



**2023-2024**

**Parent/Student  
Handbook**

**Bennett Elementary School**

4166 Route 28  
Boiceville, NY 12412  
657-2354  
[www.onteorak12.ny.us](http://www.onteorak12.ny.us)

*The Bennett School opens the door of opportunity.  
All are welcome to enter.*

**-K. Carle**

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## WELCOME TO THE BENNETT SCHOOL!

We are committed to providing your child with a high-quality education comprised of varied learning opportunities that include hands-on learning experiences.

Our mission is to create an engaging, healthy, and safe learning environment that empowers all students to pursue their dreams and achieve their goals. Bennett students contribute thoughtfully to the global community and have empathy for all.

Students will graduate with the independence, confidence, self-awareness, empathy, and problem-solving skills to reach their maximum potential and to be successful.

Review this handbook in its entirety with your child.

You are a valued member of our school community. We believe that a child's education is a partnership between the home, school, and larger community.

We value and welcome your participation.

Gabriel Buono  
Principal



# BENNETT SCHOOL STAFF

**Principal**  
Gabriel Buono

**Office Staff**  
Deborah Hapeman      Gina Tucker

**Fourth Grade:** Elizabeth Corsitto  
Adam LaFera  
Elizabeth Lefferts

**Physical Education:** Christopher Kasprzyk  
Matt Ryan

**AIS Math:** Maryanne Kenly

**Fifth Grade:** Doreen Erlwein  
Joan Mayone-Allison  
Erika McLean  
Kristen Warren

**AIS Reading:** Kristina Countryman  
Amanda Kovac  
Julie McCarthy

**Speech:** Alexandra Harkin

**Sixth Grade:** Jennifer Bruck  
Kelly Downs  
Cassidy Drop  
Kevin LaMonda

**Social Worker:** Kevin White

**Psychologist:** Lauren Petriski

**School Counselor:** Candice Sosler

**Special Education:** Lisa Barringer  
Benjamin Crum  
Elizabeth George  
Jolie Moorhus

**ENL:** Robin Panico  
Richard Mugge

**Consultant Teachers:** Brandi Decker  
Lee Ann Kuhne  
Nicole Mastrangelo  
William Michella

## Teaching Assistants

Adam Blank                      Shaylin McGowan  
Dylan Hill                        Lauren Silver  
Shelby Thompson               Molly Slater  
Veronica Kivlehan               Barbara May

**School Nurse:** Brianna Ashmore

**Art:** Roberta Ziemba

**Monitors:** Ashley Bishop  
Danielle Kraft  
Richard Davis  
Donna Turner

**Music:** Harvey Boyer  
Karen McKenna  
Abigail Mitchell  
Josephine Rose

**Cafeteria Staff:** Sally Piland  
Joanne Plourde

**Library Media Specialist:** Bernadette Amodeo

**Occupational Therapist:** Nina Reiten  
Nicole Zacchio

**Custodial Staff:** Brian Davis  
Lisa Baughman  
Pam Natoli

**Physical Therapist:** Erin Burch

## DAILY SCHEDULE

The Onteora School District provides each student with a district calendar noting planned conference days, school holidays, and scheduled events. Please refer to this calendar to determine when school will be in session.

The daily schedule for Bennett Elementary School is as follows:

8:40 a.m. Buses unload, classrooms open, Breakfast Program begins  
9:00 a.m. Classes begin, attendance is taken, daily announcements

*Students arriving at 9:00 a.m. or after are considered tardy*

11:00 p.m. 12:00 p.m. Grade 4 Recess/Lunch  
11:35 p.m. 12:35 p.m. Grade 5 Recess/Lunch  
12:10 p.m. 1:10 p.m. Grade 6 Recess/Lunch  
3:25 p.m. Students (pick up) dismissed to Exit 1  
3:30 p.m. 3:40 p.m. Students dismissed to busses/Buses depart

## SCHOOL CLOSINGS AND DELAYS

Notification of school closings and delays will be made through our *Shout Point Messenger* program.

For your convenience, the Onteora School District also posts all delayed openings and closings at [www.schoolclosingnetwork.com](http://www.schoolclosingnetwork.com), [www.cancellations.com](http://www.cancellations.com), and on the district website at [www.onteora.k12.ny.us](http://www.onteora.k12.ny.us).

## ADDRESS CHANGES

Up-to-date information is critical in the event of an emergency. Onteora Central School District requires proof of residency whenever a change of address occurs. Please notify the main office of address changes and request a change of address packet.

## ARRIVAL AND DISMISSAL PROCEDURES

We use the following procedure to ensure the safety and well-being of all students at the beginning and end of each day. Please note that when your child is dropped off or picked up daily, or only on occasion, the following procedures must be followed. All doors will be locked throughout the day.

Changes to a child's dismissal plan must be made prior to 3:00 p.m. Written notifications of changes in a dismissal plan (i.e., bus pass or early release) should be submitted to the office in the morning. **No bus passes will be issued after 3:00 p.m.**

Drop Off Times	Procedure Summary
Prior to 8:30 a.m.	<i>Do not drop off your child prior to 8:30 AM. No supervision is available.</i>
8:30 – 8:45 a.m.	<p>Student drop off – you may drop off your child at the handicapped entrance located behind the school. Please follow the semi-circle traffic pattern, so that the arrival process is safe and efficient.</p> <p>At no time should your child be dropped off behind the buses that line up in front of the school. <b>Do not park in the bus unloading area.</b></p> <p>Children proceed to their classroom.</p> <p>Breakfast will be offered in the cafeteria.</p> <p>Busses unload</p>
9:00 a.m.	Late arrival. <i>Parents/Guardians <b>must</b> escort their child(ren) to the front door.</i> Students must sign in with the main office before proceeding to class.

