

Advocate

Winter 2025

The Official Newsletter of Owen J. Roberts School District

Superintendent's Notebook: An Exciting Start to School



Dear Wildcat Community,

Welcome to another exciting issue of the Advocate, the newsletter of Owen J. Roberts School District. I hope that everyone has enjoyed a great start to the second half of the school year. This is always a busy, but fun-filled time for our students and staff as we prepare for the spring season.

One of the first things you'll notice in this newsletter is the number of milestones and recognitions being earned by our students and staff. I love seeing our school community honored and celebrated for its hard work and achievements. The talent we have in our school district never ceases to amaze me. I could not be more proud to celebrate our Wildcats.

While we've accomplished quite a bit this school year already, we're also gearing up for our next school year and beyond.

Registration is now open for full-day-kindergarten for the 2025-2026 school year. For the first time in the district's history, full-day-kindergarten instruction will be available at OJR's five elementary schools - East Coventry Elementary, East Vincent Elementary, French Creek Elementary, North Coventry Elementary and West Vincent Elementary. All children who live within the school district, and who will attain the age of five on or before September 1, 2025 are eligible to attend school for the 2025-26 school year. Families can register online at OJRSD.com and I encourage families to register as soon as possible.

Earlier this school year, we provided an update to our community regarding our District Goals, including our ongoing commitment to infrastructure excellence. In support of that initiative, our team remains focused on developing a Long-Term Facilities Plan for OJR High School and OJR Middle School.

As part of the next step in that process, the OJR Long-Term Facilities Plan Steering Committee will meet this spring to provide their feedback and ideas, and collaborate with us as we develop a more accessible and an improved overall academic experience for our high school and middle school students. While all of the concepts being discussed are preliminary in nature, we encourage the entire community to stay tuned as we share additional information and updates in the coming months.

Finally, I would like to once again invite our community to join us for our next Town Hall Meeting on Tuesday, March 18, from 5:30 to 7 p.m., at the District Service Center Building, 932 Sanatoga Rd, Pottstown, PA 19465. While the district will provide updates on its initiatives and share important information about our schools, the Town Hall is free-form, meaning the topics being discussed are decided by attendees. To register, please click here. We look forward to seeing you there!

Thank you for your continued support of our school community. I can't wait to join you at many of our upcoming school events and in celebration and support of our amazing Wildcat students!

With warm regards,

Dr. Will Stout
Superintendent

Town Hall Meeting Set for March 18th



The final OJR Town Hall Meeting of the school year is scheduled for Tuesday, March 18th, beginning at 5:30 p.m., inside the District Service Center Building, 932 Sanatoga Rd, Pottstown, PA 19465.

While the district will provide updates on its initiatives and share important information about our schools, the Town Hall is free-form - meaning the topics being discussed are decided by attendees. To register, please click here.

We look forward to seeing everyone who can join us!

Facilities and Operations Department Receives Gold Award of Excellence

Congratulations to our Facilities and Operations Department for receiving a Gold Award of Excellence in School Facilities from the Pennsylvania Association of School Business Officials (PASBO)!

The award is designed to recognize local education agencies with exceptional school facilities best practices and this honor marks the fourth time our Facilities Department was recognized for excellence. The Gold Award will formally be presented to the department at the PASBO 70th Annual Conference, on March 12th.



Business & Finance Office Wins Meritorious Budget Award

The OJR Business and Finance Office is the recipient of the 2024–2025 Meritorious Budget Award (MBA) from the Association of School Business Officials International (ASBO). The award recognizes school districts for their commitment to upholding nationally recognized budget presentation standards.

The 2024-2025 honor serves as a milestone for OJR, marking the 30th consecutive year the district has received this prestigious distinction. Congratulations to our amazing Wildcat staff for their hard work and commitment to industry excellence.



Wildcat Roll Call: Updates from Around OJR

Elementary School Excitement



We're so proud of all our Wildcats who shared their talents at the PMEA District 12 String Fest, under the guidance of OJR's very own Cliff Hall and Casey Jennings!

As we continue to celebrate an amazing championship season by the Eagles, we're reminded of our OJR elementary Wildcats performing the "Eagles Fight Song" prior to the big game, with none other than the voice of the Philadelphia Eagles Merrill Reese narrating - https://youtu.be/u8Lbn3T2iFA?feature=shared.

Meanwhile, West Vincent ES was all-in for their Eagles celebration party!

One of our amazing Wildcats, Joshua, was named principal for the day at East Coventry Elementary School on February 14th. While being a school principal isn't easy, Joshua met with students and staff, picked up his work badge, and even had a check-in meeting with Superintendent Stout - all before lunch!

