



# Superintendent's Newsletter

June 2023

Volume: 3 Issue: 4



**Reminder: Last day of school is June 16, 2023, with early dismissal**

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## Message from the Superintendent

Dr. James C. Morse, Sr.

Dear Parents, Guardians, Staff, and Students,

The 2022-2023 School Year is quickly ending. What a remarkable year it was for both staff and students. This year was one of recognition and academic excellence. There is much to celebrate with the most obvious being our senior class, an amazing group of young people saying goodbye to high school and hello to the next chapter in their lives, whether that be college, careers, the military or a gap year. We are proud of every single one of them.

And they are not alone in being recognized this school year. Oyster River students at every level were celebrated for their academics, their athletic prowess, their creativity, and their leadership.

In addition, our faculty, staff, and school board also received multiples accolades. We are fortunate to have so many talented and dedicated teachers and support staff in our district.

It is always an honor and a privilege to be the Oyster River Cooperative School District's superintendent. I hope you all have a wonderful summer and read on to see a list of award and prize recipients so far this year.

**Message from the Superintendent (continued)****Staff**

- Mast Way Digital Learning Specialist Susan Leifer received the 2022 New Hampshire State Finalist for the Presidential Award for Excellence in Mathematics and Science Teaching
- Business Administrator Susan Caswell received the 2023 Alexander J. Blastos Distinguished Service Award
- Our school board was named the 2023 School Board of the Year by the New Hampshire School Boards Association (NHSBA)
- High School Nurse Kimberly Wolph was named the 2023 New Hampshire Healthcare Hero for the Seacoast Region
- Middle and High School Strings Teacher Andrea von Oeyen was selected as a 2024 Teacher of the Year semifinalist
- School Board Chair Denise Day received the 2023 Mission Award from Community Action Partnership of Strafford County
- Information Technology Director Josh Olstad was awarded the inaugural 2023 New Hampshire Chief Technology Officer (NHCTO) Leadership Award
- Six students were named National Merit Scholar Finalists
- ORHS Robotics won the Excellence in Engineering Award at UNH's FIRST FRC robotics competition
- 47 students were inducted to the ORHS chapter of the National Honor Society
- Student-run magazine Mouth of the River earned second place honors in the inaugural New Hampshire Press Association (NHPA) Distinguished Journalism Contest
- Two students were runner-up for UNH's 2023 Changemaker Challenge and Maya Ajit (senior) received recognition for her project's idea Engineering for Social Justice through an Ethics of Care Framework
- Anna Klein (sophomore) won the NH Civics Prize at National History Day, and two sophomore students, Stella Pillet-Shore and Lily Zehetner will be exhibiting at the Smithsonian's National Museum of American History on Flag Day Wednesday, June 14
- 10 Oyster River High School students performed in the New Hampshire Music Educators Association Classical All-State Festival

**Oyster River Middle School (ORMS)**

- Six teams qualified and attended the 2023 VEX IQ Challenge World Championship in Dallas, TX
- ORMS achieved the sought-after LEED (Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design) Gold status for its innovation

**Oyster River High School (ORHS)**

- ORHS' team advanced to quarterfinal in the 2023 NHPBS Granite State Challenge
- Senior Kelly Zhang received the 2023 National Aspirations in Computing Award
- 16 students have been inducted into the National Computer Science Honor Society

**Oyster River High School Athletics**

- **State Champions:** Boys Soccer, Girls Volleyball, Girls Indoor Track, Unified Volleyball, Girls Tennis (first time in 36 years!)
- **State Runners-Up:** Girls Hockey, Unified Soccer, Boys Indoor Track, Girls Cross Country, Girls Track DII
- **DII Volleyball Player of the Year:** Emma Hampton
- **New Balance National Indoor Track and Field Qualifiers:** Ty Dorow, Keane Swiesz, Theo Fleischer, Chris Jernigan, Avery Baumgardt, Talia Banafato, Erin Carty, Haley Kavanagh, Henry Hagen, Dan Doherty, Mackenzie Cook

## Assistant Superintendent's Report

Suzanne Filippone

As we near the end of the school year, classrooms are being “packed up” for summer cleaning, and our teachers are preparing for summer learning.

As educators, we acknowledge that the summer is an opportunity for both respite, reflection, and professional learning.

This year we received over 100 professional learning requests from our K-12 faculty for summertime. Leadership has worked through these requests to ensure that faculty have opportunities to learn and grow collaboratively to improve classroom practices and student learning.

This large number of requests demonstrates the dedication and motivation for continued learning by our educational professionals. It also sends a powerful message to students about continued learning and empowerment to seek new ways to better oneself and their practices.