Pick Up Times	Procedure Summary
Prior to 3:15 p.m. (Early dismissal)	If it is necessary to pick your child up early, an email to your child's teacher and the Main Office on that date will help the teacher and your child to be prepared for the early departure. Please ring the doorbell/monitor to notify the office of your arrival.
3:25 p.m.	<p>Children, who have provided proper notification to the office stating they will be picked up, will assemble by Exit 1 and await pickup by an authorized person (<b>picture ID is required</b>).</p> <p>Instruction continues in the classrooms until 3:30 p.m. Students are reviewing their homework assignments and gather the necessary materials. We ask that you minimize the number of times you pick up children early, so they have appropriate closure to their school day. Please park in the west-end parking lot by the tennis courts.</p> <p><b>Note: If you will be picking up your child on the same day every week, you may send in one ongoing email stating which days your child will be picked up and by whom. (Should there be any changes to this dismissal plan, please notify the office via email as soon as possible.)</b></p>
3:30 p.m.- 3:40 p.m.	Students dismiss/busses depart

## **Buses**

Bus assignments including pick-up and drop-off times are viewable on the Parent Portal. If you have any questions regarding your child's bus schedule, please contact the Transportation Department Office at 657-2537.

In the morning, buses begin to arrive at approximately 8:40 a.m. and begin to unload.

In the afternoon, buses begin to assemble to take students home around 3:25 p.m. When all the buses have arrived, students are escorted to their buses at the front of the building. Buses are dismissed at approximately 3:40 p.m.

Bus transfers (bus passes) may be issued to a student by the Main Office only upon written request from a parent/guardian. The written request must include the child's full name, date, the classroom teacher's name, the child's destination, the parent's full name, contact phone number (for questions or concerns), and signature. Written requests must be received in the office prior to 3:00 p.m. No bus passes will be issued after 3:00 p.m. For morning pickup, the transfer request should be sent to the school the day before the pickup is needed. **Transfers may be rejected if the bus is at capacity.**

Any alternate transportation arrangements that are needed on a regular basis (ex. childcare situations) should be made with the Transportation Department Office at 845-657-2537.

## **Walkers**

Students identified as walkers by the Transportation Department are released after the buses have departed.

## **Early Emergency Dismissal (Shout Point Messenger)**

During the course of the school year, we face the possibility of early emergency dismissal. Although early dismissals are most often caused by weather, there may be other reasons for early dismissal (heating problems, water problems, etc.)

In the event of an early emergency dismissal, the Onteora Central School District activates the Shout Point Messenger program. This program has the capability to contact the entire District within minutes of an announcement of an early dismissal. Parents/Guardians will be contacted at the phone numbers that are entered in Infinite Campus (our student management system).

**Students will follow their normal dismissal plan. If you need to make any changes to your student's dismissal plan, please contact the Main Office as soon as possible. Please review the emergency procedures with your child frequently.**

In addition to the Shout Point announcements, early dismissals are posted on the websites listed on page 4 of this handbook.

## ATTENDANCE

Attendance will be submitted to the office by the homeroom teacher daily at 9:00 a.m. Students arriving after 9:00 a.m. **must be signed in by a Parent/Guardian.**

Parents are asked to call the school between 8:30 and 9:00 a.m. to notify the Health Office of their child's absence at extension 4140. **State law requires that an explanation for the absence be sent to the Main Office (email is best) on the day that your child returns to school. Please send the excuse to the Bennett Office email [bennettoffice@onteorak12.ny.us](mailto:bennettoffice@onteorak12.ny.us).**

**Good attendance is directly related to scholastic success. NYSED has now mandated that all children be in attendance 90% of the school year.** Chronic absence from school, which is defined as missing at least ten percent of enrolled days, warrants our urgent attention because it diminishes successful student outcomes and undermines learning. Please know that you will be notified if your child misses 10% of school, which includes excused absences, unexcused absences, and late entry to school. Parents are responsible for their children's regular attendance and punctuality.

The Board of Education recognizes the following as excused absences, each of which must be verified by the student's parent or guardian, in writing, or school personnel, where applicable:

- Illness of the child
- Emergency illness in the family
- Death in the immediate family
- Emergency dental and medical appointments
- Religious observance
- Approved school-sponsored activities
- Court appearance

**An email or written note must be provided by the student's parent or guardian to the Main Office, [bennettoffice@onteorak12.ny.us](mailto:bennettoffice@onteorak12.ny.us), for an absence due to the above reason(s) to be considered legal. No excuse for an absence will be accepted if the excuse is submitted more than three (3) days after the date of absence with the exception of a medical note.**

If your child will be leaving school early on a given day, an email should be sent to your child's teacher and the Main Office.

### **Student Absences due to Family Vacation**

The Onteora Central School District strongly supports attendance in school for all students on days when classes are scheduled. The nature of the curriculum and the teaching-learning process itself requires regular student attendance. Missed instruction in school cannot always be easily made up or duplicated. Students' absences from school due to family vacations, by law, must be recorded as unexcused absences.



## **Student Absences due to Family Vacation (continued)**

Accordingly, the following information is provided to parents:

1. It is suggested that family vacations be arranged to coincide with scheduled school vacations.
2. The classroom teachers should be informed of a pending absence two (2) weeks prior to the absence. The teacher will inform parents of any possible implications of the proposed absence and of any expectations or responsibilities a student will have to meet upon returning to class.
3. Teachers will furnish assignments as deemed appropriate, when possible.
4. Teachers will determine the extent and the manner in which missed work will be completed.
5. Teachers may provide an opportunity for test make-ups.

