

ONTEORA

Winter 2022

LETTER FROM THE INTERIM SUPERINTENDENT

DEAR ONTEORA COMMUNITY,

Let me start by thanking the entire Onteora community for being patient and flexible during the surge of COVID. It appears that as a District, we are mirroring the State and the County and are on a downward trend. Your partnership has allowed us to continue to meet our commitment to provide in-person instruction for all students five days a week and to provide as many extracurricular activities as possible while continuing to keep everyone safe.

I am fortunate to be part of such a close-knit community that is dedicated to working together for the greater good. This was demonstrated by everyone's collaboration and commitment in ensuring that the necessary repairs to our towns' infrastructures occurred in a timely manner so that we could return our students to schools with heat, water, and hot meals as soon as possible after this month's ice storm.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 2

Handwriting Without Tears at Woodstock and Phoenicia!

FOR YOUNGER LEARNERS, HANDWRITING CAN BE A DIFFICULT SKILL TO MASTER—AND THIS DIFFICULTY CAN LEAD TO TEARS OF FRUSTRATION. That's why Onteora Kindergarten students, led by their classroom teachers and District Occupational Therapists Michele Darling and Nina Reiten (aka "Mrs. Nina"), participate in an innovative program called Handwriting Without Tears (HWT).

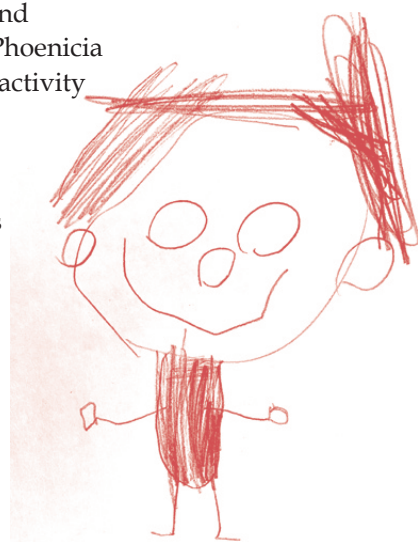
According to Mrs. Reiten, who works at Phoenicia Elementary School, HWT is a widely used handwriting curriculum that was developed in 1977 by an occupational therapist. "It emphasizes a developmental and sequential approach to learning letter and number formation, and later, sizing," she said.

Handwriting, she explained, is one of the early building blocks that help students learn the skill of writing, and that writing process expands with each grade level. "The intent of the HWT program is to make learning handwriting fun and engaging, in order to build a more solid foundation in handwriting skills," she explained.

In addition to teaching handwriting via traditional tools such as workbooks, the HWT curriculum also utilizes multi-sensory tools, for example, movement songs, building letters and numbers with hands-on manipulatives, and interactive Smartboard video lessons. The handwriting programming continues for students across the primary grade levels.

Recently, students in Heidi LaMonda and Melissa Johnson's Kindergarten classes at Phoenicia participated in the pre-writing "Mat Man" activity lesson, which teaches students about body parts, shapes, sizes, and spatial orientation. In another lesson at Phoenicia, students in Jolie Moorhus's Kindergarten/Grade 1 class practiced their letter formation by drawing letters in shaving cream.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 2



Top photo: Woodstock Kindergarten student Wylder Downton proudly displays the letter "D" during a handwriting class. At left, Occupational Therapist Nina Reiten is leading a Phoenicia Kindergarten class participating in the pre-writing "Mat Man" activity lesson, which focuses on body parts, shapes, sizes, and spatial orientation. After the lesson, one student drew this picture of Mat Man, showing off what he had learned (above).

Handwriting Without Tears at Woodstock and Phoenicia!

