OCSU Superintendent Updates

I recently realized that I have had 50 first days of school (including K-12, college, teaching, etc.), and somehow I still love the energy and possibility that come with each one!

Over the past year, we have been working intentionally to create greater coherence across OCSU by ensuring we are all moving toward the same vision for students. Our schools are aligning to shared goals with our common OCSU/LRUEMS/LRUHS direction. Our Teacher Evaluation Process is now aligned with those same goals. Our PLC, MTSS, curriculum, attendance, and student-support work is increasingly becoming part of one connected PreK–12 system. The Board OCSU Annual Work Plan 2026-2027 With Strategic Alignment.xlsx is now also aligned to the District Quality Standards and the OCSU strategic plan.

Our Opening Day reflected this alignment. We centered ourselves on our vision, heard powerful stories about the difference humans make in our lives when we focus on ensuring pathways stay open, and had students help recognize some of the extraordinary people who serve our students every day. For the first time at OCSU, I invited students to present the awards to the nominated staff members. This was the second year that we also honored instructional and operational support staff. Our UVM K -8 teacher of the year is Phun Gile (Albany), our 9-12 teacher of the year is Travis Terrell, our instructional support staff person of the year is Melissa Schwarm (Glover), and our operational support staff person of the year is Sam Boucher (COFEC). Here is a video capturing just some of the moments from our convocation.



Our students came back on August 26! Here is my back-to-school message. Across OCSU, the feedback about our first day was overwhelmingly positive. Things went so smoothly that in some places, people said they barely felt any of the usual uncertainty that comes with a first day of school. This doesn't happen by accident. It comes from people planning, communicating, collaborating, and caring deeply about getting things right for kids, and I think that may be what I'm most excited about as we begin the year. We are becoming more intentional about operating as one PreK–12 educational system while honoring the identity, strengths, and communities of each of our schools. And ultimately, all of this work comes back to one promise: ensuring that every student truly has pathways that lead to success throughout their life.

It has become clear that we need to update our central office job descriptions, so I will be working on that over the next month or so. Also, I am happy to say that I have completed and submitted the *draft* one-board research report for the AOE. This is an essential step toward securing State Board approval to move the one-board vote forward. The AOE will provide feedback on the work thus far, and I will work with the one-board committee to update the report based on the AOE feedback and submit a final copy before September 5. Now that we have opened our doors, I will be checking in with the team and community and working collaboratively to establish meaningful goals for the year. Thank you all for your support! Jackie

Learning and Instruction - Erica Harryman

- OCSU educators returned in August with professional learning focused on strengthening teaching and learning for the 2026–2027 school year. Educators engaged in collaborative work around essential standards, curriculum implementation, and instructional practices designed to support high levels of learning for all students.
- The Curriculum & Instruction Department worked throughout August to ensure teachers had the tools and resources needed for a successful start to the school year, including student and teacher curriculum materials, access to academic platforms, assessment systems, and instructional resources. We continue to respond to needs as they arise and ensure educators have what they need to support students effectively.
- Schools are preparing for beginning-of-year universal screening and assessment to establish current student learning needs and identify students who may need additional support. These data, along with classroom evidence, will help collaborative teams make timely instructional and intervention decisions.
- The Vermont Agency of Education has released the 2026 Vermont Comprehensive Assessments Program (VTCAP) assessment results to school districts. OCSU principals and district leaders are reviewing the results to identify trends, celebrate areas of growth, and determine instructional priorities for the 2026–2027 school year. District and school results will be shared publicly once the Agency's statewide reporting process is complete.

Finance - Melissa Fortuna - No Update Provided

Human Resources - Lisa Worden and Monica Fisher

- We have switched to a new system, Red Rover. RedRover provides timesheet tracking, as well as absence and sub management, replacing AMS. RedRover is MUCH more user-friendly, and subs can see all available jobs and choose which ones they would like to take - which has been very well received. Overall, we have had positive feedback on the new system. The timecard part will be implemented later, once we connect to our payroll system as well.
- Substitutes - Currently, we have 36 substitutes that have set up their accounts in RedRover and 26 who have not. Last week I onboarded 4 new subs, and next week I have 4 more subs coming in for onboarding!
- We have 3 open FT positions: Custodian, Interventionist, and Paraprofessional. 2 PT positions: School Librarian and Driver. 1 coaching position - Middle school soccer.
- It has been a busy first week back in school, but overall it is going great!

