

ORCSD Superintendent Newsletter - August 2023

Office of the Superintendent Thursday, Aug 31 • Oyster River Cooperative School District

Superintendent Newsletter

August 2023
Volume 4, Issue 1

Dear Oyster River,

As A.A. Milne, the author of Winnie the Pooh, said, “How lucky am I to have something that makes saying goodbye so hard.”

I am both sad and excited to share that I will be retiring on June 30, 2024. Sad because I will miss all of you, and excited to start a new chapter in my life. I’ve been an educator for 47 years and did not anticipate education to be my destiny. But when I entered a classroom as an art teacher in 1976, I knew I had found my calling.

Oyster River was my fourth superintendent position. When I started in the role, it was a difficult time in the district’s history. Trust was low. My first goal was to bring us back together, which was achieved over the course of my first two years.

Shortly after, the School Board authorized the creation of the first five-year strategic plan. Their adoption of the plan laid the foundation for most work to follow and set the course for future budget development. We have since updated the plan that followed.

Over the past 11 years Oyster River has exemplified its mission of “Working Together to Engage Every Learner”.

Some examples of our district’s success during the last decade include:

- Near 100% graduation rate
- 100% graduation rate for students with disabilities
- An incredibly high college placement rate
- Some of the highest SAT scores in New Hampshire and the country
- Innovative programs like social-emotional learning and Multi-Tiered Systems of Support to assist all children
- Full day kindergarten
- Advanced mathematics program
- One-to-one devices for all students K-12

- Expansion of counseling and school psychologist staff
- New athletic fields at the middle school and high school
- A brand-new middle school which is the first project in New Hampshire to achieve LEED V4 Gold for Building Design and Construction
- Extended learning opportunities such as dual enrollment and UNH courses to supplement and enhance our high school, and so many others

Perhaps more notably, these remarkable achievements were accomplished by the ORCSD while considering their impact taxpayers. Our district budget’s average growth over these past years was around 3% even when inflation soared.

I will dearly miss Oyster River, the amazing employees, the students, and all of you.

I am proud of OR students and proud of OR staff. I am thankful for the support of Durham, Lee, and Madbury. I’m grateful Barrington students can attend ORHS as it has allowed us to continue to offer a robust program of studies.

But most importantly, I will miss your amazing children. Their hunger for learning is unbridled and their commitment to each other is inspiring. I will always remember the excited faces of kindergarten children arriving on their first day of school and I’ll remember the excitement of graduation. I call them the bookends of a child’s school experience.

The Beatles sang, “There are places I’ll remember all my life.” ORCSD is that place for me.

Dr. Jim Morse
Superintendent

Assistant Superintendent's Message

Oyster River Faculty and staff members are known for their long-standing commitment to academic excellence. We believe students achieve their fullest potential when benefiting from abundant support and encouragement.

In 2022-2023, our high school students again demonstrated their academic excellence with their high levels of performance on universal testing. Our SAT school day assessment scores showed Oyster River students scoring higher than both the state and national average.

Reading and Writing (ORHS)

557

NH: 506 | National: 488

Math (ORHS)

557

NH: 488 | National: 467

For more information about our universal assessments please visit: [District Assessment](#).

As a district, we strive to help every student thrive and reach their full potential. We value heterogeneous classroom settings in which all students can learn together while fostering the uniqueness of all our

learners and the equitable access to our rigorous academic program. Our robust Multi-Tiered Systems of Support (MTSS) reflects this commitment and supports our ability to respond to the changing needs of students

What is a Multi-Tiered Systems of Support (MTSS)?

MTSS is a student-centered framework of support which individualizes student success within their academics and behavioral health. It provides a continuum to meet students' needs and ensures all students have equitable access to a high-quality and rigorous educational experience.

The MTSS framework includes three tiers:

- Universal Instruction (the general curriculum available to all students)
- Targeted Instruction (small temporary skill/content building groups)
- Intensive Instruction (focused individual or small group instruction not associated with special education)

Our MTSS school-based teams meet regularly to discuss student success. You and your student(s) are welcome to contact your school counselor or principal for grade-specific information.

Oyster River is committed to providing individualized instruction and equitable access to a relevant and rigorous academic experience for all students. Leadership, faculty, and staff are dedicated to our students, and we are fortunate to receive community support for education and wellness.

Welcome back to school!

Suzanne Filippone
Assistant Superintendent

Diversity, Equity, Inclusion & Justice

Hello, Bobcats!

As we start this new school year, I am reminded of the importance of differentiating between belonging and fitting in.

In the book *Daring Greatly: How the Courage to Be Vulnerable Transforms the Way We Live, Love, Parent, and Lead*, author Dr. Brene Brown states, "One of the biggest surprises in this research was learning that fitting in and belonging are not the same thing. In fact, fitting in is one of the greatest barriers to belonging. Fitting in is about assessing a situation and becoming who you need to be in order to be accepted. Belonging, on the other hand, does not require us to change who we are; it requires us to be who we are."

