

## LATER MIDDLE AND HIGH SCHOOL START TIMES

One of Superintendent Phyllis McGill's Goals for the 2014-2015 school year focuses on later Middle School and High School start times. The goal, established by the Board of Education in collaboration with the Superintendent, was inspired by research showing that teenagers are physiologically driven to fall asleep later and wake up later than younger children and adults, and that making teenagers attend school before 8:30 AM can have negative impacts on their health and education.

### PLANNING FOR LATER MIDDLE AND HIGH SCHOOL START TIMES

To work on the Superintendent's Goal, Dr. McGill established the District Comprehensive Planning Team on Later Middle and High School Start Times. Parents, teachers, teaching assistants, union members, and administrators are represented on the 20-person Planning Team, which has been meeting since November. The charge of the team is as follows:

- Provide parameters, identify hurdles, and craft solutions specific to the Onteora CSD in regards to the following Superintendent goal:

- "Based on the recommendation of the American Academy of Pediatrics and considerable other data-based research, plan and prepare for later start times for secondary students using an 8:45 am-9:00 am target. This goal acknowledges the need to factor into account current elementary start times, BOCES attendance and extra-curricular activities, and the need to engage the community in the planning process."

To carry out its charge, the Team has established a number of subcommittees, including ones focusing on transportation, academic offerings, extracurricular sports and clubs, music and arts, union contracts, and students who work. As of press time, the group had met three times.

[continued on page 3](#)

## PBIS: A POSITIVE APPROACH TO STUDENT BEHAVIOR

Every student, even the best-behaved ones, may behave inappropriately from time to time. They may get a little too rowdy on a school bus, for example, making it difficult for the driver to concentrate.

In the cafeteria, they may forget to clean up after themselves. Perhaps most seriously, they may not always treat each other with kindness or respect.

The challenge faced by teachers and administrators is how to discourage inappropriate behavior in a positive way—ideally, without punitive measures like scolding, detention, or loss of recess time. It is a challenge being tackled by Onteora schools, which are all implementing a character education initiative called Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS). Onteora's PBIS program aims to ensure a positive, respectful, and safe educational experience for all its students.

AT WOODSTOCK PRIMARY SCHOOL, individual children as well as entire classes who are "caught" doing something good (say, sharing playground equipment or proceeding down a hallway in a quiet, orderly way) may be rewarded with "owl" tickets that can be redeemed for prizes and activities (including dance parties, guest readers, and opportunities to wear hats or pj's to school). Posters displayed throughout the school urge children to remember to "Be Respectful, Be Responsible, Be Safe," whether they're in the hallways, on the bus, in the cafeteria, on the playground, or in the bathroom.

[continued on page 4](#)



Woodstock Primary School students recently volunteered to make a video on bus safety as part of their school's PBIS program.



High School students Sierra Shultis and Stephanie Vianello make Valentine's Day cards during a PBIS event.

# Westward, Ho!

Bennett's Library Media Center was transformed into a piece of the Wild, Wild West in December, as Grade 5 students held a publishing party to display their "Westward Expansion" projects. The celebration included readings by the students from pioneer diaries, a schoolwide display of the students' artwork and research projects, a group sing-along of pioneer-era songs led by musician Earl Pardini, and authentic food and drink from America's Westward Expansion period.



## MESSAGE FROM THE BOARD OF EDUCATION PRESIDENT

On May 19, communities across New York State will vote on their school district's budget and elect trustees for their school board. Some voters may find themselves wondering not only who they are being asked to elect, but to what end? What, in short, is the role of a school board trustee?

According to a handbook published by the New York State School Boards Association (NYSSBA), *A Guide to Surviving Your First Year*, "a school board member oversees the district's affairs (students' education), personnel and properties. The board has specific responsibilities to determine curriculum, employ a superintendent, and submit a proposed budget to the district voters for their approval." This work is predominantly undertaken at public board meetings, held on average twice a month in the Ontario Central School District, usually on Tuesday evenings, and rotating around the District.

