

DISTRICT UPDATES

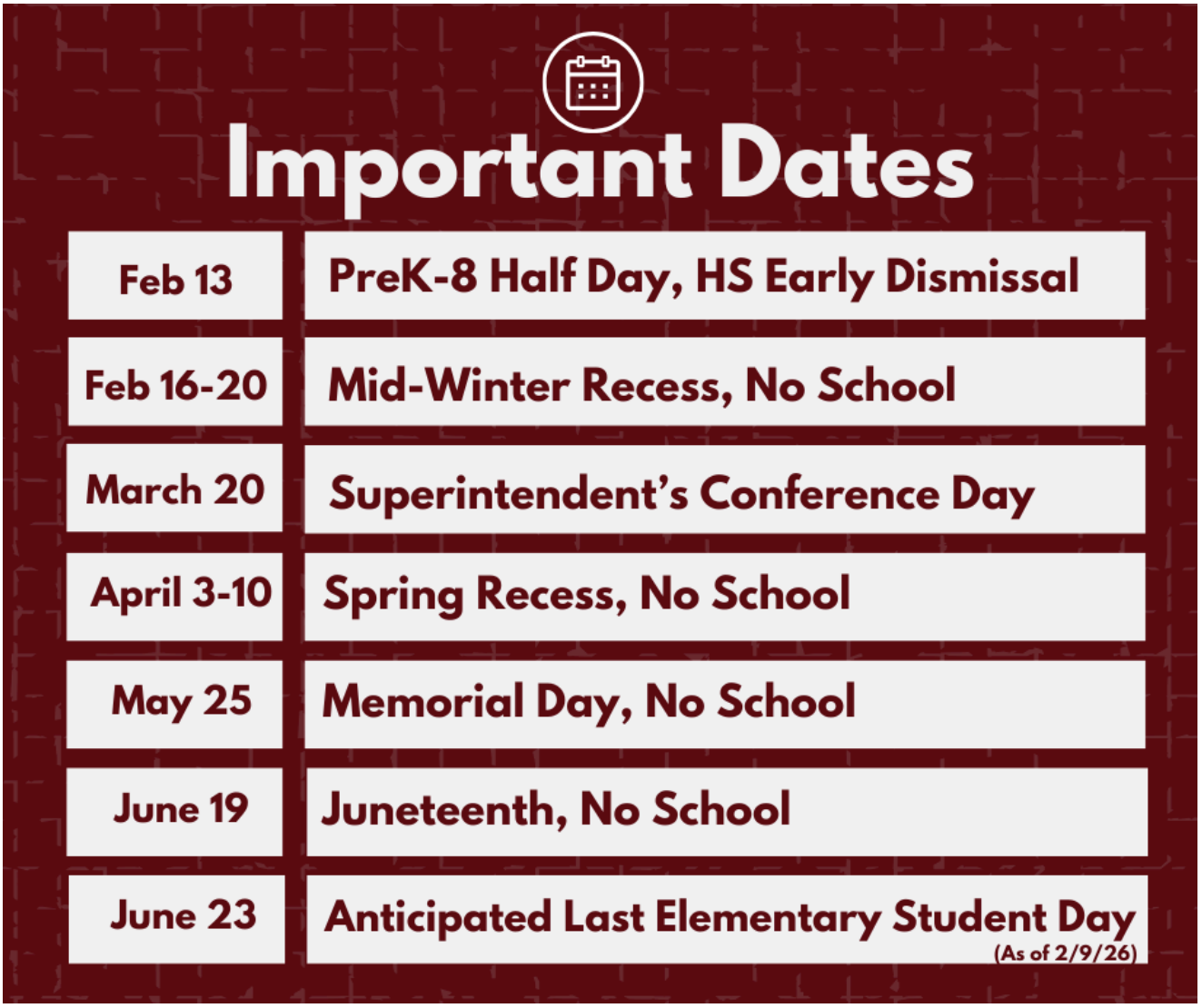
A Capital Project Update from Superintendent Lilleck

The Orchard Park Central School District is entering the final phases of its $114 million capital improvement project, approved by voters in May 2022 with no additional tax impact. Despite unprecedented construction cost increases since 2021, the district has remained fiscally responsible while making substantial progress toward modernizing learning environments for students and staff. A major milestone will be the completion of additions at Eggert, Ellicott, Windom, and South Davis Elementary Schools, scheduled to open in September 2026. These additions will support the expansion of pre-kindergarten programs in every elementary building and feature modern classrooms designed to enhance elementary learning.

