Parent/Student Handbook

2026-2027



Bennett Elementary School

4166 State Route 28
Boiceville, NY 12412
845-657-2354
www.onteora.k12.ny.us

The Bennett School opens the door of opportunity.
All are welcome to enter.

-K.Carle

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WELCOME TO THE BENNETT ELEMENTARY!

Dear Bennett Elementary Students and Families,

Welcome to another exciting year at Bennett Elementary! Whether you are new to our school or returning, we are excited to have your family with us.

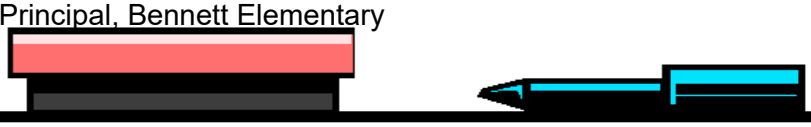
At Bennett, we believe strong relationships are at the heart of meaningful learning. We are committed to creating a welcoming, healthy, and equitable environment where every student feels known, valued, supported, and inspired to grow. Our staff, families, and students work together to build strong relationships, encourage curiosity, and foster academic success.

Creating this environment is a partnership. As a valued partner in your child's education, your insights are essential in helping us understand, support, and celebrate your child's learning and growth.

This handbook highlights key opportunities, expectations, and policies. Please review it with your child, and feel free to reach out with any questions.

I am excited for the year ahead and all the opportunities it will bring for learning, connection, discovery, and joy. Thank you for entrusting us with your children's education and for partnering with us on their learning journey. Welcome to Bennett Elementary; let's make it a wonderful year together!

Warmly,
Ariel McGrath
Principal, Bennett Elementary



BENNETT ELEMENTARY STAFF

Principal
Ariel McGrath

Main Office
Deborah Hapeman and Gina Tucker

School Counselor Candice Sosler	**School Nurse** Janice Tieri
Kindergarten Shandell Heppner Michelle Millman Jolie Morrhus (K-1)	**AIS Reading** Kristina Countryman Amanda Kovac Kelly McLean
First Grade Alissa Schupp Rachel Wood	**AIS Math** Sharee Haro-Montelongo
Second Grade Anna Armstrong Abbie Gordon (1-3) Ashley Mitchell	**Speech** Ali Harkin Jackie Hanzl
Third Grade Laura Kirn Allison Mitchell	**Occupational Therapist** Nina Reiten Nicole Zacchio
Fourth Grade Elizabeth Corsitto Adam LaFera	**Physical Therapist** Erin Burch
Fifth Grade Doreen Erlwein Krissy Warren	**Social Worker** Kevin White
Co-teachers Elizabeth George Samantha Mundy Katrina Quigley	**School Psychologist** Lauren Petriski
ELL Dominique Fields Richard Mugge	**Teaching Assistants** Adam Black — Tracy Guerin Connor Decker — Nicole Hastie
Art Roberta Ziemba	**Teaching Assistants Continued** Catherine Johnan — Stephanie Pearlman Veronica Kivlehan — Lauren Silver Shaylin McGowan
Library Media Specialist Bernadette Amodeo	**Monitors** Michele Hilty — Jonathan Verdon Donna Carr
Music Josephine Catalano Tess Leavey Corinne Sorace	**Cafeteria Staff** Sally Piland Ana Villanueva
Physical Education Christopher Kasprzyk Matt Ryan	**Custodial Staff** Brian Davis — Kimberly Neal Pam Natoli

DISTRICT MISSION STATEMENT

Our Onteora schools exist to educate and nurture the children of our diverse community. 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.

DAILY SCHEDULE

The Onteora School District provides each student with a district calendar noting planned conference days, school holidays, and scheduled events. Please refer to this calendar to determine when school will be in session.

The daily schedule for Bennett Elementary School is as follows:

8:40 a.m.	Busses unload, classrooms open, Breakfast Program begins
9:00 a.m.	Classes begin, attendance is taken, daily announcements

Students arriving at 9:00 a.m. or after are considered tardy

11:00 a.m./12:05 p.m.	Grade 2-3 Recess/Lunch
11:30 a.m./12:35 p.m.	Grade 4-5 Recess/Lunch
12:05 p.m./1:10 p.m.	Grade K-1 Recess/Lunch
3:25 p.m.	Students (pick up) dismissed to Exit 2
3:30 p.m./3:40 p.m.	Students dismissed to busses/Busses depart

SCHOOL CLOSINGS AND DELAYS

Notification of school closings and delays will be made through our ***Shout Point Messenger*** system.

For your convenience, the Onteora School District also posts all delayed openings and closings at **www.schoolclosingnetwork.com** and on the district website at **www.onteora.k12.ny.us.**

ADDRESS CHANGES

Up-to-date information is critical in the event of an emergency. Onteora Central School District requires proof of residency whenever a change of address occurs. Please notify the main office of address changes and request a change of address packet.

ARRIVAL AND DISMISSAL PROCEDURES

We use the following procedure to ensure the safety and well-being of all students at the beginning and end of each day. Please note that when your child is dropped off or picked up daily, or only on occasion, the following procedures must be followed. All doors will be locked throughout the day.
Note: Changes to a child's dismissal plan must be made prior to 3:00 p.m. Written notifications of changes in a dismissal plan (i.e., bus pass or early release) should be submitted to the office in the morning. **No bus passes will be issued after 3:00 p.m.**