Examples of the professional learning that will be occurring this summer includes:

- Grades K – 5: Teacher teams collaborating and reflecting on Eureka2 Math with the goal to design curriculum and instruction as well as consistent implementation strategies. This type of work will continue throughout the school year.
- Grades 9 – 12: Teacher teams will be collaborating to deepen their understanding of AI/ChatGPT. As an interdisciplinary group they will explore ways to educate both teachers and students around the ethical use of this new tool. The goal is to use a collaborative and interdisciplinary approach to create a consistent message and practices around AI in the classroom.

## Assistant Superintendent Report (continued)

- All grade levels: Participate in a community read of Margaret Wheatley’s *Turning to One Another: Simple Conversations to Restore Hope to the Future*, and Lily Zheng’s *DEI Deconstruction: Your No-Nonsense Guide to Doing the Work and Doing it Right*.

Oyster River Cooperative School District embodies a culture of learning and growth for faculty and our students. We acknowledge that effective teachers and teaching are at the core of student learning. Our teachers continue to stretch themselves and their practices throughout the summer months. We are fortunate for their dedication to their craft and students.

The District’s team and I wish you a wonderful time away from schoolwork and look forward to seeing you again in August.

## DEIJ Update

Rachael Blansett

Hello Bobcats!

In March, Oyster River had the honor of hosting the internationally-acclaimed musician and artist Tona Brown, who graciously practiced with students and performed an evening concert for the community.



## DEIJ Update (continued )

During Tona’s visit, the high school JEDI (Justice, Equity, Diversity & Inclusion) Club and several other students planned and coordinated a panel discussion with the musician to talk about her career and life as a Black, trans woman in the arts.

This program proved to be a meaningful experience for LGBTQIA+ students and students of Color. It set an example on the importance of representation and support for marginalized students in education and how these positive interactions can impact student’s mental health.

The month of May marked Mental Health Awareness month, and many are claiming we are living through a “mental health crisis” with at least 78% of adults stating they were struggling with a mental health issue (Mental Health America, 2023).

Sadly, this statistic does not fare better for our youth with 1 in 10 reporting experiencing at least “one depressive episode” (Mental Health America, 2023) and this data becomes even more troubling when broken down by race, gender identity, and/or sexual orientation.

Though these statistics are concerning, The Trevor Project (2019) reports that having at least “one supportive adult in a youth’s life decreases suicide attempts by 40%.” Additionally, having culturally-mindful adults helps students of Color in destigmatizing asking for support or seeking out mental health services (Anxiety & Depression Association of America, 2022).

Marginalized students want to feel seen, heard, and validated in their identities and this can play a critical role in their mental health. This is a call for us all to be that one adult in our youth’s lives that offers this acceptance. We can never underestimate how significant one affirming conversation can have on a student—it could be life-saving.

## General News & Announcements

### 2023 School Board of the Year

The Oyster River School Board was named the 2023 School Board of the Year by the New Hampshire School Boards Association (NHSBA). It was celebrated for its leadership, teamwork, and effectiveness. For more information read the [full press release](#).



### Business Administrator Honored by NHASBO

School Business Administrator Susan Caswell recently received the 2023 Alexander J. Blastos Distinguished Service Award. On Wednesday, March 22, Nathan Lunney, New Hampshire Association of School Business Officials (NHASBO) President, recognized Sue during a school board meeting for her work and dedication to the District. Ms. Caswell will be retiring in June. For more information read the [full press release](#).

### New Website Coming in June

The district will be launching a new website June 29. New enhanced features will include faster browsing, convenient quick links, intuitive navigation, and a centralized calendar.

Additional details will be shared by email in the coming weeks.

**General News & Announcements (continued)**

**Titan Family Portal Changes to LINQ Connect**

The Titan Family Portal used to make payments for students and staff meals has migrated to a new platform called [LINQ Connect](#). No action is required from families. Account information has automatically been migrated to the new platform.



**Special Education Yearly Determination**

The New Hampshire Department of Education, Bureau of Special Education Support, has issued this year’s determination letter to the district and found ORCSD to meet all requirements. Our excellent staff, family engagement, and community support is why we do so well. Oyster River students with disabilities who have received services through our special education department have a 100% graduation rate.



**April Community Dinner**

Thank you to the 302 students, parents, guardians, staff, and community members who attended the April Community Dinner hosted by ORCSD’s Sustainability Committee.

**Empty Bowls and Art Show May 17**

Thank you to the students, staff, families, and community members who joined us. Over 350 sundaes were served, and over \$4,000 were raised for End 68 Hours of Hunger a program which supported over 50 Oyster River students this year.

The district would also like to thank Shain’s of Maine, Hershey, and WB Mason for their generous donations of ice cream, compostable bowls, and spoons.



**Class of 2023: Top 10 Students**

The Oyster River Cooperative School District wishes to recognize and congratulate the top 10 students in the Oyster River High School Class of 2023. Valedictorian Kelly Zhang (Durham), Salutatorian Katherine McEwan (Madbury), Maya Ajit (Durham), Henry Hagen (Madbury), Chloe Hawkes (Lee), Haley Pickering (Lee), Zoe Selig (Durham), Siddharth Srivatsan (Lee), Devon Wasiewski (Lee), and Grace Webb (Durham). A full feature on each student is available on the [Oyster River High School's website](#).