## **BEHAVIOR STANDARDS**

All members of the Bennett School Community will respect and be kind to each other. This means:

1. We care for each other and respect each other's belongings.
2. We are polite to our classmates, teachers, administrators, and other visiting adults and children who may be in our school.
3. We walk and talk quietly in the hallways.
4. We respect everyone's personal space.
5. We don't tease one another or call each other names.
6. We solve our problems with one another by talking, not fighting.
7. We ask a teacher, another adult, or peer mediators for help if we have a problem we cannot solve on our own.
8. We are proud of our school and ourselves and we do not do anything to harm either.
9. We tell the whole truth.
10. We follow the rules whether or not an adult is present.

## **POSITIVE BEHAVIORAL INTERVENTION AND SUPPORT (PBIS)**

Bennett Elementary is a PBIS school. PBIS emphasizes using functional assessment and positive approaches to encourage good behavior. Listed below are the behavioral expectations for students:

- Be Safe
- Be Respectful
- Be Responsible

## DIGNITY FOR ALL STUDENTS ACT (DASA)

New York State's Dignity for All Students Act (The Dignity Act) seeks to provide the State's public elementary and secondary school students with a safe and supportive environment free from discrimination, intimidation, taunting, harassment, and bullying on school property, a school bus and/or at a school function.

### CONDUCT

The Board of Education expects all students to conduct themselves in an appropriate and civil manner, with proper regard for the rights and welfare of other students, district personnel, and other members of the school community and for the care of school facilities and equipment.

The best discipline is self-imposed, and students must learn to assume and accept responsibility for their own behavior, as well as the consequences of their misbehavior. District personnel who interact with students are expected to use disciplinary action only when necessary and to place emphasis on the student's ability to grow in self-discipline.

The Board recognizes the need to make its expectations for student conduct while on school property or engaged in school functions specific and clear. The rules of conduct listed below are intended to do that and focus on safety and respect for the rights and property of others. Students who will not accept responsibility for their own behavior and who violate these school rules will be required to accept the penalties for their conduct.

Students may be subject to disciplinary action, up to and including suspension from school, when they:

- A. Engage in conduct that is disorderly. Examples of disorderly conduct include:
  1. Running in the hallways.
  2. Making unreasonable noise.
  3. Using language or gestures that are profane, lewd, vulgar, or abusive.
  4. Obstructing vehicular or pedestrian traffic.
  5. Engaging in any willful act, which disrupts the normal operation of the school community.
  6. Trespassing. Students are not permitted in any school building, other than the one they regularly attend, without permission from the administrator in charge of the building.
  7. Computer/electronic communications misuse, including any unauthorized use of computers, software, or internet/intranet account; accessing inappropriate websites; or any other violation of the district's acceptable use policy.

## CONDUCT (continued)

- B. Engage in conduct that is insubordinate. Examples of insubordinate conduct include:
1. Failing to comply with the reasonable directions of teachers, school administrators, or other school employees in charge of students or otherwise demonstrating disrespect.
  2. Lateness for, missing or leaving school without permission.
  3. Skipping lunch detention.
- C. Engage in conduct that is disruptive. Examples of disruptive conduct include:
1. Failing to comply with the reasonable directions of teachers, school administrators, or other school personnel in charge of students.
- D. Engage in conduct that is violent. Examples of violent conduct include:
1. Committing an act of violence (such as hitting, kicking, punching, and scratching) upon a teacher, administrator, or other school employee or attempting to do so.
  2. Committing an act of violence (such as hitting, kicking, punching, and scratching) upon another student or any other person lawfully on school property or at a school function.
  3. Possessing a weapon. Authorized law enforcement officials are the only persons permitted to have a weapon in their possession while on school property or at a school function.
  4. Displaying what appears to be a weapon.
  5. Making threats with the intention to harm.
  6. Intentionally damaging or destroying the personal property of a student, teacher, administrator, or other district employee or any person lawfully on school property, including graffiti or arson.
  7. Intentionally damaging or destroying school district property.
- E. Engage in misconduct while on a school bus. It is crucial for students to behave appropriately while riding on district buses to ensure their safety and that of other passengers and to avoid distracting the bus driver. Students are required to conduct themselves on the bus in a manner consistent with established standards for classroom behavior. Excessive noise, pushing, shoving, and fighting will not be tolerated.

## CONDUCT (continued)

The approach taken with Incident Reports is one which focuses on helping students understand and internalize acceptable behavior. Should an infraction occur such that an adult in a supervisory role feels it is necessary to involve the principal, the adult will relay the problem in person or via a Behavior Incident Report. A variety of steps may be taken, as the circumstances require. For example:

- Student conference with the Principal.
- Student conference with the Principal and the Teacher.
- Parent(s) called.
- Student, Parent(s) and Teacher conference with the Principal
- The services of the social worker may be employed at any point in this process.

**Δ Teachers have the authority to “remove” disruptive students under Education Law §3214(3-a). Disruptive is defined as “one who is substantially disruptive of the educational process or substantially interferes with the teacher’s authority over the classroom.”**

School desks, lockers, storage spaces, and computers belong to the school district, not the student, and thus may be opened and inspected from time to time by school officials without student permission. But school officials will respect the privacy of such spaces as much as possible.

Students who are found to have violated the district’s code of conduct may be subject to the following consequences, either alone or in combination. The school personnel identified after each penalty are authorized to impose that penalty, consistent with the student’s right to due process.

