



BUDGET 2026

ONTEORA

CENTRAL SCHOOL DISTRICT

VOTE
MAY 19
7 AM-9PM
at Onteora Middle/
High School

Budget Highlights

- ★ Tax levy at the NYS tax cap level
- ★ Maintains all student academic and extracurricular programming
- ★ Strategically addresses facilities improvements
- ★ Aligns staffing with enrollment to maintain class sizes and support students
- ★ Provides counseling, social-emotional learning, wellness initiatives, and mental health supports
- ★ Continues robust technology infrastructure and digital learning tools

Onteora Central School District's Proposed 2026-2027 Budget Maintains Student Programs and Meets the Tax Cap

The Onteora Central School District is proposing a \$66,481,500 budget for the 2026-2027 school year, representing a 2.48% tax levy increase, which is at New York State's allowable tax cap. As a result, the budget requires a simple majority voter approval.

This marks the 15th consecutive year that the Board of Education has presented a budget at or below the tax cap, reflecting a continued commitment to responsible financial planning and stewardship of taxpayer resources.

Managing Rising Costs with Fund Balance

Although the District was able to develop a proposed budget that meets the tax cap level, the budget continues to absorb significant cost increases, including (to name a few):

- Property/auto insurance rates (+10%)
- Electricity (+30%)
- Out-of-district special education placements (+13.7%)
- Employee health insurance premiums (+11%)

To balance these increases while preserving student programs and also presenting a budget that meets the tax cap level, the District will use \$2,962,485 from its saved fund balance. In addition, a one-time \$1,000,000 transfer to the capital line will support the completion of facility improvements at the Middle/High School, including:

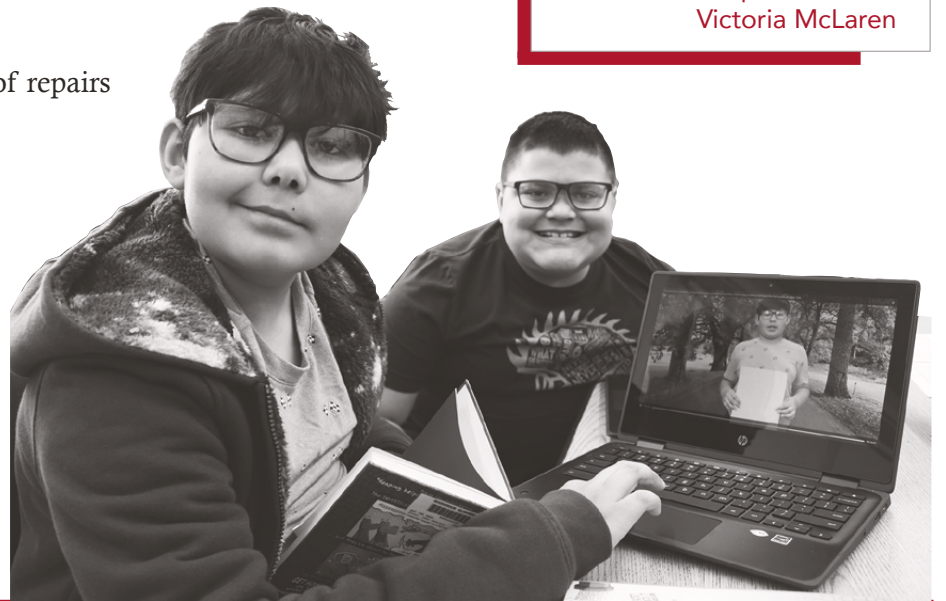
- Elevator repairs
- Asbestos removal and ceiling replacement at the High School
- Gym floor replacement at the Middle School
- Flooring upgrades in the School Counseling offices and the Learning Center
- Server room repairs
- Selected paving and roof repairs

"The proposed budget continues to prioritize strong academic programming and a wide range of extracurricular opportunities that support the development of well-rounded and socially responsible students."

—Superintendent
Victoria McLaren

CONTINUED ON PAGE 4

**READ ABOUT
GRADE 5
STUDENTS TAKING
JOURNALISM
SKILLS FROM PAGE
TO SCREEN
ON PAGE 2**



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To Postal Customer



REMINDER: TUESDAY, MAY 19, 2026, IS NOW A FULL DAY OF SCHOOL FOR BENNETT AND WOODSTOCK ELEMENTARY SCHOOL STUDENTS. The previously scheduled early dismissal has been changed, so students will follow their regular school-day schedule. Please take note!