Drop Off Times	Procedure Summary
Prior to 8:30 a.m.	***Do not drop off your child prior to 8:30 AM.*** **No supervision is available.**
8:30 – 8:45 a.m.	Student drop off – you may drop off your child at the handicapped entrance located behind the school. Please follow the semi-circle traffic pattern, so that the arrival process is safe and efficient. **For safety and efficiency, please have your child exit on the passenger side of the vehicle. Students may exit your vehicle when you are the first or second car in line. Should you need to walk your student to the door for any reason, kindly park in the staff parking lot and walk your student down to the door. This will help with the continuous flow of cars at the drop off area and ensure safety** At no time should your child be dropped off behind the buses that line up in front of the school. **Do not park in the bus unloading area**. Children proceed to their classroom. Breakfast will be offered in the cafeteria. Busses unload
9:00 a.m.	Late arrival. ***Parents/Guardians must escort their child(ren) to the front door***. Students must sign in with the main office before proceeding to class.
Prior to 3:15 p.m. (Early dismissal)	If it is necessary to pick your child up early, an email to your child's teacher and the Main Office on that date will help the teacher and your child to be prepared for the early departure. Please ring the doorbell/monitor to notify the office of your arrival. **Instruction continues in the classrooms until 3:25 p.m. Students are reviewing their homework assignments and gathering the necessary materials. We ask that you minimize the number of times you pick up children early, so they have appropriate closure to their school day.**
3:25 p.m.	Students dismissed to Exit 2 for legal guardian or delegate pick up - Legal guardians must notify the Main Office via email or handwritten note, if a delegate including a stepparent will be picking up their child. **Proper ID will be required**. Please park in the west-end parking lot by the tennis courts. **Note: If you will be picking up your child on the same day every week, you may send in one ongoing email stating which days your child will be picked up and by whom. (Should there be any changes to this dismissal plan, please notify the office via email as soon as possible.)**
3:30 p.m./3:40 p.m.	Students dismiss/busses depart

Buses

Bus assignments including pick-up and drop-off times are viewable on the Parent Portal. If you have any questions regarding your child's bus schedule, please contact the Transportation Department Office at 657-2537.

In the morning, buses begin to arrive at approximately 8:40 a.m. and begin to unload.

In the afternoon, buses begin to assemble to take students home around 3:25 p.m. When all the buses have arrived, students are escorted to their buses at the front of the building. Loaded buses depart the school at approximately 3:40 p.m.

Bus transfers (bus passes) may be issued to a student by the Main Office only upon written request from a parent/guardian. The written request must include the child's full name, date, the classroom teacher's name, the child's destination, the parent's full name, contact phone number (for questions or concerns), and signature. Written requests must be received in the office prior to 3:00 p.m.*. No bus passes will be issued after 3:00 p.m. For morning pickup, the transfer request should be sent to the school the day before the pickup is needed.
***Transfers may be rejected if the bus is at capacity.**

Any alternate transportation arrangements that are needed on a regular basis (ex. childcare situations) should be made with the Transportation Department.
Email: **Transportation@onteora.k12.ny.us** Phone: **845-657-2537**

Walkers

Students identified as walkers by the Transportation Department are released after the buses have departed.

Early Emergency Dismissal (Shout Point Messenger)

During the course of the school year, we face the possibility of early emergency dismissal. Although early dismissals are most often caused by weather, there may be other reasons for early dismissal (heating problems, water problems, etc.)

In the event of an early emergency dismissal, the Onteora Central School District activates the Shout Point Messenger system. This system has the capability to contact the entire district within minutes of an announcement of an early dismissal. Parents/Guardians will be contacted at the phone numbers that are entered in Infinite Campus (our student management system).

Students will follow their normal dismissal plan. If you need to make any changes to your student's dismissal plan, please contact the Main Office as soon as possible. Please review the emergency procedures with your child frequently.

In addition to the messenger system, information can be located on the District's website.

TRANSPORTATION
BUS SAFETY RULES

Please review this information with your child.

1) Arriving and waiting at bus stop:
   a) Be ready when the bus arrives – be orderly.
   b) Wait Fifteen feet from the bus until the bus door opens.
   c) Enter with care – use the handrail.
2) If crossing the street, cross in front of the bus, use the following procedure:
   a) Stand Fifteen feet from the front bumper and make eye contact with the driver.
   b) Await a signal from the driver.
   c) Look both ways before crossing.
   d) Continue looking while crossing.
   e) Never go back but continue completely across the roadway.
   f) If the bus beeps its horn, it signifies danger. Return back to the side of the street.
3) Riders should remain seated while the bus is in motion.
4) No eating, smoking, vaping or drinking is allowed on school buses.
5) Keep head, hands and arms inside.
6) Keep the bus clean and aisles clear.
7) No pets, animals, glass or sharp objects are allowed on the bus.
8) Be courteous and speak quietly.
9) No throwing objects in the bus or out of windows or doors.
10) Obey all requests of the bus driver.
11) Shoving, pushing, profane and obscene language is prohibited on the bus.

Violation of the bus safety rules or misbehavior will result in a referral to the Principal. Consequences usually are progressive in nature. Efforts are made to avoid suspension, but safety cannot be compromised. Your cooperation and support in helping your child review the proper conduct are greatly appreciated.

Bus drills are held at the beginning of the year to prepare children in case of an emergency while on the school bus.

Safety rules and drills are an integral part of our school safety plan.

ATTENDANCE

Attendance will be submitted to the office by the homeroom teacher daily at 9:00 a.m. Students arriving after 9:00 a.m. ***must*** **be signed in by a Parent/Guardian**.

Parents are asked to call the school between 8:30 and 9:00 a.m. to notify the Health Office of their child's absence at extension 4140. **State law requires that an explanation for the absence be sent to the Main Office (email is best) on the day that your child returns to school. Please send the excuse to the Bennett Office email bennettoffice@onteora.k12.ny.us.**

Good attendance is directly related to scholastic success. NYSED has now mandated that all children be in attendance 90% of the school year. Chronic absence from school, which is defined as missing at least ten percent of enrolled days, warrants our urgent attention because it diminishes successful student outcomes and undermines learning. Please know that you will be notified if your child misses 10% of school, which includes excused absences, unexcused absences, and late entry to school. Parents are responsible for their children's regular attendance and punctuality. Resources including posters, parent fliers, examples of successful intervention strategies and programs to reduce chronic absenteeism can be found at http://www.everystudentpresent.org/ .

