

ONTEORA

Summer 2022

LETTER FROM THE SUPERINTENDENT

DEAR ONTEORA COMMUNITY,

The summer is in full swing, and I hope that everyone is enjoying all of the activities that are traditionally part of this time for rejuvenation!

We are very fortunate to have several new Board members: Sarah Hemingway Lynch, Meghann Reimondo, and David Wallis. These three individuals bring incredible skills and enthusiasm to their roles. We are still waiting for the Commissioner of Education to authorize a recount of our votes to determine the winner of the remaining seat on the Board.

At the reorganization meeting in July, Emily Sherry was elected to serve as President of the Board, and Cindy Bishop was elected to the office of Vice President. I'm excited to work with this leadership team in the coming year.

I anticipate that the Board will be setting their goals for the coming year in the next couple of months. This will give us our roadmap and priorities for this year.

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Onteora's Class of 2022 celebrated their successful completion of High School with an outdoor ceremony held on the football field.

Onteora's Graduates March into the Future

IT WAS A PICTURE-PERFECT EVENING ON JUNE 24, when scores of families, friends, educators, and well-wishers gathered at Onteora High School (OHS) to celebrate the accomplishments – and promising futures – of the Class of 2022.

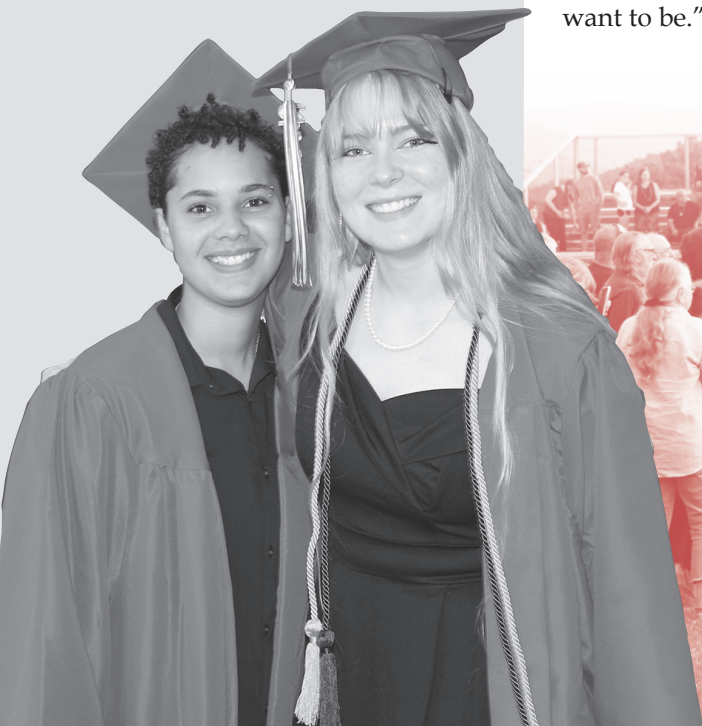
Nearly 100 graduating seniors stepped onto the football field to the inspiring strains of "Pomp and Circumstance," performed by the Onteora Chamber Orchestra under the direction of Music teacher Erica Boyer. Following the presentation of the colors by the Honor Guard of the Ulster County Sheriff's Office, student vocalist Sophia Grinberg gave a moving rendition of the "Star Spangled Banner."

The honorary guest speaker was Dr. Neal Smoller, a pharmacist and the owner of Village Apothecary in Woodstock. During the pandemic, Dr. Smoller, his staff, and hundreds of community members rallied to carry out a monumental public health effort – the vaccination of more than 20,000 people against COVID-19.

Also addressing the crowd were Salutatorian Tahlula Potter, Valedictorian Joey Driscoll, and Senior Class President Jakson Spiotta, who shared memories, jokes, and pearls of wisdom.

During her address, Tahlula declared, "Change can be a gift, reinvention is a blessing you can choose. Do not be afraid to switch paths. Our time on earth is too short for us to live lives we think we should be living, instead of ones we want to be."

