



Members of the Class of 2023 make their graduation official by following the tradition of throwing their caps at the conclusion of their commencement ceremony.

Onteora Spirit Soars as Eagles Celebrate their Graduation and a Bright Future

Ninety-two Onteora Eagles celebrated their successful conclusion of high school—and the start of their post-graduation journeys—during a joyful commencement ceremony held in the gymnasium on June 23rd.

Addressing his fellow graduates, Valedictorian Takemi Sono-Knowles stressed the value of home. “Home isn’t just a house that you live in, it’s a special place where you feel connected to your environment and the community around you,” he said. “Be thankful to everyone who got you to this moment. Admire this beautiful area we were so lucky to grow up in. And as you grow older, remember to spend time with the people you love. Remember to do the things you enjoy. Remember to stay true to yourself, and be the person you love.”

Salutatorian Maeve Turck said, “Our class legacy will live on. And I, for one, am certainly excited to see what our legacy will grow into, but I am even more excited for us to go from looking at the past to walking into the bright futures each and every one of us has.”

CONTINUED ON PAGE 4

Mercedes Cecelia-Storey
with Science teacher
Brianna Funck.

Message from the Superintendent

The summer is well underway, and I hope everyone is enjoying time with family and friends.

We have several new Board members: Clark Goodrich, Emily Mitchell-Marell, and Caroline Jerome. Both Clark Goodrich and Emily Mitchell-Marell began their terms in May, and Caroline Jerome joined the Board in July.

At the reorganization meeting in July, Cindy Bishop was elected to serve as president of the Board, and Valerie Storey was elected to serve as vice president. I’m excited to work with this leadership team in the coming year. They bring a wealth of knowledge and experience to the positions.

In every building this summer, faculty members are busy revising curriculum to meet the needs of all our students.

Our elementary summer skills academy students were with us for most of the month of July and the beginning of August, and soon we will be welcoming our Junior Varsity and Varsity athletes back. They return to campus in mid-August for the beginning of the athletic season. Although the break in the summer is necessary for facilities maintenance and cleaning, in addition to professional rejuvenation and planning, we much prefer when there are students on campus!

I hope everyone enjoys the second half 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!

Victoria McLaren
**SUPERINTENDENT OF
SCHOOLS**



Phoenicia Kindergarteners Ready for First Grade

Lots of pride and festivity were on display as our youngest Eagles took the stage in the garden at Phoenicia Elementary School on June 2nd to officially complete Kindergarten!

Before an eager audience of their families and teachers, the young learners kicked off the show with a joyful song about the letters of the alphabet and each of their corresponding phonetic sounds. Each child came to the stage dressed as a different letter, and led participants in a singalong about their letter and sound. There were appearances from an apple, a cookie, a rainbow, french fries, an umbrella, and more!

Next up were songs and dances about complete words and numbers, as well as a very appropriate song called “On My Way” by Pevan and Sarah, during which the future first graders proclaimed, “Look at all the friends I’ve made/These memories will never fade/I am proud of me and all that I can be/Watch and you will see/I’m on my way... Watch me be the best that I can be!”

Afterwards, the students enjoyed a PTA-sponsored picnic with their families. What a great way to celebrate this milestone!



Eagles take the stage in the garden at Phoenicia Elementary School on June 2nd to officially complete Kindergarten.

BENNETT STUDENTS HEAD TO MIDDLE SCHOOL!

SPIRITS WERE AT AN ALL-TIME HIGH INSIDE ONTEORA’S HARRY SIMON AUDITORIUM ON JUNE 22ND, when friends, family members, teachers, staff, and administrators gathered to celebrate the moving up of Bennett’s Grade 6 students to Middle School. “That was the most energetic response to a procession I have ever witnessed!” said Principal Gabriel Buono, referring to the lively cheers and applause the students received as they took the stage.

Mr. Buono gave a heartfelt speech to the students, using the popular Dr. Seuss book *Oh, the Places You’ll Go!* as a reference point. “Whatever places you do go, I hope you move through these experiences with joy,” he said. He also commented on the resilience of the group, who had faced the challenges of remote learning during the pandemic as young students in Grade 4. “As you start your secondary education, remember the lessons learned from your elementary teachers and other role models in your lives,” he said. “Be kind, express gratitude, use your imagination, work hard, ask questions, and always be your best self.”



