

# ONTEORA

Fall 2022

## LETTER FROM THE SUPERINTENDENT

### DEAR ONTEORA COMMUNITY,

As we move into the holiday season, I want to take a moment to say thank you to this incredible school community. Our buildings are vibrant and energized with activities. Our PTA and Booster Club leaders, partnering with our faculty, staff, and administration, have been creating many memorable events for our students. There is a palpable sense of joy in every building.

Another topic of discussion that usually coincides with the holiday season is inclement weather and snow days. We have six snow days included in our school calendar for this year. Although the NYS Education Department has continued the viability of remote learning days, we plan to use all of our traditional snow days before considering the use of virtual learning days.

As you are all aware, when we have inclement weather, there are often power outages that are accompanied by internet service interruptions. This lack of equity and access makes virtual learning very difficult in this community. If and when we exhaust our snow days, we will consider whether virtual learning might be appropriate in specific situations, but if our faculty and students would be unable to connect for a virtual learning day, we will not utilize that option.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 3

Football player Griffin Alterio and School Resource Officer Deputy Tom Sharon were among the Homecoming celebrants. Photo by Jennifer Wentland.



## Bennett Students Bring New Life to School Courtyard

LAST YEAR, BENNETT ELEMENTARY SCHOOL'S GRADE 6 STUDENTS CARRIED OUT AN AMBITIOUS "LEAVE-BEHIND" PROJECT: they transformed a neglected, weed-strewn school courtyard into a vibrant, inviting space for reading, learning, relaxing, eating – and remembering.

The refurbished courtyard is not only a peaceful refuge; it is also a living, growing memorial dedicated to the memories of Pearson Reynolds, a student who died last year, and Garry VanLeuvan, a head custodian at Onteora who passed away in 2007.

Bennett teacher Joan Mayone-Allison noted that the courtyard endeavor was a group effort, spearheaded by the Student Council. "In addition to Bennett staff members and students," she said, "there were retirees, substitute teachers, graduates, family members, and local businesspeople who were all excited to be part of the process."

Pearson, who had been a member of the Student Council, was especially eager for the student government to undertake the courtyard project, recalled Ms. Mayone-Allison, who served as co-advisor for the group along with Deborah Hapeman, a building secretary who works in the Main Office.

"Among the many people who devoted time to the project," said Ms. Mayone-Allison, "Ms. Hapeman and I would also like to acknowledge the following: Principal Gabriel Buono and his recently retired co-principal, Linda Sella; Director of Facilities Kyle Harjes and his staff; PTA member Heather LaMonda; Teaching Assistant Molly Slater; the Bennett families who generously donated to our 'non-event' fundraiser; and of course, the 2022 Bennett graduates (OCSD Class of 2028)."

CONTINUED ON PAGE 2



These former Bennett students were among the many volunteers who transformed their school's courtyard.



The revamped courtyard includes a snowboard sign featuring a facsimile of Pearson's handwriting (left); tables and seating (below left); and a rock garden (below right).



## OHS HOMECOMING & PEP RALLY

See more on pages 4 & 5



## Phoenicia Students Celebrate the Season!

TAPPING INTO THE EXCITEMENT MANY CHILDREN FEEL WHEN THE AIR IS TURNING CRISP,

the leaves are turning colors, and pumpkins and apples are just waiting to be picked, Phoenicia Elementary School's Parent Teacher Association (PTA) treated students to a celebratory Fall Fest on October 20.



Phoenicia PTA President Christina Signore assisting students during a pumpkin-decorating activity.

First, the students visited the school's labyrinth garden, which was chock-full of pumpkins (donated by Hannaford in West Hurley). After choosing their own personal pumpkins, the youngsters posed for photos and competed in sack races. Then the students and their pumpkins headed to the Art room, which had been decked out with a shiny skeleton, a magic cauldron, and spooky signs, like one declaring "Enter If You Dare."

The students decorated their pumpkins with paint and glitter, played Halloween-themed games, and happily checked out their goodie bags, which included pumpkin sunglasses, vampire teeth, and all the fixings to make caramel apples (courtesy of the Kingston Plaza Hannaford, which donated the fruit and candies).

