

ONTEORA

Fall 2020

LETTER FROM THE SUPERINTENDENT

DEAR ONTEORA COMMUNITY,

As we move into the holiday season, I see our families working hard to support our students and showing the incredible resilience that exists within this community. Nothing about the past eight months has been easy, but the difficulties we have faced have truly highlighted our community's strengths. All of us in the schools are humbled and proud to partner with you throughout this pandemic. It seems as if each time we get through a new situation or challenge, something else pops up, but we will continue to focus on our students and know that they are the reason we all work together.

We are pleased that we have been able to continue our partnership with the Morningside Institute in support of our Social Emotional Learning/Equity initiative. It is so important that we recognize the stresses our students and families are facing. Today's stresses are different from those of past years, and we have added parent workshops to our curriculum because we understand that entire families are struggling and in need of support.

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Returning Elementary School Students Can't Mask Their Enthusiasm!

AFTER MONTHS OF ONLINE LEARNING, many of Onteora's Elementary School students returned to their classrooms on October 1.

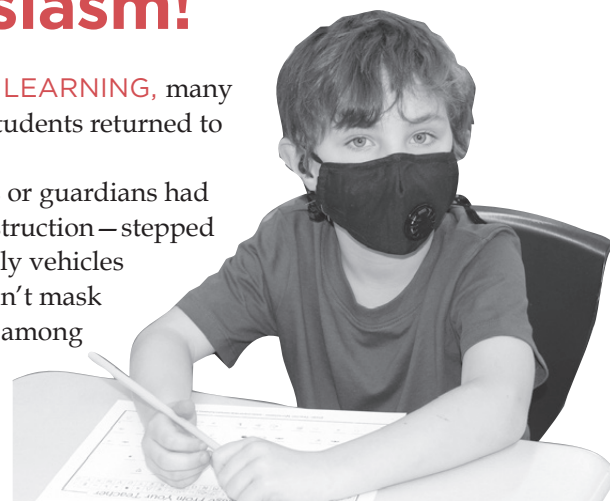
The students—whose parents or guardians had chosen the in-person model of instruction—stepped off their buses or out of their family vehicles wearing face coverings that couldn't mask their enthusiasm over being back among their friends, teachers, and classmates.

The first day of in-person schooling at Phoenicia, Woodstock, and Bennett Elementary Schools was a bit different this year, of course, due to the ongoing pandemic. Instead of high-fives and hugs, there were socially distanced hellos, point-of-entry temperature checks, and strategically placed hand-sanitizing stations.

Colorful signage reminded children, staffers, and visitors to wash their hands frequently, to stay at least six feet apart from others, and to follow one-way directional arrows in hallways to reduce congestion.

In another safety measure, breakfasts were distributed as students entered their school building, eliminating the need for them to crowd into the cafeteria. Similarly, the students' lunches were delivered to the classrooms—where desks were spaced six feet or more away from one another.

Despite the many changes, at least one thing remained the same—the overwhelming sense of anticipation and excitement that only “the first day” of the school year can bring. It's going to be a great year!



Woodstock student Cass Powell working on a classroom assignment.



BACK TO SCHOOL

Diego Vazquez Collado (right) arriving at Bennett on the first day of in-person learning. Phoenicia student Dylan Cabrera Lopez (left) was eager to answer his teacher's question on the first day of school.



Bennett student Annika Turner (left) waving hello as she waits in line to have her temperature checked. Phoenicia student Stella Jansen (right) selecting a crayon while completing a worksheet.



Middle School Students Return to the Classroom

THE EXCITEMENT WAS PALPABLE AT ONTEORA MIDDLE SCHOOL ON OCTOBER 5, as students participating in the hybrid system of learning began returning to school. Students, many of whom had not seen their friends, classmates, and/or teachers in person since last March, happily took the opportunity to catch up and reconnect—while socially distancing, of course.

After arriving at the Boiceville campus, the students filed through the Middle School/High School doors. Using the District’s health-screening app (<https://entry.neric.org/onteor>), the Middle Schoolers showed that they had provided acceptable answers regarding their respective health statuses and had been cleared to attend school that day. They also had their temperatures checked before proceeding to their classrooms.

Classes were small, as the returning students were divided into four cohorts (groups), with each cohort



Middle School student Jennifer Albright completing her first ride on a school bus since March.



