

NEWS

*From the Office of the
Superintendent*

Dr. David Baker



November 2023

Dear Parents, Guardians, Staff, and Community:

November is a great time of year. We get to experience that beautiful end to our fall and also anticipate that wonderful Thanksgiving holiday that brings families and friends together. This year I want to remind you that we have the full week of Thanksgiving off in November. While this was a regional decision to match up with our regional technical center, it should provide an opportunity for people to travel, prepare for the holiday, and to spend just a little bit of extra time with family and friends. While we celebrate with families and friends, we do keep in mind the horrific situations that are occurring across the globe, especially in the Middle East. Our thoughts and prayers go out to that war torn region.

November also signifies a good time to pause and reflect on student performance. The week of November 6th we will engage in Parent Conferences. Schedules and information will come out through the schools. This is a chance for us to get together with teachers and discuss student progress to date. I want to remind our parent community that, under the direction of the Agency of Education, public school districts began moving toward a proficiency-based curriculum built on Vermont state standards sometimes referred to as "The Common Core." Orleans Southwest began this journey toward proficiencies in 2015. The initiative was intended to measure individual growth against a standard of performance. It also recognized that there were multiple ways that a student could reach a particular standard. It was much more of a process that would calculate small increments of progress toward an ultimate performance standard or proficiency.

The first three years of this initiative were difficult. Teachers and administrators across the state had not been trained in proficiency-based growth. We were used to assessing students at a single point in time (often quarterly or by trimester) and we believed that grades and transcripts would be generated based on one summative measure. So at a point of time, you either "passed" the course or "failed." We were struggling with ways to allow an individual student to grow over time and to measure and report that information in a different way.

"How can we come up with systems to measure growth over time?" This was the question that all school districts faced.

Here's a simple example of the traditional approach. John and Mary are in the second grade. At the beginning of the week, they are given a list of 10 spelling words. They are told to study the words and that there will be a test at the end of the week. Over the course of the week, they would see the spelling words in books they were reading. They wrote the words in sentences. They made flashcards. But here was the underlying problem, John knew all 10 words at the beginning of the week. He had been read to every night since before he could walk. Mary knew none of the words. She was not exposed to reading until she got to school.

So, on Friday the teacher gives the spelling test. John gets them all right and receives a 100% which will certainly lead to him getting an "A" in spelling on his report card. Mary gets 6 words right, receiving a 60% on the test and could be well on her way to a "D". But here's the question, who actually learned more that week? Who showed the greater growth?

So, educators struggled for several years to embrace this growth model. Schools around the state, including our schools, were just starting to make progress in this new proficiency-based growth model when COVID hit. Essentially, for two years, the work stopped.

Last year we started the work again. The first thing we realized was that the 2,200 common core standards were simply too many. We had to pare these down in all subject areas to a manageable number. In Orleans Southwest we did some of that work last year and we have been finishing it up this year. That pared down list is called "The Power Proficiencies". Sometimes a proficiency can be wrapped around more than one standard. But keeping the number of proficiencies down and focusing on depth of learning, it becomes more manageable.

We just got all of the proficiencies uploaded into PowerSchool. Now teachers can match those proficiencies up against their lesson plans and unit designs. They can provide assignments, projects, and, yes, tests and quizzes that measure individual student growth over time toward those proficiencies. But this creates a challenge when we report student progress over time. Parents are not provided enough information with a one-time summative grade. When my child used to get a "C" in Algebra I, I had no way to know whether they were getting better at algebra or were stagnant. Maybe they just weren't completing assignments, and I didn't know that. So, the final quarterly report card did not really provide information about growth over time.

So, this year we are going to begin to move away from printed report cards. We want parents to actually log into the school's learning management system and see how their children are doing on projects, assignments, tests, and quizzes. We also want to encourage those

conversations about growth at parent teacher conferences. **Of course, if someone does not have access to technology, we can print out a report card.**

This will be a work in progress. Middle and high school teachers have been using technology to report student progress for a couple of years. Elementary teachers are in the beginning stages of uploading grades and units. This is why the parent conferences are so important. It is an opportunity to talk about growth over time. At the elementary level, it may take time to get information on unit progress uploaded. We appreciate your patience, and we think that the parent portal will be a much better way to report.