The most extensive phase of construction will be coming up during the summer of 2026, with significant renovations at both the Middle School and High School that can only be completed when buildings are unoccupied. Planned improvements include comprehensive music program upgrades, gymnasium and cafeteria renovations, modernized instructional spaces, updated lockers and restrooms, partial roof replacements, and critical infrastructure upgrades, including a new heating system at the Middle School. While some elements were scaled back to remain within budget, the district has prioritized essential improvements to maximize long-term value. Phase 6

construction begins in April 2026 and is expected to conclude in December 2027, with all elementary additions fully operational for the 2026–27 school year.

Important Dates 📅



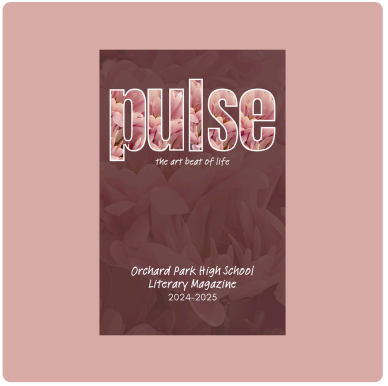
School Calendar

🌟Celebrating Student Growth and Success

OPHS Literary Magazine PULSE Earns Top Honor🏆

The 2025 edition of Orchard Park High School's literary magazine, *PULSE*, has earned a First Class rating from the National Council of Teachers of English (NCTE) through its REALM Awards

program, the highest distinction possible.



The award-winning issue was submitted by *PULSE* advisor Kristin Perillo. This year, only 13 literary magazines in New York State received a First Class rating, placing Orchard Park among an elite group. Nationwide, just 135 student publications achieved this top honor.

PULSE is an annual celebration of student creativity, showcasing original poetry, short stories, creative nonfiction, photography, painting, drawing, film, and music created by OPHS students.

The award-winning 2025 edition of *PULSE* can be viewed online here:
2025 Edition of *PULSE*

This recognition highlights the exceptional talent of OPHS students and the strength of the school's creative arts program.

Pictured are current PULSE editors Cassandra P, Victoria L, Georgina M, and Isabella D (pictured left to right)




National Council of Teachers of English

The RecognizingExcellence inArtand Literary Magazines (REALM)Program awards this certificate with the designation of

REALM First Class

to Orchard ParkHighSchool for PULSE

January 15, 2026

Emily Kirkpatrick, NCTE Executive Director

NCTE National Council of Teachers of English



Ellicott STEAM Club Takes Over Keybank Center ⭐

On January 30, Ellicott Elementary's STEAM Club competed in the Cardboard Arcade Challenge at KeyBank Center. Led by art teacher Ms. Kate Ebling and STEM teacher Mrs. Liz Love, students joined hundreds of peers from local districts to design and build original games using cardboard and found materials.

Sponsored by Erie 1 BOCES and the Buffalo Sabres, the event featured collaborative art activities, snacks and lunch, an awards ceremony, and plenty of time for students to play and test one another's creations. Ellicott students Evyn P., Everly A., and Shayla D. also earned the Best in Engineering award for their game, *Animal Claw!*













OPCSD Takes First Place at Tech Wars 🥇

On January 7th, Orchard Park students came out on top once again at the Tech Wars competition at SUNY Niagara! Our high school students captured first place for the 6th year in a row, while our middle school students earned first place for the 3rd consecutive year. More than 130 Orchard Park middle and high school students competed against 30+ schools and over 1,100 students from across Western New York.

This continued success reflects the talent and dedication of our students and staff, as well as the strength of Orchard Park's Technology and Engineering program, which is among the most comprehensive in Western New York, with 27 electives at the high school level alone. These results underscore our commitment to preparing students for future-ready skills through strong STEM programming.



OPHS Music Students Experience the Art of Sound at Universal Studios 🎶

Orchard Park High School music students and staff recently traveled to Universal Studios in Orlando, Florida, for an immersive, hands-on musical experience. During this once-in-a-lifetime opportunity, students participated in the STARS Performance Program, Sound Design: Music and the Art of Foley, where they explored music recording, voice overlay, and sound effect design while learning directly from industry professionals.









Students Teaching Students: Engagement in Action

Teachers at South Davis Elementary have been exploring ways to help students take greater ownership of their learning by focusing on engagement in the classroom. Students are learning how attention, curiosity, focus, and motivation play an important role in helping them grow as learners.

