

# ONTEORA

Summer 2016

## ONTEORA WELCOMES NEW SUPERINTENDENT



Bruce Watson, Onteora's new Superintendent of Schools.

The Onteora Central School District welcomes Bruce Watson as its new Superintendent. Mr. Watson, who was officially appointed at the May 17 Board of Education meeting, assumes his new duties on August 22.

Mr. Watson comes to Onteora from New Jersey's Fair Lawn Schools, a district of 5,000 students and nine schools. He has served as Fair Lawn's Superintendent of Schools for the past 15 years.

Prior to becoming Fair Lawn's Superintendent, he was a Business Administrator, High School teacher, and coach for a number of student teams (football, wrestling, basketball, and softball). Mr. Watson also has a corporate background in the software industry.

Mr. Watson was chosen after a search process that included candidate interviews with Board members and District stakeholder groups, as well as a group site visit to the Fair Lawn School District. "Mr. Watson's experience as a Superintendent in a high performing district, his leadership qualities, his skill in community building, and his vision impressed the Board as well as the various team members who visited the Fair Lawn School District," said Board President Bobbi Schnell. "We are pleased to welcome him to the Onteora Central School District family."

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## Farewell and Good Luck to Onteora's Class of 2016

NINETY-THREE ONTEORA SENIORS celebrated the end of their High School careers – and the beginning of their post-graduation journeys – on a balmy June evening.

The graduates – a moving mosaic of red and white – made their entrance onto the High School football field, accompanied by the regal sounds of "Pomp and Circumstance."

The High School Orchestra performed the traditional graduation march, as the neighboring mountains provided a suitably majestic backdrop.

The event's speakers included Valedictorian Andre Senecal, Salutatorian Daniel Foster, and Class President Sean Harkin. Andre, who will be attending Harvard University in the fall, paid tribute to "the great diversity of thought" he found at Onteora, a community that he noted was home to people from many walks of life, from loggers to lawyers.

Retired Onteora Social Studies teacher Daniel Opalka, who delivered the commencement address, touched on a wide range of topics, including the state of American education, the gap between rich and poor, and the importance of remembering that America is a nation of immigrants. "Pay attention," he told the graduates. "Wisdom can come from the most unexpected places."



Salutatorian Daniel Foster was among the speakers at Onteora's graduation ceremony.



# Middle School Graduates Celebrate their Passage to High School

**CELEBRATING THEIR HARD-EARNED PROMOTION** to High School, 105 Middle School students marched into Harry Simon Auditorium on June 20 to the strains of "Pomp and Circumstance."

Highlights of the evening included a stellar performance of the national anthem by Middle School vocalists Sierra Jenkins, Loretta Mainieri, Akanksha Robison, Alyssa Page, and Katherine Queen, as well as an inspiring speech by Class of 2016 Valedictorian Andre Senecal.

Continuing a venerable Onteora tradition, the "graduates" each received one red flower, which was theirs to keep, and one white flower, which they were told to present to a family member, friend, or staff member who had helped them to succeed.

Addressing the students, Principal Jennifer O'Connor offered some words of advice.

"Remember to be kind, do your best, and be responsible for yourselves. You have many people to help you; be sure to thank them!"

Jake Stern and Daniel Meiser said good-bye to Middle School during a June moving-up ceremony.



Grade 8 students Mia Quick, Alex Loiacono, Sophia Musialkiewicz, and Emily Morreale pose for a group shot before the ceremony marking their passage to High School.



The "graduating" Middle School students received certificates as well as flowers. Pictured are Ashley Hillard (above) and Anthony LaBarbera (left).

# ONTEORA WELCOMES NEW SUPERINTENDENT

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One of Mr. Watson's stated goals is building trusting professional relationships with all stakeholders. "Together, we can create a shared vision for learning and student success," he said.

"The schools I have been associated with have been dedicated to strong instructional leadership, a climate of high expectations, positive home and school relations, having a clear and focused mission, and providing a safe and orderly environment," he continued. "I believe this characterizes a culture in the schools where both students and staff can be at their best."

## THE FIRST DAY OF SCHOOL FOR CHILDREN will be Wednesday, September 7

**BUS ROUTES** are being finalized. Information about transportation routes will be available on or about August 26. Parents or guardians can access bus information by using the Parent Portal, calling or visiting their children's school(s), or contacting the Transportation office.

The parents/guardians of Kindergarten students can expect to receive a call from the Transportation office by the last week of August about their children's first-day schedules. Please note that even after the bus-run information is released in August, there will continue to be last-minute additions and deletions to the routes. So please be sure to check the Parent Portal right before the start of school. Thank you.



# Woodstock Students are on the Move!

WOODSTOCK ELEMENTARY SCHOOL hosted two moving-up ceremonies in June – one for Kindergarten students who are making the leap to first grade, and one for third grade students who will be attending Bennett in September.

Woodstock's youngest students celebrated a year of learning on June 3, staging a music-filled event in the school cafeteria. Singing "ABC Rock" and "I Can't Spell Hippopotamus," the youngsters revealed their mastery of the alphabet and their growing skill at spelling. Students also showed off their reading and public-speaking abilities, their love of rhymes, and their appreciation to the teachers, staff, and family members who helped make this year such a success.

The Third Grade Moving-Up Ceremony took place on June 16. Highlights of the Hawaiian-themed event included a slideshow of the Continents in a Box learning unit, which was led by Library Media Specialist Steve Patschke. The yearlong project, which complemented the Grade 3 Social Studies curriculum, taught students about the maps, oceans, and continents of the world. After the slideshow, the students displayed their newfound ukulele skills and cooled off with an ice cream party.

Woodstock's Grade 3 students played the ukulele for friends and family members during their end-of-year celebration.



Woodstock's Kindergarten students staged a music-filled event at the end of their school year.



# Phoenicia Students are Going Places!

PHOENICIA ELEMENTARY SCHOOL staged end-of-year celebrations for its Kindergarten students, who are moving on to first grade, and its Grade 3 students, who will be attending Bennett Elementary School in September.

Bright smiles, colorful outfits, and vibrant voices were the order of the day on June 10, as 21 students celebrated their successful completion of Kindergarten.

