

Senior Class Family Survival Guide

CHS Class of 2026 Families:

The road will move quickly for our seniors from this point forward. There is important information families of seniors need to understand to help their children successfully make their way to graduation. Please carefully read the document below with your child:

Senior Dues

“Senior Dues” are used cover a wide range of expenses associated with senior year. **By using a dues system, our senior class leadership seeks to avoid families having to make multiple payments throughout the year and reduces costs to families by ordering items in bulk.** Last month, representatives from PTSCO, CHS Foundation, CHS Administration, Senior Senate and Senior Class advisor, Mrs. Brandquist, met to review the class balance and expenses. Dues were set at \$150.00 and must be submitted by Friday, May 15th. If you have already paid and were charged a fee of approximately \$6.00 in excess of \$150.00, you have the option to make this a donation toward members of the class who need financial assistance with dues or can contact Mrs. Brandquist for a refund of that amount. We have extended senior the **Senior Dues deadline to Friday, May 15th.**

To streamline the process, all payments are being accepted securely through the district’s online payment portal, SchoolCash. Families should have received a SchoolCash email by now requesting payment. If you have not received an email for some reason, please use [this link](#) to complete your payment. If your family has not previously registered for SchoolCash, [this link](#) will take you to directions.

If you have any questions regarding the dues, please contact senior class advisor, Mrs. Brandquist at mbrandquist@buffaloschools.org.

The cost of senior dues includes, but is not limited to:

- Professionally printed graduation announcements for each senior, to share with family and friends
- Keepsake graduation programs that are professionally formatted and printed
- Cap, gown, and stole to wear at the graduation ceremony
- One (1) ticket to the Senior Dinner at Riverworks (families may purchase additional tickets depending on which family members they would like present – see the senior dinner details section of this letter for more information)
- Rental of Kleinhans Music Hall and stage flowers. Rental costs include Kleinhans staff and security. The City Honors Foundation funds the majority of the cost for Kleinhans. The use of this beautiful venue allows families to bring unlimited guests to graduation and to enjoy the ceremony in a spacious, air-conditioned environment with excellent acoustics.
- Special CHS diploma cover
- Professionally printed diplomas
- CHS Class of 2026 hoodie
- Class of 2026 gift to the school community

At the request of our students, yearbooks are not included in dues. Please email Mr. Hecker at ethecker@buffaloschools.org to inquire about remaining yearbook inventory for purchase.

Some common questions about senior dues:

-What happens if there is surplus? The district requires that any surplus be held for one year to be sure that all outstanding debts are resolved. After this, a class gift can be made based on a signed letter left by senior class officers. We do our best to calculate dues so that any surplus is modest.

-Why don't we notify families of the exact dues amount earlier in the school year? If we notified families early in the year, we would have to list a much higher amount, as it takes time to finalize vendor pricing, and seniors are still fundraising throughout the school year. We do not want to alarm families in this fashion. Last year, we arrived at a last-minute agreement with a vendor at the start of March that provided a \$15 reduction for each senior. We do not want families to pay a dollar more than is needed.

-Why doesn't the school district pay for these things? Our district subsidizes many expenses for students that other districts do not, including free breakfasts and lunches, paying for the expenses of PSAT, SAT, AP and IB exams, Say Yes Scholarships, Metro passes and more. These special touches at the conclusion of our seniors' CHS voyage funded by dues are something worth investing in for the indelible memories they create.

-What should a student do if they have a financial hardship? Seniors should meet with their school counselor to discuss. School counselors review our most recent documentation to verify a student is coming from an economically disadvantaged background, in order to confirm family need. For decades, the City Honors Foundation has quietly supported many students with documented financial need.

Senior Dinner

On Tuesday, June 2, 2026, our annual Senior Dinner will take place at RiverWorks on Ganson Street. It will start promptly at 6:00 p.m. The cost of dinner for each senior is covered as part of their senior dues.

At this event, our seniors and their families are able to enjoy each other's company together as a class one last time before they move on to their college destinations. Senior awards are also presented as a part of the evening. We welcome and encourage our seniors and their families to attend this special event.

