MESSAGE FROM THE SUPERINTENDENT AND INTERIM ASSISTANT SUPERINTENDENT FOR CURRICULUM AND INSTRUCTION

DEAR ONTEORA COMMUNITY MEMBERS,

Now that the holiday season is over and we are in the long haul to spring, we would like to brighten your winter by sharing some of the great things that are happening in our schools.

This year, we have begun to explore the "growth mindset" as it applies to our students and ourselves. The basic tenet of this mindset is to instill the thought that while it is okay to say, "I don't know that," it is better to reframe it as "I don't know that yet." In order to learn, we often need to make mistakes and grow from the process of figuring out how to correct our course. We have to be willing to take risks with the understanding that if we are never challenged, we may not fail, but we will not reach our full potential.

Our schools are vibrant houses of learning, and our staff members have been enthusiastically working to support our students in various ways at all levels of the District throughout the fall and winter.

Some of the exciting things our students are experiencing include:

Next Gen Standards and the Inquiry Process: Our Kindergarten-Grade 4 teachers have begun to use what is known as the inquiry process to meet the new "Next Gen Standards" in Math and Science. The process of allowing students to inquire—rather than simply listen—provides an engaging environment for students as well as teachers.

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Grade 4 students (from left to right)
Angel Maize, Rosetta Safuto,
Erik Chazik, and Abby Voelker playing
a "Monkey Multiplication" game. ▶

New Bennett Program Promotes Math Literacy

PLAYING CARDS.
ROLLING DICE.
SOLVING "TANGY
TUESDAY" PUZZLES.

These are just some of the unusual learning activities taking place at Bennett Elementary School, where teachers are implementing a new curriculum that uses games to promote math literacy.

The curriculum, inspired by a program called Math Workshop,



Grade 4 Bennett students Andrew Umhey (left) and Jeremy Huber learn about math concepts while playing cards.

employs a variety of strategies — including having students rotate among different learning stations, teaching children to communicate using "Math Talk," and asking the young learners to work independently as well as collaboratively to solve a "problem of the day."

Learning stations featuring math-based games are especially popular, notes Academic Intervention Services (AIS) Math teacher Maryanne Kenly. Games are not only fun, she explains. They also allow students to explore—and master—fundamental mathematical concepts.

Students are playing cards and rolling dice while focusing on key math concepts and skills, such as multiplication, division, and place value. Adding decimals is much more enjoyable when you're playing a game rather than doing a worksheet, according to Mrs. Kenly.

Mathematician and author Greg Tang created the "Tangy Tuesday" packets used in the classrooms. The packets, Mrs. Kenly explains, give students the chance to use their math sense to solve logic problems while having fun. "Students absolutely love the games, and often ask to play them—even during their independent time," she remarks.

Grade 4 teacher Leigh VanDeBogart appreciates the program's emphasis on breaking the classroom into multiple learning stations. "The stations give the children an opportunity to strengthen their math skills while learning cooperatively and building a sense of community," she explains.

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MESSAGE FROM THE SUPERINTENDENT AND INTERIM ASSISTANT SUPERINTENDENT FOR CURRICULUM AND INSTRUCTION

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

For example, our Grade 5 science teachers have embarked on a robotics journey with their students. During this adventure, the young learners are building robots and writing code to instruct their robots to perform specific tasks. The students are working at their own paces, and are learning through the process of trial and error.

In another example of the inquiry process, our Kindergarten-Grade 6 math activities are shifting to math workstations. At these stations, students are using manipulatives to enhance their math fluency and visualization to help them make sense of math word problems.

Literacy: In Kindergarten-Grade 6 this year, we are employing Literacy Coaches, reading specialists who partner with our teachers and help provide leadership for our literacy efforts. We have also created Professional Growth Circles, which encourage our teachers to share ideas and best practices regarding student learning. Our Balanced Literacy Program has been using guided reading practices as well as small-group instruction. We have also expanded the use of Leveled Literacy Interventions, which aim to support struggling readers by providing supplementary, targeted instruction.