Members of Bennett’s Class of 2023 are applauded at the Harry Simon Auditorium during their June moving-up event.



Kira Jule and Emma Bodnar pose with gifts they received while celebrating their moving-up ceremony, held in June.

Highlights of the evening included performances by the Bennett Band, which had the crowd grooving to a song called “Watermelon Man” by Herbie Hancock, featuring soloists Soe Moe Kan Tun and Spencer Malloy on trombone and Maya Wolf on tenor saxophone. The Bennett Youth Chorale then joined the musicians for a performance of Earth, Wind & Fire’s “Can’t Hide Love.” Prior to the ceremony, audience members also enjoyed a slideshow presentation of the years the students had spent at Bennett, complete with a slide from each student sharing their favorite quote and what they are thankful for, as well as messages from their teachers. Even Gidget, the school’s therapy dog, had something to say!

A reception featuring refreshments—including yummy “2023” cupcakes decorated in Onteora colors—concluded the festivities. Congratulations to Bennett’s Class of 2023!

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

During an evening fit for Hollywood’s most popular celebs, Woodstock Elementary School’s Grade 3 students were honored during a celebratory moving-up ceremony on June 7th. The young honorees made their way up a special red carpet—parading by cheering parents, teachers, friends, and family members—to claim their “grammy,” goody bag, and certificate of completion in celebration of moving on to Bennett Elementary School next year.

As each student made their way to the stage, turning to wave at their “fans,” Principal Scott Richards read a special message that the student composed, explaining their choice of dream career. The stars of Woodstock Elementary School chose a range of future professions and goals, from fashion designer, to race car driver, to being happy!

After the last student had claimed their loot, a huge round of applause erupted. Then it was time for Woodstock Elementary’s “A-List” to receive their “Hollywood Star” from a Wall of Fame their teachers had made, before making their way over to a Hollywood-themed backdrop for a glamorous photoshoot with family and friends. The star-studded event concluded with delicious ice cream, courtesy of the PTA.

We wish the rising stars every success as they move up to Bennett in September!



Woodstock Elementary School Grade 3 students Jayden Treasure (left) and Grayson Hegeman (right) display the “grammys” they were awarded at a moving-up ceremony held in June.



Woodstock Elementary School Grade 3 students celebrate their upcoming move to Bennett Elementary School in the fall. Pictured (from left to right) are Eva Brueckner, Stella Doscher, Fayette Jared, and June Slips.

Summer Academy Students Sharpen Academic Skills to Prevent “Summer Slide”

THE DISTRICT’S SUCCESSFUL SUMMER ACADEMY RETURNED TO BENNETT ELEMENTARY FROM JULY 10TH THROUGH AUGUST 4TH.

Sixty-six students from Pre-Kindergarten through Grade 6 took the opportunity to brush up on their reading, writing, and math skills, thus preventing the so-called “summer slide”—the tendency to lose some of the academic gains that were made during the school year.

Teachers brought many exciting activities to the students. For example, Joan Mayone-Allison and Kimberly Davis took an interdisciplinary approach to the novel they chose for their Grades 5 and 6 class. In addition to discussing the literary elements of *The Great Peach Experiment: When Life Gives You Lemons, Make Peach Pie* by Erin Soderberg Downing—a story about a family that learns to grieve together by “taking it on the road” as food truck vendors—the young learners also applied data skills when analyzing both the travel patterns of the food truck and the recipe calculations for large-scale production.

Summer Academy Principal Gabriel Buono is pleased with the success of this year’s programming. “We were excited to have this opportunity to partner with children and families to further student growth,” he said.

Bennett Students Bring History to Life at Colonial Fair

On June 2nd, visitors to Bennett Elementary School stepped into another time and place—a bustling trade fair set in the Colony of New York! This project-based learning initiative was part of the Grade 4 year-long study on Living and Working in Pre-Revolutionary Colonial New York.

After researching life in Pre-Revolutionary Colonial New York, each student selected a trade that was vital to the Colonial New York community—ranging from blacksmiths to bakers, school teachers to soldiers, and carpenters to potters. At the fair, students brought these roles to life using props and traditional costumes, and welcomed attendees to learn about their work in the community with a prepared speech...at least if you were a self-proclaimed Patriot. Loyalists would be quickly shown the door! Parents, teachers, and other students toured the fair, catching a glimpse of what life was like in the past.

