



ONTEORA

BUDGET 2024

CENTRAL SCHOOL DISTRICT

Proposed 2024-2025 School Budget is Below Tax Levy Limit;

Continues All Educational Programs and Supports Capital Improvements

The Onteora Board of Education is proposing a \$62,325,500 budget for the 2024-2025 school year, a budget increase of 1.64 percent that represents a 3 percent levy increase, which is \$305,534 less than the New York State tax levy limit calculation for a simple majority voter approval. This is the 13th year in a row that Onteora has proposed a budget at or below the allowable tax levy limit calculation.

Although cost reductions were needed to offset the impact of rising costs and the loss of revenue from the Coronavirus Response and Relief Supplemental Appropriations (which ended in April) and American Rescue Plan funds (which end in September), the proposed budget preserves educational programs and services for students, including supports for mental health and social and emotional learning. Safety enhancements and classroom updates are also supported.

This was accomplished by leveraging savings created by a dozen retirements and a resignation; the decrease in six bus runs due to the closure of Phoenicia Elementary School; eliminating unutilized stipends; and prepayment of debt for Energy Performance Contract (EPC) Project and BOCES debt; as well as strategically applying fund balance to reduce the tax levy.

The budget also includes a second proposition to support the District's strategic approach to maintaining aging facilities without increasing the tax levy.

"We've strategically budgeted for expenses like academic supports and facilities improvements by leveraging funding sources that benefit us the most fiscally," explains Assistant Superintendent for Business Monica LaClair. "Our goal is to be as fiscally prudent as possible without negatively impacting student programs."

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Grade 2 Students Act as Pond Keepers

READ MORE ON PAGE 2



Sharon McInerney's Grade 2 students observe the pond creatures that they were tasked with caring for and studying as part of the Mohonk Preserve's Pond Keepers program. Pictured are (from left to right) Letty Huppert, Arlo Peltzman, Evelyn Han, Lucy Lynch, and Billie O'Neal.

Budget Highlights

- ★ Supports the Grade 6 transition to the MS and Phoenicia Elementary students' move to Bennett Elementary
- ★ Preserves educational programs and services for students
- ★ Supports mental health and social and emotional learning
- ★ Continues to support the transformation of traditional classrooms into "Active Learning Spaces" at the MS/HS
- ★ Continues to support technology updates
- ★ Funds the new transportation contract and the purchase of two buses to replace aged, high-mileage vehicles
- ★ Presents a tax levy below the tax levy limit for the 13th year in a row



 **NEW PAYMENT INFO**  **NEW LOCATION**

SEE PAGE 5 FOR DETAILS

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CENTRAL SCHOOL DISTRICT
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To Postal Customer

★★★
VOTE
MAY 21
★★★

The Annual Budget Vote and Election of Trustees will take place on Tuesday, May 21, 2024 from 2 PM-9 PM. Qualified voters may vote at ANY of the three Elementary Schools (Bennett, Phoenicia, or Woodstock).

BOARD OF EDUCATION
Cindy Bishop, President
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SUPERINTENDENT OF SCHOOLS
Victoria McLaren

NEWSLETTER EDITING & DESIGN
Ulster BOCES Community Relations

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AP European History Students Act as Curators While Learning History

This winter, students in David Nelsen-Epstein's AP European History class put themselves in the shoes of a museum curator, planning the details and design of a hypothetical exhibition. After studying the time period known as "The Age of Anxiety," spanning 1900-1939, students were encouraged to think about some of the themes of the era. And what better way to represent the human experience than through art?

Mr. Nelsen-Epstein enlisted the help of Guggenheim Museum Director of Collections and Senior Curator Tracey Bashkoff to help his students learn about the process of developing and curating an art exhibition.

During a Skype call, students learned about how Ms. Bashkoff went about creating a very well-received art exhibition titled, "Hilma af Klint: Paintings for the Future." She explained why she chose to spotlight this particular artist, how she went about selecting pieces from hundreds of possible choices, and what themes she drew from the artist's work.

After being inspired by the conversation, students then set about thinking and designing their exhibits—and the results were quite impressive. Oskar Baron chose to study expressionism in music. "World War I changed the style of music," he explained. "I chose pieces by the French composer Maurice Ravel, who was a medic in the war, and I analyzed the way his music reflected these changes."

"He used such expressionist musical elements as texture changes, contrasting dynamics, and even sounds of water in his compositions," Oskar added.

Grade 10 student Harsimran Kaur chose to curate an exhibition of the works of the Polish painter Tamara de Lempicka, who depicted the growing independence of women with her Art Deco portraits of aristocrats. "In her bold, colorful portraits she showed that women have desires, too. She showed the beginnings of the modern woman," Harsimran explained.

Gemma Holstein, Grade 10, focused on an artistic movement called rayonism, a style of abstract art that was developed in Russia in the early 1900s. What drew Gemma to rayonism was the use of light play, and she showcased the works of founders Mikhail Larionov and Natalia Goncharova in her exhibition. Pointing to a painting she chose called "Blue-Green Forest" by Goncharova, Gemma explained how the artist used everyday scenery in her paintings. "The use of light reflections off the trees is what makes this work so visually pleasing," she said.

"Art reflects the thoughts and feelings of a time period," said Mr. Nelsen-Epstein. "So incorporating it into history lessons can be a fun and effective way to learn."



Grade 10 student Harsimran Kaur created a brochure for an exhibition of the works of the Polish painter Tamara de Lempicka.



Lucia McDonagh created a brochure for an exhibition on the works of Swedish artist Hilma af Klint.

Grade 2 Students Act as Pond Keepers CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

In March, students in Allison Mitchell and Sharon McInerney's Grade 2 classes at Phoenicia Elementary School had a special visitor from the Mohonk Preserve—who brought some special visitors of her own!

The young scientists, who have already become well-versed in all things biology, including concepts like photosynthesis, producers and consumers, and insect metamorphoses, enjoyed a lively chat with Outdoor Educator Lauren Borer about pond life. And wow, was she impressed with their knowledge!

