



ADVOCATE

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The newsletter of the
Owen J. Roberts School District **Spring 2023**

A Look Inside OJR Middle School's Award-Winning Art Program

Upon entering the classrooms of Mrs. Ingrid Fake or Mrs. Gretchen McGinnis, art teachers at Owen J. Roberts Middle School, it can be tempting to pick up a nearby paint brush and try your hand at being an artist. Inspiration is all around, ranging from works-in-progress by students to finished masterpieces ready to be shared with the world. Art supplies are neatly organized across rows of tables and the best examples of celebrated artists adorn the walls.

Both Ingrid and Gretchen have enjoyed different paths to OJR. However, they share a common love for the power of art and the profound impact it can have in the lives of their students.

Ingrid, who's taught at OJR Middle School for more than 30 years, developed a love for teaching art while working at Elwyn as a teenager. While employed as a summer arts and crafts instructor, Ingrid saw firsthand the way art is able to transcend different communication styles and personality types to allow for uninhibited expression and positive change.

Gretchen has been with OJR for four years, after taking time away from the classroom to raise her family. As a child, she was surrounded by family members who were artists and was always drawing. When deciding on a career path, Gretchen decided to combine her love for art with a desire to be in a profession that helped others. In addition to guiding middle school students along the path to discovering art, Gretchen is also a practicing artist who focuses on still life, figures and landscapes.

Neither one originally set out to teach at a middle school. But now they cannot imagine teaching at any other level.

"I figured I would start out at the middle school, because that's where the job opportunity was, before eventually transitioning to an elementary school," Ingrid said. "But I absolutely fell in love with the energy of middle school students and the chance to help them harness their curiosity into their artistic endeavors."

Gretchen, nodding in agreement adds, "Art is a part of the human experience and most everyone wants to create something. Art in school not only gives students a means to express themselves, it also creates a well-rounded learning experience that teaches students to face challenges head-on and strive for solutions."

Anywhere from between 500 to 600 students participate in the art program at OJR Middle School each year. Working in groups, in addition to individual assignments, students cross-train across a number of skill sets such as two-dimensional design, three-dimensional design, craft construction, digital design and more. The middle school program is asynchronous and self-paced, enabling students to learn at a steady pace or push themselves beyond the standard lessons and accelerate their journey. Depending on the assignment, students may utilize math, history or technology as part of their classroom experience. The skills developed during art class transfer to other academic subjects and the rejuvenating experience for students can help them build and maintain momentum throughout the school day.

"Our students tell us that no matter when they have art class, it helps make their day complete," Gretchen notes. "Whether they start or finish their day with art, they share that the creative process helps them tackle their next challenge."

Ingrid describes the classrooms as an "art gym for the brain" and touts the middle school's approach to art as a growth model that helps students gain confidence and gain a sense of pride in their accomplishments. She notes that along the way students discover how to research important topics, learn about their work styles and preferences, strive to overcome project challenges and focus on how they communicate and express their ideas.

"Art students are provided with tangible, real-world skills that colleges seek," Ingrid said. "Our students create portfolios and galleries of their work. Whether the student plans to pursue art as a career or not, they learn how to present themselves and showcase their credentials as a candidate for different opportunities throughout life."



While both Ingrid and Gretchen have a steadfast belief in the power of including art at the middle school level, the program's success has been gaining a lot of statewide attention in recent years. The Pennsylvania Art Education Association (PAEA) named the school an Outstanding Visual Arts Community for 2021-2022. Building on that success, this past December, Ingrid and her

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OJRMS Ushers in the Spring Season with Sports and Music

Students and staff from the middle school faced off in a basketball game for the ages. In a stunning thriller, the students outlasted the faculty in overtime to win 57-55. The game was organized by the Builder's Club and raised over \$1,500 for the Fight On Makena Foundation.

Students with a love of reading came together to enjoy an evening of reading and friendship in our annual Reading After Dark event. The event is hosted by Student Council.