"Our annual end-of-the-year show is such a great way to celebrate 10 months of laughs, learning, and friendships in Kindergarten," remarked Heidi LaMonda, who teaches Kindergarten along with Brigid Kelly. "My students were thrilled to be able to perform for their friends, family, and teachers, and they did a wonderful job. I will miss this class dearly and look forward to watching them grow as they make their way down the hallways of Phoenicia Elementary School."

The Grade 3 Moving-Up Ceremony, held on June 20, honored the 51 students who are moving on to fourth grade. Highlights of the event included a Gallery Walk, which showcased student artwork, and a performance of the song "Phoenicia is Dynamite," written by student Anna Johnson.

Principal Linda Sella thanked Grade 3 teachers Robert Hallock and Jaclyn Sobolewski for helping to prepare the children for this special day. "And I want to send a big shout out to all the parents, grandparents, and other family members for all that you have done."



▲ Phoenicia Kindergarten students (above) used their voices, hands, and feet during their Moving-Up Ceremony. Later in June, Phoenicia's Grade 3 students (left and below) celebrated their upcoming move to Bennett Elementary School.



# Community Helps Pave Students' Way to College

AS AN ENTHUSIASTIC CROWD of proud parents, friends, and community members looked on, Onteora High School seniors gratefully accepted scholarships totaling approximately \$230,000 during a June 8 ceremony. Approximately 141 awards were announced at the event, which took place in the Harry Simon Auditorium.

Students were recognized in a wide range of areas, including music, art, business, sportsmanship, citizenship, community service, leadership, extracurricular activities, character, and academic excellence. Among the numerous scholarships announced during the event was the Bishop Scholarship Medical Professions Award, which will provide up



Assistant Principal Dieter Schimmelpfennig congratulates scholarship winner Brooke Harrison as Principal Lance Edelman looks on.



Dylan Clark (left) received several scholarships, including the V.F.W. Service Award.

to \$15,000 a year for four years of college. This year's recipients were Kiara Cruickshank, Raegan Loheide, and Andre Senecal.

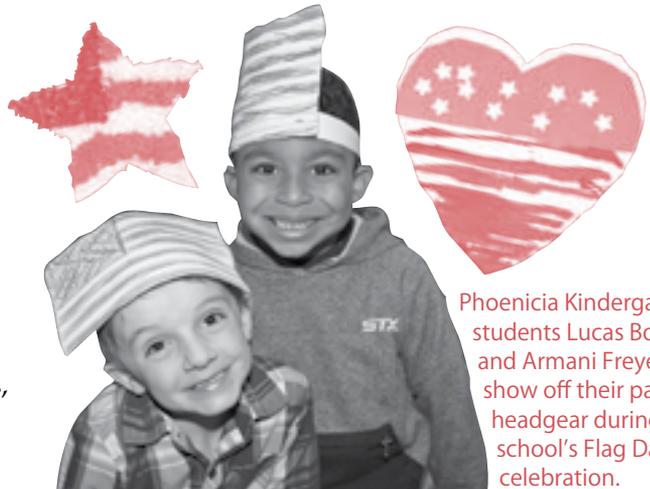
High School Principal Lance Edelman was pleased by the impressive show of support for the graduating seniors. "Our community has once again stepped up to the plate to recognize student achievement," he said. "I'm confident that our students will make our community proud."

## Phoenicia School Celebrates Flag Day

THE STUDENTS OF PHOENICIA ELEMENTARY SCHOOL continued a decades-long tradition of celebrating Flag Day with rousing patriotic songs, inspiring history lessons, and special guests. The June 14 event, one of the most anticipated on the school's calendar, has brought students, staff members, alumni, and community guests together since Helen T. Cordo, a beloved retired employee, organized the first celebration more than 30 years ago.

The assembly featured student performances of "You're a Grand Old Flag" and "This Land is Your Land" and short speeches by dignitaries including American Legion Auxiliary President Kate Steen (Unit 950) and local veteran Hank Rope (a popular volunteer for the school's Trout in the Classroom program).

Veteran and Town of Shandaken Judge Thomas Crucet led the children in a military cadence, a kind of work song typically sung by soldiers while marching or running. The cadence listed wars, past and present, in which Americans have made the ultimate sacrifice for freedom, their flag, and their country.



Phoenicia Kindergarten students Lucas Borruso and Armani Freyer show off their patriotic headgear during their school's Flag Day celebration.

Mr. Crucet also delivered the traditional "Thirteen Folds" recitation during a flag-folding ceremony carried out by members of the local American Legion. The recitation assigned special meaning to each of the folds in the 13-fold procedure.

The event was held in the school's cafetorium, which was decorated with flag-themed student artwork and acrostic poems inspired by the word "Freedom." "Students from every grade participated," said current Flag Day organizer Tracy Quick, a teaching assistant who took over the event's organizational duties when Mrs. Cordo retired in 2001.

"I am very passionate about our flag and the men and women who have, and still do, serve our country," she said. "It is important that children understand that the flag is the symbol representing our country's freedom, and that this freedom came with a price. Many men and women have sacrificed so much for the freedoms we enjoy today."



Members of American Legion Post 950 participated in a traditional flag-folding ceremony during Phoenicia's Flag Day celebration. Pictured, from left to right, are Navy veteran Dave Crispell, former Navy Seabee Frank Stone, and Army veteran Donald Simms.

# Bennett Elementary School's "Book Boogie" Promotes Summer Reading

**BENNETT ELEMENTARY SCHOOL STUDENTS** are "boogieing" into summer with plenty of free reading material, courtesy of a legion of book lovers from the Onteora community and beyond.

During the Bennett Book Boogie, held on June 21 and June 22, the school library rocked to the beat of "Electric Boogie," as children in Grades 4-6 excitedly perused hundreds of books that were theirs for the taking.

The idea, said Onteora Literacy Coach Linda Szakmary, is to encourage year-round reading and to prevent students from losing hard-earned literacy skills over the summer break. "Research has shown that summer reading helps maintain reading levels and stems the 'summer slide.'"

Inspiration for the event, Mrs. Szakmary explained, came from the research of Dr. Richard Allington and his wife, Anne McGill-Franzen, who have written that "Summer reading loss accounts for at least 80 percent of the reading achievement gap by 9th grade."

The free books, which included perennially popular titles like Gary Paulsen's *Hatchet* and J.K. Rowling's Harry Potter series, were all donated or purchased with assistance from generous benefactors. Bennett students and parents passed along books they no longer needed or wanted, for example, and members of the High School's chapter of the National Honor Society held a book drive.