Facilities - Jason Rowell

- Welcome back everyone. The custodians have done a great job getting things ready for students despite working around several summer projects. We know some of you still have projects still going on and we appreciate you working with us as we wrap those up.
- Just a reminder, to keep Jason looped in on expenses that come out of the building operations lines. Most of the time a simple text from the custodian on a quick note from the office is enough. It keeps Jason aware of what issues are popping up and how prevalent they are. It gives us a chance to handle things as a group or standardize our process where it makes sense.
- Also, we plan to keep looking at the budget lines to standardize how various building ops expenses are coded and correct things we have been billing incorrectly in the past. This may require some budget adjustments and journal entries in the short run, but it

will make our budgeting process more consistent and equitable across the schools in the long run.

Student Support Services - Sandra Lapham

- We are incredibly excited to welcome our students and staff back into the buildings for a successful year ahead!
- Alison Kidder: Our new Assistant Director of Student Support Services has officially begun her role, with her office located at Barton Graded School. We have already started establishing departmental goals aligned directly with the district's PLC at Work initiative.
- Danielle Greenwood: As our new School to Home Coordinator. Danielle is working closely with Alison to build procedures to support OCSU with truancy mandates and the newly enacted parts of Act 122.
- Hiring Update: We are actively seeking to fill 3 remaining paraprofessional vacancies resulting from staff retirements and non-returns. If you have individuals who would be a great fit for our team, please do not hesitate to reach out.
- Nancy Horton and I are currently completing training on the new statewide School-Based Services (SBS) Medicaid administration framework. Oversight has transitioned from the Agency of Education processes to a unified system managed by the Agency of Human Services and the Department of Vermont Health Access. This transition significantly broadens the scope of reimbursable services available to our district, though it will also require increased tracking and documentation rigor from our staff. I know this is a significant adjustment, and my goal is to ensure we have the support we need.
- We are excited to kick off this work! Please feel free to bring any questions or collaborative ideas to me anytime through email or phone call.

Child Nutrition - Becca Boucher

- What have we accomplished over the past two years?
  - Following the rules: Every student receives breakfast even if they are late to school. Every student takes a fruit or veg at every meal. Offering all veggie subgroups as required. All grains served are whole-grain rich.
  - Expanded food access: Offered after-school snack at the high school. Started pilot after-school supper program at Orleans Elementary. Offered summer meal kits for the first time in OCSU – and distributed 350-400 boxes every week during the summer.
- What is already new this year!
  - All Managers are becoming ServSafe certified.
  - All OCSU schools now have standalone, expanded five-bay salad bars. The last one arrived at Irasburg on the first morning of school and the kitchen put it to use that very day! Irasburg had requested a larger salad bar at the end of last year and we received a state grant to cover half the cost. Kids were excited to serve themselves at the new salad bar that is the proper height for K-4 students, they were thrilled that it matched their school color blue, and several came back for seconds! (We also received 2 free salad bars this year from the Chef Ann Foundation, so as a district we received 4 for the price of 1.5.)
  - The only "seconds" to be served this year are on fruits and veggies – either hot from the kitchen or cold from the salad bar. (Exception: Students can take other items from share bowls.) This is to encourage more fruit and veggie consumption (for all of us those two food groups should cover half our plates!) and to discourage adverse health effects from eating too much of the other food groups.
  - There are new weekly sugar limits on school breakfasts. In general, we're offering

fewer sugary breakfasts and more savory breakfasts to comply with this rule change.
- Lake Region has a new lunch line configuration. The entrance for hot lunch will remain the same, but last year's exit is now the entrance for grab-and-go cold lunch options (premade sandwiches and salads) and both lines head out through the central double doors to the salad bar and point-of-sale machine. I helped direct high school traffic regarding this change today, which was entertaining.
- New Pricing for Building Adults: Lunch is $6.00, Breakfast is $3.50. The state required us to raise the prices again this year so that taxpayer money does not subsidize adult lunches.

Health Office - Julie Rose

- It has been a great kick off and start to the school year! All health office staff returning.
- Medication Drop off. Health office staff provided days designated for parents to drop off medications for students prior to the first day of school. This is a change in process for families. Many did take advantage of the opportunity! This lightened the busyness during the first morning when our students returned.
- Online Annual Health Forms were also a change this year for families and staff. We continue to adapt and move our process to help give us the ability to give care to students as new information comes in.
- We are utilizing a new process in our EHR, document student care, office visits and manage our complex care and chronic ill students. This new process through powerschool aligns with scope of practice for UAPs vs RNs.