

ORCSD Superintendent's Newsletter

February 2023
Volume: 3 Issue: 3



Please refer to your school for information regarding the last day of school.

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Upcoming Events

- Open Circle Parent Program (K-5th grade)
February 28 – 7:00 – 8:00 pm
March 7, 14, 21 & 28 - 7:00 – 8:00 pm
- Oyster River Middle School Band Concert
April 20 – 7:00 – 8:00 pm
- School Board Meetings
March 1, 22 – 7:00 – 9:00 pm
April 5, 19 - 7:00 – 9:00 pm
May 3, 17 - 7:00 – 9:00 pm

Message from the Superintendent

Dr. James C. Morse, Sr.

Dear Parents, Guardians, Staff, and Students,

Thank you to all who joined us at the new Middle School in the Recital Hall on February 7, 2023, for our budget Deliberative Session.

Despite an 8.2% inflation at the time of its development, the 2023-2024 Oyster River Cooperative District's budget only sees a 1.54% increase from the previous year. It is one of our smallest increases in a decade. This annual inflation rate, combined with our loss of state funding equaled to \$847,318, created a challenging situation for the School Board.

We are offering early retirement incentives, cutting unfilled positions, choosing not to repave the Moharimet parking lot, and will be forgoing a new carpet for Mast Way's library.

However, the real story isn't about numbers or financial operations. It's about maintaining an unwavering focus on our students' needs.

Parents, guardians, and teaching staff's high expectations coupled with engaging coursework are the reasons our students distinguish themselves.

Message from the Superintendent (continued)

Oyster River is highly competitive, and we are proud to be one of the highest performing school systems in the country.

Our high aggregate SAT score of 1118 with 82% participation is one of the highest in the state and our math scores are 27% above state average. In 2022, our high school's graduation rate was 98.58% and our college placement was 83%.

Our students shine locally and internationally. The Middle School's Robotics Club sent three teams to the world championship in Dallas last year, and the following High School athletic clubs won their respective state championships: Division II Golf (2021), Unified Soccer Team (2021), Girls' Cross Country (2022) and selected music students participated in All States.

Recent recognition of our staff's achievements includes Alida Carter receiving the New Hampshire Department of Education's NH PE Teacher of the Year Award (2022-2023) and Val Wolfson receiving the NH Social Studies Teacher of the Year.

Nevertheless, not all children thrive academically. It is therefore imperative we maintain a holistic perspective of their development. To the end, Oyster River has implemented a multi-tiered support system (MTSS), prioritized social emotional learning (SEL), mental health, and suicide prevention. These initiatives have proven to be vital to our community schools.

Thank you for your support.

Assistant Superintendent's Report

Suzanne Filippone

Each year school districts throughout the nation encounter students who experience homelessness. It is important as a district that everyone has some knowledge about homelessness to ensure the immediate enrollment, school stability, and academic support needed to increase the educational success of homeless children and youth.

The McKinney-Vento Act is a Federal law that addresses the educational needs of children and youth experiencing homelessness. The purpose of the McKinney-Vento Act is to address any educational barriers and challenges created by homelessness by guaranteeing students experiencing homelessness the right to enroll in and attend school, and providing supports needed for school success.

If you are interested in learning more about McKinney-Vento, please visit the following:

[NHDOE Learner Support](#)

[National Center for Homeless Education](#)



Assistant Superintendent Report (continued)

Please see below for additional housing resources.



CAP

603-435-2500

www.CAPNH.org

Share Fund

603-335-0011

www.ShareFund.org

Families in Transition

603-641-9441

www.FitNH.org

Homeless Hotline

866-444-4211

HUD

617-994-8405

www.HUD.gov

Homeless Center for Strafford County

603-332-3065

www.hcscnh.org

Salvation Army

603-332-2623

211

24/7 for help with resources and shelter

DEIJ Update

Rachael Blansett

Hi Bobcats!

I'm excited to share some of the highlights from the great work we were able to accomplish as a community this past semester in diversity, equity, and inclusion, and announce our goals for spring. In the short amount of time within my position, we were able to grow significantly in our district efforts towards equity and I am incredibly proud of the work we have been able to accomplish and the projects we can look forward to ahead.

