

# ONTEORA

Budget 2020

## MESSAGE FROM THE SUPERINTENDENT AND BOARD PRESIDENT

### Dear Onteora Community,

We hope you are well and safe and getting through these unprecedented times as best as possible. We are a school community that thrives on connection and closeness, and our staff, students, and families are all missing these elements in their lives.

Although we have not been bringing our students into the buildings, we are very much still teaching and caring for them on a daily basis. Our classes are meeting virtually, our mental health professionals are reaching out to students and families to provide support, and we have distributed hundreds of devices to families that would not otherwise have been able to connect to online learning. We also continue to provide breakfast and lunch for children every week.

School has always been, and continues to be, an important part in the lives of our students. Our staff is working incredibly hard every day to create new ways to engage with students and help them learn while remaining at home. This situation evolved rapidly and while other businesses closed their operations, we continued to operate in a completely new environment. The ability of the District to quickly pivot in this new paradigm has allowed us to continue to retain our employees. These staff members are your neighbors. Throughout this pandemic, they have shown over and over again that they are committed to this community and are consistently generous with their time and donations. As the community supports the school, the school in turn supports the community. We are all in this together, and our partnership is a vital relationship.

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## Proposed 2020-2021 School Budget Within Tax Levy Limit

Proposal Developed in Climate of Economic Uncertainty

DEVELOPING A PROPOSED BUDGET DURING THIS TIME OF UNCERTAINTY HAS BEEN CHALLENGING. The level of State Aid, which helps offset the local tax impact, is still unknown. We also do not know what opening school in September will look like, and how any potential requirements will increase our expenses. "With so much uncertainty before us, we were challenged to make decisions based on unknown factors," explained Superintendent Victoria McLaren. "To do so, we kept our discussions and decisions centered on what would be best for students, while balancing potential future cuts in State and Federal Aid and taxpayer impact."

As a result, the Onteora Board of Education adopted the 2020-2021 proposed budget, which holds the spending increase to less than 1 percent (0.93 percent) and meets the criteria of the NYS tax levy limit (tax cap) formula, which permitted a 2.56 percent levy increase. This is the ninth year in a row that Onteora has presented a budget at or below the allowable tax levy limit. The \$57,938,542 plan will be voted upon by absentee ballot this year, with all completed ballots due to be returned to the Office of the District Clerk by 5 PM on June 9, 2020. (For more information, please see the "Please Vote" section on page 2.)

### Reflects Reduced Spending in Some Areas

In addition to reductions in the areas of operations and maintenance, transportation, and general support, the proposed budget reflects savings in the area of debt service, as Onteora paid off the balance due on a bus purchase.

### Continues Support for Pre-Kindergarten Programs

Onteora will continue to provide a strong foundation for children to begin their educational journeys by continuing to support both half-day and full-day Universal PreKindergarten (UPK) programs.

### Maintains Infrastructure

The proposed budget also invests \$750,000 in fund transfers to support two ongoing building improvements, one involving the replacement of the air-handling unit over the Bennett Elementary School gym, and the other focusing on resurfacing the High School tennis courts and paving various areas within the District.

### Addresses Potential Cuts in Aid

At this time, the amount of State Aid school districts can expect is unknown, as is the amount of Federal Aid, so Onteora is preparing for various fiscal scenarios. New York State Comptroller Thomas DiNapoli has warned that school districts may be facing a 20 percent reduction in State Aid. "The State is using quarterly measuring

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## ONTEORA MAKES TRANSITION TO REMOTE LEARNING

ONTEORA'S PHYSICAL SCHOOLS ARE CLOSED, but we know that the learning hasn't stopped! We appreciate all the hard work that students, teachers, staff members, and parents and guardians are doing during the current school closure. We are Onteora Strong!



Ben Emrich, a Grade 1 student in Elizabeth Granberg's class at Phoenicia Elementary School, is practicing his math skills by playing a card game at home. Following directions that Miss Granberg had posted online, Ben is trying to collect as many pairs of sums as possible.