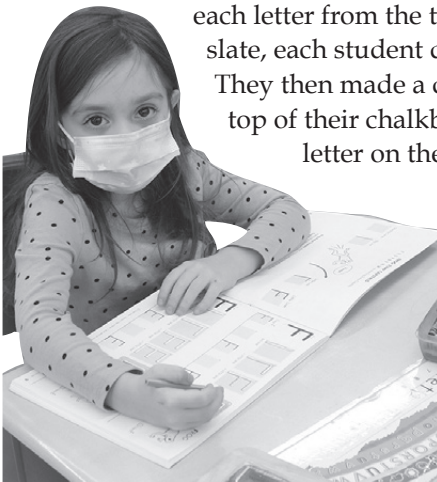
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Phoenicia students in Jolie Moorhus’s Kindergarten/Grade 1 class practicing their letter formation by drawing letters in shaving cream.

At Woodstock, Kindergarten teacher Elohim Pacheco’s class recently kicked off a handwriting lesson by having the children sing “Where Do You Start Your Letters?” – a song that reminded them to begin writing their letters “at the top.”

The fledgling writers then got out small chalkboards and practiced writing “frog jump” capital letters. Building each letter from the top left-hand corner of their slate, each student drew a straight line downward. They then made a quick “jump” back up to the top of their chalkboard, forming the rest of the letter on the right. “This prevents letter



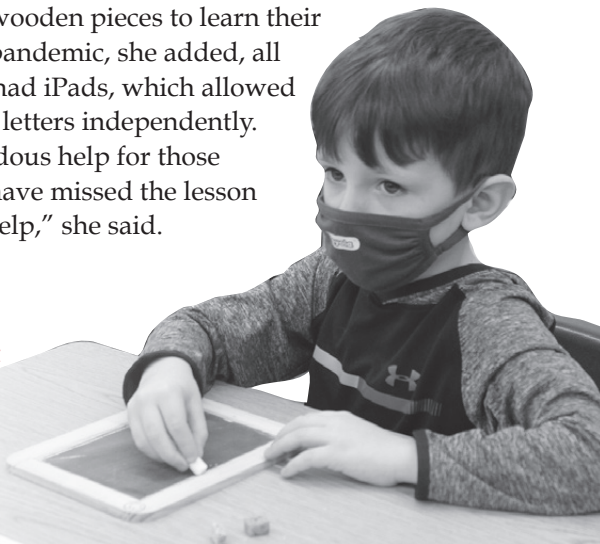
Woodstock Kindergarten student Violet Roefs practices writing the letter “F.”

reversals, and helps to teach the students proper stroke habits,” explained Mrs. Pacheco.

“The program focuses on using common language to support the learning of the letter formations,” Mrs. Pacheco continued. “For example, all the letters are formed by using straight lines and curved lines,

some big and some small – i.e., big lines, little lines, big curves, and little curves.” The letters are not taught in alphabetical order, she added; rather, they are grouped according to similarities in their formations.

Occupational Therapist Michele Darling, who works at Woodstock Elementary School, is another fan of HWT. “The program is a multi-sensory approach to learning handwriting,” she declared. “The whole class can work together using the chalkboards or the wooden pieces to learn their letters.” Before the pandemic, she added, all the Kindergartners had iPads, which allowed them to practice the letters independently. “That was a tremendous help for those students who may have missed the lesson or who need extra help,” she said.



Kaleb Lasher, a Kindergarten student at Woodstock, using a chalkboard to practice forming letters.

LETTER FROM THE INTERIM SUPERINTENDENT

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

As we start to look ahead to spring, I will be working with the Communication Committee of the Board of Education to conduct a communications audit of the District. We would like to open a discussion with all of you, our community, and begin to get your thoughts on the District’s communications, as a start to the process of understanding how we might more effectively interact with each other.

Keep smiling—spring is just around the corner!

Sincerely,
Marystephanie Corsones
INTERIM SUPERINTENDENT OF SCHOOLS

Onteora’s Online Kindergarten Registration is Now Open!

It’s time to register your child for Kindergarten if they are eligible. Children who turn five on or before December 1, 2022 are eligible to attend Kindergarten beginning in September 2022.

To register online, parents or guardians should go to www.onteora.k12.ny.us and click on “Registration & Displaced Families.” The link for online registration is in the middle of the page. Please be sure to choose the 2022-2023 school year. Current UPK parents should simply update their already established registration.

Once your child is completely registered, you will be contacted with an appointment for Kindergarten screening. Screening will take place during the week of June 6-10.