Here are some additional updates:

Budget Season: Yes, it's that time of year again when administrators and school boards will be budgeting for the next school year. It is always difficult to predict a year in advance. But our boards do the best that they can as they navigate the Vermont finance system. This year the system is going to change, specifically with the tax rate formula calculation, or as some call the "revenue side". We used to calculate spending based on something called "Equalized Pupil" and then our "per-pupil spending" would generate a tax rate based on the number of equalized pupils. It was supposed to help schools with declining enrollment maintain some stability. However, the equalized formula did not take into account some of the difficulties that rural school districts face when they budget. Transportation, teacher recruitment, mental health services, and a smaller tax base can have a real negative impact on a rural school district. So, the legislators worked for two years to move away from the equalized pupil model. Our revenue will now be based on something called weighted average daily membership and one of the weight factors is "rurality" or "sparsity", referring to schools in sparsely populated areas. It should help all OSSU districts, but it is going to take us at least one budget season to develop the new baseline. It is coming at the right time for our districts because all of the ARP/ESSER federal money also goes away next year. We will do our very best to explain how all of this impacts the tax rate over the next couple of months. Stay tuned.

Afterschool Programming: This fall, WonderKids, under the direction of the Rural Arts Collaborative (RAC), is going WILD - exploring the wild outdoors, wild animals, and wild colors! The WonderKids after school program for registered K-6 students is now open Monday through Thursday at the Craftsbury Academy campus and Hardwick Elementary School, and on Monday and Tuesday at Wolcott Elementary School. Although registration for our fall session is now closed, registration for our winter session will open in early December. The winter session will begin after the December break. Our goal is still to operate four days per week at three schools, but we must first fill all staff slots. If you or someone you know is interested in applying to work with the WonderKids program, [please click this link](#) to check out the job descriptions and apply.

Policy Work: We continue to prioritize policies that are required by law as we review and revise across the SU. This work needed to happen. Many of our policies were sorely outdated. Remember, you can find the adopted policies [here](#). In November, we will review **Student Freedom of Expression in School-Sponsored Media, Participation of Home Study Students in School Programs and Activities, and Student Conduct and Discipline**. We hope to adopt **Class Size, Substitute Teachers, and Tobacco Prohibition for Students and Staff**. If you have feedback on any policy, please contact a board member or me. If you want a current contact list of board members you can find that [here](#).

Board Meetings: Our school boards have been very busy and as previously mentioned, are now in budget season. I feel very fortunate to work with such committed members. Our Board chairs are as follows - Kasey Allen (kallen@ossu.org) in Craftsbury; Elliot Waring (ewaring@ossu.org) in Wolcott and OSSU; Steven Freihofner (sfreihofner@ossu.org) in Hazen; and Samantha Friend (sfriend@ossu.org) in our elementary union district. We do have our regular meetings in November, and we welcome community participation. All of our school boards want to hear from the public. Here are the dates, times, and meeting links for November meetings:

Stannard Board Meeting- November 1, 2023, 5:30-6:30 PM, Stannard Town Hall

OSSU Board Meeting- November 7, 2023, 6:00-8:00 PM, OSSU Central Office

Craftsbury Board Meeting- November 8, 2023, 6:00-8:00 PM, Craftsbury Academy

Mountain View Board Meeting- November 14, 2023, 6:00-8:00 PM, Woodbury Elementary

Wolcott Board Meeting- November 15, 2023, 6:00-8:00 PM, Wolcott Elementary

Hazen Board Meeting- November 21, 2023, 6:00-8:00 PM, Hazen Union Library

OSSU is Hiring! We are always looking for capable and passionate community folks to work in our schools! We encourage you to take a look at all of our part-time and full time open positions and consider applying to work with us – or sharing job descriptions with a qualified candidate! You can see the open positions at [this link](#).