## PLEASE VOTE

The Annual Budget Vote and Election of Trustees will happen by absentee ballot only on June 9. If you are a qualified voter and have not received an absentee ballot, please contact the District Clerk at 845-657-8851 or by email at [districtclerk@onteora.k12.ny.us](mailto:districtclerk@onteora.k12.ny.us)

### BOARD OF EDUCATION

Laurie Osmond, President  
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Valerie Storey  
Kevin Salem

Bennet Ratcliff  
Robert Burke Warren  
Dafne DeJesus

### SUPERINTENDENT OF SCHOOLS

Victoria McLaren

### NEWSLETTER EDITING & DESIGN

Ulster BOCES Community Relations



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To Postal Customer



## MESSAGE FROM THE SUPERINTENDENT AND BOARD PRESIDENT

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There is a lot of uncertainty surrounding the reopening of the economy and how schools will function as we begin to see restrictions loosening across the State. We are engaging in planning sessions within the District as well as regionally. We are envisioning how we can best support our students and maintain the safety of our school community. If we are able to welcome our students back in September, school may look different than it has in the past, but the level of caring for our students will be higher than ever. We know that this prolonged isolation has been incredibly difficult for children, and they will need higher levels of social and emotional support than ever before, in addition to increased academic support.

We continue to be overwhelmingly impressed by and proud of our students and their families for their efforts to stay on track and participate in learning while dealing with all the challenges that this situation has presented. We know that it is not easy, and we appreciate that everyone is doing their best.

We also want to offer special appreciation and congratulations to our graduating seniors. We know this is not what you envisioned, and we admire your resilience. The District is planning a unique celebration of your accomplishments to show how proud we are of the Class of 2020.

Our best to you all,  
Victoria McLaren, *Superintendent*  
Laurie Osmond, *Board President*

## Chromebooks and Technical Support for At-Home Learners

ONCE ONTEORA'S PHYSICAL SCHOOLS SHUT THEIR DOORS, teachers had to quickly design lessons that could be delivered remotely, and families had to carve out learning spaces in their own homes.

To facilitate that abrupt transition, Onteora distributed approximately 300 Chromebooks to students in Grades K-8. Students in these grade levels had previously used District-issued computers only in their classrooms. (High School students had been allowed to take their Chromebooks home nightly throughout the school year and so had their devices with them when the school closure went into effect.)

The District has also created a Google Form to provide students, parents, and faculty members across all grade levels remote technical support during the closure. This form can be found by going to the District website (<https://www.onteora.k12.ny.us>), then clicking on the Remote Learning - Technical Support - Form tab on the right hand side of the screen. Technical Support team members can only offer assistance for District platforms, applications, and devices, but will do their best to answer any questions you may have.

## ONTEORA'S MUSICIANS PLAY ON

With the State-mandated school closures, Onteora's music lessons moved online. Although the schools' music rooms are closed, the students are honing their musical skills at home. Pictured is Grade 5 student Ashley Campbell, who is practicing her cello in her family's backyard.



## Proposed 2020-2021 School Budget Within Tax Levy Limit

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periods to decide how much aid districts may lose," said Onteora's Assistant Superintendent for Business, Monica Kim LaClair. "To help preserve instructional programs, we are recommending to the Board of Education that any savings realized from the closure of our buildings in March—including reduced costs for fuel, electricity, field trips, conferences, and other reduced expenditures—be carried over into next year in order to help to offset potential State Aid cuts as predicted by Governor Cuomo," she added.

### Contingent Budget

As of publication of this newsletter, Governor Cuomo has not yet provided information to schools on what a failed budget vote would mean. In the past, a district would have one additional chance to present a new budget to voters for approval. Since the school's fiscal year begins on July 1, there is no time for a second vote. If Onteora's proposed budget fails, officials presume the District would need to go straight to a contingent budget, which would require a zero percent tax levy increase from the 2019-2020 school year and result in cuts totaling \$1,117,748. A contingent budget would eliminate all equipment purchases from the budget. There would also be reductions in areas such as field trips, conferences, and non-mandated services. "Any decisions about budget cuts will be student-based, and will focus on providing the maximum amount of support for our students when they return to our buildings as possible," said Superintendent McLaren. "This pandemic has impacted our students and their families in many ways, and we will continue to do our best to provide as much academic and social emotional support for them as we are able."

