



RSU23 MEMO

Superintendent's Monthly Update

March 2026

A NOTE FROM MR. SUTTIE

Hi Everyone,

As we move into March, we begin to feel the welcome transition from winter to spring. The days are growing longer, and temperatures are gradually warming. March is always an exciting time in our district as winter activities conclude and students and staff begin getting ready for the many opportunities that spring brings.

Across our schools, students are busy preparing for the upcoming spring sports season, while our music, theatre, and club programs continue to showcase the incredible talent, creativity, and dedication of our students and staff. These programs play an important role in building community, developing leadership, and providing meaningful experiences beyond the classroom.

March is also a month filled with notable events and celebrations. We recognized St. Patrick's Day on March 17th, and the month is widely celebrated as Women's History Month, a time to honor the achievements and contributions of women throughout history. Earlier this month, we also moved our clocks forward for Daylight Saving Time, bringing longer evenings and a reminder that brighter days are ahead.

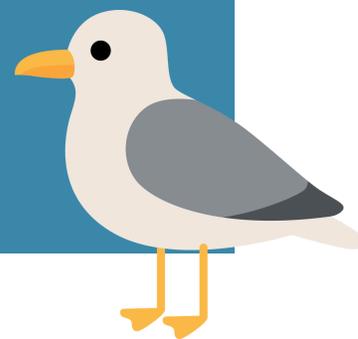
I would also like to remind everyone that we will be holding a budget workshop this evening as part of the School Board meeting.

Community engagement and transparency are important parts of our budgeting process, and I encourage anyone with questions to learn more. Additional information is available on our website at www.rsu23.org. You are also welcome to call my office at (207) 934-5751 ext. 1901 or email me directly at jsuttie@rsu23.org if you have questions or would like to discuss the budget.

Thank you, as always, for your continued support of our students, staff, and schools. As we move toward spring, I look forward to celebrating the many accomplishments and activities taking place throughout RSU 23.

HIGHLIGHTS

- School Construction Update
- Principal of the Year
- District News
- Jameson Happenings
- Loranger News
- OOBHS Updates
- Adult Education



DISTRICT NEWS

School Construction Update

I would also like to provide the community with an update regarding our new school construction project. While we are currently awaiting the official authorization from the Maine Department of Education to move forward, we have already begun several important preparatory steps so that we are ready to proceed as soon as we receive the green light later this year.

First, the district has contracted with the New England School Development Council (NESDEC) to conduct a comprehensive study of future population trends, student enrollment projections, and community demographics. This analysis will help ensure that any future facility is appropriately sized and designed to meet the needs of our students and community for many years to come.

In addition, we are working with an engineering firm to review our campus maps and begin preparations for vernal pool testing this spring. This environmental assessment is a required step in the site evaluation process and will help determine how best to plan for future construction while protecting important natural resources.

We are also in the process of forming an Educational Visioning Committee made up of educators and stakeholders. This group will begin developing the educational vision and identifying the types of learning environments and physical spaces that best support teaching and learning. Their work will ultimately guide architects as they begin the design process for a future school facility.

In addition to these efforts, members of our leadership team have begun visiting recently constructed schools throughout New England. These visits allow us to see firsthand what modern school facilities look like, how they are designed to support teaching and learning, and how they serve the needs of their communities. Learning from these examples will help inform our planning and ensure that we are thoughtful and forward-looking as we begin this important work.

All of these steps are required by the Maine Department of Education as part of the school construction process, and we have been proactive in beginning this work so that we are prepared to move forward as soon as we receive formal approval. I will continue to keep the community informed as we progress through the next phases of this important project for RSU 23.



School Board/
Budget Meeting
TONIGHT



DISTRICT NEWS

Congratulations Mr. Harris!

I am pleased to share some wonderful news with our school community. Jameson Elementary School Principal Ben Harris has been named Maine's 2026 National Distinguished Principal by the Maine Principals' Association (MPA). This prestigious recognition honors elementary school leaders across the country who demonstrate exceptional leadership and a strong commitment to student success.

Mr. Harris will be formally recognized at the MPA Night of Excellence on May 21, 2026, in Brewer.

This award reflects the outstanding work happening every day at Jameson Elementary School. Under Mr. Harris's leadership, the school has continued to strengthen a welcoming and connected school culture rooted in shared ownership, high expectations, and strong relationships with students, staff, and families. He has also helped build innovative partnerships with local universities that bring student teachers and aspiring educators into the building, strengthening professional learning while supporting instruction for our students.