East Coventry students were busy at work using comp saws as part of their cardboard projects in STEAM Lab - https://www.facebook.com/reel/1988968964929780.

Word finders were everywhere at East Coventry's Literacy Night. Families took part in several fun activities all meant to build vocabulary and to promote the importance of being literate individuals. The importance of being literate is still an essential skill to being a successful human being! A specials thanks to the EC staff who organized or helped make the evening a smashing success.

It was a very special Valentine's Day at French Creek with all of our 3rd grade Grandfriends - https://www.facebook.com/permalink.php?story_fbid=pfbid033xDLU1mjk9C9W63PBTZn1jXP9f3tTYHQwk7aujh7U8koKSkLE9CYrWC2htmNTfVSl&id=100063472213095.

Congratulations to the French Creek Drama Club for an amazing performance of Disney's Frozen Kids!

Congratulations to Maia Bruton and Matthew Kemner who represented North Coventry Elementary School at the Pennsylvania Music Educators Association "String Fest" festival.

They spent the entire day at Kennett High School rehearsing advanced orchestra music for an evening concert, alongside over 100 students in 5th and 6th grade from schools throughout Chester County, Delaware County, and Philadelphia County. What an honor!

The North Coventry Elementary K Kids have been hard at work on a few great projects over the last few months. They made and delivered Valentine's Day Cards to residents at Camphill Village Kimberton Hills. The group also collected supplies for Fostering Hope of Montgomery County. At their meeting, they sorted the donations and were able to make bags to be used by children going in to foster care.

East Vincent Elementary Wildcats enjoyed an amazing science fair recently, and guess who made a surprise visit to EV...again? That's right, the Elf on the Shelf!



PMEA District 12 String Fest



PMEA District 12 String Fest



Joshua, ECES Principal for the Day



ES Band



FCES Grandfriends



FCES Frozen Kids performance



Celebrating the Eagles at WVES



ECES Literacy Night



Maia Bruton and Matthew Kemner



North Coventry K Kids



A reported elf sighting at EVES

Middle School Milestones



The Band held their annual Winter Concert on February 20th, with video available online via YouTube - https://www.youtube.com/@OJR_SchoolDistrict.

On January 17th, middle school students were honored to listen to Holocaust survivor Peter Stern as he shared his experiences and memories. A special thank you to the Holocaust Awareness Museum and Education Center for the privilege of making this opportunity possible for our students and our community. Video of Mr. Stern's visit is available online at https://www.facebook.com/TheOJRSD/videos/1126560555636879.

Operation Giving Tree was a success! Our students, staff, and families came together to help provide holiday gifts for children in our area. Thank you to everyone who contributed and to those who did all of the behind the scenes work to ensure the success of the operation!



MS Band Winter Concert



Operation Giving Tree

High School Honors



Our amazing High School and Middle School Wildcat Orchestras held a fantastic winter concert on February 26th. If you were unable to join us live, video from the concert is available on the OJR YouTube channel - https://youtu.be/3vxRGUhs3Rs.

The Chamber Choir continued to share their amazing talent with the community when they performed a collaborative concert with the Henderson High School and Kennett High School Chamber Choirs and Chamber Orchestras on Friday, February 28th, at Immaculata University.

Congratulations to Junior, Layla Boghdadi, for her 4th place finish at the District 1 Diving competition at North Penn High School on February 14th!

The Owen J. Roberts NJROTC, featuring students from Owen J. Roberts High School and Owen J. Roberts Middle School, held their annual Pass In Review on Thursday, Feb. 13th.

As part of the drill, our Wildcats showcased their skills, training and commitment in front of their families, friends and fellow students. You can watch highlights on OJR's YouTube channel at https://youtu.be/zkDbWjKQ2mE?feature=shared

The Girls Swim Team has finished the regular season as PAC Champions going 10-0. This is their 9th year of being undefeated.

The Boys Swim Team were crowned co-champions of the Pioneer Athletic Conference (PAC) following a 9-0-1 record in their dual meets.

Congrats to our 11Wildcats who represented our community at the PMEA District 12 Choir Festival. They joined more than 150 singers from Chester, Delaware and Philadelphia counties. At the festival, students auditioned for the next level, the Region 6 Choir. Representing OJR at the March 13-15 festival will be Jonah Hayes, Brady Roland, Cecily Vu, Alia Booth-Genthe and Will Pederson.