If you have any questions, you may contact Sharon Wood, Onteora’s District Registrar, by calling 845-657-6383, ext. 1023 or emailing swood@onteora.k12.ny.us.

Onteora Thespians Bring Shakespeare to Life

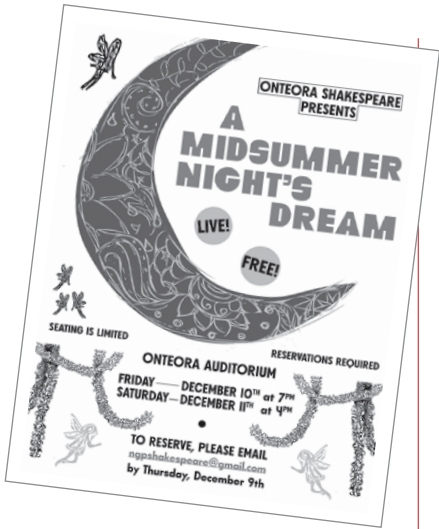
THE WEATHER OUTSIDE MAY HAVE BEEN FRIGHTFUL, but it was quite delightful inside the Harry Simon Auditorium in early December, when Onteora Middle School and High School students staged Shakespeare’s enchanting comedy, *A Midsummer Night’s Dream*.

The talented group, comprising 17 actors and five back-stage crew members, began rehearsing in mid-October under the direction of New Genesis Productions Artistic Director Lesley Sawhill and Middle School English teacher Geordarna Constant. They rehearsed twice a week until Thanksgiving, and then daily until the curtains opened on December 10.

Grade 7 student Lily Spada played Hermia, one of the play’s human lovers, as well as Starveling, a tailor. “This is my first play,” she remarked. “I got into the play by showing up for crew, and now I have two parts!”

Grade 8 student Charlee Kennoeh, who played Hippolyta (Queen of the Amazons) as well as Moth (a fairy), shared that she auditioned as a “joke,” but had no regrets. “I have always wanted to be in a play,” she said. “I got the opportunity, so I took it!”

Congratulations to all for bringing Shakespeare—and a bit of summer—to Onteora this winter!



Bennett Students Celebrate the Season with Winter Festival

IT WAS A WINTER WONDERLAND AT BENNETT ELEMENTARY SCHOOL ON DECEMBER 22, WHEN STUDENTS ENJOYED AN AFTERNOON OF SEASONALLY THEMED ACTIVITIES.

In the library media center, the youngsters learned about Scottish New Year’s traditions and listened to readings of poems related to the holiday. Meanwhile, in the computer labs, students constructed shiny noisemakers for New Year’s Eve.

The cafeteria hosted Snowman Bingo, with the winners earning the honor of smashing a whipped-cream pie in the face of Bennett Principal Gabriel Buono or Assistant Director of Pupil Personnel Services Carol Grima.

Other festivities included “penguin” races (which tasked competitors with waddling as quickly as they could while holding a ball between their legs), “snowball” fights (featuring soft, non-melting balls), and a human snowman-building contest in which teams of students transformed a staff member into a frosty figure with the assistance of white garbage bags, newspaper stuffing, a sporty top hat, and a colorful scarf.

Principal Buono credits the school’s Student Government representatives with coming up with the idea of having a pre-Winter Break festival to bolster school spirit. “I’m so proud of our elected student leaders, who are working on behalf of all their friends,” he said. “I’m happy to take a pie in the face in support of our school’s Student Government.”

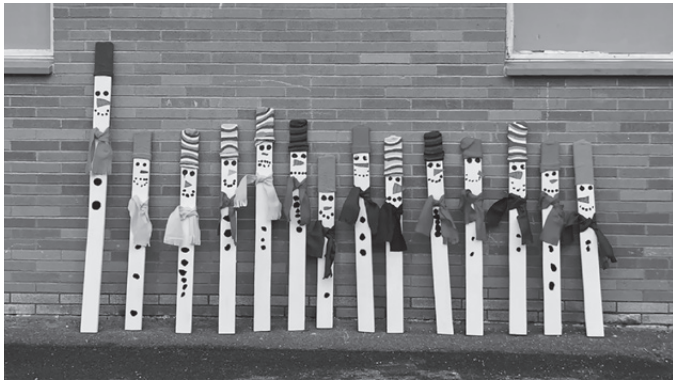


Bennett staff members gamely participated in a human snowman-building contest.