CONTINUED ON PAGE 4



Phoenicia Students Say Goodbye to Third Grade, Hello to Bennett!

Four Phoenicia Grade 3 students celebrating after receiving their moving-up certificates.



Phoenicia students posing for family photos before their graduation ceremony.



Phoenicia teacher Carly Hull (far right) and her students were among those participating in the school's moving-up ceremony.

PHOENICIA'S GRADE 3 MOVING UP-CEREMONY was a celebratory affair, complete with colorful balloons, a shimmering photo booth, fancy outfits, and even a few impromptu conga lines. Originally scheduled for outdoors, the June 23 event was moved indoors due to inclement weather – and the transition seemed seamless.

Principal Elizabeth Fallo welcomed the overflow crowd of family, friends, and well-wishers. "Thank you for being here this evening, for being partners with your child's teachers, and for everything you do each and every day," she said. "Your children are amazing!"

After receiving their moving-up certificates, the children joined their families and guests for some delicious ice cream, courtesy of Stewart's Shops and the PTA. The PTA also donated specially made T-shirts, emblazoned with the motto "Peace, Love, and Eagles," for the students to wear during their field day.

Judging by the children's giant smiles and infectious laughter, the event was a roaring success. The newly minted fourth graders are ready to spread their wings and soar at Bennett next fall!

Phoenicia Celebrates Art—and Artists!

In early June, Phoenicia Elementary School hosted a fabulous outdoor art show! Art teacher Danielle Payette guided the young artists and curated the exhibit, which was assembled with assistance from the PTA (which also provided light refreshments). Each class had the opportunity to view the masterpieces during the school day. Afterwards, family and community members were welcome to attend the show's public opening. The talent on display was truly impressive!



Phoenicia's outdoor art exhibit showcased the talents and creativity of the student artists.

Under the Sea! The Little Mermaid Takes Onteora by Storm

Onteora's production of *The Little Mermaid* wowed audiences this spring.

Based on the Hans Christian Andersen story and the popular Disney film, the crowd-pleasing musical was performed by a talented cast of student actors, singers, and musicians.

The show was directed by English teacher Geordarna Constant, assisted by student director Madelynn Taylor. Chorus Director Brittany Carrol was the production's Musical Director. The lively dancing was choreographed by Amber McCarthy.



The cast of Onteora's production of *The Little Mermaid*.

Welcome Back!

SEPT 7

The first day of school for students will be Wednesday, September 7.
LET THE LEARNING BEGIN!

LETTER FROM THE
SUPERINTENDENT

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

The Board of Education recently adopted a new math curriculum for the elementary buildings, and the elementary staff, administrators, and Assistant Superintendent for Curriculum and Instruction will be focusing on implementing it as we move into the school year. This curriculum was chosen by a committee that included representation from all three of our elementary buildings; the committee worked through the selection process over the course of six months. I'm grateful to the committee members who dedicated so much time to ensuring that we chose the product that will best serve our students and to our Assistant Superintendent, Stephanie Laffin, for facilitating this process. The presentation that Assistant Superintendent Laffin shared with the Board of Education can be found on Board Docs on the July 5 meeting agenda.

We have not yet received any guidance from the NYS Education Department or the Department of Health related to the pandemic. Governor Kathy Hochul did recently say that she did not anticipate that schoolchildren would need to wear masks when they return to school in September, but as we all know, this can change based on the progression of COVID in our state. I will remain cautiously optimistic, but we will be ready to take whatever steps are necessary as we move into the school year.

I hope everyone enjoys the rest of their summer break and gets to spend quality time with family and loved ones.

We are looking forward to everyone returning in September and getting back to work!

Sincerely,
Victoria McLaren
SUPERINTENDENT OF
SCHOOLS

Woodstock's Grade 3 Students
Stage Moving-Up Parade



Woodstock Principal Scott Richards presenting Maximus Iovieno with his moving-up certificate.