Fall 2022 Highlights:

- **Over 70% of our teaching staff completed the DEIJ Teacher Needs Assessment** which outlined thoughtful and intentional questions to gauge the needs of our faculty when it comes to topics of diversity, equity, and inclusion.
- **I was able to serve as a thought partner to teachers >25 times** to support in navigating curriculum questions and difficult discussion topics last semester, along with being invited to attend classrooms and lead guest lessons.
- **I made strong connections with district groups and built community ties with local organizations** such as: DEIJ Professional Learning Communities, New Hampshire School Administrator Association (NHSAA), statewide DEIJ Directors, Oyster River Alumni Association, Oyster River Equity & Justice, and New Hampshire Listens.

- **Our DEIJ Community Group was able to meet monthly and focused on priority actions** like creating more opportunities to engage in difficult dialogue and conversations, hosting more community events, sharing and collaborating with other DEIJ community groups, and sustaining the longevity of the multi-stakeholder group.
- **A large focus entering in my new role was to introduce myself to the community which I was able to accomplish** in multiple ways, including Teacher Workshop Day introductions at all schools, scheduled days in school buildings, Coffee & Conversations with elementary school teachers, high school assembly introduction to students, reading to kindergartners, and engaging with community events.

Spring 2023 Semester Goals:

- Coordinate the spring 2023 district visit with Tona Brown.
- Continue to convene and facilitate the Superintendent's DEIJ Community Group and Steering Committee.
- Create a teacher DEIJ professional development plan, design and implement relevant workshops, and share resources with faculty and staff.
- Develop working DEIJ competencies and the transgender & gender expression policy.

To learn more about DEIJ work in the district, please visit our website or contact me at rblansett@orcsd.org.

General News & Announcements

Changes to Quick Tip Reporting System

Beginning the week of February 13, our Quick Tip reporting system is no longer anonymous. Students can access Quick Tip on their district-issued device or any personal computer via their school's website. Tips are handled privately and with the confidentiality permitted by law.

February 2nd Community Dinner

Our first community dinner since the pandemic was a roaring success with about 300 people in attendance. It was such a pleasure to see both familiar and new faces. Thank you for attending!



Oyster River Middle School Certified LEED Gold

Our Middle School is the first New Hampshire project to achieve Eversource's Zero-Net Energy/Deep Energy Savings incentive program. The District estimates it will earn almost \$300,000 in rebates once verified. ORMS is the eighth school project in New England to achieve LEED V4 Gold for Building Design and Construction (LEED BD+C): Schools.

Kindergarten Registration

Deadline to register a child for the 2023-2024 academic year was February 14. If you missed the deadline, please contact your school directly.

General News & Announcements (continued)**Niche.com Rankings**

ORCSD has received its 2023 ranking from website Niche.com and would like to congratulate the following:

Moharimet: #1 Best Public Elementary School in Strafford County

Mast Way: #2 Best Public Elementary School in Strafford County

Middle School: #1 Best Public Middle School in Strafford County and #1 Best Public Middle School Teachers in Strafford County

High School: #1 Best High School for STEM in Strafford County and #3 Best Public High School Teachers in Strafford County

ORCSD: #1 District with the Best Teachers in Strafford County

**End 68 Hours of Hunger**

With the increased cost of utilities and inflation, the district is experiencing a 20% increase of requests for nutrition support from local families.

Should you be able to donate food, please make sure it's not expired as we are unable to donate expired items to families. Because our bags are sometimes brought home by students, we are unable to accept glass jars. Normal sized items are also more helpful than larger "family size". This way, we can fit a variety of items in each individual bag being donated.

National School Resource Officer (SRO) Appreciation Day

The National Association of School Resource Officers recognizes SROs on February 15 each year. A SRO is a full-time law enforcement officer that is trained in school-based, community-oriented policing. Oyster River's SRO, Officer Nicolosi, is a continuous presence at the Moharimet Elementary School, Mast Way Elementary School, Oyster River Middle School, and Oyster River High School, and is among the District's biggest Bobcat boosters.

Paul Bamford Receives Distinguished Service Award

On February 7, Denise Day presented this year's Distinguished Service Award to Paul Bamford. Over the years, Paul has generously given countless hours to the community by organizing an annual golf charity event benefiting cancer research, coaching golf at the high school, and upholding a long-standing commitment to fundraise for the high school's press box and sound system.

Dates to Remember**School Board Meetings**

March 1 & 22

April 5 & 19

May 3 & 17

Spring Recess

April 24 - 28: no school

Teacher Workshop Day

May 26: no school

Memorial Day

May 29: no school

Elementary Schools

Mast Way

Presidential Award for Excellence

Digital Learning Specialist Susan Leifer was nominated by a parent and selected as the state's finalist for the Presidential Award of Excellence in Mathematics and Science Teaching. National Level Awardees for Leifer's cohort will be announced in March 2024.