Bennett student Nolan Powell won the honor of covering Principal Gabriel Buono's face in whipped cream.

Phoenicia Students Create Snowmen—and Memories



EVERY CHILD LOVES TO MAKE A SNOWMAN, AND PHOENICIA'S GRADE 1 STUDENTS ARE NO EXCEPTION. This winter, with the help of their teachers, the students created “snowmen” that will never melt—and will be delighting their families for years to come!

Grade 1 teacher Elizabeth Furman explains that she and her colleagues wanted to send each child home for Winter Break with a special handmade project. The teachers measured each child, and then arranged for a piece of wood to be cut to their size. “With the help of Physical Education teacher Patrick Burkhardt, who milled and supplied us with all of the wood, we were able to create life-sized snowmen,” Mrs. Furman reported. The scarves—the finishing touch—were created by Building School Monitor Leana Nieves, who volunteered her seamstress skills to sew pieces of felt together.

“Each child sanded the boards and put two coats of paint on each side before personalizing them with a hat, scarf, nose, buttons, eyes, and a mouth,” said Mrs. Furman. “The snowmen went home with tags saying: ‘Lean this snowman against the wall to remind you of when I was this small. Take him out each Christmas and see—I’m not as little as I used to be.’ ”



MIDDLE SCHOOL STUDENTS SUPPORT ANIMALS IN NEED

Onteora Middle School's chapter of the National Junior Honor Society would like to thank everyone for their generous donations to the Annual Pet Supply Drive. More than 200 items were donated, all of which were delivered to the Ulster County SPCA in Kingston. Nice work, Middle School! Pictured (from left to right) are: Alexa Hull, Nico Stackpole, Serena Ratcliff, Aoife Bronston, Jeremy Huber, and Connor Gierloff.



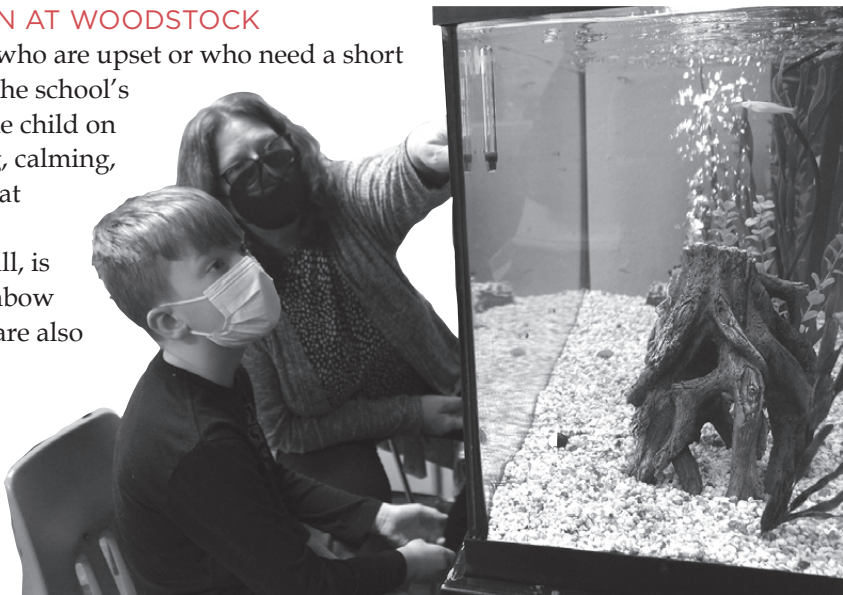
Fishy Fun at Woodstock Elementary School

THERE'S SOMETHING FISHY GOING ON AT WOODSTOCK ELEMENTARY SCHOOL, where students who are upset or who need a short break from their classrooms can visit one of the school's two fish tanks. Depending on the needs of the child on that particular day, the tanks can be soothing, calming, amusing, educational – or all of these things at once.

