

Office of the Principal
Oyster River Middle School
1 Coe Drive, Durham, NH 03824

To: ORCSD School Board
From: Principal Jay Richard
Date: April 17, 2019
CC: Dr. James Morse

Subject: Middle School Professional Assignments

Over the past two years the ORMS staff have been engaged in a dialogue about professional assignments. One of our long-term strategic goals has been to promote a culture of collaboration. This year a committee was formed to advise school administration on the process of changing professional assignments for the upcoming 2019-20 year. This group had a variety of representatives from different grade levels and departments. The committee offered two recommendations, which were followed.

First was to survey staff on preferred grade level and potential people that they would like to work with next year. Using this process, several staff members requested different assignments, and each of these individual requests were granted. The other recommendation was to keep at least one person with recent grade level experience on each team, this was also accomplished. Throughout this process, staff was encouraged to meet with leadership to share their thoughts on the changes to the building-wide professional assignments; I was impressed by the staff response.

There were several key reasons for making these changes.

- Staff understanding and experiencing the progression of learning from grade to grade in content areas. For example, a grade six teacher experiencing and understanding what we want students to learn in grade 7.
- Collaboration across the school with experienced and new teachers. Over the last few years we have hired a good number of new teachers. These new teachers will benefit greatly from working with our veteran staff and vice versa.
- To promote the creation of some new activities, experiences, and new perspective on current learning activities and goals.
- The potential to loop staff in the future. For example, grade seven teachers moving to grade 8 with their current students.
- Fostering more collaboration in content areas, for example, "This is how I taught it when I taught in grade (5, 6, 7, 8)."
- An opportunity to introduce new structures to team meeting time that are more efficient, and new perspectives on how to utilize Bobcat Time with new teammates.
- Create new team identities (with new team names). The goal being adapting team identity based on the current needs of students.

Change is not easy, but it is in the best interest of creating a more collaborative school culture that addresses our strategic goal. Historically, team change has not been something that has happened very often at ORMS. Moving forward, change should be more a part of our school culture.

Results for the number of teachers teaching at a new grade level: 15 out of 40 (grades 5-8). More importantly, all teachers have been assigned to positions for which they are qualified to teach.