

Student Ownership for Learning

OSMS Newsletter
September 2022

Celebration of Learning 2022

Over the summer, students were given choice in their summer learning activities. Students were expected to complete at least two activities, one reading activity and one other activity that included all the different content areas. Students took part in a variety of activities including writing poetry, exploring the natural habitat, participating in summer learning classes and reading challenges with Acton Library. The goal was to continue to build students' skills while allowing them to explore topics that were interesting to them.

Students could do more than the two required activities and received raffle tickets for each activity they completed. At our Celebration of Learning, the tickets were pulled for raffle prizes and silly games.



This was the first time in several years that we were able to bring the entire school together. We were able to welcome all the students back to school, celebrate their summer work, and have some fun together as a school.



Voice and Choice

As we promote students' ownership for learning, we will work to provide them with opportunities for voice and choice in their learning. As students move throughout their school year, they will be given a variety of opportunities to make choices about their learning. They may have a choice in the topic, the type of project, or how they demonstrate their learning. Students will also receive feedback on their growth toward the learning targets to understand their strengths and weaknesses. They will use this information to make choices about what they need to work on next or how they will learn the material.

This statement was created by the staff regarding our beliefs about voice and choice in the classroom. *At OSMS, we value students taking ownership of their learning by creating an environment that allows for opportunities to access the curriculum through an exploration of personal interests while utilizing the 21st Century Skills and giving students varied opportunities to achieve their personal learning goals.*



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Grade 5 teachers Mrs. Evans and Ms. St. Germain as well as our integrationist, Mrs. Conti have just introduced a project called Main Street Math to our students. The students will be applying the math skills they learn this year to real life. They will be creating a business that will be placed on their "Main Street." They will develop business plans for their companies. Throughout the project, the teachers will connect the math they are using in class to

the student businesses. They plan to invite local business owners to speak with the students and/or visit some local businesses.



Students will also be learning about 21st century skills. In particular, they will be focusing on Initiative and Entrepreneurship. Through this process, the teachers will make math relevant and fun.

Initiative and Entrepreneurship
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Initiative is the practice of being self-directed in determining ways to seek out new opportunities, ideas, and strategies for improvement.• Entrepreneurship is putting those ideas into practice.
I can set a learning goal and monitor my progress.
I can plan my work time and follow the plan.
I can come up with ways to learn more.
I can think about past learning to help guide new learning.

New Staff

We have many new faces here at OSMS this school year. Our students may have things in common with some of them. Common interests can help staff build relationships with students, so please share this article with your children.

New to grade 5, teaching ELA and Social Studies is **Mrs. Ellen Gehret**. She joins us after teaching grade 8 students in Manchester. She has a young cat named Coco, loves to read, bike, and is learning to garden. Her favorite food is pizza. She currently lives in the same home she grew up in, in Old Saybrook. She loves and is already a part of our community.

Mrs. Gehret



Ms. Kara Phillips



Kara Phillips is our new Board Certified Behavior Analyst (BCBA). She works with teachers and paras to help support students' behavioral needs across the schools. Prior to becoming a BCBA, she was a special education teacher for 13 years and she is joining us from Wallingford. She has two pups, a puggle named Bailey and a lab named Maya. She enjoys reading, boating, and traveling. Her favorite food is Mexican. Kara is a bit of a daredevil. She's been ziplining in Costa Rica and skydiving in Key West. Kara also has a twin sister.

Mary Jane Walsh has joined us as a paraprofessional. Mary has lived in Old Saybrook for 20 years. She has experience as an elementary school teacher, and as a substitute teacher in local towns.

Mrs. Mary Jane Walsh



She loves kids, but especially her 8 grandchildren. For fun, Mary Jane goes for walks, plays pickleball, bakes and gardens.

Mrs. Nancy Smerekanicz is our new grade 8 science teacher and science department leader.

Mrs. Nancy Smerekanicz



Nancy joins us after teaching in Woodbridge for 15 years and working as a chemist for two CT chemical companies. She has a crazy yet sweet rescue dog named Whiskey. Outside of school, Mrs. Smerekanicz hikes, kayaks, and travels. She also loves lobster! She wanted to come to OSMS because of the way the community supports and celebrates students. In return, she brings all things science to OSMS. Something interesting about Nancy is that she was chosen to attend the Space Academy for Educators at the U.S. Space and Rocket Center in Alabama with other teachers from around the world.

Ms. Michelle Konishesky joins us from Goodwin, where she worked for 20 years. Michelle is working at the middle school as a registered behavior technician (RBT). Her loves include biking, walking, kayaking,

nature, animals, her pitbull, Maddy, and mandarin orange chicken salad.

Ms. Michelle Konishesky



Mrs. Laura Martino returns to us at OSMS after working in Clinton Schools, as a French teacher. She has two cats named Buddy and Apple. She relaxes by going jogging, reading, playing the piano, and playing pickleball. She loves broccoli rabe and homemade apple crisp. Mrs. Martino is also certified to teach agriculture.

Mrs. Laura Martino



Another important role in our school is our building sub. They work with all the students across the building. **Mrs. Deborah Bole** is well prepared for this role after teaching middle school special education for 23 years. Outside of school, she enjoys cooking and walking. Seafood and pizza are some of her favorite foods.

Mrs. Deborah Bole



Ms. Maria Holub is also an RBT joining us from Goodwin. She has two hamsters named Harry and Lloyd. Ms. Holub loves to read, hike, go to the beach, bike ride, and watch sporting events. In case you are an ice cream lover, you should know that Ms. Holub has worked at Dairy Queen since she was 16. Yum!

Mrs. Maria Holub



Maria Gonzalez is joining us to teach one class of Spanish in grade 8.

Ms. Maria Gonzalez



She has experience as a teaching assistant and a journalist. She has a cat named Luna and a tortoise. Mrs. Gonzalez plays the flute in a community orchestra, loves to cook, and swim. She has a unique experience moving to the US from Peru when she was just 7 years old.

Mrs. Amy Bonatti is joining us as an assistant in our nurse's office. She was an adult probation officer for over 20 years before joining OSMS. She enjoys reading, being outside, and watching her kids play sports. She loves ice cream and admits that she is not a great cook.

Mrs. Amy Bonatti



Please join me in welcoming our new staff to the OSMS community.



Kickball Tournament

To develop collaboration and team building, we started the first week of school with a kickball tournament. The students played in their homerooms, against the other teams. Grade 5 and 6 played in one tournament, and grades 7 and 8 in the other.



The teachers and students had a great time and it was an excellent way to shape the community of the homeroom classes.



Information and Reminders

PTO: Joining our PTO is a great way to get involved and connected to your child's school. Please join us for one of our next meetings at 6:30 in the OSMS Library on October 24 and November 28.

Beverages: Only water is allowed in classrooms.

SEL Day: We will hold our next Social Emotional Learning Day on Friday, October 7!

Parent-Teacher Conferences: Conferences will be held on November 15 and 17. Sign-up information will be sent out in a few weeks. These dates will be early release days for students.

How to look more closely at your child's standards-based grades in PowerSchool: Please watch this video. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=N0Gp9CX6IKw>

Dangerous Candy: We wanted parents to be aware of fentanyl that has been colored to look like candy. We have not seen this in our schools but wanted parents to be aware. Please see the news report linked below.

<https://www.cbsnews.com/news/fake-pills-fentanyl-overdose-deaths-some-look-like-candy-dea/>



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