Students attended the Jr Girls in STEM Symposium hosted by Kutztown University. Students rotated through hands-on science experiments led by the science faculty and students of various colleges and St Luke's Hospital. In addition, students operated a ground penetrating radar device, extracted DNA, assessed the health of a stream, planted seeds, generated computer simulations and 3D models, and more to introduce them to a world filled with countless STEM opportunities.

The Band & Orchestra held their Winter Concert on Feb. 22. Highlights can be viewed online at <https://www.facebook.com/TheOJRSD/videos/203568429011093>.



North Coventry Celebrates Read Across OJR; Student Archer Wins Big

March 2nd was Read Across America Day. As a way to celebrate, everyone at North Coventry dropped everything and read from 9:00 - 9:20 that morning. All students, big and small, as well as all adults came into the hallways to enjoy 20 minutes of reading as a school community. Additionally, throughout the rest of the hour long Read Across OJR celebration, we had students earn gold coins to use in our book vending machine. Students were invited down to the lobby if they share a birthday with Dr. Suess, if they were wearing striped socks like the stripes found on Dr. Suess' well known hat or if they are a twin like Thing One and Thing Two. Other reading focused activities continued in individual classrooms during the rest of the day.

Sophia Spotts, a 6th grader at North Coventry shoots for The Reading Archery Club S3DA Team. (Scholastic 3D Archery)

Recently, Sophia won first place in her category, Eagle Open in the Pennsylvania S3DA State Indoor Championship. Eagle is the age category and Open is the type of equipment she uses. Sophia then headed to the S3DA National Indoor Target Championship on March 2nd in Owensboro Kentucky. Way to make us NC Proud Sophia!



East Coventry Students Learn About Tadpoles Through Reading

Throughout the month of March, students and staff participated in several activities intended to promote the importance of literacy. Literacy is an essential skill in fostering future success for all students. The March activities included a read-a-thon, the one book, one school adventure, and the annual OJR Read-in.

The read-a-thon, which is sponsored by the East Coventry Parent-Teacher organization encourages students to spend the majority of the month reading various books in order to increase the volume of which the students read. Students track their minutes and receive prizes for participating and the number of minutes that they spend reading. Additionally, cumulative minutes are recorded and grade levels compete against one another to see which students can read the most. At the end of read-a-thon, the top readers in each grade receive special recognition and prizes. Additionally,

the proceeds used from the reading challenge have helped to support various large scale school-related projects such as additional leveled readers, fencing for the play space, as well as helping to fund field trips.

On the morning of Thursday, March 2nd, students and staff from across the District cozied up in comfortable places in the classrooms and the buildings in order to participate in the OJR Read-in. The annual event is intended to honor world renowned children's author Dr. Suess while helping to instill his love of literacy among the East Coventry Elementary students. At the conclusion of the Read-in, the school launched the annual One Book, One School adventure. During the launch assembly, students learned that this year's book was Life According to Og the Frog by Betty Birney. During the assembly, students learned about the life cycle of frogs from local nature expert Alex Runde from Green Valley Watershed Association. At the conclusion of the assembly, each class received an aquarium purchased by the OJR Education Foundation. The classes received a tadpole that will be kept in the classrooms for the duration of the month. Students had a chance to watch the tadpoles develop into frogs while reading a chapter a day throughout March.



Need hours?

North Coventry Spring Fest

Opportunities Available

Friday May 5th	Saturday May 6th
Field mapping	Face painting
Table set up	Game booth
Tent set up	Morning set up
Sign hanging	Breakdown
Parking	Decorating

Let us know you're interested
<https://tinyurl.com/NCSFVolunteers>

A Season of Celebration at OJR High School

On March 14th, Mu Alpha Theta, the math honors society at the high school, ran the group's 2nd Annual Math Day. This event was held in the middle school library for our 8th grade students and provided them with an opportunity to engage with math in a number of fun and exciting ways.