At times, diversity can be mistaken as diverging from the larger whole. However, diversity is not about division; it is about building connections and understanding across differences. In my role as the DEI Director, I will continue to build these bridges across differences as this directly impacts and influences the district's inclusion efforts.

Last year, my focus was on introducing myself to the district, forming community partnerships, and providing applicable professional development to district leaders and educators. This year, I am looking forward to shifting some of that focus to provide an extra layer of support and resources to students to learn more about themselves and others.

This will include (but, not be limited to):

- Creating and holding spaces for students wanting to build community through shared identities
- Offering student-centered programming to learn more about the lived experiences of those in marginalized groups
- Working with a local organization to coordinate an elementary parent/caregiver group that will focus on providing additional guidance and education in supporting kids who identify within the LGBTQIA+ community

I hope these efforts will enhance our students' sense of self and belonging in our community.

Rachael Blansett
DEIJ Director

General News & Announcements

2023 - 2024 School Year Registration

Families with incomplete forms must finalize their student(s)' registration in PowerSchool. Step-by-step instructions are available on the [district website here](#).

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.

Bus Routes, Riding Rules & More

Information about bus routes, riding rules, schedules, and the [drop off release authorization form](#) (3rd and 4th grade only) are available on the [district website](#). If you already completed a drop off authorization form for your student in PowerSchool during registration, there is no need to complete a second one. Students ride their bus unless arrangements are made directly with the Transportation office. Please note some buses are full and cannot accommodate more riders.

A second bus will be added for grades 9 to 12 Barrington students starting Tuesday, September 5. Please make sure to look up the [updated routes](#) to confirm both your bus stop location and pick-up time.

ORCSD Care

The ORCSD Care program offers coverage for school issued laptops, iPads, charges, and cases against loss, theft, and accidental damage from the day of distribution through the last day of school. It is

\$20 to join, and you can do so through [LinqConnect.com](https://linqconnect.com). Coverage does not begin until a full payment is received, and families who choose to not join ORCSD Care program are liable for full replacement or repair costs. The ORCSD Care program is free for students who qualify for [free and reduced meals](#).

ParentSquare Communications

District and school communications are now sent via ParentSquare. In 2023-2024, ParentSquare will be used for mass notifications, and you may expect additional features to become available next year. Parents and guardians are encouraged to register their account by visiting [ParentSquare.com](https://parentsquare.com). Login information is the same as for PowerSchool. For those interested, a mobile application is available for both [Android](#) and [iOS devices](#). Downloading the application is optional and will not affect your ability to receive messages.

Superintendent Search

Superintendent Dr. James C. Morse, Sr. has announced his decision to retire in June 2024. The ORCSD School Board invites students, families, and community members to assist with the search. A survey and focus groups will be held in September. Information gathered through the survey and during the focus groups will be used to establish a candidate profile. For information on the process and timeline, including focus groups, screening, and candidate selection, please visit our [Superintendent Search page](#).

New Website Survey

Parents, guardians, students, and staff are invited to provide feedback on the new website launched in June 2023 by completing an [online survey](#). To view a website navigation tutorial produced by Oyster River Middle School students, [please click here](#). Enhancements will be implemented during the 2023-2024 school year.

An Invitation from the White House

ORCSD Director of IT Josh Olstad was invited to the White House on August 7, 2023, along with other information technology leaders to attend a special announcement from First Lady Jill Biden. During the session, White House representatives and IT security experts discussed the new K-12 Cybersecurity Initiative and how to strengthen cybersecurity. Additional details can be found on the [White House website here](#).

Titan Family Portal Changed 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.





Mast Way Elementary School

Cafeteria Improvements

The district's Facilities team was busy working on various enhancements over the summer. Mast Way's cafeteria now features a pass-through between the kitchen and the dining space. This allows for additional safety as students are no longer required to enter the kitchen to receive their meals.



Drop-Off and Pick-Up Instructions

Our neighbors at the Lee Congregational Church allow us to use the church parking lot for morning parent drop off and afternoon parent pick up. To view Mast Way's drop off and pick up map, [please click here](#). If you plan to transport your child(ren) please check in with the front office to receive a car placard.

Technology Parent Night

If you are curious to learn about how technology is used in the classroom or wonder about digital safety, this night is for you!

- Kindergarten parents and guardians are invited to join the Mast Way technology team on Wednesday, September 13, 2023, between 6:00 p.m. and 7:00 p.m.
- Grade 1-4 parents and guardians are invited on Thursday, September 14, between 6:00 p.m. and 7:00 p.m.

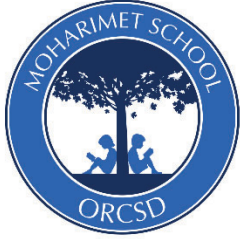
Limited childcare will be offered by ORCSD National Honor Society Students in the gym.

