



BUDGET 2025

ONTEORA

CENTRAL SCHOOL DISTRICT

Proposed 2025-2026 School Budget is Below Tax Levy Limit:

Budget Prioritizes Students, Fiscal Stability, and the Future with Proposition 2

For the 2025-2026 school year, the Onteora Board of Education is proposing a budget of \$63,588,660, reflecting a 2.03% increase over the current year. The corresponding tax levy increase to support the proposal is 2.0% and remains below New York State's allowable levy increase of 2.99%, requiring a simple majority voter approval. This marks the 14th consecutive year that the Board has presented a budget that is at or below the State's tax cap: a testament to the District's consistent fiscal planning and commitment to the community's taxpayers.

"We remain deeply committed to providing comprehensive support—both academic and emotional," says Superintendent Victoria McLaren. "The proposed budget prioritizes students and reflects prudent long-term planning, keeping a smart use of fund balance, and a careful eye toward future fiscal challenges."

Prioritizes Programs & Services for Students

The proposed budget represents the culmination of a year-long, data-driven planning process and is anchored by a strong "student-first" philosophy. This approach ensures that all budget requests connected to teaching and learning, which are submitted on a building-by-building basis (such as field trips, guest speakers, and specialized programs), have been funded.

Priorities such as student mental health, after-school homework help, and extracurriculars continue to be funded, and the process for our Multi-Tiered Systems of Support (MTSS) and the implementation of the Branching Minds MTSS data system to support student growth are also supported. The successful Summer Skills Academy will also once again be offered.



CONTINUED
ON PAGE 4

Read About the Bennett Elementary School Literacy Fair on Page 4

VOTE
MAY 20
2 PM-9 PM

Budget Highlights

- ★ Continues to support all existing educational programs and services for students, including mental health supports, after-school homework help, extracurriculars, and the Multi-Tiered Systems of Support (MTSS) process and MTSS new data system
- ★ Restores the Summer Skills Academy
- ★ Enhances student safety through two School Resource Officers
- ★ Supports the Ulster BOCES Career & Technical Center relocation to the iPark 87 facility to provide students with career training opportunities in more than two dozen fields
- ★ Replaces an aged, high-mileage small school bus
- ★ Purchases a tractor, scissor lift, and utility terrain vehicle to maintain grounds
- ★ Leverages fund balance and savings to present a tax levy increase below the NYS tax cap level for the 14th year in a row

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To Postal Customer



Please see insert
for Capital Project
Information

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SUPERINTENDENT OF SCHOOLS

Victoria McLaren

NEWSLETTER EDITING & DESIGN

Ulster BOCES Community Relations



This publication was printed on recycled paper

CELEBRATING READ
ACROSS AMERICA WEEK
WITH FUN AND BOOKS!

BENNETT AND WOODSTOCK ELEMENTARY SCHOOLS were buzzing with reading excitement from March 3-7 as students and staff embraced Read Across America Week, a nationwide celebration sponsored by the National Education Association.

Highlights included a visit from *New York Times* children’s author Matthew Holm, a fun “book tasting” at Woodstock with Reading teachers Andrew Vail and Nicole Polacco, a PTA-sponsored book fair at Bennett, themed dress-up days like “Dress Like Your Favorite Animal” and “Crazy Hairstyle Day” at both schools, and plenty of cozy reading time throughout the week.

What a fantastic way to celebrate literacy and the joy of books!



Onteora Welcomes
School Resource
Officer at Woodstock
Elementary School

Please welcome Deputy Corey Halwick, Woodstock Elementary School’s new School Resource Officer (SRO)! Deputy Halwick assumed his new post on February 10.

Deputy Halwick is no stranger to our area. He grew up locally, in the Town of Ulster, and began a career in law enforcement in 2005 when he was hired by the Ulster County Sheriff’s Office as a part-time deputy. In 2010, he officially became a part of the Town of Woodstock community—first as a part-time police officer, and then in 2013, as a full-time police officer.

Deputy Halwick transferred to the Sheriff’s Office in 2025. He has many talents and skills. Currently, he is assigned to the Ulster County Emergency Response Team (UCERT), as well as the Marine Unit and the In-Water Rescue Team (IWRT) as a boat operator, rescue diver, and swift water technician.

When he is not busy in law enforcement, Deputy Halwick enjoys spending time with his family and working on home improvement projects. “I am excited about my new role as an SRO,” he said. “I look forward to being able to establish a positive relationship between the students and the law enforcement community.”



Deputy and SRO Corey Halwick

GROWING KNOWLEDGE:
First Graders Celebrate Agricultural Literacy Week



Grade 1 student Danny Simco Lefferts checks that his pumpkin seed is planted just right.