### Please Vote

As ordered by the Governor, voting will be held on June 9, 2020 by absentee ballot only. All "qualified voters" are eligible to vote and receive an absentee ballot. All voters who are registered to vote with the County Board of Elections will automatically be sent an absentee ballot, a postage-paid return envelope, and instructions. Information on how to look up if you are a registered voter and how an unregistered voter, who meets the definition of a qualified voter, may receive an absentee ballot is available at: [www.onteora.k12.ny.us/board-of-education/vote-election](http://www.onteora.k12.ny.us/board-of-education/vote-election). You may contact the District Clerk at 845-657-8851 or by email at [districtclerk@onteora.k12.ny.us](mailto:districtclerk@onteora.k12.ny.us) if you have any questions.

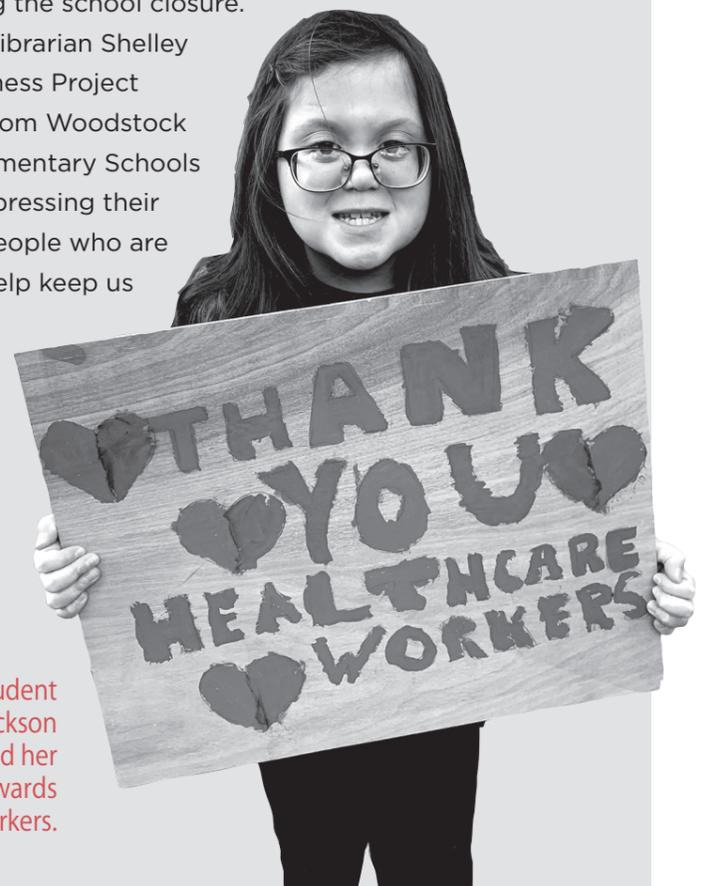
**All completed absentee ballots must be received in the Office of the District Clerk by 5 PM on June 9, 2020 to be counted.**

## SIGNS OF THE TIMES:

### Elementary School Students Honor Community Heroes

Our community's heroes—including doctors, nurses, firefighters, paramedics, police officers, and other essential workers—were honored with a special project carried out at the elementary school level during the school closure.

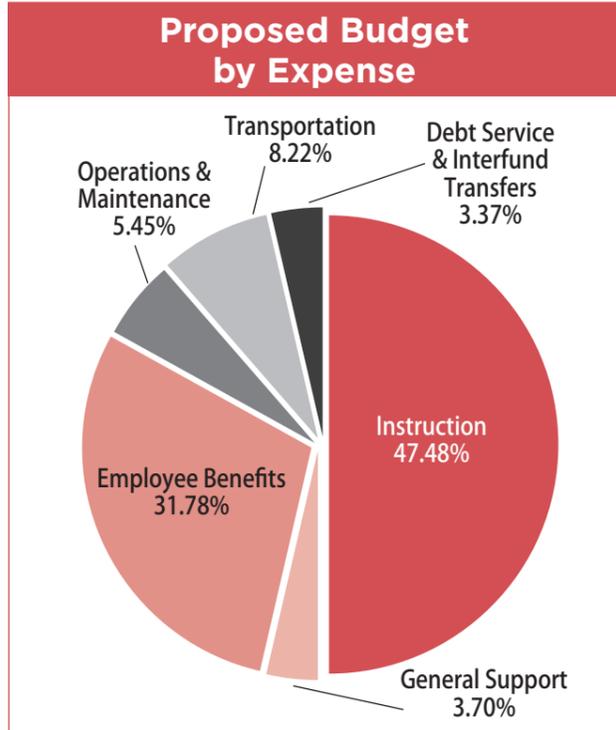
Spearheaded by Librarian Shelley Savatgy, the Kindness Project invited students from Woodstock and Phoenicia Elementary Schools to create signs expressing their gratitude to the people who are working hard to help keep us safe while most of us are sheltering at home.