Led by the Best Buddies club, students and staff participated in the Rock Your Socks campaign. On March 21st, people are encouraged to wear mismatched or crazy socks to serve as a conversation starter, so that when someone asks about your socks, you can tell them that you're wearing them to raise awareness of Down Syndrome. This event is held on March 21st in recognition that Down Syndrome is the result of having 3 copies of the 21st chromosome, thus raising awareness on the 21st day of the 3rd month.

U.S. Representative Chrissy Houlahan met with High School students Eliana Crew '23, Maya Evans '24, and Riley Haring '24 to offer her congratulations for the students earning the top award at the international iWISH competition. As part of their winning entry into the competition, these students created a one minute video to highlight the importance

of early STEM education for girls and young women. Representative Houlahan presented the students with Certificates of Special Congressional Recognition and Challenge Coins in the form of brand-new, straight from the mint, Dr. Sally Ride quarters.

The Pioneer Athletic Conference participated in the Peak Performance Leadership Academy at Montgomery County Community College on March 2nd. Athletes from around the conference came together for a day designed to enhance the leadership and decision-making skills of student-athletes. Representing the OJR community were Tyler Brashear '24, Derek Hinrichs '24, Ava Taylor '24, and Marley Danielsson '24.

Congratulations to the OJR Wildcats Club Hockey Team on winning the Pioneer Conference this year. The team entered the 2023 Flyers Cup as the #6 seed in Class AA and earned its first Flyers Cup wins in club history with wins over Central Bucks South and Avon Grove.



West Vincent Celebrates Black History Month

West Vincent Elementary School celebrated Black History Month in February with a fun door decorating activity! Each classroom chose a Black historical figure to research collectively as a group. Then, they decorated their doors to demonstrate their learning. Classrooms had an opportunity to travel around the building to learn more about important people from our history. Additionally, it supported the learning that took place at home!

Congratulations to West Vincent Elementary School students Vedansh and Eeshan Kumbharathi, who were at the PA State Scholastic Chess championship in Harrisburg this weekend and respectively won 8th and 9th place in the K-5 Open and K-3 open sections. In addition, Vedansh won 1st place in the U1800 section of the quick chess format of the game!

Have you ever just thought during your working day that you could use a spot to just unwind and say "Ahhh"? West Vincent's own Nurse Becky and Mrs. Weber developed and is utilizing a Calm Corner in the Health Suite to provide a calm space for students to use during the day for a few minutes to relax. Just like adults, students experience stress in the course of the day. They feel stress in the form of illness and come to see Nurse Becky to feel better. After asking a few questions and doing an assessment, oftentimes a break is all they needed. A few minutes are spent in the Calm Corner and they are set to complete their day. As always, Mrs. Weber teaches about emotions and coping skills in her guidance lessons in grades K-3. A few years back Nurse Becky started visiting classrooms to teach about stress, how it makes our bodies feel and teaches the skills to help our bodies to calm. Now the Calm Corner is here for them to get away and practice those skills under the supervision of Nurse Becky and Mrs. Weber. Our next step is to have a Calm Box in each classroom so they can start to use these skills right in the classroom, but the Calm Corner will always be a place for them as well. 9th place in the K-5 Open and K-3 open sections.



East Vincent Collects Food Pantry Items

Each month at East Vincent, teachers from Grades K-6 nominate a Wildcat of the Month. Nominations are based on the monthly theme, which is a character trait chosen ahead of time by the staff. The selected students exemplify these themes in their daily functioning and interactions. These Wildcats of the Month went above and beyond demonstrating caring during the month of February.

East Vincent Student Council held a Winter Whiteout collection of non-perishable items including toiletries and essential household "white items." All proceeds were donated to the Coventry Food Pantry to directly benefit our OJR families!