- Oral Warning – any member of the district staff
- Written Warning – bus drivers, hall and lunch monitors, teachers, administrators, superintendent
- Written notification to parent–bus drivers, hall and lunch monitors, teachers, administrators, superintendent
- Lunch Detention – teachers, administrators, superintendent
- Suspension from transportation – director of transportation, administrators, superintendent
- Suspension from after-school activities – activity director, administrators, superintendent
- Suspension from social or extracurricular activities – activity director, administrators, superintendent
- Suspension of other privileges – administrators, superintendent
- In School Suspension (ISS) – administrators, superintendent
- Removal from classroom by teacher – teachers, administrators
- Counseling – principal, superintendent
- Short-term (five days or less) suspension from school (OSS) – principal, superintendent
- Long-term (more than five days) suspension from school (OSS) – principal, superintendent, board of education
- Permanent suspension from school – superintendent, board of education

## PROMOTION, RETENTION, AND ACCELERATION OF STUDENTS

School Board Policy #7212

The Onteora CSD will ensure that each child experiences both challenge and success in school activities. To this end, the District will make every effort to place each student at the most appropriate learning level for a successful educational experience. The concept of grade placement is based on the premise that each teacher will provide appropriate opportunities for students at all stages of physical, emotional, and academic growth. Academic growth does not take place at the same pace, and promotion, retention, and acceleration are added methods to meet the needs of individual students.

Promotion, retention, and acceleration of a student will be based on the following general considerations:

1. Academic achievement;
2. Age of the student;
3. Teacher and principal recommendations in consultation with the parents/guardians; and
4. Where the decision for retention is in question, the principal will have the final authority;

The Administration will develop regulations to establish guidelines and procedures for decisions regarding promotion, retention, and acceleration.

In order to inform parents/guardians about the District's approach to promotion and retention, this policy will be posted on the district website and included in student and/or parent handbooks.

Ref: Education Law §§ 305(47); 1709; 2503(4); 3202  
8 NYCRR §100.4  
*Isqwith v. Levitt*, 285 App. Div. 833; 137 N.Y.S.2d 497 (1955)  
*Matter of Eckert*, 13 EDR 270 (1979)  
Op. Counsel, 1 EDR 775 (1952)  
OCSD Regulation 7212R

Adopted: 10/13/15

## STUDENT DRESS CODE

Children's school dress should be comfortable, free of complicated fastenings, washable, sturdy, and warm for outside play. Please dress your child for outdoor play every day.

If you would like your child to have a change of clothing kept at school in case of emergency, you may send it in to be kept in their cubby or backpack. Make sure the clothing is labeled with your child's name.

All students and staff should show healthy and respectful attention to their personal cleanliness and clothing. Adults should model and reinforce acceptable dress for students. Please refer to the Code of Conduct, Attachment E for additional information related to the District dress code expectations.

## ELECTRONIC EQUIPMENT

Electronic devices should not be brought to school; however, parents may choose to give their child a device to be used only on the bus. Students are NOT allowed to record or take pictures on the bus.

Mobile phones, IPOD devices, smartwatches, or any device capable of recording audio, photographic, or video content interfere with the academic environment of the school. **AT NO TIME IS A STUDENT ALLOWED TO RECORD OR TAKE PICTURES OF OTHER STUDENTS DUE TO THE POTENTIAL OF FERPA VIOLATIONS.** Considering the potential for distraction and additional problems, all equipment must be turned off and not visible during school hours unless authorized by school personnel. Any student observed with such devices will be referred to Mr. Buono. In the event that a student is observed utilizing an electronic device, it will be confiscated and returned only to the student's parent/guardian by Mr. Buono or designee.

**School-issued Chromebooks that are brought home, can only be used for school assignments. These are not to be used as personal devices.**

## FOOD SERVICES

The District is using Infinite Campus to support the Food Services program in all schools. All positive account balances will be the same when the students return to school in September as they were before summer vacation. Parents/guardians have the option of checking their child's account history online and making deposits to their accounts there as well. You may request account histories to be sent to you, and cash or checks may be sent in to place money in your child's account. The breakfast/lunch menu is distributed to all students each month and can also be found on the district website.

The following is the cost of meals and milk for this school year:

K-6	Breakfast No Charge Lunch No Charge
7-8	Breakfast No Charge Lunch No Charge
9-12	Breakfast No Charge Lunch No Charge
Milk	<b>\$0.50</b>

The District strives to serve healthy options and our fresh ingredients are purchased locally whenever possible.

To help expedite the handling of your student's account, we strongly encourage parents/guardians to do the following.

- Pre-pay for your student's a la carte purchases on a weekly, monthly, or yearly basis. Please keep in mind this is a debit account.
- Meal charge policy can be found on our district website. District > Food Services
- **If you had spending limits set on your child's account last year, please contact Christine Downs, Director of Food Services, to re-activate those limits. Otherwise, your child will not have a set-spending limit. Also, please contact the District if your child requires special meal accommodations. A detailed diet plan is required by a physician annually, at the start of a new school year, in order for the District to accommodate the request.**

### **Free or Reduced Meals**

We are pleased to inform you that Bennett Elementary will be implementing a meal certification option available to schools participating in the National School Lunch and School Breakfast Programs for 2023-2024.

All students enrolled at Bennett Elementary are eligible to receive a healthy breakfast and lunch at school at **no charge** to your household each day of the 2023-2024 school year.

### **Breakfast Program**

The Food Service Department serves breakfast each day. All students are eligible to participate in this program.

## **Snacks**

Snacks are made available daily for children **to purchase** during their scheduled classroom snack times. Students will not be allowed to charge snacks; therefore, it is important to keep a positive balance in their lunch account. Children may also bring snacks from home. Healthy snacks are encouraged. We also encourage students to take the grab-and-go breakfast when they arrive, even if they ate at home, this can act as their snack for the day.

## **Lunch from Home**

Students must bring lunches that are ready to eat. There are no microwaves.

Beverages brought from home should be packed in appropriate (leakproof, reusable) containers. Under no circumstances should beverages be sent in glass containers.

If there is an occasional day when a parent brings lunch to a child, it must be brought to the office, and office staff will deliver it to your child. Doing this on a daily basis is disruptive to the class.