Students imagined what would happen if their classrooms were suddenly transformed into a pond, making hypotheses about what biodiversity there would be and how each organism would survive. Then they went ahead and created a living, breathing pond in their classrooms (in miniature, of course!)

As part of their "Pond Keepers" project, the students in each classroom created their own mini pond ecosystem, complete with a batch of macroinvertebrates that Ms. Borer had left. The students took care of and studied the creatures during their two-week visit, feeding them, observing them, and creating questions about the behaviors they saw.

The young ecologists took each of the macroinvertebrates out of their tank and carefully examined them. Using keys and diagrams that described each organism's locomotion, diet, camouflage, breathing characteristics, and defense mechanisms, the students utilized skills of comparing and contrasting to solidly identify each critter.

Mrs. McInerney's students identified caddisfly larvae, damselfly nymphs, backswimmers, crayfish, water boatmen, and tadpoles. Ms. Mitchell's students identified caddisfly larvae, damselfly nymphs, backswimmers, water boatmen, tadpoles, two salamanders, and even a water scorpion. The work also included sketching and labeling diagrams of the pond creatures.

The "Pond Keepers" in Ms. Mitchell's class loved the project so much that they even wrote poems to the macroinvertebrates they studied. In addition, students in both classes enjoyed sharing their knowledge with the younger students in Kindergarten.

Cavin Turck observed a lot of adaptive behaviors in his classroom pond. "It was interesting to see how good the tadpoles were at camouflaging, and how the creatures interacted," he said. "We watched the newts trying to get away when the dragonfly nymph was attacking it."

Allyson Cabrera Lopez was impressed by how "Big Guy," a large tadpole, had developed longer back legs. "He even started his front ones!" she enthused. Vivian Swinehart said, "It was cool to watch the newts go to the surface for air and then float down again."



Mohonk Preserve Outdoor Educator Lauren Borer shows students in Sharon McInerney's Grade 2 class an interesting creature known as a water scorpion. Looking on (from left to right) are Phoenicia students Billie O'Neal, Sophia Brown, Simon Swinehart, and Ryan Kothe.



Using a Pond Creatures chart to identify their new "friends" that are on loan from the Mohonk Preserve, Phoenicia Pond Keepers Vivian Swinehart and Raven Walley use skills of comparing and contrasting to make a hypothesis.



Phoenicia Grade 2 teacher Sharon McInerney and one of her students, Evelyn Han, check out the pond creatures that her class was tasked with watching over as part of the "Pond Keepers" project with the Mohonk Preserve.



Phoenicia students in Allison Mitchell's Grade 2 class look closely at the pond creatures and identify several of them, including caddisflies, newts, and tadpoles. Pictured are (from left to right): Vivian Swinehart, Annie VanKleeck, Sadie Downes, and Bryce Rabuffo.

Message from the Superintendent

Dear **Onteora Community Members,**

I would like to begin by thanking everyone who advocated with our elected state representatives for the restoration of the Save Harmless provision of Foundation Aid.

It was difficult to develop the proposed budget without being able to project the amount of funding we would receive from the State. Our elected representatives and community rallied to voice their objections to the Governor's initial budget proposal, which initially included a \$3 million loss of State aid to Onteora. As a result of your support, when the State finally adopted its budget on April 20th, our Foundation Aid was restored (at least for this year). This allowed us to move forward with a budget proposal with a tax levy that is once again below the allowable tax levy limit.

We have been granted a one-year reprieve, but it is likely that next year's State budget will once again include cuts to Onteora, as the Governor has been clear that the formula will be adjusted moving forward to account for districts like Onteora that have experienced significant declines in enrollment but have continued to receive the same level of Foundation Aid due to the Save Harmless provision. The State included funding for an analysis of the Foundation Aid formula, and we have been put on notice that our funding is likely to be reduced in the 2025-2026 school year. We have advocated for a gradual reduction over several years so that we can adjust incrementally.

Our Optimizing Onteora plans continue to progress. We are excited to host four Community Gatherings designed to co-create our vision of the central campus. There will be two Sharing Sessions in May (one in person and one virtual) and two in-person Community Forums in June. You can learn about these gatherings by visiting our webpage at www.onteora.k12.ny.us/centralcampus. If you would like to attend, please RSVP on the website so that we can plan accordingly.

The Bennett garden was built in April, and it looks incredible. Thank you to all of the PTA members, teachers, and families who imagined it, designed it, and came out to help build it. We are also looking forward to the community build for the Bennett playground addition, which will take place on Friday, May 31st, in the afternoon, and Saturday, June 1st. We will be sharing a sign-up for each of the days, with Saturday being split into two time slots for volunteers.

May and June are busy months for our schools. I look forward to seeing our students, families, and community members at the many upcoming events. Don't forget to mark your calendars for June 8th from 12-4 PM for Phoenicia Elementary School's special event to commemorate the closing of the building and to celebrate the 60 incredible years the school has served our students.

Victoria McLaren

SUPERINTENDENT OF SCHOOLS

Onteora Elementary Teachers on the Cutting "Edge" of State Science Learning Standards

Bennett Elementary School teachers Elizabeth Corsitto (Grade 4) and Jolie Moorhus (Special Education) recently participated in a series of three dynamic workshops aimed at allowing educators that delved into the complexities of the New York State Pre-K through Grade 5 Science Learning Standards. The workshops were organized by Ulster BOCES Educator Edge.

Attendees had the opportunity to step into the shoes of students, taking part in a series of hands-on experiences. From intricate experiments to collaborative problem-solving, the workshops provided a rich environment for exploration and discovery.

Both teachers came back chock-full of new ideas, which they immediately put to use in the classrooms!

"In my classroom, we have applied the idea we learned of the 'anchor phenomenon,' which is to use observable, real-life contexts—phenomena—that form the basis of a question or a problem to be solved," Mrs. Corsitto said. "This was very accessible to the students because it is much more inquiry-based and anchored in the everyday world."

