

The Official Newsletter of Owen J. Roberts School District

Superintendent's Notebook: An Exciting Start to School



Dear Wildcat Community,

Welcome back to another exciting year at Owen J. Roberts School District. This school year represents my fourth as superintendent of OJR, and my 30th year in education – and I am proud of everything we've been able to accomplish together as a community on behalf of our students!

Over the first several weeks of the 2024-2025 school year, one of our highlights is the successful implementation of later school start times. This initiative provides our middle and high school Wildcats with much needed additional time to rest before they begin their daily studies and enhances their overall school experience with us.

Already, we're hard at work making preparations to begin offering Full-Day Kindergarten to our youngest Wildcats beginning next fall. Our administrative team is focused on ensuring that district staff across all five of our elementary schools have everything they need to serve our students. As we get closer to launching Full-Day Kindergarten, we'll be sure to provide additional updates throughout the school year.

Fostering a safe and supportive school environment for our Wildcats remains a priority in our school district. Recently, our administrative team shared with our community our ongoing commitment to uphold the three overarching district goals we initially unveiled in 2023, and discussed how our work will continue to drive student success, student wellbeing and infrastructure excellence.

Our first district goal, student success, is designed to ensure that all students are challenged and engaged, while providing multiple pathways to achieve their best by broadening opportunities, building support systems and eliminating barriers. As a school district, we will eliminate opportunity gaps and work to ensure all students are active participants in the community.

Our second district goal, student wellbeing, will create an environment that fosters the growth and nurturing of all students' physical, mental, and social-emotional growth in healthy, safe and supportive learning environments. Our work to support student wellbeing includes a K-12 Multi-tiered Systems of Support (MTSS) that focuses on personalized learning, collaboration and communication, data-informed decision-making and continuous improvement. In addition, our work also includes the continued implementation of a Mental Health Comprehensive Plan in collaboration with our work in the Penn Mental Health Consortium.

Our third and final goal, infrastructure excellence, seeks to finalize the selection of an architect and engineers, and begin design development/phased construction of the ten-year Master Facilities Plan. In addition, we will engage stakeholders in the 2025-26 budget development process with the intent of staying within the state-mandated limits and focusing on resource allocation that prioritizes district initiatives related to student success and wellbeing.

We invite the community to review our 2024-2025 district goals and become familiar with our many initiatives and measures of success by viewing them on our website.

These goals will not only serve as our north star as we focus on supporting the unique needs of our community's children, they will also serve as a foundational component of all districtwide initiatives – ranging from community engagement events and staff development, to the development of new mission, vision and core values statements for our school district.

I believe a critical component of serving our community is ensuring that all of our students and families feel welcome and valued. To foster and enhance our sense of community, these guiding principles will reflect our shared commitment to student learning, inclusion and wellbeing.

Soon, members of our administrative team and our Board of School Directors will begin meeting with staff, students, parents and other members of our school community to ensure the values and vision we develop not only represents our shared identity as Owen J. Roberts Wildcats, but also reflect our highest expectations for the experience we provide to all of our students. We appreciate your ongoing support and cannot wait to share our progress with our Wildcat community.

Last, but certainly not least, I want to invite all of you to join us in the coming weeks as our students participate in their fall and winter activities – including athletics, the performing arts and other enriching experiences. Information about many of these events can be found on our school websites and social media platforms, including Facebook, Instagram and YouTube. These events provide a wonderful opportunity for our students to demonstrate and share their amazing talent, and also inspire wonderful memories for all who attend.

I hope everyone has a safe and happy start to the fall season, and I look forward to seeing you at our upcoming events! #WeAreWildcats!

With warm regards,

Dr. Will Stout
Superintendent







Three OJR Seniors Named National Merit Scholarship Program Semifinalists

Three Owen J. Roberts (OJR) High School seniors were named by the National Merit Scholarship Corporation as semifinalists in the 70th annual National Merit Scholarship Program. All semifinalists are eligible to compete for some 6,870 National Merit Scholarship awards worth nearly $26 million, to be awarded in spring 2025. The program honors students who meet exceptional academic ability standards and other requirements, including a recommendation from a high school official.