BOARD OF EDUCATION

Cindy Bishop, President
Rick Knutsen, Vice President
Clark Goodrich, Trustee
Emily Mitchell-Marell, Trustee
Caroline Jerome, Trustee
Jenny Jared, Trustee
Rory Smith, Trustee

SUPERINTENDENT OF SCHOOLS

Victoria McLaren

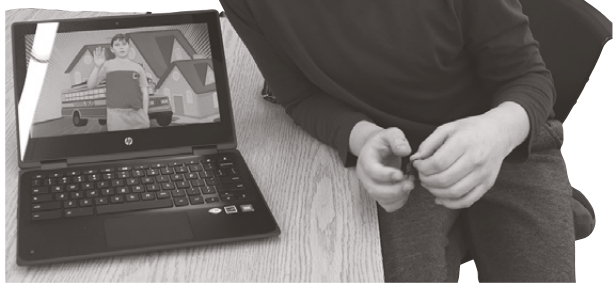
NEWSLETTER EDITING & DESIGN

Ulster BOCES Community Relations



This publication was printed on recycled paper

Media Club member Otis Cullen-DuPont shows a video he is working on.



GRADE 5 STUDENTS TAKE JOURNALISM SKILLS FROM PAGE TO SCREEN

After writing articles and producing a class newspaper during Karli Denter’s English Language Arts (ELA) class in the Fall, several Grade 5 students were inspired to build on their newly developed skills by joining Ms. Denter’s Media Club.

The club, which began meeting in January, is allowing these students to explore another exciting aspect of journalism—video!

The budding journalists regularly team up in groups of two to discuss what stories they are interested in covering. They decide who they will need to interview, and what questions they will ask, keeping in mind the foundational questions behind all good journalism: Who? What? Where? When? Why? and How? They then begin developing their strategies for their video reporting.

Ms. Denter helps the teams prepare for their videos. “What will you say when you go on video?” she asks the students. The pairs also discuss what footage they may want to run along with their reporting and how to arrange it.

With the assistance of Ulster BOCES Innovation Specialist Wes Trabelsi, Media Club members have learned key aspects of WeVideo, an online video-editing platform that allows users to create, edit, and share videos. These include recording and importing videos; trimming and editing; adding sound effects, music, and narration; cropping and resizing elements; adjusting volume across clips; and using a “green screen” to layer videos.

Future lessons, based on student interest, may focus on additional filmmaking skills, says Ms. Denter, including the intentional use of angles, the effective use of camera movement and/or multiple cameras; and post-production techniques.



(From left to right) Media Club member Ada Speck, Ulster BOCES Innovation Specialist Wes Trabelsi, and Media Club member Meriah Shands work on a video.

Bennett Family Literacy Fair Celebrates Reading, Art, and Community



Bennett Elementary Grade 1 student Aurora Amell enjoys doing a scavenger hunt at the Literacy Fair.

THE SECOND ANNUAL BENNETT ELEMENTARY SCHOOL FAMILY LITERACY FAIR NIGHT, held on March 26, was a rousing success, with hallways bustling with families and friends. This year’s theme, “A Celebration of Reading and Art,” set the tone for an evening filled with creativity and storytelling. Volunteers from the Olive Free Library, Phoenicia Library, and Bennett PTA helped spread a love of reading by giving out free books and prizes. An impressive collection of student artwork was displayed throughout the school, thanks to the efforts of Art teacher Roberta Ziemba.

Attendees explored a variety of engaging art and literacy stations, organized by grade level and led by dedicated staff members. Students also enjoyed a spooky storytelling station with the Olive Free Library, an art show scavenger hunt, an interactive shadow puppet theater, cookies, and hot chocolate; with a special guest storyteller to close out the night. A huge thank-you to everyone who made this night of creativity, reading, and community so memorable!

WORDS INTO ART: World Languages Week Fills Hallways With Color and Meaning

This March, 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 3-6. Continuing a longstanding Onteora tradition, World Language students in Grades 7 through 12 in the Spanish classes of Valerie Stewart, Annie Gallin, and Rebecca Joslin, and the French classes of Christi Nelsen-Epstein created colorful posters that showcased both their creativity and their language skills, as well as their ability to leave viewers with a powerful message. 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.

Passersby pondered such ideas as the Spanish proverb, *Para llegar a un puerto debemos zarpar* (To reach a port, we must set sail) and the French saying, *Ne reveillez pas la chat qui dort* (Let the sleeping cat lie, or Leave well enough alone), to name a few.

Among those participating was Grade 8 student Julissa Lemus Carrillo, who depicted the phrase, *Si la vida te da limones* (If life gives you lemons...) with an eye-catching landscape of lemons in an orchard, as well as a lemonade stand. Julissa said the phrase reminds her that “if life gives you an opportunity, you should take it.” She used several unique techniques in her poster, including finger painting, to create the lemons and beautiful clouds.

Shelby Buryk, Grade 12, chose the French phrase *On ne peut pas avoir le beurre et l’argent du beurre*, which loosely translates into “You can’t have it both ways,” or “You can’t have your cake and eat it, too.” Her stunning hand-drawn poster depicts a woman churning luxurious butter, while handfuls of money are falling from her pockets.

