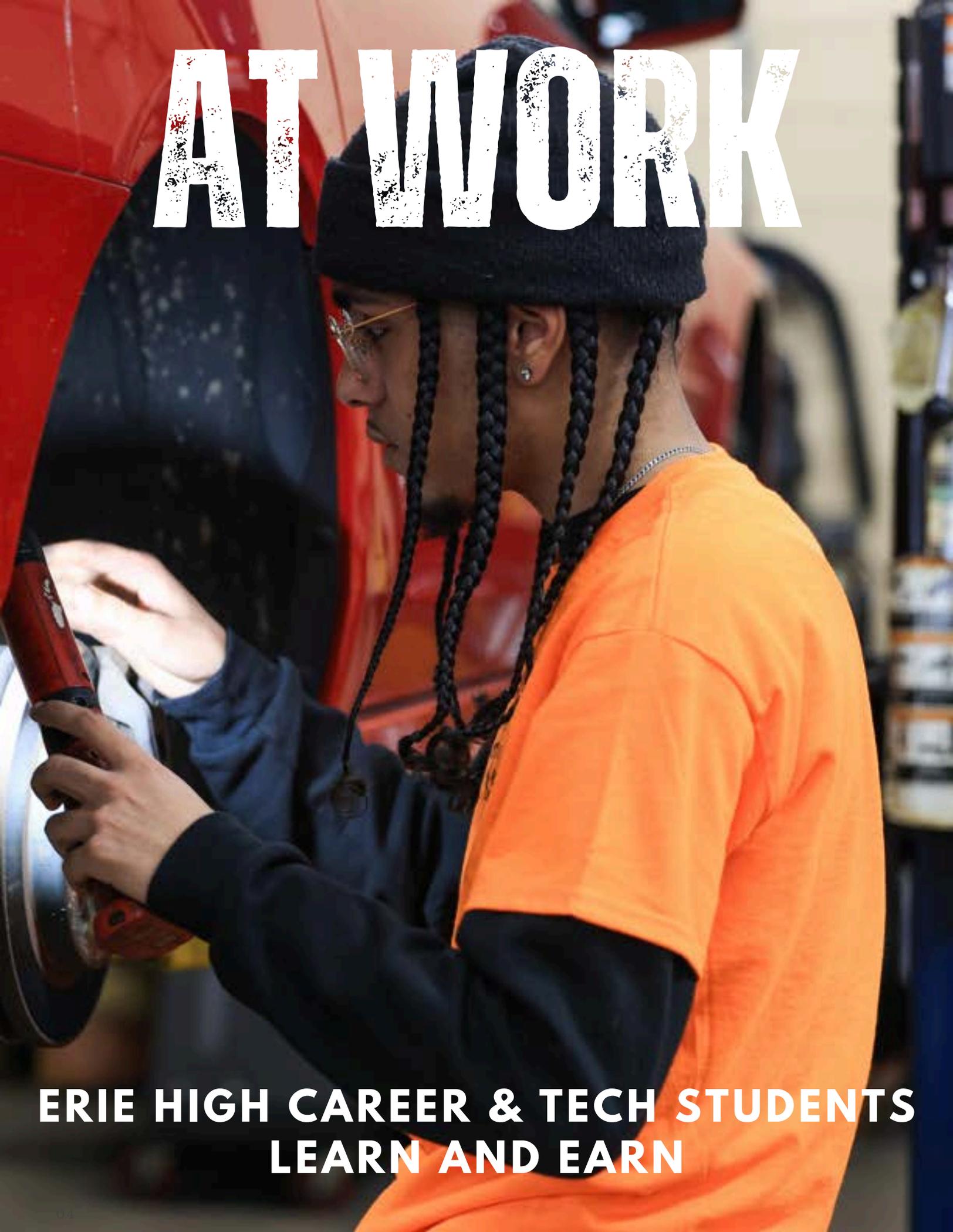


A Wilson Middle School student speaks as part of a group presentation on “Restaurant Roulette,” an app meant to help people choose what to eat.

One group from Wilson Middle School addressed the vexing problem of not being able to decide what to eat through the proposed creation of “Restaurant Roulette, an app that would generate a list of restaurants for the user. Another group, from Strong Vincent, advocated for increased privacy in bathrooms through the creation of a bathroom privacy barrier.

Just over 100 students in all presented their challenges and proposed solutions; a select few spoke on the auditorium stage, while others presented tri-fold displays in the gymnasium.

“The Ice House program allows our students to sharpen their critical thinking skills by identifying a problem in a fun and engaging way,” said Karin Ryan, director of educational services for Erie’s Public Schools. “It also helps show them, sometimes for the first time, that they have the agency and ability to solve that problem or challenge in innovative ways, and that’s what grows the entrepreneurial mindset.”

A young person with braided hair, wearing safety glasses and a black beanie, is focused on using a red power tool on a car's wheel. They are wearing a bright orange t-shirt with dark sleeves. The background shows a workshop environment with a red car body and various tools.

AT WORK

**ERIE HIGH CAREER & TECH STUDENTS
LEARN AND EARN**

Manuel Latorre's head disappeared into the wheel well. A hand snaked in there too, gripping a bright flashlight that illuminated the inside.

Latorre, an 18-year-old senior in the automotive mechanics technology program at Erie High School, had only been working at the City of Erie's municipal garage for a few days, but had already acquainted himself with the shop floor and the many city vehicles he'd be working on. He's one of nearly 30 students employed in paying jobs as part of the school's Career and Technical Education Co-op Program.