In February, the 7ups hosted their annual workshop for elementary students. As part of the workshop, 40 Wildcats in grades 2-6 from East Vincent Elementary School, East Coventry

Elementary School, West Vincent Elementary School, North Coventry Elementary School and French Creek Elementary School learned a song and dance number, and performed for an audience at the end of the day!

Congratulations to Boone Toguchi (football) on winning the PAC Citizenship Award!

Congratulations to the Girls Cross Country Team for being named PAC Champions, District Champions, and placing 2nd in States!

On Martin Luther King Jr. Day, the Owen J. Roberts High School Black Student Union Multicultural Alliance concluded their annual drive to collect textured hair care products for children experiencing foster care. The BSU/MCA partnered with the non-profit organization, Fostering Hope. The various items collected from the school and community will be included in The Bags of Hope. This initiative provides children experiencing foster care with bags containing the basic necessities needed when entering a new home. Additionally, the MS Leo Club and the local YWCA contributed to the collection efforts.



Orchestra Winter Concert



Orchestra Winter Concert



OJR NJROTC



HS Boys Swim Team



HS Girls Swim Team



PMEA District 12 Choir Festival Wildcats



The 7ups ES workshop



Boone Toguchi



Black Student Union Wildcats



Girls XC Team



HR Heartbeat: Celebrating OJR's Amazing Team

The OJR Employee of the Month Award is presented to members of our team who exemplify the Wildcat spirit and our district's commitment to, “Do the right thing at the right time for the right reason.”

We are thrilled to recognize Krista Zollers as our November 2024 Employee of the Month, Ada Evans as our December 2024 recipient, Aprille Doherty as our January 2025 honoree, and Terry Lawhorne as our February 2025 recipient.

Krista is an art teacher at French Creek Elementary and has worked in our district for 9 years.

Ada is a paraprofessional at East Coventry Elementary and has worked in our district for over 15 years.

Aprille is the Administrative Assistant to the principal at North Coventry Elementary School and has worked in our district for almost four years.

Terry is the Courier for the district and has worked in our district for almost 23 years.

You can watch their surprise announcements, and many other exciting videos featuring our Wildcat staff and students, on OJR's YouTube Channel.



Krista Zollers



Ada Evans



Aprille Doherty



Terry Lawhorne

OJR Middle School Student Takes First Place in 2025 Chester County Spelling Bee

Disha Jain of Owen J. Roberts Middle School won first place in the 2025 Chester County Spelling Bee on Monday, February 10, 2025. Jain spelled her way to victory with the winning word

“mademoiselle.” Her victory qualifies her to represent Chester County this spring at the 100th Annual Scripps National Spelling Bee in National Harbor, MD.



“The moment I realized I won, I was overwhelmed with emotions,” said Jain. “I was excited and honestly a little shocked; I was not expecting to get this far... I felt really happy in that moment.”

“The Chester County Spelling Bee is more than a competition; it's a platform for developing critical thinking skills," said Jay Della Ragione, special events coordinator for the Chester County Intermediate Unit (CCIU), who organized the event. "We're nurturing intellectual discipline and building confidence while helping students expand their vocabulary. These participants demonstrate remarkable dedication in honing their linguistic abilities.”

Each student earned the invitation to compete in the Chester County Spelling Bee by achieving first place in their sending school’s spelling bee. Nearly 40 students competed in this year’s event and spelled their way through more than 135 words.

When asked what the hardest word was for her to spell, Jain answered, “I had to spell the word ‘internecine’ and at first it seemed difficult, but then I got clues from the pronouncer about the definition and origin.” She went on to explain that even if she wasn’t sure about the spelling of a word, she gave it a try anyway. “Say what you think is correct,” she said.

Jain prepared for this event by studying the provided materials, writing the words down, memorizing them, and going back to restudy words that posed a particular challenge. Her advice to future spelling bee participants emphasized practice and poise.

“Practice is important; knowing most of the words, their origins, and definitions can help when spelling a tough word. But confidence and remaining calm is key.” She explained that deep breathing and positive thoughts helped her keep a level head during the event, helping her maintain the confidence to succeed.

As spelling bee champion, Jain received a one-year subscription to Merriam-Webster Unabridged Online, a one-year subscription to the Encyclopedia Britannica Online (Student Edition), a $50 Barnes & Noble gift card, and a Scrabble board game. The second-place winners each received a Merriam-Webster Collegiate Dictionary (11th Edition), a $35 Barnes & Noble gift card, and a Bananagrams game; the third-place winner received a $20 Barnes & Noble gift card and a Bananagrams game.

