Orchard Park Central School District 2023 Winter Community Report

OPHS Recognized as a 2022 National Blue Ribbon School

Orchard Park High School is recognized again in its first year of eligibility since receiving this award in 2016 and is one of only three schools in NYS to be designated as a National Blue Ribbon School twice.



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Th September, U.S. Secretary of Education Miguel Cardona 📕 recognized 297 schools, including Orchard Park High School, as 2022 National Blue Ribbon Schools. The recognition is based on a school's overall academic performance or progress in closing achievement gaps among student subgroups.

"I applaud all the honorees for the 2022 National Blue Ribbon Schools Award for creating vibrant, welcoming, and affirming school communities where students can learn, grow, reach their potential, and achieve their dreams," said U.S. Secretary of Education Miguel Cardona. "As our country continues to recover from the pandemic, we know that our future will only be as strong as the education we provide to all of our children. Blue Ribbon Schools have gone above and beyond to keep students healthy and safe while meeting their academic, social,

emotional, and mental health needs. These schools show what is possible to make an enduring, positive difference in students' lives."

With its 39th cohort, the National Blue Ribbon Schools Program has bestowed approximately 10,000 awards to more than 9,000 schools. The National Blue Ribbon School award affirms and validates the hard work of students, educators, families, and communities in striving for - and attaining - exemplary achievement.

National Blue Ribbon Schools serve as models of effective school practices for state and district educators and other schools nationwide. A National Blue Ribbon School flag gracing a school's entryway or on a flagpole is a widely recognized symbol of exemplary teaching and learning.

The Department recognizes all schools in one of two performance categories, based on all student scores, subgroup student scores, and graduation rates:

- Exemplary High-Performing Schools are among their state's highest-performing schools as measured by state assessments or nationally normed tests.
- Exemplary Achievement Gap-Closing Schools are among their state's highest performing schools in closing achievement gaps between a school's student groups and all students.

Orchard Park High School has been named among the Exemplary High-Performing Schools for the second time.

"On behalf of Orchard Park High School's staff, students, and families, we are incredibly proud to be recognized as a 2022 National Blue Ribbon School. said Orchard Park High School Principal Jonathan Wolf. "This award recognizes the out- Wolf and Orchard Park High School Technology standing work of the entire Orchard Park School District, culminating with student Education teacher Emil Erlandson attended the 2022 achievement at the High School. We are humbled by this honor in that OPHS is being National Blue Ribbon Ceremony in Washington D.C. recognized again in our first year of eligibility since receiving this award in 2016."



In early November Superintendent of Schools, David Lilleck, Orchard Park High School Principal Jonathan

Continued on page 3.

Winter/Spring Community Education Brochure Enclosed. Pull out and Save Center Insert!

Superintendent of Schools David Lilleck



The Orchard Park Central School District, along with Erie 2 BOCES, has joined Sandy Hook Promise to deploy an anonymous reporting system as an additional layer to our school district safety plan. Sandy Hook Promise (SHP) is a national nonprofit organization with a mission to end school shootings and create a culture change that prevents violence and other harmful acts that

hurt children. Through its life-saving, evidence-informed Know the Signs prevention programs, SHP educates and empowers youth and adults to recognize, intervene, and get help for individuals who may be socially isolated and/ or at risk of hurting themselves or others. SHP is led by several family members whose loved ones were killed in the tragic mass shooting at Sandy Hook Elementary School on December 14, 2012.

The Say Something Anonymous Reporting System (SS-ARS) program is designed to provide students with an anonymous reporting system, as each year in schools and communities across the United States, there are millions of youth who hurt themselves or others through verbal, physical and digital means. These behaviors can cause youth to experience emotional trauma and physical injury, mental health or wellness issues, stress or anxiety, and/or feelings of being unsafe. Too often, the outcome results in self-harm, suicide, and homicide.

The Say Something Anonymous Reporting System (SS-ARS) teaches youth and adults how to recognize warning signs and signals, especially within social media, of individuals who may be a threat to themselves or others and Say Something, using the anonymous reporting system before it is too late. Students will be able to use this system to report concerning behaviors online at any time, day or night.