PTA President Christina Signore explained that Fall Fest, which made its debut last year, was originally organized after an annual field trip to a local farm for Kindergarten and Grade 1 students had been canceled due to COVID restrictions. This year, she noted, the farm field trip is back on the school calendar. "But since the Fall Fest was so loved by the children last year, we decided it was a tradition the PTA wanted to continue offering to all children and would love to continue for years to come," she said.

## WOODSTOCK STUDENTS EXPLORE LOCAL FARM

Woodstock Kindergarten students got a taste of farm life during a field trip to Kelder's Farm in Kerhonkson in early October. The children enjoyed a variety of fall-themed activities, including taking a hay ride, picking apples, and searching for the perfect pumpkin. They happily fed the resident farm animals, watched in awe as Farmer Chris shot a pumpkin out of a cannon, and learned fun farm facts like "Within an hour of birth, calves stand, walk, and nurse," "Llamas are guard animals for animals like sheep," and "It takes about 36 apples to create one gallon of cider." They also admired "Gnome Chomsky," one of the world's largest garden gnomes, who stands guard near the farm's entrance.

It was, the children agreed, a wonderful way to spend a beautiful fall school day!



## Bennett Students Bring New Life to School Courtyard

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

The courtyard, which officially opened on August 31, includes tables and benches for people who wish to eat their lunch or do schoolwork outdoors. "I love seeing my colleagues outdoors at lunch time," Ms. Mayone-Allison said, "and I can't wait to bring my students outdoors for a lesson, or to read." The benches, fashioned from snowboards donated by Belleayre Mountain Ski Shop and Potter Brothers Ski and Snowboard Shop—serve as an homage to Pearson, who was a nationally ranked snowboarder.

A rock garden, featuring stones painted by Bennett students under the guidance of local artist Donna Parise (of happy stART creations), adds splashes of color to the courtyard, which also includes a wealth of plants, trees, and bushes. "Several work parties took place over the summer," explained Ms. Mayone-Allison. "Those who were able to participate weeded, planted, hauled dirt, laid down gravel—whatever needed to be done; of course, my husband often, willingly, filled in the gaps."

Kurt Boyer of the Phoenicia-based Boyer Sign Company donated his glass-etching skills to signage at the courtyard's west-end entrance, where the doors are emblazoned with the words "Pearson's Place" and "Garry's Garden." Another sign, created by Timely Signs of Kingston, was fashioned from a snowboard and a facsimile of Pearson's own handwriting.

Principal Buono is thrilled with the results. "Emotions with this initiative are surreal on many levels, but I believe the courtyard is a moving tribute to two special people from our school community who were tragically lost too soon," he said. "It is also a tribute to the hard work of our Student Council, which saw this ambitious project through, from the drawing board to its grand opening, with the support of our generous school community. I look forward to seeing our students and teachers enjoying this beautiful new space during the course of the school year."

# Government in Action at the Middle School

## ONTEORA'S MIDDLE SCHOOL STUDENT GOVERNMENT

has been hard at work this year. Student Council members, who meet once a week during lunch on Fridays, have been organizing events and activities to promote school spirit and enhance students' in-school experiences.

In early October, the Student Government sponsored an Ice Cream Social. "There are about a dozen new students in the Middle School this year," said English teacher Denise Maltese, who advises the club along with Health teacher Michael Rushford. "We invited them for ice cream and a chance to meet the Student Council officers."

Recalling the event, Grade 8 Class President Azi Tehrani said, "It was an amazing idea for the new students, and I believe that it has helped them integrate into the school."

Like his fellow officers, Azi has found his Student Council work to be rewarding. "I love the due process of government," he said. "I think it's an honor to be part of Student Government, and I love making the school a better place."

Similarly, Grade 7 Class President Austin

Otis sees his service as a chance to make a difference. "I want to help my school," he explained.