Middle School student Juliet Barry using her Chromebook during one of her in-person classes.

attending in-person classes on a different day. (On days the youngsters are not at the school, they are learning remotely.) Desks were spaced at least six feet apart from one another.

Many safety measures are in place at Onteora this fall, including hand-sanitizing stations, mandatory mask wearing, and directional arrows that reduce congestion in hallways by creating one-way traffic patterns. Lockers are off-limits.

Change is also evident in the cafeteria, where the tables have been spread out to ensure social distancing. There is a maximum of three students per table. All of the students in Kindergarten through Grade 12 are eligible for free breakfasts and lunches, per the U.S. Department of Agriculture.

A huge thank-you to everyone—including students, staff, and families—who are working hard to ensure that this school year is as safe and productive as possible. We are all in this together!

HIGH SCHOOL’S “HYBRID” LEARNERS RETURN TO IN-PERSON LEARNING

A little rain couldn’t dampen the enthusiasm of the High School students who began in-person learning on October 13, joining the Middle School students who had started the previous week. Students from both schools arrived at the Boiceville campus a bit soggy, but still smiling beneath their masks.

One by one, the students flashed the color-coded screen on their phones or Chromebooks that showed that they had successfully answered the questions on the District’s health-screening app. They then “scanned” their wrists at temperature-taking stations before proceeding to their first-period classes.

Like the Middle School students, the high schoolers have been divided into four cohorts, with each group attending in-person classes one day a week. The other four days, they are learning remotely—except for those students enrolled in Ulster BOCES programs, who are attending in-person classes on Wednesdays.

Welcome back!



Nathan Lonstein arriving at the High School for his first day of in-person classes this year.



High School student Semfora Loizou checking her temperature before entering the school.

Teaching Music During a Pandemic



Music teacher Paul Schubert teaching a class at Phoenicia Elementary School.

BEING A MUSIC EDUCATOR DURING A PANDEMIC IS CHALLENGING. Just ask Paul Schubert, who is teaching music at Phoenicia and Woodstock Elementary Schools this fall.

“Having been a music teacher in Onteora for 21 years, I have seen and heard just about everything in terms of the obstacles to educating students in the arts—or so I thought,” he said. “The challenges of teaching during COVID-19 truly supersede any I have seen in my decades of teaching.”

Because of social distancing requirements, most of Mr. Schubert’s classes are being divided between two rooms. When teaching Kindergarteners at Phoenicia, for example, he positions his cart in a doorway that connects two adjoining classrooms. He teaches in both directions, so he can give both groups of students equal attention. During a recent lesson, he led his masked students in singing Halloween-inspired songs, reminding them to practice “Whisper singing only!”



Phoenicia Kindergarten students listening to Music teacher Paul Schubert during a recent class.

“We all have to figure out how to adjust our curriculum so that we can teach what we need to students at home who don’t have the materials that are present in the classroom. This is a challenge for all of us—including music teachers, who have everything from instruments to hand-given materials that are not available to homebound students.”

Despite the challenges posed by the pandemic, Mr. Schubert believes that his fellow music teachers, along with the rest of Onteora’s educators, are responding in “incredible” ways. “We’re doing the best that we can, under totally crazy circumstances, and supporting each other in the process!” he said.

Students are also rising to the challenges, according to Mr. Schubert. “The students are real troopers through this,” he said. “They are rolling with all the punches and are patient and upbeat. I might not see it through the masks, but I can tell they are smiling a lot, and that brightens my day too. I am looking forward to the day I see those smiles with no barriers.”

In other cases, Mr. Schubert is teaching the students in one classroom “live,” beaming his lesson into a second classroom using Google Meet. He takes care to position himself so his computer’s web camera can “see” him, and plugs in any devices he may need—such as a keyboard, “boombox,” or iPad. He also tries to record the class for those students who aren’t present.

When it comes to remote learners, Mr. Schubert said,

LETTER FROM THE SUPERINTENDENT

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As many of you know, each year our Board of Education sets goals for the coming school year. If you have a moment, please review the Board of Education goals for this year. They can be found on the Board page of our website at: www.onteora.k12.ny.us/board-of-education/about-the-board/goals.