Mrs. Moorhus reported that her students successfully used the anchor phenomenon the very next day, during a lesson on energy and circuits. "Students don't have anything to connect the vocabulary words to until they investigate the phenomenon," she said. "So instead of beginning with vocabulary words, I gave the students the parts of a circuit and asked them if they could use the materials to light the bulb."

"It was a different way of thinking and more interesting for the students. The excitement was intense! I could see the engagement and participation went to the next level," Mrs. Moorhus added.

Grade 4 student Carson Douglas thoroughly enjoyed the lesson. "We worked together and made the bulb light," Carson said. "We are able to do fun stuff."

Another important concept the teachers learned during the sessions was something called "cross-cutting concepts" (CCC), which are fundamental themes that apply to multiple scientific disciplines. "We learned that the tools we already have and are using can be applied to other areas of everyday teaching," said Mrs. Moorhus. Since then, the teachers have been able to incorporate the CCC into learning centers and learning stations, and even indoor recess. "We have used games like the 'Cat's Cradle' to work with clapping patterns; 'Hi Ho! Cherry-O' to practice scale, portion, and quantity; several building games to work on structure and function; and even tuning forks in water to show cause and effect," she said.

"I really enjoyed working in pairs to create models and then critiquing the pros and cons before we revised them," said Mrs. Moorhus. "This gave us the chance to understand how we would adapt this for our own classrooms."

During the course of the school year, multiple teachers in grades 3-6 have also attended similar grade-level workshops through the Ulster BOCES Educator Edge program.



Bennett Elementary teachers Elizabeth Corsitto (left) and Jolie Moorhus build their "dream houses" during a workshop with Ulster BOCES Educator Edge on New York State Pre-K through Grade 5 Science Learning Standards.

NAMASTE!

STUDENTS AT WOODSTOCK ELEMENTARY SCHOOL enjoyed a deep dive into yoga during their Physical Education classes the week before Spring Break!

The young yogis worked with local instructor Hari Prakaash on multiple techniques aimed at enhancing their physical and mental health, including breathing exercises, focusing and relaxation practices, and imaginative stretching poses like "cat," "cow," and "butterfly." At the end of their lessons, they were encouraged to "get their crazies out" by doing some free dancing.

"I try to expose the students to many kinds of movement and body awareness activities," said Physical Education teacher Sonja Rothe. "Yoga is a great way for students to build this awareness while strengthening their bodies and having a good time, too!"





Proposed 2024-2025 School Budget is Below Tax Levy Limit; Continues All Educational Programs and Supports Capital Improvements

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

FOLLOWING ARE SOME HIGHLIGHTS OF THE PROPOSED BUDGET.

Supports Improvements to Enhance Safety and Preserve Infrastructure

Funded within the budget is a transfer to enhance safety on the Boiceville campus by upgrading the Route 28 crosswalk and making repairs to the Middle/High School parking lot that will ease the flow of traffic. Corridor ceiling repairs at the Middle/High School are also included.

Supports Restructuring and Transition Plan

The proposed budget supports the District’s restructuring plan to relocate Grade 6 to the Middle School and Phoenicia Elementary students to Bennett. The budget supports the positive integration of students into their new school communities through initiatives to help them build a shared identity—such as field trips or other community-building activities. Ensuring that students have a welcoming, functional, and robust learning environment continues to be a priority for the District, as it moves toward a more optimized, central campus configuration.

Enhances Academic Opportunities with the Expansion of Active Learning Spaces

Classrooms and other learning spaces in the Middle/High School continue to be updated to provide students with innovative, flexible spaces that support 21st century learning. Active learning spaces support multiple learning configurations that facilitate both independent and group work in order to develop communication and collaboration, as well as creative and critical thinking skills.

Addresses Transportation Needs

The proposed budget includes the cost of three new transportation contracts: one for home-to-school transportation, one for field trips and sports, and one for summer school (both regular and special education). The bids were awarded to First Student, Inc., and the contracts will begin on July 1, 2024. The contracts will continue to give the District flexibility, as they allow the addition and removal of bus runs as needed. In addition, the proposed budget will allocate \$255,000 for the purchase of two buses for Onteora’s transportation program, which will replace aging vehicles that have reached the end of their useful life. One of the vehicles carries 28 passengers, and the other carries 66. This will give the District more flexibility to do its own runs for BOCES students and students attending Special Education programs without having to contract with outside bus companies.

Restores State Funding for Another Year

Governor Kathy Hochul initially proposed the elimination of the “Save Harmless” provision that would have cut Onteora’s Foundation Aid by \$3 million in the 2024-2025 school year and an additional \$3 million in 2025-2026. After an outpouring of advocacy from our elected representatives, local community, and concerned citizens throughout New York, the State finally adopted a late budget on April 20th that restored the aid for one more year.

“It is a reprieve,” said Superintendent Victoria McLaren, noting that plans to re-evaluate the formula for future years are already underway. “Onteora’s continuing declining enrollment, as well as its increase in property wealth, makes the District susceptible to the State’s probable changes in the future. Essentially, like all New York school districts, Onteora needs to prepare for a future with less State assistance,” she said, adding that she will continue to advocate for a gradual change.

PROPOSITION 2:

Invests in Capital Improvements with No Increase to the Tax Levy

A second proposition asking voters to approve the use of a maximum amount of \$1.95 million that is saved in two voter-approved Capital Reserve Funds created in 2021 and 2023 is included on the ballot. The Capital Reserves are funded specifically to support facilities upgrades and legally cannot be used for other purposes, such as offsetting the revenue gap in the operating budget.

These funds will be used to create a new cafeteria serving line at the Middle School/High School to improve the flow of students during lunchtime, as well as provide any additional money that may be needed to cover the costs of existing projects that were approved by voters last year, but have been delayed by the New York State Education Department, and so are now planned for the Summer of 2025. Anticipating price increases related to rising costs and including them in this proposition ensures that funding will be available to complete the upgrades. If funds are not needed, they will be returned to the Capital Reserve account.