At the fair’s conclusion, students showed off Colonial dances they had learned in their physical education classes, while student and teacher musicians performed the much-loved American favorite, “Yankee Doodle.”



Grade 4 students at Bennett participated in fun and festive dances at a Colonial Fair, held this past June.

Middle School Students Celebrate in Moving-Up Ceremony

“Grade 8 students marched into the auditorium the evening of June 15th to the sounds of “Pomp and Circumstance,” played by Oskar Baron from Onteora High School’s Class of 2026.

Before receiving their Certificates of Achievement, the students heard heartfelt congratulations and parting advice from their principal, James DiDonna. “It is an honor and a privilege to stand before this amazing class of eighth graders,” he said. “As you enter the next phase of your educational journey, carry the essence of the school community with you,” he advised. “Cherish your friendships, your relationships with teachers, and remember, it is not just about academics, but about finding balance, too.”



Middle School Grade 8 students (from left to right) Jade Belfiore, Gabrielle Alterio, and Jasmine Barker celebrate after the ceremony.



Middle School Grade 8 students (from left to right) Aiden Blakely, Dante Guido, and William Barron pose with their official Certificates of Achievement after the ceremony.

Highlights of the ceremony included musical selections by Grade 8 choral students, a beautiful rendition of “Caro Mio Ben” by Gabrielle Alterio, and a performance of “March Phantasma” by the talented musicians of the Middle School Band.

Class of 2023 Valedictorian Takemi Sono-Knowles also shared some words of wisdom, telling the students that it is okay to make mistakes and learn from them. “You will have to work hard, but it is worth the outcome,” he said. “Most importantly, remember to always be kind.”

After the presentation of awards, the ceremony ended with a beloved Onteora tradition. Each student was given one red flower to celebrate their accomplishments, and one white flower to give to someone who helped support them along the way.

Congratulations to all! Wishing you much success and happiness in the years to come as the Onteora High School Class of 2027!

Onteora Spirit Soars as Eagles Celebrate their Graduation and a Bright Future

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

Onteora Senior Class President and Principal’s Award recipient Noelle Crandell encouraged her classmates to be proud of themselves. “Celebrate your journey today and take in every moment because you have worked so hard for this,” she said. “I have no doubt that each of you will be excellent wherever the road takes you.”

The honorary guest speaker was retiring Band teacher Steven Murphy, who worked in the Onteora Central School District for 29 years. During his tenure, he instructed hundreds of students as he conducted both Middle and High School Wind Ensembles, led the Marching Band, and directed the Jazz Ensemble. Through the years, he even coached a few sports. During her introduction of Mr. Murphy, Noelle said, “He will be missed, but his legacy will continue.”

Onteora Superintendent Victoria McLaren also addressed the graduates. “Your talents, accomplishments, and dedication remind me every day that what we do here has purpose and value,” she said.

“I have been fortunate enough to have been in the District when you were all Kindergarteners, and I’ve seen you navigate your education for all of these years,” she continued. “I can say without reservation that you are an incredibly hard-working group of young adults. Thank you for leaving such a positive imprint here at Onteora, and good luck with everything to come!”



MIDDLE SCHOOL STUDENTS WIN PRESIDENT’S CHALLENGE SCHOLARSHIPS



KUDOS TO Sharlynn Lovera Hernandez, Jacob Connelly, Ariel Bergenn, Hailey Keator, and William John Rhodes, who have won SUNY Ulster President’s Challenge Scholarships. The Onteora Central School District partners 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 also receive guidance counseling and mentoring throughout their High School careers. Pictured with the students are Onteora Middle School Principal James DiDonna (far left) and SUNY Ulster President’s Challenge Scholarship Program Coordinator Scott Davis. Not pictured are Hailey Keator and William John Rhodes.

HIGH SCHOOL INDUCTS NEW MEMBERS INTO NATIONAL HONOR SOCIETY

TWENTY-TWO HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS WERE INDUCTED INTO ONTEORA’S CHAPTER OF THE NATIONAL HONOR SOCIETY (NHS) during a moving candle-lighting ceremony held on June 7. The newest members are Abigail Zeh, Alexia Melendez, Anna Johnson, Blanca Ramirez Perez, Chloe Maloney, Cocoro Asada, Gavin Rice, Grace Young, Griffin VanDreason, Keegan Burkhardt, Kylie Osterhoudt, Landry Mack, Lila Metawee, Lily Pizer, Linus Driscoll, Natalie Hastie, Olivia McHugh, Oscar Espinoza, Riley Fitzgerald, Sarah Caloro, Sara Metawee, and Vincent Christofora. We’re so proud of these students, who exemplify the four pillars of NHS—Scholarship, Leadership, Service, and Character.