On March 18, Grade 1 students at Bennett Elementary School celebrated Agricultural Literacy Week with a special visit from a Cornell Cooperative Extension volunteer. The young learners in Alissa Schupp’s and Rachel Wood’s classes enjoyed a reading and a lively discussion of *The Pie That Molly Grew* by Sue Heavenrich, learning how a tiny seed can transform into a pumpkin—just like the one that Molly bakes into a pie to share! During the course of their discussion, the students explored topics ranging from gardening, to farming, to the vital role played by pollinating bees, and connecting these topics to the food that they eat. They eagerly shared their personal experiences with gardening and local farms, making predictions about which crops will be ready by fall. The best part of the lesson? Each student received a pumpkin seed to nurture over the coming months—gaining hands-on experience in plant growth, responsibility, and sustainability. Plus, it was a whole lot of fun!



Grade 1 students at Bennett Elementary School listen to a story read by a volunteer from Cornell Cooperative Extension during Agricultural Literacy Week.



Grade 1 students Lily Franceschina (left) and Leo Slovensky (right) place their pumpkin seeds where they can get sunlight.

Message from the Superintendent

Dear Onteora Community Members,

This year has been full of community partnership and collaboration in support of creating the future of Onteora and the development of a Capital Project that will be on the ballot as Proposition 2. I have been inspired by the participation of so many members of our community in this process. We have come together many times and dreamed together, shared ideas, engaged in the design process, and created a Central Campus vision that provides incredible opportunities for our students. We have held closely to our priorities of “Students First, Staff Forward, Fiscally Responsible, With Community” throughout this process.

I look forward to continuing this work after the vote and bringing this community vision to life for our students. We are committed to continuing the conversation as we move through this transformative process and keeping our community apprised of our progress. We will engage with faculty, staff, and students during the design phase and share the schedule of work so that everyone is up to date on our progress.

We are excited to see the capital improvements that were previously approved by our community come to life this summer. Our Middle School gymnasium is getting a much-needed renovation, and we are adding a security vestibule to the entrance of the Middle/High School. The students will be able to appreciate a permanent pavilion behind the cafeteria at the Middle/High School for lunch outside.

Thankfully, this budget season has been smoother than last year. Although we are bracing for future cuts to our State funding, our Foundation Aid remained in place this year, so we have been able to continue with all programs for our students. We also continue to fund the second SRO in our budget, who was added during this school year. Budget presentations can be reviewed online at www.onteora.k12.ny.us/budget.

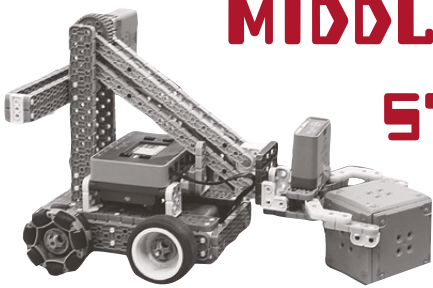
We have two Board of Education seats on the ballot this year, and three candidates. Our Board Trustees are elected officials who volunteer countless hours in service to our school community. We are grateful for each individual willing to step into this role and support our district.

We are coming to the end of the year and all of the milestones and celebrations this entails. We are incredibly proud of our students and all they have accomplished over the past year. I look forward to seeing all of their families at our end-of-year events. I encourage everyone to attend our High School graduation. It is the culmination of everything our students have achieved with the support of this generous and amazing community.

Please ensure that you vote on May 20th at either Bennett Elementary or Woodstock Elementary from 2 PM to 9 PM. Alternatively, you can obtain a ballot early and mail it in. Applications for early mail ballots can also be found on our webpage. Thank you for your support of our district.

Victoria McLaren

SUPERINTENDENT OF SCHOOLS



MIDDLE SCHOOL TECHNOLOGY STUDENTS DESIGN, BUILD, TEST, AND MORE

Grade 8 students in Doug Sanders’ Technology class at Onteora Middle School have been busy acquiring vital STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math) skills!

Students learned and utilized SolidWorks, an industry-standard CAD (computer-aided design) program that is used by companies around the world, to design and build a bridge truss. Then, in a winning combination of hands-on learning and real-world skills development, they tested their individual builds.

Each student slowly added sand to a bucket, which measured the amount of force applied to the roadbed of their bridge. Students recorded the weight of the sand just before the bridge broke, and thus, were able to evaluate the total efficiency of their structure.

For another project, students used block programming—which uses graphical blocks that represent standard coding concepts—to program a robot to perform specific functions on an obstacle course-type track. They programmed the robots to move forward, reverse, turn, go specific distances, and even utilize a claw feature to pick only red blocks up and move them.