A 2005 NYSSBA survey revealed that the average trustee spends about six hours a week on board service. Those who are dedicated to the role in 2015 understand differently. Committee meetings, countywide board meetings, statewide conferences, and special board meetings—held for purposes of evaluation, superintendent searches, or for urgent business—all require attention. Just as importantly, the necessity for continual study, both of the weekly district-related management updates distributed to the board by the superintendent, and of ongoing issues and developments in public education, can eat up the supposed "down" time otherwise spent with one's kids or partners.

Increased study of public education can in turn lead to greater engagement in advocacy. In New York State, the existence of the Gap Elimination Adjustment—which stripped money from school districts during the State's budget crisis starting in 2010, and which inexplicably continues to do so despite the State's current \$5 billion surplus—is a thorn in the side of all school boards, which must ask their resident taxpayers to make up the difference. (That, or cut the budget, resulting in lost programs and opportunities for students.) The tax levy cap, which requires a 60% "supermajority" approval of the budget for any district that goes over a complex formula inaccurately touted as a "2% cap," is similarly frustrating for districts whose budgets often exceed such an increase due to State mandates and legal contractual obligations. And the current situation in New York, where the Governor is refusing to disclose, let alone release, any increases in district funding for 2015-2016 unless his controversial package of

educational "reforms" is accepted by the Legislature, can only further frustrate districts trying to finalize their budgets without final numbers. Add in the increasing confusion surrounding the Common Core Learning Standards and the understandable pushback against standardized testing—even as the Governor insists that the results of student test scores be increased from 20% to 50% of teachers' and administrators' Annual Professional Performance Review ratings—and a trustee can spend much of his or her time knocking on the doors of elected officials, asking for explanations and demanding changes.

There is no monetary compensation for this; a school board trustee is a volunteer. However, most trustees will tell you that they see it as a rewarding use of their time. For all the external challenges, we still embody the notion of "local control" that is largely unique to the American school system. By setting curriculum, policies, and budgets specific to our districts (while following applicable laws, of course), we are, we hope, accurately representing and reflecting the needs of our communities.

In Ontario, which at 282 square miles is the largest geographical district south of the Adirondacks, that community is quite diverse. Every year, we have graduating students accepted into some of the top universities in the United States. We have students who make the news, local and national, for their excellence in art, music, sports, business, volunteerism, and more. Yet we also have an increasingly high number of students who receive Free or Reduced Lunch, an ever-growing student body for whom English is not their native language, and a higher percentage of Students with Disabilities than the State average. And that is not to discount all the students in "the middle," whose educational welfare can sometimes be overlooked if districts only tout their success stories and address their disadvantaged students. As trustees, it is incumbent upon us to consider every one of our students as equal.

If you are interested in becoming a trustee, please see information elsewhere in this newsletter on the application process for the upcoming election. In the meantime, we hope to see you at our Board meetings and out in the community, and we thank you for your support of the Ontario Central School District.

Sincerely,

**Tony Fletcher**

ONTEORA CENTRAL SCHOOL DISTRICT BOARD PRESIDENT  
2014-2015

# Committee Focuses on Primary School Planning

A group of dedicated parents, teachers, and administrators has been working to help make Onteora's primary schools the best they can be.



The Committee is focusing on improving the educational experience at Onteora's primary schools. Pictured are students from Phoenicia Primary School.

The Primary School Planning Committee has already done important work. Thanks to its efforts last year, for example, the District now has new recommendations regarding optimum primary-school class sizes. The Committee's recommendation to

seek additional Universal Pre-K funding led to the District applying for, and being awarded, a \$188,000 State grant to support 20 full-day Pre-K slots. Other recommendations led to the establishment of a Kindergarten/Pre-K Summer Academy and to the adoption of a social and emotional learning (SEL) curriculum, which is currently being implemented in our schools.

The identified planning priorities for the 2014-2015 school year include expanding Pre-K opportunities, improving the provision of English as a Second Language (ELS) services, and enhancing curriculum. The group will continue to review research, data, and "best practice" information in these areas, with the goal of presenting recommendations to the Superintendent of Schools.

"I feel so privileged to work with this diverse group of stakeholders," says Committee facilitator Marki Clair-O'Rourke, Assistant Superintendent for Curriculum and Instruction. "They are truly committed to ensuring continuous improvement of our primary school programs and practices."