Global School Play Day

This February 1, Mast Way celebrated Global School Play Day. Since 2015, over a million and a half students from 75 Nations were given the gift of unstructured playtime.

WMUR Visited 3rd Grade Students

Meteorologist Matt Hoenic [was at Mast Way](#) earlier this month and some lucky students were able to see themselves on television the following Saturday. Thank you for visiting Mr. Hoenic!

School to Farm Day

This year's June 8 program will enable students to learn about local agricultural heritage and building appreciation for the critical role of food and fibers. Our sincere thank you to the Durham Great Bay Rotary Club for generously offering to pay for our 4th grade students' field trip.

Moharimet

Reading Week Celebration

Jerry Pallotta, author of the *Who Would Win* book series and many other children's books, visited students for a special program on Wednesday, February 15. Jerry is passionate about connecting with students on school visits and providing a meaningful, long-lasting experience.

Sugaring is Underway

All our tapping is done by students and our classes can always use adult volunteers to help our groups. Families interested in volunteering should contact Jessica Whalen at (603) 742-2900 or jwhalen@orcscsd.org.

Pancake Breakfast March 18, 8:00 to 11:30 am

Please join us for a buffet-style pancake breakfast featuring maple syrup boiled at our own sugar shack! Music and entertainment provided by the middle and high schools. Funds will be used to support our maple sugaring projects. Suggested donation: \$6 per person or \$20 per family. Please consider volunteering an hour of your time by [signing up here](#).

Volunteers Needed for Day of the Forest

We are planning to culminate our "Year of the Forest" exploration with a special day full of forest themed experiences. People interested in volunteering should email Sarah Curtin (scurtin@orcscsd.org) or Melissa Gianino (mgianino@orcscsd.org) with their name and topic/activity idea.



Middle School

Kindness Week Spirit Days

Kindness is a behavior promoted every day at ORMS and the week of February 13, Bobcats were also encouraged to participate in different themes created by the Spirit Club: Book Character Day, Peace & Love Day, Wacky Wednesday, Duo Day, and Blue & White Day.

The Child Nutrition team stepped up to the challenge. Can you tell which book characters they dressed up as?



Progress Report Feedback

Parents and guardians have received a survey request by email. If you missed it, please contact the front desk at (603) 868-2820 to share your feedback.

Clubs & Activities

Is your child interested in anime? Drama? Dungeon & Dragons? Chess? French? Music? There's a ORMS club for that!

Please visit orms.orcsd.org – all club and activities information is under the [“About ORMS”](#) tab.

High School

Sustainability Club News

ORHS's Sustainability Club students were at the February 1 school board meeting to present their experience at the Youth Climate Leadership Academy (YCLA). You may view the presentation [on YouTube](#) (starts at 29:40).

Poetry Out Loud

Congratulations to our Poetry out Loud winner who competed at ORHS January 26. Juliana Kun will vie for the regional championship at the Rochester Opera House.



Visual Arts at ORHS

Another shout-out to the students who placed for the Scholastic Art Competition and Clio Grondahl who will be exhibiting her pottery in the “Fledgling: Artists Under 30” exhibition at Levy gallery in Portsmouth between February 22 and April 2.

HOBY-NH Leadership Seminar

Student Liv Van Ledtje has accepted the honor of representing the state of New Hampshire to the Hugh O'Brian Youth Foundation who celebrates outstanding high school sophomores. Two participants from each State Seminar are chosen yearly to represent their state at the one-week World Leadership Seminar to be held in June.

We're Hiring!

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

To apply: www.applitrack.com/orcsd/onlineapp

- **Director of Child Nutrition**

Positive work schedule (210 days), salaried position, comprehensive package.

- **HR Coordinator**

Full year (260 days), hourly position, comprehensive package.

- **School Nutrition Kitchen Worker (middle and high schools)**

Both positions are 5.25 hours per day, 5-days per week. School year only.

- **Substitute School Nutrition Workers**

Substitute position are a great way to have a job and work only when you want to!

- **School Bus Drivers**

\$24 dollars per hour, competitive benefits package (medical, dental, long-term disability, 403b), 11 paid holidays, 15 days of paid sick time, and a \$1,000 annual perfect attendance bonus.

- **Special Ed Paraeducators Elementary Level**

- **Special Ed Paraeducators High School Level**



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