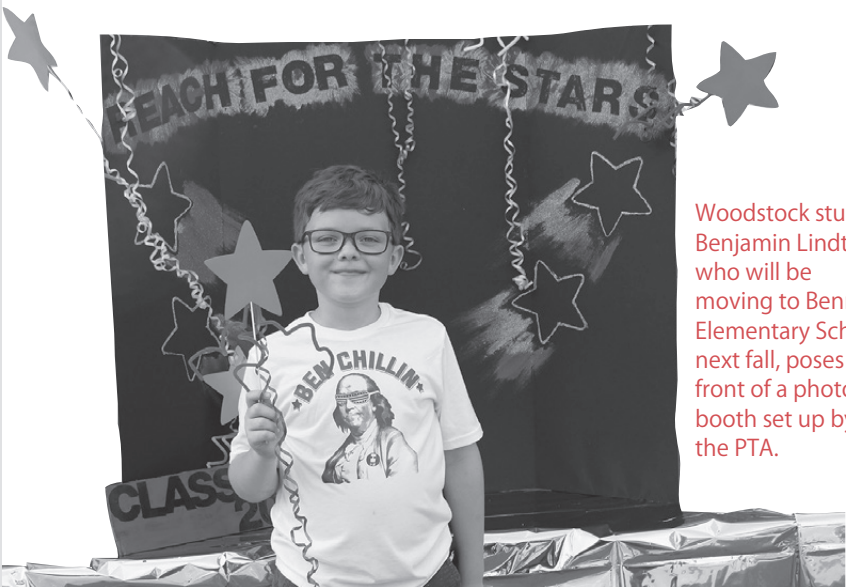
WOODSTOCK'S "GRADUATING" GRADE 3 STUDENTS WERE HONORED DURING A CELEBRATORY MOVING-UP CEREMONY HELD THE EVENING OF JUNE 15. The youngsters paraded by cheering parents, teachers, friends, and family members before receiving their moving-up certificates and a farewell gift packet filled with goodies like bubbles, colored pencils, chalk, balloons, and even a stuffed animal. Principal Scott Richards commended the students, families, and staff for the hard work, perseverance, and resiliency they had shown – despite the



Woodstock Grade 3 students Peyton Bynoe and Eva Harrigfeld enjoying ice cream during their school's graduation ceremony.



Woodstock student Natalie Guerin proudly holds her moving-up certificate and a bouquet of flowers.



Woodstock student Benjamin Lindtveit, who will be moving to Bennett Elementary School next fall, poses in front of a photo booth set up by the PTA.

Bennett Graduates are Ready for Middle School!

RAINY SKIES MOVED BENNETT'S SIXTH GRADE GRADUATION INDOORS, but that didn't dampen spirits inside Harry Simon Auditorium, where friends, family members, teachers, staff, and administrators gathered to celebrate the students' upcoming move to Middle School. Highlights of the evening included performances by the Bennett Youth Chorale of "When I Close My Eyes" (featuring soloist Fiona Turck) and "September" (featuring soloists Rowan Driscoll, Jameson Driscoll, Hanna Metawee, and Maya Wolf).

Before the graduates received their moving-up certificates, Principal Gabriel Buono shared a few words of wisdom. "No matter what choice you are faced with," he said, "I am here to tell you to reflect on your collective experiences, keep an open mind, learn from your mistakes, be willing to admit that you made a mistake, and create short-term, achievable goals for yourself so that you can have more positive experiences like you have had in the past three years."

Calling the graduating students "one of the most productive Bennett classes to graduate in the past 15 years," he pointed to some of their impressive accomplishments, including initiating Fall and Winter Festivals, partnering with Senator Michelle Hinchey to write Valentine wishes to senior citizens, and revitalizing the school garden. "Your input makes a difference and has value," he declared. "You may not realize this, but you have contributed to how Bennett is shaped today, and I strongly believe you have set a new path for future student leaders. I am grateful to you!"



Bennett Principal Gabriel Buono presenting a certificate to Gavin Baker during the Sixth Grade Graduation ceremony.



The Bennett Youth Chorale singing "September" at the conclusion of their school's graduation ceremony.