The cost of \$45.00 per person includes a dinner buffet, unlimited soda pop, coffee & tea and dessert. Adults 21 and over will also have access to a cash bar. Attire for the event is business casual: ex: dresses, a blouse with skirt/slacks, or dockers/trousers with a collared shirt.

Please have your senior return the remittance slip sent home with your child to Mrs. Brandquist's classroom (Room 219), confirming whether they will be in attendance. *Even though the senior dinner is paid for through each senior's dues, we still need every senior to RSVP for the event so that we know they are attending and can plan accordingly. (If a senior chooses to not RSVP by May 11th, they cannot attend.)*

Families wishing to purchase tickets for family members in addition to their graduating senior must do so **no later than Monday, May 11th** using their School Cash Accounts at [the following link](#).

Please do not hesitate to contact me at mcbrandquist@buffaloschools.org, or at (716) 816-4230, if you have any questions regarding this special event. We hope to see you and your senior on June 2, 2026!

CHS Class of 2026 Lawn Signs

If you would like the world to know about your soon-to-be CHS graduate, celebratory lawn signs are now available at Zoom Copy [using this link](#). To keep pricing as low as possible, the school is not deriving any profit from the sale of these signs. There is a discount for ordering more than one sign. Families may want to consider joining together for orders to save.



Senior Exit Survey (Mandatory)

All seniors are required to complete the [Senior Exit Survey Form](#), which is **due on Monday, May 18th**. Please fill this out carefully and accurately as this information is used to complete important end of year documents. The supplemental survey will be available in the last week of May (via Schoology). Responses must be submitted for the supplemental survey by Friday, June 5th. We cannot guarantee that any information submitted after that date will be included in the graduation program.

Senior Drop-Off Day

All seniors will drop-off their BPS devices, chargers textbooks, team uniforms, library books and any other district property on a date in early June. As soon as the BPS IT Department confirms the date for our building, we will notify families. Students must return all district property in preparation for graduation.

Senior Service Learning Initiative (SLI)

SLI applications were due Friday, April 17th. SLI begins on Monday, May 18th and continues until Tuesday, June 16th. Students report to their SLI site for at least 4 hours during each school day. They will be responsible for completing a time log and a reflection sheet. Both of those items will be distributed before SLI and will also be posted on the Senior Guidance page. The time log and reflection must be emailed to Mrs. Casseri at dcasseri@buffaloschools.org at the completion of SLI. (**Time log and reflections are due via email by Thursday, June 18th at 3pm.**) Please email any questions to Mrs. Casseri at dcasseri@buffaloschools.org.

Graduation

- If your child will not be attending the graduation ceremony for some reason, please email Mrs. Banas at ebanas@buffaloschools.org as soon as possible.
- Rehearsal is **mandatory** and will take place at 10:30 am on graduation day (Thursday, June 25th). Seniors are then required to return at 6:00 pm that evening for the 7:00 pm ceremony start.
- Our keynote speaker will be Curtis “Fitz” Williams ‘80, music writer and producer; longtime member of Rock and Roll Hall-of-Fame Inductees, ‘Kool and the Gang’
- Please remember that you do not need a ticket to attend the CHS graduation ceremony at Kleinhans Music Hall. The City Honors Foundation and our senior families invest in using the hall so that families can bring as many people as they want to share this special day with their child.
- Please plan to arrive early as free parking is limited to side streets. If you want to park in the actual parking lot at Kleinhans, there is a charge of \$10 (the school does NOT receive these proceeds).

- Families may not bring any noisemaking devices to graduation.
- City Honors requires students to wear the graduation costume issued by the school without any alterations or additions to their cap, gown or stole. No other cords, medals, etc. are worn with the graduation costume. Students who violate this requirement will be removed from the procession into Kleinhans and will not be allowed to participate in the ceremony.