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 school personnel, where applicable:

- Illness of the child
- Emergency illness in the family
- Death in the immediate family
- Emergency dental and medical appointments
- Religious observance
- Approved school-sponsored activities
- Court appearance

An email or written note must be provided by the student's parent or guardian to the Main Office, bennettoffice@onteora.k12.ny.us and bennettnurse@onteora.k12.ny.us for an absence due to the above reason(s) to be considered legal. No excuse for an absence will be accepted if the excuse is submitted more than three (3) days after the date of absence with the exception of a medical note.

If your child will be leaving school early on a given day, an email should be sent to your child's teacher and the Main Office.

Student Absences due to Family Vacation

The Onteora Central School District strongly supports attendance in school for all students on days when classes are scheduled. The nature of the curriculum and the teaching-learning process itself requires regular student attendance. Missed instruction in school cannot always be easily made up or duplicated. Students' absences from school due to family vacations, by law, must be recorded as unexcused absences.

Accordingly, the following information is provided to parents:

1. It is suggested that family vacations be arranged to coincide with scheduled school vacations.
2. The classroom teachers should be informed of a pending absence two (2) weeks prior to the absence. The teacher will inform parents of any possible implications of the proposed absence and of any expectations or responsibilities a student will have to meet upon returning to class.
3. Teachers will furnish assignments as deemed appropriate, when possible.
4. Teachers will determine the extent and the manner in which missed work will be completed.
5. Teachers may provide an opportunity for test make-ups.

FOOD SERVICES

The District is using Infinite Campus to support the Food Services program in all schools. All positive account balances will be the same when the students return to school in September as they were before summer vacation. Parents/guardians have the option of checking their child's account history online and making deposits to their accounts there as well. You may request account histories to be sent to you, and cash or checks may be sent in to place money in your child's account. The breakfast/lunch menu is distributed to all students each month and can also be found on the district website.

The following is the cost of meals and milk for this school year:

K-5	Breakfast No Charge Lunch No Charge
6-8	Breakfast No Charge Lunch No Charge
9-12	Breakfast No Charge Lunch No Charge
Milk	**$0.50**

The District strives to serve healthy options and our fresh ingredients are purchased locally whenever possible.

To help expedite the handling of your student's account, we strongly encourage parents/guardians to do the following.

- Pre-pay for your student's a la carte purchases on a weekly, monthly, or yearly basis. Please keep in mind this is a debit account.

- Meal charge policy can be found on our district website. District > Food Services

- **If you had spending limits set on your child's account last year, please contact Christine Downs, Director of Food Services, to re-activate those limits. Otherwise, your**

child will not have a set-spending limit. Also, please contact the District if your child requires special meal accommodations. A detailed diet plan is required by a physician annually, at the start of a new school year, in order for the District to accommodate the request.

Free or Reduced Meals
We are pleased to inform you that as part of New York State's Executive budget, Universal Free Meals has been implemented for the 2026-2027 school year. All School Food Authorities participating in the National School Lunch and Breakfast Programs will be providing enrolled students a healthy school breakfast and lunch at ***no cost***.

Breakfast Program
The Food Service Department serves breakfast each day. All students are eligible to participate in this program.

Snacks

Snacks are made available daily for children **to purchase** during their scheduled classroom snack times. Students will not be allowed to charge snacks; therefore, it is important to keep a positive balance in their lunch account. Children may also bring snacks from home. Healthy snacks are encouraged. We also encourage students to take the grab-and-go breakfast when they arrive, even if they ate at home, this can act as their snack for the day.

Lunch from Home
Students must bring lunches that are ready to eat. There are no microwaves.

Beverages brought from home should be packed in appropriate (leakproof, reusable) containers. Under no circumstances should beverages be sent in glass containers.

If there is an occasional day when a parent brings lunch to a child, it must be brought to the office, and office staff will deliver it to your child. Doing this on a daily basis is disruptive to the class.

Cafeteria Rules:
a. Sit in a safe and acceptable manner.
b. Use acceptable table manners.
c. No Sharing of Food
d. Use appropriate language.
e. Speak in conversational tones.
f. Cooperate with peers and adults.
g. Respect the rights and property of others.
h. Raise your hand and wait for permission before leaving your seat.
i. Remain seated until called upon by an adult.
j. Don't leave the cafeteria without permission.
k. When an adult raises their hand or counts, quiet down immediately.

Peanut/Tree Nut Procedures

We care about all our students at Bennett Elementary and have become a "nut-aware" school in order to provide a safe environment for students who are allergic to nuts. We do not want anything to happen to these children, nor do we want other children to witness trauma. Either situation could be devastating. The steps we have taken are:

1. Instead of peanut butter and jelly as a cold lunch offering, students may select a “Sunbutter” and jelly, turkey, tuna, ham, cheese sandwich, or salad plate. Please see the lunch menu for a complete list of options. Cereals and snacks containing nuts have also been eliminated.

2. We have designated "nut-free" tables in the cafeteria, which are cleaned with different cleaning supplies. We request that parents try to minimize sending in peanut butter on sandwiches. Peanut butter will be allowed; however, your child will have to sit with other classmates on the opposite side of the cafeteria away from the "nut-free" tables. There will be no repercussions or discomfort for your child. We will also require these children to wash their hands after eating. If a nut/peanut allergic child touches something after someone who has touched these products, a severe reaction could occur.

