



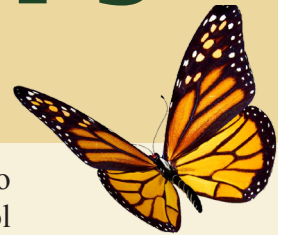
RSU 26

Orono, Maine

Spring 2023



SUPERINTENDENT'S NEWSLETTER



We turn the calendar to May and it is hard to believe the school year has flown by so quickly! As we approach the end of school year there is a lot to look forward to for school events and exciting culminations of student learning this year. Perhaps the most exciting of celebrations we have to look forward to in this season are the graduation events for the Class of 2023. Best of luck to all of the Orono High School Class of 2023 graduates...we look forward to seeing you soar into the next chapter of your journey!

I wish everyone a happy summer full of new experiences and exciting adventures!

Regards,
Meredith Higgins
RSU 26 Superintendent

ANNUAL BUDGET MEETING
TUESDAY, MAY 23 AT 6 PM
ORONO PERFORMING ARTS CENTER
OPEN TO ALL MEMBERS OF THE RSU 26 COMMUNITY
REGISTERED ORONO VOTERS
CAN ACT ON THE PROPOSED BUDGET

Jessica Archer Named 2023 Penobscot County Teacher of Year!

We are pleased to announce that one of our teachers, Jessica Archer, was selected as the 2023 Penobscot County Teacher of the Year.

Ms. Archer has taught at Orono Middle School for 23 years and is an exemplary teacher in our district. It is fitting she receive such an honor. She, along with the other 2023 County Teachers of the Year from across Maine, were honored in Augusta at the Maine State House Hall of Flags on May 11th. Ms. Archer will go on to compete in the Maine 2023 Teacher of the Year competition in the coming months.

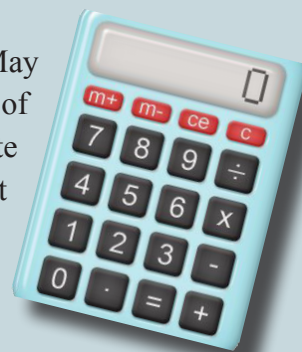
We are going to have our own celebration of this great news...All are invited to join us for a reception honoring Ms. Archer on Tuesday, May 23rd at 5:00 pm in the Performing Arts Center Lobby. The RSU 26 Annual Budget Meeting follows at 6:00 pm in the PAC, so come join us for both! We want to extend the congratulations of the entire community to Ms. Archer and wish her the best of luck as she moves forward in the statewide competition! We hope many will be able to join us for this reception. Congratulations Ms. Archer – thank you for representing RSU 26 so well!!



RSU 26 2023-24 School Year Budget

As for most households, this was a challenging budget year. The funding from the state did not come close to keeping up with last year's inflation and our enrollments are increasing. We managed to keep the increase in expenditures well below the inflation rate (expenditures increased 5.3% but this includes almost a 2% increase in student enrollment so the increase in per capita expenditures is closer to 3.4%). The increase covers making permanent much needed support for students who are struggling with mental health and other issues (previously covered by COVID relief funds). The increase also includes, for the first time in decades, budgeting realistically for maintenance needs to upkeep our buildings according to a recently completed 10-year capital needs plan. But most of the increases are directly tied to rising salaries and energy costs. We were able to make some cuts in other more discretionary areas. The tax impact won't be known exactly until property valuations are known in late summer, but it will result in one of the larger increases from the district in recent years. We hope you will keep in mind that just two years ago we gave back an even larger tax decrease – we try to keep the money in your pocket as much as we can.

The budget for the 2023-24 school year will be presented at the Annual Meeting on Tuesday, May 23rd at 6:00 pm in the Orono High School Performing Arts Center. We encourage all members of the community to attend this meeting to learn about the proposed budget. Anyone registered to vote in Orono will have an opportunity to act on the proposed budget. Following this step in the budget process, the budget will go to the voters on June 13th at the Town Council Chambers from 7am-8pm. We appreciate the support the Orono community demonstrates each year to our schools!



MEET THE 2023 - 2024 STUDENT BOARD REPRESENTATIVES!

It is the time of year that our seats for the Student Representatives to the Board of Directors are up for new applicants. We are pleased to announce the new Student Representatives to the Board for the coming year. Marissa McLaughlin, OHS Class of 2024 and Dorsa Tajvidi, OHS Class of 2025 will serve as Student Representatives for the next year.



