

The Oxford Hills School District M.S.A.D. #17

www.msad17.org



232 Main Street, South Paris, ME 04281
Phone (207) 743-8972 fax (207) 743-2878

Jan Neureuther, *Chief Student Services Officer*
Donald Thorne, *Chief Operations Officer*

Heather Manchester, *Superintendent of Schools*
Carrie Colley, *Chief Financial Officer*

Harrison * Hebron * Norway * Otisfield * Oxford * Paris * Waterford * West Paris

May 5th, 2022

To the Citizens of Oxford,

I write to you as the new Interim Superintendent of Schools for the Oxford Hills School District. This is the 61st annual report provided to the town of Oxford.

This year, for the third year in a row, our staff, students, and community experienced a school year like no other. Last year, we ended the school year thinking that we were in the home stretch of the pandemic; we were optimistic about the removal of masks and a predicted return to in-person learning for all students. When school started again in September, we found ourselves wearing masks again and continuing to maintain social distancing in our schools. The good news was that all of our students were able to learn face-to-face in our schools.

Our teachers and administrators report that this year was the most difficult of the three years that were impacted by Covid-19. While students were very excited to be back in school with their friends and their teachers, the effects of the pandemic were front and center. The impact of disrupted schooling is real: our school staff are supporting many of our students with mental health struggles and behavior challenges. In addition, our school attendance rates were impacted by the quarantining of students and the real reluctance by some students to come back to school.

It is not all a tale of woe, however. Our students are resilient and continue to enjoy being back to school full time. Due to a decline in the cases of Covid-19 and a decline in hospitalizations in the county, the MSAD#17 Board of Directors recently voted to shift to a mask-optional policy for the district. It is truly a delight to see the faces of our students and staff!

Oxford Elementary School (OES) continues to be a wonderful place for the 335 students it serves. One of the goals of OES is to increase math achievement for all students. The Math Leadership Team developed a plan for the year that was kicked off with "The First Ten Days of Math," in which they engaged students in hands-on activities related to the engineering process: developing problem-solving skills, persevering when learning is difficult, and creating alternative solutions to challenges. This week culminated in an egg drop from the top of a fire truck ladder!

During the winter months, the staff set up another challenge from the students: develop a cardboard sled that would travel far and go fast. The students had a wonderful time engaging in the design and engineering process as they collaborated to build their sleds. Many families came out to watch the students launch their sleds. The students were proud of their designs and a wonderful time was had by all.

Last summer, Oxford Elementary was one of the sites for our district summer school program. Students from Oxford and Otisfield attended "Camp Achieve," to continue to boost their learning over the summer. Students learned reading, writing, and math skills through the lens of science. This meant that many of the activities were highly engaging, hands-on, and often took place outdoors. The District was grateful for the Federal funds that enabled an additional school to be added to our summer programming. Other uses of the federal grants include interventions and support for students, technology applications and devices, resources for outdoor learning, books and instructional materials, personal protective equipment, and summer programming.

Finally, I would like to thank the amazing teachers, support staff, and administrators of the Oxford Hills School District for their continued efforts to help our students to thrive in the midst of the challenges of the pandemic. I am grateful to work with such skilled and compassionate educators. The resilience our staff has shown during the pandemic speaks volumes about their care and commitment to the students and families of the Oxford Hills.

Sincerely,
Heather Manchester
Superintendent of Schools