This program will be implemented with a training session for all students in grades 6 - 12 during the month of February. We are excited to be able to offer our community this additional layer of support as we work to ensure all of our students are safe and welcomed in our school community. The social emotional well-being of our students and adults is paramount in our mission and vision as a District.

Empowering Families: An Update on the Family Solutions Center

T he Orchard Park Central School District's Family Solutions Center (FSC) was inaugurated with a ribbon-cutting ceremony on September 13. The OPCSD and the Town of Orchard Park have partnered to assist the families of the community by opening the FSC within the Community Center at 4520 California Road. The District thanks the town for the collaboration in this important initiative to support families. The center's goal is to support district and community families with school-aged children by offering direct counseling services, hosting parenting classes, and providing resources. The mental health professionals at the FSC work with families to encourage problem-solving strategies and healthy communication. By recognizing the family as the most significant influence on the development of a child, mental health professionals optimize student success by empowering



families.

In its first few months, the FSC has served 39 families with issues ranging from parent-child communication to more complex challenges like mental illness, financial stress, grief, and family conflicts. The FSC staff have

Orchard Park students and members of BoyChattenges like mentalScout Troop 285 Drew and Bowen S. droppedillness, financial stress,off a school supply donation to the Familygrief, and family con-Solution Center.flicts. The FSC staff have

already received positive feedback from families who appreciate the center's evening hours and the supportive relationships they have formed with counselors and social workers. The FSC plans to expand its offerings with a kinship program for grandparents or other family members raising children, as well as parenting classes for parents of students with ADHD and autism.

The center's resource coordination branch also aims to provide holiday donation coordination, camp scholarships for children, and food and other necessities. This fall, the FSC held a "Winter Gear Up" and a "Personal Care Drive," which

were generously supported by faculty and staff at OPCSD. Community groups have also contributed resources and supplies to the FSC. To learn more about the Family Solutions Center or to make a donation,



visit www.opschools.org/familysolutions or scan the QR code.



This fall, the FSC held a "Winter Gear Up" and a "Personal Care Drive," which were generously supported by faculty and staff at OPCSD.

OPHS Recognized as a Blue Ribbon School Cont.

In early November, Superintendent of Schools, David Lilleck, Orchard Park High School Principal Jonathan Wolf and Orchard Park High School Technology Education teacher Emil Erlandson attended the 2022 National Blue Ribbon Ceremony in Washington D.C. They had the opportunity to meet with national leaders, including the United States Department of Education. On November 30 Orchard Park High School was able to celebrate this honor at home with an assembly that featured a



In November the OPHS was able to celebrate this honor at home with an assembly that featured a proclamation and presentation of awards by Erie County Legislator, Mr. John Mills, a blue ribbon video created by OPHS students and musical performances by the Wind Ensemble and the Choraliers.

proclamation and presentation of awards by Erie County Legislator, Mr. John Mills, a blue ribbon video created by Orchard Park High School students and musical performances by the Wind Ensemble and the Choraliers. "I am incredibly proud to be a part of a district with multiple schools named National Blue Ribbon Schools. District recipients include Eggert Elementary (2007), South Davis Elementary (2013) and Orchard Park High School (2016 and 2022). This honor is a testament to the dedication of teachers, support staff members, administrators, students, school board members, community members and parents. Orchard Park is a district of excellence that works to ensure all members of our school community have the opportunity to reach their full potential." said David Lilleck, Orchard Park Superintendent of Schools.

Building a Love for STEM in K-5

The Orchard Park Central School District launched its K-5 STEM program in September and it is off to an exciting start. Students in grades K-5 attend STEM class once every 6 days which is approximately thirty STEM classes per school year.

STEM stands for Science, Technology, Engineering and Math. STEM education teaches students more than science and mathematics concepts. The focus is on hands-on learning with real-world applications that help develop a variety of skill sets, including the four C's: Creativity, Collaboration, Critical thinking, and Communication skills.

Students are already benefiting as they collaborate and problem-solve with their peers through hands-on learning experiences. Students in Kindergarten through second grade have been experimenting, testing and working through the engineering design process to create "sail cars." Students learned to adjust and improve their sail's shape, angle and pitch to gain speed and distance. Intermediate students in grades three through five built, tested and re-engineered fan-powered air racers. Equipped with an electric motor



South Davis students tinker and build with KEVA blocks.

and propeller, the air racers were constructed with wooden dowels, wheels, nuts, and screws to make it go! Learning activities like these are allowing students to build real working projects where they can learn and grow through experimentation, redesign and even failure as part of the problem-solving process.