Portrait of a Graduate: Our Portrait of a Graduate (PoG) planning team continues to meet each month. We are in the gathering feedback stage that will provide us themes related to attributes we want for all of our graduates. This process includes gathering from a variety of stakeholders (students, staff, parents, community, businesses, homeschool families, partner organizations) - just to name a few. Gathering this information has been both through in person connections as well as via survey. We encourage each of you to complete [this survey](#) to provide us with feedback as well. The deadline for all data collection is Friday, December 8, 2023. Greater Schools Partnership will then use this information in identifying themes related to attributes. Once this is complete, we will have a draft portrait for review by our school boards. We hope that will happen right at the turn of the new year. The state of Vermont also has a Portrait that can be found [here](#).

Once the Portrait is adopted, we move on to an even more critical phase where we look at our “Current State of Analysis” (CSA) against the portrait to see our strengths and our weaknesses and build a very specific strategic plan with action steps, timelines, and assigned responsibilities. Our goal is to have a draft action plan in place by the end of this school year. It is aggressive, but so important.

Equity Update: The Equity Coaches have kicked off Anti-Racist Storytime in every K-2 classroom across the district. They are reading *The Colors of Us* by Karen Katz, *All the Colors We Are* by Katie Kissinger, and *Frida and her Animalitos* by Monica Brown, and each book has an accompanying art project. The equity team will offer evening opportunities for community members to hear more about the program, check out the library, and share the experience. Our district boards are committed to ensuring that our schools work to have all children feel like they belong in a safe and nurturing environment. Additionally, equity coaches are working closely with the Leadership Team and the Equity Leadership Committee to implement our equity policy across the district. We continue to celebrate the equity work in our districts and appreciate the work of the equity team.

Early Childhood Screenings: Do you or does someone you know have a three-, four-, or five-year old child? Because a child's first 5 years of life are so important, we want to help to provide the best start for every child. All families that live within OSSU's boundaries (Craftsbury, Greensboro, Hardwick, Stannard, Wolcott, or Woodbury) are invited to participate in an Ages & Stages Questionnaire, Third Edition (ASQ-3) and SE (Social Emotional) online screening to help you keep track of your child's development. The questionnaire includes questions about your child's communication, gross motor, fine motor, problem solving, and personal social skills. [Click this link to complete your screening.](#) If you would prefer to fill out a paper form, please reach out to Jessica Lamberton at 802-472-2584 or jlamberton@ossu.org and we will get one to you! [Also, click this link for step-by-step instructions.](#) Please let [Jessica](#) know if you have any questions. We look forward to your participation in ASQ-3 and ASQ-SE!



Mountain View Union Elementary School District is Official! With recent notification of our Employer Identification Number (EIN) from the Internal Revenue Service, we can now say that the newly named Mountain View Union Elementary School District is official! The school district formerly known as Orleans Southwest Union Elementary School District comprises our Hardwick Elementary, Lakeview Elementary and Woodbury Elementary campuses. We would also like to thank Alex and Ann Peltz of Peltz Creative for donating a beautiful new logo design package for Mountain View Union that captures the extraordinary abundance of these three campuses' natural surroundings. Alex and Ann are proud Woodbury Elementary parents and

Ann also serves on the Mountain View Union Elementary School District Board and the OSSU Board. You can keep up with all things "Mountain View Union" at mountainview.ossu.org.

New Pellet Boilers: Thanks to four new pellet boilers from Maine Energy Systems installed at Craftsbury Academy over the course of the last year, we're offsetting a significant amount of fossil fuel, using renewable wood pellets, reducing maintenance costs, and supporting local forest industries. As noted by OSSU facilities director Joe Houston, "One of the benefits of running a pellet heating system is price stability. While we're increasing our fuel economy, we're also better able to budget our heating dollars and save the public money in the long run." Joe recently gave a tour of the Craftsbury Academy pellet system to Korey Morgan with the U.S. Forest Service (USFS). The USFS has now produced a video as part of Forest Products Week 2023 explaining the benefits of biomass heating systems - with a Craftsbury Academy mention - that you can view [here](#). Joining the tour were representatives from the Vermont Department of Forests, Parks, and Recreation who, along with the Vermont Public Service Department and Efficiency Vermont, have provided over \$450,000.00 in grant funds to support pellet boiler installations at Craftsbury Academy and Hardwick Elementary. While Craftsbury's boilers are fully up and running right now, Hardwick's installation is still in progress and due to be fully operational for the winter of 2024-25.