Sizable cash donations for book purchases were given by the Bennett PTA (\$500) and the school's faculty



During Bennett School's "Book Boogie" event, Grade 6 student Max Rosenkranse picked out a free book for his younger brother.

and staff (\$300). In addition, more than \$20,000 worth of books were donated by the non-profit organization First Book through a partnership with NYSUT (New York State United Teachers).

Students who had younger siblings were invited to choose a few books from the event's "family table." Grade 6 student Max Rosenkranse was looking forward to choosing a book for his little brother, who is three years old.

"He still loves the Mickey Mouse animal book I got him last year," Max remarked. This year, Max chose a movie-based book, *Thor*, for his brother and a thick novel, *Daughters of the Moon* by Lynne Ewing, for himself.

Grade 6 student Harmony Cross was hoping to find a particular title. "My friend Darla found *Sisters* [by Raina Telgemeier], and I'm hoping to find another copy," she explained. Another sixth grader, Travon Wright, was checking out the many sports books.

Reading Teacher Melanie Feldman quoted a proverb to explain that the Book Boogie event was a team effort. "I'm reminded of the phrase, 'It takes a whole village to raise a child,'" she said. "Our Onteora 'village' has worked together to put books into the hands of our children this summer."

In addition to Mrs. Szakmary and Ms. Feldman, Bennett's Book Boogie team included Principal Gabriel Buono as well as staff members Kristina Countryman, Melanie Feldman, Julie Hull, Karen Hadley, Doreen Erlwein, Melissa Thongs, Judy Iapoco, Joan Mayone-Allison, and Robin Panico.



Bennett students Darla Stokes and Harmony Cross show off a few of the many free books being given away at their school's "Book Boogie" event, held at the end of the school year.

## ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENT RECOGNIZED AT MIDDLE SCHOOL EVENT

**ONTEORA MIDDLE SCHOOL'S** top students were honored at the school's annual Academic Awards Ceremony on June 9.

In addition to receiving certificates honoring their scholastic achievements, the young scholars received inspiring advice from Onteora Class of 2016 Salutatorian Daniel Foster. Recalling that he was something of a "perfectionist" in Middle School, Daniel said that High School taught him a vitally important lesson: how to fail. "When you fail, see it as an opportunity to improve," he counseled. "Everyone who is successful has failed at some point in their lives. They chose to better themselves."



Maxwell Barnes and Archie Lewis-Harris were among the honorees at the Middle School's Academic Awards Ceremony.



Middle School students Margaret Turck, Fiona Stuart, Emily Peck, Nicole Lane, Alayna Fisher, and Makenzie Grant were among those recognized for their academic achievements during a June ceremony.



# Bennett Celebrates Earth Day

**GLOBAL WARMING. INVASIVE SPECIES. BACKYARD BEEKEEPING. RECYCLING AND COMPOSTING.** All these topics, and more, were discussed by guest presenters at Bennett School's Earth Day celebration. Students rotated through various learning stations located both inside and outside of the school building. The visiting experts included representatives of Cornell Cooperative Extension, Trout Unlimited, Earth Guardians, the New York City Department of Environmental Protection, and the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation. Thank you to all the presenters!



Bennett student Piper Levine generates electricity using "pedal power" during her school's Earth Day celebration.



A New York State DEC Forest Ranger spoke about "Leave No Trace" camping during Bennett's Earth Day celebration.

## NATIONAL HONOR SOCIETY INDUCTS NEW MEMBERS

**KUDOS TO THE FOLLOWING STUDENTS**, who were inducted into Onteora's chapter of the National Honor Society during a candlelight ceremony on June 8: Maia Amellio, Devon Anderson, Brianna Boland, Jake Castellano, Emily Downs, Kyle Fisher, Kaleigh Garraffa, Lena Gran, Michael Havens, Sophie Heckelman, Sydney Heidenberg, Milo Himberger, Jacqueline Katz, Kalena Kwiecinski, Hailey Mainieri, Calista Marchand-Nazzaro, Matthew Powers, Gabrielle Raphael, Stephanie Rice, Allison Ryan, Brendan Stuart, Natalie Tischler, Keely Terpening, and Autumn Ward.

Three students—Libra Dolce, Brandt Estes, and Troy O'Connor—were recognized as honorary inductees in recognition of their dedicated service to their school community.



The newest members of Onteora's chapter of the National Honor Society were recognized during a moving candlelight ceremony (left). Above, NHS Adviser Jeanne Blank lights Autumn Ward's candle. After taking the NHS Pledge, the new members posed for a group photo (below).



# Community Mentor Presentations Showcase Students' Passions, Interests, Career Explorations

ONTEORA'S COMMUNITY MENTOR PROGRAM offers students in Grades 9-12 the opportunity to pursue their interests and passions—and in some cases their 'dream' careers—with the guidance of community-based professionals. The most recent program led to mentorships in a wide variety of fields, including documentary filmmaking, costume design, game programming, chocolate-making, photography, prop fabrication, architecture, African dance, medicine, and music composition and production.

According to Program Coordinator Kay Goldbeck, students are paired with community members who have expertise in the mentees' respective areas of interest. In addition to meeting regularly with their mentors, the students carry out independent research. "The program culminates in a celebration during which students present complex, polished projects to a public audience," she explained.

Thank you to all the community mentors, who so generously shared their time, advice, and expertise with our students!

Raphael Pierson-Sante (left) gives a certificate of appreciation to his community mentor, documentary filmmaker David Becker, during Onteora's recent



Community Mentor presentations. With Becker's guidance, Raphael made a short documentary film about World War II veterans.



Ruby Price (left) performs a traditional African dance that she choreographed during her mentorship with dancer and African dance instructor Pamela Lord Camera. Assisting Ruby with her performance were drummer Nafarma Badjie (center) from The Gambia and Mimo Camara (right), a renowned dancer, percussionist, and choreographer with the National Dance Company of the Republic of Guinea.

Kira Daniels models a historically inspired gown that she created under the mentorship of Marcia Panza, a founder of the Woodstock Youth Theater and a costumer for BSP. The dress, which represents the French Revolutionary period, includes a petticoat, robe, and side hoops.



Cally Mansfield performs "Insensitivity," a song she wrote during her music production mentorship with professional musicians Elizabeth Mitchell and Daniel Littleton.