The Chester County Spelling Bee is a qualifying competition for the Scripps National Spelling Bee, where competitors from across the country gather to spell their way to the top. The 2025 Chester County Spelling Bee was coordinated by the CCIU and sponsored by CCRES Educational and Behavioral Health Services and Baldwin’s Book Barn.

To learn more about the Chester County Spelling Bee, visit www.cciu.org/spelling-bee.



Middle School Students' Art Featured in Exhibition

Congratulations to the following Owen J. Roberts Middle School Wildcats for having their artwork selected for the PAEA Youth Art Month Exhibit: Katie Righter, 7th grade; Hailey Buell, 8th grade; Nelson Maci Laughead, 8th grade; Afsa Syed, 7th grade; Vivien Hummel, 8th grade; Madison Hunt, 8th grade; Dhyani Sapa, 8th grade; Caitlin Kunkle, 8th grade; and Izabell Elliot, 7th grade. The exhibit will be online, from March 1-31, 2025 and can viewed here.

In addition, Afsa's piece "Still Life" won the award for Region 12 and will also have her work printed on a banner that will hang in the Pennsylvania State Capitol for the month of March. Her piece can also be viewed online.

The Council for Art Education (CFAE) administers Youth Art Month, which encourages support for quality school art programs and promotes art material safety. The program provides a medium for recognizing skills developed through visual arts experiences unlike any other curriculum subjects, including problem-solving, creativity, observation, and communication.

Register Today for OJR Summer Enrichment Camps!



A reminder that a variety of summer camps and OJR enrichment opportunities will be opening up for students of all ages in just a few days and the 2025 Summer Enrichment Program Preview Brochure is now online on OJR's website at https://www.ojrsd.com/Domain/1991.

OJR's summer programs offer students a place to come together to play, learn and grow. Registration will open on Tuesday, March 4th, via School Pay.

Please note that spots in some of these programs can fill up very quickly, so we encourage you to mark these dates on your calendar and be sure to visit School Pay!

For more information or questions, please email Missy Walton at mwalton@ojrsd.net, or Heidi Lehmann at hlehmann@ojrsd.net.



Cooking Camp



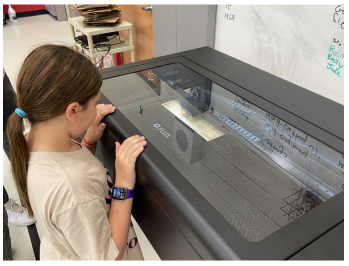
Baking Camp



Fishing Camp



Dessert Camp



Engineers Think Tank Camp



Lego Engineers Camp

Registration Now Open for Full-Day-Kindergarten

Registration is now open for full-day-kindergarten for the 2025-2026 school year in the Owen J. Roberts School District (OJR). For the first time in the district's history, full-day-kindergarten instruction will be available at OJR's five elementary schools - East Coventry Elementary, East Vincent Elementary, French Creek Elementary, North Coventry Elementary and West Vincent Elementary.

All children who live within the school district, and who will attain the age of five on or before September 1, 2025, are eligible to attend school for the 2025-26 school year. Families can register online by clicking here. At the end of the online registration process, families can make an

appointment to complete the registration process at their community elementary school on either March 5 or March 6, 2025. Families who are new to the school district or who are unsure of their child's school can also use OJR's online school locator tool.

Full-day-kindergarten was originally approved by the OJR Board of School Directors in January 2024, following the recommendation of the school district's administration. The implementation of full-day-kindergarten in OJR will directly benefit students by creating a solid basis for future academic success - including teaching students how to be lifelong learners, allowing for a deeper dive into content and enabling teachers to guide students at a slower pace. In addition, the program will improve the ability of teachers to reteach concepts and enrich the classroom experience for students, and introduce OJR's youngest learners to a wider range of subjects.

The full-day program will also provide more opportunities for academic content and a structured classroom environment, while enabling staff to support emotional learning and focus on students' social development and their ability to build peer connections. It comes with significant support from the community and from district staff.

"Our community has been clear in its desire to see Owen J. Roberts pursue full-day-kindergarten and to have schools provide greater educational opportunities to our students," said Dr. Will Stout, superintendent. "Our teachers who have previously taught both full-day and half-day classes, also shared their belief that the quality of time spent teaching and building relationships with the students was significantly better as part of full-day kindergarten. We cannot wait to welcome our newest and youngest students into our thriving OJR Wildcat Community."

Owen J. Roberts students, including those in kindergarten, will begin the 2025-2026 school year on Monday, August 25. Visit www.ojrsd.com for more information.



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