

Superintendent Newsletter

November 2023
Volume 4, Issue 2

Dear Oyster River,

As we enter the holiday season and with our first quarter behind us, our hearts turn to the joy of spending time with loved ones and the spirit of togetherness. Yet, for many families in our community, this time of year can also be a time of additional financial and emotional stress. I've witnessed firsthand the challenges families face during this period and wish to share the following resources with you.

Oyster River schools help through donation programs, the coordination of food baskets for families, and the program 68 Hours of Hunger which provides groceries to families in need. Families may opt in or out of 68 Hours of Hunger at any time and there is no income qualification to receive assistance. Benefiting from this program will not affect a family's ability to receive free and reduced meals. Additional details may be found on our website by [clicking here](#).

If you are in a position where you can assist others by donating this year, please consider contacting your school's Health Office or 68 Hours of Hunger Coordinator Doris Demers at OysterRiver@End68HoursofHunger.org.

We also work closely with local community organizations to connect families with additional resources. As you read on you will find additional information provided by Assistant Superintendent Filippone regarding homelessness.

Beyond material support, we're also committed to fostering a sense of community and belonging. You might have heard about the middle school's [Coffee Connection](#) initiative, a project started by two Oyster River Middle School team members to help students develop their social communication and functional skills, which evolved into a joyful weekly coffee shop creating a sense of school community.

Our elementary schools are collaborating with community partners to bring to life enrichment activities on the topics of ["Year of Water"](#) (Moharimet) and ["This Land"](#) (Mast Way). The high school Student Senate hosted a [mental health panel](#) focused on breaking the stigma related to mental health.

Every year, many of you experience firsthand our school's [fall activities](#) and holiday-themed events, a beloved opportunity to come together for celebration of student performances. These events not only provide a sense of joy and connection but also create a network of

support for families. You may find a list of holiday events in the "Important Dates" section of this newsletter.

Our schools are not just places of learning, they are a community, and we at ORCSD place student success at the heart of everything we do.

Respectfully,

Dr. James Morse

Superintendent

Assistant Superintendent's Message

Like many school districts throughout the nation, we in Oyster River also work with students and families who experience homelessness. In fact, during the first few months of the school year, we have seen the number of students impacted by homelessness double.

It is important to talk about homelessness to ensure homeless children and youth can receive the support they need. As a district we have directed additional resources to students and have found new ways to address educational barriers and challenges created by homelessness.

New this year is a free hygiene pantry for students in need. If you are interested in supporting the pantry, we are currently accepting donations of the following items:

- Body soap
- Cleaning products
- Dental floss
- Deodorant
- Facial cleanser
- Feminine hygiene products
- Laundry detergent
- Lotion
- Shampoo and conditioner
- Shaving cream
- Toothbrush and toothpaste

You may bring these items to the ORCSD district office ([36 Coe Dr, Durham, NH 03824](#)) during business hours.

As Assistant Superintendent, one of my roles is to act as homeless liaison for our district. In this capacity I work with schools to support homeless students and ensure compliance with the federal law that addresses the educational needs of homeless children and youth (McKinney-Vento Act). The McKinney-Vento Act established the definition of *homeless* used by public schools and guarantees the protection of children's educational rights such as the right to enroll in and attend school. It also provides support for academic success.

If you are interested in learning more about McKinney Vento, please visit the following link: [NHDOE Learner Support or the National Center for Homeless Education](#) .

Housing resources are also made available by the following organizations:

- [Homeless Information: New Hampshire | HUD.gov / U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development \(HUD\)](#)
- Community Action Partnership of New Hampshire (CAP): 603-435-2500 (www.CAPNH.org)
- Share Fund: 603-335-0011 (www.sharefund.org)
- Families in Transition (FIT): 603-641-9441 (www.fitnh.org)
- Homeless Hotline: 866-444-4211 (www.211nh.org)
- U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD): 617-994-8405 (www.hud.gov)
- Homeless Center for Strafford County: 603-332-3065 (www.hcscnh.org)
- Salvation Army: 603-332-2623 (eaternusa.salvationarmy.org/northern-new-england)
- 24/7 for help with resources and shelter: 211

Families in need can also contact their school nurse or school counselor. All requests are treated with diligence and confidentiality.

Respectfully,

Suzanne Filippone
Assistant Superintendent

General News & Announcements

Inclement Weather Season

This is a reminder, as we soon enter inclement weather season, that there is no perfect weather call. Having the following options help us determine the end of the school year with more predictability which benefits everyone.

- Snow days: We will use snow days for predicted heavy snow events.
- Remote Learning: We will use remote learning days when experiencing significant winter weather.
- Delayed Start: We will use delay starts when the weather is predicting thaw by mid-morning.

Free and Reduced Meals Applications

Free and reduced meals applications can be [completed online](#). Applications are also available at each school's front office and nurse's office upon request. Please be sure the application you complete has the current school year listed on it as we are, unfortunately, unable to accept previous years applications.