One tank, located in the school's front hall, is home to a variety of creatures, including rainbow sharks, swordtails, plecós, and snails. There are also fun props like a skeleton and a sea monster.

Another tank, which has been set up in Room 6 for the school's younger students (in Kindergarten and Grade 1), is filled with goldfish.

According to Teaching Assistant Esther Roosa, who maintains the so-called therapy tanks, the installations are a hit with all of the students.



Woodstock Teaching Assistant Esther Roosa (above) helping Grade 2 student CJ Schmidt identify some of the creatures that live in the fish tank installed in the front hall of the school. At left, CJ looks for the tank's resident frog.



"They come here, sit down on a chair, relax, and check out the fish," she explained.

One wintry morning, Grade 2 student CJ Schmidt stopped by the front-hall tank with Ms. Roosa to exclaim over the latest arrivals, which included several tetras and zebrafish and an aquatic frog. "I really like the new fish and all the new stuff, like the frog and the battleship!" CJ enthused.



National Honor Society Gives Back to Community

DURING THE LAST WEEKS OF JANUARY AND THE FIRST TWO WEEKS OF FEBRUARY, ONTEORA HIGH SCHOOL'S CHAPTER OF THE NATIONAL HONOR SOCIETY (NHS) collected non-perishable food items to support local families in need. Donation boxes were placed in the Main Office and Guidance Office at the High School as well as at the Hannaford in West Hurley and the Boiceville Market IGA. "We wanted to provide food for people in our community who may not have access to it," said NHS President Joey Driscoll (left). "I think that our community does a lot to address food insecurity, and this is a way for us to do our part." The donated food items were delivered to the Reservoir Food Pantry.

ONTEORA RUNNERS COMPETE AT STATE CHAMPIONSHIPS

Congratulations to the three Onteora cross-country runners who competed in the State Championships! Trapper VanDreason (second from left) finished 64th, Michael McCutcheon (third from left) came in 105th, and Rachel Williams (second from right) was 120th. Also pictured is Coach Patrick Burkhardt (far left) and Assistant Coach Brianna Funk (far right). Great job, everyone!



Bennett Students Learn about Iroquois Longhouses

IN ERIKA NELSON'S GRADE 4 CLASSES AT BENNETT ELEMENTARY SCHOOL, students recently built models of longhouses, a type of shelter favored by the Iroquois. Before beginning to build, each student was required to draw blueprints of their structure's interior and exterior. As a class, they watched videos and read articles of how longhouses were built. Armed with this knowledge, they used popsicle sticks and tissue paper to represent the trees and bark historically used to create longhouses. Students also researched what was inside the longhouses, making clay sculptures of typical household items.

According to Ms. Nelson, the project was inspired by New York State's Social Studies Framework. "In this framework, students learn about how Native American groups, such as the Iroquois and Algonquians, inhabited the region that became New York State," she said. "The students have stated they made more connections to the lessons using this hands-on approach."



All Hands on Deck!



A number of District staff members and administrators recently headed to the High School/Middle cafeteria to help Onteora's Food Service Department deliver lunch to students. "At Onteora, it's all hands on deck when it comes to supporting students," said Interim Superintendent Marystephanie Corsones. "We do whatever is needed!" Thank you to all of our hard-working employees!



ONTEORA ACCEPTING APPLICATIONS FOR PRE-K PROGRAM

If you live in the Onteora Central School District and have a child turning four by December 1, 2022, you're invited to apply online for the District's Universal Pre-Kindergarten (UPK) program for the 2022-2023 school year.

To register online, parents or guardians should go to the District website or visit the following link: <https://bit.ly/OnteoraPreK>. UPK online registration forms must be completed by May 6, 2022. (Enrollment will not be verified until after that date.)

Once a child is registered, their name will be added to a list from which the UPK students will be chosen. Onteora's full-day Universal Pre-K enrollment is based on need. Students who receive Special Education supports, those eligible for free/reduced lunch, and/or those who are English Language Learners will be enrolled first. All other children will be chosen randomly by lottery for the District's full-day or half-day programs.