Multicultural Education: We are working to create a culture that supports multicultural education by celebrating our diversity and promoting tolerance for and among all of our students. Students need to feel safe and accepted in order to be able to focus on learning. Volunteers from all of our buildings and many different departments came together to form a Diversity Cadre.

The Cadre is working on many initiatives, one of which is developing a Tolerance Curriculum and gathering tools and supports that can be utilized by our staff to help our students as they navigate their way through the complicated issues that have become part of our world in recent years.

One of the issues we have begun to consider is implicit bias—the attitudes or stereotypes that may unconsciously affect the way we react to people and events. We are applying for a grant to fund additional staff development to address this challenge and hope to have more plans to share in the coming months based on the work of this team.

Weather Matters: While we have already seen the first few winter storms and have had some delays and snow days, we are hoping that we make it to spring without exhausting our snow day allotment. Please understand that when inclement weather is in the forecast, student safety is our first concern. Any decisions to delay, dismiss early, or close school are not taken lightly, and we use multiple forecasts as well as input from our local highway departments in our decision-making process.

We thank you all for your continued support of our students and our schools.

Sincerely,

Victoria McLaren SUPERINTENDENT OF SCHOOLS

Marystephanie Corsones
INTERIM ASSISTANT
SUPERINTENDENT FOR
CURRICULUM AND
INSTRUCTION

New Bennett Program Promotes Math Literacy

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

The learning-station format allows teachers to work with small groups of students, reviewing concepts, reinforcing skills, and re-teaching lessons if necessary. Bennett teachers have noticed that some students are less hesitant to ask questions when they are part of smaller groups.

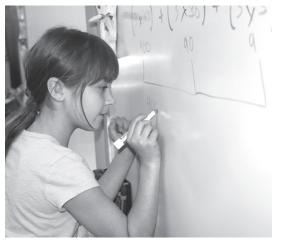
To help the children learn—and problem solve—cooperatively, the children also practice "Math Talk," which Mrs. Kenly describes as using "mathematical language to explain, evaluate, extend, and strengthen their answers." The student-to-student conversations allow the young mathematicians to hone their math skills as well as their communication skills and, perhaps most importantly, to learn that there is usually more than one way to solve a problem.

Mrs. Kenly, along with Grade 5 teacher Virginia Occhi, has been leading book studies for their fellow teachers, so the Bennett educators can deepen their understanding of the Math Workshop approach.

In December, Bennett's Math Department, with the support of the PTA, hosted a Math Family Game Night, which gave students the opportunity to introduce their families to some of the games created by Greg Tang.

"It was a great way to generate excitement about math and bring families together," recalls Mrs. Kenly. "Best of all," she says, "it enabled parents to become partners in their children's math education and see how many math problems are solved during the course of a game."

"When parents play the games with their children, they begin to think about numbers—and math—in new and better ways," she suggests. "When it comes to math facts, we need our parents' help. Strategies can be taught in the classroom, but practice also takes place at home."



Aria Heinitz, a student in Leigh VanDeBogart's Grade 4 class, works out a math problem.

Phoenicia's Mystery Reader Café

EVERYONE LOVES A GOOD MYSTERY, AND PHOENICIA ELEMENTARY SCHOOL STUDENTS ARE NO EXCEPTION. One of their favorite activities is participating in their school's monthly Mystery Reader Café events.

The café, organized by teachers Kelly McLean and Nicole Ryan, features a series of guest readers, whose identities are kept a closely guarded secret. Each mystery guest brings along a book to entertain the children during their lunchtimes.

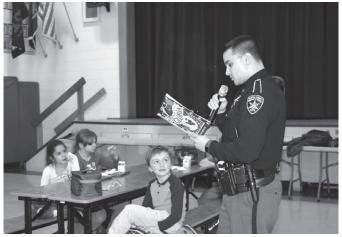
During the days leading up to the literary luncheons, tantalizing clues about the visitors' secret identities are shared during the morning announcements, explains Ms. McLean. "Students need to think about the clues, ask grown-ups questions, do some inference work by collecting the clues and coming up with possible 'suspects,' and use the process of elimination," she says.