Academically, Mr. Harris and the Jameson team have implemented a comprehensive and collaborative system of supports designed to meet the needs of every learner. Guided by the belief that "they are all our kids," the staff uses data-informed and flexible approaches to ensure that students receive the literacy and mathematics support they need to succeed. His leadership message of "raising aspirations for all kids" is evident in the high-quality learning experiences taking place throughout the school.

Mr. Harris began his career as a classroom teacher before moving into school leadership, serving as Assistant Principal and later Principal at Bonny Eagle Middle School. In 2022, he joined the RSU 23 leadership team as Principal of Jameson Elementary School. He holds degrees from the University of Maine at Farmington, the University of Southern Maine, Saint Joseph's College, and Anna Maria College.

Please join me in congratulating Mr. Harris on this well-deserved recognition. His leadership, dedication to students, and commitment to building a strong school community are a tremendous asset to our district and to the families we serve.



DISTRICT NEWS

Custodial News

Please join us in welcoming the newest members of our custodial team, Michael Pendexter and Juan Perez. We're excited to have them join our crew and are confident they will be great additions to the team. Their work will help ensure that our facilities remain clean, safe, and welcoming for everyone who uses them.

Michael and Juan will currently be working at Loranger Memorial Middle School on second shift, where they will play an important role in supporting the students, staff, and daily operations of the school.

Please take a moment to say hello and help make them feel welcome!

Transportation News

Congratulations to Kimberly Schildroth, currently working at OOBHS in Food Service, for training and obtaining her CDL Class B school bus license. This is a great accomplishment and a wonderful way to support our students and school community.

Kim also works as a Bus Aide and has already participated in daily route driving as well as driving extra-curricular trips.

A special thank you as well to Bus Driver Glen Berryman for his time and dedication in helping train Kim. Your support and teamwork make a real difference!



School Nutrition News

Last week, our school nutrition team participated in a hands-on “Foundational Fish Skills” training at Loranger Memorial School. During the workshop, staff learned how to prepare fresh fish filets and explored ways to incorporate more locally caught Maine seafood into school meals.

The training brought together school nutrition professionals from several nearby districts, including Gorham, Kennebunk, Buxton, Westbrook, and South Portland, hosted by the Gulf of Maine Research Institute, the Maine Coast Fishermen’s Association, and Maine Farm & Sea to School.

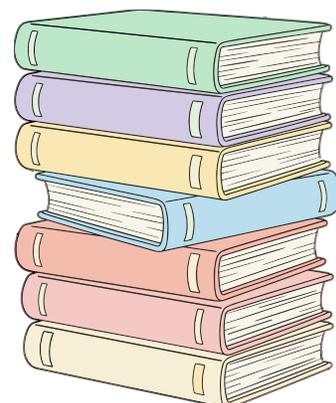
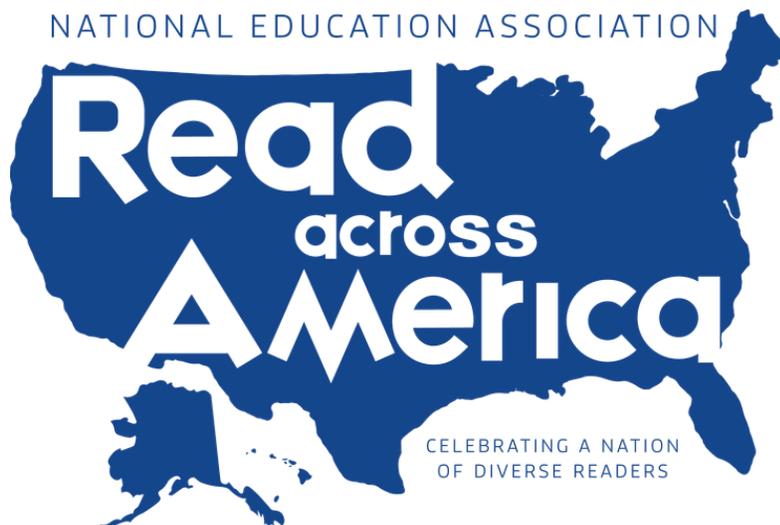
Opportunities like this help our team build new skills while discovering kid-friendly ways to serve fresh, nutritious foods. We’re excited to continue exploring ways to feature local Maine seafood on our menus in the future!