As you review the Board goals, you will note the focus on providing students with the educational environment and support that they need to thrive. The Board has created goals that aim to enhance and improve the culture and climate of our schools, the physical plant of our buildings, the content of the curriculum, and the opportunities that exist beyond graduation for our students. They recognize that progress may be slowed while we navigate through this pandemic, but the direction of the District is clearly laid out, and we will continue to strive to achieve these outcomes for our students.

Although all of our administrators say this frequently, it bears repeating: Thank you to our families for the patience and understanding that you have shown throughout this difficult time. The rules we are given by the New York State Education Department and the Department of Health seem to change frequently, and we are all doing our best to comply with all of the requirements while still providing a high-quality education for our students. At this time, there has been no indication that our State assessments and the spring Regents examinations will be waived as they were last spring, so our faculty is striving to ensure that all of our students are receiving the appropriate curriculum and will be prepared for these important exams. The world has gained a fresh appreciation for the work that is accomplished by teachers every day, and the Onteora faculty is certainly among the best faculty there is—please take a moment to thank a teacher!

Sincerely,

Victoria McLaren
SUPERINTENDENT OF
SCHOOLS

Onteora's Coaches and Athletic Department Look Ahead

LIKE MANY OF OUR STUDENTS, FAMILIES, AND COMMUNITY MEMBERS, the Onteora Central School District is looking forward to resuming team sports when it is safe to do so. In the meantime, we'd like to thank our dedicated coaches and our entire Athletic Department for all that they do for our athletes, our students, and school community. We are the Eagles, and we are Onteora Strong!

“To our Onteora Athletic Team: Oftentimes, it only takes one person to change a life, one person to be there, one person to push, one person to believe, one person to challenge, one person to trust, one person to empower. Thank you, Onteora coaching staff, for your dedication and commitment and for the passion you give to the wonderful student-athletes of the Onteora Central School District. We appreciate you!”



—Kimberly Pilla, Director of Physical Education,
Athletics, Health/Dean of Students



Mike Allison



Aaron Bennett



Todd Faulkner



Anne Gallin



Chris Kasprzyk



Emma Katz



Tom King



Mike Liverani



Phillip Loizou



Eric Matteson



Lori Matteson



Kathy Nerp

“When I think about the students at Onteora, what comes to mind is the dedication, the will to succeed, and the heart they give to whatever they are doing.”



— Andrew Occhi, Coach
Varsity Girls Golf,
Varsity Boys Golf,
Varsity Girls Basketball

“Hello, Onteora Eagles! This has been a difficult year for everyone, but I'm sure you're trying to make the most of your school year in all possible ways. Like your mascot, the Eagle, Onteora students have the strength and tenacity to get through these tough times! Keep in mind—the virus will eventually disappear, and our tennis courts will still be there waiting for us! Miss you all!”



— Kathy Nerp, Coach
Varsity Boys Tennis



Manuella Jeanne Pierre



Kimberly Pilla



Leah Smith



Sam Smith



Nicole Temple



Carsten Warnes



Amy Weisz



Jen Brueckner



Patrick Burkhardt



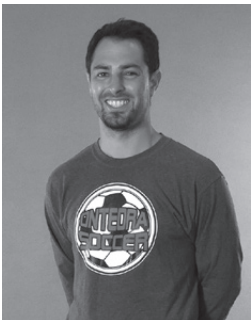
Jason Calinda



Sam Guest



Brooke Harrington



Jacob Hoyt-Friedman

“ The *Onteora Central School District*, its staff, student body, and community have shown me nothing but love throughout the many years I’ve coached the Varsity Boys Basketball program. The *Onteora* school district and its ardent school spirit have shaped my experience in a positive direction, and it’s been truly amazing to be a part of such a wonderful school district. The *Onteora* staff, student body, and community are the epitome of all the reasons why I love to call *Onteora* home. ”



—Sam Guest, Coach
Varsity Boys Basketball



Andrew Occhi



Brian Perez



Eric Pezzello



Christina Rider



Mike Rushford



Rebecca Scherer



Mark Wilens

“ I love *Onteora* because it is my home. I grew up in Boiceville, and I feel blessed to be able to give back to the *Onteora* community in my capacity as a coach. The school will always have a special place in my heart. ”