“Programming can be a little tedious,” said student Byron Reznick. “But when you get it right, it is also very fun!”



Middle/High School Technology teacher Doug Sanders helps students Kenny Rogers (left) and Austin Martin (right) with a robotics project.



Oliver Haas (right) and CJ Gizzi (left) attempt to stack blocks manually using a remote control before programming the robot to stack them autonomously.

Mr. Sanders utilizes the strategy of differentiation in his class to allow for students to work at their own pace, ask as many questions as they would like, or even surpass the basic requirements of the assignments with further challenges. As a result, students in his class are always engaged.

“Onteora students are not strangers to robotics and other STEM activities,” he explained. “As early as elementary school, they begin using simpler kits to learn programming, and then take on more advanced and complex programming as they go along.”

Congratulations to the High School’s Harvard Model Congress team!

Twenty Onteora High School students traveled to Boston this winter to participate in the Harvard Model Congress, where they took on the roles of individual senators and representatives, as well as members of various executive branch organizations.

During their time there, the students wrote, debated, and voted on bills as members of the House Foreign Relations Committee; the House Select Committee on Intelligence; the House Space, Science and Technology Committee; the House Judiciary Committee; the Senate Commerce, Science, and Transportation (CST) Committee; and the Senate Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions Committee.

Other students represented South Korea (the Republic of Korea) in the G-20 intergovernmental forum, and Latvia and Algeria in the United States Agency for International Development. Two of our delegates argued and judged cases in the Supreme Court, and several others worked in the West Wing.

Special recognition goes to Onteora junior Oskar Baron, who won a “Best Delegate” gavel for his role on the Senate CST Committee, which focused on the topics of internet privacy, data regulation, generative AI (artificial intelligence), and misinformation.



Oskar Baron





Proposed 2025-2026 School Budget is Below Tax Levy Limit:

Budget Prioritizes Students, Fiscal Stability, and the Future with Proposition 2

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

Enhances School Safety

Ensuring our schools are safe places for students and staff is a top priority. This current school year, a second School Resource Officer (SRO) was added to the budget to provide dedicated support at both the Boiceville and Woodstock Elementary School campuses. The proposed budget continues to support both SRO positions, ensuring both campuses have the benefits of having on-site safety support in the event of an emergency.

Supports a New Career & Technical Education Center for our High School Students

The budget supports Onteora’s share of the cost of building and relocating the Ulster BOCES Career & Technical Center to a state-of-the-art workforce training facility at the iPark 87 complex (former IBM) in Lake Katrine. The new facility is anticipated to open to students in September 2025. Our High School juniors and seniors are able to enroll in half-day career training programs in more than two dozen career areas.

Provides Vehicles & Tools for School Operations

The 2025–2026 proposed budget reflects thoughtful spending in other areas as well. It includes \$225,000 for equipment purchases that will directly support District operations. This includes a new tractor, scissor lift, and utility terrain vehicle to assist with groundskeeping and maintenance needs. It also includes the replacement of a small, aging, high-mileage school bus—ensuring that the District’s transportation fleet remains safe and cost-effective to operate.

Anticipates Decreases in State & Federal Funding

In terms of revenue, Onteora is expected to receive only the minimum 2.0% increase in Foundation Aid from New York State, and fully anticipates a greater loss in State support next year as changes to the State Aid formula are rolled out. While less reliant on Federal funding, the District is also monitoring changes on the Federal level. As a result, the District is approaching the future with deliberate planning. The future loss of State Aid has become an important factor in preparing for a transition to a centralized campus structure—a move that aims to reduce costs while strengthening educational opportunities for all students (see Capital Project information on the insert).

Closes Budget Gap with Reductions and Fund Balance

Strategic cost reductions are also embedded in the budget. Three positions are being eliminated through retirement attrition. There are also program realignments—such as elimination of a BOCES program that no longer aligns with student needs, and cost savings in the school lunch program—made possible by staffing changes. These decisions allow the District to reduce expenses without impacting classroom instruction or staff morale.

After applying projected revenues and reductions, a \$2,518,408 budget gap remained. Fund balance was used to close this gap without cutting programs or further increasing the tax levy.

“Another outcome of this careful budgeting process is a reduced reliance on the District’s fund balance compared to previous years, which reflects progress toward greater long-term sustainability, even in the face of rising costs and an ever-shifting financial landscape,” says Assistant Superintendent for Business Monica LaClair.

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 17, 2025, 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 2025-2026 tax levy would remain at the same level as the 2024-2025 school year. This would require a reduction in the budget of a total of \$968,682. By law, the District would not be permitted to purchase any equipment and would also need to eliminate free community use of facilities.