During a recent lunchtime, the students wondered which book lover might match up with the clues they'd been given. Who, they asked themselves, owns a dog named Skeet, has a fondness for chocolate and ice cream, and works out at 5 AM most days? The answer, to the children's surprise and delight, was Superintendent Victoria McLaren, who arrived in the cafeteria bearing *Miss Smith's Incredible Storybook*, by Michael Garland.

The following lunch period, the students' sleuthing was more successful. A telltale clue—"wears a star"—



Book in hand, Onteora Superintendent Victoria McLaren dropped by Phoenicia School's Mystery Reader Café to share her love of reading.



Onteora School Resource Officer Tom Sharon gives a dramatic reading of *Officer Buckle and Gloria*, by Peggy Rathmann, during one of Phoenicia's Mystery Reader Café events.

led to the unveiling of mystery reader Tom Sharon, who wears a star-shaped badge when he serves as the School Resource Officer. "Deputy Tom" elicited squeals of delight, as he tried on various voices during his reading of *Officer Buckle and Gloria*, a story about a policeman, his canine partner, and their efforts to help keep schoolchildren safe.

Previous mystery readers this year have included Phoenicia staff members Leana Nieves, Ariel McGrath, Deborah VanEtten, Laurie Hoy, and Tracy Quick. Principal Linda Sella has also made guest appearances.

The café, now in its third season, has been a hit with Phoenicia's young learners. "I think it's fun to listen to a story while we're eating lunch," says Lilly Carlton. "I like how different teachers get to read to us, and we have to guess clues about who's going to read to us," adds Konnor Nace. Another student, Siobhan Almon, is already anticipating the next café. "I think Ms. McInerney will be the next mystery reader," she predicts.

The Mystery Reader Café is just one of the ways that Phoenicia's teachers help promote literacy, notes Mrs. Ryan. "There are various projects that take place throughout the year to promote student reading, such as the Phoenicia Read-A-Thon, the 100th Day of School celebration (which incorporates both ELA and math), our Bingo-for-a-Book games, various book giveaways, our end-of-year book swap, and of course our schoolwide Scholastic book orders," she says.

At Phoenica, reading is fun—and it's everywhere, even in the school cafeteria!

Pre-K Students Celebrate the Season

Onteora's Universal Pre-K students and First Steps Preschool entertained friends and family in December. The young singers, many of them dressed in their finest party clothes, gave spirited renditions of such holiday classics as "Driedel, Driedel, Driedel," "Feliz Navidad," and "Jingle Bells." Helping the young ones spread musical cheer were Uncle Rock (aka Onteora Board member Robert Burke Warren), Board President Kevin Salem, First Step staff members, and of course Santa.



Onteora Pre-K students Zachary Lane, Jrue Parker, Ivy Bryant, and Reid Perrotta pose for a photo before their holiday concert at First Steps Preschool in Woodstock.

Woodstock Students Flock to 'Kidstock'

WHAT DO PERCUSSION INSTRUMENTS AND POTTERY, FIELD HOCKEY AND FOREIGN LANGUAGES HAVE IN COMMON? These are just some of the subjects tackled by Woodstock Elementary School students during "Kidstock," an afterschool program run by the Woodstock PTA.

One hundred and twelve students took part in the most recent session of Kidstock, which featured classes based on 10 different themes. The weekly lessons, which took place during a six-week period during November and December, were taught by a number of talented guest teachers, ranging from martial arts expert Marilyn St. John to musician Nathan Brenowitz, retired Onteora Food Services cook Robert Kothe to avid gardener (and Bennett teacher) Karen Hadley.

On any given Wednesday afternoon, Woodstock students could be found laboring over Legos, digging in the dirt, whipping up a creamy pot au chocolate, practicing their karate moves, molding clay pots, and drumming up a storm. They assembled collages, wielded field hockey sticks, hunched over sewing machines, and tried out newly acquired vocabulary in Spanish and French.



Martial arts expert Marilyn St. John works with Woodstock student Dylan Katz-Dixon during the Kidstock afterschool program.



Woodstock students listening to their drumming instructor during the Kidstock afterschool program.