—Carsten Warnes, Coach
Modified Boys Soccer,
Modified Track and Field

- Mike Allison:** Varsity Football
- Aaron Bennett:** Modified Boys Basketball
- Jen Brueckner:** Modified Field Hockey
- Patrick Burkhardt:** Varsity Cross Country, Varsity Swimming, Varsity Girls Track and Field
- Jason Calinda:** Varsity Cross Country, Varsity Indoor Track, Varsity Boys Track and Field
- Todd Faulkner:** Modified Football, Modified Wrestling
- Anne Gallin:** Modified Cross Country, Modified Track and Field
- Sam Guest:** Varsity Boys Basketball
- Brooke Harrington:** Varsity Volleyball, Varsity Skiing, Modified Softball
- Jacob Hoyt-Friedman:** JV Girls Soccer
- Chris Kasprzyk:** JV Boys Basketball, JV Softball
- Emma Katz:** JV Field Hockey, Varsity Gymnastics
- Tom King:** Varsity Girls Soccer, Varsity Indoor Track, Varsity Track and Field
- Mike Liverani:** Varsity Football, JV Boys Basketball
- Phillip Loizou:** Varsity Football
- Eric Matteson:** Modified Football
- Lori Matteson:** Modified Girls Basketball
- Kathy Nerp:** Varsity Boys Tennis
- Andrew Occhi:** Varsity Boys Golf, Varsity Girls Basketball, Varsity Girls Golf
- Brian Perez:** Varsity Skiing
- Eric Pezzello:** Varsity Soccer, Varsity Wrestling, Varsity Track and Field
- Manuella Jeanne Pierre:** Dance Team
- Kimberly Pilla:** Director of Physical Education, Athletics, Health/Dean of Students
- Christina Rider:** Varsity Track and Field
- Mike Rushford:** Modified Girls Soccer
- Rebecca Scherer:** Varsity Girls Tennis
- Leah Smith:** Athletic Secretary
- Sam Smith:** Modified Boys Track
- Nicole Temple:** Varsity Field Hockey
- Carsten Warnes:** Modified Boys Soccer, Modified Track and Field
- Amy Weisz:** Modified Girls Track and Field
- Mark Wilens:** JV Girls Basketball

Library Learning Flourishing at Bennett

ONTEORA SCHOOLS LOOK A BIT DIFFERENT THIS FALL – and that includes the District’s library media centers, where student learning is thriving despite the limitations imposed by pandemic-related health and safety considerations.

At Bennett Elementary School, for example, you can no longer see students browsing through the stacks, leafing through books, or checking out reading materials the way they did last fall. What you can see, however, are students honing their technology, research, reading, and keyboarding skills.

They’re still requesting books, but in a newer, safer way. Using their District-issued Chromebooks, the students are logging onto the new library system, Destiny Discover, to search for books and to reserve the ones they will pick up later from Library Media Specialist Bernadette Amodeo.

Bennett’s library-goers are also learning to become better researchers. “Using their Chromebooks, the students are utilizing databases offered by the District to read non-fiction and search for reliable, verifiable information,” Mrs. Amodeo noted.

On a recent morning, students were engrossed in researching topics of their own choosing. Grade 5 student Austin Otis was inspired to learn more about fossils after playing a dinosaur-themed video game at home, while Grade 4 student Jeffrey Fowler browsed

a website focusing on artists. “I like to do art,” Jeffrey explained. Nearby, Grade 5 student Leticia Marin expressed surprise over a newly discovered fact. “Lady Gaga learned to play the piano at age 4!” she marveled.

Bennett students are being invited to explore new resources such as Sora, a reading app, to read e-books (electronic versions of printed books) and listen to audiobooks.

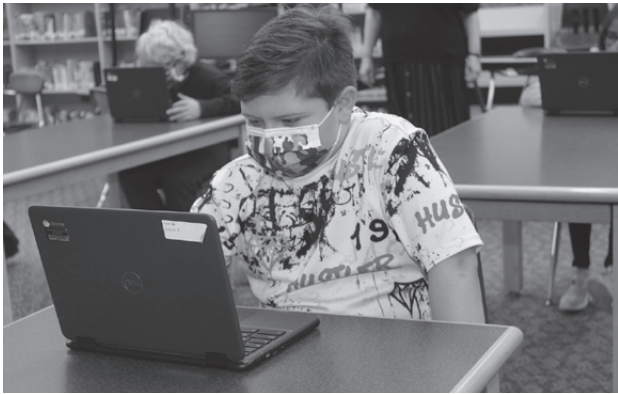
Mrs. Amodeo has also encouraged students to sign up for library cards online. A library card may be

especially useful for the school’s remote learners, she said, since they are not currently able to enjoy in-person visits to Bennett’s library.