Phoenicia Grade 3 Students Learn STEM Skills From Community Member

This year, Robert Hallock’s Grade 3 class at Phoenicia Elementary School enjoyed several visits from parent volunteer Shane Haas, who is an electrical and mathematical engineer. The students engaged in team activities using STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math) skills to build and program LEGO robots and vehicles. They enjoyed both races and competitions that tested the integrity of what they had built and programmed.

Teams used the WeDo 2.0 LEGO Education software to program their models, programming commands to control speed, direction, and travel length. In the hands-on portion of the lesson, they explored many science concepts, including power, friction, speed, and center


of gravity, to construct their models. Mr. Haas and Mr. Hallock were both available to help teams as they worked through the important process of problem-solving and testing their creations.



Engineer and parent volunteer Shane Haas helps Silas Davis construct a pivot to use in the competition.

On one such visit, teams were tasked with following a set of directions, and each member took a turn to add a piece to finish “Milo,” the robot. Once that was completed, students used an iPad or a laptop provided by Mr. Haas to code and program Milo to move around and make sounds. Then they applied more coding skills to add sensors so that Milo would know when to stop. Students were so engaged in this inquiry-based, student-driven project that they were crawling around on the floor with Milo as if he were a class pet!

ONTEORA SENIORS EARN SEALS OF BILITERACY



CONGRATULATIONS TO THE 21 SENIORS WHO WERE AWARDED THE SEAL OF BILITERACY!

The following 16 students successfully presented in Spanish: Emily Baker, Maeve Turck, Jett Conti, Hudson Turba, Jessica Mazariego Moran, Ruby Gallin, Gianna Tisch, Takemi Sono-Knowles, Noelle Crandell, Trapper VanDreason, Abigail Nolan, Thea Millenson, Auden Stellavato, Ari Green, Kevin Hicks, and Amelie Belfiore. The five students who successfully presented in French are Campbell Ebbecke, Milo Batista, Eleanor Schackne-Martello, Charlie Weisz-Hoolihan, and Liam Bertheaud.

The students presented on a variety of topics, including the Spanish Civil War, the Amazon rainforest, Argentinian soccer, the colonization of Haiti, mathematician and astronomer Pierre-Simon Laplace, French cinematography, and more! At the end of each presentation, students were asked questions by the Seal of Biliteracy committee, which consisted of World Language teachers Christi Nelsen-Epstein, Annie Gallin, and Rebecca Joslin; World Languages Liaison 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.

Woodstock Elementary School Hosts Science Fair

On the evening of May 4th, Woodstock Elementary School (WES) was bustling with activity as families, teachers, and staff enjoyed an interactive, museum-style Science Fair put on by students in Kindergarten through Grade 3.

Students in Kindergarten displayed impressive collections they gathered, including such items as birds' nests, snake skins, seashells, and more. Grade 1 students explored life cycles, and treated guests to their research on wolves, bears, octopi, butterflies, spiders, sunflowers, mushrooms, and more. The cafeteria was the place where fairgoers could check out the variety of Grade 2 detailed habitat explorations, as well as Grade 3 experiments and engineering projects, where students tested out their hypotheses, as scientists do.

Grade 2 student Lucas Hochman decided to do his research on volcanoes. What he found most fascinating was that he could make a representation of an erupting volcano using everyday products. "I learned that I could use sodium bicarbonate (baking soda) and citric acid to produce a chemical reaction

that looks like lava," he said.

Grade 3 student Fayette Jared conducted an experiment based on the question "Which butter tastes better: homemade or store-bought?" The young scientist and baking enthusiast first tried to make



Woodstock Elementary School Grade 1 student Jude Habernig poses in front of the project he completed on the life cycle of a spider at the Science Fair.



Woodstock Elementary School Grade 1 student Emily Giordano poses in front of the project she completed on the life cycle of a wolf at the Science Fair.

butter from plant-based milk, but discovered that getting the right consistency was very difficult. She then changed to a regular creamer, created butter, and then used it to make cookies! After running a taste test between cookies made with homemade butter and cookies made with store-bought butter, she was able to confirm what she had suspected all along. "I thought people would prefer something baked with homemade butter, and they did!" she said.

