

ONTEORA CENTRAL SCHOOL DISTRICT

Boiceville, New York

Home of the Eagles

MIDDLE SCHOOL

Student, Parent & Family Handbook

2026–2027 School Year

Our mission is to create an engaging and healthy learning environment that empowers all students to pursue their dreams, achieve their goals, and contribute thoughtfully to the global community.

Onteora Middle School

Student & Family Handbook — 2026–2027

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Principal's Welcome

Dear Onteora Middle School Families,

Welcome to the 2026–2027 school year. There is a certain energy to the start of the year at OMS — organizing school supplies, receiving new schedules, and setting new goals. Whether your child is stepping into 6th grade for the very first time or returning as a seasoned 7th or 8th grader, this is a year built for growth, and we are honored to walk it alongside you.

Starting or returning to middle school is a big leap, and we want every step to feel exciting rather than overwhelming. We open the year with an intentional focus on relationships and routines — the foundation everything else is built on. Families have many chances to connect with us throughout the year, including 6th Grade Orientation, our fall Open House, and Parent–Teacher Conferences, our dedicated time for parents and teachers to have the conversations that help students grow.

A few dates to know as the year begins:

- **6th Grade Orientation** — Thursday, August 27, 4:30–6:30 PM
- **First Day of School** — Tuesday, September 8
- **Open House** — Thursday, September 17, 6:00 PM
- **Parent–Teacher Conferences** — Monday & Tuesday, November 9 & 10

We are also committed to a distraction-free school. All middle school students are expected to silence their cell phones and store them in their lockers from arrival to dismissal. We've seen the difference this makes at OMS — sharper focus in class, stronger friendships in the halls, and a more connected community overall. Thank you for standing with us on this.

If a question comes up, please reach out. You can call the Middle School Office at (845) 657-2373, ext. 2210, or email dsolimene@onteora.k12.ny.us. Here's to a year of learning, growth, and genuine connection at Onteora Middle School.

Sincerely,

Dr. Don N. Solimene

Principal, Onteora Middle School

Our Vision, Mission & Core Beliefs

Our Vision

An Onteora education fosters intellectual curiosity, mutual respect, self-respect, creative problem solving, individual expression, ethical decision making, and active engagement in the world. Our community values and supports its children through a holistic collaboration among students, families, the educational community, and Onteora residents at large. During the middle school years, students build the confidence, self-awareness, and skills to reach their maximum potential — growing into engaged citizens and lifelong learners prepared to live rich and successful lives.

Our Mission

Our Onteora schools exist to educate and nurture the children of our diverse community. At Onteora Middle School, our mission is to create an engaging, healthy, and equitable learning environment that empowers all students to pursue their dreams, achieve their goals, and contribute thoughtfully to the global community — cultivating the knowledge, skills, and values for productive global citizenship.

Core Beliefs

We believe that:

- Every student can learn and deserves to be challenged and supported.
- A safe, welcoming, and inclusive school is the foundation for learning.
- Families are essential partners in each student's education.
- Mistakes are part of learning.

Middle School Instructional Staff

Administration: Dr. Don N. Solimene

Art: Anita Sidler, Jennifer Wentland

ENL: Emily Katz

English: Jennifer Bruck, Geordarna Constant, Kaila Stark

Family/Consumer Sciences: Karen Grimm

Health Education: Michael Rushford

Library Media Center: Amy Weisz

Mathematics: Linda Cavallaro, Michael Kocher, Kevin LaMonda

Music: Erica Boyer, Harvey Boyer, Brittany Carroll, Marilyn Dizon

Nurse: Karen Hansen

Physical Education: Brandon Harkin, Jacob Hoyt-Friedman

Psychologist: Jennifer Simco

Reading: Brigid Kelly, Julie McCarthy, Nicole Ryan

Science: Alyssa Babcock, Kelly Downs, Shaina Proietti

Social Studies: Corey Cavallaro, Karen Hadley, Kelsey VanEtten

Social Workers: Rosalie Mernin, Maegan Schenker, Elizabeth Thomas

Special Education: Lisa Barringer, Jennifer Brueckner, Mark Dornan, Megan Frandino, Lori Matteson, William Michella

School Counseling Dept.: Monir Evers, Brian Schaffer, Sam Smith, Jessica Staiger

Speech and Language: Megan Wiacek

Technology: Douglas Sanders

World Languages: Anne Gallin, Rebecca Joslin, Christi Nelsen-Epstein, Valerie Stewart

A Middle School Day: Arrival & Dismissal

Morning Arrival (7:25–7:40 AM)

- **Bus riders** enter through the Main Entrance or Center 28.
- **Parent drop-off** is at the West End Entrance (Tennis Courts side).
- **Late arrivals** enter through the West End Visitor Entrance (Tennis Courts side) and sign in.