## BOOKS ON THE MENU FOR MIDDLE SCHOOL STUDENTS

Once a month, a group of Middle School students forgoes having lunch in the cafeteria. Instead, they bring their lunches to English teacher Betsy Lastner's room, where they attend a meeting of the school's Book Club. Moderating the lively literary lunches are Mrs. Lastner and the club's co-advisor, Library Media Specialist Amy Wiesz. Recent titles include *The Book Thief* by Markus Zusak and *The Boy in the Striped Pajamas* by John Boyne.

## LATER MIDDLE AND HIGH SCHOOL START TIMES continued from page 1

Minutes of the Planning Team's meetings can be found on the main page of the District website ([www.onteora.k12.ny.us](http://www.onteora.k12.ny.us)).

### FORUM ON LATER MIDDLE AND HIGH SCHOOL START TIMES

With a view towards encouraging discussions of the Superintendent's Goal regarding later Middle and High School start times, the District hosted an open forum at Phoenicia Primary School on February 24.

The Onteora Board of Education and Dr. McGill invited Glens Falls City Schools Superintendent Paul Jenkins to share the experiences of his school district, which changed its high school start time from 7:45 AM to 8:26 AM in September 2012. After the forum, attendees had the opportunity to ask Superintendent Jenkins questions about the challenges his District overcame to implement the change, as well the subsequent improvements his District saw in a number of areas, including academic performance, tardiness, and discipline. To view a video of the forum, go to the main page of the District website ([www.onteora.k12.ny.us](http://www.onteora.k12.ny.us)).

Onteora plans to host additional public discussions on the issue of later secondary school start times, held in different locations around the District, in the coming months. Research on this topic can be found on the District website at: <http://onteora.schoolwires.com/Page/5663>.



Prior to his presentation, Glens Falls Superintendent Paul Jenkins (second from left) exchanged a few words with some members of Onteora's District Comprehensive Planning Team on Later Middle and High School Start Times. Pictured are Onteora High School Principal Lance Edelman (far left), Onteora teacher Lou Chartrand (third from left), and community member Maxanne Resnick.

## ARE YOU THINKING OF RUNNING FOR THE BOARD OF EDUCATION?

Petitions to nominate candidates for the Board of Education may be picked up from the District Clerk at the Onteora Administrative Offices (4166 Route 28, Boiceville, New York) on business days between the hours of 8 AM and 4 PM. Petitions are also available on the District website ([www.onteora.k12.ny.us](http://www.onteora.k12.ny.us)). Petitions, which require at least 25 qualified voter signatures, must be returned to the Clerk by 5 PM on Monday, April 20, 2015. There are three (3) vacancies for Board seats:

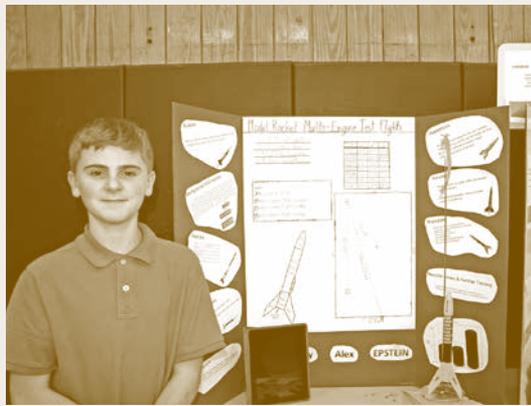
- Two (2) vacancies for Three Years – July 1, 2015 to June 30, 2018
- One (1) vacancy for One Year – May 19, 2015 to June 30, 2016 (unexpired term of Tom Hickey)

The Trustee with the least number of votes is seated in the one-year position and begins his or her term on May 19.

## Middle School Science Fair Showcases Inquiring Minds

How does playing Grand Theft Auto affect one's pulse rate? How much iron is in your cereal? How does listening to music affect the amount of time a person takes to read a paragraph? These were just a few of the intriguing questions asked by Middle School students at the school's Science Fair, which took place this fall.

Although all of the projects and displays drew enthusiastic responses from the attendees, the following young scientists were rewarded by the fair's judges:



Alex Epstein's project, "Model Rocket Multi-Engine Test Flights," was judged "Best Overall Project."