## **Cafeteria Rules:**

- a. Sit in a safe and acceptable manner.
- b. Use acceptable table manners.
- c. No Sharing of Food
- d. Use appropriate language.
- e. Speak in conversational tones.
- f. Cooperate with peers and adults.
- g. Respect the rights and property of others.
- h. Raise your hand and wait for permission before leaving your seat.
- i. Remain seated until called upon by an adult.
- j. Don't leave the cafeteria without permission.
- k. When an adult raises their hand or counts, quiet down immediately.

## **Peanut/Tree Nut Procedures**

We care about all our students at Bennett Elementary and have become a "nut-aware" school in order to provide a safe environment for students who are allergic to nuts. We do not want anything to happen to these children, nor do we want other children to witness trauma. Either situation could be devastating. The steps we have taken are:

1. Instead of peanut butter and jelly as a cold lunch offering, students may select a "Sunbutter" and jelly, turkey, tuna, ham, cheese sandwich, or salad plate. Please see the lunch menu for a complete list of options. Cereals and snacks containing peanuts have also been eliminated.
2. We have designated "nut-free" tables in the cafeteria, which are cleaned with different cleaning supplies. We request that parents try to minimize sending in peanut butter on sandwiches. Peanut butter will be allowed; however, your child will have to sit with other classmates on the opposite side of the cafeteria away from the "nut-free" tables. There will be no repercussions or discomfort for your child. We will also require these children to wash their hands after eating. If a nut/peanut allergic child touches something after someone who has touched these products, a severe reaction could occur.



3. All common rooms will be nut free. Foods containing nuts will not be allowed. If students bring in items with nuts, they will follow the same procedure as the procedure in the cafeteria (see above). We recognize that nuts are good and healthy snacks for most children. We also know that students are in school only 6 hours each day and that there are other snacks that are just as healthy and will help others in our school community.

4. Classroom teachers will determine if the classroom is nut free or will establish a nut free area.

5. The school nurse/teacher will discuss food allergies with all classes in the school.

6. Staff members will be trained in the use of the EpiPen if applicable for specific students.

7. Research and materials on this condition, and how other schools approach the same situation, are continually reviewed.

It is our responsibility to minimize the risk for all our students to the greatest extent possible. No child should have to be afraid to come to school afraid that they will have a potentially life-threatening reaction, nor should other children be witness to a tragedy should it occur. These minor changes should reduce the risk significantly for all of our children.

While this may be an inconvenience for some families, the health of our children is well worth any minor inconvenience.

We invite anyone who anticipates having difficulties with the elimination/minimization of nuts in school to please feel free to call the health office. We will gladly work with you to help find a solution.

## COMMUNICATION

### **Bennett Open House**

Please refer to the District Calendar for the date and time our Open House will take place.

**This Open House will also allow parents the opportunity to visit their child's classroom and meet their teacher. This night is designed for the teachers to speak with all parents about the curriculum for the year, daily schedules, classroom rules and expectations, and any special activities that will be occurring during the year. This is a time for parents only – students should *not* attend.**

Please note that Open House is not an appropriate time to discuss personal concerns. These topics are best handled during a private conference. Do not hesitate to schedule a conference to discuss these matters.

## Conferences

Within the Onteora School District, many programs are available to encourage all students to succeed. If you have any questions or concerns regarding your child, please do not hesitate to schedule a conference with your child's teacher or the principal.

Parent-teacher conferences are planned two times per year. The dates for these conferences can be found in the School District Calendar. It is the teacher's goal to invite each child's parents/guardian at least once per year.

Parents are welcome and encouraged to talk with their child's teachers during the school year. Appointments must be made to coincide with the teachers' schedules. Please contact the teacher to set up an appointment.

## Parent Portal

The Portal is a secure website that allows parents to monitor their child's progress in school. As a parent, you can monitor your child's daily attendance and grades (4-6), as well as have access to your child's lunch account, health records, and assessments. *It is designed to increase the communication between parents, the school, and the teacher, **which will be used to communicate with you on a regular basis.***

## FIELD TRIPS

Field trips are an important part of the educational process. Field trips are designed to enhance the curriculum and to give students an opportunity to visit locations that they might otherwise not have the opportunity to explore.

The District provides bus transportation for field trips. By law, children must report to school on the morning of the field trip and ride the bus to the destination in order to be marked as in attendance and be part of the class trip. If a parent/guardian transports a child directly to the field trip location, the child will be marked absent (and will not be covered by the school's insurance for the day).

If a parent/guardian wishes to take their child directly from the field trip location, a note must be sent to the school stating this, prior to the field trip. The parent/guardian must sign the child out with the teacher in charge of the trip.

## PLAYGROUND RULES

Students must follow the rules listed below to assure their own safety and the safety of others. This information will be reviewed with the children by the physical education teacher, the classroom teacher, and the teaching assistants on duty.

1. Children must remain inside the fenced areas at all times.
2. If equipment goes outside the fence, get an adult to help.
3. Fighting, play fighting, wrestling, roughhousing, tackle football, dodgeball, throwing stones/woodchips/snowballs, or any activity which is dangerous or annoying to other children, is not acceptable. If a child feels that they are going to be hurt or that someone else may be hurt they should tell an adult. Everyone should have the opportunity to play fairly.
4. Picnic tables are for sitting at...not climbing on.
5. No running on wood-chipped areas.
6. Running and tagging games in grass areas only.
7. Slides are one-way. Slide down only. Take turns. One child on the slide per time.
8. Do not walk on the wood chips by the swings unless you are using the swings. Pay Attention!
9. You must be seated when on the swings.
10. Do not hang upside down off high bars.
11. PLEASE...make sure all playground equipment is back in the playground shed when you leave the area.
12. Children must return to the building when directed by staff.
13. When using the climbing structures:
  - ~Children should not crowd each other and they should take turns.
  - ~Children should use a tight grip on the bars.
  - ~Children should keep their hands to themselves.
14. Appropriate clothing for weather conditions, i.e., snow play (snow pants, boots, gloves, etc.)
15. Appropriate footwear during recess – **flip flops, sandals without a strap around the ankle, or high-heeled shoes will not be allowed on the Netplex.** Sneakers are recommended for recess and required for Physical Education class.