During the month of March, East Vincent students will be participating in March Mathness. Students will solve math facts on Reflex to help their class advance on the March Mathness bracket. There will also be a winner for the class that solves the most math facts during the month of March.



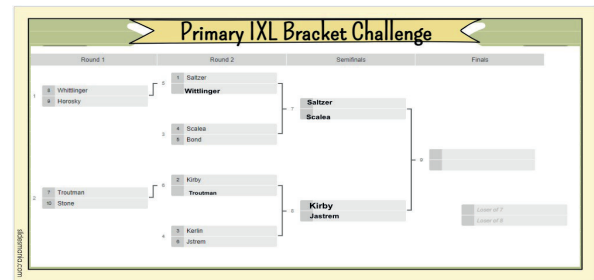
Grandfriends, March Madness Arrive at French Creek Elementary

Welcome to March Madness, or should we say March MATHness at French Creek. Students in grades 1-6 have been participating in a competitive school-wide IXL math bracket competition! IXL is an online program that allows students to solve mathematical concepts by academic standard at specific grade levels.

How does March Mathness work? There are two brackets: primary (grades 1-3) and intermediate (grades 4-6). Each week students are encouraged to solve as many math problems as possible. Since beginning the challenge on March 1st, students have solved a total of 317,862 questions (and counting) and have increased their number of proficient math skills from 14,235 to 29,456!

The winning classrooms will win a pizza party. However, the most important prize is that of knowledge! We are excited to celebrate the growth of all our French Creek mathematicians!

February 17th was a very special day at French Creek. Students in Grade 3 had the opportunity to host up to four special guests for Grandfriends' Day. This year was extra special because it was our first chance to welcome back Grandfriends' since 2020. Students escorted their guests to the library to read together, classes gathered in our large group commons area to play Bingo, and each student conducted informative and entertaining Grandfriend interviews back in their classroom. It was a wonderful opportunity for our students and their guests to make special memories together.



Kelsey Kramer's Dream Lives On and Continues to Uplift OJR Students

In her 16 years of life, Kelsey Kramer touched the lives of nearly everyone she encountered. Growing up, Kelsey radiated a positivity that inspired those around her to be stronger, braver and more inclusive of others. She strived to be a true friend to everyone whom she met, from classmates to teammates, and across different social groups, activities and backgrounds.

When Kelsey passed in 2011, her impact on the world was immediately apparent as the entire Owen J. Roberts community came together to grieve, to share memories and ultimately to heal. Classmates who had only known Kelsey for a few months shared stories with her loved ones about her kindness, her unflinching loyalty and her unique ability to make everyone feel accepted, appreciated and special. Those who knew her longer shared their love for having someone in their life who was a loyal friend through their triumphs and challenges.

Today, with the help of her family, friends and the entire community, Kelsey continues to leave her mark on the world and enrich the lives of others.

Founded shortly after her passing, [Kelsey's Legacy Forever Strong Foundation](#) has worked to carry forth Kelsey's spirit and heart by making a positive difference in the lives of local youth by promoting leadership development through sports, education and community outreach activities. Every year, the Foundation provides the [Kelsey Kramer Scholarship](#) to an OJR High School graduating senior who shares her values and goals, as well as embraces Kelsey's integrity, spirit and character.

In addition, [The Kelsey Kramer Parisi Athletic Training Scholarship](#) is offered through the Parisi Speed School in Downingtown. Recipients of the scholarship receive a year of speed and agility training at the acclaimed facility, where Kelsey spent much of her time. The scholarship is awarded annually to an OJR High School or OJR

Middle School student-athlete who exemplifies Kelsey's characteristics and values – including academic excellence, strong leadership skills, integrity, compassion and serving as a role model.

"From an early age, Kelsey enjoyed working with kids and wanted that to be a big part of any career she chose," said Lori Kramer, Kelsey's mom. "The driving force behind all the work we do with Kelsey's Legacy Forever Strong Foundation is to do what we think she would do and make a positive difference in the lives of young people."