Students in their junior or senior years who demonstrate proficiency in their trade and meet certain requirements can spend at least part of their school day putting the skills they learned in the classroom into practice alongside seasoned professionals.

The benefit is two-fold: Students earn real-world experience — and a paycheck — all before graduating high school. And employers desperately trying to fill open positions find a very ready and willing pipeline of talented young workers.

"It can provide on-site training and expand a student's skill set, and it can be a gateway to employment after graduation," Jason Burgert, director of career and technical education, said of the program. "For students thinking about post-secondary education, it provides a year of experience in the field."

The chance to turn a passion into a paycheck was too good to pass up for Latorre, who grew up attending car shows. Now he spends his days doing the same type of work veterans of the municipal garage have been doing for years. Their advice and guidance is invaluable.

"Being around people who have been in the field for so long, they can help you in so many ways that school can't, just because they've been doing it for so long," Latorre said.

Latorre works alongside another student in the Co-op Program, Esmeralda Suarez, a 19-year-old welder whose three other brothers also studied welding. On one of her first days at work, she found herself resealing the rotted fan housing on a street sweeper.

"I enjoy it, the different things we get to do," Suarez said and smiled. "We destroy it and we make it."

A growing number of employers in Erie and throughout the region are signing on to work with Co-op students in the areas of landscaping and horticulture, marketing, protective services, medical and nurse assisting, machine trades, cosmetology, construction trades, computer programming, engineering, and digital media. Current employers include Potratz Floral, UPMC Hamot, OBGYN Associates of Erie, Sunburst Electronics, Perry Hi-Way Hose Company, Sepco Erie and more.

At Perry Hi-Way, the partnership has been an incredibly positive and productive one, said John Spaulding, who supervises Andrew Norris, a senior in the Protective Services program at Erie High. Norris, a trained emergency medical technician, helps fill a crucial gap.

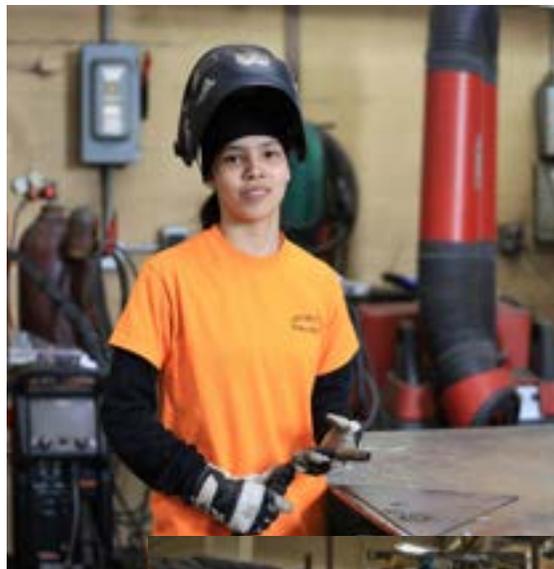
"In (emergency medical services) today, there is a severe shortage of people," Spaulding said. "By getting these young folks interested in EMS, that helps to bolster the numbers going forward" and ultimately improve the safety of the community.

None of the seniors in instructor Donna Newell's welding program at Erie High are in the classroom this year. All, like Suarez, have been placed in co-op jobs, and feedback from students ahas been positive.

"That means we're doing something right," Newell said. "And employers have become such a support in our school. We're trying to show that just because these students are 17 and 18, that doesn't mean they're any less than someone who is 30, 40 y ears old. Employers can mold these young kids into who they want them to be."

Erie Mayor Joe Schember recently visited Suarez and Latorre during a shift at the garage. Schember said he was impressed by what he saw, and hopeful for the future.

"Hopefully they'll stay right here in Erie," he said.



To learn more about Career and Technical Education and the Co-op Program at Erie High School, visit eriesd.org/cte.

SCHOOL SCENES



Staff and students of Perry Elementary School recently unveiled a student-drawn mural on the outside of the building. Artist in residence Sarah Jacobs worked with first and second grade students to turn their vision into the beautiful display. The project was made possible through a partnership with Erie Arts & Culture Artist in Residency program.

Strong Vincent Middle School's Quiz Bowl team, right, in May competed in the National Academic Quiz Tournaments' Middle School National Championship in Chicago. The team finished with two wins in tournament play.



Above, a Woodrow Wilson Middle School student participates in a day of beautification in honor of Earth Day, helping spruce up the school grounds.

At right, students from JoAnna Connell Elementary School don their shades and gaze skyward to view the April 8 total solar eclipse. Erie was in the path of totality, giving students districtwide the chance to see the solar phenomenon in person.





SPORTS SPOTLIGHT

John Sinnott, a junior at Northwest Pennsylvania Collegiate Academy, became the first person to win a District 10 Class 3A singles tournament under the Royals banner when he defeated McDowell High School's Gridley Wright, 6-1, 6-3, at the district championships in May.

"This means a lot," Sinnott told the Erie Times-News/Go Erie's Mike Copper. "We haven't always had the most respect as some other tennis programs, so this is really going to put us on that map. Maybe we can (attract) some other guys to play here."

The D-10 win catapulted Sinnott to a PIAA play-in match, where he defeated the District 8 champion and earned a spot in the state championship, which will take place over Memorial Day weekend.



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