Saydeigh Santiago, who serves as the Grade 8 Class Secretary, said that she has enjoyed making new friends through the Student Council, and she is happy to contribute her own particular skill set. "I love taking notes; I'm a hands-on person," she said.

At the end of October, members of the Student Government organized a Spirit Week, complete with Wacky Wednesday, PJ Day, and School Colors Day. Clubs and Modified Sports teams were recognized to cheers and applause, and relay races (involving things like balloons and scooters) demonstrated the students' competitive spirit and willingness to embrace their sillier sides.

Looking forward, the Student Government is planning to place a suggestion box in the school cafeteria, where students can share their concerns, as well as any ideas they may have about how to make their school a better place. "We will host a Spring Dance Party, which usually is coupled with a Food Drive and a monetary donation to the Reservoir Food Pantry," said Ms. Maltese.



Grade 8 Student Council officers Saydeigh Santiago (Class Secretary), Dylan Pace (Class Vice-President), Azi Tehrani (Class President), and Giuliana Frisenda (Class Treasurer).

## LETTER FROM THE SUPERINTENDENT

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

As we enter the season of inclement weather, please ensure that you are set up to receive phone calls or texts through our system if that is how you would like to be notified of a school closing, delay, or early dismissal. You can be contacted with a call and/or a text. If you would like to sign up to receive calls or texts, or to confirm how you are currently set up, please contact Sharon Wood at [swood@onteorak12.ny.us](mailto:swood@onteorak12.ny.us).

The Board of Education has set two goals for this school year. I am excited to partner with the Board to make progress on these goals. The Board will be providing updates on its work in each newsletter. Please take a moment to review the Board of Education's goals and read about the work they have done so far. The Board meetings are in person this year and are still being live-streamed as well as recorded.

Lastly, we often receive calls from community members wondering how they can support our students. We have created a list of clubs and organizations to which community members can donate. The list can be found on our website on the Community Resources tab, under Information on Community Donations.

I hope everyone has a warm and wonderful holiday season!

Sincerely,

**Victoria McLaren**  
SUPERINTENDENT OF  
SCHOOLS

## New District Logo

We are excited to share with you the new official Onteora Central School District logo. We have used a number of logos over the years, including one featuring an eagle—the District's official mascot—which was designed by a student several years ago.

"While we still plan to use our mascot, the Eagle, in the context of athletics, we saw the need for a logo that speaks to some of our other strengths as a school community," said Onteora Superintendent of Schools Victoria McLaren. The mountains in the new, refreshed logo are a tribute to our area's incredible natural beauty, she noted, while the leaf suggests the Tree of Knowledge. Circling the mountains and the leaf is a giant "O," which recalls some of the District's previous logos.

"We'd like to extend a huge thank-you to Chris Anderson of Quantum Design Lab, who worked patiently with the District to create our beautiful new logo, which we hope will help strengthen our District's brand identity," she said.





# Onteora Announces Appointment of New Middle School Principal

ONTEORA MIDDLE SCHOOL HAS A NEW PRINCIPAL THIS YEAR: JAMES DIDONNA.

Mr. DiDonna, whose appointment was approved by the Board of Education at its August 16 meeting, replaced Jennifer O'Connor, who retired after a 14-year career at Onteora.

"We are thrilled to welcome Mr. DiDonna to our team," said Superintendent Victoria McLaren. "I expect that his extensive experience at this level and wide-ranging skill set in areas such as curriculum development, school safety, and professional development will make him a real asset to our school district."

Mr. DiDonna came to Onteora from the Germantown Central School District, where he served as principal of the Junior/Senior High School for five years. Previously, he was a Middle School principal for the Pine Plains Central School District, an assistant principal at Ellenville High School, and an Elementary and Middle



School teacher for the Kingston City School District.

A graduate of Kingston High School, Mr. DiDonna received a Bachelor of Arts in Philosophy and a Master of Science in Education from Fordham University. He also earned a Certificate of Advanced Study in Educational Leadership from the College of Saint Rose.