Picture Day and Open Houses

Picture Day is scheduled for Friday, September 8, and retakes will be on Friday, October 27. The Open House event is scheduled for Thursday, September 28, between 5:30 p.m. and 6:30 p.m.

New Front Office Secretary: Devon Anthony

Please join us in welcoming Devon Anthony our new secretary! Devon joins the front desk team with already 3 years of experience at Mast Way. Feel free to contact Devon for all attendance matters.



Moharimet Elementary School

Year of the Water

Our theme for the year is: The Year of Water! This is different than past Year of the Ocean themes – this will focus on water in many forms – the science of water itself, how we engineer and live with water, the water around our community, and more.

Drop Off and Pick Instructions

Drop off takes place in the Madbury Church parking lot between 8:50 a.m. and 9:00 a.m. and pick up starts at 3:25 p.m. at the school's front doors. For pick up, once your vehicle is parked in one of the three lots on Town Hall Road (Town Hall, Library, or Recreation Lot), walk to the school and wait under the atrium. Students will be released by a staff member. For the safety of our students, parking is not permitted in the parking lot during drop off or pick up.

Attendance and Notes from Home

Students may be excused for illnesses, emergencies, or religious holidays. If your child will be absent from school, please notify the front office no later than 9:00 a.m. by calling the attendance line at (603) 742-2900, extension 2, or emailing mohattendance@orcsc.org.

Picture Day and Open House

Picture Day is scheduled for Wednesday, September 6, and Thursday, September 7. Grade specific information will be provided in Principal Goldsmith's family newsletter. The Open House event is scheduled for Thursday, September 28, between 5:30 p.m. and 6:45 p.m.



Oyster River Middle School

Athletics and Clubs

We encourage all students to get involved in one (or more) of our many sports and clubs. Athletics information can be found on the [website here](#), and you may find information about our clubs [on this webpage](#).

New Bleachers Installation Completed

We are happy to report our new bleachers' installation has been completed. We are grateful for the community's support which allows us to keep improving our students' learning experiences. We



look forward to seeing you in attendance at one of our outdoor events this year!

Picture Day Thursday, September 7

Additional information will be provided in Principal Sullivan's family newsletter. Please contact ORMS' front office at (603) 868-2820 if you have any questions.



Oyster River High School

Parking Instructions

Seniors and juniors who received parking permits have been emailed information on how to retrieve their permits and where to park on campus. Please contact the front office at (603) 868-2375 if you have any questions.

Absence Procedure

If you need to dismiss your student, please try to call the main office no later than 1:00 p.m. so we can give them a dismissal pass. This will cut down on classroom disruptions. Thank you! Call (603) 868-2375, or email ORHSAttendance@orcsd.org

NEW in 2023-2024! State Graduation Requirements

Beginning with the 2023-2024 school year, each student who is eligible to graduate from high school, or the parent of such a student who is under the age of 18 years, shall either:

- File a [Free Application for Federal Student Aid \(FAFSA\)](#) with the United States Department of Education; or
- [File a waiver](#) indicating that the parent or guardian or, if applicable, the student, understands what the Free Application for Federal Student Aid is and has chosen not to file an application

Bus Routes & Schedules

Bus routes are [available online](#). A second bus will be added for Barrington students starting Tuesday, September 5. Please make sure to view our [updated routes and schedules](#).

Athletics Are in Full Swing

We have incredible numbers and lots of participation this fall! Please check out the [schedules online](#) and come support our athletes!

We're Hiring!

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

- **Special Education Teacher** - Full time or part time
- **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? If you were a Substitute, you could do just that!
- **Child Nutrition Employees**
 - Located at both the high school and middle school, multiple positions, no experience necessary.
- **Bus Drivers:**
 - \$25.71 dollars per hour, competitive benefits package with medical, dental, long-term disability, 403b, 11 paid holidays, 15 days of paid sick time, and a \$1,000 annual perfect attendance bonus!

Important Dates

8/30 First Day (Grade K-12)
8/31 First Day (pre-K)
9/01 No School: Labor Day
9/04 No School: Labor Day
9/06 School Board Meeting
9/20 School Board Meeting
10/04 School Board Meeting
10/06 No School: Teacher Workshop Day
10/09 No School: Indigenous People's Day
10/18 School Board Meeting

SAU Email Contact Information

- Superintendent: Dr. Jim Morse | jmorse@orcsd.org
- Assistant Superintendent: Suzanne Filippone | sfilippone@orcsd.org
 - Executive Assistant: Wendy DiFruscio | wdifruscio@orcsd.org
- Business Administrator: Amy Ransom | aransom@orcsd.org
- Communications Specialist: Genevieve Brown | gebrown@orcsd.org

- DEIJ Director: Rachael Blansett | rblansett@orcsd.org
- Director of Student Services: Catherine Plourde | cplourde@orcsd.org
 - Administrative Assistant: Pamela Purser | ppurser@orcsd.org
- HR Coordinator: Nanette Viellieu | nviellieu@orcsd.org