### GRADE 7 WINNERS:

#### Best Display

Jason Zheng and Quinn Savatgy

#### Most Informative

Grace Foster

#### Most Creative

Javan Bresler

#### Best Overall Project

Alex Epstein

### GRADE 8 WINNERS:

#### Best Display

Taejah Dash and Natalya Morton

#### Most Informative

Kira Becker and Jolie Perfit

#### Most Creative

Charlie Coryell

#### Best Overall Project

James Davis and Adam Savage

## State Senate Proclamation Honors Onteora High School



State Senator James L. Seward visited Onteora High School in November to share a Senate proclamation honoring the school for being included in the Daily Beast's list of the nation's best high schools for the third year in a row. Onteora, which ranked 526 among the 754 schools making the list, was one of only two Ulster County schools earning spots for this year.

Senator Seward (left) presented the proclamation to Onteora Superintendent Phyllis McGill (center) and High School Principal Lance Edelman in front of an audience of High School Civics class students. "Education is more than reading, writing, and arithmetic," noted the proclamation. "It is one of the most important investments a country can make in its people and its future.... The students and faculty at Onteora High School have made it a point to set the bar high on the standard of education."

## PBIS: A POSITIVE APPROACH TO STUDENT

Recently, Woodstock students collaborated with Onteora Transportation Director Nicole Sommer on a video explaining safe bus behavior, which includes talking in quiet voices, listening to the bus driver, and staying seated. The video may be viewed on the District YouTube channel:

<https://www.youtube.com/user/OnteoraCSD>.

### AT BENNETT INTERMEDIATE SCHOOL,

staff members who observe children displaying expected behavior reward the students with special tickets, which are redeemable at the school store for a range of prizes, including school supplies, puzzles, and trinkets like stickers, bracelets, and mini-skateboard erasers. A complementary initiative, the RACK (Recognizing Acts of Courage and Kindness) program sponsors a bulletin board filled with the



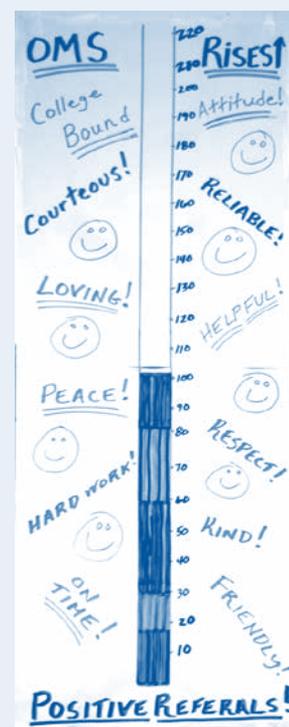
Bennett Grade 4 student Gabriel Kladakis shows off a Rubik's Cube, which he selected from Bennett's PBIS store. Looking on is Teaching Assistant Janet Parker.

photos of students who have been recognized for positive acts—including befriending others, showing compassion, and lending a helping hand to a teacher or classmate.

### AT THE MIDDLE SCHOOL,

a thermometer displayed in a hallway measures increases in the number of positive referrals handed out to students. When students raise the "temperature" through their safe, respectful, and responsible actions, they are rewarded with an ice cream party during lunch. Posters remind students of expected behaviors in the cafeteria (returning trays and

recycling, for example) and hallways (i.e., looking out for others, being helpful, and having an appropriate pass visible at all times).



## ALL THAT JAZZ: Onteora High School Hosts Regional Jazz Event

Onteora High School hosted this year's Ulster County Music Educators Association (UCMEA) Vocal Jazz Workshop on January 7. Student vocalists from Onteora, New Paltz, Highland, Ellenville, Wallkill, and Rondout Valley spent the day working with guest clinician Dr. Jennifer Scott Miceli, director of music education and vocal jazz at the C.W. Post Campus of Long Island University. They then showed off what they had learned at an informal evening performance at Onteora's Harry Simon auditorium. The event was coordinated by music teachers Krista Cayea (Onteora) and Barbara Wild (Rondout Valley).



## National Junior Honor Society Holds Food Drive



NJHS members pose with boxes of food they collected for the Reservoir Food Pantry. Accepting the donations are the Food Pantry's executive director, Sean Bigler (second from right) and secretary, Bonnie Lykes-Bigler (far right).