3. All common rooms will be nut free. Foods containing nuts will not be allowed. If students bring in items with nuts, they will follow the same procedure as the procedure in the cafeteria (see above). We recognize that nuts are good and healthy snacks for most children. We also know that students are in school only 6 hours each day and that there are other snacks that are just as healthy and will help others in our school community.

COMMUNICATION

Bennett Open House
Please refer to the District Calendar for the date and time our Open House will take place.

This Open House will also allow parents the opportunity to visit their child's classroom and meet their teacher. This night is designed for the teachers to speak with all parents about the curriculum for the year, daily schedules, classroom rules and expectations, and any special activities that will be occurring during the year. This is a time for parents only – students should *not* attend.

Please note that Open House is not an appropriate time to discuss personal concerns. These topics are best handled during a private conference. Do not hesitate to schedule a conference to discuss these matters.

Conferences
Within the Onteora School District, many programs are available to encourage all students to succeed. If you have any questions or concerns regarding your child, please do not hesitate to schedule a conference with your child’s teacher or the principal.

Parent-teacher conferences are planned two times per year. The dates for these conferences can be found in the School District Calendar. It is the teacher's goal to invite each child's parents/guardian at least once per year.

Parents are welcome and encouraged to talk with their child's teachers during the school year. Appointments must be made to coincide with the teachers' schedules. Please contact the teacher to set up an appointment.

Parent Portal
The Portal is a secure website that allows parents to monitor their child's progress in school. As a parent, you can monitor your child's daily attendance and grades (K-5), as well as have access to your child's lunch account, health records, and assessments. *It is designed to increase the communication between parents, the school, and the teacher,* ***which will be used to communicate with you on a regular basis.***

Parent Square
Parent Square is our school's primary communication platform, designed to keep families informed and connected. Through Parent Square, parents and guardians receive important school announcements, classroom updates, event reminders, emergency notifications, and messages from teachers and administrators. We encourage all families to activate their Parent Square account to ensure they receive timely information and stay engaged with their child's education. If you do not wish to activate your account, you will receive information from Parent Square in email form.

FIELD TRIPS

Field trips are an important part of the educational process. Field trips are designed to enhance the curriculum and to give students an opportunity to visit locations that they might otherwise not have the opportunity to explore.

The District provides bus transportation for field trips. By law, children must report to school on the morning of the field trip and ride the bus to the destination in order to be marked as in attendance and be part of the class trip. If a parent/guardian transports a child directly to the field trip location, the child will be marked absent (and will not be covered by the school's insurance for the day).

If a parent/guardian wishes to take their child directly from the field trip location, a note must be sent to the school stating this, prior to the field trip. The parent/guardian must sign the child out with the teacher in charge of the trip.

When a field trip has been scheduled, parents will receive a permission slip home that needs to be completed and returned to the school. Any child that does not return a permission slip, will not be allowed to attend the field trip.

PLAYGROUND RULES

Students must follow the rules listed below to assure their own safety and the safety of others. This information will be reviewed with the children by the physical education teacher, the classroom teacher, and the teaching assistants on duty.

1. Children must always remain inside the fenced areas.
2. If equipment goes outside the fence, get an adult to help.
3. Fighting, play fighting, wrestling, roughhousing, tackle football, dodgeball, throwing stones/woodchips/snowballs, or any activity which is dangerous or annoying to other children, is not acceptable. If a child feels that they are going to be hurt or that someone else may be hurt, they should tell an adult. Everyone should have the opportunity to play fairly.
4. Picnic tables are for sitting at, not climbing on.
5. Parents/guardians may not pick up their children from the playground. School personnel have been directed NOT to release children from the playground.
6. Running and tagging games in grass areas only.
7. When using the slides:
    a. Children should take turns.
    b. One child per time on the slide.
    c. Slide down only
8. Do not walk on the wood chips by the swings unless you are using the swings.
9. You must be seated when on the swings.
10. Children must return to the building when directed by staff.
11. When using the climbing structures:
    a. Children should not crowd each other and should take turns.
    b. Children should use a tight grip on the bars.
    c. Children should keep their hands to themselves.
12. Toys from home are not allowed on the playground. We encourage children to leave their personal toys at home.
13. Appropriate clothing for weather conditions, i.e., snow play (snow pants, boots, gloves, etc.)
14. Appropriate footwear during recess – **flip flops, sandals without a strap around the ankle, or high-heeled shoes will not be allowed on the Net plex**. Sneakers are recommended for recess and required for Physical Education class.

SAFETY DRILLS

According to state law, safety drills are held throughout the school year to ensure that children, teachers, and staff are familiar with the best possible emergency safety procedures.

The safety drills include evacuation (fire) drills and lockdown drills.

- **Evacuation (Fire) Drill** - Students and Staff will evacuate the building via the closest exit.

- **Lockdown -** implemented when there is an incident *in* the school building. The doors throughout the building are locked and students must stay in their classrooms, away from the doors and windows.

Health Services

Onteora Central School District's School Health Services program supports your student's academic success by promoting health in the school setting. One way that we provide care for your student is by performing the health screenings as mandated by the State of New York.

Each building has a Health Office with a School Nurse.

Immunizations:

All entering students (kindergarten and new to the district) are required by New York State Education Law to be immunized against diphtheria, tetanus, pertussis (whooping cough), poliomyelitis, measles, mumps, rubella (German measles), varicella (chickenpox), Hepatitis B, age-appropriate Tdap and meningococcal vaccines. Proof of immunizations by a Health Care Provider (HCP) or previous school record is required as acceptable documentation of the immunization status.