About 95 percent of the semifinalists are expected to attain finalist standing, and approximately half of the Finalists will win a National Merit Scholarship, earning the Merit Scholar title. OJR's three National Merit Scholarship semifinalists are:

- **Alexander Arp –** A member of the Junior Classical League and the Dungeons and Dragons club, Alexander plans to pursue a degree in mechanical engineering - hopefully at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology or the California Institute of Technology. Additional details about Alexander's journey can be viewed online at **https://youtu.be/_kPDfHEe78c**.

- **Andrew Dybicz –** Treasuring the many connections he's made with friends and teachers while at OJR, and the numerous activities available to him, Andrew hopes to attend college in the northeast and earn a degree in mechanical engineering. Additional details about Andrew's journey can be viewed online at **https://youtu.be/mS9QPg3bGgw**.

- **Jane Hummel –** A student-athlete who is a member of the swim team, Jane is thankful for the strong connections she's formed with her teachers and the bonds she's formed with her friends. Jane is interested in pursuing a career in biomedical research and plans to attend a top research university. Additional details about Jane's journey can be viewed online at **https://youtu.be/5ZgYvb6GXLw**.

"Alexander, Andrew and Jane are outstanding students and members of our school community, and we are very proud to have them recognized as National Merit Scholarship Semifinalists," said Owen J. Roberts High School Principal Steven Kollar. "This outstanding achievement not only reflects their standing as top performers in our school district, but also places them among the most distinguished performers in the nation. Each student has excelled in their time at OJR, and

our entire Wildcat Community is united in congratulating them for this accomplishment and wishing them the best as they advance in the scholarship process."

More than 1.3 million juniors in approximately 21,000 high schools entered the 2025 National Merit Scholarship Program by taking the 2023 Preliminary SAT/National Merit Scholarship Qualifying Test (PSAT/NMSQT®), which served as an initial screen of program entrants. The nationwide pool of Semifinalists, representing less than one percent of U.S. high school seniors, includes the highest-scoring entrants in each state. The number of Semifinalists in a state is proportional to the state's percentage of the national total of graduating seniors.

To become a Finalist, the Semifinalist and a high school official must submit a detailed scholarship application, in which they provide information about the Semifinalist's academic record, participation in school and community activities, demonstrated leadership abilities, employment, and honors and awards received. A Semifinalist must have an outstanding academic record throughout high school, be endorsed and recommended by a high school official, write an essay, and earn SAT® or ACT® scores that confirm the student's earlier performance on the qualifying test. From over 16,000 Semifinalists, more than 15,000 are expected to advance to the Finalist level, and in February they will be notified of this designation.



Eight OJR Seniors Commended by National Merit Scholarship Program

Eight Owen J. Roberts (OJR) High School seniors were named Commended Students in the 70th annual National Merit Scholarship Program.

OJR's eight Commended students are:

- **Ronak Bhagwanjee** – Ronak aims to attend college in California and become an aerospace engineer.
- **Jazlynn Campbell** – Jazz plans on attending a small liberal arts college so that she can earn her Bachelor of Fine Arts in acting.
- **Skyler Cucinotta** – Skyler plans to attend a four-year university and major in aerospace engineering.
- **Maxwell Dorward** – Max plans to become a computer science engineer after graduation.
- **River King** – River plans to pursue a degree in film and media studies, and possibly minor in gender studies.
- **Austin Spranger** – After graduation, Austin plans to attend a four-year college for music/musical performance.
- **Boone Toguchi** – Boone plans to attend a four-year college and pursue his education in chemical engineering.
- **Chance Weaver** – Chance plans to pursue a degree in aerospace engineering at either Michigan, Purdue or Princeton University.