68 Hours of Hunger

The district offers a weekend food program for students called 68 Hours of Hunger. The program is named for the 68 hours between a students' last weekly Friday school meal and their next one the following Monday. There is no income qualification for this program. Additional information is [available here](#). If you'd like to support the program, please contact Child Nutrition Director Maredith St Onge at (603) 389-3310.

ParentSquare Communications

Parents and guardians are encouraged to register their account by visiting [ParentSquare.com](https://www.ParentSquare.com). You may also customize your notification settings. The "instant" setting will send all posts notifications in real-time. The "digest" setting sends direct messages, alerts, and time-sensitive posts instantly, but sends all non-time sensitive posts at the end of the day, reducing the number of notifications you receive daily. Instructions to update your notification settings are [available here](#).

Parking Restrictions at the ORCSD District Office

Parking at the SAU and Service Building during business hours is by permit only (36 Coe Dr, Durham, NH 03824). Vehicles parked during business hours that are not displaying a valid SAU parking permit will be ticketed by the Town of Durham.

Important Traffic Information

Thank you for your collaboration and patience during school pick-up and drop-off at the Oyster River middle and high schools. Mornings and afternoons can be hectic, and we understand how frustrating it can be to sit in traffic. Due to the increased amount of traffic this year, it is

important to remember the importance of the following safety rules and the importance of planning your commute with traffic in mind.

- Drop off and pick up are only permitted in dedicated areas
- Do not attempt to pass vehicles using the middle or opposing lane
- When instructed to stop by our School Resource Office, you must immobilize your vehicle immediately
- U-turns are not permitted on the road

Highlight on Sustainability

The ORCSD Sustainability Committee proudly hosted two exciting opportunities in November. On November 6, students, staff, families, and community members were invited to attend Kiss the Ground, a viewing and panel conversation where Oyster River students shared their school's sustainability practices.

On November 8, our district joined schools across the US and celebrated [Plastic Free Lunch Day](#), a nationwide initiative to reduce plastic foodware and packaging. For the occasion Oyster River school lunches will be served with limited single-use plastic foodware and packaging.



Superintendent Search

The ORCSD School Board recently announced three candidates for the superintendent position. For information on the timeline, and candidate selection process, please visit our [Superintendent Search page](#).

Mast Way Elementary School



This Land

This year, Mast Way students of all grade levels will be invited to explore our annual theme, "This Land". Students will be invited to explore the different facets of our land through enrichment activities, including our ties to indigenous populations and community partners, the origin of our school's name, agriculture, sustainability, and more.

We are excited to be extending this theme into a multi-year project so that we might have an extra year to work with the Lee Historical Society and share in some of their own plans in the next few years leading to the anniversary of the American Revolution. Additional details will be provided by your student(s)'s teacher.

Spooktacular

Thank you to our amazing PTO for making this year's Spooktacular event such a success! Volunteers and staff members went above and beyond to create a festive and memorable event.

Volunteers made popcorn, helped by decorating and cleaning up after the event. DeMerritt Hill Farm cider and baked goods were available for purchase.

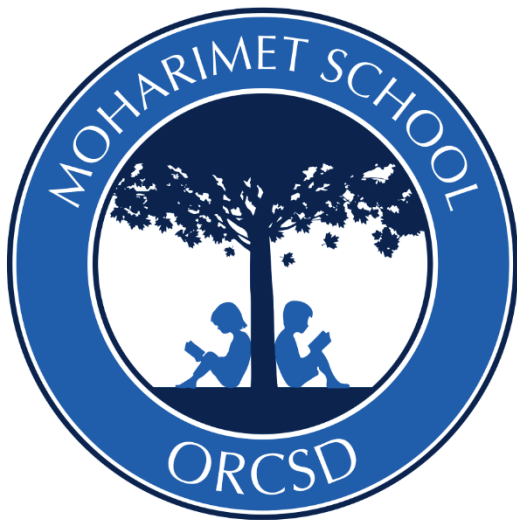


Before and After School Opportunities

Before and after school opportunities at Mast Way include Running Club, Chinese Club, Lego Club, as well as multiple community programs that are available to Mast Way students. For additional information, please contact Mast Way's front office.

Wee Deliver

Wee Deliver is a school wide postal system that encourages students to have in-school pen pals that allows our students to make connections with other students, siblings, and teachers while practicing letter writing skills.



Moharimet Elementary School

Year of the Water

Moharimet students kicked off their "Year of Water" program on September 29 during a special "Day of Water" activity supported by community partners. Five Oyster River Middle School 8th grade students also visited the elementary school to present an activity on watersheds. Additional information may be found [here](#).

Pumpkin Stroll

Thank you to our family volunteers, PTO, and Madbury police and fire departments for their support and making this Moharimet tradition happen annually. Students planted their seeds last June and harvested the pumpkins this fall. All grade levels were invited to carve the pumpkins in the gym ahead of the stroll. Additional information may be found [here](#).





Oyster River Middle School

Veteran's Day Breakfast

On November 9, veterans, active military and service providers from Durham, Lee, and Madbury were invited to attend a celebration in honor of Veteran's Day at the Oyster River Middle School. A breakfast was provided by the school PTO and culinary team and students of all grade levels were invited to seize the opportunity to honor family members.