Woodstock student Bella Jackson expressed her gratitude towards healthcare workers.

# PROPOSED BUDGET

## Questions & Answers About Voting

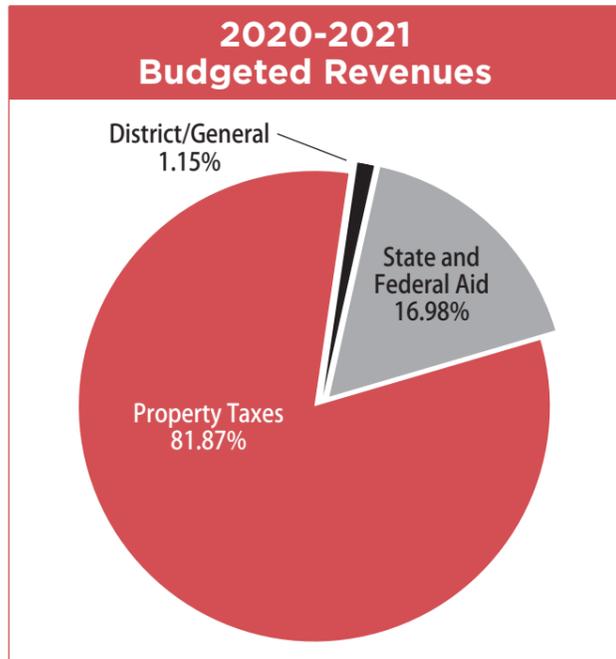


**Will There Be In-Person Voting?** As ordered by the Governor, voting will be by **absentee ballot only**. All “qualified voters” are eligible to vote and receive an absentee ballot. All completed absentee ballots must be received in the Office of the District Clerk by 5 PM on June 9, 2020 to be counted.

**Am I Eligible to Vote?** In order to be eligible to vote, you must be at least 18 years of age, a U.S. citizen, a resident of the Onteora Central School District for at least 30 days prior to the vote, and not otherwise prohibited from voting under the provisions of Section 5-106 of the Election Law (e.g. a person who had been adjudged to be mentally incompetent).

**How Do I Receive My Absentee Ballot?** All voters who are registered to vote with the County Board of Elections will automatically be sent an absentee ballot, a postage-paid return envelope, and instructions. Information on how to determine if you are a registered voter and how an unregistered voter, who meets the definition of a qualified voter, may receive an absentee ballot is available at: <https://www.onteora.k12.ny.us/board-of-education/vote-election>. You may contact the District Clerk at 845-657-8851 or by email at [districtclerk@onteora.k12.ny.us](mailto:districtclerk@onteora.k12.ny.us) if you have any questions.

**Where are Copies of the 2020-2021 Proposed Budget Available?** The proposed budget may be viewed on the District Website, [www.onteora.k12.ny.us](http://www.onteora.k12.ny.us)



## School Budget Notice

OVERALL BUDGET PROPOSAL	Budget Adopted for the 2019-2020 School Year	Budget Proposed for the 2020-2021 School Year	Contingency Budget for the 2020-2021 School Year *
Total Budgeted Amount, Not Including Separate Propositions	\$57,403,498	\$57,938,542	\$56,820,794
Increase/Decrease for the 2020-2021 School Year		\$535,044	\$(582,704)
Percentage Increase/Decrease in Proposed Budget		0.93 %	(1.02)%
Change in the Consumer Price Index		1.81%	
A. Proposed Levy to Support the Total Budgeted Amount	\$43,640,790	\$44,758,538	
B. Levy to Support Library Debt, if Applicable	\$0	\$0	
C. Levy for Non-Excludable Propositions, if Applicable **	\$0	\$0	
D. Total Tax Cap Reserve Amount Used to Reduce Current Year Levy	\$0	\$0	
E. Total Proposed School Year Tax Levy (A + B + C - D)	\$43,640,790	\$44,758,538	\$43,640,790
F. Total Permissible Exclusions	\$392,946	\$511,662	
G. School Tax Levy Limit, Excluding Levy for Permissible Exclusions	\$43,247,844	\$44,246,876	
H. Total Proposed School Year Tax Levy, Excluding Levy to Support Library Debt and/or Permissible Exclusions (E - B - F + D)	\$43,247,844	\$44,246,876	
I. Difference: G - H (Negative Value Requires 60.0% Voter Approval - See Note Below Regarding Separate Propositions) **	\$0	\$0	
Administrative Component	\$4,146,346	\$4,284,172	\$4,184,172
Program Component	\$48,175,379	\$48,397,002	\$48,301,255
Capital Component	\$5,081,773	\$5,257,368	\$4,335,367