“Our students look forward to this poster challenge year after year, as well as the faculty and staff who eagerly await every March to see the amazing display of artistic and creative talent of our students,” said Valerie Stewart, who serves as the High School’s World Language Liaison.



Grade 9 student Kira Jule shows her Spanish World Languages poster.



Grade 8 student Paxton Moll with his Spanish World Languages poster.



Grade 8 student Julissa Lemus Carrillo shows her Spanish World Languages poster.

Message from the Superintendent

Dear Onteora Community Members,

I am so grateful for the support and collaboration of our community this year. We have begun the design process for our renovations at Bennett Elementary School, and although it is very early, the excitement is already building. We have a wonderful and inclusive design team that is tailoring the designs around the input and feedback of our faculty and staff. We want to ensure that these spaces are not only functional, but also inspire a love of learning in our students.

We are also looking forward to the completion of our Middle School gymnasium renovation with the replacement of the gymnasium floor this summer. As you may recall, we discovered that there was concrete under the existing floor when we began renovating last year and so were unable to complete the project over the summer of 2025. That unforeseen issue delayed us, but we are not deterred, and this project will be completed this year!

We are pleased that we have been able to create a budget to present to our community that maintains all of our existing programs and does not require us to reduce our faculty and staff in order to remain within the tax levy limit. Our budget presentations can be viewed and our Board meeting videos can be seen on our YouTube channel at @OnteoraCSD. Budget presentations can be viewed as PowerPoint documents on our budget webpage at www.onteorak12.ny.us/budget. Community members who have questions about the budget are encouraged to contact Assistant Superintendent for Business Monica LaClair at mclair@onteorak12.ny.us.

We have three Board of Education seats on the ballot this year (and two candidates). Trustees Clark Goodrich and Emily Mitchell-Marell will complete their terms in June, and are stepping off of the Board. Trustee Caroline Jerome is running for a second term, and Aubrey O'Neal is running. 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 school year and all of the milestones and celebrations this entails. We are incredibly proud of our students and everything they have accomplished over the past year. I look forward to seeing all of their families at our end-of-year events. I always 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, and it is such a heartwarming ceremony and rite of passage for these young adults getting ready to step out of our halls and into the world.

Please ensure that you **vote on May 19 in Boiceville at the Middle/High School. The polls will be open from 7 AM 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

Students Hear Powerful Messages About Compassion, Choices, and Speaking Up



Students in Grades 9–12 attended a thought-provoking assembly on March 10 featuring “Breaking the Cycle of Violence Through Forgiveness,” a panel that shares personal stories about overcoming conflict and hardship through forgiveness. The award-winning program supports the District’s social-emotional learning goals and encourages open conversations about mental health, empathy, and responsibility.

After an introduction from the event organizer, AnnMarie D’Aliso took the stage and shared the heartbreaking story of losing her son, Patrick, to suicide. Students listened in complete silence as she reflected on the depth of that loss.

“We have a word for a person who has lost their spouse, and a word for someone who has lost their parents,” she said tearfully. “But there is no word for a parent who has lost a child.”

AnnMarie urged students to look out for one another and to reach out to a trusted adult if they sense something may be wrong with a friend. She explained that people who are struggling often communicate their pain in subtle ways.

“People give messages, but they can be hard to see,” she said. “Sometimes they communicate without words because they have lost their voice. Pay attention.”

She shared that Patrick may have offered what she called “invitations”—subtle clues that he hoped might invite someone to ask how he was really doing—but those signs were not recognized at the time.

Patrick’s father, Pat D’Aliso, also spoke to students, reflecting on the importance of choices and their impact on others. “Your life is not just about decisions—it’s about consequences,” he said, before asking students a simple but powerful question: “When was the last time you told the people who take care of you ‘thank you’ and ‘I love you’?”

The speakers addressed some of the challenges that many teenagers face today, including social pressures in school hallways, lunchrooms, and classrooms, as well as in online spaces, where cyberbullying can occur. They reminded students that words carry tremendous power.

“Words can help, but they can also hurt,” Pat said, encouraging students to choose kindness and use their voices to lift others up rather than put them down.

AnnMarie and Pat also spoke about how the loss of a child affects not only parents, but also siblings, friends, teachers, and the entire community. Their message to students was clear: if you are struggling, speak up and reach out to a trusted adult.

Students were visibly moved by the presentation and asked thoughtful questions afterward, including asking how Patrick’s siblings coped with the loss. Many appreciated the opportunity to speak candidly with the parents about peer pressure, expectations, and mental health. When the assembly ended, several students approached AnnMarie to thank her—and some offered heartfelt hugs.