The money, if needed, would supplement funds already allocated and voter-approved for the construction of a security vestibule for enhanced security at the Middle/High School; the purchase of a new generator at the High School; an improved cafeteria canopy for outdoor seating at the Middle/High School; classroom renovations, roof repairs; and improvements to the exterior doors at Woodstock and Phoenicia Elementary Schools.

What is a Contingency Budget?

If Onteora’s proposed budget fails, the District would have the option of re-submitting the same budget, presenting a different budget, or going to a contingency budget. A second budget vote would be held on June 18, 2024, a date established by New York State.

If a budget is defeated a second time, then the District would be required to adopt a contingency budget. Under a contingency budget, the 2024-2025 tax levy would remain at the same level as the 2023-2024 school year. This would require a reduction in the budget of a total of \$1,410,702. A contingency budget would eliminate all equipment purchases (\$450,000) from the budget. There would need to be an additional \$960,702 eliminated from the budget to reach the contingency budget amount. By law, the District would also need to eliminate free community use of facilities. Under a contingency budget, the Property Tax Rebate is also discontinued, which further harms our community.

Please Vote

The community is encouraged to participate in the school budget vote and election of Board of Education members on Tuesday, May 21, 2024, from 2-9 PM. Qualified voters may vote at ANY of the three Elementary Schools (Bennett, Phoenicia, or Woodstock), or may vote by absentee or early mail ballots. Information about applying for and receiving absentee or early mail ballots is available on the District’s website.

ONTEORA HIGH SCHOOL HAS ONCE AGAIN EARNED A SPOT ON THE U.S. NEWS & WORLD REPORT’S LIST OF THE BEST U.S. HIGH SCHOOLS!

Onteora is ranked 263 in New York State, and 2,782 in the national ranking on the 2024 list. The school’s Advanced Placement (AP) Exam participation rate, which is 45 percent, as well as its graduation rate, which is 95 percent, are among the factors used in determining rankings. Performance on state-required tests and how well the school prepares its students for college was also considered.

The U.S. News & World Report’s “scorecard” for Onteora took note that mathematics proficiency among students stands at 87 percent, and reading proficiency at 88 percent.

Principal Lance Edelman was thrilled. “I am extremely proud of our students, faculty, and staff,” he said. “Despite being such a small high school, we are continuing to find ways to provide our students with various opportunities to excel. Our students continue to take advantage of these opportunities and continue to shine.”



JOIN US AT THE PHOENICIA FAREWELL FAIR!

WHEN: JUNE 8 • 12-4 PM

Come celebrate the good times that were had at Phoenicia Elementary during its incredible 60-year history. This special event is open to all who have been a part of Phoenicia Elementary, past and present.

Special thanks to the Phoenicia PTA, with help from Phoenicia’s staff and many community volunteers, for hosting this event.



Onteora school taxpayers, please take note that the District is now partnering with The Bank of Greene County for tax collection. Please update your records to reflect the new payment address below.

BY MAIL:

Onteora Central School District,
Tax Collector
P.O. Box 1025
Woodstock, NY 12498

IN PERSON:

The Bank of Greene County
81 Mill Hill Road
Woodstock, NY 12498
Hours: M-TH - 9 AM-5 PM
FRI - 9 AM-6 PM
Sat - 9 AM-1 PM

PAYMENT METHODS ACCEPTED IN PERSON: Cash, Check, Money Order

GO TO WWW.ONTEORA.K12.NY.US FOR FURTHER DETAILS!!

TAX INFORMATION

What is the Tax Levy?

The tax levy is the total amount of taxes a school district raises to help fund its budget, after accounting for all other revenue resources. The tax levy is the basis for determining the tax rates for each municipality within a school district. Tax rates are impacted by the changes in town assessments and state equalization rates, and are not determined by the school district. The Board of Education has adopted a budget that utilizes a 3 percent increase in the tax levy, which is \$305,534 below the allowable increase of the tax cap calculation.

Since the budget is below the State Tax Levy Limit, why do I have to vote?

Even though the District's proposed tax levy increase is less than the allowable calculation under the New York State Tax Levy Limit (tax cap) parameters, voter approval is still needed. Under the 2012 legislation, commonly called the Two Percent Tax Cap law, if the proposed budget is defeated two times, the District would have to make budget reductions to reach a zero percent tax levy increase. In addition to requiring the elimination of all equipment purchases (\$450,000), an additional \$960,702 of reductions to non-mandated programs would be necessary to reach this level. In addition, by law, fees would have to be charged for facilities use. Under a contingency budget, the Property Tax Rebate is also discontinued.

Bennett Elementary School Musicians Shine in "Music in Our Schools" Performances

THE TALENTED MUSICIANS OF BENNETT ELEMENTARY SCHOOL'S Grade 5/6 Orchestra, Chamber Ensemble, Jazz Band, and Youth Chorale traveled to the Empire State Plaza Concourse in Albany on March 11th to perform in honor of Music in Our Schools Month.

Every year, New York State celebrates the importance of music in schools by inviting young musicians to demonstrate their skills by performing on the famous concourse. This is the second year that student musicians from Bennett have participated, and this time they were able to meet with State Senator Peter Oberacker!

The Bennett 5/6 Grade Orchestra, directed by Karen McKenna, wowed passersby with pieces that included "Sahara Crossing" by Richard Meyer and "Sailors' Song" by Mark Williams. In addition, Grade 6 violinist Erin Han performed "Humoresque" by Antonín Dvořák. The Bennett Chamber Ensemble also performed a variety of short pieces, including "Turkey in the Straw," an American folk song, and the "William Tell Overture" by Gioachino Rossini.