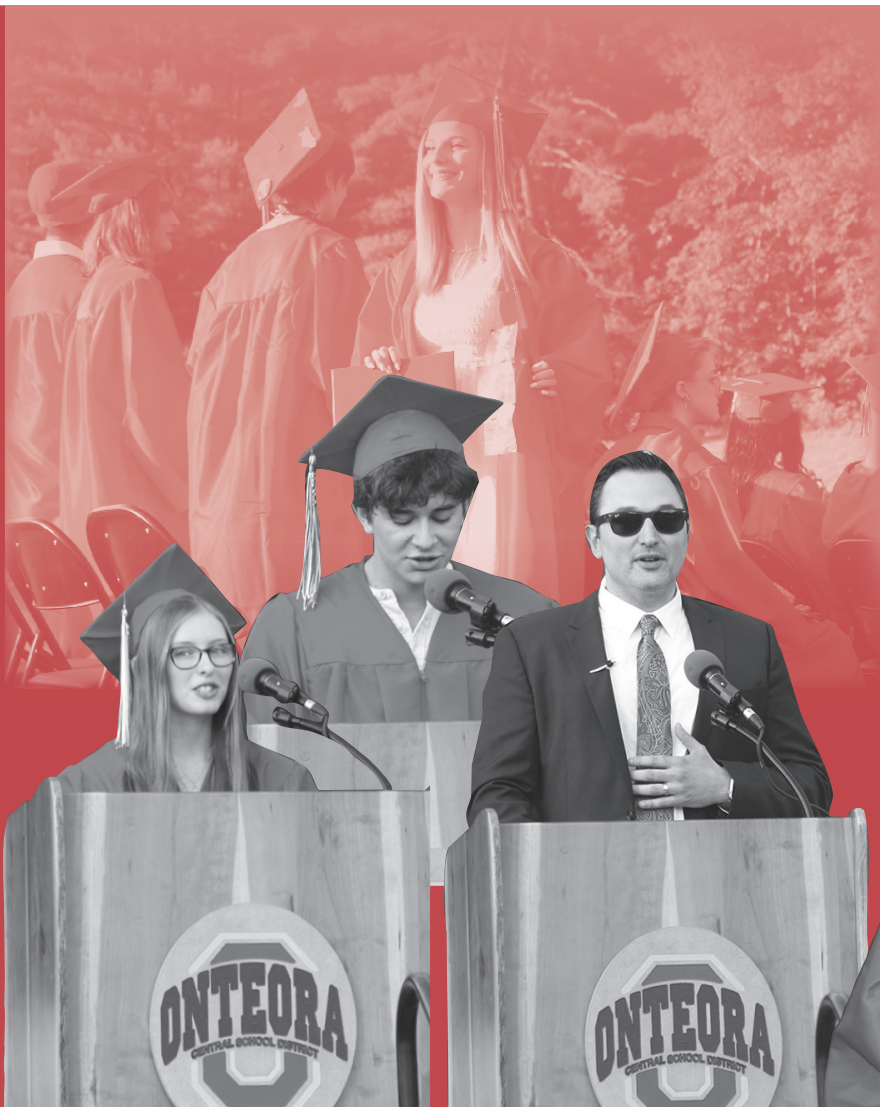
Members of Bennett's Class of 2022 took to the stage of Harry Simon Auditorium during their June moving-up event.

Onteora's Graduates March into the Future

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

Addressing her fellow graduates, Joey offered the following advice: "No matter what it is you choose to do, I hope you all take pride in yourselves and find true contentment in your lives."

Looking back at the graduating class's time at OHS, Jakson said, "What we received in our high school experience was far from traditional." Their educations, he suggested, had been "ruptured by COVID and made difficult by our ever-shrinking, TikTok-era attention spans." Nevertheless, he added, "Our rural, mountain-nestled school has been the setting of some of my fondest memories – from epic games of floor hockey in the gym to lively debates in social studies class." After graduating, he said, many of the students were unlikely to stay as close as they had been during their years at Onteora. "But we'll have shared something that, perhaps unseen now, will forever bind us," he suggested.