Breakfast is available from 7:25 to 7:35. If your child arrives late, they may still receive breakfast as soon as they enter the building — please have them tell the staff member at the West End that they are getting breakfast first before heading to class. Otherwise, students report to their locker or the cafeteria on arrival. At 7:35, students begin heading toward their first-period class, which begins at 7:40. Students may not cross Route 28 at any time without permission from an administrator.

During the School Day (7:40 AM–2:35 PM)

- **Late arrivals** enter through the West End Visitor Entrance (Tennis Courts side) and sign in.
- **Dropped-off items** (lunches, instruments, etc.) are left at the East End Vestibule; the item will be received and the student notified to come retrieve it.
- **Early dismissal** pick-ups occur at the West End Entrance (Tennis Courts side). Middle School students must be signed out by a parent/guardian.
- **Nurse/medical dismissal** is through the East End entrance, unless it is medically necessary to exit via the West End.

End-of-Day Dismissal (2:35 PM)

- **Bus riders** are dismissed through the Main Entrance and Center 28.
- **Parent pick-up** occurs at the West End Entrance (Tennis Courts side).

Afterschool (Clubs, Activities & Athletics)

Students staying after school must be supervised for a legitimate purpose (a club, athletics, homework help, the Learning Center, or detention) and must report to that activity by 2:45 P.M. Afterschool pick-up begins at 3:45 P.M. at the West End Entrance; before 3:45 P.M., pick-up is at the East End Entrance. Students taking a late bus report to the area in front of the computer lab (Rm 121 C/D) beginning at 4:10 P.M.

Home–School Communication

Staying Informed

- **Parent/Student Portal:** Grades, progress reports, and attendance are posted in Infinite Campus. For log-in help, contact the Middle School Office.
<https://onteorany.infinitecampus.org/campus/portal/parents/onteoara.jsp>

- **District communications:** Announcements, closings, and emergency messages are sent through ParentSquare and posted at www.onteora.k12.ny.us.
- **Conferences:** Parent–Teacher Conferences are held on November 9 and 10. Families may also request a conference with a teacher, counselor, or administrator at any time.

Principal's Weekly Update at OMS

Each week a short video message on the Onteora Middle School YouTube channel — updates, reminders, and celebrations from around the building. New messages are posted weekly, on Sunday. <https://www.youtube.com/channel/UC50PG3X6jkvyCh1fkg-FVYg>

Who to Contact

When you have a question, starting with the person closest to the situation usually resolves it fastest.

Your concern is about...	Start with...	How to reach them...
A specific class, grade, or assignment	Your child's teacher	845-657-2373 · teacher emails https://oms.onteora.k12.ny.us/schools/ms-directory
Schedules, social-emotional needs, or academic planning	Your child's school counselor	845-657-2373 · x2132
Attendance, absences, early dismissal	MS Attendance Secretary	845-657-2373 · msattendance@onteora.k12.ny.us
Discipline or anything unresolved	MS Principal's Office	Dr. Don N. Solimene 845-657-2373 x2210 · dsolimene@onteora.k12.ny.us
Bullying or harassment (DASA)	Dignity Act Coordinator	Dr. Don N. Solimene 845-657-2373 x2210 · dsolimene@onteora.k12.ny.us
Transportation and bus routes	Transportation Office	Ray Clinton 845-657-2373 x1065 · rclinton@onteora.k12.ny.us
Health, medication, or screenings	Health Office	Karen Hansen 845-657-2373 x2240 · khansen@onteora.k12.ny.us

Extra-Curricular Activities

This listing of student activities was designed to provide information to families so students can make informed choices about their involvement in school activities. Each listing provides the name of the activity, grade level of participation, and a brief description. Please visit our website for current and updated information. <https://oms.onteorak12.ny.us/clubs>

Any student staying after school that is unsupervised will be expected to sit in a supervised room and wait for a late bus or a ride, if there is one available. Parents will be expected to pick their child up after school if their child continually stays after school for no reason. Middle School students will not be permitted in the High School After School Supervision room without prior principal approval.