Following the string performances, the Jazz Band and Youth Chorale, directed by Harvey Boyer, took to the stage. They opened with a combined, show-stopping rendition of "Rag Mop" by the Ames Brothers. The Jazz Band then impressed with "Chillin'" by Norman White, which featured solos by Jameson Driscoll and Colden Burgher on alto saxophone, and Emerick Lynch on baritone saxophone. The budding musicians also performed "So What" by Miles Davis, which featured many students, including Tug Bennett on trombone, Ann Louise Leggett on piano, and Ivy Bryant on the xylophone. Their presentation concluded with a crowd favorite called "Hot Chocolate" by Glen Ballard and Alan Silvestri.

Afterwards, the Bennett musicians met with Senator Oberacker, who had listened appreciatively to their performances and even took the time to pose for a few photos.

Baxter Bryant, a Grade 6 Orchestra bass player and Jazz Band bassist and percussionist, thoroughly enjoyed



Bennett Elementary School musicians in the Orchestra, Chamber Ensemble, Jazz Band, and Youth Chorale met with State Senator Peter Oberacker after their performances at the Music in Our Schools Month celebration.



Bennett Elementary School Jazz Band musician Jameson Driscoll (Grade 6) performs a solo at the Music in Our Schools Month celebration.

the trip. "It was an honor to play for a large crowd of people, and it was super cool to meet a senator!" he said.

Eden Lindwasser, a Grade 4 violinist in the Grade 5/6 Orchestra and the Chamber Ensemble, said, "Going to Albany was a lot of fun. I really enjoyed performing, and I hope we can go again next year!"

Grade 5 cellist Wataru Frazier said, "I really liked performing on the concourse because people walking through stopped to listen to us. It was a free concert, and strangers could listen to our fabulous playing!"

The Bennett Music teachers were grateful their students were given the opportunity to perform again in Albany. "Many thanks to the parents who traveled to listen to the performances and support our student musicians!" said Mrs. McKenna.



The Bennett Elementary School Jazz Band participated in a Music in Our Schools Month performance at the Empire State Plaza Concourse in Albany on March 11th. Pictured are (from left to right): Dylan Jared (Grade 6), Ann Louise Leggett (Grade 5), Ivy Bryant (Grade 5), and Baxter Bryant (Grade 6).



The Bennett Elementary School Grade 5/6 Orchestra showed off their musical talents during a Music in Our Schools Month performance at the Empire State Plaza Concourse in Albany.



WHAT YOU WILL SEE ON THE BALLOT

2024-2025 BUDGET PROPOSITION #1

BE IT RESOLVED that the Onteora Central School District Board of Education be and is hereby authorized to expend the sums set forth under the various headings which are voted upon in gross and not in detail in the total amount of \$62,325,500 for the year commencing July 1, 2024 and ending June 30, 2025, and the Board is authorized to levy and collect the necessary tax thereof on the taxable property of the District.

USE OF CAPITAL RESERVE PROPOSITION #2

SHALL THE Board of Education of the Onteora Central School District be authorized to reconstruct and construct improvements to District-wide facilities, including funding additional costs for current projects within the various locations within the Onteora Middle School/High School, Bennett Elementary School, Woodstock Elementary School and Phoenicia Elementary School, the Classroom Renovation Phase III project that also includes a security vestibule and canopy and a new serving line at the Onteora MS/HS Cafeteria, and the acquisition of equipment, machinery, apparatus and incidental work, at an estimated maximum cost of \$1,950,000, which amount shall be funded entirely from the 2021 and 2023 Capital Reserve Fund?

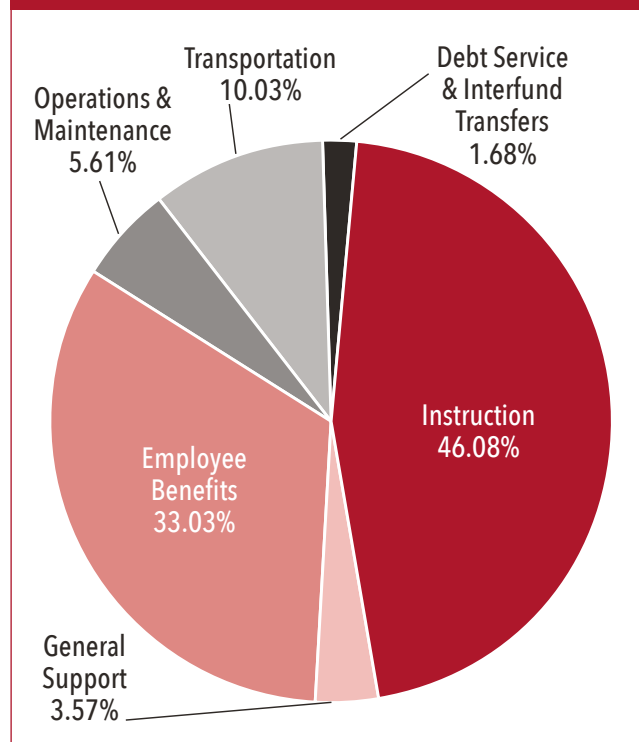
BOARD CANDIDATES: (VOTE FOR ANY TWO)

- Coryn Nadeau
- Cynthia "Cindy" Bishop
- Jillian Kahn Urrutia
- Eric "Rick" Knutsen