Featured: Wolcott Elementary's Chef David Jourdan and OSSU's Commitment to Serving Fresh, Locally Sourced Vegetables: The Center for an Agricultural Economy (CAE) recently spent time in Chef Dave's kitchen at Wolcott Elementary to showcase how OSSU and CAE are partnering to offer nutritious and delicious food that kids want to eat! Hats off to Chef Dave and all OSSU food service staff who have worked diligently to increase locally sourced food—all OSSU schools are currently serving between 19% and 24% local food in their menus and salad bars. This is a strong win for our kids, local agriculture, and our communities! [Read the story here.](#)

The Arts Update:

Hazen Union School

The entire community is invited to attend any of our upcoming performing & visual arts events at Hazen! Middle and high school student artwork will be exhibited at both winter concerts.

Middle School Winter Concert - Tuesday, December 5, from 6-8 p.m. (snow date: December 18)

High School Winter Concert - Wednesday, December 6, from 6-8 p.m. (snow date: December 21)

Coffeehouse (Open Mic Night) – Thursday, December 21, from 6-8 p.m.

District 2 Jazz Festival: On Friday, November 10, band students in 6th grade, middle, and high school are participating in the first ever District 2 Jazz Festival at Spruce Peak Performing Arts Center in Stowe. They will rehearse for the day with guest conductors and then will perform a concert at 6:30 pm.

The Rose of Treason Fall Drama Production: Mark your calendars to join us for Hazen Drama Club's production of *The Rose of Treason* on November 30, December 1 and December 2 at 7pm each night at the Highland Center for the Arts; ticket sales open in November. *The Rose of Treason* is a powerful historical drama about the life of Hans and Sophie Scholl who were raised in Germany as the Nazi party came into power. As college students, they helped found the Weiße Rose (White Rose), an organization that worked to undermine the Nazi party, call out Nazi crimes, and raise up people in resistance. Their work was critical in informing the German population and the rest of the world about what was really going on in Germany and Poland in the early 1940's. They were eventually captured by the Gestapo, tried for treason, and executed.

Craftsbury Schools

In theater and communication arts classes, grades K-2 have been working on creating original stories and bringing them to life in class. Improvisation exercises, which are foundational to acting, are also helping students to actively listen and communicate with each other. Grades 3-8 have similarly been working very hard on creating original stories, improvisation, and acting exercises and have also just settled into their production companies. Each company is going to create an original piece of content: either a short play, film, musical project, or podcast. We're excited to see how students' creative vision and artistic expression come to life!

Wolcott Elementary School

The community is invited to come out and support the arts at Wolcott Elementary! Save the date for our Concert & Art Show on Tuesday, December 12, from 5:30-6:30 p.m.

Mountain View Elementary Schools

Mountain View Winter Concert - Thursday, December 14, from 6:00-7:30 p.m. Woodbury, Lakeview and Hardwick Elementary students will all come together for this joint winter concert at Hardwick Elementary School. Please join us!

Athletics Update: Fall sports are wrapping up and registration is now open for winter sports! We encourage you to come out to a game, meet or race to cheer our students on!

Hazen Union Athletics:

Boys Varsity Soccer: The boys varsity soccer program finished 7th in their division with a record of 5-8. The boys hosted a home playoff game and lost in a nail-biter, 3-2 against Green Mountain in overtime. From boys head coach Allison Paradee: "The boys varsity soccer team finished the season strong after working extremely hard against some of the strongest teams in the Capital League and a hard fight in the first round of playoffs. Twenty-three players, grades 9, 10 and 12, from both Hazen and Craftsbury, came together in a season of growth in skills, teamwork, and leadership."

Girls Varsity Soccer: The girls varsity soccer program finished 6th in their division. The girls hosted a home playoff game and lost 0-2 against Richford at the end of regulation.

Middle School Boys and Girls soccer, from Coaches Megan Mercier and Stephen Fortmann: The boys and girls finished 8th in their division. Both middle school teams played hard in a tough new division, often playing older teams with no subs. Both coaches are proud of the growth, effort, and camaraderie they saw from their players this season.