Marissa McLaughlin is a rising senior who loves spending time with family and friends. She is a member of National Honor Society and the National Art Honor Society. She led the Asa Show Choir and Orono Summer Show Choir Camp. She starred in the 2022 fall musical Mamma Mia and show choir. Marissa is very excited to start the adventure of becoming a student representative, as she strives to help the community any way she can!

Dorsa Tajvidi will be an 11th grade student during the next school year. She is active in the arts program at Orono High School, and has participated in the fall musical and show choir. Dorsa volunteered in the Asa Adams Food Waste Study, and is a member of the Young People's Caucus.



CONGRATULATIONS TO MARISSA AND DORSA!

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RSU 26



RSU 26 School Board



@RSU_26

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Brian McGill, Chair
bmcgill@rsu26.org

Jacob Eckert, Vice Chair
jeckert@rsu26.org

Mark Brewer
mbrewer@rsu26.org

Noah Charney
ncharney@rsu26.org

Kevin Roberge
kroberge@rsu26.org

2022-2023 RSU 26 Board Meeting Dates

Held in person and via Zoom - link available on meeting agendas and on the RSU 26 website:

May 23- Annual Budget Meeting

May 30

June 6

June 20

Important Dates to Remember

May 23 – RSU 26 Annual Budget Meeting, Orono High School Performing Arts Center, 6:00 p.m.

May 29 – Memorial Day -- All Schools & Offices Closed

June 11 – Graduation Ceremony, Class of 2023, 10 a.m., Collins Center for the Arts, University of Maine

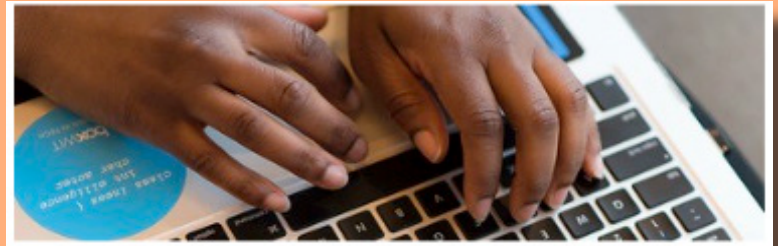
June 13 – Last Day of School for Students (Early Release Day)

June 13 – School Budget Referendum, Town Council Chambers, 7:00 am – 8:00 pm

June 19 -- Juneteenth Holiday- Offices Closed

August 30 – First Student Day for 2023-24 school year

Technology Update



Over the past several months, the RSU 26 Instructional Technology Committee has been researching, developing, refining, seeking feedback from teachers, and incorporating that feedback into draft Technology Use Statements & Expectations (below) and Technology Skills by Grade Level ([linked here](#) and below). These documents will be used to help our students build age appropriate digital literacy, well-being, and citizenship skills. We would like your input and feedback to help us check our assumptions and make improvements.

Please use this link to share your thoughts: [Stakeholder Feedback Form](#)

Appreciatively,
The RSU 26 Instructional Technology Committee

Draft Technology Use Statements

RSU 26 will:

help students build age appropriate digital literacy, well-being, and citizenship skills through classroom instruction and apply them in their learning in and outside of school.

use instructional technology in deliberate and mindful ways to teach, using technology and digital media when it adds value and enhances learning.

encourage the use of technology and digital media for active learning which engages the mind with the goal of researching, collaborating, and creating.

use technology in our classrooms to create universally accessible instruction and instructional materials through thoughtful and intentional design.

Draft Expectations

All grades and courses (K-12) will embed the skills and knowledge from the RSU 26 Technology Skills by Grade Level into instruction.

Administrators, faculty, and staff will be trained to use technology to facilitate student learning.

All courses/grade levels/departments will have a technology philosophy statement that explains the use of technology in that course/grade level/department. The philosophy statement will be on the course syllabus (OMS and OHS) or shared in family communications (Asa).

All courses/grade levels will have a digital classroom (for example Google Classroom or Seesaw) that is updated at least weekly (K-5) or every other day (6-12). The digital classroom will also include the technology philosophy statement.

Draft Technology Skills by Grade Level

[Technology Skills by Grade Level](#)

Hands-On Science!