In addition to researching and reading, Bennett students are working to improve their ability to type, or keyboard. Keyboarding, according to the New York State Education Department, is

a skill that is “critical to success in school, college, and careers in the 21st Century.” To help prepare students for the future, Mrs. Amodeo uses a typing program called EduTyping. “When the students are beginning, I stress accuracy, and then we build up to increasing our words per minute,” she explained.

At Bennett, it’s clear that reading, researching, and learning are flourishing – despite the challenges posed by COVID-19!



Grade 4 Bennett student Jeffrey Fowler uses one of the District’s databases to learn about artists.

Pre-K Students Enjoy Outdoor “Classrooms”

At Woodland Playhouse, the learning often takes place outdoors, beyond the confines of classroom walls. Onteora students enrolled in the Pre-K program administered by the preschool have been enjoying plenty of outdoor learning activities this fall.

Recently, teachers took advantage of the fact that the preschool’s yards and orchards are chock-full of delicious apples. The children listened to an oral version of *Johnny Appleseed*, sang songs about apples, and read stories about the fruit. *Ten Apples Up On Top*, a Dr. Seuss counting book, spurred lively conversations between students and teachers about how many apples they could balance on their heads—a feat which they then proceeded to demonstrate!

The Pre-K students also explored the woods, documenting signs of the season—including changing leaves and scurrying squirrels. Teacher Michele Garner and some students discovered and identified (safe) mushrooms growing along the school path, and the students took them back to open them up and study them more closely with magnifying glasses. They examined mushrooms, birch bark, and even their own hands!



Pre-K student Olivia Townsend balances an apple on her head during a fall-themed learning activity at Woodland Playhouse.

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Middle School Artists Show Creativity, Resilience

THIS FALL, THE ART CLASSES AT THE MIDDLE SCHOOL are quieter, as fewer students are attending school in-person on any particular day. The classroom walls, which in pre-COVID times were covered in student art, are looking a bit bare. But despite the changes brought about by the pandemic, it's clear that the creativity is still flowing at Onteora Middle School. In fact, it may be stronger than ever.

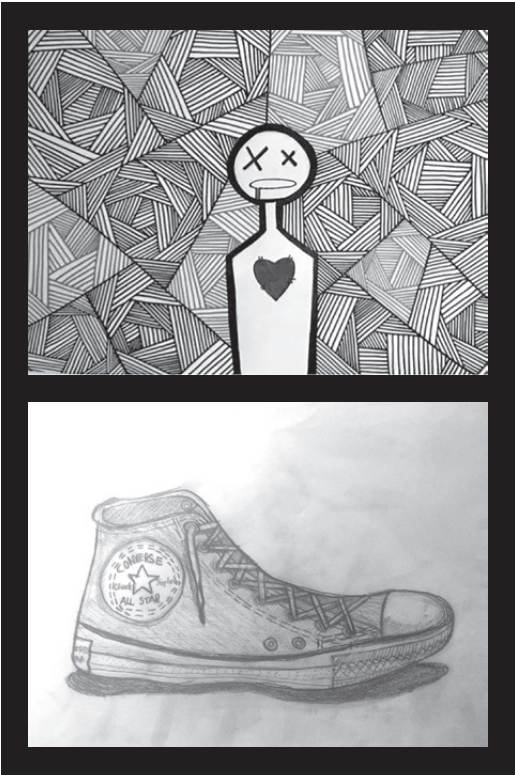
There's still plenty of art being made by students, though much of the work is being done at home, with the artists sharing their projects during Google Meets. When students do attend classes in person, they are bringing their pencils, sketchbooks, and any other materials they need to class—and taking them back home when they leave.

A recent assignment in Anita Sidler's Grade 7 Art class, for example, produced a delightful array of boots, sneakers, and other footwear, all skillfully sketched and shaded. In Jen Wentland's Grade 8 Art class, recent assignments showcased the students' skills at using lines, practicing the compositional method called "Rule of Thirds," and creating compelling self-portraits.