Athletics

Sports and Seasons

Fall: Cross Country (Varsity, **Modified**); Field Hockey (Varsity, JV, **Modified**); Football (Varsity, **Modified**); Golf (Boys Varsity); Soccer (Varsity, JV, **Modified**); Tennis (Girls Varsity); Volleyball (Girls Varsity, JV, **Modified**); Swimming/Shadow (Girls Varsity).

Winter: Alpine Skiing (Varsity); Basketball (Varsity, JV, **Modified**); Indoor Track (Varsity); Swimming/Shadow (Boys Varsity); Wrestling (Varsity, JV, **Modified**).

Spring: Baseball (Boys Varsity, JV, **Modified**); Golf (Girls Varsity); Softball (Girls Varsity, JV, **Modified**); Tennis (Boys Varsity); Track & Field (Varsity, **Modified**).

Modified teams (grades 7 & 8) are the primary opportunity for middle-school student-athletes.

Please refer to the Athletic Code of Conduct Guidelines for athletics.

Academic Eligibility

Academic eligibility establishes standards for participation in athletics and extra-curricular activities. It is meant to act as a motivational tool consistent with our first and most important mission — academic success — and to foster standards that elevate student effort and achievement while rewarding consistent, exemplary performance.

Students in grades 7–12 who participate in the athletic program and/or extra-curricular activities that meet at least two hours per week must maintain academic eligibility and must be present in school by the start of fourth period to participate on the day the activity occurs.

School Counseling

The School Counseling Department is always open to all students and parents for assistance. Please phone for an appointment (657-2373 ext. 2132). Every student is assigned a school counselor. The chart below indicates counselor assignments for the middle school grades.

Counselor	Grade 6	Grade 7	Grade 8
Ms. Monir Evers — mevers@onteora.k12.ny.us — x2136	A-L		A-F
Ms. Jessica Staiger — jstaiger@onteora.k12.ny.us — x2135		A-L	G-I
Mr. Sam Smith — ssmith@onteora.k12.ny.us — x2134	M-P	M-Z	J-O
Mr. Brian Schaffer — bschaffer@onteora.k12.ny.us — x2133	R-Z		P-Z

Academics & Grading

Grading, Progress Reports & Report Cards

Onteora reports student progress on a regular cycle so families always have a current picture of how their child is doing. Computerized progress reports are generated every five weeks, and report cards are issued at the end of each quarter. All reports are available on the parent/student portal; families who need a paper copy may request one from the Principal's Office.

Grade Weights and Final Calculations

Course Type	Marking Period	Midterm Exam/ Assessment	Final Exam/ Assessment
Core Courses & Technology 8	21.25%	5%	Final Exam 10%
Acc Biology, Acc Algebra & Spanish 1	20%	5%	Regents (Bio/Alg) or Checkpoint A (Spanish 1) 15%
Art 7, Home & Careers 7, Health 8, & All Music courses	22.5%	Performances, Projects, Concerts, Portfolio	Final Assessment 10%
Physical Education	25%	None	None

Passing & Promotion (Grades 6–8)

The passing grade for any academic course is 65. Students who pass all subjects but one shall have the failure evaluated and a determination made as to the reason for the failure; the student may be required to repeat the subject, but in typical cases shall be promoted. Students

who fail two core academic courses must attend summer school; failure to do so will result in retention. A student will be retained with a failure of three or more academic courses. A decision to retain is made by the building principal, appropriate staff, and parent/guardian as appropriate, and the decision of the building principal is final.

Honor Roll

Students are recognized each marking period for strong academic performance:

Designation	Average
High Honors	95–100
Honors	90–94
Merit	85–89

A student with an Incomplete (IN) in any subject at the end of a marking period is not eligible for the Honor Roll for that period. Incomplete grades must be replaced with a numerical grade within five weeks or they become a zero; it is the student’s responsibility to arrange make-up work with the teacher and school counselor.

Middle School Accelerated Course Offerings

Per state regulations, students in grade 8 shall have the opportunity to take high school courses in mathematics and in at least one of the following areas:

- HS Algebra (Regents Exam)
- HS Biology (Regents Exam)
- Studio Art

Onteora uses placement assessments, student data and teacher recommendations to determine eligibility for these courses. For further clarification on the determining factors, contact your child’s school counselor.

Student Devices & Technology

Personal Devices (Phones, Smartwatches, Earbuds)

Consistent with New York Education Law §2803, students may not use internet-enabled personal devices during the school day — including classes, homeroom, lunch, study halls, and passing time — unless an exception applies (for example, an IEP/504 accommodation or specific staff authorization). Devices must be silenced and stored as directed.