The district is seeing positive feedback from these classes and is looking forward to learning from the experiences this year brings in order to continue to improve as we move forward with the continued goal of building a

comprehensive K-12 STEM program to ensure that all Orchard Park students have exposure Fifth grade students are building their to STEM lessons and the potential for future STEM careers.





fan-powered air racers.

Update From OPCSD Librarians

T he goal of the Orchard Park Central School District Libraries is to promote a love for reading that will develop an appreciation for books to become information literate and lifelong readers. The Orchard Park School Libraries strive to provide patrons with materials that will enrich and support the educational program of the school. It is the responsibility of the school media center to provide a wide range of materials on different levels of difficulty, with diversity of appeal, and representing different points of view. Responsibility for the selection of library materials rests with professionally trained and certified library personnel. District librarians handpick materials using a variety of professional selection resources to support the curriculum, foster a love of reading and literature appreciation, and support inquiry and research both in the library and classroom. Materials are added that are culturally responsive and inclusive for all learners, relevant and updated, and align with the instructional needs and interests of our learning community.

Orchard Park Central School District Librarians select materials in alignment with the Board of Education Policy #8320 and the following suggested criteria from the American Library Association¹.

- · Support and enrich the curriculum and/or students' personal interests and learning
- · Meet high standards in literary, artistic, and aesthetic quality; technical aspects; and physical format
- Be appropriate for the subject area and for the age, emotional development, ability level, learning styles, and social, emotional, and intellectual development of the students for whom the materials are selected
- Incorporate accurate and authentic factual content from authoritative sources
- Earn favorable reviews in standard reviewing sources and/or favorable recommendations based on preview and examination of materials by professional personnel
- · Exhibit a high degree of potential user appeal and interest
- Represent differing viewpoints on controversial issues
- Provide a global perspective and promote diversity by including materials by authors and illustrators of all cultures

School libraries have the responsibility to assemble collections that represent all students. According to the American Library Association interpretations of the Library Bill of Rights², "a diverse collection should contain content by and about a wide array of people and cultures to authentically reflect a variety of ideas, information, stories, and experiences". A diverse collection allows students to learn about themselves, the world around them and develop empathy for others. In providing access to diverse materials, some materials may be considered offensive and or/ controversial to some patrons. If a parent or guardian has a specific title(s) that they would not like their child to check out, they must follow the instructions and fill out a Google Form on their building library's website. After the building librarian has received the form, a note will be made in the student's account prohibiting access to the listed title(s). The note will follow the students through their school career, even if a building change is made. If a parent wishes to add more titles over time a new form can be filled out at any time. If a parent or guardian has questions, they are encouraged to contact a building administrator.

1 "Selection & Reconsideration Policy Toolkit for Public, School" <u>https://www.ala.org/tools/challengesupport/selectionpolicytoolkit</u>. Accessed 30 Nov. 2022.

2"Interpretations of the Library Bill of Rights | Advocacy, Legislation" https://www.ala.org/advocacy/intfreedom/librarybill/interpretations. Accessed 30 Nov. 2022.



In November and December, fifteen Orchard Park High School seniors committed to play their sports at the collegiate level next year. Gabriel D'Angelo will be playing baseball at Hudson Valley; Dylan Evans will play football at the University of New Hampshire: Brooke Halter will be on the gymnastics team at Utica University; Charlie Fischer will be playing golf at Mercer University; Brennan Hart-Nova will be playing tennis at Sacred Heart University; Maura Langdon will be playing lacrosse at SUNY Cortland; Robert Leach will be playing baseball at St. John Fisher University; Jack Lucidi will be playing lacrosse at the College of St. Rose; Frank Neeson will be playing lacrosse at SUNY Cortland; Sullivan O'Brien will be playing lacrosse at New Jersey Institute of Technology; Molly Ryan will be playing volleyball at Daemen University; Joscelyn Wabick will be on the gymnastics team at Utica University; and Nicole Woroszylo will be rowing at Duquesne University. Congratulations seniors, we wish you continued success.