(For those of you who wonder why we do this: We have discussed the reasons for this with our seniors. Uniformity in this setting does create an elegant look, but this has more to do with avoiding putting our staff in a position to make subjective judgments on a moment's notice about what is "appropriate" decoration or messaging and what is not. I tell students, "think of the cause that is closest to your heart. And now think of the exact opposite. Chances are I would have to allow that opposite cause if we allowed your cause to be displayed. Is seeing that on your graduation day something that you would want?" In addition, questions of "what is art?", "what is appropriate messaging at a ceremony?", "what is crude versus what is personal expression?" are very subjective from person to person. Some may think of this approach as very traditional. We believe it is forward thinking. We do not have school uniforms. Our seniors have benefited over the years from one of the most progressive dress codes in the region. We simply do not want our staff members who assemble candidates for graduation to face any last-minute decisions or confrontations with our seniors on what should be a special occasion for them and their families.)

- Student dress beneath the gown: All students should dress appropriately for this formal ceremony. We strongly encourage students to wear dress shoes, a dress shirt and slacks or knee-length dress under their graduation robes. Students should not wear shorts or any footwear that would endanger them or their classmates while walking up and down stairs, narrow risers, and a Kleinhans stage that shifts as you walk on it.
- All gowns must be "zipped" for the processional, during the ceremony, and recessional.
- Families are asked to please remain at their seats out of consideration for other guests. We have secured a professional photographer to take photos of each graduate as they receive their diploma. Information on how to access those photos will be listed in the graduation program. To keep pricing as low as possible for families, the school does not receive a commission from these sales.
- Students should take their gown out of the packaging and hang it immediately after getting home from rehearsal - the gown will be wrinkled when it is removed. Tip: hanging it in your bathroom works well as the steam from shower takes most wrinkles out. Do not iron the cap or gown.
- Be careful to not lose your tassel when taking the gown and cap out of the bag (we do not have extras).
- A white (Diploma course candidates) or silver (Diploma candidates) stole will be given to each student at rehearsal to wear as a part of the graduation costume. (Seniors may want to "steam" that as well.)
- All personal belongings of the graduates should be given to family members before entering the staging area for graduates downstairs at Kleinhans. Graduates will not be permitted to have bags, purses, cell phones, cameras, water bottles, etc. with them during the ceremony. City Honors and Kleinhans are not responsible for any items that go missing.
- Please note that only diploma covers are handed out to the graduates during the ceremony. All students should report to the Mary Seaton room following the ceremony to pick up their actual diploma and an envelope containing other important documents from our school counselors.

- All policies relating to student conduct during the regular school year remain in force during graduation. Misconduct, distractions, defiance of procedures and/or lack of compliance with dress code requirements may result in a graduate's diploma being retained by the school until resolution of disciplinary issues and family conference in the days after graduation.

Graduation Duties

On March 30th, Mrs. Banas shared the application survey for graduation duties on Schoology. At City Honors, seniors apply to give the class address, read the superintendent's message, present the class gift, or introduce the keynote speaker. **Seniors have until Friday, May 8th to apply.** The link to the application survey is: <https://forms.gle/gxj7xjW5uk5cjMpi8>. Applications will be reviewed by a committee of faculty and the administration to select students. Any senior may apply, provided they are in good standing with their studies and conduct. The goal of the committee is not to select the highest achieving student or the perfect student, but to select a cross-section of students who are representative of their classmates and their journey. The committee will make selections based upon the student's career at the school and the application they submit. The focus of the City Honors graduation exercises since its inception in 1975 has been the accomplishments and learning of the group rather than the individual. In keeping with this, students fulfilling these duties are serving as representatives of their classmates rather than being singled out for an individual recognition.

AP/IB Scores

AP: Seniors will be provided with instructions from the Guidance Department to obtain a free AP score report to their college destination. The College Board allows students to send one free score report by June 20, 2026. After this date, College Board will charge a fee. City Honors does not have the ability to send your final AP score report.