At the middle school level, student devices must be silenced and stored in student lockers.

See Board of Education Policy #7370

If a student needs to reach a parent during the day, they may use a phone in the main office, nurse's office, or a counselor's office. Parents who need to reach a student should call the middle school office at 845-657-2373 x2210.

Consequences for using an unauthorized device:

- **First offense:** The device will be confiscated by a staff member, and the student will be referred to the administration. Noncompliance will be viewed as insubordination and treated accordingly. The device will be turned over to a building administrator. Students will be provided with the consequence of having to bring their device to the principal's office each day, for a period of five consecutive school days, so that it can remain out of their possession during the instructional day.
- **Second offense:** The device will be confiscated by a staff member and returned only to the student's parent/guardian by an administrator following communication with a parent/guardian. Additional consequences for students, such as detention and in-school suspension, will also be considered.
- Subsequent violations of this policy shall result in additional behavioral consequences, including the possibility of in-school suspension.

Generally, the district is not responsible for lost, stolen, or damaged personal devices brought to school.

Daily Schedules & Calendar

Bell Schedule

Period	Regular Time	2 Hour Delay Time	3 Hour Delay Time
Period 1	7:40 – 8:22	9:40 – 10:09	
Period 2	8:26 – 9:08	10:13 – 10:42	
Period 3 + HR	9:12 – 9:59	10:46 – 11:17	10:40 – 11:11
Period 4	10:03 – 10:45	11:21 – 11:50	11:15 – 11:45
Period 5 (6/7/8 Lunch)	10:49 – 11:31	11:54 – 12:23	11:49 – 12:19
Period 6	11:35 – 12:17	12:27 – 12:56	12:23 – 12:53
Period 7	12:21 – 1:03	1:00 – 1:29	12:57 – 1:27
Period 8	1:07 – 1:49	1:33 – 2:02	1:31 – 2:01
Period 9	1:53 – 2:35	2:06 – 2:35	2:05 – 2:35

Marking Calendar

1st Quarter: Friday, October 2, 2026 (5-Week Mark); Friday, November 13, 2026 (End of 1st Quarter).

2nd Quarter: Friday, December 18, 2026 (5-Week Mark); Friday, January 29, 2027 (End of 2nd Quarter).

3rd Quarter: Friday, March 5, 2027 (5-Week Mark); Friday, April 9, 2027 (End of 3rd Quarter).

4th Quarter: Friday, May 14, 2027 (5-Week Mark); Friday, June 25, 2027 (End of 4th Quarter).

Dignity for All Students Act (DASA)

The Board of Education recognizes that a learning environment that is safe and supportive can increase student attendance and improve academic achievement. A student's ability to learn and a school's ability to educate are compromised by incidents of discrimination or harassment, including bullying, taunting, hazing, and intimidation. The District will strive to create an environment free of discrimination and harassment and will foster civility to prevent conduct inconsistent with the District's educational mission.

Consistent with Policy 3420 Anti-Harassment in the School District, the District condemns and prohibits all forms of discrimination and harassment of students based on actual or perceived race, color, weight, national origin, ethnic group, religion, religious practice, disability, sexual orientation, gender, or sex by school employees or students on school property or at school-sponsored events on or off school property. In addition, any act of discrimination or harassment outside of school-sponsored events that can reasonably be expected to materially and substantially disrupt the educational process may be subject to discipline.

Middle School Dignity Act Coordinator: Dr. Don N. Solimene, 845-657-2373 ext. 2210, dsolimene@onteorak12.ny.us

<https://www.onteorak12.ny.us/about/dignity-for-all-students-act>

Attendance

Absent Student Assignments

If a student is to be absent for a short time (1–2 days), the student is requested to contact fellow classmates for assignments. If an extended absence is anticipated (longer than 2 days), contact the child's School Counselor so arrangements can be made for collection of assignments.

School Attendance Guidelines

Parents/guardians are responsible under the School Attendance Laws of New York State for their children's regular attendance and punctuality. A parent/guardian must contact the school by 9:30 a.m. if their child is not going to attend school that day. All notes must be sent in or e-mailed to the Middle School attendance secretary. For grades 6 through 8, e-mails are sent to msattendance@onteorak12.ny.us. The number to call is 657-2373.