Middle School Students Head to High School

“GRADUATING” GRADE 8 STUDENTS MARCHED INTO HARRY SIMON AUDITORIUM the evening of June 16 to the sounds of “Pomp and Circumstance,” played by Nicholas Denton, Onteora High School Class of 2023.

Before receiving their certificates, the students heard some parting advice from their principal, Jennifer O’Connor. “Remember to be kind, do your best, and be responsible for yourselves,” she said. “You have many people who have helped you succeed in Middle School. Be sure to thank them.”

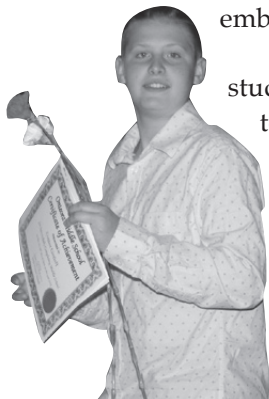
Highlights of the ceremony included musical performances by Grade 8 choral students, the Middle School Percussion Ensemble, and Grade 8 student Oskar Baron.

Class of 2022 Valedictorian Joey Driscoll also shared some words of wisdom, urging them to follow their passions, while understanding that their passions may change. “We need to embrace change and spontaneity,” she said.

Continuing an Onteora tradition, each student was given two flowers – a red one to keep, and a white one to give away to someone who had helped him or her succeed in Middle School. Afterwards, the soon-to-be high schoolers celebrated by sharing refreshments with their families, friends, teachers, and mentors.

Congratulations to all, and good luck in High School!

Middle School students who are heading to High School include Ruby Gahagan (above) and Connor Gierloff (below).



MIDDLE SCHOOL STUDENTS WIN PRESIDENT’S CHALLENGE SCHOLARSHIPS



Kudos to Conner Avery, Kyle Berryann, Elva Marin, and Marvin Umana Alarcon, who have won SUNY Ulster President’s Challenge Scholarships. The Onteora Central School District is partnering with SUNY Ulster and the SUNY Ulster Foundation to offer these scholarships to first-generation, college-bound students. Upon successful graduation from High School, these students will be afforded the opportunity to attend SUNY Ulster, tuition free. The students will also receive guidance counseling and mentoring throughout their High School careers. Congrats!

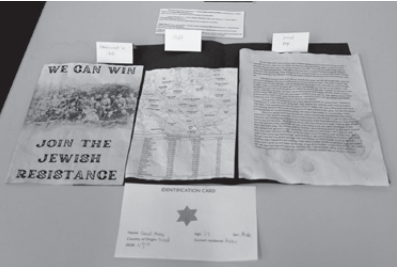
Pictured with the students (above) are Middle School Principal Jennifer O’Connor (far left) and Nancy Clarke, Program Coordinator, President’s Challenge Scholarship, SUNY Ulster (far right).



Middle School English Students Create Holocaust “Museum”

THIS SPRING, MIDDLE SCHOOL ENGLISH TEACHER Denise Maltese helped her students to gain a deeper understanding of those who lived during the Holocaust.

After reading and performing the screenplay of *The Diary of Anne Frank* by Albert Hackett and Frances Goodrich, the students explored primary sources from World War II, trying to get into the minds of those who experienced the horrors of the Holocaust. After absorbing these heavy materials, students created their own “artifacts” — including journal entries, letters, and photo captions — which they laid out in their classroom in the form of a museum.



Middle School students studied the Holocaust and showcased some of what they had learned in a “museum” that they created in their classroom.

“By writing in first person after studying the history of these atrocities, it was our hope that students would develop empathy for those who lived during this time,” explained Ms. Maltese. “Some students chose to take on the voice of a child, others chose the voice of a mother or a friend, and some wrote from the point of view of American soldiers who witnessed this time.”

The interdisciplinary project, which incorporated literature as well as history, was a powerful learning experience.

ONTEORA EARNS PLACE ON LIST OF BEST U.S. HIGH SCHOOLS

Onteora High School has earned a spot on the U.S. News & World Report’s listing of the best U.S. High Schools in 2022. Onteora is ranked 220th in New York State, the second highest among high schools in Ulster County.