Please Vote

The community is encouraged to participate in the school budget vote and election of Board of Education members on Tuesday, May 20, 2025, from 2-9 PM. Qualified voters may vote in person at either Bennett or Woodstock Elementary School, or may vote by absentee or early mail ballot. Information about applying for and receiving absentee or early mail ballots is available on the District’s website.



Bennett Elementary Holds First Literacy Fair

THE FIRST ANNUAL BENNETT ELEMENTARY LITERACY FAIR, held on March 6, was a huge success, with about 50 students, and many families, in attendance for the evening.

Students were first welcomed with a free book of their choice, generously donated by the PTA. Students and families were then able to attend a book fair, visit the Phoenicia Public Library table—and since math was the theme of the evening—go to the math “measuring station” and participate in a math-themed scavenger hunt.

Students and families then traveled to classrooms to listen to math-based interactive book read-alouds, read by teachers, and create a book-inspired craft to take home. The evening ended with delicious hot cocoa and cookies, donated by the PTA and the Phoenicia Diner. Principal Gabriel Buono led a spirited game of Bingo, during which 30 “book bundles” and game prizes were given away.

It was a memorable event promoting lifelong literacy!

Middle/High School Hosts Trivia Bowl



Board Trustee Rick Knutsen emcees at the Trivia Bowl.

Which came first—the chicken nugget or the Egg McMuffin? What four characters are named the most frequently in the Harry Potter series—besides Harry?

These questions, and so many more, challenged the teams at the Middle/High School’s first-ever Trivia Bowl, held on March 5. The event, which had an impressive showing of students and teachers interested in testing their

knowledge by playing this fun game, was sponsored by the Onteora Booster Club, and emceed by Board trustee—and former “Jeopardy!” contestant—Rick Knutsen!

Teams tackled such categories as “Trivia Potpourri,” “Where Have I Seen That?” (which involved identifying some very close-up photos of locations around our region), “The Marvel Cinematic Universe,” and “Six Truths and a Lie,” featuring facts and lies from Onteora teachers. Thank you to all who made this event possible!



High School Social Studies teacher David Nelsen-Epstein and his teammates ponder one of the questions at the Trivia Bowl.

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 2 percent increase in the tax levy, which is \$479,171 below the allowable increase of the tax cap calculation.

Our maximum allowable tax levy for 2025-2026 came in at \$49,881,971. We are proposing a tax levy of \$49,402,800, so we will be collecting \$479,171 less than the maximum we are allowed, or almost 1% less.

Since the tax levy is below the State Tax Cap, why do I have to vote?

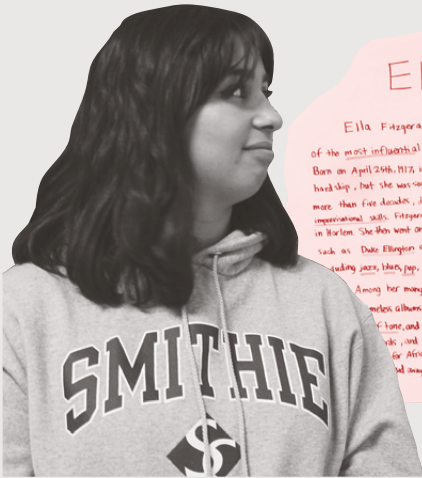
Even though the District’s proposed tax levy increase is less than the allowable calculation under the New York State Tax Levy Limit (tax cap) parameters, voter approval is still needed. Under the 2012 legislation, commonly called the Two Percent Tax Cap law, if the proposed budget is defeated two times, 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 (\$225,023), an additional \$743,659 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.

Register for
September 2025
Kindergarten
Now!

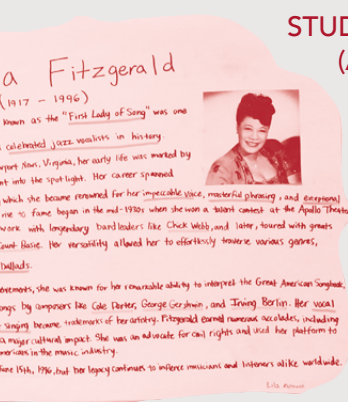
The District’s online registration system for Kindergarten is now open for September 2025. Visit www.onteora.k12.ny.us/registration. Please be sure to choose the 2025-2026 school year.

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 2, 2025. For questions about Kindergarten registration, please contact Sharon Wood, Onteora’s District Registrar, at 845-657-6383, ext. 1023, or swood@onteora.k12.ny.us.

African American Studies Students Bring History to Life



Lila Metawee shows the poster of her research on the American singer Ella Fitzgerald.