During the school year, the following screenings are required:

- Vision – distance and near acuity for all newly entering students and students in kindergarten, grades 1, 3, 5, 7, & 11.
- Hearing – hearing screening for all new entrants and students in kindergarten, grades 1, 3, 5, 7, & 11.
- Scoliosis - scoliosis (spinal curvature) screening for all girls in grades 5 and 7, and all boys in grade 9.
- Health Appraisals - a physical exam, including Body Mass Index (BMI) and Weight Status Category is required for all new entrants and students in kindergarten, grades 1, 3, 5, 7, 9, & 11. If we do not receive a physical from your health care provider by September 30, a school physical exam will be scheduled.
- Body Mass Index Reporting (BMI) – as part of a required school health exam, a student is to have their height and weight measured. The results are then used to compute the student's BMI. The BMI helps the doctor or nurse know if the student's weight is in a healthy range, too low, or too high. Periodically schools are requested to report to the New York State Department of Health (NYSDOH) information about our students' weight status groups. **Only summary information is sent, no student names or identifying information.** However, you may choose to have your child's information excluded from this survey report. **IF you do not wish to have your child's weight status group information included as part of the Health Departments survey, please SEND WRITTEN notice to the school nurse.**
- The information sent to the NYSDOH will help health officials develop programs that make it easier for children to be healthier.
- Dental Certificates – a dental certificate is requested for all new entrants and students in kindergarten, grades 1, 3, 5, 7, 9 & 11.

A letter will be sent home if there are any findings on the screenings done at school that would cause concern or need medical follow-up. Please call the school's health office if you have any questions or concerns.

First Aid:

In cases of accidents or illness, the school district is responsible for immediate first aid care. Parents will be notified. The subsequent treatment and transportation of the ill or injured student becomes parental responsibility. All injuries incurred in school must be reported to the teacher, supervisor, or bus driver in charge, and the student must report to the health office. The health office must receive a report of injury since the appropriate recording and insurance follow- up is

very important and must be completed promptly. *If students become ill or injured during school hours, they must report to the health office.*

Basic Health Rules:

1. Keep your child home if your child has any of the following conditions:
    a. Fever (temperature of 100 degrees or more)
    b. Fever during the previous 24 hours
    c. Heavy nasal discharge
    d. Persistent cough
    e. Overtired and generally not feeling well
    f. Vomiting and/or diarrhea within 24 hours of the start of the school day
    g. Rash of unknown origin
2. If a child's health is in doubt upon entering school or during the school day, the parents/guardians will be notified to pick up the child.
3. Parents/guardians should notify the Health Office whenever a child is absent. Please email the Main Office bennettoffice@onteora.k12.ny.us and the Health Office bennettnurse@onteora.k12.ny.us or send in a written note when the student returns to school from an absence. If the student has been diagnosed with a contagious illness (such as chicken pox, mono, strep throat, etc.), this should be reported - even if they have been out for several days.
4. A child with a fever of 100.0° F may not return to school until they have been fever-free for 24 hours without the use of fever-reducing medications (i.e., Tylenol, ibuprofen, etc.).
5. Notify School Nurse as soon as possible if a child has tested positive for COVID-19.
6. If your child has been evaluated by a health care provider due to an injury, please request a note that clears them to return to school and specifies activity restrictions if necessary.
7. Contact School Nurse if any questions or concerns.

Medication Administration:

If it becomes necessary for a student to take any form of medication at school, the following steps must be followed:

1. A written order from the health care provider must be obtained which includes the student's name, medication, dosage, and time to be given at school.
2. Permission must be given in writing by the parent/guardian, in order for the medication to be given at school.
3. The medication must be delivered to the school by an adult in its original container, properly identified with the student's name, date prescribed, name of medication, dosage, and instructions for administering (if it is a prescription medication, the medication must be delivered in the original pharmacy container. We recommend asking the pharmacy at the time of filling the prescription for a second labeled bottle, so one can be kept at home and one sent to school).
4. The medication must be kept in the health office in a locked cabinet (see below for exceptions*).
5. At no time should a student have prescription or non-prescription medication/drugs on them*.
6. If a student is to self-carry medication, it is to be noted on the medication order form, and the self-carry attestation form must be completed as well. School personnel may not dispense any medications including over the counter medications unless the above conditions have been met.

*Some conditions may necessitate that a child carry and self-administer their medication. Examples would be an inhaler for severe asthma or an Epi-pen for serious allergies. The school should have knowledge of these mediations prior to a student bringing them to school. They require all of the above written permissions and an attestation form completed by parent and

medical provider to self-carry and self -administer. Ritalin, anti-seizure drugs and antibiotics are examples of non-emergency medications, and must be administered through the health office. If you believe your child has a potential emergency health need, please consult with the school nurse to develop an emergency care plan. Students may not possess, consume, or distribute any type of medication without the approval of the school's administration and/or the health office.

These policies and procedures are necessary to insure the health and safety of the entire student body. We appreciate your cooperation and compliance.

Hand Sanitizers:

Alcohol based hand sanitizers can be used in school. If you do not want your child to use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer, you MUST notify the nurse in writing.

Physical Education and Sports:

Medical excuses pertaining to Physical Education must be obtained from the student's health provider. The document should be brought to the Health Office prior to the start of class. The Health Office will supply the Physical Education teacher with documentation of doctor's note. A student may not participate in any Physical Education classes until cleared, in writing, by their health provider. If a student is expected to be out of physical education class for any extended time, there is a form that can be given to the doctor to determine if any adaptive measures can allow student to participate.

In order to be cleared for activities after a concussion, a physician must clear the student to return to activity. Upon private physician clearance, the school medical director, will clear the student to begin the return to play protocol. Once the student has completed the return to play protocol, the student will be able to participate in all activities.

Before a student is allowed to participate in any interscholastic athletic activity, the student must have a current physical exam on file, be registered on Family ID for sport including recent health history (each season), and be approved by the school's medical director.