JAMESON HAPPENINGS

Jameson Elementary School recently celebrated a wonderful Read Across America week filled with enthusiasm for books and storytelling. In honor of Read Across America, our school welcomed several adult guest readers from the community who generously shared their time and favorite stories with our students. In addition, our 4th graders took on the special role of visiting younger classrooms to read and connect with their peers. It was a joyful celebration of literacy that highlighted the power of reading to bring our school community together. We are grateful to everyone who participated and helped make this event such a great success.

NATIONAL EDUCATION ASSOCIATION



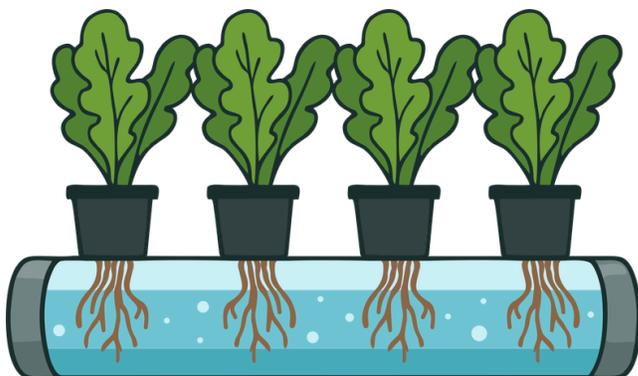
LORANGER NEWS

Ms. McConnell's 8th grade science class is in our anatomy unit, and just finished learning about the musculoskeletal system. We dissected chicken wings to see the muscles, bones, tendons, ligaments, and joints. Students removed the skin, observed muscles, and then removed the muscle to observe the bone. We identified the structures in the wing, as they are very similar to the human elbow.



Hydroponic Harvest

Fifth graders helped Ms. Botko, Director of Food & Nutrition Services, harvest lettuce and bok choy from the hydroponic grower in the cafeteria. They seeded pods for replanting in the grower and helped chop the lettuce to serve on the salad bar. Bok choy will be on the menu soon. Other greens and even edible flowers are almost ready to harvest. In the LMS cafeteria, it's always growing season!



LORANGER NEWS

Tree Research

Tree research continues at Loranger. On March 10, Colleen Teerling, an entomologist with the Maine Forest Service, visited Mrs. Seaver's fifth graders. She showed them how to collect samples of Hemlock Woolly Adelgid (HWA) in the woods at Jameson School. Hemlock Woolly Adelgid is an invasive insect that kills hemlock trees. Every week throughout the spring, students will send Ms. Teerling samples of HWA to help state scientists collect data on the life cycle of HWA in Maine.

Students in enrichment science went to Milliken Mill Woods on Portland Avenue to look for Hemlock Woolly Adelgid (HWA). Loranger students have been studying HWA for seven years, helping to track its progress in Maine. This will be our 5th year releasing a predator beetle, *Sasajiscymnus tsugae* (St), that feeds on HWA. We are helping state scientists and the OOB Conservation Commission by determining where to release the beetles and monitoring HWA to try to save our hemlock forests.

Students also collected data on ash trees, looking for signs of the Emerald Ash Borer (EAB), an invasive insect that kills ash trees. They found clear signs of EAB on two white ash trees on the Loranger playground. Green ash trees growing in Jameson Woods appear to be healthier.

Students will present their work at a student research symposium sponsored by the Gulf of Maine Research Institute and hosted by UNUM on March 30.



OOBHS UPDATES

Fundraiser!

Help OOBHS say farewell to the class of 2026! Senior lawn signs are available for purchasing through [this order link here](#). Please note: the store to order online is open from April 1-15; if you try to order before then, you will not be able to do so. Reach out to lartes@rsu23.org or mlewis@rsu23.org with any questions. All proceeds will go toward next year's project graduation! Go gulls, and good luck class of 2026!



Intramural Volleyball

Intramural volleyball is currently underway after school at the high school, and it has been a great opportunity for students and staff to come together in a fun and active setting. This year we have five student teams and one faculty team participating, with more than 30 students involved. It has been wonderful to see such strong participation and school spirit as students enjoy friendly competition and time together outside the classroom.

March Spirit Week!

Students wrapped up Spirit Week on Friday with the Island Day Games, bringing some much-needed energy to the long stretch of March. With the pep band playing and students competing in grade-level challenges, the gym was full of excitement. Participants showed great camaraderie and teamwork as they relied on their wit, endurance, and speed throughout the competitions. The event ended on a fun note when principal Mr. Sirois was pied in the face by Sam McKenzie, the winner of our Pi Day contest, who impressively recited over 200 digits of pi. Thank you to the Student Council for organizing such a fun event!