For more information on “Breaking the Cycle,” visit <https://www.breakingthecycle.com/>.

THREE’S THE MAGIC NUMBER: Woodstock Grade 5 Students Shine at WAAM Gallery

AFTER AN OPENING RECEPTION ON MARCH 14, ARTWORK BY GRADE 5 STUDENTS FROM WOODSTOCK ELEMENTARY SCHOOL was on display at the YES (Youth Exhibition Space) Gallery at the Woodstock Artists Association & Museum (WAAM) until April 26.

Under the guidance of Art teacher Danielle Payette, the young artists explored landscapes through the concept of the number three, discovering its many creative possibilities, a technique known as the “trptych.” The project was inspired by WAAM artist Alan Samalin, who is known for creating abstract triptych works.

Students began by drawing landscapes using only three types of lines: a curved line, a straight line, and a continuous contour line. After creating several sketches, each student selected three landscapes and used three different mediums to transform them into a triptych—a work of art made up of three panels that are displayed together as a single piece.

Through the process, students experimented with line, composition, and materials, ultimately discovering that when it comes to creativity, three really can be the magic number.



Woodstock Elementary School student Evelyn Neden shows her work on display.

Onteora Central School District’s Proposed 2026-2027 Budget Maintains Student Programs and Meets the Tax Cap

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

“The proposed budget continues to prioritize strong academic programming and a wide range of extracurricular opportunities that support the development of well-rounded and socially responsible students,” said Superintendent Victoria McLaren. “Programs that support student mental health, wellness, and engagement also remain a priority, ensuring meaningful learning experiences both inside and outside the classroom.”

Key Investments in Students and Learning

The proposed budget continues to invest in programs and services that directly support student success. Examples include:

- Strengthening Early Literacy:** The adoption of a new phonics curriculum that is aligned with Science of Reading research will improve systemic foundational literacy instruction across early grades. Partnerships with Ulster BOCES literacy coaches will support teachers and enhance student outcomes.
- Safe and Supportive School Environments:** A security vestibule installed this year will remain professionally staffed, and ongoing safety planning and wellness initiatives will continue to ensure students feel safe, supported, and ready to learn.
- Updates to Learning Environments and Technology:** Continued investment in technology infrastructure ensures reliable access, modern tools, and equitable digital learning opportunities. Updates to Middle/High School flooring will create improved learning spaces.
- Responsible Staffing:** Staffing remains aligned with enrollment to maintain appropriate class sizes and student support. Whenever possible, adjustments will be made through attrition rather than layoffs, allowing the District to manage staffing responsibly while maintaining stability.
- Supporting All Learners:** The District remains committed to meeting the needs of all students. The budget proposal supports special education services, English Language Learners, and access to high-quality curriculum materials aligned with New York State standards. Ongoing professional learning for staff strengthens instruction and supports effective curriculum implementation.

Planning for Long-Term Stability

Looking ahead, potential reductions in State Aid remain an important consideration. The District’s long-term planning includes transitioning to a centralized campus structure, which is expected to reduce operational costs while expanding educational opportunities for students. The Board of Education remains focused on balancing fiscal responsibility with maintaining strong academic programs and student experiences.

Understanding the Tax Impact

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. The District determines the tax levy, with voter approval. 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 2.48 percent increase in the tax levy, which is at the allowable increase of this year’s tax cap calculation.

Contingency Budget Information

If the budget is defeated, the Board may present the same proposal or a revised one for a second vote on Tuesday, June 16. If defeated a second time, a contingency budget must be adopted. Under a contingency budget, by law, the District would be required to:

- Eliminate \$394,100 of equipment purchases.
- Reduce \$829,635 for non-mandated programs.
- Charge a fee for community use of school facilities, which, by law, includes PTAs and Town recreation leagues.

Proposition 2: Establishing a Capital Reserve Fund

Voters will also consider a separate proposition to establish a Capital Reserve Fund of up to \$10 million to be funded over 10 years. A capital reserve functions as a long-term savings account used to fund various construction projects. It does not increase the budget and is funded only with surplus funds that may become available at the end of each fiscal year. Using a capital reserve can reduce or eliminate the need for future borrowing, saving taxpayers the cost of paying interest. Voter approval is required both to establish the reserve and to use the funds for specific projects.

Make Your Voice Heard on May 19

Community members are encouraged to participate in the school budget vote and Board of Education election on **Tuesday, May 19, 2026, from 7 AM to 9 PM**. Voting will take place at the Onteora Middle/High School in Boiceville. Absentee and Early Mail Ballots are also available. Additional information about the budget and voting process can be found at www.onteora.k12.ny.us/budget.