Mr. DiDonna is excited to be joining Onteora's team of educators. "Onteora is a great community," he said. "It has a great reputation, and I hope to be a positive influence on students and staff moving forward. My leadership philosophy is to be supportive, and to work together to build upon the wonderful practices already in place."

The veteran educator lives in Hurley with his wife, son, and daughter. When he is not at work, he enjoys hiking, camping, and skiing in the Catskills as well as traveling with his family. He is also an avid golfer and mountain biker.

## HOMEcoming 2022:

### A Celebration of Sports, Community, and School Spirit

Hard-fought athletic contests, parading athletes, cheering crowds, colorful banners and balloons, a picture-perfect September sky—Onteora's Homecoming celebration had all this, and much more.

The fun started early during the days leading up to Homecoming Weekend. During Spirit Week (September 19-23), students enjoyed a number of excuses to dress up, including Pajama Day, Dress Like Your Favorite Teacher Day, Hawaiian Day, Flannel Day, and Class Color or Jersey Day (an invitation to wear Eagles athletic jerseys or class colors).

On Friday, Onteora fans had the chance to cheer on the Varsity Girls Soccer, Boys Golf, and Girls Tennis teams. Other highlights of the day included an in-school pep rally and a community tailgating event.

Onteora athletes continued to shine on Saturday, as members of the Varsity Cross Country, Field Hockey, Boys Soccer, and Football teams gave it their all during their Homecoming competitions.

There was also plenty of pomp and ceremony on Saturday, as this year's Homecoming Court—Ruby Gallin, Jacob Cecelia-Storey, Mercedes Cecelia-Storey, Giovanni Flores, Paige Matteson, Trapper VanDreason, Lucienne Leonard, Joseph Christofora, Charlotte Barry, Steven Blakely, Alexis Olen, Hudson Turba, Thea Millenson-Wilens, and Oliver Roy—was introduced to the crowd before Saturday's football game.

Also in the spotlight on Saturday were the fall athletic teams, which paraded along the High School/Middle School track as friends, families, staff members, and community members cheered in the grandstands. Senior athletes and their parents—and sometimes their siblings, friends, and coaches—proudly posed for photos under a Homecoming arch made of red and white balloons.

The crowning highlight of the day's festivities, however, took place during halftime of the football game, when Giovanni Flores and Paige Matteson were pronounced "Homecoming Royalty." It was another Homecoming to remember!





## AT HIGH SCHOOL, OCTOBER WAS “SOCKTOBER”

In October, Onteora’s chapter of the National Honor Society (NHS) worked to spread a little warmth in our community. Throughout the month, the group collected donations of new socks and other cold-weather items like hats, gloves, and scarves. Students, faculty, and staff were invited to drop off items in collection bins located in the main office and the guidance office. The items were then donated to Family of Woodstock, which distributed them to local families in need.

“As a club, one of our goals is always to give back to our community,” said NHS President Zoe Gabriel (pictured), who noted that winters in our area are typically cold and harsh. “One of the simplest, yet very important, things we can do is to help families go through the winter with a little warmth and comfort.”

The year’s NHS “Socktober” drive was spearheaded by Committee Chair Virginia Potter.



## PEP RALLY KICKS OFF HOMECOMING WEEKEND!

Homecoming Weekend kicked off with a spirited pep rally, which featured the recognition of fall athletes and coaches, as well as spirited competitions involving ropes, balloons, balls, and plenty of laughing, yelling, and cheering.

Photo at right by Jennifer Wentland.





## Parent Guide for Addressing School-Related Concerns

AT ONTEORA, 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. We realize, however, that sometimes school-related issues may arise that negatively impact your student's learning and overall well-being. Whether these issues are happening in the classroom, in the cafeteria, on the bus, or anywhere on school grounds, we'd like to help.