Among the factors taken into account in Onteora’s ranking was the school’s Advanced Placement (AP) Exam participation rate, which is 44 percent, as well as its graduation rate (94 percent). The U.S. News & World Report’s “scorecard” for Onteora also noted that mathematics proficiency among students stands at 90 percent, and reading proficiency at 91 percent.

Superintendent of Schools Victoria McLaren is pleased, but not surprised, by the school’s ranking. “This honor is not only a testament to the dedication and passion of our faculty, staff, and administration, but even more, it is a reflection of the skills and talents exhibited by the students of Onteora,” she said. “It is a well-deserved accolade, especially during such a difficult time. Our students consistently make us incredibly proud, and this is just one more example of their excellence!”

High School Principal Lance Edelman is thrilled that the school has once again placed high on the list. “We’re so very proud of our students, who continue to impress us with their hard work, dedication, and perseverance,” he said. “We are also extremely proud of—and immensely grateful for—our faculty and staff, who are committed to raising the bar for all of our learners, while supporting each individual student’s goals.”

For more information, please visit this link: <https://www.usnews.com/education/best-high-schools/search?name=Onteora>

MHAL SENIOR SCHOLAR-ATHLETES HONORED

Kyra Smith and Avery Burns have been named this year’s Mid-Hudson Athletic League (MHAL) Senior Scholar-Athlete Award recipients from Onteora High School (OHS). The awards, which are given to two students from each school in the League, are based on academic merit and athletic performance. Congratulations!



Kyra Smith



Avery Burns

NINETEEN HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS INDUCTED INTO NATIONAL HONOR SOCIETY

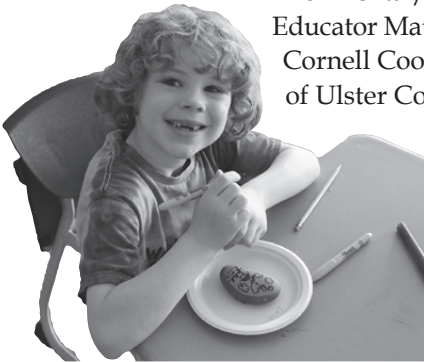
Congratulations to the following High School students, who were inducted into Onteora’s chapter of the National Honor Society (NHS) in a moving candlelit ceremony on June 8: Abilene Adelman, Ariaanni Boyd, Noelle Crandell, Campbell Ebbecke, Caleb Frank, Ari Green, Isabella Hamilton, Jonimaya Huber, Iris Koester, Ava Lamb, Nadou Louis, James Lynch, Madeline Mills, Sophia Odatto, Hailey Peck, Virginia Potter, Noah Stern, Jefferson Voelker, and Xiaohui Wen. We’re so proud of these students, who exemplify the four pillars of NHS: Scholarship, Leadership, Service, and Character.

Woodstock Students Go Camping!

WOODSTOCK ELEMENTARY SCHOOL BROUGHT THE “CAMP” TO THEIR CAMPUS on June 3, with an all-day series of events that replicated the experience of a woodland adventure. The day featured campsite storytelling, nature-inspired crafts, bird exploration, and much more.

Academic Intervention Services (AIS) Reading teacher Nicole Polacco contributed her family's own camping gear to create an authentic-seeming campground on the school grounds, where fellow Reading teacher Andrew Vail held storytime.

Environmental/Watershed Youth Educator Matt Savatgy, from Cornell Cooperative Extension of Ulster County, shared an interactive lesson



Woodstock student Lucas Hochman decorating a rock during a day of camp-themed activities.



Arts and crafts activities were a popular part of Woodstock's Camp Day.

about birds that can be found in the Hudson Valley.

Of course, no camping adventure is complete without eating! Thanks to Director of Food Service Christine Downs, the lucky students enjoyed a camp-themed lunch of hot dogs and beans, as well as refreshing slices of watermelon and gooey servings of s'mores. It was a camping trip to remember!