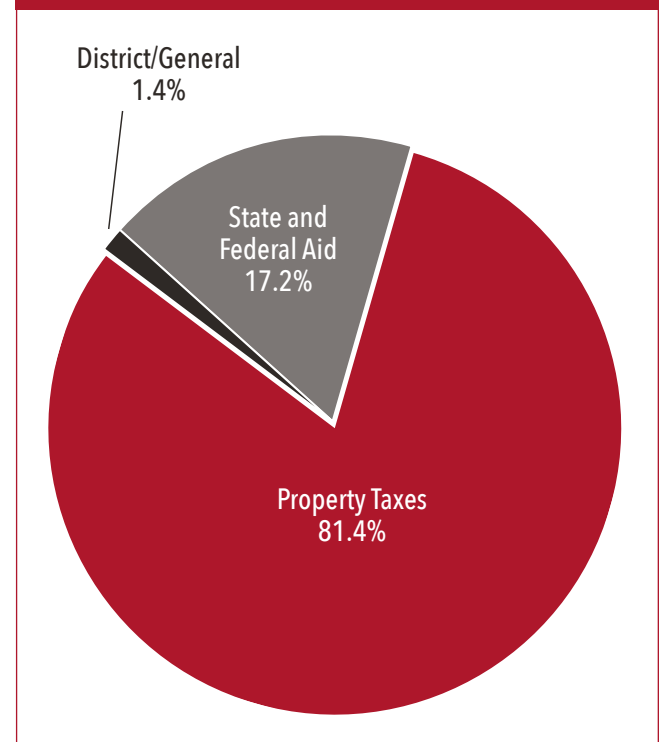
2024-2025 Budget Summary

	Administrative	Program	Capital
Instruction	\$1,964,975	\$26,752,301	\$0
General Support	\$2,161,953	\$55,000	\$7,500
Employee Benefits	\$2,222,383	\$16,902,220	\$1,462,205
Operations & Maintenance	\$0	\$95,000	\$3,400,829
Transportation	\$0	\$5,997,532	\$255,000
Debt Service & Interfund Transfers	\$0	\$485,000	\$563,602
TOTAL	\$6,349,311	\$50,287,053	\$5,689,136
Percentage of Budget	10.2%	80.7%	9.13%

Proposed Budget by Expense



Budgeted Revenues



QUESTIONS & ANSWERS ABOUT VOTING

Am I Eligible to Vote?

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

Absentee & Early Mail Ballot Process

A new voter law has been enacted in New York that allows eligible voters to now apply for, obtain, and cast an Early Mail Ballot in advance of the annual budget vote and board election. Absentee Ballots are still available. The steps for obtaining an Absentee or Early Mail Ballot are the same.

To obtain an Absentee or Early Mail Ballot, an eligible voter must first fill out an application, which can be printed from the District's website, be picked up in person, or be requested by mailing a letter to the District Clerk. Please note, the "Application for Absentee Ballot" requires an applicant to provide a qualifying reason.

Completed applications may be returned to the District Clerk in Central Administration

in person: 8 AM - 4 PM Monday through Friday at 4166 State Route 28, Boiceville, NY

by email: send a scanned file to districtclerk@onteora.k12.ny.us

by mail: Onteora Central School District, District Clerk, PO Box 300, Boiceville, NY 12412

Upon receipt of a completed application, a ballot will be issued. If the voter is requesting to have a ballot sent to them by mail, applications must reach the District Clerk by May 14th. If the voter is collecting their ballot in person, applications must be received by May 20th.

Completed ballots must be received by the District Clerk by 5 PM on Tuesday, May 21st.

For voting questions, or if you need special arrangements to complete the absentee ballot process, please call 845-657-6383 ext. 1030.

Download applications at: www.onteora.k12.ny.us/mailballot
www.onteora.k12.ny.us/absenteeballot

Where are Copies of the Proposed Budget Available?

Copies are available for review at the following locations:

- High School/Middle School Offices
- Bennett Elementary School
- Woodstock Elementary School
- Phoenicia Elementary School
- The Business Office at Central Administration
- Public Libraries within the District
- The District Website, www.onteora.k12.ny.us

Community members: DO YOU WANT TO RECEIVE NEWS AND UPDATES FROM ONTEORA CENTRAL SCHOOL DISTRICT?

Members of our community who do not have students currently enrolled—we want to keep you updated on the District's Optimizing Onteora restructuring plans as well as important news about other District initiatives and priorities. You can sign up to receive email updates from us here: www.onteora.k12.ny/maillinglist
 Sign up today!





Board of Education Candidates
(in the order they will appear on the ballot)

Four candidates are seeking election for two available seats. Both members will serve three (3) year terms commencing July 1, 2024 and expiring on June 30, 2027.

Coryn Nadeau, LICENSED AND BOARD CERTIFIED ART THERAPIST, EDUCATION LEADER, AND TEACHER, SELF CONTRACTOR Lives in Bearsville, NY Resident of District for 5 years

Coryn Nadeau has two young children who will enter the District in upcoming years. She holds a Master of Arts in Clinical Art Therapy from Long Island University and a Bachelor of Fine Arts and Psychology from Hofstra University. Coryn also is a certified Transformational Education coach and a certified Perinatal Mental Health practitioner. She is an active member of the community, and has organized multiple events through the YMCA, including the Douglas Watt Family Fund for Performing Arts and Fusion Academy and a free art healing and processing workshop for teachers and families impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic. Coryn has earned multiple awards for her work, including the Fred and Adele Astaire Award for school-based dance therapy programs, as well as academic scholarships to college programs. In addition, she has earned multiple Epic Education Awards, including the Innovation Award in 2019-2020 as well as 2021-2022, and an Ethos Commendation in 2020-2021.

Cynthia "Cindy" Bishop, CURRENT PRESIDENT OF THE ONTEORA BOARD OF EDUCATION Lives in Hurley Resident of District for 10 1/2 years

Cindy Bishop has been on the Onteora Board of Education since 2021 and currently serves as the president. She served students, staff, and families of the District as the director of Onteora's Pupil Personnel Services for over nine years with over 25 years of public education experience. Cindy's granddaughter is currently a student at Bennett Elementary School. Cindy holds a Bachelor of Science in Education and a Master of Science in Special Education from SUNY New Paltz. She also earned a Certificate of Advanced Study in Education Administration from Massachusetts College of Liberal Arts. Cindy is an active community member and is a member of the Hurley Democratic Committee, Woodstock Immigrant Support, and The Table at Woodstock.