## IMPORTANT UPCOMING DATES

### SEPTEMBER

- Sept. 6** ..... Superintendent's Conference Day, No School for Students
- Sept. 7** ..... First Day of School for Students
- Sept. 7** ..... Kindergarten Orientation, 10 AM-12 PM (Phoenicia and Woodstock)
- Sept. 30** ..... Superintendent's Conference Day, No School for Students

### OCTOBER

- Oct. 3** ..... Rosh Hashanah, School Closed
- Oct. 10** ..... Columbus Day, School Closed
- Oct. 12** ..... Yom Kippur, School Closed

### NOVEMBER

- Nov. 3** ..... Early Evacuation Drill: Students Dismissed 15 minutes early
- Nov. 4** ..... Parent Teacher Conference Day
- Nov. 11** ..... Veterans Day, School Closed
- Nov. 23** ..... Superintendent's Conference Day, School Closed
- Nov. 24-25** ..... Thanksgiving Recess

## Class of 1966 Issues Invitation

Onteora's Class of 1966 will celebrate its 50-year reunion this October, and is hoping that members of other Onteora classes will help them celebrate. Events will be held on October 21, 22, and 23 in Woodstock and Kingston.

According to 1966 grad Gilles Malkine, all former Onteora students, as well as Onteora faculty and staff members, are invited to attend. Friends and family members are also welcome.

For more details, please e-mail Mr. Malkine at: [malkines@hvc.rr.com](mailto:malkines@hvc.rr.com).

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**SUPERINTENDENT OF SCHOOLS**

Bruce Watson

**NEWSLETTER EDITING & DESIGN**

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## To Postal Customer



### ALUMNI SPOTLIGHT Paul Covello CLASS OF 1994

SINCE GRADUATING FROM ONTEORA, Paul Covello has found success on Wall Street as well as on the local hotel scene. The co-owner of Woodstock’s Hotel Dylan spends his weekdays at a New York City investment firm. Weekends, he and his family are often found at their home in Glenford, where he continues to draw inspiration from his Hudson Valley roots.

“We are a family of entrepreneurs,” says Covello. His father, he notes, built homes in the area, and his brother owns a couple of local gyms. His grandparents, accomplished tailors, owned a cottage in Phoenicia. His own entrepreneurial talent became clear at a young age: he bought his first property when he was just 16.

Years later, Covello would see potential in the former site of the Black Bear Restaurant on Route 28. “I had driven past this property for years, thinking of what it could be,” he recalls. Teaming up with a friend, David Mazzullo, Covello brought the property and set about transforming it into a boutique hotel.

“What started off as a real estate investment soon became a labor of love,” Covello remarks. Realizing they needed help with their renovation, the investors turned to local contractor Errol Tisch, as well as a New York City-based husband-and-wife design team, Courtney and Robert Novogratz. “It was a team project,

and our personalities really came through,” says Covello. “The Novogratzes were able to embrace our ideas and interpret what we love about the Catskills into the project.”

The charming result features recycled wood, old-style turntables, and rooms named after musicians associated with Woodstock, including Jimi Hendrix, Janis Joplin, and local favorite Levon Helm.

Covello credits much of his success to his Onteora roots. “I went to Bennett Elementary School,” he remembers. “This is where the likes of Mr. Hellenschmidt and Mr. Leonard helped shape my personality. I loved science and math, and Mr. Leonard was passionate about both subjects. English wasn’t my forte, but Mr. H taught me kindness. He was intelligent, altruistic, and most of all encouraging. He equipped me with the self-confidence to enter High School.”

In High School, Covello says, many teachers influenced him, including Mr. Friedel, Mr. Boms, and Mr. Fisher. But it was his economics teacher, Mr. Iannotti, who influenced his choice of career. “I learned about supply and demand, free markets, and how public companies are traded,” he explains. “He gave me an understanding of the world of finance.”

Covello went on to graduate from the University of Florida’s Warrington College of Business. Despite working in the city, he makes a point of heading north to the Catskills every weekend. “The Catskills are an amazing community,” he says. “There is no place I like being more. It feels good to invest in the community that has brought me so many cherished memories.”

**SPONSORED BY IMAGINE ONTEORA, LTD.** IF YOU KNOW OF AN ONTEORA GRADUATE WHOM YOU WOULD LIKE TO SEE SPOTLIGHTED, CONTACT IMAGINE ONTEORA AT [IMAGINEONTEORA@GMAIL.COM](mailto:IMAGINEONTEORA@GMAIL.COM).

### USEFUL DISTRICT CONTACT INFORMATION

[www.onteora.k12.ny.us](http://www.onteora.k12.ny.us)

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Christine Downs.....657-6383 x2181

**Director of Facilities and Operations**  
Jared Mance.....657-6384

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Asst. Principal, Dieter Schimmelpfennig

**MIDDLE SCHOOL • 657-2373**  
Principal, Jennifer O’Connor

**BENNETT ELEMENTARY • 657-2354**  
Principal, Gabriel Buono

**PHOENICIA ELEMENTARY • 688-5580**  
Principal, Linda Sella

**WOODSTOCK ELEMENTARY • 679-2316**  
Principal, Scott Richards

# IMPORTANT NOTICES

REQUIRED NOTIFICATION FOR PARENTS/GUARDIANS/COMMUNITY MEMBERS  
2016-2017

## TITLE I PARENT INVOLVEMENT POLICY

The Board of Education recognizes the rights of parents/persons in parental relation to be fully informed of all information relevant to their children, including children who participate in programs and projects funded by Title I. Therefore, the Board of Education encourages the participation of parents of students eligible for Title I services in all aspects of their child's education, including the development and implementation of District programs, as well as activities and procedures that are designed to carry out the federal law's parent involvement goals.