"Kidstock is what I like to call an 'expanded learning opportunity' that allows kids to try, explore, or do something they may not have otherwise tried," explained Woodstock PTA President Rana Spada. "It also provides the kids with a safe, healthy, and stimulating environment that builds ongoing relationships with caring adults that strengthen feelings of community, character, and social skills."

Principal Scott Richards is grateful to the PTA and to the instructors, drawn from the Onteora community, who helped make Kidstock possible. "Our students are so fortunate to have the opportunity to explore new subjects outside of their regular school days," he said. "They learned that education can take place not only in the classroom, but also in the kitchen, on a hockey field, in a garden—anywhere!"

The classes, which included snacks, were open to all students. The next session of Kidstock will begin in late March. Be on the lookout for sign-up sheets, which will be coming home in children's backpacks.

Author of Hudson Valley-Inspired Folk Tales Visits Onteora High School

uthor Raymond Depew, a Hudson Valley native who writes under the name R.D. Vincent, visited with Onteora Grade 9 students on December 8. The creator of a series of books set in the fictional Hudson Valley town of Donbridge, Mr. Depew talked with the freshmen about his books, his inspiration, the writing process, the publishing industry, and the importance of following your dreams. "Do things you're passionate about," he told the students.

Mr. Depew, who now makes his home in Houston, said that he draws inspiration from the family stories and local legends he heard from his grandmother and great-aunt while growing up on a dairy farm in the Town of Wallkill. His family, he said, has deep roots in the area, dating back 300 years or so.

The author graduated from Pine Bush High School, where his Grade 10 English teacher was current Onteora teacher Erin McGurgan. "She was a fantastic, memorable

Raymond Depew paid tribute to two of his inspirations: his great-aunt Dorothy Angeloni (left), who passed down family stories and legends, and his Grade 10 English teacher, Erin McGurgan.

During his visit to Onteora High School, author

teacher," Mr. Depew remembers. "It's been almost 25 years, but I never forget the lessons I learned in her class."

Explaining why he decided to write the Donbridge series, Mr. Depew said, "I'm looking to preserve the American heritage of storytelling, which I think is being lost."



Onteora's Poetry 'Battle' Yields Two Victors

YOU CAN SAY IT WAS A WAR OF WORDS—poetic words. Eight young poetry lovers showed off their recitation skills at Onteora High School's Poetry Out Loud Competition on December 7, and two of them emerged victorious: junior Jules Schauffler and sophomore Miriam Silver-Altman.

Jules recited "The Lake Isle of Innisfree" by William Butler Yeats, and "Cathedral of Salt" by Nick Flynn. Miriam also recited a Yeats poem—"The Second Coming," along with "The New Colossus" by Emma Lazurus. Both students will be continuing on to the regional stage of the competition.

"Poetry Out Loud is a national program that encourages high school



This year's Poetry Out Loud competitors pose for a group photo.

students to learn about great poetry through memorization, performance, and competition," Poetry Out Loud Advisor (and Onteora English teacher) Laura Loheide told the audience. "Poetry Out Loud gives students an opportunity to master public speaking skills, build self-confidence, and learn about their literary heritage."

Judging the competition were JD Louis, an English Language Arts teacher at Woodstock Day School and the Faculty Advisor of that school's literary magazine; Dr. Derek Furr, Associate Professor of Literature and Director of the Master of Arts in Teaching Program at Bard College; Carol LaMonda, a novelist as well as a former English teacher at Onteora High School; and Dr. Bill Birns, a retired English teacher from Onteora who holds a Ph.D. in linguistics and rhetoric.

Scenes from Bennett's Grade 4 Winter Band and Orchestra Recital

Photos courtesy of Roy Brueckner









NTEORA

SOARING FOR HER SPORT:

Middle School Gymnast Abigail Nolan

MIDDLE SCHOOL ATHLETE ABIGAIL NOLAN is

no stranger to soaring through the air, balancing on a narrow piece of wood, or executing thrilling maneuvers on a vault table. In other words, she's a gymnast - and a very good one, at that.