Winter Season: Signups for the winter season are now open! At Hazen, we are offering Basketball, E-Sports, Indoor Track and Field, Gymnastics at Saint J, and Hockey at Lyndon. The boys basketball program is looking to make another finals appearance after losing last year in the finals. The team will be led by Coach Aaron Hill who is entering his 25th year of coaching the boys program at Hazen. The girls basketball team is young but gritty. They are looking to make another playoff appearance at the Barre Aud led by Randy Lumsden who is entering his 2nd year of coaching the girls varsity program at Hazen.

Craftsbury Schools Athletics:

Soccer has wrapped up, playing over 25 games! The sportsmanship shown by the athletes made this a truly successful season. Our cross country teams continue to excel with our young runners competing at 3 events this year. Our varsity cross country runners continued the streak of excellence with an amazing 3rd place team finish in Boston at the Catholic Memorial Invitational Silver Division, facing 15 high schools and placing 3 in the top 15 places! **Boys Cross Country are State Champions!** To top off the season, boys cross country just secured their **fourth straight D3 State Championship title**, an incredible testament to the dedication of the entire team and program.

Winter sports are starting to warm up as the temperatures cool down. Craftsbury will offer basketball, Nordic skiing and bowling this year. Currently, Craftsbury will have boys varsity basketball, girls junior varsity basketball, Nordic skiing for both mid-level and high school as well as a high school bowling team. Some schedules are still being set but it looks to be a very busy and exciting winter! Registration for winter sports is still open - check your classrooms for sign-ups!

Wolcott Elementary Athletics: Wolcott students have wrapped up their soccer season. The kids had so much fun on the field and we appreciate all who supported our athletes this fall! We are actively searching for a basketball coach for the upcoming season, so if this sounds like something you'd enjoy, it's a great opportunity to support the youth in our community! Reach out to Administrative Assistant [Dawn Cochran](#) to express interest.

Woodbury Elementary Athletics: Woodbury Elementary's coed 3rd-6th grade soccer team had a fantastic season traveling to games at all schools in our district. We're so thankful for the support of our Coaches Amy and Marguerite who built a strong group that demonstrated teamwork, played hard and had fun! Woodbury's younger group focused on skills and drills to help develop future team members. Coaches Sean and Darren created a fun space to explore soccer and gain confidence while having loads of fun with classmates. We are now looking forward to participating in basketball season as a combined Mountain View Union team.

Please see the Hardwick Elementary Athletics section for important information about registering to play!

Lakeview Elementary Athletics: Lakeview Elementary has wrapped up another successful soccer season! We thank our amazing coaches for their commitment to the kids, as they learn the skills necessary to succeed on the field athletically, but also learn how to be good teammates and competitors. We now turn our attention to basketball season and are looking forward to playing as a combined Mountain View Union team. Please see the Hardwick Elementary Athletics section for important information about registering to play basketball this winter as deadlines are fast approaching!

Hardwick Elementary Athletics: Hardwick Elementary has successfully completed a great soccer season and registration is now underway through November 7 for the Mountain View Union combined schools basketball season! We will **NOT** accept registrations after November 7. This will allow time for teams to be configured and games to be scheduled in a more timely manner. Parents of students from Lakeview, Woodbury, and Hardwick Elementary who would like to sign up for basketball need to fill out the [Mountain View Union Elementary School District Sports Authorization form](#) and return it to your school office or Amber Foster at Hardwick Elementary no later than November 7, 2023. Please note that your student will need an updated physical before playing in any games. If you have already filled out the Sports Authorization form for soccer season and selected to play basketball, you do not have to fill out the form again. If you have any questions, please reach out to [Amber Foster](#) or leave her a phone message at 802-472-5201.

I think that is it for now. I hope you have a great rest of the fall! Always feel free to reach out to me, and please continue to keep updated by following news on our [OSSU website](#) and school websites, as well as our [Facebook](#), [Instagram](#), and [LinkedIn](#) pages.

David Baker
Superintendent of Schools
Orleans Southwest Supervisory Union