\* Provide a statement of assumptions made in projecting a contingency budget for the 2020-21 school year, should the proposed budget be defeated pursuant to Section 2023 of the Education Law.

A contingent budget would eliminate all equipment purchases from the budget. The transfer to capital work (the air-handling unit over the Bennett gymnasium and the paving work) would be disallowed, along with reductions in other areas such as field trips, conferences, and non-mandated services.

\*\* List Separate Propositions that are not included in the Total Budgeted Amount: (Tax Levy associated with educational or transportation services propositions are not eligible for exclusion and may affect voter approval requirements)

Description	Amount
No separate propositions	

★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ **Under the Budget Proposed for the 2020-2021 School Year**

**Estimated Basic STAR Exemption Savings<sup>1</sup> \$353**

<sup>1</sup> The basic school tax relief (STAR) exemption is authorized by section 425 of the Real Property Tax Law.

In accordance with Governor Cuomo’s Executive Order No. 202.26, the annual budget vote for the fiscal year 2020-21 will be held on June 9, 2020 by absentee ballot only. No in-person voting or registration is permitted and all qualified voters are eligible to vote and receive an absentee ballot with a postage paid return envelope.

## WHAT YOU WILL SEE ON THE BALLOT

**PROPOSITION # 1 - 2020-2021 BUDGET**  
**BE IT RESOLVED**, that the Onteora Central School District Board of Education be and is hereby authorized to expend the sums set forth under the various headings which are voted upon in gross and not in detail in the total amount of \$57,938,542 (which includes \$20,000 to support public library) for the year commencing July 1, 2020 and ending June 30, 2021, and the Board is authorized to levy and collect the necessary tax thereof on the taxable property of the District.

**BOARD OF EDUCATION CANDIDATES (VOTE FOR THREE)** Three (3) Vacancies; Three (3) Year Terms - Effective July 1, 2020 to June 30, 2023

**Laurie Osmond • Bennet Ratcliff • Emily Sherry**

Save the Date!

This year’s High School graduation will be held on June 25. While a traditional ceremony will not be possible because of safety considerations, that won’t be stopping us from celebrating the accomplishments of the Class of 2020! Plans are currently being developed to honor our graduating seniors with a modified commencement ceremony at 5 PM, followed by a celebratory caravan-style procession at approximately 5:30 PM. We invite the entire Onteora community to come cheer on our graduates, who will be traveling in their family vehicles along 43 miles of the District’s major roads. The event will continue until 7 PM. This event is being made possible by the generous support of our Town Supervisors, our local, county, and state emergency service agencies, and Woodstock Radio - WDST (FM 100.1), which will be broadcasting the ceremony. For more details on our plans to date, please visit <https://bit.ly/3fL2u1l>

Class of 2020

## Onteora Announces Valedictorian and Salutatorian

ONTEORA IS PROUD TO ANNOUNCE that Emily Salem has been named valedictorian of the Class of 2020, and Ellery Loheide is this year's salutatorian. Both students excelled inside and outside of the classroom.

Emily, who earned a weighted Grade Point Average (GPA) of 100.66 during her time at Onteora, will be attending Harvard College. She plans to concentrate her studies on Government or Social Studies, with a focus on education.

Ellery, who achieved her salutatorian status by earning a weighted GPA of 98.736, will be attending the University of Southern California, where she intends to major in Sociology.

Congratulations!



Valedictorian Emily Salem



Salutatorian Ellery Loheide

## Elementary Schools Celebrate Earth Day

ONTEORA'S ELEMENTARY SCHOOLS CELEBRATED THE BEAUTY OF NATURE

and our community by creating Earth Day-inspired mandalas out of natural materials. Students, families, staff, and teachers sent in photos of their individual mandalas. Together, they showed how strong and beautiful our community is. Art teachers Teresa Pellegrini and Roberta Ziemba, along with Teaching Assistant Cheryl Formont, created a beautiful video of the results.