STUDENTS IN JASON CALINDA’S AP (ADVANCED PLACEMENT) AFRICAN AMERICAN STUDIES CLASS AT ONTEORA HIGH SCHOOL decorated the hallways with their historical marker projects in February—an opportune time to celebrate Black History Month!

Each student conducted in-depth research and created a poster presentation on two prominent African American figures, placing their work near relevant classrooms. For example, senior Eve Batista’s beautiful poster display on the writer and activist Alice Walker hangs near an English classroom, and senior Lila Metawee’s work on singer Ella Fitzgerald hangs near the music rooms and auditorium.

The course, based on a curriculum designed by scholars assembled by the College Board, is open to students in Grades 10-12. Upon successfully completing the course and achieving a score of 3 or higher on the AP exam in May, students can potentially earn college credits or the opportunity to skip foundational-level classes during their college years.

“The work is challenging, and the class gives students the opportunity to experience the rigors of a real college-level course,” explained Mr. Calinda. The course requires a comprehensive, thesis-based research project by year-end. Some students opt to build on their previous research for this assignment. Junior Amanuel Shim, for example, is using his research on American rapper and hip-hop artist Brendan McCarty as a springboard to explore the issues of violence and racism in the rap industry.

Senior Eleanor Wyman chose to research activist, abolitionist, and local historical figure Sojourner Truth. “Her life story is extremely powerful and should be an essential story for Americans to learn about, especially New Yorkers,” said Eleanor. “After she escaped slavery, she spent her life devoted to fighting systemic racism and the institution of slavery.”

Eleanor explained how Sojourner Truth challenged white feminism when she delivered her famous *Ain’t I a Woman?* speech at the Women’s Rights Convention in Akron, Ohio, on May 29, 1851. “Her words created a better, more equal foundation for the movement,” she said.

Jaelyn Ostling, Grade 12, chose the historical figure Claudette Colvin, who was a pioneer during the 1950s Civil Rights Movement. “Not many know that she was actually the first person to refuse to give up their seat on a segregated bus, nine months before Rosa Parks did,” Jaelyn said. “Claudette inspired people to fight for their rights. If she had not done that, I feel like people would still have been afraid,” she added.

Lily McNamara, Grade 12, chose to focus her studies on American rapper and singer-songwriter Lauryn Hill. “Most of the people we get to study aren’t as prevalent in current pop culture,” Lily explained. “I wanted to focus on someone who is still a household name in the R&B world, and Lauryn Hill made history by becoming the first African American woman to win a Grammy in the R&B category.”

Scarlett Andretta, Grade 12, chose to focus her research on the American writer and Presidential Medal of Freedom winner Maya Angelou. Scarlett explained how Angelou, the author of the novel *I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings*, has broken barriers and challenged societal norms. The author, she added, suffered hardship and abuse from authority figures in her childhood, especially her stepfather. Nevertheless, Scarlett said, “Her life is a remarkable example of someone who faced adversity, yet was able to turn her challenges into an emboldening force.” In her poster, Scarlett discusses how the novel, though controversial, has helped many other survivors of abuse feel empowered enough to tell their own stories.



Eve Batista displays her research poster on Alice Walker, an activist and an award-winning writer.

WHAT YOU WILL SEE
ON THE BALLOT

2025-2026 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 \$63,588,660 (which includes \$20,000 to support public library) for the year commencing July 1, 2025 and ending June 30, 2026, and the Board is authorized to levy and collect the necessary tax thereof on the taxable property of the District.

CAPITAL PROJECT
PROPOSITION #2

That the Board of Education of Onteora Central School District, in the Counties of Ulster and Greene, New York (the “District”), is hereby authorized to construct improvements and alterations to Bennett Elementary School and the Middle School/ High School and to construct site, athletic and recreational improvements; and to expend therefor an amount not to exceed the estimated total cost of \$70,500,000; (b) that the amounts of \$10,000,000 from the District’s “2023 Capital Reserve Fund”, approved by the voters of the District on May 16, 2023, and \$5,000,000 available from current funds of the District are each hereby authorized to be expended to pay a portion of said total cost, and such expenditures are hereby approved; and (c) that a tax is hereby voted in an aggregate amount of not to exceed \$55,500,000 to finance the balance of such total cost, such tax to be levied and collected in installments in such years and in such amounts as shall be determined by said Board of Education; and that in anticipation of said tax, bonds of the District are hereby authorized to be issued in the aggregate principal amount of not to exceed \$55,500,000 and a tax is hereby voted to pay the interest on said bonds as the same shall become due and payable.