General:

Please notify your School Nurse of any changes in your child's health history throughout the school year. It is important to keep your School Nurse informed of any changes in your child's health. This would include any newly diagnosed allergies, asthma, food sensitivities/preferences, new medications, as well as any new illnesses or injuries.

HOMEWORK

The educators at Bennett Elementary value meaningful homework because it provides an opportunity for students to practice and reinforce skills and concepts that are taught in class. Reading and writing reflection each night promotes learning in all subject areas. Math homework helps students develop necessary foundational skills. Homework helps to foster strong work habits and student independence.

What is homework? It is a planned part of the curriculum, extending and reinforcing the learning experience of the school. In addition, homework is:

1. Additional practice to strengthen new skills introduced in the classroom;
2. Work on projects of short-term or long-term nature;
3. Participation in research activities in locating facts and data;
4. Extended reading/writing assignments.

Whenever homework exists in our school system, it should supplement, complement (through differentiation), and reinforce classroom teaching and learning.

Parental Role: It is crucial that parents support and have an active role in their child's academic life. Student growth will be ensured when parents and teachers work together in a combined effort to support and encourage student learning; this includes homework.

Independent Reading (Readers Workshop): Readers Workshop requires that students read independently in their "just right" book that correlates with the current Unit of Study and is included in the minutes below.

Time Guidelines for Homework (includes independent reading) – These guidelines specify the **approximate** range spent on homework assignments:

- K-2: homework will begin slowly leading to reading 10-15 minutes a day after school
- Grade 3: 25-35 minutes
- Grade 4: 35-45 minutes
- Grade 5: 45-55 minutes

Homework will not be assigned over school breaks. Every effort will be made to keep homework to a minimum on weekends. Homework may be assigned five nights per week. Assignments given weekly may need to be completed by students on weekends if that is how a student chooses to manage his or her time.

Homework should be a topic of communication between parents and teachers. These procedures recognize and allow for exceptions and extenuating circumstances.

PTA

The Bennett PTA is a vital and active part of the Bennett School Community. Parents are encouraged to participate. Meetings are held monthly. Check the district calendar for dates and times. If you are unable to attend the meetings but would like to volunteer, please contact one of the PTA officers. We seek your involvement and participation as we work together to create an exceptional school for our children. pta@thebennettpta.com

OUR SCHOOL COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIP

A child's parents/guardians and the school share the responsibility for establishing an educational climate that will encourage each child's maximum growth. As the parent looks to the school to provide the facilities and the personnel, which are essential to the child's proper development, the school looks to the parent to assume certain obligations, which cannot be delegated to others.

A school can be effective in teaching the commonly accepted virtues of honesty, respect for authority, consideration for the rights and property of others, and adequate standards or personal integrity when the basic principles have been established and are held in sufficiently high regard in the home.

When parents have confidence in the school and cooperate with its programs and they show respect for the sincerity and integrity of its teachers, this is quite likely to be reflected in wholesome attitudes on the part of their child(ren).

❖ Take an interest in your child's work and encourage maximum effort.

❖ Become acquainted with the school, its programs, and its staff through scheduled teacher conferences, attendance at Parent Night programs, and participation in PTA affairs.

❖ Provide adequate supervision over study habits, instrument practicing, meeting of school obligations, health habits, and recreational activities.

❖ Cooperate with supporting teachers who find it necessary to contact you regarding your child's progress or problems your child may be having in school.

❖ When possible, time your vacations to coincide with school vacations.

❖ Help your child understand that school is their work and that regular and punctual attendance is expected, as is appropriate dress.

❖ If there is something troubling your child, please contact his/her teacher. If you need more assistance, please contact the principal.

❖ Parents/guardians are not allowed in the lunchroom without permission from the principal.

❖ Put your child's name on clothing and lunch boxes. The lost and found is located in the cafeteria.

PROMOTION, RETENTION, AND ACCELERATION OF STUDENTS

School Board Policy #7212

The Onteora CSD will ensure that each child experiences both challenge and success in school activities. To this end, the District will make every effort to place each student at the most appropriate learning level for a successful educational experience. The concept of grade placement is based on the premise that each teacher will provide appropriate opportunities for students at all stages of physical, emotional, and academic growth. Academic growth does not take place at the same pace, and promotion, retention, and acceleration are added methods to meet the needs of individual students.

Promotion, retention, and acceleration of a student will be based on the following general considerations:

1. Academic achievement;
2. Age of the student;
3. Teacher and principal recommendations in consultation with the parents/guardians; and
4. Where the decision for retention is in question, the principal will have the final authority;

The Administration will develop regulations to establish guidelines and procedures for decisions regarding promotion, retention, and acceleration.

In order to inform parents/guardians about the District's approach to promotion and retention, this policy will be posted on the district website and included in student and/or parent handbooks.

Ref: Education Law §§ 305(47); 1709; 2503(4); 3202
8 NYCRR §100.4
Isqwith v. Levitt, 285 App. Div. 833; 137 N.Y.S.2d 497 (1955)
Matter of Eckert, 13 EDR 270 (1979)
Op. Counsel, 1 EDR 775 (1952)

Adopted: 10/13/15

District Code of Conduct Summary
The Code of Conduct can be found on the Onteora CSD website.

I.INTRODUCTION

The Onteora Board of Education hopes that our students will become passionate learners who are empowered to achieve their dreams and act as good citizens of the world and of their community at large.

To achieve this goal, the Board strives to provide safe schools for all students, regardless of actual or perceived race, color, weight, national origin, ethnic group, religion, religious practice, disability, sexual orientation, gender, or sex, and to ensure that all members of the school community assume personal responsibility and behave with a sense of mutual respect. The Board recognizes that to maintain such an environment, we must all live within certain boundaries and that inappropriate action by one person can infringe upon the rights of another. When conflicts arise, we are committed to abiding by the guiding principles of Positive Behavior Intervention and Supports (PBIS) with nonviolent resolutions that encourage personal growth, responsibility, and recovery and that treat each individual with respect and dignity.