Third graders, who have been using levels of engagement throughout the year, recently became Study Buddies for second graders. In this leadership role, they taught younger students the importance of listening, staying focused, and helping one another learn so everyone can be successful.

By learning what engagement looks like and how it supports learning, students are developing the skills needed to become confident, motivated learners.

🌟Fostering a Positive School Community

Bandits Visit Eggert and Windom 🥍

The Buffalo Bandits recently paid a visit to two of our elementary buildings. Zach Belter, #77, and Lukas Nielsen, #18, of the Buffalo Bandits stopped by Windom Elementary to teach students about lacrosse during PE. They explained the basics of lacrosse and hosted drills to introduce students to the sport. Belter also recently visited Eggert Elementary students in Kindergarten, 1st, and 2nd grade. Zach read *The Good Game* and spent time answering students' great questions about the sport of lacrosse and his own experiences as a player. The visits will continue in early February when members of the team visit the Orchard Park Middle School. Let's go Bandits!







Congratulations Master Teachers

Orchard Park educators Mr. Erlandson, Mr. Drake, and Ms. Richey have been accepted into the New York State Master Teacher Program, one of the state's most prestigious professional networks for outstanding educators. The program brings together more than 1,400 exceptional K–12 STEM, CTE, and counseling professionals from across New York State who are selected for their excellence in teaching, leadership, and dedication to student success.

The Master Teacher Program emphasizes collaboration, high-quality professional learning, and inspiring the next generation of STEM leaders. Selection into this program is a significant honor

and reflects both the individual excellence of these educators and the overall strength of Orchard Park's instructional programs.

The district is incredibly proud of this achievement and the positive impact these educators have on students, colleagues, and the school community. Congratulations to Mr. Erlandson, Mr. Drake, and Ms. Richey. With their acceptance, Orchard Park Central School District now has 18 Master Teachers, forming one of the largest cohorts in Western New York.



🌟Connecting with Our Families and Community

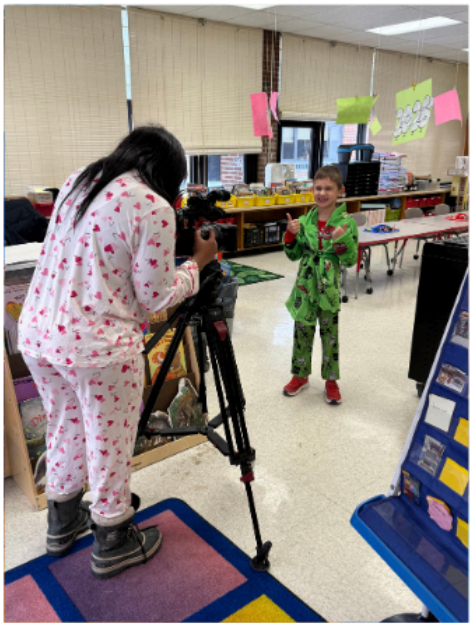
Pajama Day for a Good Cause 💛



Friday, February 6, the district participated in its fifth annual Pajamas for P.U.N.T., a fundraiser organized by Windom teacher Mrs. Kelly Barnhart. Students and staff had the opportunity to donate and wear pajamas to benefit P.U.N.T., the Pediatric Cancer Collaborative. This fundraiser supports the "Helping Hands" Program, which is is a financial safety net for WNY families in pediatric cancer treatment. We are thrilled to share that this year's fundraiser raised over $10,000! This brings our grand total to over $50,000 in donations since beginning this fundraiser.









Click here to donate to Pajamas for P.U.N.T.

Orchard Park High School Basket Raffle Supports Family Solutions Center

Each year, the staff at Orchard Park High School hosts an annual basket raffle to raise funds for a good cause. For the past several years, proceeds from the raffle have supported the Orchard Park Central School District Family Solutions Center.

This year's raffle raised $2,200, which was used to purchase gift cards to Walmart, Aldi, and Tops. These gift cards will be distributed by the Family Solutions Center throughout the coming year to help families in our community during times of need.

The continued generosity of Orchard Park High School staff helps ensure that local families receive timely support and resources when they need them most.

* The Family Solutions Center, located at 75 Bank Street, supports district and community families with school-age children through family counseling, parenting classes, and access to resources. Using a solution-focused approach, mental health professionals help families strengthen communication, build problem-solving skills, and support student success. While not a mental

health clinic, the Center provides counseling for parenting, school, social-emotional, and behavioral concerns affecting family well-being. For assistance, call 716-209-8181.