WHAT’S FOR LUNCH? Fresh, Local Flavors Take Center Stage in Onteora Cafeterias

EVER WONDER WHAT’S ON THE MENU IN ONTEORA’S LUNCHROOMS? Increasingly, students are choosing—and enjoying—healthy, locally sourced meals, thanks to the dedication and vision of Food Services Director Christine Downs and her hardworking team.

For nearly two decades, Mrs. Downs has been committed to bringing fresher, less processed foods to Onteora students. That effort began with simple outreach—letters sent to local farms to begin building relationships. “It took a lot of baby steps to reach out to farms and purveyors to make those connections and bring local food to our students,” she recalled.

Most recently, Mrs. Downs attended her second New York Farm to School Summit in Saratoga Springs, where more than 500 participants from across the State gathered to strengthen partnerships between schools and agricultural producers. She also served as a panelist, joining fellow school food program directors and farm producers to share insights about the power of collaboration in connecting local farms to school cafeterias.

Early partnerships helped lay the groundwork for today’s thriving program. Now, Onteora’s cafeterias feature breads and tortilla chips from Milestone Mill, which is part of Community Food Works; milk from Hudson Valley Fresh; fresh juices from Calhoun Farms; and a wide variety of fruits and vegetables from Dagele Brothers Farm, among others. Even more exciting partnerships have begun, including one with Hudson Valley Fisheries for steelhead trout.

On any given day, students can choose from locally sourced entrées, a colorful salad bar, and fresh sandwiches, with both meat and plant-based options. In addition, lunch-goers can opt for seconds, or thirds, of vegetables, and a serving of fruit comes with every meal.

The students are loving it! Popular menu choices include nacho boats topped with “cowboy caviar” (beans, corn, peppers), pita chips from a local producer, Issa’s, and chicken with “sunrise waffles”—a whole-grain favorite from Chow Ciao that actually includes carrots in the recipe. Another favorite is an entrée featuring a baked New York potato with beef or vegetarian chili, shredded cheddar, and roasted broccoli; as well as New York beef meatballs served over rotini pasta.

Looking ahead, Mrs. Downs plans to survey students for additional feedback, ensuring their voices continue to shape the future of Onteora’s Farm-to-School program.



Middle School student Caleb D’Arcy enjoys some of the local food options in the cafeteria.



High School student Liliana Smith checks out the options in the salad bar.

Vote Early or By Mail Available



Voters now have easy, flexible access to voting with Early Mail Ballots. Applications are available online at

www.onteorak12.ny.us/mailballot.

In addition to her regular Monday-Friday business hours at Central Administration, District Clerk Amanda Gates will also be available to assist voters with the Early Mail Ballot process at the following locations:

- WOODSTOCK LIBRARY:
Saturday, May 16, from 9 AM to 12 PM
- PHOENICIA LIBRARY:
Saturday, May 16, from 1 PM to 4 PM

During these sessions, voters will have the opportunity to:

- Complete an Early Mail Ballot application
- Receive their ballot
- Fill out and submit their ballot on-site



Scan the QR Code for the Early Mail Ballot application

ANNUAL BUDGET VOTE
AND ELECTION OF TRUSTEES

★★VOTE★★
Tuesday, May 19, 2026
from 7 AM-9 PM

Qualified voters may vote at
Onteora Middle/High School.

Onteora CSD 2026-2027 Budget				
	Administration	Program	Capital	Total
Board of Education	\$78,516			\$78,516
Chief School Administrator	\$275,887			\$275,887
Finance	\$605,031			\$605,031
Legal	\$152,500			\$152,500
Insurance	\$274,125			\$274,125
Personnel	\$204,026			\$204,026
Records Management Officer	\$4,932			\$4,932
Public Information	\$160,015			\$160,015
Operation of Plant			\$2,529,737	\$2,529,737
Maintenance of Plant			\$1,114,402	\$1,114,402
Central Storeroom		\$150,000	\$70,127	\$220,127
Other Central Services	\$83,200		\$58,500	\$141,700
BOCES Admin/Capital Costs	\$429,524		\$175,436	\$604,960
Curriculum Devel & Supervision	\$517,922			\$517,922
Supervision - Regular School	\$1,353,544			\$1,353,544
Research, Planning & Evaluation	\$70,000	\$443,504		\$513,504
Inservice Training	\$144,000			\$144,000
Teaching - Regular School		\$13,156,903		\$13,156,903
Programs: Students with Disabilities		\$7,468,065		\$7,468,065
Special Programs ELL		\$430,691		\$430,691
Special Programs Reading		\$590,585		\$590,585
Occupational Education		\$1,170,890		\$1,170,890
Teaching - Special School		\$130,000		\$130,000
School Library & Audiovisual		\$463,275		\$463,275
Computer Assisted Instruction		\$444,672		\$444,672
Guidance - Regular School		\$708,629		\$708,629
Health Services		\$564,307		\$564,307
Psychological Services		\$517,459		\$517,459
Social Worker Services		\$580,207		\$580,207
Interscholastic Athletics		\$927,452		\$927,452
Transportation		\$5,880,814	\$229,600	\$6,110,414
Civic Activities		\$20,000		\$20,000
Employee Benefits	\$2,534,683	\$17,655,272	\$1,929,466	\$22,119,421
Debt Service			\$18,602	\$18,602
Transfer to Other Funds		\$415,000		\$415,000
Transfer to Capital			\$1,750,000	\$1,750,000
GRAND TOTALS	\$6,887,905	\$51,717,725	\$7,875,870	\$66,481,500



MEET, GREET, AND EAT
A Wonderful Evening!