**Last Day of School is June 16**

**Dismissal Times**

Middle & High Schools: 12:00 pm  
Moharimet & Mast Way: 12:35 pm

## Elementary Schools

### Mast Way

#### 4<sup>th</sup> Grade Energy Project

Our 4<sup>th</sup> grade classes completed a comprehensive energy project using LEGO kits to learn about the energy journey. Students loved the hands-on experience of building LEGOs while learning about different types of energies.



#### Annual Art Show May 30

Thank you for attending and supporting our Annual Art Show!

### Moharimet

#### Day of the Forest May 25

On May 25, we culminated our “Year of the Forest” exploration with a special day full of forest themed experiences. This all-day school event invited students of all grade levels to learn from the expertise of our skilled volunteer experts.

#### Sugaring Season

Our tapping has concluded for the season and was entirely done by students, staff, and volunteers. Thank you to everyone for your support!



#### Pancake Breakfast March 18

Pancake Breakfast was back this year, and it was a roaring success! Our buffet-style pancake breakfast featuring maple syrup boiled at our own sugar shack attracted a large crowd. Music and entertainment was provided by middle and high school students. Funds will be used to support Moharimet’s maple sugaring projects.



## Middle School

### Robotics Team Goes to Worlds Championship

Six middle school robotics teams traveled to Dallas, TX, in May to compete in 2023 VEX IQ Challenge World Championship. Oyster River teams pair up with teams from China, Chinese Taipei (Taiwan), Singapore, Thailand, Vietnam, Australia, Azerbaijan, Nigeria, Mexico, and programs from all over the United States.



### Service Palooza May 25

The beloved school-wide tradition was launched 10 years ago, and students grades 5 to 8 received special lessons about the importance of giving back to their community.



### First Full Sport Season on the New Field

Students were able to enjoy a first full season on the new field. We would like to thank community members for their support!

## High School

### Robotics Team Wins Excellence in Engineering

The team won the Excellence in Engineering award at the 2023 FIRST FRC robotics competition. The event, held between March 24-26 at the University of New Hampshire and the team competed against 40 other teams from across New England.

For more information, read the [full press release](#).



### Mouth of the River Earns Honors

On April 14, student magazine Mouth of the River (MOR) earned second place honors in the New Hampshire Press Association (NHPA) Distinguished Journalism Contest. Produced entirely by students, MOR described by judges as “the gold standard for high school reporting in the state.”

### Music Students Attend Classical All-State Festival

10 Oyster River High School students performed in the New Hampshire Music Educators Association (NHMEA) Classical All-State Festival. The students showcased their talents in the annual festival, held in Concord on March 30 and April 1. For more information, read the [full press release](#).

### First Coin Flip on the Tennis Courts

Superintendent Morse performed the first coin flip on the new tennis courts in May and students were able to enjoy their first season on the new courts.

## We're Hiring!

Work for New Hampshire's most dynamic and vibrant school district.

To apply: [www.applitrack.com/orcsd/onlineapp](http://www.applitrack.com/orcsd/onlineapp)

- Several **School Nutrition Worker** positions (no prior experience required)
- Full-time, 2<sup>nd</sup> shift, **custodial opportunities**
- Several **Special Education Paraeducators** (all levels)
- Full-time **Maintenance Worker** positions (full year)
- **Coaches:**
  - Girls Varsity Basketball
  - JV Field Hockey
  - JV Girls Soccer
  - JV Girls Volleyball
- **Part-time Administrative Support** at the SAU office  
\*\*\* Flexible summer hours \*\*\*  
5 hours/day during the school year



### SAU Email Contact Information

Superintendent: Dr. Jim Morse | [jmorse@orcsd.org](mailto:jmorse@orcsd.org)

Assistant Superintendent: Suzanne Filippone | [sfilippone@orcsd.org](mailto:sfilippone@orcsd.org)

Executive Assistant: Wendy DiFruscio | [wdfruscio@orcsd.org](mailto:wdfruscio@orcsd.org)

Director of Student Services: Catherine Plourde | [cplourde@orcsd.org](mailto:cplourde@orcsd.org)

Administrative Assistant: Pamela Purser | [ppurser@orcsd.org](mailto:ppurser@orcsd.org)

Business Administrator: Susan Caswell | [scaswell@orcsd.org](mailto:scaswell@orcsd.org)

HR Coordinator: Theresa Proia | [tproia@orcsd.org](mailto:tproia@orcsd.org)

DEIJ Coordinator: Rachael Blansett | [rblansett@orcsd.org](mailto:rblansett@orcsd.org)

Communications Specialist: Genevieve Brown | [gebrown@orcsd.org](mailto:gebrown@orcsd.org)