(<https://animoto.com/play/Bu4Es8TMU0CWVizHTnms5g>)



Bennett student Alexa Hull (right) makes an Earth Day mandala with her brother Luke, who is a Kindergarten student at Phoenicia.

## BENNETT JOURNALISTS LEARN THE ART OF FEATURE WRITING

JOURNALISM IS THE FOCUS of an innovative learning experience at Bennett Elementary School.

Before the school closure, Grade 5 students and teachers began collaborating with the Teachers College Reading and Writing Project at Columbia University to pilot a new section in the writing project's journalism study unit. The section, called a "bend," is focusing on feature articles.

According to Grade 5 teacher Karen Hadley, the students' work is being guided by the question, "How Do Humans Impact the Earth?" Working in collaborative research groups, the fledgling journalists launched investigations into the following topics: endangered species, coral reefs, ocean pollution, climate change, and deforestation.

As research progressed and writing began, students approached their topics from different angles. For example, one student in the deforestation group chose to zoom in on clear-cutting in the Amazon, while another is focusing on Australian wildfires.

According to Ms. Hadley, the students are also highlighting ways that humans are helping to stop environmental damage and to reverse negative trends impacting our planet. "The soon-to-be-published articles will be compiled in an online magazine format," she explained. "The magazine will include many text features such as hand-drawn illustrations, sidebars, graphs, maps, timelines, and word banks."

Stay tuned for more info on the students' journalistic accomplishments!



## MIDDLE SCHOOL STUDENTS HAVE SPIRIT!



On Long-Lost Twin Day, Eighth Grade Class President Sophia Odato dressed up like her classmate Abilene Adelman (whose picture can be seen on the iPad).

TRADITIONAL PEP RALLIES have not been possible this spring, but that hasn't stopped Onteora Middle School students from showing their school spirit—as well as their ability to have a bit of fun despite these challenging times.

The school's Student Government sponsored a virtual Spirit Week from April 27-May 1. Each day had a special theme, ranging from Pet Day (when students were invited to bring their pets to a Google Meet) to Decade Day (when they dressed in outfits inspired by a different decade), to Fancy Friday (when the Middle Schoolers donned dresses, ties, uniforms, and other fancy garb).

## Food Service Continues During School Closure



Not all heroes wear capes—sometimes they wear aprons! Onteora's cafeterias are shuttered during the school closure, but that doesn't mean our students are going hungry. Each week, the District's Food Services staff is preparing a total of five breakfasts and five lunches for more than 315 students. The Transportation Department is delivering the meals to students' homes with the assistance of District Monitors, as well as some Teaching Assistants and Typists. It is truly a group effort!

## USEFUL DISTRICT CONTACT INFORMATION

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

### DISTRICT OFFICE..... (845) 657-6383

**Superintendent of Schools**  
Victoria McLaren..... 657-6383 x1010

**Assistant Superintendent for Curriculum and Instruction**  
Dr. Jodi M. DeLucia..... 657-6383 x1023

**District Clerk**  
Fern Amster..... 657-6383 x1010

**Assistant Superintendent for Business**  
Monica Kim LaClair..... 657-6383 x1030

**Director of Pupil Personnel**  
Cindy Bishop..... 657-3320

**Universal Pre-Kindergarten**  
Cindy Bishop..... 657-3320

**Athletic Director**  
Kim Pilla..... 657-2373 x2113

**Director of Transportation**  
Nicole Sommer..... 657-2537

**School Lunch Manager**  
Christine Downs..... 657-6383 x2181

**Director of Facilities**  
Kyle Harjes..... 657-6384

**HIGH SCHOOL • 657-2373**  
Principal, Lance Edelman  
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

**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 Title IX/Title VI Compliance Officer Dr. Jodi M. DeLucia, Assistant Superintendent for Curriculum & Instruction, at: Onteora Central School District, PO Box 300, Boiceville, NY 12412, (845) 657-6383, ext. 1023, [jdelucia@onteora.k12.ny.us](mailto:jdelucia@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](mailto:ocr.newyork@ed.gov).