### Districtwide Parent Involvement Policy

In order to facilitate parental participation, in accordance with federal law, the District will:

- a) Involve parents in the joint development of the Title I Plan. If the plan is not satisfactory to the parents of children participating in Title I programs, the District will submit any parent comments to the State Education Department along with the District's plan;
- b) Provide the coordination, technical assistance, and support necessary to assist participating schools in planning and implementing effective parent involvement activities to improve student academic achievement and school performance;
- c) Build the schools' and parents' capacity for strong parental involvement through implementing and encouraging participation in appropriate parental involvement activities, with activities to include but not limited to: Parent/School Compact, RTI Meetings, PTA Meetings, Parent/Teacher Conferences, Evening activities (plays, dances, concerts).
- d) Coordinate and integrate parental involvement strategies under Title I with those of

other programs including, but not limited to, Parent Resource Centers, Parent Peer Trainer and other programs, such as Parent notifications of AIS Services, Parent/Teacher Conferences, Parent Nights, Title I – Parents as Reading Partners (PARP), Newsletter;

- e) Conduct, with the involvement of parents, an annual evaluation of the content and effectiveness of the parental involvement policy in improving the academic quality of the Title I schools. The evaluation shall include identifying barriers to greater participation by parents in activities under the policy and use the findings of the evaluation to design strategies for more effective parental involvement and to revise, if necessary, the parental involvement policies at the District and school levels; these meetings are included in Title I review meeting;
- f) Involve parents in the activities of the Title I schools; and
- g) Involve parents of children in Title I programs in decisions regarding how funds reserved for parental involvement activities are spent.

### School-Level Parent Involvement Policy

In accordance with Section 6318(c), the Board of Education directs each school receiving Title I funds to ensure that a building level parental involvement plan is developed with the participation of that school's parents. In addition to the goals stated above, each school building level plan will describe the details to:

- a) Convene an annual meeting, at a convenient time, to inform parents of their school's participation in Title I programs and to explain Title I requirements and the right of the parents to be involved. All parents of children participating in Title I programs will be invited and encouraged to attend the meeting,

- b) Offer a flexible number of meetings, such as meetings in the morning or evening, and may provide (with funds provided under this provision of law) transportation, child care, or home visits, as such services relate to parental involvement; meeting transcripts will be provided in a language the parents understand;
- c) Involve parents in an organized, ongoing, and timely way in the planning, review, and improvement of Title I programs, including the planning, review, and improvement of the school parental involvement policy;
- d) Provide parents of participating children with timely information about programs, a description and explanation of the curriculum in use in Title I programs, the forms of academic assessment used to measure student progress, the proficiency levels students are expected to meet, and, if requested by parents, opportunities for regular meetings to formulate suggestions and to participate, as appropriate, in decisions relating to the education of their children and respond to any such suggestions as soon as practicably possible; and
- e) Develop a school-parent compact jointly with parents that outlines how the parents, school staff, and students will share the responsibility for improved student academic achievement and detail the means by which the school and parents will build and develop a partnership to help all children achieve the State's standards.

*continued on page 2*

- f) The compact must include:
1. A description of the school's responsibility to provide high-quality curriculum and instruction in a supportive and effective learning environment that enables the children served in Title I schools to meet the State's student academic achievement standards.
  2. A description of the ways in which each parent will be responsible for supporting their children's learning, such as monitoring attendance, homework completion, television watching, volunteering in their child's classroom and participating, as appropriate, in decisions relating to the education of their children and positive use of extra-curricular time; and
  3. Address the importance of communication between teachers and parents on an ongoing basis including, but not limited to:
    - a) Parent-teacher conferences in elementary schools, at least annually, during which the compact shall be discussed as the compact relates to the individual child's achievement;
    - b) Frequent reports to parents on their children's progress;
    - c) Reasonable access to staff, opportunities to volunteer and participate in their child's class; and
    - d) Observation of classroom activities which include American Education Week, Parent/Teacher Conferences, Quarterly progress reports.

To ensure effective involvement of parents and to support a partnership among the school involved, parents, and the community in order to improve student academic achievement, the District and each school shall:

- a) Provide assistance to parents of children served by the District or school, in understanding such topics as the State's Common Core State Standards, State and local academic assessments, the requirements of this part, and how to monitor a child's progress and work with educators to improve the achievement of their children at

- Open House with curriculum overview, PTA Meetings, Board of Education Meetings, Parent/Teacher Conferences, NYS State testing results;
- b) Provide materials and training to help parents to work with their children to improve their children's achievement, such as literacy training and using technology, as appropriate, to foster parental involvement. Parents have access to school library, Open House with curriculum overview, District Newsletter, BOCES classes, the school's website, and individual class websites;
- c) Educate teachers, pupil services personnel, principals, and other staff, with the assistance of parents, in the value and utility of contribution of parents, and in how to reach out to, communicate with, and work with parents as equal partners, implement and coordinate parent programs, and build ties between parents and the school, at PTA Meetings, Homework Program, Parenting Classes with School Social Worker, and through the Parent Peer Trainer; and
- d) Ensure that information related to school and parent programs, meetings, and other activities is sent to the parents of participating children in a format and, to the extent practicable, in a language the parents can understand.

In addition to the above activities, which are required for the District and each school, the District and each school:

- a) May involve parents in the development of training for teachers, principals, and other educators to improve the effectiveness of such training;
- b) May provide necessary literacy training from funds received under this part if the local educational agency has exhausted all other reasonably available sources of funding for such training;
- c) May pay reasonable and necessary expenses associated with local parental involvement activities, including transportation and child care costs, to enable parents to participate in school-related meetings and training sessions;
- d) May train parents to enhance the involvement of other parents;

- e) May arrange school meetings at a variety of times, or conduct in-home conferences between teachers or other educators, who work directly with participating children, with parents who are unable to attend such conferences at school, in order to maximize parental involvement and participation;
- f) May adopt and implement model approaches to improving parental involvement;
- g) May establish a Districtwide parent advisory council to provide advice on all matters related to parental involvement in programs supported under this section;
- h) May develop appropriate roles for community-based organizations and businesses in parent involvement activities; and
- i) Shall provide such other reasonable support for parental involvement activities under this section as parents may request.

In carrying out the parental involvement requirements, the District and schools, to the extent practicable, shall provide full opportunities for the participation of parents with limited English proficiency, parents with disabilities, and parents of migratory children, including providing information and school reports required under Section 6311 of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act in a format and, to the extent practicable, in a language such parents understand.

**Procedures for Filing Complaints/Appeals**

The District will disseminate free of charge to parents of children in Title I programs, and to appropriate private school officials or representatives, adequate information regarding the District's written complaint procedures for resolving issues of violation(s) of a Federal statute or regulation that applies to Title I, Part A programs.