In addition to scholarships, the Foundation provides support and sponsorship for community organizations such as student clubs, summer camps, youth groups and other activities designed to serve children. The Foundation particularly focuses on enriching and educational experiences for the community's youth, such as [sponsoring a recent trip by the OJR High School Black Student Union to the National Museum of African American History and Culture](#), located in Washington, D.C.



Kelsey Kramer and the foundation bearing her name have touched the lives of thousands in the Owen J. Roberts community. But for Lori Kramer, the work has just begun. In addition to continuing all of its existing programs, the Kelsey's Legacy Forever Strong Foundation continues to seek new ways to assist others.

As the community continues to heal from the COVID-19 pandemic, the Foundation is currently exploring opportunities to assist students with important topics such as mental and physical wellbeing, anti-bullying support and resources that foster a sense of belonging and acceptance for all young people. In addition, Lori Kramer is currently exploring partnerships to establish Kelsey's Klubhouse, a physical location in the community that serves as a safe haven and support system for teens, and that creates and fosters the ideals of positivity, sense of belonging, wellness, compassion, inclusivity, community and friendship.

"I have no doubt that today Kelsey would be helping people in different ways," Lori said. "The work we do not only helps us remember Kelsey, it builds self-esteem within students, positively impacts the lives of others and encourages us to be a better friend to one another."

Kelsey Kramer used to tell her friends that people were going to know her name and she was going to make an impact in their lives. Today, like a ray of light that has emerged from the clouds of an unspeakable tragedy, there is no doubt that Kelsey's dream has come true.

Registration Open for Summer Enrichment Programs

The Owen J. Roberts School District is excited to announce a variety of enrichment opportunities open to all students within the community from June 14 through August 10, 2023. From fishing, baking, crafts, sports, and STEM challenges to serious academics, there are plenty of exciting activities from which to choose!

Registration is open and will run through Friday, June 9, 2023, or until sessions are full. Please check the published brochure on our website weekly to catch any updates with new offerings or perhaps to review the closed sessions as they fill up (i.e. fishing).

Our summer opportunities are self-supporting and can only be offered with sufficient enrollment. Registration is online, offering real-time availability and immediately secures a spot in the activity your child chooses. Simply log into your SchoolPay account at <https://www.schoolpay.com/> and select the Summer Enrichment tab. If your child is interested in attending a summer activity but is not a student with Owen J. Roberts, please contact Missy Walton at mwalton@ojrsd.net and she will send you the School Pay link allowing you to register as a guest.

Our summer programs offer students of all ages a place to come together to play, learn, and grow. For more information e-mail Missy Walton or Heidi Lehmann at mwalton@ojrsd.net or hlehmann@ojrsd.net, call 610-469-5196 or download the brochure - <https://www.ojrsd.com/cms/lib/PA01916155/Centricity/Domain/4/2023%20Summer%20Brochure.pdf>.



Next Town Hall Meeting Scheduled for April 27

Save the Date! The next OJR Town Hall Meeting is scheduled for Thursday, March 9, from 5:30 to 7:30 p.m., at the Owen J. Roberts School District Warwick Building, 3650 St Peters Rd., Elverson, PA 19520.

OJR's Town Hall Meetings provide an opportunity for the community to share opinions, feedback, ideas and questions with members of the OJR Board of School Directors and district administrators. While the district will provide updates on its initiatives and share important information about our community's schools, the meeting will be free-form, meaning the topics being discussed are decided by attendees.

To register in advance, please visit <https://forms.gle/u8mTF83472v7XAuW9>.

We look forward to meeting with you and discussing the topics that are important to our school community.

Award Winning Art Program (continued)...

students were selected as PAEA's Art Room of the Month. Even more recently, as part of PAEA: March is Youth Arts Month, eighth grade student Sophie Tridico had her work exhibited inside the East Wing Rotunda of the Pennsylvania Capitol in Harrisburg. In addition, Sophie's art will also appear in a virtual art gallery alongside fellow middle school students Micah Suessmuth, Gracie Tryniszewski, Advay Kavathekar, James Felmlee and Aamina Mohammad!