8th grade student Georgia Leone sang the national anthem and Principal Sullivan thank everyone for their service and for attending. Both veterans and active military personnel in attendance were invited to introduce themselves and were celebrated by a round of applause from the audience.



2024 New Hampshire Kid Governor

Again this year, 5th grade students took part in the [New Hampshire's Kid Governor](#) program and several students ran an electoral campaign. We are proud to announce that Noah Sanders (Team Atlantic) was selected as candidate for the New Hampshire's 2024 Kid Governor alongside six other candidates selected throughout the state.

Students cast their vote at the Durham Town Hall on November 9 using the wooden ballot box, which dates to 1916. To learn more, please [click here](#).



Coffee Connection

Did you know dedicated middle school students operate a coffee shop called "Coffee Connection" providing weekly service to middle school staff? Every Wednesday during the school year, students prepare hot beverages and offer baked goods to their teachers and team members. Students love being a part of the initiative and proudly create their beverages. In the process, they learn about the importance of hard work and making a difference in their school community.

To learn more about Coffee Connection, please read our news [article online](#).



Walk a Mile Fundraiser

On November 3, the middle school hosted a walk-a-thon inspired by its advisories with a focus on empathy and respect. Students of all grade levels were invited to try to consider another person's perspectives, experiences, and motivations before making a judgement.

The school exceeded its goal and raised over \$1,300. The money raised will benefit students living around the garbage dump in Guatemala City.

Thank you for your generous support!



Annual Pie Fundraiser

Thank you to everyone who ordered their pies during our yearly pie fundraiser. All money raised will directly support Oyster River Middle School's clubs and field trips.

Oyster River High School



Graduation Ceremony

Graduation will be held June 7, 2024 (rain date June 8, 2024).

Red Ribbon Week

The week of October 23-27 high school students and staff celebrated [Red Ribbon Week](#), the nation's largest and longest-running drug-use prevention campaign.

Over the course of Red Ribbon Week, students received daily motivational morning reminders, were given the opportunity to participate in a food drive to benefit End 68 Hours of Hunger, experienced spinning the resource wheel, and were invited to wear red on Friday, October 27.



National Merit Scholarship

Congratulations to our three seniors who received a Letter of Commendation from the National Merit Scholarship: Chris Hawley, James Li, and Owen Nelan. These letters are sent to students in recognition of their outstanding academic promise.



Athletic Teams Update

- Girls Cross Country won both the Division II State Championship and the Meet of Champions.
- Volleyball won a second straight Division II state championship (second year in a row).
- Boys Soccer competed in semifinals.
- Unified Soccer competed in quarterfinals.

We're Hiring!

For more information or to apply, please visit applitrack.com/orcsd/onlineapp

- **Special Education Paraeducators** - Mast Way and Middle School
 - Full time positions at 6.5 hours/day, 32.5 hours /week
- **Paraeducators** (multiple positions) - 6.5 hours a day, Monday to Friday
- **Substitute Teachers**
 - Wouldn't it be great to have a job where you only work when you want to? Our substitutes do just that!

- **Kitchen Manager**
 - Full-time position 8 hours a day and 5 days a week, candidates must be certified in sanitation and SNA.
- **Child Nutrition Employees and Substitutes**
 - Located at both the high school and middle school, multiple positions, training provided.
- **Bus Drivers**
 - \$25.71 dollars per hour, competitive benefits package with medical, dental, long-term disability, 403b, paid holidays and sick time, guaranteed work week with choice of weekly hours, \$1,000 annual perfect attendance bonus, and new employees sign on bonus of \$2,500!



Important Dates

- 11/30** Superintendent Candidate Forum: Ms. Suzanne Filippone
- 12/1** Mast Way PTO Holiday Movie Night
- 12/1** Superintendent Candidate Forum: Mr. Russell Holden
- 12/4** Superintendent Candidate Forum: Dr. Robert Shaps
- 12/6** School Board Meeting
- 12/6** Moharimet 4th Grade Winter Concert
- 12/12** High School Orchestra Concert
- 12/13** Mast Way Winter Concert
- 12/14** Middle School Band Concert
- 12/18** Middle School Chorus Concert
- 12/20** School Board Meeting
- 12/22** Early Release

12/25-1/1 No School: Winter Recess
1/3 School Board Meeting
1/10 Bond & Budget Hearing
1/12-14 Middle School Winter Musical
1/15 No School: Martin Luther King
1/17 School Board Meeting
1/22 No School: Teacher Workshop Day
1/23 Joint Board Meeting with Barrington
1/25 Middle School 5th Grade Concert
2/1 ICAC Digital Safety Parent-Only Presentation
2/6 Annual Meeting - Session I
2/7 School Board Meeting
2/13 No School: Teacher Workshop Day
2/15 Moharimet 3rd Grade World Music Festival
2/21 School Board Meeting
2/26-3/1 No School: February Recess

SAU Email Contact Information

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