To learn more about the 2025 Commended Students, visit OJR's YouTube channel at https://youtu.be/NZN6bGjUIJA.

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Wildcat Roll Call: Updates from Around OJR

French Creek Elementary will be hosting its annual Veterans Day breakfast and assembly for honored guests on Monday, November 11, at 8 a.m.

A special thank you to the French Creek community for supporting Maggie, Tessa, and Hannah's Girl Scout project last spring and helping them earn their Girl Scout Bronze Award! The generous donations enabled students at French Creek to have new playground equipment - including cornhole sets and washer games for all classrooms to use!

In honor of Veterans Day, East Coventry Elementary invited veterans and their families to an appreciation breakfast on Wednesday, November 6. Thank you to all of our local heroes and their families who attended!

East Coventry students helped fill a school bus with the donations by our families as part of our Make A Difference Day food drive. Thank you to everyone who donated!

West Vincent Elementary School will host a very special Veterans Day Program on Monday, November 11, beginning with breakfast for all who served.

Sixth grade Wildcats at West Vincent displayed their individual works of art supporting the environment, on cloth bags, during an unveiling ceremony. The plain cloth bags were gifted to

students by the West Vincent Township Sustainability Committee as part of a collaborative project between the Committee and the school's art department. The project was designed to encourage students to utilize reusable shopping bags, replace single use bags and express their creative talents.

East Vincent Elementary danced the night away with a 1980s theme as part of its fall fundraiser. Students, families and staff came dressed to impress with bright 80's outfits, glow colors & more!

North Coventry students in third through sixth grade held an assembly with published author, Amanda Foody. She shared how she develops her characters, setting, and conflict and gave students a chance to create their own ideas. It was amazing for our Wildcats to see how similar her writing process is to what they do in writing class each day!

Thank you to the North Coventry Fire Department for a fun day learning about fire prevention. Our North Coventry students learned what they can do to remain safe and enjoyed the opportunity to squirt the hose of the visiting fire truck!

Owen J. Roberts Middle School Wildcat Caleb Mader was recognized by the Norristown Chapter of Football Officials for his outstanding volunteer service to the community! Join us in congratulating Caleb for this worthy honor, video of which you can view online at https://youtu.be/dUHOeJFejTw.

OJR Middle School also celebrated Make a Difference Day with faculty and staff winners of the Pie in the Face contest getting their "just desserts." The school's Leos helped organize the festivities and enjoyed the chance to pie the selected staff members. Congratulations to all of our great sports!

On Wednesday, October 30, students from Owen J. Roberts High School's Sports Marketing class, along with members of the DECA club, participated in the Philadelphia 76ers Sports Marketing Career Development Conference. The event featured a comprehensive case study focused on promoting the new arena, as well as a question-and-answer session with members of the 76ers promotions team. Participants engaged in various activities related to the 76ers basketball game, including the high five tunnel experience.

On Saturday, October 26, Cadets from the Owen J. Roberts NJROTC traveled to New Jersey to compete in the Colts Neck High School Academic Brain Brawl. Our team finished in 2nd place overall and Cadet Rory Harmer '26 finished in 2nd place in the individual competition. The team also stopped at Washington Crossing Historic Park on the way home to explore the area where George Washington and his men achieved an astounding victory on the morning of December 26, 1776. Cadets in attendance were: Rory Harmer '26, Paige Zebley '26, Maria Alicea '26, and Gillian Moyer '28.

















Wildcat Way: News from Pupil Services

The Special and Gifted Education (SAGE) Parent Group serves as a collaborative partnership between the OJR School District and parents with a focus on the topics, themes, resources and trends that are vital to special and gifted education in our community.

As part of ongoing efforts to support this partnership, the district will coordinate information sessions for parents, provide access to resources, solicit input from families and staff, answer any questions that families may have, and identify best learning and operational practices. In addition, district leadership and staff will collaborate with parents on creative ways to host community events related to special/gifted education.