What's Going On Throughout the District



In December the Orchard Park High School Math-Physics Society made ice cream using liquid nitrogen. House 1 Principal and former OPHS Chemistry teacher Brandon Hafner along with society advisors, Greg Hylkema and Brian Dina worked with students to quickly make ice cream using typical ice cream ingredients and liquid nitrogen which speeds up a normally long churning process.



Meteorologist Andy Parker visited fourth graders at Ellicott Elementary. The fourth graders were studying Extreme Weather & Natural Disasters. The students have been working in research teams to become experts on an assigned type of natural disaster or extreme weather. such as tornadoes. hurricanes, blizzards, tsunamis, and earthquakes. During Mr. Parker's visit, the kids learned even more about their topics and since the visit they have created videos and projects to teach their peers about their individual topics.



Orchard Park Middle School students performed their musical The Little Mermaid Jr. at the beginning of December. The show had been rescheduled because of the November storm but the performances were certainly worth the wait! The cast performed three shows on December 1, 2, and 3.



Health and Wellness classes at South Davis Elementary participated in a Cheer Challenge in December. Fourth and fifth grade students split into small teams to create centerpieces that were donated to local nursing homes. Students in lower grade levels also participated by creating class centerpieces with each student contributing one part.



Hawk Creek Wildlife Center Inc. visited fourth graders at Eggert Elementary with a snake, an opossum and Dumbledore the owl. Students were able to view the animals and learn all about animal adaptations.





Third grade students at Windom Elementary created an interactive wax museum as a culmination of their non-fiction unit in Reading. The students each picked one person to research, wrote out a script, and even dressed up like their character. The students would freeze like a wax figure, and when the visiting parents tapped them on the shoulder they would unfreeze, and go into character. It was a great way for the students to showcase all they have learned!

Celebrating our English Language Learners and the OPCSD English as a New Language Program

By: Lisa M. Krueger, Ed.D., Assistant Superintendent for Curriculum and Instruction With Contributions by: Paul Pietrantone, Ed.D. Director of Special Programs; Stephanie Boundy, ENL Teacher; and Amy Clothier, Eggert Elementary Kindergarten Teacher

The Orchard Park Central School District currently educates over 50 students whose home or primary language is not English. These students are referred to as English Language Learners (ELLs) or Multilingual Learners (MLLs). Our English Language Learners are diverse in their languages and cultures. Presently, the primary language of these students includes Arabic, Spanish, Mandarin, Punjabi, Hindi, Farsi, Macedonian, Russian, French, Ukrainian & Swedish.



New York State public schools must pro-

vide ELLs with instruction to advance their English language acquisition. The New York State Identification Test for English Language Learners assesses students' English proficiency. Based on the student's performance, the student is determined to be at the Entering Level (Beginning), Emerging Level (Low Intermediate), Transitioning (Intermediate), or Expanding Level (Advanced). Depending on the student's level of proficiency, supplemental instruction is provided through an English as a New Language (ENL) program by a certified ENL teacher. The instruction occurs in an integrated ENL classroom (where both the classroom teacher and ENL teacher co-teach) or is delivered as stand-alone instruction in a separate classroom.

ENL teachers Stephanie Boundy and Susan Burns shared that the OPCSD ENL population has steadily increased and has tripled in size over the last ten years. We have created a strong, dynamic ENL program that supports our ELL students to grow and develop their English language proficiency, while simultaneously ensuring they are learning the grade level content of the grade they are enrolled in. The skills, diversity, and strengths that our ENL students bring are amazing assets to our school community. Our families feel welcomed and included in our Orchard Park school and family community.

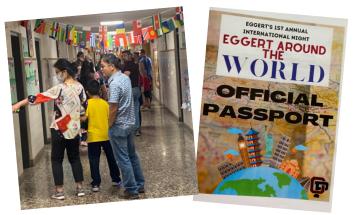
In OPCSD, Eggert Elementary School hosts the ENL program for grades K-5. This maximizes our support to English Language Learners while providing the greatest staffing efficiency. Both Orchard Park Middle School and Orchard Park High School host ENL programs within their schools. ENL teachers utilize a variety of instructional strategies to support our ELLs including a co-teaching model where a classroom teacher and an ENL teacher are partnered to provide individualized and differentiated instruction for the benefit of all students within the classroom.