Never content to rest on their past accomplishments, both Ingrid and Gretchen continue to evolve their approach to guiding students through a world of artistic possibilities. They regularly add new resources for students to utilize, including access to information, digital content and exposure to the works of local

Chester County artists. In an ever-changing technological landscape, Ingrid and Gretchen now utilize Chromebooks to make lessons more easily accessible to students with visual and auditory challenges. They also use student-assigned technology to minimize repetition for students and allow them to pursue a greater number of projects.

"We aspire to embrace emerging technological trends so that our students can have greater opportunities than ever before," Ingrid said. "Art is a great place to learn, develop skills and explore a world of ideas and strategies to help our children make their visions a reality. Watching our students apply what they experience and grow as learners speaks volumes to the value of art in our school."

Follow OJR's Middle School Art Program:

- Instagram - [@purplechickenartroom](https://www.instagram.com/purplechickenartroom) and [@ojrmsart](https://www.instagram.com/ojrmsart)
- Twitter - [@OJRMSArtTeacher](https://twitter.com/OJRMSArtTeacher)
- Pinterest - [@MSArtGallery](https://www.pinterest.com/MSArtGallery)
- Gretchen's Professional Gallery - www.gretchenmcginnisart.com/

Superintendent's Notebook

Welcome back to another exciting issue of the Advocate newsletter. It's been a busy past couple of weeks for Owen J. Roberts School District!

Recently, we've had the opportunity to enjoy wonderful spring-time activities - including the high school and middle school musicals, Pennsylvania Music Educators Association (PMEA) and Odyssey of the Mind competitions and many other important seasonal events. Our students are also gaining international recognition after winning the iWish competition and advancing awareness about the participation of girls and young women in STEAM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Art and Math) activities, careers and leadership.

Our students and staff are hard at work as we transition to the final months of the school year, with exams, advancements and graduations quickly approaching. There's a growing sense of excitement on our campuses and I'm grateful for our ability to welcome back many of the important keystone events that our community has come to love, including our first, in-person college fair in four years!

Since our last newsletter, OJR's ongoing commitment to community engagement has included listening sessions focused on special and gifted education, in addition to our third town hall meeting, held at the new District Service Center building. To date, more than 130 community members have joined us at our town hall meetings and provided essential feedback on a variety of important education-related topics.

Whether you've been our guest at all three town halls, or have yet to attend, we invite you to join us once again for our final town hall of the school year on Thursday, April 27, starting at 5:30 p.m. The town hall will take place inside the Owen J. Roberts School District Warwick Building, located at 3650 St Peters Rd, Elverson, PA 19520.

In addition to opportunities to meet in person via our town hall meetings, over the next few weeks our families, students and staff will all be invited to participate in our annual School Perceptions Surveys.

The online surveys are designed to provide insight on a number of important topics, including student engagement, school safety, district policies, available resources, communication and more. We encourage you to check your email regularly as your school principal will provide additional details about the surveys in the coming weeks. As always we appreciate your time and consideration.

I want to take a moment and express my continued appreciation for our amazing teachers, staff and administrators. Your tireless work forms the backbone of our district and has a life-changing effect on children. I also want to thank our students and their families for their continued hard work and for the passion they demonstrate while pursuing an education. Finally, I want to thank our alumni and community members for their unwavering support of OJR and our mission to serve the community's children.

I hope you enjoy this issue of the Advocate newsletter and I look forward to seeing all of you at our upcoming community engagement meetings, school celebrations, student performances and sporting events throughout the spring!

Sincerely,

Dr. Will Stout
Superintendent



Owen J. Roberts School District

Inspiring Each Student for Success Today and Greatness Tomorrow

Spring 2023 Edition

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