ONCE AGAIN, THE ONTEORA COMMUNITY SHOWED JUST HOW SPECIAL IT IS—with an incredible turnout for “Meet, Greet, and Eat” at the Onteora High School cafeteria on April 20!

Guests were greeted by a stunning display of artwork created by students in Kindergarten through Grade 12, along with a vibrant silent auction featuring generous contributions from local businesses and community members. Onteora musicians entertained the crowds, and many other students served as volunteers.

As attendees connected with familiar faces and met new friends, they enjoyed an impressive variety of dishes that highlighted the rich flavors of our region. The event was filled with laughter, meaningful connections, and memorable culinary experiences—truly a night to remember!



WHAT YOU WILL SEE
ON THE BALLOT

2026-2027 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 \$66,481,500 (which includes \$20,000 to support public library) for the year commencing July 1, 2026 and ending June 30, 2027, and the Board is authorized to levy and collect the necessary tax thereof on the taxable property of the District.

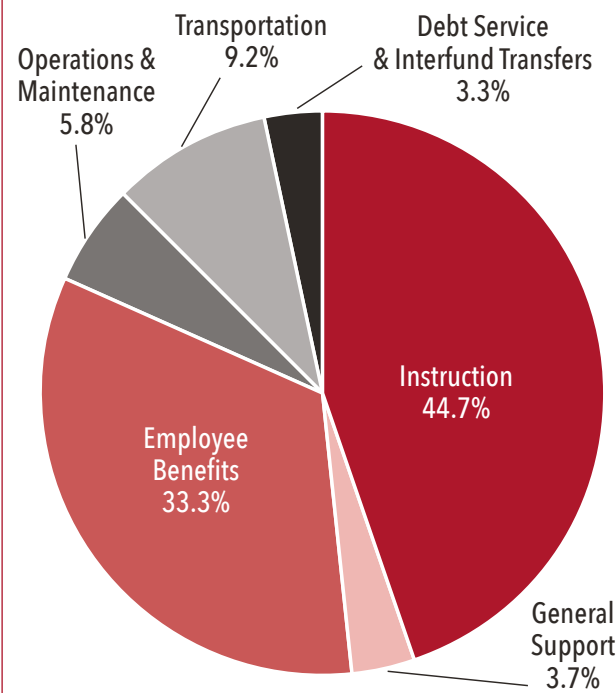
AUTHORIZE THE
ESTABLISHMENT OF A CAPITAL
RESERVE FUND
PROPOSITION #2

Shall the Board of Education of the Onteora Central School District be authorized to establish a capital reserve fund for the purpose of appropriating sufficient funds necessary to construct and finance district-wide renovations, improvements and/or additions to its facilities, as identified from time-to-time, including but not limited to those recommended in its five-year capital facilities plan, as well as original furnishings, equipment, machinery, apparatus and appurtenances, including incidental improvements and expenses in connection therewith, as well as the purchase of zero-emission school buses, and machinery and apparatus, including any infrastructure, necessary to support the maintenance of such zero-emission school buses, in the ultimate amount not to exceed \$10,000,000 over a probable term of ten (10) years; and that the source of such ultimate amount shall be transferred from unappropriated and unassigned fund balance in excess of the amount prescribed by law?

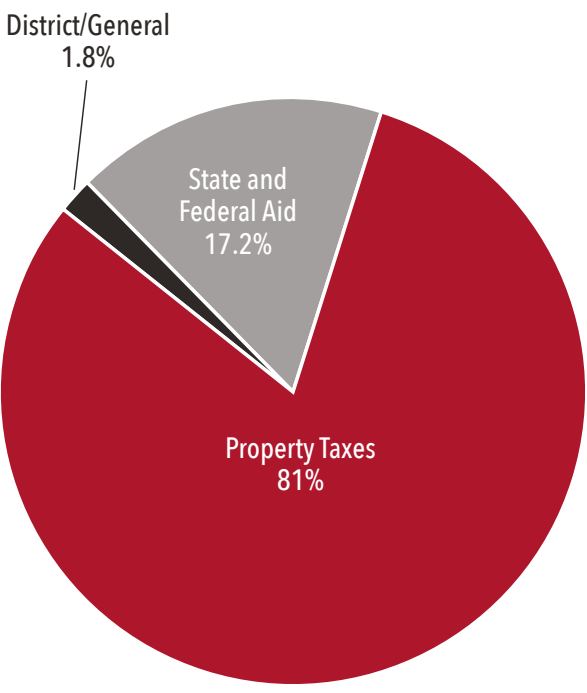
BOARD CANDIDATES:
(VOTE FOR ANY THREE)