Eggert Elementary School Kindergarten teacher Amy 6 Clothier values having ELLs in her classroom. She explained, "The children in my class gain more empathy and understanding as we learn an appreciation for how other families live and celebrate family traditions. We welcome learning about foods, family traditions, and the languages and cultures that are shared among those in class.

I personally hold such an appreciation and have a thirst for knowledge when it comes to learning and welcoming those from the ENL population in the classroom. It helps remind me how truly fascinating and large the world truly is."

The District celebrates the rich diversity that the ENL program brings to our schools. Having ELLs in our schools is a mutually beneficial experience for our students who speak English as their first language and our ELLs. In Orchard Park, we believe that our ENL program's diversity enhances the educational experience for all of our students. This was evident during the Cultural Celebration evening event at Eggert Elementary last year, where cultures worldwide were studied through hands-on learning experiences, music, and food. It was such a successful event that the Eggert School Community is hosting it again this year on April 20.

As a school district, we are committed to ensuring that all students can excel academically. Our ENL program supports our English Language Learners while benefitting our entire school community in our cultural awareness and celebration of diversity.



Last spring Eggert Elementary hosted its first Cultural Celebration evening event where cultures worldwide were studied through handson learning experiences, music, and food. Above you can see Eggert Elementary families walking through the halls decorated with the flags of different countries and the evenings official passport for students and parents who attended.

Inclement Weather Procedures



The decision to close/delay schools is not an easy one to make and often the decision needs to be made quickly and decisively and in the best interest of the safety of our students and staff.

As early as 4 a.m., communication begins between our transportation department and the Superintendent of Schools to the Orchard Park Police Department, the Orchard Park Highway Department, neighboring highway departments, the Erie County Sheriff, Erie County, and New York State Highway Departments. While the phones are ringing, key district personnel are out surveying area roads and reporting the conditions to the Superintendent of Schools.

Once the decision is made to delay or close, radio and television stations are contacted and the district's iConnect system is activated.

The district is over 50 square miles, and much of the area is hilly terrain shaped in a narrow band that stretches south. Due to the land formation, it is common to have varying weather at different ends of the district. Even though school may not be closed, your decision to keep your child home is quite appropriate if the weather conditions around your home are unsafe. We all know and believe that our top priority is the safety of our children.

It is a good idea to talk to your child about cold weather safety. It is important to check your child's (even teenagers) outerwear. Protecting exposed skin during cold weather is extremely important: warm coats, hats, gloves, scarves and boots will help protect your child during the winter season.

When considering the safety of students in cold weather the following information from the National Weather Service is used as a guideline in making a determination to close schools:

Cautionary: Wind Chills of -18 to -20 degrees Advisory: Wind Chills of -25 degrees or below Warning: Wind Chills of -35 degrees or below



In many areas of the country, schools will not close until the wind chill tempera-

ture is at the Warning level of -40 degrees or below. The American Academy of Pediatrics recommends that no one should be outside with unprotected skin with wind-chill factors in the range of -40 degrees or below. In Orchard Park, if the wind chill temperature reaches above the advisory level, school may be closed.





The Orchard Park Central School District is sending flyers home through the Virtual Backpack available on our website. You can visit the Virtual Backpack for your child's building at the link below or use the QR code.

www.opschools.org/opcsdvirtualbackpacks



Why It's Important to Use Your PowerSchool Parent Portal Account

A t least one parent from each student household should maintain a Parent Portal account and ensure that the email address and phone number are current. Visit https:// powerschool.opschools.org/public/ to log in. If you forget your password click POWERSCHOOL PORTAL HELP, One account will provide access to information for all of your children. With this account, you will have access to: Report Cards, Attendance History, Bus Information, Student Schedules, Test Scores and Parent Notification

PowerSchool SIS	Preferences.
Student and Parent Sign In	
Username	
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Syn W	
Bus information now on the parent portal.	
Need help? click POWERSCHOOL PORTAL HELP to contact us.	

Fifth Grade Students Spreading Cheer!