Onteora student Harley Barrett, who is enrolled in the Pre-Kindergarten program administered by Woodland Playhouse, is engaging in sensory play, digging out "gems" hidden in kinetic sand.

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Dogs on Duty at Two Elementary Schools

ONTEORA NOW HAS TWO CERTIFIED THERAPY DOGS, who have been playing valuable roles at their “home” schools. In addition to helping to reduce stress and anxiety, the dogs are increasing children’s excitement about attending school.

Tank, an ebullient Boston Terrier owned by Occupational Therapist Michele Darling, has been delighting Woodstock Elementary School students for several years now. Gidget, an adorable pug owned by School Counselor Candice Sosler, made her debut at Bennett Elementary School this fall.

Ms. Darling generally brings Tank to Woodstock twice a week, when she has students scheduled to come to her room. “I also walk him around during lunch periods and recess,” she said. “He is so excited to be at school, and the students love him!” As thrilled as Tank is to be around children, he still manages to have a calming effect on youngsters. “The more hyper the kids are, the calmer Tanks gets!” Ms. Darling observed.

Tank’s friendly, playful nature has even won over students who didn’t think they liked dogs. Kindergarten student Fiona Santelli shared that prior to meeting Tank, she would avoid all dogs. “I was scared,” she admitted – too scared to be happy about her family’s wish to get a puppy. Now, after befriending Tank, she loves snuggling with Genie, her family’s recently acquired Catahoula Leopard Dog.

Gidget came into Ms. Sosler’s life at the beginning of the pandemic. “It was really Gidget who let me know she would be the perfect match for being a therapy dog,” she recalled. “I noticed what a great personality she had – loving and caring, but also strong and confident. And you can’t forget to mention how cute!”

Given Gidget’s personality traits, Ms. Sosler was confident that the dog would be an excellent addition to a school community that was in the process of adjusting to a return to in-person learning. She trained Gidget and



Woodstock Occupational Therapist Michele Darling and her dog, Tank, visiting with Benjamin Lindveit (left) and Alannah Buboltz.

then, with the blessing of Bennett Principal Gabriel Buono, had her certified as a therapy dog last summer.

This year, Gidget has been accompanying Ms. Sosler to school almost every day. “In the mornings, as students get off the bus and come into the building, Gidget greets them and they say good morning and pet her,” she reported.

Gidget also participates in special events. In September, on school picture day, students had the option of having their picture taken with the photogenic canine. In October, Ms. Sosler partnered with Reading teachers, who invited students to write stories featuring Gidget. The authors were entered into a drawing to win a Gidget-themed pumpkin.

In November, in keeping with the school’s celebration of gratitude, students were given the opportunity to add feathers to “Gidget Gobblers” by mentioning three things for which they were thankful.

In December, before Winter Break, Ms. Sosler organized a “Kindness Calendar Countdown,” which encouraged students to carry out various acts of kindness to earn some special time with the therapy dog. The suggested acts, which were read daily over the school’s loudspeakers, ranged from pushing in someone’s chair, to helping clean up a mess, to writing a thank-you note to a bus driver.

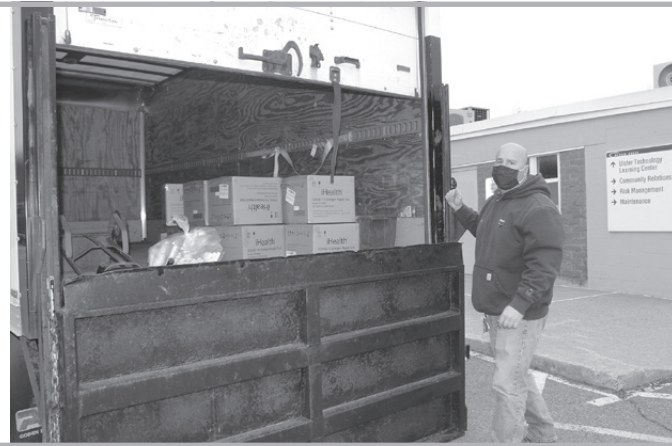
When the weather is nice, Gidget can often be found on the playground during recess. Indoors, during Ms. Sosler’s weekly visits to classrooms, students are eager to earn “Gidget Time” by participating in discussions and demonstrating good behavior.