For some Onteora Middle School students, school is not just about academics, sports, or socializing. It's also about service. This November, the members of Onteora's chapter of the National Junior Honor Society (NJHS) held a food drive to help stock the shelves of local food pantries. While students with an average of 95 and above for two consecutive quarters are eligible to apply for membership, "the NJHS is much more than just an honor roll," stresses NJHS Co-Advisor Corey Cavallaro. Like the National Honor Society, which draws its membership from high school-aged students, the NJHS aims to promote leadership, develop character, and generate enthusiasm for scholarship and service.

## BEHAVIOR continued from page 1

AT PHOENICIA PRIMARY SCHOOL, this year's PBIS kickoff assembly featured a game-show theme. Teachers and administrators, wearing T-shirts emblazoned with the key tenets of the PBIS program—Respect, Honesty, Caring, and Responsibility—played the roles of enthusiastic game-show contestants. Grade 3 teacher Robert Hallock acted as emcee. The children howled with delight as the grown-ups appeared to struggle to answer questions related to how students should act on school grounds—whether on the bus or the playground, or in the classroom, cafeteria, or hallways. The youngsters then cheered and applauded wildly when the adults finally managed to answer correctly.

Following the assembly, Kindergarten and Grade 1 students learned about bus safety, recess rules, and how to play safely on playground equipment. Students in Grades 2 and 3, who had already had two years of instruction on bus and recess safety, took part in team-building activities. "Our philosophy was to teach them how working together allows them more time to play," explained Mr. Hallock.

Phoenicia's next whole-school PBIS event will be Spirit Week (March 23-27). Students will enjoy a week of teacher-planned activities, including special "theme" days, lunchtime game shows, and activities that showcase the talents of individual staff members.



Phoenicia teacher Robert Hallock (left) leads students in a team-building exercise during the school's PBIS kickoff event. The exercise, called the Human Knot, required students to untangle a "human knot" without letting go of hands.

AT THE HIGH SCHOOL, the school's PBIS planning committee met several times over the summer to create a calendar of events aimed at fostering a warm, welcoming school environment in which students feel safe, secure, and ready to learn. Activities to date

have included a "Give a Student a Treat Day," "Onteora T-Shirt Day," a Valentine's Day celebration, and the distribution of teacher-designed buttons featuring positive messages like "You are a Superstar!" The committee has designated a theme for each month—for example, "Grateful" for November, "Compassion" for December, and "Perseverance" for February. Throughout the month, the designated theme is promoted via posters, morning announcements, carefully selected quotations, and the school website. During Homecoming, a popular pie-throwing booth raised money for PBIS activities and raised awareness of the program's core tenets: "Be Safe. Be Responsible. Be Respectful."

# Onteora Hosts Common Core Informational Night



Stephanie Laffin, ELA Content Specialist from Ulster BOCES, explained the State's new learning standards for Grades K-6 during Onteora's Common Core Information Night.

Some of the mystery surrounding the Common Core Learning Standards was dispelled during an informational night hosted by the Onteora Central School District.

Parents, teachers, and staff members attended the event, which was held at the High School/Middle School on December 4. Instructional experts from Ulster BOCES led "breakout" sessions focusing on the new State learning standards for Math and English Language Arts (ELA) for students in Kindergarten through Grade 6. After the sessions ended, attendees proceeded to the auditorium, where a panel of District administrators and curriculum specialists answered questions about Onteora's implementation of the Common Core.

According to Marki Clair-O'Rourke, Assistant Superintendent for Curriculum and Instruction, the District plans to organize additional informational events on the Common Core. "Our goal is to offer information, support, and guidance to families, and to help students meet the challenging new demands associated with the new learning standards," she explained.

## Celebrating Poetry at the High School



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

Poetry is alive and well at Onteora High School, where 15 students competed in the school's Poetry Out Loud event in December. The two winners of the competition, Jackie Katz and Kalena Kwiecinski, advanced to the Hudson Valley Poetry Out Loud regional competition, held in February at SUNY New Paltz campus. Jackie recited "Since There Is No Escape" by Sara Teasdale and "A Thousand Martyrs" by Aphra Behn, while Kalena recited "Conversation" by Ai and "I felt a Funeral, in my Brain" by Emily Dickinson. Kalo Talley and Natalie Rubin received honorable mentions. Congratulations to all the participants!