To help expedite the resolution of your school-related concerns, please follow these guidelines:

1. If an issue arises within your student's classroom, the first step is to contact the person closest to the problem or concern (usually your child's classroom teacher). Please see the directories on each school's web page.
2. If the teacher is unable to resolve your concern, or if you do not feel comfortable speaking with the teacher, please contact your child's building administrator (Principal, Assistant Principal). For concerns related to bullying, another option is to contact the school's DASA (Dignity for All Students Act) Coordinator. (At the Elementary Schools, the DASA coordinator is the building principal; at the Middle School/High School, the DASA coordinator is High School Assistant Principal Dieter Schimmelpfennig).
3. If the building administrator is unable to resolve your concern, please call the Superintendent's secretary at 845-657-8851 or email [swood@onteorak12.ny.us](mailto:swood@onteorak12.ny.us). She will direct your call to the appropriate department, such as special education, food services, curriculum, or transportation.
4. If the department is unable to resolve your concern, please contact the Superintendent's secretary and ask to speak with the Superintendent.
5. If you feel the Superintendent is unable to appropriately address your concern, please reach out to the Board of Education. Board of Education trustees are elected officials who are not compensated for their time, but are committed to serving our community and our schools. Please contact the District Clerk at [districtclerk@onteorak12.ny.us](mailto:districtclerk@onteorak12.ny.us).

Although we strive to resolve all concerns as quickly as possible, it may take time to provide you with answers. We appreciate your patience.

## INFORMATION ON COMMUNITY DONATIONS

Onteora welcomes the support of our school community. Parents and community members share their time, labor, and/or expertise in many ways, including by joining parent teacher organizations, volunteering in classrooms, and pitching in on school projects. Some people have asked how they can support our students in other ways, including financially. Following is information on community donations:



The Onteora Booster Club welcomes community donations.

**SCHOLARSHIPS** To create and/or fund a scholarship, please contact Lisa Casey, Secretary to the High School Principal, by emailing [lcasey@onteorak12.ny.us](mailto:lcasey@onteorak12.ny.us) or by calling 845-657-2373 ext. 2110.

**ECA CLUBS** Donations to an extra classroom activity (ECA) club are not tax deductible. ECA clubs include activities throughout the Middle School (MS) and High School (HS). For a list of ECA clubs, please reach out to the HS and MS principals' offices. At the HS, contact Lisa Casey at [lcasey@onteorak12.ny.us](mailto:lcasey@onteorak12.ny.us); at the MS, contact Torre Sommer at [tsommer@onteorak12.ny.us](mailto:tsommer@onteorak12.ny.us). Checks can be sent to the individual ECA club selected through Central Administration at Onteora Central School District, PO Box 300, Boiceville NY 12412.

### PTAs

**BENNETT ELEMENTARY** Checks made payable to the Bennett PTA can be sent via student folders or mailed to the Onteora Central School District, Att: Bennett PTA, PO Box 300, Boiceville NY 12412. You can also become a member or donate online by visiting <https://bennett.memberhub.com/store>. The Bennett PTA also has a QR code on its membership form.

**PHOENICIA ELEMENTARY** Checks made payable to the Phoenicia PTA can be sent via student folders or mailed to the Onteora Central School District, Att: Phoenicia PTA, PO Box 300, Boiceville NY 12412. You can also become a member by visiting <https://phoeniciapta.memberhub.com/store> or by emailing the PTA officers at [phoeniciapta@gmail.com](mailto:phoeniciapta@gmail.com).

**WOODSTOCK ELEMENTARY** Checks made payable to the Woodstock PTA can be sent via student folders or mailed to the Onteora Central School District, Att: Woodstock PTA, PO Box 300, Boiceville NY 12412. You can also become a member by visiting <https://woodstock.memberhub.com/store> or emailing the PTA officers at [ptawoodstock@gmail.com](mailto:ptawoodstock@gmail.com).

**ONTEORA BOOSTER CLUB** Information on donating to the club can be found at [www.onteoraboosterclub.com](http://www.onteoraboosterclub.com). Checks can be made payable to the Onteora Booster Club and sent to PO Box 137, Boiceville NY 12412. You can also donate using the QR code found on the membership tab of the club's website, or via Venmo @onteoraboosterclub. The Booster Club is a non-profit organization.