SAGE is a parent-led group, with multiple parent liaisons who will collaborate with district leaders to achieve the goal of developing strategies and ideas that support effective methods in the classroom and foster academic success for students. The leadership team for this group utilizes their different experiences within the district (i.e. gifted, multiple disabilities, invisible disabilities, etc.) to steer conversations and help maintain constructive dialogue on important topics in special and gifted education.

For additional information, including upcoming events and resources, please visit https://www.ojrsd.com/Page/10652 or email ojrsage@gmail.com.



HR Heartbeat: Celebrating OJR's Amazing Team

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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 honored to announce Alicia Braksator as our October 2024 Employee of the Month! Alicia is an emotional support teacher in the high school and has worked in our district for almost 20 years. You can watch Alicia's surprise announcement at https://youtu.be/5dvzLo6rBvg

Here's what a few of the staff members at the high school had to say about Alicia that earned her the employee of the month:

"Alicia is a teacher in the emotional support classroom. She provides a safe a caring environment where kids can be themselves. Alicia works tirelessly making sure the students are completing assignments in a timely manner. I have witnessed her helping a student with a science study guide, encourage another student who was working on an art project, and sit with a student who was struggling with math. All in one class period! She is consistently positive and gives reinforcement for even the smallest behavior if it is a step forward for a kiddo. Her students know she cares about their success in their classes, but more importantly they know that she cares about their emotional well-being. Alicia is an amazing teacher and deserves to be recognized!"

"There are no words and all the words to describe Alicia. She is amazing at her job - she is great in working with and working for her students. She is collaborative with colleagues and is a helper. She wants to see success for all students - and knows that that is going to look different for each student. She is compassionate and has worked so hard to make the ES program at the high school the way that it is."

Please join us as we offer our sincere thanks to Alicia for her continuing service to the community, and as we congratulate her on being named the OJR Employee of the Month for October 2024!



Art Abounds at OJR!



The integration of art in education helps develop valuable life skills that serve students beyond the classroom – including critical thinking, problem-solving, innovation, creativity and expression, and more. In addition to imparting sought-after skills in the classroom, art can also help create an environment that encourages students to become lifelong learners of history and culture while empowering them to explore the world around them.

At East Coventry Elementary, the flags that adorn the hallways were created by third and fourth grade students and represent something special about each of the students who created them. In addition, each year, the 6th grade students at East Coventry have a chance to leave their legacy for future Wildcats to enjoy. As part of their Legacy Projects, individual student signatures and class photographs line the hallways as a way to remember each member of the graduating class.

If you have an opportunity to stop by the French Creek Elementary art room, you will find a space full of joy, discovery and creativity. French Creek artists are busy growing, experimenting, and creating beautiful works of art each day. Colorful paintings, drawings, incredible sculptures, upcycled collages and yarn weavings inspire creativity.

Student artwork fills the school's halls throughout the year, along with framed student art and masterworks gifted from the many generous volunteers with OJR Friends of the Arts & Art Goes to School. French Creek's "Be the Nice Kid" mural can be found in the Wildcat Cafe gathering space reminding students and staff each day how to be an amazing French Creeker. Finally, in May, French Creek celebrates its creativity by transforming the school building into an art museum for the annual Spring Art Show, featuring works from all students!

Owen J. Roberts Middle School is a multiple-time Outstanding Visual Art Community as recognized by the Pennsylvania Art Education Association. The amazing middle school team was recognized for demonstrating the importance of their visual arts programs with rigorous and inclusive programs, offering accessible programs for all students and developing programs that are visible in the community.

In addition, every March OJR Middle School students celebrate Youth Arts Month. 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. The program culminates with an online art show and also takes place at the PA State Capitol Building in Harrisburg.