This Code of Conduct, consistent with Board Policies 3410 Code of Conduct On School Property and 7310 School Conduct and Discipline, describes the behavior that the Board expects from all members of the school community, identifies consequences if those standards are not met, and establishes procedures to ensure that discipline, when necessary, is prompt, fair, progressive and effective.

Attachment A defines the terms used in this Code.

II.STUDENT RIGHTS AND RESPONSIBILITIES

Students have a right to:	**Students have the responsibility to:**
A free, appropriate public education that will prepare them for active citizenship in a democracy.	Attend classes per Policy 7110 Comprehensive Student Attendance Policy, observe school rules and work for satisfactory achievement.
A safe and secure environment that promotes academic and social/emotional learning.	Refrain from violence. Notify an adult of the presence of drugs, alcohol, weapons, harassment, and other violent acts or threats of violence.
Speak and be heard.	Listen to others.
Take part in any school activity on an equal basis.	Participate and support others in school events.
Be treated with courtesy and respect.	Be courteous and respectful.
Freedom from bullying, harassment, and other abuse based on actual or perceived race, color,	Speak up about and refrain from bullying, harassment, and other abuse based on actual or

weight, national origin, ethnic group, religion, religious practice, disability, sexual orientation, gender, or sex.	perceived race, color, weight, national origin, ethnic group, religion, religious practice, disability, sexual orientation, gender, or sex.
Academic and emotional support.	Ask for help when it is needed and offer help to peers when needed.
Express themselves through their choices in clothing and appearance.	Adhere to the school Dress Code.
Communicate thoughts and beliefs that do not interfere with the rights of others or school operations.	Show consideration for people whose beliefs differ from their own.
Assemble peacefully.	Get permission from appropriate school personnel before assembling.
Learn strategies that develop cooperation, tolerance, and conflict resolution.	Use cooperative solutions.
Be informed of school policies and rules.	Abide by the Code of Conduct.

III. EXPECTED BEHAVIOR

All members of the school community should respect the rights and welfare of others, act ethically, and care for school facilities and equipment. The Board expects respectful behavior and civil conduct on all school property, including buses, and at all school functions, whether on or off school property.

The following will not be tolerated:

- threats of violence in school, per Policy 5681 School Safety Plans and Teams.
- possession or use of weapons or illegal materials.
- possession, distribution, use, or being under the influence of alcohol or illegal substances (including synthetic drugs).
- Repeated intentional behaviors that infringe on the physical, social, mental, or emotional well-being of others, or that disrupt the safety and support of the educational environment.
- bullying, harassment, or discrimination on the basis of actual or perceived race, color, weight, national origin, ethnic group, religion, religious practice, disability, sexual orientation, gender, or sex, or for any other reason.
- academic misconduct (e.g., plagiarism, cheating, copying, altering records, forging documents such as passes, notes, etc., assisting another student in any of these actions).
- damage to school property, including buses, or the property of others, per Policy 7311 Loss or Destruction of District Property or Resources.
- the physical or electronic dissemination, posting, or sharing of materials that are obscene, advocate illegal action or appear libelous to students or faculty.
- the posting of materials without the consent of the building administrator.
- entering or remaining on school property without authorization.
- violation of any federal, State, or local law, or Board policy.

Attachment B describes specific expectations for staff, parents/guardians, and visitors. **Attachment C** describes specific expectations for students.

IV.DIGNITY FOR ALL STUDENTS ACT

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 achieve high academic standards, and a school's ability to educate students, is compromised by incidents of discrimination or harassment, including but not limited to bullying, taunting, hazing, and intimidation. The District will strive to create an environment free of discrimination and harassment and will foster civility in the schools to prevent and prohibit conduct that is 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 and activities that take place on or off of 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.

The Dignity Act Coordinators are as follows:

Bennett School: Ariel McGrath, 845-657-2354 Ext. 4111, amcgrath@onteora.k12.ny.us Woodstock School: Scott Richards, 845-679-2316 Ext. 5111, srichards@onteora.k12.ny.us Middle School: Don Solimene 845-657- 2373 Ext 2210, dsolimene@onteora.k12.ny.us
High School: Sarah Turck 845-657-2373 Ext. 2110, sturck@onteora.k12.ny.us

V. DRESS CODE

All students and staff should show healthy and respectful attention to their personal cleanliness and clothing. Adults should model and reinforce acceptable dress for students. **Attachment E** lists the specific Dress Code rules, consistent with Policy 7312 Student Dress Code.

VI. REPORTING CODE VIOLATIONS

Each individual in the school community has the responsibility to report Code violations that they witness. Violations involving weapons, alcohol, bullying, harassment and intimidation, or illegal substances (including synthetic drugs such as synthetic cannabinoids) must be reported immediately. Students should report violations to the building principal or a guidance counselor, social worker, teacher, or any adult they trust. Adults should report violations in accordance with District policies 5573 "Whistle Blower" Protection Policy and 6410 Maintaining Discipline and Conduct. When Code violations break not only school policy but also the law, the school principal or designee may consult with the Superintendent of Schools to determine if law enforcement notification/involvement is warranted. Building/District administrators reserve the right to notify law enforcement agencies at their discretion.

VII. DISCIPLINE

The Board believes that the best discipline is that which is self-imposed. Adults should model self-discipline and help students accept responsibility for their actions.