ONTEORA STUDENTS EARN SEAL OF BILITERACY

This June, 12 Onteora seniors graduated with a prestigious and well-deserved mark of distinction: New York State's Seal of Biliteracy (NYSSOB). Congratulations to Christian Amarilla Barrios (Spanish); Amira Chefridi (French); Bernice DeLaura (French); Joey Driscoll (Spanish); Sophie Frank (Spanish); Sophia Grinberg (French); Ava Maki (Spanish); Scarlett Ragues (French); Jackson Scanlon (Spanish); Sydnee Schilling (Spanish); Shane Stackpole (French); and Isabelle Vandamme (French).

“The seal recognizes advanced achievement in both English as well as another World Language, with students having to earn points in both languages through coursework and AP and Regent exams, as well as a final presentation on a year of research in a World Language other than English,” explained World Languages Liaison Valerie Stewart.

At the end of their presentations, students answered questions from the committee, which consisted of members of the Onteora World Languages Department (Christi Nelsen-Epstein, Annie Gallin, Rebecca Joslin, and Valerie Stewart), School Counselors Sam Smith and Sarah Turck, Teaching Assistant Chantal Kwarteng, English teacher Bridget Allison, and English as a New Language teachers Emma Katz and Robin Osswald.

Speaking on behalf of the committee, Mrs. Stewart said, “These 12 students have worked tirelessly and enthusiastically all year on their presentations, and we were delighted to be a part of this achievement with them. We learned so much from these students on their various topics.”

Christian Amarilla Barrios chose to conduct his research on Pablo Escobar, the notorious leader of the Medellín drug cartel. “I didn’t want to do something mainstream,” he explained. Christian, whose parents were born in Paraguay, speaks Spanish at home. Participating in the Seal of Biliteracy program was not only fun, he said, “It was also a way to be recognized as officially biliterate.” He plans to continue with his Spanish studies at SUNY Ulster, where he will be starting his college career.



Onteora seniors who earned the New York State Seal of Biliteracy this year are flanked by High School Principal Lance Edelman (far left), Word Languages Liaison Valerie Stewart (second from left), English as a New Language teacher Emma Katz (second from right), and Spanish teacher Rebecca Joslin (far right).

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SUMMER SCHOOL OPTIONS HELP PREVENT “SUMMER SLIDE”

SCHOOL WAS OUT FOR THE SUMMER—so why were some students still riding school buses, and spending some of their hard-earned vacation time in classrooms?

The District’s successful Summer Academy, which was open to children in Kindergarten through Grade 6, returned to Bennett Elementary School on July 11. Sixty children in Kindergarten through Grade 7 took the opportunity to brush up on their reading, writing, and math skills. On one summer morning, students in a Kindergarten class were completing a connect-the-dots worksheet to show off their familiarity with numbers, while children in a Grade 2 classroom were playing a mathematical version of the card game “Go Fish.” In other classrooms, students brainstormed story ideas as part of an ELA (English Language Arts) lesson, and contrasted the characteristics of various animals during a Science-themed activity.

“We were excited to have this opportunity to partner with children and families to further student growth,” said Summer Academy Principal Gabriel Buono. “The District went above and beyond, providing door-to-door service to transport the students.”

Stephanie Laffin, Assistant Superintendent for Curriculum and Instruction, noted that online and in-person summer school options were also available for students in Grades 7-12.

“All of our summer school options were aimed at helping students avoid the so-called summer slide,” Ms. Laffin said, referring to the tendency of some students to lose some of the academic gains they had made during the regular school year. “In addition, for some students, the impact of the pandemic has created a greater need for summer academic support—and we were happy to help meet that need.”



During one of the first days of summer school, Jolie Moorhus assessed Elizabeth Mackenzie’s knowledge of colors, numbers, and shapes.



Summer school teacher Michelle Millman working with student Carson Douglas, who will be entering third grade in the fall.



Summer school teacher Allison Mitchell plays a game of “Make 10 Go Fish” with students Lillian Henion, Madison Kelder, and Zachary Gibbs.

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