**MISCELLANEOUS DONATIONS** Anyone can make a tax-deductible donation directly to the school. Please mail checks to the Onteora Central Administration, Att: Assistant Superintendent for Business, PO Box 300, Boiceville NY 12412 and include who or what you would like the donation to benefit.



One of the Board of Education's goals involves the development of the District's long-range, district-wide plan that addresses challenges and opportunities.

## Board Members

The Onteora Central Board of Education consists of seven elected or appointed Trustees: Emily Sherry (President), Cindy Bishop (Vice President), Valerie Storey (Trustee), David Wallis (Trustee), Meghann Reimondo (Trustee), Sarah Hemingway Lynch (Trustee), and Kristy Taylor (Trustee).

## What are the Responsibilities of the Board?

Onteora's Board of Education is responsible for several key areas: establishing policy; defining District priorities and goals; monitoring and evaluating progress; approving contracts, bonds, and the annual budget; and selecting and evaluating the Superintendent of Schools. For more info, please visit the School Board tab on the homepage of the District's website.

The first meeting of this Board was July 5, 2022; highlights of the Board's work to date include:

- The appointment of a new Director of Health, Physical Education, and Athletics.
- Approval of a new partnership with Astor Services for Children & Families for more mental health services for students and families on the Boiceville campus.
- Raised the substitute, teaching assistant, and monitor payment rates.
- Approval of a new, dynamic Math curriculum in Grades K-6.
- Onteora proposed a New York State School Boards Association resolution to include Universal Pre-Kindergarten for all 3- and 4-year-olds Statewide, adding this item to the State-wide advocacy agenda in Albany.
- Analyzed the communication survey results and implemented new plans, including an overhaul of the website content, new brand and logo, and a review of the BOCES public information services needed to improve how information is shared with the Onteora community.
- Creation of two new Board goals.

## 2022-2023 Board Goals

1. Support the development of the District's long-term, district-wide plan that addresses current challenges and opportunities that have already been identified, including declining enrollment, staff shortages, facilities needs, budget, student achievement, community impact, and the expansion of the Middle School to add sixth graders. The Board acknowledges that additional challenges and opportunities will likely be discovered throughout the exploration process. The Board aims to accomplish this through input from the Superintendent, a Board ad hoc committee, the Shared Decision-Making committee, PTA's as well as clear and consistent community outreach. In the next year, the Board plans to accomplish: Forming a Board ad hoc committee, holding at least one public meeting to discuss the District's long-term plan, reviewing the Building Utilization and Grade Configuration Study by Dr. Kevin S. Baughman, and requesting at least one progress report from the Superintendent.
2. Support ongoing District initiatives that foster a positive culture and climate, including improving communications with our community, teaching students and staff about diversity, prioritizing the mental health of students and staff, advancing restorative justice training and practices, and continuing advocacy for more affordable housing, Universal Pre-K for 3- and 4-year-olds, food security, and access to broadband service and cellular phone coverage.

## Board of Education Meetings

The public is invited to attend every meeting or view on YouTube. Video and audio recordings of the meetings, the current schedule and links, as well as additional Board-related info, can also be found on the website.

[https://www.onteora.k12.ny.us/  
board-of-education](https://www.onteora.k12.ny.us/board-of-education)

**NON DISCRIMINATION STATEMENT** NON DISCRIMINATION STATEMENT The Onteora Central School District does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, weight, national origin, creed, religion, religious practice, ethnic group, political affiliation, gender (including gender identity, expression, or nonconformity to stereotypical notions of masculinity and femininity), marital status, sex, age, disability, sexual orientation, or other legally protected status in access to programs and/or employment provided by the District. Inquiries to the District concerning discrimination or harassment based on sex or sexual orientation may be referred to the Title IX/Title VI Compliance Officer, Stephanie Laffin, Assistant Superintendent for Curriculum & Instruction, at: Onteora Central School District, slaffin@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.