**Comparability of Services**

The School District shall ensure equivalence among the schools in the District of the same grade span and levels of instruction with regard to teachers, administrators, and auxiliary personnel as well as equivalence in the provision of curriculum materials and instructional supplies in Title I programs.

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**PARENTAL NOTIFICATION REGARDING HIGHLY QUALIFIED TEACHERS**

Upon parental request and in a timely manner, the District will provide information regarding the professional qualifications of the student’s classroom teacher(s), including, at a minimum, the following:

- Whether the teacher has met State qualification and licensing criteria for the grade levels and subject areas in which the teacher provides instruction.
- Whether the teacher is teaching under an emergency license or waiver through which the State qualifications or licensing criteria have been waived.
- Whether the teacher is teaching in the field of study of the certification of the teacher.
- Whether the child is provided services by paraprofessionals and, if so, their qualifications.

Additionally, schools that receive Title I funding shall provide each individual parent timely notice that the parent’s child has been assigned or has been taught for four or more consecutive weeks by a teacher who is not highly qualified.

**TOBACCO-FREE, SMOKE-FREE ENVIRONMENT POLICY**

In accordance with the Goals 2000 Educate America Act, §1043 (Non-Smoking Policy for Children Services), and the New York State Public Health Law, §1399-0, smoking or the use of tobacco related products by any student, employee, or visitor is prohibited in all school buildings, within 100 feet of entrances, exits, or outdoor grounds of school property boundaries, and vehicles, owned or leased, contracted for Use of School Facilities and utilized during school hours. Furthermore, no smoking shall be permitted at any time within any indoor facility owned, operated, leased, or contracted by the School District for educational or library service for students K-12, unless legally excepted.

The existence of a tobacco-free environment for the benefit of all who occupy School District property will depend upon the thoughtfulness, consideration, and cooperation of all school personnel, students, visitors, and guests. We invite the cooperation and understanding of all individuals in assuming responsibility for keeping our School District premises tobacco-free. Further information can be found in Tobacco-Free, Smoke-Free Environment Policy #5640.

**DISTRICT POLICIES & NOTIFICATIONS**

The Onteora Central School District hereby advises its occupants that it has been inspected for asbestos by accredited inspectors pursuant to regulation 40 CFR Part 763.84-paragraph “C” of the AHERA Regulations. The results of this inspection are on file in a management plan located in each building’s Principal’s Office, and in the Administrative Office in Boiceville, NY. The results are available upon request at these locations. Copies of all District Policies are available in all District School Buildings.

**NON DISCRIMINATION STATEMENT**

The Onteora Central School District does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, weight, national origin, creed, religion, religious practice, ethnic group, political affiliation, gender (including gender identity, expression, or nonconformity to stereotypical notions of masculinity and femininity) marital status, sex, age, disability, sexual orientation, or other legally protected status in access to programs and/or employment provided by the District.

Inquiries to the District concerning discrimination or harassment based on sex or sexual orientation may be referred to the Title IX/Title VI Compliance Officers Gabriel Buono, Bennett Principal and Jennifer O’Connor, Middle School Principal at: Onteora Central School District, PO Box 300, Boiceville, NY 12412, (845) 657-6383, ext. 1010, gbuono@onteora.k12.ny.us, joconnor@onteora.k12.ny.us. Inquiries regarding discrimination can also be made to the United States Department of Education, Office of Civil Rights, 32 Old Slip, 26th Floor, New York, NY 10005, (646) 428-3900, ocr.newyork@ed.gov.

**DIGNITY FOR ALL STUDENTS ACT**

In accordance with the Dignity for all Students Act, the Onteora Central School District recognizes its responsibility to protect students from unlawful harassment, discrimination, and bullying. The Dignity Act Coordinators are:

- Woodstock Elementary:  
Scott Richards, (845) 679-2316
- Phoenicia Elementary:  
Linda Sella, (845) 688-5580
- Bennett Elementary:  
Gabriel Buono, (845) 657-2354

Middle School:  
Dieter Schimmelpfennig, (845) 657-2373

High School:  
Dieter Schimmelpfennig, (845) 657-2373

**AMERICANS WITH DISABILITIES ACT/ SECTION 504**

Onteora Central School District does not discriminate on the basis of disability in admission to, access to, or operation of its educational programs, services, or activities.

Parents who suspect their child has a disability or has additional questions, complaints, or requests for information concerning the Americans with Disabilities Act or Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act should contact the District’s designated Section 504/ADA Compliance Officer, Cindy Bishop, at: Department of Pupil Personnel Services, PO Box 300, Boiceville, NY 12412, (845) 657-3320, cbishop@onteora.k12.ny.us.

**HOMELESS ASSISTANCE ACT**

Under the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act, the Onteora Central School District must identify children and youth in homeless situations and provide appropriate services such as immediate enrollment in school, free and reduced lunch, and transportation. If you feel you and/or your family is/are homeless, please contact Cindy Bishop, the Homeless Liaison, at 845-657-3320. All information is kept confidential.

**TITLE IX**

The Onteora Central School District does not discriminate on the basis of sex in its educational programs or the activities which it operates. Sexual harassment of employees and students is illegal and the District will strive to safeguard the rights of all employees and students within the District and to provide an environment that is free from sexual harassment. Any District employee or student who believes that he or she has been subjected to, told about, or witnessed sexual harassment should communicate the alleged misconduct in accordance with the Sexual Harassment Regulations. The District will ensure that an investigation is promptly commenced by appropriate individuals.

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Inquiries to the District concerning the application of Title IX and its implementing regulations may be referred to the Title IX Compliance Officers, the Bennett and Middle School Principals at: Onteora Central School District, PO Box 300, Boiceville, NY 12412, (845) 657-6383, ext. 1010, gbuono@onteora.k12.ny.us or joconnor@onteora.k12.ny.us. Inquiries can also be made to the United States Department of Education, Office of Civil Rights, 32 Old Slip, 26th Floor, New York, NY 10005, (646) 428-3900, ocr.newyork@ed.gov.

## **CHILD FIND NOTIFICATION**

Parents who suspect their children (ages 3 and older) may have a disability which would affect his or her ability to access school programs can contact the Onteora Central School District's Committee on Special Education to arrange for evaluations. Call the Pupil Personnel Offices at (845) 657-3320 for more information and an appointment.

## **PESTICIDE NOTIFICATION**

New York State Education Law Section 409-H requires all public and non-public elementary and secondary schools to provide written notification to all persons in parental relation, faculty, staff, and students regarding the potential use of pesticides periodically throughout the school year.

