

Dear Community Members,

The Oxbow Unified Union School District (OUUSD) board began a little over a year ago. We started with ambitious goals: creating policy, changing the Articles of Agreement to increase our school board size, and to create security that all of our schools will remain part of the district. Unfortunately, the pandemic slowed our progress in some areas, but overall, we feel that our district is slowly moving forward in a positive direction. Though disheartened by our failing budget vote, we were excited to welcome two new school board members. We positively welcomed the opportunity to fine-tune our new budget by working with our schools, colleagues, and administrators in and across other districts within our supervisory union. In anticipation of the upcoming budget revote, we would like to highlight some of the notable and exciting things transforming Bradford Elementary, Newbury Elementary, Oxbow High School and River Bend Technical and Career Center while also unifying and sharing personnel, curricula, assessments, policies, and contracts across schools within our supervisory union.

The proposed budget, to be voted on September first, includes initiatives that improve the supervisory union's ability to function cohesively and, in turn, support our students in their pursuit of knowledge and skills. It also includes district reforms that enhance our goal of providing quality education, services, and support for all students, families, and communities.

At the Orange East Supervisory Union (OESU):

- The districts have struggled to attract and retain teachers; new software now allows the SU to track teacher retention and job satisfaction. As the backbone of our school, recruiting and maintaining the best teachers assures better-prepared children who will succeed in their pursuits of higher education or enter the workforce.
- Due to the lack of adequate space and an unhealthy working environment, the supervisory union offices moved to a new location. The new facility will promote program unification/interconnection and better communication between central office personnel, districts, and schools.
- Our schools' technology infrastructures have long been a jumble of platforms with no cohesive vision. The new technology director is working to align platforms with consistent electronic communication, platforms for distance learning, and cross-district performance data and budget access.
- A Multi-Tiered Systems of Support has been adopted by the supervisory union members and have worked to create programs and practices that are universal across all schools. This unification of supports will allow family mobility between OESU towns without sacrificing educational and social emotional progress.

At OUUSD:

- In order to both attract and retain high-quality teachers, we felt it imperative to address teacher salaries in our district. The average salary for a Vermont teacher is \$60,651. Our district's average teacher salary is \$55,731. We reached an

agreement with our Teacher's union which will begin to make our district more competitive in our area and within the state.

- We are committed to offering our paraprofessionals a living minimum wage. Through negotiations, we were pleased to reach an agreement that would create a minimum wage of \$15.00/hr in three years.
- In the spirit of our new merged district, we were able to share a social worker between Bradford and Newbury. This position along with partnerships with Little Rivers Healthcare and the Clara Martin Center will increase our ability to address the complex needs of many children and their families.
- Oxbow began using an independent contractor for Drivers Ed and offering French online due to these savings we added a middle school math position and increased the Technology position from part time to full time.
- Food Insecurity is a threat to many families in our district, and the global pandemic has confirmed this need within our communities. Data confirms that a hungry or undernourished child can not focus on learning. The board was encouraged to keep the universal meals plan or Provision 2 in our revised budget. The board feels strongly that this program will be of direct benefit to every single student in our district.
- Our building Principals are continuing to align teaching materials so that students from both Bradford and Newbury will be equally prepared as they join together at Oxbow.
- River Bend Career and Technical Center continues updating and adjusting its trade and career programs, including its first off-site Cyber-Security Program at Thetford Academy.
- School board meetings, currently held via Zoom, have increased the ability for public participation. Twenty-Five or more community members are in regular attendance. When we transition back to in-person meetings, we will continue to offer remote access.

We recognize that change is hard and that we have much more work to do. As a board we will continue to focus on ensuring that every member across our school communities knows that they have a voice and ownership.

We look forward to joining our community members to create a unified vision for our district that is clear in its focus and drives us towards an educational system that benefits all of our children, our schools, and our communities. We understand that these are challenging times and that we are "sailing in uncharted waters." We are committed to this unified district and ask for your support as we continue to make our school district exceptional.

Please contact us with your questions and please, join us in supporting this budget on September 1st!

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