- Aubrey O’Neal
- Caroline Jerome
- Write in: _____
- Write in: _____
- Write in: _____

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
 - Requested by mailing a letter to the District Clerk
- Onteora Central School District, District Clerk, PO Box 300, Boiceville, NY 12412

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 12, 2026**
- If you plan to **pick up your ballot in person**, your application must be received by **May 18, 2026**
- **Completed ballots** must be received by the District Clerk no later than **5 PM on Tuesday, May 19, 2026**

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

STEP 1:
Get the Application

STEP 2:
Submit Completed Application

STEP 3:
Receive Your Ballot

STEP 4:
Return Your Ballot

HOW TO VOTE BY
EARLY MAIL BALLOT

If you’d like to vote early, skip the line on vote day, or skip the trip to Boiceville, just complete and return an Early Mail Ballot application. Once you receive your ballot, you can either:

- Mail it back to us.
- Drop it off to the District Clerk in person by 5 PM on May 19.

Download your application at
www.onteora.k12.ny.us/mailballot



CONNECT WITH US

Community members who don’t have children in the district can join our email list and receive monthly updates directly to their inbox about important District initiatives!

Sign up today for
“Board Briefs” Communication
from the Board of Education

SIGN UP TODAY!

www.onteora.k12.ny.us/maillinglist

Board of Education
Candidates

(in the order they will appear
on the ballot)

Three (3) seats on the Board of Education are available, each carrying a three-year term beginning July 1, 2026. Short biographies for the two candidates who submitted the required petition to run for the Board seats are below.

Aubrey O’Neal, SENIOR DESIGN DIRECTOR
Lives in Boiceville
Resident of District for 7 years

Aubrey has two children in the District, one in Grade 4 and one in Kindergarten. She graduated summa cum laude with degrees in Apparel and Textile Design and Merchandising Management from Michigan State University. While she has not previously served as a Board member, Aubrey is eager to learn and contribute in meaningful ways.

She volunteers with The Good Company in Phoenicia, a program that supports seniors experiencing cognitive decline and isolation. Aubrey is also an active PTA volunteer, where she has helped lead an after-school program and has assisted with book fairs, the holiday market, and the Bennett Elementary School garden.

Caroline Jerome, CO-FOUNDER OF YORK EFFECT
Resident of District for 18 years

Caroline is a current Board of Education trustee seeking a second term. She has one child attending the Middle School. She holds a Bachelor of Fine Arts from Pratt Institute and has served on the Woodstock Public Library Board for eight years.

Caroline is a past recipient of the medal from AIGA (the American Institute of Graphic Arts), the most distinguished honor in the profession of communication design. She also participated in a cohort with Techstars, completing its intensive three-month program designed to help businesses accelerate growth, secure funding, and connect with a global network of entrepreneurs.

Register for September
2026 Kindergarten Now!

THE DISTRICT’S ONLINE
REGISTRATION SYSTEM FOR
KINDERGARTEN is still open
for September 2026. Visit
<https://shorturl.at/9paaM> and
please be sure to choose the
2026-2027 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 1, 2026.

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.

School Budget Notice			
OVERALL BUDGET PROPOSAL	Budget Adopted for the 2025-2026 School Year	Budget Proposed for the 2026-2027 School Year	Contingency Budget for the 2026-2027 School Year *
Total Budgeted Amount, Not Including Separate Propositions	\$63,588,660	\$66,481,500	\$65,257,765
Increase/Decrease for the 2026-2027 School Year		\$2,892,840	\$1,669,105
Percentage Increase/Decrease in Proposed Budget		4.55%	2.62%
Change in the Consumer Price Index		2.63%	
A. Proposed Levy to Support the Total Budgeted Amount	\$49,402,800	\$50,626,535	
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)	\$49,402,800	\$50,626,535	\$49,402,800
F. Total Permissible Exclusions	\$428,433	\$425,998	
G. School Tax Levy Limit, <u>Excluding</u> Levy for Permissible Exclusions	\$48,974,367	\$50,200,537	
H. Total Proposed School Year Tax Levy, <u>Excluding</u> Levy to Support Library Debt and/or Permissible Exclusions (E – B – F + D)	\$48,974,367	\$50,200,537	
I. Difference: G – H (Negative Value Requires 60.0% Voter Approval – See Note Below Regarding Separate Propositions) **	\$0	\$0	
Administrative Component	\$6,495,868	\$6,887,905	\$6,669,343
Program Component	\$50,780,644	\$51,717,725	\$50,822,552
Capital Component	\$6,312,148	\$7,875,870	\$7,765,870
* Provide a statement of assumptions made in projecting a contingency budget for the 2026-27 school year, should the proposed budget be defeated pursuant to Section 2023 of the Education Law. <i>Should the proposed budget be defeated pursuant to Section 2023 of the Education Law, a Contingent budget would eliminate all equipment purchases (\$394,100) from the budget. In addition, \$829,635 will be eliminated from the budget.</i>			