**Parents/guardians may not pick up their children from the playground.  
School personnel have been directed NOT to release children from the  
playground.**

## EXTRACURRICULAR ACTIVITIES

### **After-School Activities**

After-school activities are offered from the beginning of October thru the beginning of June in four sessions on Tuesdays, Wednesdays, and Thursdays. Various classes are offered in each session. Classes begin at 3:30 p.m. and end at 4:20 p.m. Packets to sign up for each session will be sent home periodically. Please follow the instructions included in the packet.

Transportation will be provided by the Onteora Central School District late bus run if requested by the parent. All other students need to be picked up at 4:20 p.m. *Please note: This bus run differs from your child's regular bus run. Drop-off points may not be the same as your regular bus stop.*

In the event of an early dismissal, ***all*** after-school activities are canceled and students *will follow their regular dismissal plan.*

Activities may be canceled due to unforeseen circumstances on any particular day. Students will be notified via announcements and asked to call home to notify parents/guardians during their lunch or recess.

Students participating in the after-school program need to be in good academic standing. It is the student's responsibility to stay after school for these programs. If your child will not be attending the program on a particular day, *please send a written notification to the school.*

Disruptive or uncooperative students will be dismissed from the program.

### **Assembly Programs**

Students always look forward to the wide variety of assembly programs that are presented throughout the year. Students enjoy several assemblies each year that are performed by fellow students in the band, orchestra, chorus, and others that are planned by the PTA.

### **Student Government**

Once students enter sixth grade, they have the ability to demonstrate their leadership abilities to serve their peers. They are elected at the end of fifth grade and assume the roles of President, Vice President, Secretary, and Treasurer. These collective leadership roles provide other challenges that cannot be taught in the classroom and provide learning opportunities through a democratic and representative process.

## SPECIALS

### **Art**

The main goal of the elementary art curriculum is to use the materials and processes of the visual arts as a means of expression, communication, and exploration. Students will be introduced to art history and exposed to a variety of artists and art forms. Students will be provided with opportunities to learn about art within their own community, and to meet local artists. Art may be integrated with other areas of the curriculum. Students will see that art is connected to all aspects of our lives. Students will be acquainted with the role of art in our culture and from other cultures, past and present. In today's world, there are new definitions of Art, and the possibilities for creating art are limitless.

### **General Music**

The Elementary Music Department offers students a unique and enriching musical experience. All children have musical potential, and Bennett students are encouraged to actively participate in music in a variety of ways. General music meets once a week for every child. In general music, students actively participate by singing, performing on instruments, improvising, composing, listening, analyzing, researching, evaluating, and reading music. Many methodologies and approaches to teaching music are incorporated including Kodaly, Orff, Dalcroze, and CMP.

### **Physical Education**

Physical education is an integral part of the total education growth and development process of the students. The Physical Education Program offers a graduated and graded program in which all activities are selected to provide progression in the acquisition of skills plus the opportunity for increased knowledge, strategies, and fitness.

In Physical Education class, through vigorous physical activity, students learn the qualities and attributes essential to individual progression and continued development and are required to be dressed appropriately for class on the scheduled days (i.e. sneakers).

### **Library Media Center**

The Library Media Center maintains a holistic and child-oriented focus. The program's goal is to promote the direct and practical application of library skills into a child's own life experience.

Normal weekly class visits are supplemented throughout the school day with guidance, book exchanges and information searches. An open-door policy is maintained and every effort is made to provide a nurturing environment for creative thought and intellectual exploration.

## **Instrumental Music**

Students are encouraged to be responsible by forming routine practice habits. In 4th grade, students may move on to a string, woodwind or brass instrument. From this point forward, any students participating on an instrument will receive instrumental lessons and will be part of a beginning ensemble. In 5<sup>th</sup> grade students may then join the **Band** or **Orchestra** where they are exposed to more challenging repertoire. Both the Band and the Orchestra perform winter and spring concerts along with a number of performances outside of the school.

## **Chorus Grades (4-6)**

This ensemble performs a wide repertoire of music. Music of many different cultures, styles and genres is a predominant theme in this ensemble. There is also a focus on two and three part-singing. This group performs at the winter and spring concerts along with occasional performances outside of school.

## **Strings**

String lessons in Onteora District Elementary Schools start in the 4th grade. Most students begin on violins, but many students may learn guitar, viola, cello or other stringed instruments. Children leave their classroom once a week for half an hour to participate in these lessons.

Depending on levels of achievement, students may be selected for:

**Junior String Orchestra:** meets for half an hour once a week and includes all the string students who are working in the first section of the strings lesson book.

**Senior String Orchestra:** meets for 40 minutes at least once a week and performs at the winter and spring concerts, as well as, the District Strings Festival in late May.

## **SAFETY DRILLS**

According to state law, safety drills are held throughout the school year to ensure that children, teachers, and staff are familiar with the best possible emergency safety procedures. The state requires twelve drills to be held each year.

The safety drills include fire drills and lockdown drills.

- **Fire Drill** - Students and Staff will evacuate the building via the closest exit. 8 drills per school year.
- **Lockdown** - implemented when there is an incident in the school building. The doors throughout the building are locked and students must stay in their classrooms, away from the doors and windows.

**Bus drills** are held at the beginning of the year to prepare children in case of an emergency while on the school bus.

Safety rules and drills are an integral part of our school safety plan.