OOBHS UPDATES

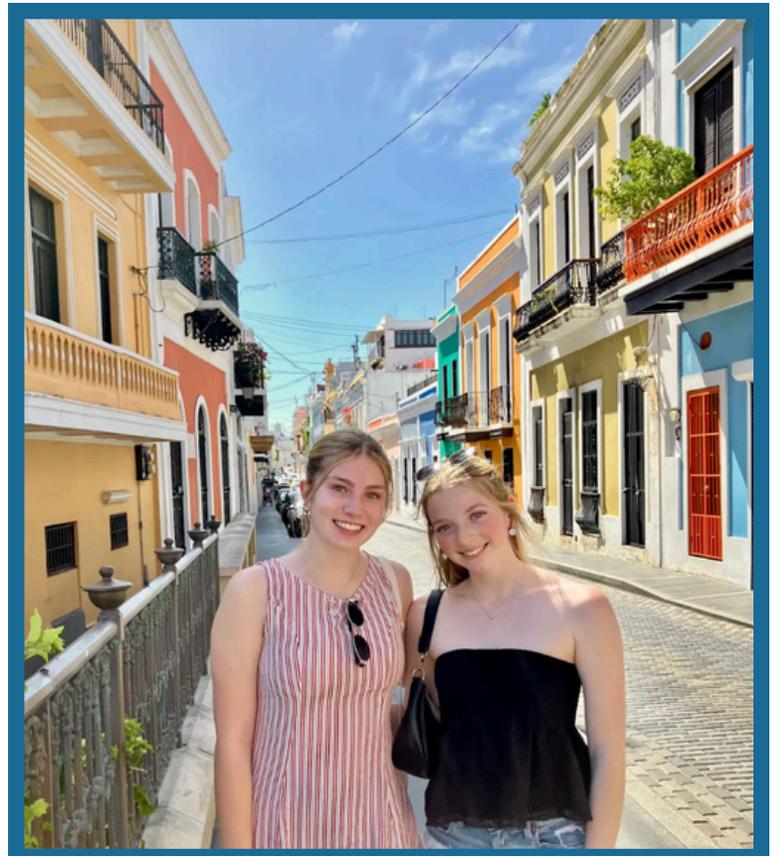
Puerto Rico Trip!

Old Orchard Beach High School Spanish students recently returned from an unforgettable educational trip to Puerto Rico, where they embraced opportunities to explore, learn, and experience firsthand how studying a language takes on greater meaning through authentic interaction.

The group toured the historic center of San Juan, where centuries of culture and history came to life. Guided by a knowledgeable local expert, students walked the picturesque streets of the capital that have shaped the island's past, gaining a deeper understanding of Puerto Rico's rich heritage, architecture, and traditions.

Students explored the lush trails of El Yunque National Forest, where they learned about the rainforest ecosystem and the importance of environmental conservation. Along the way, they waded through rivers, scaled boulders, slid down waterfalls, and jumped from cliffs into natural river pools. They supported each other and exhibited a strong spirit of adventure.

Travel plays a powerful role in language education, allowing students to move beyond textbooks and engage directly with the people, culture, and environments connected to the language they study. This trip provided students with meaningful opportunities to deepen their understanding of Puerto Rico's history, geography, and ecology while strengthening their confidence as travelers and language learners. Our Old Orchard Beach High School students returned home with lasting memories, stronger friendships, and a greater appreciation for the world beyond the classroom.





OOB/Saco Adult Education

Learning for Better Living

Old Orchard Beach/Saco Adult Education's spring/summer semester registration is now open! We have a wide range of academic, enrichment, and professional learning opportunities for adults ages 18+. Our enrichment program includes classes in creative & culinary arts, technology, dance, languages, music, personal finance, recreation, travel, wellness, and workforce training. Our free academic program includes a high school diploma program and HiSET, as well as courses in college prep, English for multi-lingual learners, and citizenship prep. Visit our website at oobsaco.maineadulted.org for more information.

School Board Meetings

Our school board meetings normally take place on the third Thursday of every month at 6 PM. You can watch the meetings with the link below, on local access television live, or on video replay. Link for meeting:

https://www.townhallstreams.com/towns/oob_maine

Important Upcoming Dates:

March 19, 2026

TONIGHT

Town Hall 6 PM

School Board Meeting/Budget Workshop

Wednesday, April 8

Early Release Day

Friday, April 17 - Friday, April 24

April Vacation