Onteora Central School District is required to maintain a list of persons in parental relation, faculty, staff, and students who wish to receive 48-hour prior written notification of certain pesticide applications.

The following pesticide applications are not subject to prior notification requirements:

- A school remains unoccupied for a continuous 72 hours following an application;
- Anti-microbial products;
- Non-volatile rodenticides in tamper resistant bait stations in areas inaccessible to children;
- Non-volatile insecticidal baits in tamper resistant bait stations in areas inaccessible to children;
- Silica gels and other non-volatile ready-to-use pastes, foams, or gels in areas inaccessible to children;
- Boric acid and disodium octaborate tetrahydrate;
- The application of EPA designated exempt materials under 40 CFR 152.25;

- The use of aerosol products with a directed spray in containers of 18 fluid ounces or less when used to protect individuals from an imminent threat from stinging and biting insects, including venomous spiders, bees, wasps, and hornets;
- In the event of an emergency application necessary to protect against an imminent threat to human health, a good faith effort will be made to supply written notification to those on the 48-hour prior notification list.

If you have any questions about New York State Pesticide Notification, or would like to request a form, please contact Jared Mance at (845) 657-6384.

## **FREE AND REDUCED MEAL PROGRAM**

No matter where they get it, at home or school, it's clear that adequate, healthy meals are great for all children. Starting the day with a healthy breakfast, followed by a nutritious lunch, is a key factor to learning, increased student attention, better behavior, and higher achievement.

Students from households that meet Federal income guidelines are eligible for free or reduced price meals while at school. Through this program, it is possible for all children to enjoy a nutritious breakfast and lunch each school day.

- Besides the obvious benefits to children, the free and reduced meal program also benefits the District by providing per meal cash reimbursements to the school from the Federal government. In addition, many Federal and State grants are based upon District demographic profiles, including the percent of students receiving free or reduced lunch. Thus, identifying families in need of assistance and encouraging their participation in the program can lead to free or low-cost meals to children and increased grant funding to support important District educational programs; a win/win situation.

To apply for free or reduced price meals, families are encouraged to complete an Application for Free or Reduced Meals or submit a Direct Certification letter from the NYS Office of Temporary and Disability Assistance. Applications will be sent home with students in September. Families may also access the application from the District website by visiting

www.onteora.k12.ny.us. They are also available in each of the school buildings throughout the District, or upon request, can be mailed to interested families. Incomplete applications cannot be approved, so be sure to fill out all required information. If you need assistance completing the form, please contact the School Lunch Manager, Christine Downs, at (845) 657-2373. The District will notify you when a decision on your application has been made.

Families may apply for benefits at any time during the school year. Perhaps you are not eligible now, but during the school year your family circumstances change (such as unemployment, a decrease in household income, or an increase in family size); you may apply then.

If you are approved to receive this benefit for your children, the school may ask you at any time during the school year to verify your eligibility. Should you be selected for verification, you will be notified, in writing.

For more information on the free and reduced lunch program, including income requirements, please contact Christine Downs, School Lunch Manager, at (845) 657-2373.

## **Nondiscrimination Statement**

This statement explains what to do if you believe you have been treated unfairly. In accordance with Federal law and U.S. Department of Agriculture policy, this institution is prohibited from discriminating on the basis of race, color, national origin, sex, age, or disability. To file a complaint of discrimination, write to USDA, Director, Office of Civil Rights, Room 326-W, Whitten Building, 1400 Independence Avenue, SW, Washington, DC 20250-9410 or call 202-720-5964 (voice and TDD). USDA is an equal opportunity provider.

## **Fair Hearing**

If you do not agree with the school's decision on your application or the result of verification, you may wish to discuss it with the school. You also have the right to a fair hearing. This can be done by calling or writing the following official: Victoria McLaren, Assistant Superintendent for Business, (845) 657-8499.

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## **Meal Service to Children with Disabilities**

Federal regulations require schools and institutions to serve meals at no extra charge to children with a disability which may restrict their diet. A student with a disability is defined in 7 CFR Part 15b.3 of Federal regulations, as one who has a physical or mental impairment which substantially limits one or more major life activities. Major life activities are defined to include functions such as caring for one's self, performing manual tasks, walking, seeing, hearing, speaking, breathing, learning, and working. You must request the special meals from the school and provide the school with medical certification from a medical doctor. If you believe your child needs substitutions because of a disability, please get in touch with us for further information, as there is specific information that the medical certification must contain.

## **Confidentiality**

The United States Department of Agriculture has approved the release of students' names and eligibility status, without parent/guardian consent, to persons directly connected with the administration or enforcement of Federal education programs such as Title I and the National Assessment of Education Progress (NAEP), which are United States Department of Education programs used to determine areas such as the allocation of funds to schools, to evaluate socioeconomic status of the school's attendance area, and to assess educational progress. Information may also be released to State health or State education programs administered by the State agency or local education agency, provided the State or local education agency administers the program, and Federal, State, or local nutrition programs similar to the National School Lunch Program. Additionally, all information contained in the free and reduced price application may be released to persons directly connected with the administration or enforcement of programs authorized under the National School Lunch Act (NSLA) or Child Nutrition Act (CNA); including the National School Lunch and School Breakfast Programs, the Special Milk Program, the Child and Adult Care Food Program, Summer Food Service Program and the Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women Infants and Children (WIC); the Comptroller General of the United States for audit purposes, and Federal, State, or local

law enforcement officials investigating alleged violation of the programs under the NSLA or CNA. The disclosure of eligibility information not specifically authorized by the NSLA requires a written consent statement from the parent/guardian.

## **ACCESS TO STUDENT RECORDS**

### **Policy #7240 Student Records**

The School District shall comply with the provisions of the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act of 1974 (FERPA). Under its provisions, "parents/guardians and noncustodial parent(s), whose rights are not limited by court order or formal agreement, of a student under eighteen (18), or a student who is eighteen (18) years of age or older or who is attending an institution of post-secondary education, have a right to inspect and review any and all educational records maintained by the School District" and files on students, and to insure the confidentiality of such records with respect to third parties.