## ONTEORA'S TASK FORCE ON TESTING REDUCTION

**TESTING:** it's a hot topic not only in our District, but nationwide. Many parents, students, community members, and educators are wondering just how much testing is needed to accurately assess students' academic progress—and how much testing is arguably too much—i.e., potentially detrimental to the students' educations, mental and emotional health, and overall well-being.

Seeking to address the concerns of the Onteora community regarding student assessments, the Board of Education adopted the following goal for 2014-2015:

*"After careful study, develop and adopt an actionable policy and/or plan regarding testing, reflecting the Board's desire to avoid over-testing, 'teaching to the test,' the infringement upon instructional time, and the perception thereof. Work in collaboration with PTAs, Administrators, Teachers and other staff members to develop a policy and /or plan that can be supported by all stake-holders."*

The Task Force, which is co-chaired by Board Trustee Ann McGillicuddy and Assistant Superintendent for Curriculum and Instruction Marki Clair-O'Rourke, also includes parents, principals, and teachers. To date, the Task Force has been working on:

- identifying changes to the Annual Professional Performance Review (APPR) process that will significantly reduce the amount of testing;
- developing a positive testing environment for children, as opposed to one driven by stakeholder desires; and
- presenting recommendations to the Board by March 2015.

As part of its work, the Task Force has been examining how other school districts, including New Paltz, have been addressing the issue of testing, including through advocacy efforts and through so-called "opt-out" movements. In addition, the Task Force is currently in the process of drafting a policy on testing, which it will present to the District's Policy Committee for its consideration.

Minutes of the Task Force meetings can be found on the District website at [www.onteora.k12.ny.us/Page/5660](http://www.onteora.k12.ny.us/Page/5660).

*At Onteora, both the Bennett and Woodstock PTAs recently hosted forums on high-stakes testing, inviting speakers who addressed the potential impacts of high-stake testing and testing refusals on children and their schools. Among the guest speakers at Bennett's "Reclaiming Public Education" event were a Middle School student, two teachers, education advocate Bianca Tanis of New York Allies for Public Education, and Bennett PTA Vice President Heather Roberts. Roberts was also the featured speaker at Woodstock's event.*

# Onteora Announces Lottery for Pre-Kindergarten Slots

The Onteora Central School District is currently accepting applications for its half-day Universal Pre-Kindergarten program for the 2015-2016 school year. Onteora residents who are the parent or guardian of a child who will be four years old on or before



First Steps Preschool and Onteora's Universal Pre-K students helped spread some holiday magic in December, as they performed in a festive concert for family and friends.

December 1, 2015 are eligible to apply to be entered into the lottery that selects students for the program.

If you wish for your child to be considered for placement in the program, please fill out the application that is available on the District website ([www.onteora.k12.ny.us](http://www.onteora.k12.ny.us)). You may also obtain an application by calling Margaret Harkin at 657-3320. Completed applications are due at the District Office on Route 28 in Boiceville by May 22, 2015. Please note that if an original birth certificate cannot be produced, other proofs of date of birth may be considered.

The continuation of the half-day Pre-K program is contingent upon State budget approval. The District also hopes to continue its full-day Pre-K program, which serves children the State considers "at risk." The District will reapply for this grant if it is offered for the 2015-2016 school year. Based upon the applications received, the District will determine which students are eligible for the full-day program.

## Onteora Board of Education Appoints New Trustee

The Onteora Board of Education has appointed Barbara "Bobbi" Schnell to fill the vacant position of Board Trustee. The appointment followed an interview process conducted at the December 11 Board of Education meeting.

Ms. Schnell, an Olive resident, replaces former Trustee Tom Hickey, who resigned in September. She will hold the position until the Budget vote on May 19, 2015.

A longtime educator, Ms. Schnell previously served as principal of Woodstock and West Hurley Elementary Schools. She has lived in the District for 24 years, raising a son who graduated from Onteora High School. While her son attended Bennett Elementary School, she was an active member of the school's PTA. She is, she notes, "currently a taxpayer, with a senior citizen husband."