BOARD CANDIDATES:
(VOTE FOR ANY TWO)

- Daniel Aliberte
- Jenny Jared
- Rory Smith

ANNUAL BUDGET VOTE
AND ELECTION OF TRUSTEES

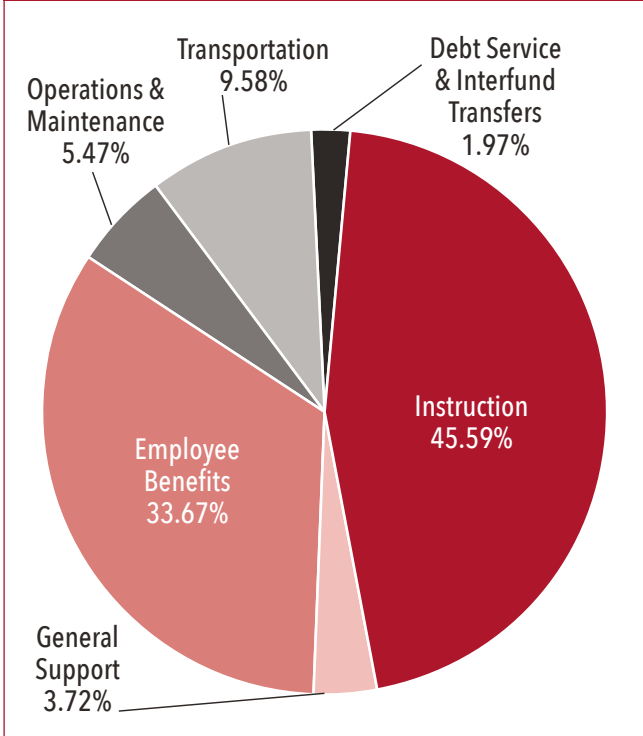
★ ★ ★
VOTE
Tuesday, May 20, 2025
from 2 PM-9 PM
★ ★ ★

Qualified voters may vote
at at Woodstock & Bennett
Elementary Schools.

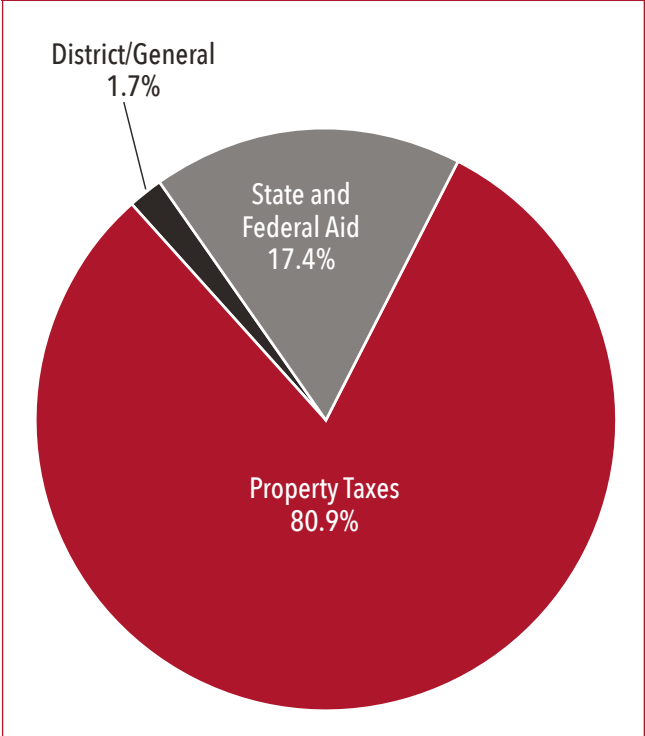
2025-2026 Budget Summary

	Administrative	Program	Capital
Instruction	\$2,002,132	\$26,985,565	\$0
General Support	\$2,131,714	\$0	\$234,998
Employee Benefits	\$2,362,022	\$17,221,133	\$1,829,113
Operations & Maintenance	\$0	\$150,000	\$3,329,412
Transportation	\$0	\$5,988,946	\$105,023
Debt Service & Interfund Transfers	\$0	\$435,000	\$813,602
TOTAL	\$6,495,868	\$50,780,644	\$6,312,148
Percentage of Budget	10.2%	79.9%	9.9%

Proposed Budget by Expense



Budgeted Revenues



QUESTIONS & ANSWERS ABOUT VOTING

Am I Eligible to Vote?

To be eligible to vote, you must meet the following criteria: be at least 18 years of age; be a U.S. citizen; be a resident of the Onteora Central School District for at least 30 days prior to the vote; not be prohibited from voting under Section 5-106 of the Election Law (e.g., individuals adjudged to be mentally incompetent)

Absentee & Early Mail Ballot Process

A new voter law in New York now allows eligible voters to apply for, receive, and cast an Early Mail Ballot ahead of the annual budget vote and board election. Absentee Ballots are still available. The process for obtaining either type of ballot is the same:

To obtain an Absentee or Early Mail Ballot, an eligible voter must first complete an application. Applications can be: downloaded from the District’s website, picked up in person, or requested by mailing a letter to the District Clerk.