### **Access to Student Records**

Under FERPA, unless otherwise exempted in accordance with law and regulation, the District may release personally identifiable information contained in student records only if it has received a "signed and dated written consent" from a parent or eligible student. Signed and dated written consent may include a record and signature in electronic form provided that such signature:

- a) Identifies and authenticates a particular person as the source of the electronic consent; and
- b) Indicates such person's approval of the information contained in the electronic consent.

### **Health and Safety Emergency Exception**

School districts must balance the need to protect students' personally identifiable information with the need to address issues of school safety and emergency preparedness. Under FERPA, if an educational agency or institution determines that there is an articulable and significant threat to the health or safety of a student or other individuals, it may disclose information from education records, without consent, to any person whose knowledge of the information is necessary to protect the health and safety of the student or other individuals during the period of the health or safety emergency. School districts may release information

from records to appropriate parties including, but not limited to, parents, law enforcement officials and medical personnel. A school district's determination that there is an articulable and significant threat to the health or safety of a student or other individuals shall be based upon a totality of the circumstances, including the information available, at the time the determination is made. The school district must record the articulable and significant threat that formed the basis for the disclosure and maintain this record for as long as the student's education records are maintained.

### **Disclosures to Parents of Eligible Students**

Even after a student has become an "eligible student" under FERPA (which is defined as a student who is eighteen [18] years of age or older or who is attending an institution of post-secondary education) an educational agency or institution may disclose education records to an eligible student's parents without the student's consent:

- a) If the student is claimed as a dependent for Federal income tax purposes by either parent;
- b) In connection with a health or safety emergency;
- c) If the disclosure falls within any other exception to the consent requirements under FERPA or its Regulations, such as the disclosure of directory information or in compliance with a court order or lawfully issued subpoena.

### **Challenge to Student Records**

Parents/guardians of a student under the age of eighteen (18), or an eligible student shall have an opportunity for a hearing to challenge the content of the school records, which they believe to be inaccurate, misleading, or otherwise in violation of the privacy or other rights of students. However, parents/guardians or an eligible student do not have the right to correct, delete or expunge grades, an individual's opinion or other substantive decisions of the District that appear in a student's record. After the hearing, the District shall determine whether correction or deletion of any such inaccurate, misleading, or otherwise inappropriate data is necessary.

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## Education Records

The term "education records" is defined as all records, files, documents and other materials containing information directly related to a student; and maintained by the education agency or institution, or by a person acting for such agency or institution (34 Code of Federal Regulations (CFR) Section 99.3). This includes all records regardless of medium, including, but not limited to, handwriting, videotape or audiotape, electronic or computer files, film, print, microfilm, and microfiche.

In addition, for students who attend a public school district, all records pertaining to services provided under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) are considered "education records" under FERPA. As such, they are subject to the confidentiality provisions of both Acts.

Personal notes made by teachers or other staff, on the other hand, are not considered education records if they are:

- a) Kept in the sole possession of the maker;
  - b) Not accessible or revealed to any other person except a temporary substitute; and
  - c) Use only as a memory aid.
- Records created and maintained by a law enforcement unit for law enforcement purposes are also excluded.

## Release of Information

Among other exemptions in accordance with law and regulation, the District may disclose any and all educational records, including disciplinary records and records that were created as a result of a student receiving special education services under Part B of IDEA, to another school or postsecondary institution at which the student seeks or intends to enroll. Parental consent is not required for transferring education records; however, the student's annual FERPA notification indicates that such disclosures have been made, unless expressly prohibited by law or regulation. In the absence of information about disclosures in the annual FERPA notification, school officials must make a reasonable attempt to notify the parent about the disclosure, unless the parent initiated the disclosure. Additionally, upon request, schools must provide a copy of the information disclosed and an opportunity for a hearing. The District may also disclose any and all educational records to other school officials within the district who have been determined to have legitimate

educational interests. A school official has a legitimate educational interest if the official needs to review an education record in order to fulfill his or her professional responsibility. A school official is a person who has a legitimate education interest in a student record who is employed by the district as an administrator, supervisor, instructor or support staff member (including health or medical staff and law enforcement unit personnel); a member of the Board of Education; a person or company with whom the district has contracted to perform a special task (such as attorney, auditor, medical consultant or therapist); or a parent or student serving on an official committee, such as disciplinary or grievance committee, or assisting another school official performing his or her tasks.

*Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act of 1974, 20 United States Code (USC) Section 1232(g)*

*34 Code of Federal Regulations (CFR) Part 99*

NOTE: Refer also to Policy #7643 – Transfer Students with Disabilities *Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act of 1974, 20 United States Code (USC) Section 1232(g)*  
*34 Code of Federal Regulations (CFR) Part 99*

## U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION AND THIRD PARTY SURVEYS

Parents shall have the right, upon request, to inspect U.S. Department of Education and third party surveys before they are distributed and administered by the District to students, and shall also have the right to opt their child out of participation in such surveys.

In the event that a third party survey contains any of the following types of information:

1. Political affiliations or beliefs of the student or the student's parent;
2. Mental and psychological problems of the student or the student's family;
3. Sex behavior or attitudes;
4. Illegal, antisocial, self-incriminating, demeaning behavior;
5. Critical appraisals of other individuals with whom respondents have close family relationships;
6. Legally recognized, privileged, or analogous relationships such as those of lawyers, physicians, and ministers;

7. Religious practices, affiliations, or beliefs of the student or the student's parent;
8. Income (other than that required by law to determine eligibility for participation in the program or for receiving financial assistance under such program);

then the District will protect the privacy of the student in the event of administration of such a survey, by allowing parents to inspect the survey prior to administration and by advising the students that their responses should contain no personally identifiable information. The provisions of this paragraph shall not apply to any survey administered to a student in accordance with the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act.

## INSPECTION OF INSTRUCTIONAL MATERIALS

Parents shall have the right to inspect, upon request, instructional materials used as part of the educational curriculum for students. The request should be made in writing and directed to Bruce Watson, Superintendent. The response will be provided within a reasonable period of time from the date of receipt of the request. Instructional materials include material provided to a student regardless of format, including printed or representational materials, and materials in electronic or digital formats (such as materials accessible through the Internet). The term does not include academic tests or academic assessments.

## MANDATED ASSESSMENTS

Parents may request information regarding student participation in any mandated state or local assessments by contacting Assistant Superintendent for Curriculum & Instruction at 845-657-6383 ext. 1010. Such information shall be provided within two (2) weeks of the request.