** 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
Proposition #2 – Create a Capital Reserve	\$0

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

★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ Estimated Basic STAR Exemption Savings ¹	Under the Budget Proposed for the 2026-2027 School Year \$284
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The annual budget vote for the fiscal year 2026-27 by the qualified voters of the Onteora Central School District, Ulster County, New York, will be held at the Middle School/High School in said district on Tuesday, May 19, 2026 between the hours of 7:00 am and 9:00 pm, prevailing time in the Middle School/High School Wrestling Room, at which time the polls will be opened to vote by voting ballot or machine.

Universal Pre-Kindergarten
Registration is Still Open!

1

2

3

4

5

6

ATTENTION, PARENTS OF CHILDREN ENTERING PRE-KINDERGARTEN IN SEPTEMBER 2026: if you haven't done so already, please register your child for Universal Pre-Kindergarten (UPK)! In order to be eligible for the program, children must be four years of age on or before December 1, 2026. A deadline will be announced this month (May).

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 2026-2027 school year. Once your child is completely registered, their name will be placed in the lottery. Please note, if there aren't enough applicants for the slots available, then a waitlist will be created.

If you have any questions, you may contact Margaret Harkin, Secretary to the Director of Pupil Personnel Services, at mharkin@onteora.k12.ny.us.

A

B

C

D

E

F

FAST FACTS



ONTEORA

CENTRAL SCHOOL DISTRICT

DISTRICT OVERVIEW

Serves six towns: Olive, Woodstock, Shandaken, Hurley, and parts of Marbletown and Lexington.



Surrounded by the scenic Catskill Mountains, offering environmental learning opportunities.

LOWEST SCHOOL TAX RATE IN ULSTER COUNTY.

15 years of school budgets **at or below** the State tax cap.

DIPLOMAS & ACHIEVEMENTS (CLASS OF 2024)



62%

Regents
Diplomas

34%

Regents with
Advanced Designation

22%

CTE
Endorsements

29%

CDOS
Credentials

UNIVERSAL PRE-K (UPK)

42

Full-day program students
(capacity: 52)

\$425,932

annually State-funded



ATHLETICS & ACTIVITIES



30

varsity and junior
varsity sports teams

26

clubs and
extracurriculars

ENROLLMENT & GRADUATION (CLASS OF 2025)

317



High School
students enrolled

105

students
graduated

58% attending
4-year colleges

25% attending
2-year colleges



\$650,000+

in scholarships awarded

31%

earned the Seal of
Civic Readiness

10%

earned the
Seal of Biliteracy

ENVIRONMENTAL LEARNING

Hands-on science enrichment using
Onteora's natural landscape.



ARTS & MUSIC HIGHLIGHTS



Early music and arts
instruction starts in
elementary school.

Programs include
orchestra, band, chorus,
and music theory.

Expanded MS & HS programs include
jazz ensemble, advanced visual arts,
stagecraft, and digital media.

Annual concerts,
performances, and art
showcases.



WHOLE-STUDENT SUPPORT



Mental health and
counseling teams:

4

psychologists

4

social workers

5

school counselors

1

family/community
liaison social worker

1

full-time ASTOR community
mental health clinician

**FREE BREAKFAST AND LUNCH
FOR ALL STUDENTS.**

ACADEMIC EXCELLENCE

32

elective courses

1:1

Chromebooks for
all students

15

Advanced Placement
(AP) courses

8

college-level
bridge courses

20+

career pathways via
Ulster BOCES

COMMUNITY CONNECTIONS

**The Community Mentor Program pairs
students with local professionals.**

Deep roots: many staff have decades of
experience and strong ties to the community.



www.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

Director of Pupil Personnel Services
Carol Grima 845-657-3320

**Interim Assistant Director of Pupil
Personnel Services**
Ariel McGrath 845-657-3320

District MTSS Coordinator
Elizabeth Fallo 845-657-6383

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

Director of Transportation
Raymond Clinton 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, Sarah Turck

MIDDLE SCHOOL • 845-657-2373
Interim Principal, Dr. Don Solimene

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](mailto: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.