Fifth grade students in Mrs. Schermerhorn's class were learning



about how the holidays can look different for all families so they wanted to bring cheer to the children who would be at Oishei Children's Hospital this holiday season. The students opted to make cards filled

with encouraging words and sayings. The students took things a bit further by creating interactive activities for the children to do in the cards like including a Tic Tac Toe board, word searches and drawings that could be colored in. Two of the students Kennedy Q. and Reese L. were able to drop the cards off at Children's Hospital in December.

DECA Students Excel at Region 12 Competition



School chapter of DECA attended the Region 12 competition on December 16. They competed in various businessrelated contests, including marketing, accounting, and hospitality. Sixteen of these outstanding students placed in their events and have qualified to represent Orchard Park DECA at the State Career Conference/Competition this March in Rochester, NY. Orchard Park senior Bowen S, who is currently serving as the Region 12 President, served as Master of Ceremonies at the December competition. Orchard Park Central Schools Board of Education Orchard Park, New York 14127 Editor: Julianne Becker www.opschools.org (716) 209-6222

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Resident

Upcoming Events

1-24-1-27 HS Local/Regents Exams

- 1-24 Winter/Spring Community Education Walk-In Registration, 6 p.m. - 8 p.m.
- 1-26 Winter/Spring Community Education Walk-In Registration, 6 p.m. - 8 p.m.
- 1-26 Anxious Children In School, Virtual Parent Info. Series, 7 p.m.

1-28 HS Winterscape Winterguard Show, 4 p.m. at OPHS

- *1-30* Winter/Spring Community Education Classes Begin *1-30* HS Post Prom Meeting, 6 p.m.
- **1-30** 5th to 6th Grade Special Education Transition Parent Meeting, 6:30 p.m.
- 1-30 HS PTO Meeting, 7 p.m.

February

2-1 Collegiate Athletic Signing, 3 p.m. 2-1 HS Winter Choral Concert, 7 p.m. 2-2 EL PTO Meeting, 9:30 a.m. 2-2 WE PTO Meeting, 7 p.m. 2-4 Annual Section VI Invitational Bowling Tournament 2-5 Quaker Cheer Challenge 2-6 HS STAP Comm Meeting, 7 p.m. 2-8-2-9 EL Musical, 7 p.m. 2-9-2-10 WE Musical, 7 p.m. 2-9 SD PTO Meeting, 6:30 p.m. 2-9 WE PTO Meeting, 7 p.m. 2-11 WE Skate Event 2-11 HS Winter Homecoming Dance, 7:30 - 10:30 2-13-2-14 EG Musical, 7 p.m. 2-14 Board of Education Meeting, 7 p.m. at OPMS 2-15 MS PTO Meeting, 9 a.m. 2-15 OPSEPTSA Meeting, 6:30 p.m. 2-15-2-16 SD Musical, 7 p.m. 2-17 Pre-K-8 Half-Day: Pre-K Dismissal 11 a.m., Elementary Dismissal, 11:30 a.m., Middle School Dismissal, 10:30 a.m. 2-17 HS Early Dismissal, 12:45 p.m.

2-20-2-24 Mid-Winter Recess - No School

UPK Registration

 $T^{\rm he\,Orchard\,Park\,Central\,School\,District\,(OPCSD)}$ is currently accepting applications for Universal Pre-Kindergarten

(UPK) during the 2023-2024 school year. To participate, children must reside in the OPCSD's attendance area and be four years old on or before December 1, 2023 – meaning, their birthdate must fall between 12-02-18 and



12-01-19. Applications are available online at

www.opschools.org/upk and due by March 3, 2023.

The OPCSD is once again able to offer UPK through a grant provided by the New York State Education Department. This grant covers the cost of the program but does not cover transportation. It is the responsibility of each family to transport their child to the UPK site.

Based on grant funding there are only a designated number of UPK spots available. If the district receives more applications than available openings, there will be a "digital lottery" to determine who will qualify to attend. Children are randomly selected for the program and selection is not based on academic or economic need. All registered children are equally eligible for participation.

All students with complete registration before the March 3, 2023 deadline will have an equal chance for selection in the lottery. More information about the registration process and UPK

program is available online. Interested parents/ guardians also may 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.