Note: The “Application for Absentee Ballot” requires a qualifying reason.

Submit completed applications to the District Clerk in Central Administration:

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

By email: Send a scanned copy to districtclerk@onteora.k12.ny.us

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

Deadlines:

- If you want your ballot **mailed to you**, your application must be received by **May 13, 2025**
- If you plan to **pick up your ballot in person**, your application must be received by **May 19, 2025**
- **Completed ballots** must be received by the District Clerk no later than **5 PM on Tuesday, May 20, 2025**

For voting questions or to request special arrangements, 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
- The Business Office at Central Administration
- Bennett Elementary School
- Public Libraries within the District
- Woodstock Elementary School
- The District Website, www.onteora.k12.ny.us

Board of Education
Candidates

(in the order they will appear on the ballot)

Three candidates are seeking election for two available seats. Both members will serve three (3) year terms commencing July 1, 2025 and running through June 30, 2028.

Daniel Aliberte, PARALEGAL AT LYG LAW FIRM Lives in West Hurley Returned to the District 3 years ago

Daniel Aliberte is a Class of 2000 graduate of Onteora High School and earned a Bachelor of Science from SUNY Oneonta. He grew up in Onteora but left the area after graduation. He returned to the area three years ago and currently has one child who attends Woodstock Elementary School. He serves as an assistant coach for a local little league.

Jenny Jared, CHAIRMAN OF THE BOARD AND CO-FOUNDER OF THE COMMUNITY SERVICE NON-PROFIT UNITED WE OM Lives in Hurley Resident of District for 5 years

Jenny Jared has two children in the Onteora School District, one at Bennett Elementary School and one at Onteora Middle School. She holds a Bachelor of Fine Arts from Carnegie Mellon University. Jenny has been involved with the PTA and the Onteora Booster Club. She has been a part of the Woodstock Elementary School PTA, and was the president of Bennett Elementary School PTA from 2021-2024. She is currently a parent representative on the District Safety Committee, and is part of the Onteora Booster Club Leadership. She also served on a building-level Ad Hoc Committee in 2022, and on a Middle/High School Hiring Committee in 2024. In 2023, Jenny was the recipient of the Community Member Service Award, presented by the Onteora Teachers Association.

Rory Smith, WATERSHED MAINTAINER WITH THE DEPARTMENT OF ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION (DEP) Lives in the Town of Olive Resident of District for 23 years

Rory Smith has one child currently in the District, at Onteora High School, and another who graduated from Onteora High School in 2022. Rory served in the United States Army and received an Honorable Discharge. He served as a volunteer soccer coach for the Town of Olive for eight years, and as a member of the soccer board. Rory also worked for the Catskill Watershed Corporation, and before that, was self-employed as a carpenter for 20 years.

School Budget Notice			
OVERALL BUDGET PROPOSAL	Budget Adopted for the 2024-2025 School Year	Budget Proposed for the 2025-2026 School Year	Contingency Budget for the 2025-2026 School Year *
Total Budgeted Amount, Not Including Separate Propositions	\$62,325,500	\$63,558,660	\$62,589,978
Increase/Decrease for the 2025-2026 School Year		\$1,233,160	\$264,478
Percentage Increase/Decrease in Proposed Budget		1.98%	0.42%
Change in the Consumer Price Index		2.95%	
A. Proposed Levy to Support the Total Budgeted Amount	\$48,434,118	\$49,402,800	
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)	\$48,434,118	\$49,402,800	\$968,682
F. Total Permissible Exclusions	\$358,192	\$428,433	
G. School Tax Levy Limit, <u>Excluding</u> Levy for Permissible Exclusions	\$48,381,460	\$49,453,538	
H. Total Proposed School Year Tax Levy, <u>Excluding</u> Levy to Support Library Debt and/or Permissible Exclusions (E – B – F + D)	\$48,075,926	\$48,974,367	
I. Difference: G – H (Negative Value Requires 60.0% Voter Approval – See Note Below Regarding Separate Propositions) **	\$305,534	\$479,171	
Administrative Component	\$6,288,950	\$6,495,686	\$6,413,068
Program Component	\$50,285,506	\$50,780,644	\$49,990,260
Capital Component	\$5,751,044	\$6,312,148	\$6,186,650
* Provide a statement of assumptions made in projecting a contingency budget for the 2025-2026 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 (\$225,023) from the budget. In addition, \$743,659 would 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)

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

Description	Amount
Proposition 2 – Renovations and Reconstruction and addition to School District Facilities using \$15,000,000 in cash reserves/cash and \$55,500,000 in borrowing	\$70,500,000



Under the Budget Proposed for the 2025-2026 School Year

Estimated Basic STAR Exemption Savings ¹	\$336
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The annual budget vote for the fiscal year 2025-2026 by the qualified voters of the Onteora Central School District, Ulster County, New York, will be held at Bennett and Woodstock schools in said district on Tuesday, May 20, 2025 between the hours of 2:00 pm and 9:00 pm, prevailing time in the Bennett and Woodstock Elementary schools, at which time the polls will be opened to vote by voting ballot or machine.