East Vincent Elementary School art teacher Sarah Smith painted the front doors to her school as a welcome message in the style of Alma Thomas, an African American painter. The work of Thomas is part of the permanent collection in the White House, in addition to being featured at the Whitney Museum in New York City and the Corcoran Gallery of Art in Washington D.C. Second grade students looked at Thomas' work and used her style to create a sky background for a bat themed picture.

In keeping with a love for the arts, students are working on a schoolwide mural based on the book Rainbow Fish. The Mural was a welcome back to school project in which students used color and line to create their work.

West Vincent Elementary School has a variety of student-created artworks on display every day on its campus. Some of these beautiful pieces are mosaic murals made with thousands of clay pieces that were shaped, fired, glazed and fired again before being installed. The largest leads into the front doors of the school. Once inside there are more clay mosaics, in addition to a number of murals painted on the walls in interior latex paint.

Joining the school's 2-D artworks, there are several sculptural pieces made from recycled materials, paper mache and plastic. All the pieces are created by West Vincent students, with the support of Art Teacher Mrs. Allison Beaver, and occasionally in collaboration with guest artists who have volunteered to help guide students.

In addition to its intrinsic beauty, The Makenna Mosaic has deeper connection to the school community at North Coventry Elementary School. The mosaic proudly stands as a permanent memorial and meditation location to celebrate the life of sweet Makenna Massi, a Wildcat student who lost her battle to cancer in 2018. Serving as a valuable reminder of Makenna's bright and kind spirit, the mosaic is purple with a nearby butterfly sculpture created in her honor by a former artist in residency. The special quote embedded in the mosaic was chosen by Makenna's best friend, Mackenzie Flick, and reads, "A beautiful soul is never forgotten."

North Coventry students created the design and many participated in the production of the mosaic. Former classmates of Makenna's at the time of her passing, who were 9th graders at the time of design/construction and are now two-year OJR Alumni, also participated in the community-spanning tribute. The mosaic will remain in NC's courtyard as an enduring symbol of friendship and kindness.

When visiting Owen J. Roberts High School, along with a rotating display of recent art projects, you will also see senior artwork from the Annual Honor Artist Award and OJR Legacy Art Program.

The Annual Honor Artist Award is presented to the senior artist who best exemplifies excellence in art for that year and is chosen to complete a work of art specially designed for the high school. There are 37 Honor Artist pieces on display throughout the school.

Not to be outdone, the high school's Legacy Art Program includes 45 murals on display for the community. As part of the program, senior artists enrolled in the school's AP or Studio Art classes design and produce an original mural or fine art piece that is displayed for generations of Wildcats to come.















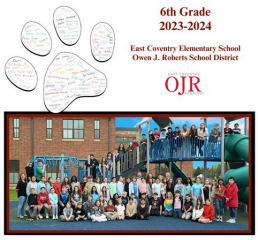










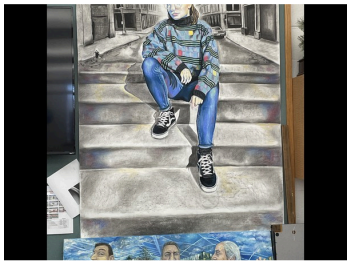












Senior Community Members Invited to Tea on December 5th

Our Owen J. Roberts High School Wildcats are excited to announce the return of Senior Tea, scheduled for Thursday, December 5th, beginning at 12:30 p.m.

This beloved event is open to all senior members of the community and features our performing arts students showcasing their talents for guests, followed by dessert, tea and coffee. To RSVP, please visit https://forms.gle/4grej9qQ8aEHeg5K9. (We ask that all interested community members please respond by November 22nd.)

Help us spread the word about the return of this amazing event to all our amazing senior community members!



Town Hall Meeting Set for November 21st



The first OJR Town Hall Meeting of the school year is scheduled for Thursday, November 21st, 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 visit https://forms.gle/c1YJQyQhVg7ZGhZ16

We look forward to seeing everyone who can join us!

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