A class of 8th graders spent four days in April working with scientists from the Penobscot Nation's Water Resources Department. These students collected water in four different local swimming holes (Orono Boat Landing, Brownie's Beach, Indian Island Boat Landing, Gould's Landing) and processed the samples in the scientists' lab. They were testing for total coliforms and E. coli in particular. The students are now spending the next month writing up this work and doing other reporting related to the river, the Penobscot Nation, and water quality, all

of which will go live as a [special-issue publication on May 22nd](#). We are grateful to the generous scientists--Angie Reed, Shantel Neptune, and the rest of the team at the Penobscot Nation Water Resources Program--for sharing their time and expertise with us!

Fête de la Manie musicale



Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (DEI) Update

The DEI Leadership Team has been working throughout this school year on implementing the goals & strategies outlined in our district DEI Action Plan ([link to plan here](#)). The team has been working on priorities identified in the plan including developing cultural consciousness among staff, developing welcoming activities and structures in all schools, implementing Student Success Plans across the district, and creating and implementing DEI data collection tools. These areas are where our leadership team decided to start the work this year - while still recognizing there is much still to be done! The team plans on expanding and growing these initiatives and more next school year with the goal of ensuring safety and belonging for all members of the school community.

Orono musicians show off their talent on Maine State and National Stages!



BE THE BEACON

In April, eight educators from the Asa Adams School attended the Massachusetts Reading Association's Annual Conference "Be the Beacon That Lights the Way." The content of the conference aligned well with RSU 26's initiatives and was a wonderful opportunity to learn and connect with researchers and resources. Sessions focused on applying the newest science of reading to the classroom as well as incorporating diversity resources and equity strategies. Speakers included Jan Burkins (Shifting the Balance), Wiley Blevins (A Fresh Look at Phonics), Sonja Cherry-Paul (Stamped for Kids), and Nikki Grimes (poet and author of more than 50 books including Garvey in the Dark). We are looking forward to sharing our new knowledge with others and using it in our classrooms.



SCIENCE FAIR!

Eighteen OMS student scientists presented research at the Maine Middle School Science and Engineering Fair this spring, and 12 emerged with awards, including three of the five state-level Grand Awards. Each student designed their own research question and methods, analyzed data, and designed a poster to present to judges at the fair. Students' research topics included seed germination in microgravity, the effect of car dependency on subjects' reported wellbeing, and two projects studying emissions from the pulp mill in Old Town, Maine. Students' posters can be found here. Congratulations to all of the student scientists and to those who won awards, including eight first, second or third-place awards in the categories of Animal and Plant Sciences, Behavioral and Social Sciences, Environmental Sciences, and Physical Sciences and Math; the Broadcom Coding with Commitment Award, which came with a cash prize; and three Grand Awards.



SCHOOL CALENDAR

As we wrap up one school year and begin to think about the next, there are two important elements to share about the school calendar.

- **First is our projected ending date for this school year. Since we used 2 of our 4 built in weather cancellation days this year, the last day of school for students will be Tuesday, June 13th (early release day).**
- **The Board of Directors adopted the 2023-24 school calendar recently. It can be found on our website under "Important Links" (<https://www.rsu26.org/links>) and a copy is on the last page of this newsletter. This calendar doesn't reflect significant change from this school year's calendar.**

Last Day of School Update

We have received feedback from the Department of Education regarding our waiver for the canceled school day last week - the requested waiver has been approved. This means that the last day of school for students will remain June 13th, as previously advertised. However, it should be noted that any subsequent cause for cancellation this school year could result in a remote learning day to avoid complications with the end date of the school year. We look forward to having a great finish for this school year...the next few weeks of school will fly by!

Approved 2023-2024 RSU 26 Orono Schools Calendar 3/31/2023

	Schools are Closed		F / PK-6, 9	First Student Day (PK-6, 9)		ER ALL	Early Release-All		G	OHS Graduation
	Teachers Only (no students)		ALL STUDENTS	All Students		ER ASA	Asa Only Early Release		ER/L	Early Release/Last Day
H	Holiday (no school)		K	Kindergarten first full day		ER OHS	OHS Only Early Release			Board Meeting

Jul-23						
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Aug-23						
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Oct-23						
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Dec-23						
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Jan-24						
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Apr-24						
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May-24						
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Jun-24						
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Approved by RSU 26 Board of Directors -- March 31, 2023	Storm Days Included in Calendar	4
	Toal Number of Student Days	179

The anticipated last student day is June 13, 2024 The date of the last day is subject to the actual number of storm days. Students are required to attend school for 175 days per year, students in grade 12 must attend at least 170