Jillian Kahn Urrutia, EMPLOYEE AT JEAN TURMO, LTD. Lives in West Hurley Resident of District for 33 years

Jillian Kahn Urrutia graduated from Onteora High School in 2008. She earned a New York State Regents Diploma and an associate's degree in Theater Arts from SUNY Ulster. She now has two young children who are District students in Pre-Kindergarten and Kindergarten. Jillian is very active with the PTA at Woodstock and has helped organize numerous events.

Eric "Rick" Knutsen, MUSICIAN Lives in Woodstock Resident of District for 7 years

Eric Knutsen graduated from Yale University with a Bachelor of Arts in History. He was an active community member at PS 261 in Brooklyn, serving as PTA president, a literacy volunteer with Learning Leaders, and director of a school-wide event called "Student Showcase." An interesting fact about Eric is that he has been a five-time champion on the popular game show, "Jeopardy!"

School Budget Notice

OVERALL BUDGET PROPOSAL	Budget Adopted for the 2023-2024 School Year	Budget Proposed for the 2024-2025 School Year	Contingency Budget for the 2024-2025 School Year *
Total Budgeted Amount, Not Including Separate Propositions	\$61,322,550	\$62,325,500	\$60,914,798
Increase/Decrease for the 2024-2025 School Year		\$1,002,950	\$(407,752)
Percentage Increase/Decrease in Proposed Budget		1.64%	(0.66%)
Change in the Consumer Price Index		4.12%	
A. Proposed Levy to Support the Total Budgeted Amount	\$47,023,416	\$48,434,118	
B. Levy to Support Library Debt, if Applicable	\$0	0	
C. Levy for Non-Excludable Propositions, if Applicable **	\$0	\$0	
D. Total Tax Cap Reserve Amount Used to Reduce Current Year Levy	\$0	\$0	
E. Total Proposed School Year Tax Levy (A + B + C - D)	\$47,023,416	\$48,434,118	\$47,023,416
F. Total Permissible Exclusions	\$401,425	\$358,192	
G. School Tax Levy Limit, <u>Excluding</u> Levy for Permissible Exclusions	\$47,490,716	\$48,381,460	
H. Total Proposed School Year Tax Levy, <u>Excluding</u> Levy to Support Library Debt and/or Permissible Exclusions (E - B - F + D)	\$46,621,991	\$48,075,926	
I. Difference: G - H (Negative Value Requires 60.0% Voter Approval - See Note Below Regarding Separate Propositions) **	\$868,725	\$305,534	
Administrative Component	\$5,699,301	\$5,861,658	\$5,790,039
Program Component	\$50,574,981	\$51,303,406	\$50,414,323
Capital Component	\$5,048,268	\$5,160,436	\$4,710,436

* Provide a statement of assumptions made in projecting a contingency budget for the 2024-25 school year, should the proposed budget be defeated pursuant to Section 2023 of the Education Law.
Should the proposed budget be defeated pursuant to Section 2023 of the Education Law. A Contingent budget would eliminate all equipment purchases (\$450,000) from the budget. In addition, \$960,702 will be eliminated from the budget.

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

Description	Amount
Use of Capital Reserve	\$1,950,000

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



Under the Budget Proposed for the 2024-2025 School Year
\$342

Estimated Basic STAR Exemption Savings ¹

The annual budget vote for the fiscal year 2024-25 by the qualified voters of the Onteora Central School District, Ulster County, New York, will be held at Bennett, Phoenicia and Woodstock Elementary school(s) in said district on Tuesday, May 21, 2024 between the hours of 2:00 and 9:00pm, prevailing time in the Bennett, Phoenicia and Woodstock Elementary school(s), at which time the polls will be opened to vote by voting ballot or machine.

JOIN US TO SHAPE THE VISION OF OUR CENTRAL CAMPUS

AS WE LOOK TOWARD THE FUTURE OF ONTEORA, it is vitally important to engage the community on how we can make our planned central campus as successful as possible. To do this, we will hold a series of community gatherings for our community to share, learn, and imagine together. We have partnered with Point Road Studios to facilitate community conversations and gather your input on the vision of a central campus in Boiceville. Point Road's founder, Sharon Lipovsky, will facilitate these conversations. Sharon brings to the table a unique visioning expertise. Her professional background includes working with individuals, teams, and organizations to set, align, and lead toward a desired future. She is also a community resident and Onteora parent.

Sharing Sessions | May 13 at High School and May 14 via Zoom | 6-8 pm
These get-togethers are a chance for us to share our "wishes and worries" regarding the transition to a central campus. The ideas we generate will be used to help shape the community forums that follow.

Community Forums | June 11 and June 13 at High School | 6-8 pm
These gatherings are a chance for us to dream big together about what we really want for our students, teachers, staff, and community on a reimagined central campus. Sharon will be joined by an artist and visual scribe, who will help to capture and share our creative ideas.

Learn more about these community sessions and RSVP at
www.onteora.k12.ny.us/centralcampus

Science Olympiad Team Makes Onteora Proud

The Onteora Middle School Science Olympiad team, coached by Alyssa Babcock and Shaina Proietti, had a strong showing at the Lower Hudson Science Olympiad Regional competition on March 2nd, finishing in 22nd place overall and taking home two medals!

Science Olympiad is a nationwide non-profit organization. "It is a wonderful opportunity for students to learn a lot more about science topics they are interested in," said Ms. Babcock. "It also promotes teamwork, collaboration, and fun!"

Beginning in October and continuing into winter, the team had been meeting once or twice a week after school, preparing for the competition. Students from Grades 7-9 worked in pairs, building and engineering such items as a balsa wood tower, a wooden car, a ping-pong ball launcher, and an airplane. They also studied for competitive exams.

"The whole team worked so hard, and I am so proud of them!" Ms. Babcock exclaimed.

Jesper Peacock and Walker Melville snagged 8th place in the Flight competition for the plane they engineered and constructed. Jake Slater and Rama Gabriel earned 9th place in Fast Facts. The team earned 11th place, just barely missing a medal, in four other events, including Air Trajectory, Road



Science Olympiad team member Rama Gabriel (Grade 8) proudly wears the medal she earned at the Lower Hudson Science Olympiad Regional competition.