### BOARD OF EDUCATION


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### SUPERINTENDENT OF SCHOOLS

Victoria McLaren

### NEWSLETTER EDITING & DESIGN

Ulster BOCES Community Relations

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## To Postal Customer

## Onteora Welcomes New Director of Health, Physical Education, and Athletics

THE ONTEORA CENTRAL SCHOOL DISTRICT is pleased to welcome Beth Fletcher as its new Director of Health, Physical Education, and Athletics.



Ms. Fletcher comes to Onteora from the Newburgh Enlarged Central School District, where she had been a Physical Education teacher for 16 years. During her years at Newburgh, she also coached a variety of athletic teams, including Girls Softball, Volleyball, Basketball, and Soccer.

Most recently, she was a District-level Administrative Intern in Newburgh's Athletic Office, as well as a Building-Level Administrative Intern. As part of her duties, she supervised athletic events at all levels, including Modified, Junior Varsity, Varsity, and Unified. The Unified teams included students both with and without intellectual disabilities on the same team, she explained.

"I am familiar with working with a diverse population of students, and I believe that every child can learn, and every child has strengths they can use to build foundational skills," Ms. Fletcher observed. "I truly believe that Physical Education and athletics can be an avenue to build these qualities in our scholars."

"Athletics and health and wellness really are my passion," she said, adding that she looks forward to continuing to develop that passion at Onteora. "I am excited to continue my work as an educator and a leader at Onteora as the new Director of Health, PE, and Athletics."

Welcome!

## ELECTRIFYING NEWS!

Onteora will be awarded a \$8.295 million grant for the purchase of 21 electric school buses, courtesy of the federal Environmental Protection Agency's (EPA's) Clean Bus Program. The initiative is part of the Bipartisan Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act, according to a press release from Senator Chuck Schumer (<https://bit.ly/ElectricSchoolBusPressRelease>).

Superintendent Victoria McLaren said that the grant will help Onteora begin its response to the State's mandate that all school buses be converted to electric vehicles by 2035. "We need to have lots of discussions as we move forward with the conversion process," she explained. "This will need to be integrated into the District's long-term plan, as it will require infrastructure to support it." Onteora will not be replacing their existing buses, she noted; rather, the bus contractor would use the new buses on the District's behalf.

"We appreciate that the EPA is helping to kickstart a process that will help the District reduce carbon emissions and combat climate change," added Superintendent McLaren. "The exhaust from diesel buses can contribute to poor air quality, and we want to do our part to help keep the air that our students and community members breathe clean and healthy."

### USEFUL DISTRICT INFORMATION

DISTRICT OFFICE  
845-657-6383

[www.onteorak12.ny.us](http://www.onteorak12.ny.us)

#### Superintendent

Victoria McLaren ..... 845-657-8851

#### Assistant Superintendent for Curriculum and Instruction

Stephanie Laffin ..... 845-657-6383 x1023

#### District Clerk

Amanda Gates ..... 845-657-6383 x1030

#### Assistant Superintendent for Business

Monica LaClair ..... 845-657-6383 x1035

#### Assistant Superintendent for Pupil Personnel Services

Amanda Allison ..... 845-657-3320

#### Universal Pre-Kindergarten

Amanda Allison ..... 845-657-3320

#### Director of Special Education

Carol Grima ..... 845-657-3320 x1024

#### Director of Health, Physical Education, and Athletics

Beth Fletcher ..... 845-657-2373 x2113

#### Director of Transportation

Nicole Sommer ..... 845-657-2537

#### Director of Food Service

Christine Downs ..... 845-657-6383 x2181

#### Director of Facilities

Kyle Harjes ..... 845-657-6384

#### HIGH SCHOOL • 845-657-2373

Principal, Lance Edelman  
Asst. Principal, Dieter Schimmelpfennig

#### MIDDLE SCHOOL • 845-657-2373

Principal, James DiDonna

#### BENNETT ELEMENTARY • 845-657-2354

Principal, Gabriel Buono

#### PHOENICIA ELEMENTARY • 845-688-5580

Principal, Elizabeth Fallo

#### WOODSTOCK ELEMENTARY • 845-679-2316

Principal, Scott Richards