## TRANSPORTATION BUS SAFETY RULES

**Please review this information with your child.**

1. Arriving and waiting at the bus stop:
  - a. Be ready when the bus arrives – be orderly.
  - b. Wait six feet from the bus until the bus door opens.
  - c. Enter with care – use the handrail.
2. If crossing the street in front of the bus, use the following procedure:
  - a. Stand ten feet from the front bumper and make eye contact with the driver.
  - b. Await a signal from the driver to cross.
  - c. Look both ways before crossing.
  - d. Continue looking while crossing.
  - e. If the bus beeps the horn, **return back** to the side of the street
3. Obey all requests of the bus driver.
4. No pets, animals, glass, or sharp objects are allowed on the bus.
5. Riders should remain seated while the bus is in motion.
6. No eating, smoking, or drinking is allowed on school buses.
7. Keep your head, hands, and arms inside.
8. Keep the bus clean and aisles clear.
9. Be courteous and speak quietly.
10. No throwing objects in the bus or out of windows or doors.
11. Shoving, pushing, profane and obscene language is prohibited on the bus.

**Violation of the bus safety rules or misbehavior will result in a referral to the Principal. Consequences usually are progressive in nature. Efforts are made to avoid suspension, but safety cannot be compromised. Your cooperation and support in helping your child review the proper conduct are greatly appreciated.**

### Health Services

Onteora Central School District's School Health Services program supports your student's academic success by promoting health in the school setting. One way that we provide care for your student is by performing the health screenings as mandated by the State of New York.

Each building has a Health Office with a School Nurse.

#### **Immunizations:**

All entering students (kindergarten and new to the district) are required by New York State Education Law to be immunized against diphtheria, poliomyelitis, measles, mumps, rubella (German measles), varicella, Hepatitis B, age-appropriate Tdap and meningococcal vaccines. Proof of immunizations by a Health Care Provider (HCP) or previous school record is required as acceptable documentation of the immunization status.

During the school year, the following screenings are required:

- Vision – distance and near acuity for all newly entering students and students in kindergarten, grades 1, 3, 5, 7, & 11.
- Hearing – hearing screening for all new entrants and students in kindergarten, grades 1, 3, 5, 7, & 11.
- Scoliosis - scoliosis (spinal curvature) screening for all girls in grades 5 and 7, and all boys in grade 9.
- Health Appraisals - a physical exam, including Body Mass Index (BMI) and Weight Status Category is required for all new entrants and students in kindergarten, grades 1, 3, 5, 7, 9, & 11. If we do not receive a physical from your health care provider by September 30, a school physical exam will be scheduled.
- Body Mass Index Reporting (BMI) – as part of a required school health exam, a student is to have their height and weight measured. The results are then used to compute the student's BMI. The BMI helps the doctor or nurse know if the student's weight is in a healthy range, too low, or too high. Periodically schools are requested to report to the New York State Department of Health (NYSDOH) information about our students' weight status groups. **Only summary information is sent, no student names or identifying information.** However, you may choose to have your child's information excluded from this survey report. **IF you do not wish to have your child's weight status group information included as part of the Health Departments survey, please SEND WRITTEN notice to the school nurse.** The information sent to the NYSDOH will help health officials develop programs that make it easier for children to be healthier.
- Dental Certificates – a dental certificate is requested for all new entrants and students in kindergarten, grades 1, 3, 5, 7, 9 & 11.

A letter will be sent home if there are any findings on the screenings done at school that would cause concern or need medical follow-up. Please call the school's health office if you have any questions or concerns.

### **First Aid:**

In cases of accidents or illness, the school district is responsible for immediate first aid care. Parents will be notified. The subsequent treatment and transportation of the ill or injured student becomes parental responsibility. All injuries incurred in school must be reported to the teacher, supervisor, or bus driver in charge, and the student must report to the health office. The health office must receive a report of injury since the appropriate recording and insurance follow-up is very important and must be completed promptly. *If students become ill or injured during school hours, they must report to the health office.*



## Basic Health Rules:

1. Keep your child home if your child has any of the following conditions:
  - a. Fever (temperature of 100 degrees or more)
  - b. Fever during the previous 24 hours
  - c. Heavy nasal discharge
  - d. Persistent cough
  - e. Overtired and generally not feeling well
  - f. Vomiting and/or diarrhea within 24 hours of the start of the school day
  - g. Rash of unknown origin
2. If a child's health is in doubt upon entering school or during the school day, the parents/guardians will be notified to pick up the child.
3. Parents/guardians should notify the Health Office whenever a child is absent. This is especially true if the child has been exposed to, or diagnosed with a contagious disease (chicken pox, mono, strep throat, etc.), even if they have been home for several days.
4. A child with a fever cannot return to school until fever free for 24 hours without any fever reducing medications (i.e., Tylenol, ibuprofen, etc.).
5. Send in a written note whenever the child returns to school from an absence.
6. Notify School Nurse as soon as possible if a child has tested positive for COVID-19.
7. If you child has been evaluated by a health care provider due to an injury, please request a note that clears them to return to school and specifies activity restrictions if necessary.
8. Contact School Nurse if any questions or concerns.

## Medication Administration:

If it becomes necessary for a student to take any form of medication at school, the following steps must be followed:

1. A written order from the health care provider must be obtained which includes the student's name, medication, dosage, and time to be given at school.
2. Permission must be given in writing by the parent/guardian, in order for the medication to be given at school.
3. The medication must be delivered to the school by an adult in its original container, properly identified with the student's name, date prescribed, name of medication, dosage, and instructions for administering (if it is a prescription medication, the medication must be delivered in the original pharmacy container. We recommend asking the pharmacy at the time of filling the prescription for a second labeled bottle, so one can be kept at home and one sent to school).
4. The medication must be kept in the health office in a locked cabinet (see below for exceptions\*).
5. At no time should a student have prescription or non-prescription medication/drugs on them\*.
6. If a student is to self-carry medication, it is to be noted on the medication order form, and the self-carry attestation form must be completed as well. School personnel may not dispense any medications including over the counter medications unless the above conditions have been met.