Ms. Schnell looks forward to putting her experience, skills, and passion for children to work while on the Board of Education. "I'd like to thank the Board for considering me and am grateful to be joining the Onteora School Board," she said. "It was an honor to work with my school community and it afforded me much joy. Now, it is my turn to give back to the community. I hope to bring my knowledge of the communities, along with my dedication to the children, to the Board table."



## BOARD OF EDUCATION ADOPTS NEW MISSION AND VISION STATEMENTS

At its December 11 meeting, the Onteora Board of Education adopted new Mission and Vision Statements for the District.

The statements were drafted during Board of Education meetings held from August through October. The Board subsequently invited public feedback on the drafts, holding three public hearings in November and December.

The District's new Mission and Vision Statements are as follows:

### ONTEORA MISSION

*Our Onteora schools exist to educate and nurture the children of our diverse community. Our mission is to create an engaging and healthy learning environment that empowers all students to pursue their dreams, achieve their goals, and contribute thoughtfully to the global community.*

### ONTEORA VISION

*An Onteora education fosters intellectual curiosity, mutual respect, self-respect, creative problem solving, individual expression, ethical decision making and active engagement in the world. Our community values and supports its children, through a holistic collaboration among students, families, the educational community, and Onteora residents at large. Students will graduate as engaged citizens and life-long learners with the confidence, self-awareness and skills to reach their maximum potential, and to live rich and successful lives.*

## VICTORIA MCLAREN TO SERVE AS ACTING SUPERINTENDENT

Due to Superintendent Phyllis McGill's temporary leave of absence under the Family and Medical Leave Act, Assistant Superintendent for Business Victoria McLaren has been named Acting Superintendent. The temporary appointment is effective March 15, 2015 through June 10, 2015.

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## To Postal Customer

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### Alumni Spotlight

#### Jennifer Ward, Class of 1961

Jennifer Ward has traveled far and wide since graduating from Onteora. Her career has included diplomatic posts in Africa and the Caribbean, as well as teaching and administrative positions at various American colleges and universities.

Ward believes that her strong Onteora education helped lay the groundwork for her career paths. "I had excellent teachers," she recalls. "They all wanted us to succeed and did everything they could to prepare us for our college years. Onteora really provided a nurturing and innovative educational environment." She has particularly fond memories of Henry and Dorothy Berleth, Matthew Ostoyich, and Bernard Stahl.

After graduating from Vassar with a BA in history and from UCLA with MA and PhD degrees (also in history), Ward worked in the non-profit sector in New York and then served in both faculty and administrative positions at the City University of New York and Princeton University. In 1978 she moved to Washington, D.C., where she served as Staff Director of the U.S. House of Representatives' Subcommittee on Africa and as a consultant to the U.S. Department of Defense.

In 1979, Ward entered the U.S. Foreign Service. She held posts in Zaire, Senegal, and Jamaica, and served as Ambassador to the Republic of Niger from 1991-1993. She was subsequently assigned to the National Security Council, the State Department, and the World Bank.

After retiring from the Department of State in 1999, Ward became Associate Dean for Programs and Studies at Georgetown University, where she also ran the Georgetown Leadership Seminar. Since 2010, she has been teaching English as a Second Language (ESL) at a number of colleges and universities, including Georgetown University, Montgomery College, Catholic University, George Washington University, and the Johns Hopkins School of Advanced International Studies (SAIS).

Ward, who has one daughter, lives in Washington, D.C. She believes that her overseas experiences serve her well in her current job as an ESL teacher. "I think my career as a Foreign Service Officer helped me better understand the cultural differences which these students bring to learning English," she explains. In addition, she notes, her jobs at the Defense Department, the State Department, and Georgetown University took her to Central America and the Middle East, further expanding her understanding of the world and its people.

Though Ward has traveled the globe, she always enjoys returning to Ulster County. "I love coming back to visit because it reminds me that growing up in that area of the Catskills and going to Onteora turned out to be an incredible opportunity."



Jennifer Ward and her daughter Jacqueline

**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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Assistant Principal, Dieter Schimmelpfennig

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

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

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

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