ONTEORA STAFF ENJOY DAY OF PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

WHILE OUR STUDENTS MAY HAVE ENJOYED A DAY OFF ON MARCH 12, our teachers, administrators, and staff were all busy learning and growing during a Superintendent’s Conference Day!

Middle/High School staff began their day with an informative keynote presentation on Assessment with Cassandra Erkens from Solution Tree. Throughout the day, all schools hosted workshops with valuable learning opportunities, including “Multi-Tiered Systems of Support” with LaTisha Cole from Branching Minds; “Seen, Valued, and Heard: Using Universal Design for Learning (UDL) for Flexible Learning Environments” with Dr. Barbara Tischler Hastie from Ulster BOCES for teacher assistants and monitors; “Co-Teaching Strategies for Teachers,” and more.

In addition, School Resource Officers Tom Sharon and Corey Halwick, along with Chris Blackwell from the Altaris Consulting Group, discussed safety scenarios with building-level safety teams.



Bennett Elementary School Safety Team

Celebrating Our Talented Musicians and Artists!

The 2025 Music & Arts Celebration, held on March 13th at the Middle/High School, was the perfect way to honor Music in Our Schools Month and Youth Art Month, while showcasing the creativity and dedication of our students.

Attendees enjoyed a museum-style art exhibition in the cafeteria, featuring student work from all grades, including pieces that were featured in “Future Voices 2025” at SUNY Ulster’s Muroff-Kotler Gallery this spring.

In the gym, there were performances by the Bennett Orchestra, Chorus, and Band; the Middle/High School Theater Club; the Middle School Jam Band, Orchestra, Chorus, Band, and Jazz Ensemble; and the High School Orchestra, Concert Choir, Wind Ensemble, and Chamber Orchestra. Highlights included Toto’s “Africa” by the Middle School Chorus, an “Eighties Flashback” medley by the High School Wind Ensemble, and a moving “Eleanor Rigby” by the High School Chamber Orchestra. The finale united Middle and High School Bands with the Onteora Color Guard for a high-energy performance of “Uptown Funk.” As always, plenty of student musicians and singers were given opportunities to solo.

Many thanks to our amazing Music teachers Harvey Boyer, Brittany Carroll, Karen McKenna, Corinne Sorace, Erica Boyer, Josephine Catalano, and Marilyn Dizon, and our equally amazing Art teachers, Jennifer Wentland, Shelly Hamilton, Anita Sidler, Roberta Ziembra, and Danielle Payette. We’re also deeply grateful to the Onteora Booster Club; the Facilities Department; our administration and Board of Education, including Rick Knutsen, our Board Trustee and keyboard accompaniment extraordinaire, and of course—YOU—our appreciative audience, whose support makes all of this possible!



LANGUAGE STUDENTS CELEBRATE WORLD LANGUAGES WEEK

ONCE AGAIN, THE HALLWAYS OF THE MIDDLE/HIGH SCHOOL were filled with beautifully illustrated posters, thanks to World Languages Week, which was celebrated at the school from March 3-7.

Continuing a longstanding Onteora tradition, World Language students in Grades 7-12 created colorful posters that showcased both their creativity and their language skills. Choosing from lists of Spanish proverbs and French tongue twisters, the students translated their chosen phrases into poster form and then shared their creations with their classmates.



Pearl Male, Grade 7, chose the French saying, “Souris qui n’a qu’un trou est bientôt prise,” which literally translates to “A mouse with one hole soon gets caught” (and can be loosely translated as “Better safe than sorry”).

USEFUL DISTRICT INFORMATION

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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

District MTSS Coordinator
Elizabeth Fallo 845-657-6383

Interim Director of Physical Education, Athletics, and Health
Jonah O'Donnell... 845-657-2373 x2113

Director of Transportation
Nicole Sommer 845-657-2537

Director of Food Services
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 Schimmelpennig

MIDDLE SCHOOL • 845-657-2373
Principal, James DiDonna

BENNETT ELEMENTARY • 845-657-2354
Principal, Gabriel Buono

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.