Grade 1 student Jude Habernig researched the spider's life cycle, and created a three-dimensional representation of the female arachnid's egg sac, elaborate webs, and offspring. When asked what was the "coolest thing" he learned, Jude said, "They use silk from inside their body to produce webs!"

WES Principal Scott Richards was pleased with how the event turned out. "The Science Fair was a huge success," he said. "It was well-attended and the feedback from the community was very positive."

"I am super proud of all of the hard work and effort our students put into their projects!" he added.

MIDDLE SCHOOL STUDENTS INDUCTED INTO NATIONAL JUNIOR HONOR SOCIETY

CONGRATULATIONS TO THE FOLLOWING MIDDLE SCHOOL STUDENTS, who were inducted into Onteora's chapter of the National Junior Honor Society (NJHS) during a candle-lighting ceremony on March 23rd: Jade Belfiore, Paul Consorte, Rowan Driscoll, Carli DuMond, Oren Erlichman, Henry Fox, Saige Gierloff, Jack Goodman, Alena Grant, Nyah Grusell, Vivienne Lamb, Philanthe LaMonda, Ayden Lemmy, Leroi Louis, Harper Mack, Erastus Mayunga, Vaughan McDonagh, Cooper Nagele, Jesna Vernet, Jesper Peacock, Leo Sorbellini, Lily Spada, Amelia Swasey, Clara Swasey, Annika Turner, Cimarron Waldo, and Oliver Wyman.

The new members were congratulated by Principal James DiDonna, who praised the students' perseverance. Quoting former United States Secretary of State General Colin Powell, he told them, "A dream doesn't become reality through magic; it takes sweat, determination, and hard work."

"I encourage you to dream big," Mr. DiDonna said.



BOARD OF EDUCATION


Cindy Bishop, President
Valerie Storey, Vice President
Meghann Reimondo, Trustee
Sarah Hemingway-Lynch, Trustee
Clark Goodrich, Trustee
Emily Mitchell-Marell, Trustee
Caroline Jerome, Trustee

SUPERINTENDENT OF SCHOOLS

Victoria McLaren

NEWSLETTER EDITING & DESIGN

Ulster BOCES Community Relations

 This publication was printed on recycled paper

To Postal Customer

CHICAGO: TEEN EDITION TAKES ONTEORA BY STORM

ONTEORA MIDDLE AND HIGH SCHOOL STUDENT-ACTORS TOOK THE STAGE at the Harry Simon Auditorium for three stellar performances of *Chicago: Teen Edition* on April 21st, 22nd, and 23rd. Their production, based on one of the longest-running American musicals in Broadway history, was chock-full of fun, jaunty tunes, and of course—all that jazz!

Onteora’s talented team, comprising 27 actors, five stage crew members, and 11 orchestra musicians, began rehearsing in January under the direction of Choreographer Amber McCarthy, High School Chorus Director Brittany Carroll, and Middle School teacher and Production Director Geordarna Constant. The students rehearsed tirelessly, twice a week right up until the performance.

“A musical such as *Chicago: Teen Edition* has many moving parts,” said Mrs. Constant. “It takes a community to pull together and present a production. Luckily, we have the best community around!” Senior Madelynn Taylor, who played one of the lead roles as “Velma Kelly,” said she was grateful for the opportunity. “Working on such a fun production with such a talented cast of people was an amazing way to end my senior year,” she said. “I’m forever thankful I got to play my dream role alongside my best friend!”



Welcome Back to School

The first day of school for students will be
Wednesday, September 6th.
LET THE LEARNING BEGIN!



USEFUL
DISTRICT
INFORMATION

DISTRICT OFFICE
845-657-6383
www.onteora.k12.ny.us

Superintendent
Victoria McLaren 845-657-8851

Assistant Superintendent for Curriculum and Instruction
Stephanie Laffin 845-657-6383 x1023

Assistant Superintendent for Business
Monica LaClair 845-657-8499

Assistant Superintendent for Pupil Personnel Services
Amanda Allison 845-657-3320

Director of Special Education
Carol Grima..... 845-657-3320

Director of Health, Physical Education, and Athletics
Beth Fletcher 845-657-2373

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

District Clerk
Amanda Gates 845-657-6383 x1030