\*Some conditions may necessitate that a child carry and self-administer their medication. Examples would be an inhaler for severe asthma or an Epi-pen for serious allergies. The school should have knowledge of these medications prior to a student bringing them to school. They require all of the above written permissions and an attestation form completed by parent and medical provider to self-carry and self-administer. Ritalin, anti-seizure drugs and antibiotics are examples of non-emergency medications, and must be administered through the health office. If you believe your child has a potential emergency health need, please consult with the school nurse to develop an emergency care plan. Students may not possess, consume, or distribute any type of medication without the approval of the school's administration and/or the health office.

These policies and procedures are necessary to insure the health and safety of the entire student body. We appreciate your cooperation and compliance.

### Hand Sanitizers:

Alcohol based hand sanitizers can be used in school. If you do not want your child to use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer, you **MUST** notify the nurse in writing.

### Physical Education and Sports:

Medical excuses pertaining to Physical Education must be obtained from the student's health provider. The document should be brought to the Health Office prior to the start of class. The Health Office will supply the Physical Education teacher with documentation of doctor's note. A student may not participate in any Physical Education classes until cleared, in writing, by their health provider. If a student is expected to be out of physical education class for any extended time, there is a form that can be given to the doctor to determine if any adaptive measures can allow student to participate.

In order to be cleared for activities after a concussion, a physician must clear the student to return to activity. Upon private physician clearance, the school medical director, will clear the student to begin the return to play protocol. Once the student has completed the return to play protocol, the student will be able to participate in all activities.

Before a student is allowed to participate in any interscholastic athletic activity, the student must have a current physical exam on file, be registered on Family ID for sport including recent health history (each season), and be approved by the school's medical director.

### General:

Please notify your School Nurse of any changes in your child's health history throughout the school year. It is important to keep your School Nurse informed of any changes in your child's health. This would include any newly diagnosed allergies, asthma, food sensitivities/preferences, new medications, as well as any new illnesses or injuries.

## HOMework

*The educators at Bennett Elementary value meaningful homework because it provides an opportunity for students to practice and reinforce skills and concepts that are taught in class. Reading and writing reflection each night promotes learning in all subject areas. Math homework helps students develop necessary foundational skills. Homework helps to foster strong work habits and student independence.*

**What is homework?** It is a planned part of the curriculum, extending and reinforcing the learning experience of the school. In addition, homework is:

1. Additional practice to strengthen new skills introduced in the classroom;
2. Work on projects of short-term or long-term nature;
3. Participation in research activities in locating facts and data;
4. Extended reading/writing assignments.

Whenever homework exists in our school system, it should supplement, complement (through differentiation), and reinforce classroom teaching and learning.

**Parental Role:** It is crucial that parents support and have an active role in their child's academic life. Student growth will be ensured when parents and teachers work together in a combined effort to support and encourage student learning; this includes homework.

**Independent Reading (Readers Workshop):** Readers Workshop requires that students read independently in their "just right" book that correlates with the current Unit of Study and is included in the minutes below.

Time Guidelines for Homework (includes independent reading) – These guidelines specify the **approximate** range spent on homework assignments:

- 4<sup>th</sup> grade: approx. 40 minutes
- 5<sup>th</sup> grade: approx. 50 minutes
- 6<sup>th</sup> grade: approx. 60 minutes

Homework will not be assigned over school breaks. Every effort will be made to keep homework to a minimum on weekends. Homework may be assigned five nights per week. Assignments given weekly may need to be completed by students on weekends if that is how a student chooses to manage his or her time.

**Homework should be a topic of communication between parents and teachers. These procedures recognize and allow for exceptions and extenuating circumstances.**

## PTA

The Bennett PTA is a vital and active part of the Bennett School Community. Parents are encouraged to participate. Meetings are held monthly. Check the district calendar for dates and times. If you are unable to attend the meetings but would like to volunteer, please contact one of the PTA officers. We seek your involvement and participation as we work together to create an exceptional school for our children.

### OUR SCHOOL COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIP

A child's parents/guardians and the school share the responsibility for establishing an educational climate that will encourage each child's maximum growth. As the parent looks to the school to provide the facilities and the personnel, which are essential to the child's proper development, the school looks to the parent to assume certain obligations, which cannot be delegated to others.

A school can be effective in teaching the commonly accepted virtues of honesty, respect for authority, consideration for the rights and property of others, and adequate standards or personal integrity when the basic principles have been established and are held in sufficiently high regard in the home.

When parents have confidence in the school and cooperate with its programs and they show respect for the sincerity and integrity of its teachers, this is quite likely to be reflected in wholesome attitudes on the part of their child(ren).

- ❖ Take an interest in your child's work and encourage maximum effort.
- ❖ Become acquainted with the school, its programs, and its staff through scheduled teacher conferences, attendance at Parent Night programs, and participation in PTA affairs.
- ❖ Provide adequate supervision over study habits, instrument practicing, meeting of school obligations, health habits, and recreational activities.
- ❖ Cooperate with supporting teachers who find it necessary to contact you regarding your child's progress or problems your child may be having in school.
- ❖ When possible, time your vacations to coincide with school vacations.
- ❖ Help your child understand that school is their work and that regular and punctual attendance is expected, as is appropriate dress.
- ❖ If there is something troubling your child, please contact his/her teacher. If you need more assistance, please contact the principal.
- ❖ Parents/guardians are not allowed in the lunchroom without permission from the principal.
- ❖ Put your child's name on clothing and lunch boxes. The lost and found is located near the nurse's office.