Disciplinary action should be used only when necessary and in accordance with applicable contracts, laws, regulations, and policies. Such actions should not just punish but also encourage personal growth and individual responsibility.
Staff members authorized to impose discipline should act in a prompt, fair, progressive, and problem-solving manner. School personnel administering student discipline should consider:

- The student's age, learning style, and prior disciplinary record.
- The nature and circumstances of the offense.
- The effectiveness of any prior discipline.
- Information from parents/guardians, teachers, or others, as appropriate.
- Other extenuating circumstances.

Consequences. For students, these can range from an oral warning to permanent school suspension. Disciplinary action against staff will conform to law and applicable contracts. Visitors will be asked to leave the building. **Attachment D** more fully describes the possible consequences.

Procedures. All disciplinary action should adhere to District contracts, regulations, and policies. Students accused of misconduct should be told by authorized personnel of the nature of the accusation. If necessary, authorized school staff should investigate the facts surrounding the alleged misconduct. Students will have an opportunity to tell their version of the events. Students subject to penalties other than an oral or written warning or a written notification to their parents/guardians are entitled to additional rights before the consequence is imposed. **Attachment F** more fully describes disciplinary procedures.

Minimum suspensions. A student who brings a weapon to school will be suspended for at least one calendar year, unless the Superintendent modifies the penalty based upon the student's age, grade, prior disciplinary record, the belief that other forms of discipline may be more effective, other relevant information from parent(s), teacher(s), or others, or other extenuating circumstances. A student who commits any other violent act or who repeatedly and substantially disrupts the educational process could be suspended for at least five days unless the Superintendent modifies the consequence. **Attachment G** more fully describes minimum suspensions.

Alternative instruction for disciplined students. The District will provide alternative instruction within a reasonable amount of time to students removed from classes by teachers or suspended from school.

Referrals. Students may be referred for counseling, in-house District programs (e.g., Prime for Life, Peer Mediation, etc.), a Person in Need of Supervision petition through Family Court, or juvenile delinquency proceedings. **Attachment H** describes when students may be referred to such counseling or proceedings.

VIII. STUDENT SEARCHES AND INTERROGATIONS

Searches. Police, as well as the Superintendent and District/building administrators, may search students and their possessions if there is reasonable suspicion.

By bringing a personal electronic device (including, but not limited to, cellular phones, smartphones, tablets, and laptops) to school, the student consents to a search of the device when school officials have reasonable suspicion that such a search will reveal a violation of the District Code of Conduct. The scope of the search will be limited to the violation that the

student is accused of. Content or images that violate state or federal laws will be referred to law enforcement. The school district will cooperate with law enforcement officials as appropriate.

School computers, desks, lockers, and storage spaces are school property and may be opened and inspected by school officials without prior notice or student consent. Video surveillance footage may be accessed as part of a search process, consistent with Policies 5686 Use of Surveillance Cameras in the School District and 5751 Video Cameras on School Buses.

Questioning. School officials may question students about possible violations of school rules. The student's parents/guardians may be contacted, depending upon the circumstances.

The police may enter the schools if a crime has been committed on school property, they have an arrest or search warrant, or if they have been invited by school officials. Prior to questioning students, police must read them their "Miranda rights," and school administrators or police must diligently try to notify the student's parents/guardians and give them the opportunity to be present.

Child Protective Services (CPS) may interview students on school property without notification to the parents/guardians regarding allegations of suspected child abuse, maltreatment, or neglect (including educational neglect).

Attachment K more fully describes the rules governing student searches and questioning.

IX. SCHOOL VISITORS

The Board encourages parents/guardians and other community members to visit our schools. All visitors must first sign in and obtain authorization to be on school premises during the instructional day. The building principal or their designees are responsible for all persons in the building and on the grounds. **Attachment L** more fully describes Policy 3210 Visitors to the School governing school visitors.

X. PUBLIC CONDUCT ON SCHOOL PROPERTY

The District is committed to providing an orderly, respectful, and safe environment that is conducive to learning. All persons on school property or attending a school function, whether on or off school property, consistent with Policy 3410 Code of Conduct on School Property, shall conduct themselves in a respectful and orderly manner.

No person, either alone or with others, while on school property or attending a school function, shall:

- Intentionally injure or threaten to injure any person.
- Intentionally damage or destroy school property or the property of others, or remove or use such property without authorization.
- Disrupt the orderly conduct of classes, school programs, and activities.
- Distribute or wear materials that are obscene, advocate illegal action, appear libelous, obstruct the rights of others, or are disruptive to the school program.
- Intimidate, harass, or discriminate against any person on the basis of actual or perceived race, color, creed, weight, national origin, ethnic group, religion, religious practice, age, gender, sexual orientation, disability, or any other discriminatory reason.
- Harass, including creating a hostile environment by conduct or by threats, intimidation, bullying, cyberbullying, or other abuse, as defined in **Attachment A**.

- Intimidate, including engaging in actions, statements, or threats that put an individual in fear of bodily harm.
- Enter any school property without authorization or remain in any school premises after it is closed.
- Obstruct the free movement of any person.
- Violate traffic laws, parking regulations, or other vehicle restrictions.
- Possess, consume, sell, distribute, or exchange alcoholic beverages, tobacco, or controlled substances (including synthetic drugs such as synthetic cannabinoids, e-cigarettes, oils, edibles, and tinctures made from controlled substances or used for vaping, jeweling, or dabbing), or be under the influence of any of the above.
- Possess or use weapons (unless specifically authorized by the District).
- Loiter, gamble, litter, spit, or urinate in public.
- Refuse to comply with reasonable directives of school officials while they are performing their duty.
- Willfully incite others to commit any acts prohibited by the Code of Conduct.
- Violate any federal or state law, local ordinance, or Board policy.

XI. DISSEMINATION AND REVIEW OF CODE

The School District will educate the community about this Code of Conduct as set forth in **Attachment M**.
Copies of the complete Code, including **Attachments A-M,** are available on the District website.

Revised: June 2026