Grade 8 Science Olympiad team member Jesper Peacock holds an airplane he and classmate Walker Melville engineered and constructed for the Lower Hudson Science Olympiad Regional competition.



Science Olympiad team member Saige Gierloff (Grade 8) with the car she built and engineered.

Scholar, Disease Detective, and Reach for the Stars.

"I really enjoyed building the plane," said Jesper, who participated in the Science Olympiad in Grade 7 as well. "My plane this year is a lot better than last year!"

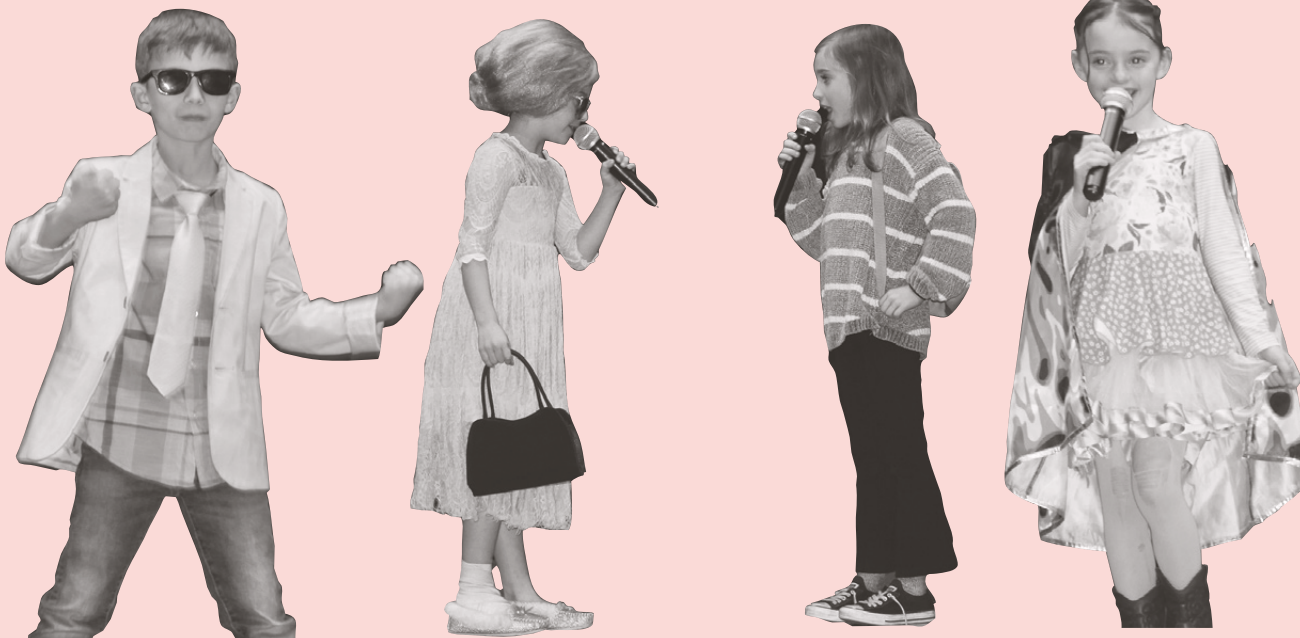
Congratulations to Grade 9 student Jake Slater; Grade 8 students Rama Gabriel, Saige Gierloff, Walker Melville, Jesper Peacock, Piper Love-Joyce, Leo Sorbellini, Miles Amitin; and Grade 7 students Lana Bernhardt-Waldo, Oliver Haas, Soe Moe Kan Tun, Oisin McDermott, Esme Drucquer, and Isabelle Terpening.

WOODSTOCK WOWS!

ON THE EVENING OF MARCH 8TH, Woodstock Elementary School (WES) students—and teachers—showed that they have what it takes to be a star!

Students in Kindergarten through Grade 3 brought a variety of entertainment to an eager audience of family, staff, and friends, including singing, dancing, gymnastics, the classic Abbott and Costello routine "Who's on First?", and so much more. Not to be outdone, WES teachers got in on the fun with two surprise performances, including a dance as their former elementary school selves, much to the delight of their students.

The show ended with a surprise conga line and a party on stage, wrapping up the perfect, fun-filled night. They were truly "on fire!"



Left to right: Grade 2 student Cassano Rega gave a star performance of "Uptown Funk" by Bruno Mars and amazed everyone with his dance moves; Grade 3 students Willa Hernandez (left) and Evelyn Neden (right) had everyone in stitches when they performed an original skit they penned called "Coins"; and Grade 1 student Edie Lehrer wowed the audience with a rendition of "Girl on Fire" by Alicia Keys. She was the first of two performers to choose this show-stopping tune.

KINDERGARTEN REGISTRATION NOW OPEN!

IT'S TIME TO REGISTER YOUR CHILD FOR KINDERGARTEN IF THEY ARE ELIGIBLE. The District's online Kindergarten registration system is now open. Children who turn five on or before December 1, 2024 are eligible to attend Kindergarten beginning in September 2024.

To register online, parents or guardians should go to www.onteora.k12.ny.us and click on "Registration & Displaced Families." The link for online registration is in the middle of the page. Please be sure to choose the 2024-2025 school year. Current Universal Pre-Kindergarten parents will be mailed information and do not need to complete the online form again.

Once your child is completely registered, you will be contacted with an appointment for Kindergarten screening. Screening will take place during the week of June 3-6, 2024.

If you have any questions you may contact Sharon Wood, Onteora's District Registrar, by calling 845-657-6383 ext. 1023 or emailing swood@onteora.k12.ny.us.

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 845-657-8851

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

Interim Director of Health, Physical Education, and Athletics
Jonnah O'Donnell 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

District Clerk
Amanda Gates 845-657-6383 x1030

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

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.