This year, competing at the Varsity level, she was awarded "All Around" (AA) honors at the first six Section IX meets of the season. The AA winner was

calculated by adding up the scores from four events - uneven bars, floor, beam, and vault.

While Abigail admits to getting nervous at competitions, she relishes the challenge. "I love the feeling of achieving my goals, then setting new ones," she explains. "In school I do the same thing. I set high goals for what I want my average to be, and I make sure my grades are high."

Abigail, who is in Grade 7, was introduced to the sport in a recreational class at Excel Gymnastics in Saugerties. That's where she caught the eye of Excel

owner Rhonda Dixon, who is now one of the Varsity coaches at Kingston.

"I evaluated her and discovered she had talent for more than just a rec class," Ms. Dixon recalls. Abigail started on Excel's Junior Olympic (JO) Level 4 team at the age of 7. Today, Coach Dixon says, "Abigail is a very talented, strong, and focused gymnast."

Underlying Abigail's success is practice, and lots of it. At first, Abigail practiced three days a week, three hours at a time. Later her practice time increased to five times a week - four hours on Saturdays, three and a half hours on weeknights.

Along the way, she picked up her share of awards, including a medal for being named vault champion at the New York State Level 7 Championships.

By Grade 6, Abigail was competing at Level 8. Prior to entering Middle School, however, she decided to take a bit of a break.

"I wanted to try different sports like field hockey and track," she explains. In the fall, she joined the Modified Field Hockey team, and she has continued to play in a winter league. She also takes hip-hop dance classes.

By this winter, however, she was back doing the sport she loves. Since Onteora does not have its own

> gymnastics team, she is "shadowing" Kingston's.

Abigail has been training alongside Kingston athletes as well as ones from several other "shadow" teams. Coaching the gymnasts are Ms. Dixon and Kingston Varsity co-coach Alyssa Schaller. On Mondays, when Abigail doesn't have Varsity practice, she travels to Poughkeepsie to train with her old floor and beam coach, Ali Tosi.

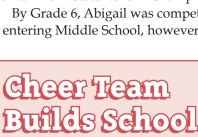
With all the time spent practicing, how does she keep up with her schoolwork? "It's not difficult as long as I plan ahead and stay organized,

Abigail explains. "I also use my study halls wisely!" On occasion, she has resorted to doing homework in the car.

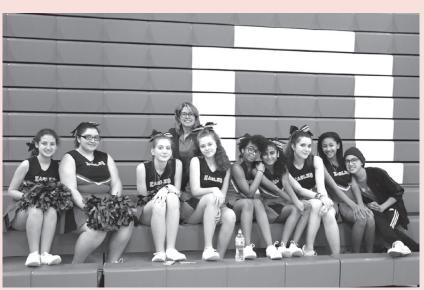
Competing at a Varsity level is a challenge for the 13-year-old, not only because many of her competitors are more experienced than she is, but also because Varsity competitions are scored at Level 9 – one level higher than she has been accustomed to.

Happy with how her season has started, Abigail is most appreciative of the camaraderie she has found. "I like that even though each gymnast wants to score the highest and win, we all cheer for each other, even if we are on different teams."

Looking ahead, she hopes to perform well at the Section IX championships, and to make it to States. Come spring, she plans to go out for the track team. And she adds, "I will continue to practice gymnastics throughout the year to keep my skills and strength and learn."



A new team has made its debut at Onteora, just in time for the winter sports season. The 11-member Cheer Team, captained by senior Olivia Brekke, has been chanting, cheering, cartwheeling, and drumming up school spirit among Onteora fans at home Varsity Boys and Girls Basketball games. Coach Michelle Martin, an AIS Reading teacher at Onteora, explains that the co-educational team takes their cheering duties



Members of Onteora's Cheer Team pose with their coach, Michelle Martin, before a home basketball game.

seriously. "We practice, like all teams, every day after school," she says. In addition to Olivia, the team includes Samantha Berryann, Ava Calinda, Gianna Vianello, Destinee Bernard, Tessa Delisio, Steven Marin, Jennifer Borruso, Sage Bernhard, Kiarra Edwards, and Akanksha Robison.