IB: The senior exit survey will be used by Mrs. Banas to enter college/university information into IB's information system for each senior. International Baccalaureate sends one transcript free of charge. Additionally, seniors were provided IB PIN sheets by Dr. Ziolkowski so that they could upload their Language & Literature HL essays. They were told at the time that they needed to keep that information so that they could access their IB scores. Using any browser but Safari, grades can be checked starting in the late morning of Monday, July 6th. Seniors will not know their scores without this information sheet. If this information was misplaced, they must **email Mrs. Banas before June 24th** and ask that she please provide that information to them again.

Dual Enrollment Transcripts

Information on retrieving a dual enrollment transcript from SUNY Erie or Hilbert College, will be provided by the Buffalo Public School District later this Spring. All seniors will be notified when the information is available.

Final CHS Transcripts for Colleges

The school counselors send final transcripts to colleges by uploading them to the application the student used (ex: Common App, SUNY App, etc.) to apply to the college they will be attending. Please ensure that the correct school is listed in the senior exit survey. Final transcripts will be done during the first week of July or as soon as the district makes final transcripts available to download.

Financial Aid Applications

- [FAFSA](#) and [TAP](#) applications (and the CSS Profile for some schools) should have been submitted for financial aid. If these forms have not been completed or you want to check your child's status with these applications, reach out to your child's school counselor.
- [Say Yes applications](#) need to be completed even if your child is not attending a school on their partner list. 73% of our Seniors have completed their Say Yes application so far! This application takes less than 5 minutes to complete. Students will **NOT** receive money from Say Yes if both their FAFSA and TAP applications aren't completed by June 30.
 - If students attending a SUNY or CUNY school have a tuition gap after Say Yes is applied, they should consider applying for the NYS Excelsior Scholarship, which is only applied to remaining tuition. [Click here](#) for details.
 - If your child will not be attending a school on the Say Yes list of partner schools, please have them complete the Say Yes application anyway. We would like the students to have the opportunity to use the Say Yes Scholarship just in case they transfer to a school on the Say Yes list of partner schools.
- Students should be looking for and applying for scholarships! The CHS School Counselors post local scholarship opportunities as we receive them to the CHS Class of 2026 Counselors' Schoology Group page and the S on the School Counseling page of the [City Honors website](#). Some hard copies are also available in the School Counseling Office. Deadlines are coming and going quickly, so apply now. Don't leave free money on the table!

Additional Senior Celebrations

Representatives from PTSCO, our senior class advisor and our senior class advisor are currently running an "Anython" to fundraise for additional ways for our seniors to gather and celebrate the conclusion of their CHS voyage. Please support the Anython (senior families received emails) and contact Tava Shanchuk (shanchuk@yahoo.com) or Danielle Grzymala (danigriz07@gmail.com) if you can assist with our efforts for special events!

Some Important Upcoming Dates for Seniors

AP and IB Exams: See the CHS AP/IB Testing schedule [at this link](#).

May 8 **Graduation Duties Application Due**

May 11 **Deadline for Seniors to RSVP for the Senior Dinner**
Family member ticket payment deadline for Senior Dinner

- May 15** **Senior Dues Deadline**
- May 18** **Senior Exit Survey Due**
Senior Service Learning Initiative (SLI) Begins
- May 29** **Junior/Senior Prom, Hyatt Regency Downtown**
- June 2** **Senior Dinner at Riverworks**
- June 5** **Senior Drop-off Day**
-All seniors must surrender their BPS laptop devices AND chargers
-Seniors who have not paid their senior dues, owe money for IB examinations they did not complete, owe library books, debts, team uniforms, SLI forms, etc. need to resolve these issues on this day in order to avoid complications on graduation day.
- June 16** **Last day of SLI**
- June 18** **SLI time log and reflections due to Mrs. Casseri via email by 3pm.**
- June 25** **Graduation Day**
-10:30 am: Mandatory Graduation Rehearsal at Kleinhans Music Hall
 Seniors must attend rehearsal in order to participate in graduation
-6:00 pm: Seniors arrive and are arranged in formation for procession
-7:00 pm: Graduation procession begins