Gidget has been a hit with Bennett students and staff, according to Ms. Sosler. “She has definitely brought joy and comfort to the whole Bennett community!” she said.



Bennett student Persaea Bowler poses with Gidget and a pumpkin inspired by the popular pup.

Before, during and after the Winter Break, the Onteora Central School District has been offering at-home COVID-19 tests to Onteora families. Pictured is Onteora Buildings and Grounds employee Stewart Benjamin, who was picking up a supply of the rapid tests from Ulster BOCES. New York State purchased the tests in an effort to help increase test access to students and staff who were symptomatic and further support the school district’s ability to continue in-person learning.



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INTERIM SUPERINTENDENT OF SCHOOLS

Marystephanie Corsones

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Ulster BOCES Community Relations

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To Postal Customer

Onteora Welcomes New Director of Physical Education, Athletics, and Health

Onteora is pleased to welcome Ryan Naccarato as its new Director of Physical Education, Athletics, and Health. He was appointed by the Board of Education on December 7.

Mr. Naccarato, who assumed his new duties in January, came to Onteora from Blind Brook High School in Westchester, where he served as the Director of Health, Physical Education, Athletics, and Nursing.

"I'm super excited to be joining the Onteora school district and community," said Mr. Naccarato, who graduated from Kingston High School, where he was a standout football, baseball, and basketball player. His goals at Onteora, he said, will include increasing participation and opportunities for students to be involved and compete in athletics, developing a positive team culture that lays the foundation for organizational success, and teaching life lessons through athletics to set students up for success after graduation.

Mr. Naccarato's previous positions include Athletic Director/Assistant Principal at Cocksackie-Athens High School, Dean of Students at Miller Middle School, Principal of Summer School at Kingston High School, and Physical Education teacher at RJK Middle School and Kingston High School.

The owner of Hudson Valley Ambition (an outdoor

fitness organization), Mr. Naccarato also has extensive coaching experience. At Kingston High School, he led the Varsity Softball team to the Class AA Sectional Semifinals in 2019. He also served as head coach of Kingston's JV Football and Modified Basketball teams, and as assistant coach of the Varsity Football team.

During his tenure as Varsity Softball coach for the Marlboro Central School District, the team achieved a

number of honors, including being crowned Mid-Hudson Athletic League Divisional Champions (2018); Class B Section IX Champions (2017), and New York State Public High School Athletic Association Class B State Champions (2016). He was named 2016 Class B Coach of the Year by the New York State Sportswriters Association and the *Daily Freeman*.

Mr. Naccarato holds a bachelor's degree in Physical Education from the College at Brockport, a master's degree in Sports Management from SUNY Cortland, and a master's degree in Educational

Administration and Supervision from Canisius College. His professional certifications include School Building Leader/School District Leader (SBL/SDL), Certified Athletic Administrator (CAA), and Registered Athletic Administrator (RAA).

Welcome to Onteora!



USEFUL DISTRICT INFORMATION

www.onteora.k12.ny.us

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Fern Amster 657-6383 x1010
Interim Assistant Superintendent for Business
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Amanda Allison657-3320

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Director of Transportation
Nicole Sommer657-2537
School Lunch Manager
Christine Downs..... 657-6383 x2181
Director of Facilities
Kyle Harjes657-6384

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Asst. Principal, Dieter Schimmelpfennig
MIDDLE SCHOOL • 657-2373
Principal, Jennifer O'Connor
BENNETT ELEMENTARY • 657-2354
Co-principals, Gabriel Buono and Linda Sella
PHOENICIA ELEMENTARY • 688-5580
Principal, Elizabeth Fallo
WOODSTOCK ELEMENTARY • 679-2316
Principal, Scott Richards