High School Plants 'Literary Forest'

In January, a forest grew at Onteora High School—a literary forest, as students and staff celebrated their favorite books with a verdant display in the hallway. The forest sprouted from the seed of an idea planted during an English department meeting. When students got wind of the suggestion, they designed the trees and leaves that would eventually make up the forest. Each leaf that hung from the trees displayed a book title, author, and quote chosen by the students and staff because it resonated with them in some way. What a wonderful, grassroots way to get people talking about what they are reading!



SCHOLARSHIP RECIPIENTS SHOPE IN ART EXHIBIT

Twenty-one Onteora artists showed off their impressive artistic talents at the Thompson Family Foundation exhibit held at the Woodstock School of Art (WSA) from January 16-February 3. Thanks to scholarships provided by the Foundation, the students had the opportunity to polish their skills by taking fine arts classes at the WSA. Work by the following Onteora artists were featured: Alexis Nguyen, Ashley Hillard, Daniel Mintz, Marcel D'Aprile, Olivia Epina-Weiss, PariAra Marquez-Haberstroh, Erin Downs, Piper Levine, Morgan Edelstein, Isabella Brekke, Michael VanLeuvan, Jack Dornan, Leah Watt, Sophia Frank, Andrew Quick, Alexander McLain, Dakota Newton, Johanna Salminen, Joli Perfit, Kailey Cremer, and Samantha Berryann.

Onteora scholarship recipient Alexis Nguyen working on a monoprint at the Woodstock School of Art. Photo courtesy of Jamie Nguyen





Onteora student Daniel Mintz (right) working with Woodstock School of Art Instructor Savannah Baker.

Photo courtesy of Jamie Nguyen



Onteora artist Olivia Epina-Weiss working on a monoprint during a class held at the Woodstock School of Art.

Photo courtesy of Jamie Nguyen



Onteora High School student Morgan Edelstein using charcoal and ink during a Drawing from Life class at the Woodstock School of Art. Photo Courtesy of Jennifer Wentland

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SUPERINTENDENT OF SCHOOLS

Victoria McLaren

NEWSLETTER EDITING & DESIGN

Ulster BOCES Community Relations



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Science Olympiad Coach Bryan Keenan (far right) poses with students who competed in the Helicopters event.

Congratulations to the High School Science Olympiad team, which finished third out of 28 teams at the Mid-Hudson **Regional Science Olympiad Competition** on February 3. The team, which earned 36 medals, will now move on to compete at the New York State Science Olympiad Championships in Syracuse. Contributing first-place finishes were Lindsy Voelker and Alexa Maldonado (Herpetology) and **Axel Roberts and Zachary Calinda** (Helicopters). For a complete list of winners, please visit the High School website.

Foundation Enhances Students' Educational **Experiences**

To Postal Customer

"WITH THE ESCALATING COSTS OF RUNNING A SCHOOL DISTRICT, THE LITTLE THINGS—like

class trips, or small-scale equipment such as risers for our student musicians - can get bypassed," says Imagine Onteora Board President Rita Vanacore.

That's where Imagine Onteora, the recognized notfor-profit foundation for the Onteora Central School District, steps in. The foundation, founded in 2009 by a group of alumni, helps fund extracurricular activities, equipment, and projects that directly benefit the student population.

In addition to granting scholarships to graduating seniors, Imagine Onteora has donated a smart TV, two handcrafted podiums, and a table covering used for indoor interschool activities such as basketball. The Foundation also donated \$1,000 towards the purchase of risers for the Bennett Music Department, and helps run the annual Dodgeball tournament, which benefits the participating classes.

"All donations, no matter how small, will make a significant difference in the 'big picture,'" notes Mrs. Vanacore. The donations, which are tax deductible, can be earmarked for specific classes, activities, or purchases.

Imagine Onteora is also currently selling raffle tickets, with a first prize of \$2,500. All profits will go to Onteora's athletic teams, which are participating in the ticket sales.

If you'd like to contribute, please mail your check to Imagine Onteora, PO Box 204, Shokan, NY 12481.

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