The Board of Education recognizes the following as excused absences, each of which must be verified by the student's parent or guardian, in writing, or by school personnel where applicable:

- Personal illness;
- Death in the immediate family;
- Religious observance;
- Required attendance in court;
- Approved school-sponsored activities, including field trips, interscholastic athletics, musical and other competitions;
- Directed or authorized presence at the Administrative Offices or Nurse's Office;
- Quarantine;
- Emergency dental and medical appointments;
- Military obligations;
- Approved cooperative/work study program;
- College visitations (juniors and seniors only), with prior approval, not to exceed 4 days per school year.

A written excuse must be presented by the student on the day of return following such absence. No written excuse will be accepted if submitted more than 3 days after the date of the absence, unless it is a doctor's note. Any absence not provided for on the excused list shall be deemed unexcused. No parent has the right to illegally prevent a student from attending school. A student will be given an unexcused absence for truancy and is responsible for all work missed. Students violating N.Y.S. Law in such a manner will be disciplined as outlined in the Code of Conduct.

Attendance Procedures

The attendance office will provide a list of students who reach the following absences for administrative action:

- 10 consecutive days absent — Letter/Email sent to parents.
- 15 consecutive days absent — Phone call to parents from an administrator.
- 20 consecutive days absent — Parent conference required.

Additional procedures:

- Attendance is taken each period, except lunch, by the classroom teacher or their substitute.
- Students who cut a class are responsible for all classwork and will receive a zero for any quizzes or tests administered; they will also receive a disciplinary consequence.
- Students are required to provide a written excuse when they return to school.
- All students must be in attendance for at least half of the school day to participate in any school function that day, including sports, clubs, and activities. Excused part-day absences (such as doctors' appointments or school-related activities) meet this requirement. A student cannot miss more than four consecutive periods in a given day to be considered a part-day absence.

Early Dismissal Notes

- Students must present a note from their parent/guardian to the Middle School attendance secretary prior to the beginning of first period.
- The note must contain the pick-up time, reason for early dismissal, and contact number(s) for the parent/guardian.
- If the student is being picked up by someone other than their parent/guardian, the name of that individual must be included.
- Telephone contact will be made to confirm the note prior to an early dismissal pass being provided. Failure to confirm will result in denial of an early dismissal pass.
- If a written note cannot be provided due to unexpected circumstances, an e-mail must be sent to the Middle School attendance secretary at msattendance@onteorak12.ny.us, including the information above.

General Topics

Backpacks

Carrying the weight of many textbooks in backpacks all day has caused back strain and injuries. Because of this and the necessity to teach organizational skills, the use of backpacks in the middle school during the day is not permitted (this includes any bags used for carrying books). Middle school students may use backpacks to transport their books to and from school, and

they must be stored in lockers during the school day. Teachers will assist students with locker strategies that assure timely arrival to classes.

Restrooms

Student restrooms throughout the building are designated as either high school or middle school restrooms; students must use only the restrooms assigned to their building. There should be no more than two students at a time in any large restroom, and never more than one person at a time inside a gender-neutral bathroom.

Lockers

Onteora Middle School issues a locker and combination lock to each student at no cost; students must return locks at the end of the school year. Students are expected to keep the locker neat and clean, and may go to lockers before and after school and during passing time. They are encouraged to take sufficient books for both classes and study halls so it is not necessary to visit lockers at the end of each class period. Students should not leave valuables in lockers and should keep them locked at all times; they should not give the combination to anyone else or keep articles in other students' lockers. If a locker does not work properly, it should be reported to the office. Students are to use their assigned locker only. Lockers are provided by the school for student use, and the administration has the right to search any locker as deemed necessary.

Transportation

Alternate Transportation Requests

- The student must present a written note from the parent/guardian to the Middle School attendance secretary prior to the beginning of first period.
- The note must contain the address the student will need transportation to and valid contact number(s) for the parent/guardian.
- If the student is going home with another student, include that information as well.
- Telephone contact will be made to confirm the request prior to a transportation pass being provided; failure to confirm will result in denial.
- If a written note cannot be provided due to unexpected circumstances, an e-mail must be sent to the Middle School attendance secretary. For grades 6 through 8, e-mails are sent to msattendance@onteora.k12.ny.us. The e-mail must include the information requested above.
- Ray Clinton, Transportation Supervisor — (845) 657-2373, ext. 1061

Late Bus Runs

Students taking a late bus report to the area in front of the computer lab (Rm 121 C/D) beginning at 4:10 P.M. (see "A Middle School Day: Arrival & Dismissal").