According to Ms. Sidler, her students are engaged, eager to learn—and happy to get away from their computer screens. "With remote learning, I've noticed my students getting a bit screen

fatigued, so I think doing some old-school drawing on paper has helped them to break away from the computer light," she said.

To date, Ms. Sidler's class has been focusing on observational drawing. "I talk a lot about how drawing is just about learning how to see, how to focus, and how to slow down our eyes and brains to meet what we do with our hands," she said.



Work by Grade 8 artist Lily Stoudt (top) and Grade 7 artist Alexandra Lukowicz.

Despite the challenges associated with remote learning and the COVID situation, Ms. Sidler's students continue to surprise her with their work ethic and talent. "I'm incredibly proud of their accomplishments and look forward to working with them this year," she enthused.

Mrs. Wentland, who has been encouraging her students to do something creative every day, is similarly impressed by her students. "I am amazed every day at the resiliency of our creative students," she declared. "Some of them are definitely struggling with the changes in the world and society, but most are pushing through. Art-making brings a sense of calmness and can be therapeutic."

Art, Mrs. Wentland believes, is also helping to forge connections and build community during these socially distanced times. "I am finding that looking at art, creating art, and talking about art is connecting all of us—even though we are not in the same room together," she said.

WOODSTOCK'S NEW OWL MURAL ENCOURAGES POSITIVE BEHAVIOR

When Woodstock Elementary School students returned to in-person learning, they were greeted by a colorful new mural painted by local artist Gillian Jule.

Owls—which are a traditional symbol of wisdom and knowledge as well as the inspiration for the school's Owl Store—can be seen soaring and perching in the painting, which is located near the front entrance. An inquisitive dinosaur also makes an appearance, peering out from a window in Jule's fanciful depiction of the store.

The mural and the Owl Store are part of the school's PBIS (Positive Behavioral Interventions & Supports) program, explains Principal Scott Richards. Individual students as well as entire classes who are "caught" doing something good (volunteering to help out a student or staff member in need of assistance, for example) may be rewarded with "owl" tickets that can be redeemed for one of the store's many tantalizing trinkets. "The aim of this character education initiative," he said, "is to discourage inappropriate behavior in a positive way—ideally, without punitive measures like scolding or loss of recess time."

Ms. Jule, who graduated from Woodstock Elementary School (as did her own daughter), painted the mural over the summer with financial support from the school's PTA. "It was so much fun to paint, and I love that I was able to contribute something artistic that kids can enjoy for years to come," she said. "It is really great to be able to give back to such a fantastic school!"



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SUPERINTENDENT OF SCHOOLS

Victoria McLaren

NEWSLETTER EDITING & DESIGN

Ulster BOCES Community Relations



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To Postal Customer

National Honor Society Serves Community, Spreads Warmth

THE ONGOING PANDEMIC HASN'T STOPPED Onteora High School's chapter of the National Honor Society (NHS) from celebrating two very special months—Socktober and NovembRRR!

Throughout October and November, NHS members have been collecting donations of new socks and other cold-weather items like hats, gloves, and scarves for Family of Woodstock. Students, faculty, and staff were invited to drop off items in collection boxes located at the east and west end entrances of the High School. There is also a donation box located at the Boiceville Market for community members who wish to contribute.

NHS President Maggie Turck is proud of the group's efforts. "It's amazing to me that the pandemic hasn't held the NHS back," she said. "Sure it's given us hurdles, but when it comes to helping our community, we just jump right over them. It's nice to see our members putting in the extra effort to do something for our community that is needed more now than ever before."



NHS members Nelson DelTufo and Eva Donato holding a box filled with donated socks, hats, gloves, and scarves. The cold-weather gear will be donated to Family of Woodstock. Photo by Cambria D'Aprile, Treasurer of NHS.



Onteora High School students enrolled in Ulster BOCES programs at the Career & Technical Center in Port Ewen attend in-person classes once a week, on Wednesdays. When the students are not on campus, they are engaged in remote learning.

Ulster BOCES Automotive Technology student Steven Pajti (left) uses a vehicle lift in his classroom's shop to inspect the damage done to his vehicle after it was hit in a parking lot.

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