The Circus Comes to OPHS 🎪

OPHS proudly presents Billy Martin's Cole All-Star Circus on Saturday, February 28, 2026, from 6 p.m. - 7:30 p.m. in the OPHS gymnasium.

The event will include 90 minutes of acrobats, contortion, juggling, and magic!

Tickets are $15 pre-sale and $20 at the door. Every ticket purchased includes one free minor (12 years and under). A portion of the proceeds go to the OPHS student government.



Universal Pre-K 🍎📝

Registration is open for the 2026-2027 Universal Pre-Kindergarten (UPK) program within the Orchard Park Central School District. All registered children are equally eligible to participate; there is no preference based on academic or economic need.

The UPK program is a full-day program and follows the OPCSD calendar. District schools operate from 9 a.m. - 3 p.m. The exact program times at community partner locations may vary slightly.
To participate, children must reside within Orchard Park Central School District's attendance area and be four years old on or before December 1, 2026. Children born between December 2, 2021, and December 1, 2022, will be eligible. Registration is available online at https://www.opschools.org/parent-and-student-resources/universal-pre-k.

New this year, district transportation will be provided for students who are at least 4 years old. Students who begin the year as 3-year-olds will become eligible for transportation when they turn 4.
All children who are fully registered, and reside in the district, and who wish to attend their designated district elementary school, based on their home address, will be placed in the UPK program at that school. There will be no lottery for placement in the four district elementary schools.

The District will continue to partner with local preschools on a limited basis. If the number of applicants exceeds available seats at community partner sites, a lottery will be held to determine

placement. Students with a complete registration submitted by March 27, 2026, will be eligible to participate in the lottery for a community partner placement.

OPCSD receives partial funding for the UPK program through a grant provided by the New York State Education Department, which allows the district to offer UPK to our community.

More information about the registration process and UPK program is available online. Interested parents/guardians may also contact Amy Woodward at 716-209-6440 or awoodward@opschools.org with program questions. Registration questions may be directed to the Central Registrar at 716-209-6325 or registrar@opschools.org.

Universal Pre-K Registration

Quaker Camp Update 📝

This summer, construction will be taking place at all elementary schools. As a result, the district will not offer Quaker Camp during the summer of 2026, as it has in recent years. Extended school year (ESY) services will continue to be offered for eligible students through the Office of Special Education. If you have any questions regarding summer programs, please contact Sarah Hornung (shornung@opschools.org) and Betsy DiCanio (edicanio@opschools.org).

Update on Nasal Epinephrine (Neffy) Use in Schools

We would like to share an important update regarding the use of nasal epinephrine (Neffy) in New York State schools for students with life-threatening allergies.

Recent legislation has expanded the definition of epinephrine devices to include all methods of delivery, such as nasal sprays, and updated related laws and regulations accordingly. As a result, trained, unlicensed school personnel can administer epinephrine using any approved delivery device, including nasal epinephrine, in an emergency.

Neffy has already been stocked in our schools for use by our school-registered nurses. With this legislative update, we can begin training additional school staff to administer nasal epinephrine if needed during an allergic emergency.

If your child currently has an epinephrine auto-injector prescribed, you may wish to contact your child's healthcare provider to discuss whether nasal epinephrine is an appropriate option for them. If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact your child's school nurse.

OPCSD is Looking for Bus Drivers! 🚌

Join our team and make a positive impact in our community as a school bus driver! This rewarding position offers competitive pay, consistent hours, and the opportunity to build meaningful connections with students and families.

- Substitute and appointed positions available
- Flexible schedules include options for both morning and afternoon shifts.
- 10 month positions have summers off with an optional 6 weeks of summer work
- Starting pay:
  - $26.33/hour for appointed drivers
  - $25.00/hour for substitute drivers
- State benefits and state retirement system
- Family-friendly work environment
- Opportunity to be off work when your kids are out of school

Please submit a **Google Form** (click here) to express interest to the Transportation Department and we will follow up with you in a timely fashion.











Helpful Links

Calendar

Community Support Resources 👕🥫

Free and Reduced Meals/Milk 🥛🥪

Learn How We Are Maximizing the Potential of All Students

🍎🌮🍕🍝 Menus 🍎🌮🍕🍝

My School Bucks 💲

Parent Portal👨‍👦

Virtual Backpack🎒

Orchard Park Central School District

Maximizing the potential of every student, every day.

Contact