



OLD TOWN HIGH SCHOOL

School Board Report - February 2021

Scott Gordon, Principal

Academic Awards Breakfast

On Tuesday, January 26th and again on Thursday, January 28th we held our annual “Academic Awards Breakfast” in the OTHS cafeteria. We ran two sessions in order to accommodate the cohort of Monday/Tuesday students and Thursday/Friday students. This breakfast is a long standing tradition at Old Town High School and is meant to honor students for their academic achievements. Long-time OTHS Principal, Don Sturgeon developed a point system for students to earn points based on what level of honor roll they earn each quarter. As students accumulate points they can earn their school letter and then service bars in subsequent years. The breakfast is typically ‘standing room only’ in our cafeteria, as parents join us in a normal year. This year we did livestream the ceremony for parents, while the students joined us in person [masked and distanced, of course]. A big “Thank You” to OTHS Food Service as each student got a scone and smoothie before returning to class. Since I was in charge of “quality control” for the scone and smoothie - I can tell you that they were fantastic! :)

Athletics at OTHS - update

Mr. Bousquet will be on hand Wednesday evening to give us an update on athletics. At the end of this report, I will provide dates for some of the remaining home contests and links for access. I have attended at least one event for most of our sports and my overall impression is that our student-athletes seem to just be grateful and happy to be playing. We have had few, if any, that are willfully non-compliant with any request that we make of them. Our kids are simply outstanding and we are very proud of them.

Rural U

Amy Ketch and I met with Scott Voisine from the University of Maine at Fort Kent recently to discuss expanding options for students at Old Town High School to take classes which might offer college credit while earning their high school diploma. UMFK runs a program called “Rural U” which targets students attending high schools in rural communities throughout Maine and strives to increase academic rigor and provide an affordable pathway to college with opportunities for students to experience college learning and earn college credits. We currently offer a math class which is connected to

UMFK through Rural U - with our own teacher, Drew Myers teaching it. Our students will earn a math credit toward graduation from OTHS and college credit through the University of Maine system.

You might ask, “why have you connected with UMFK, with the flagship campus of the University of Maine system only 4 miles from you in Orono?” That is a wonderful question and the simple, yet extremely frustrating answer is that Orono’s has been much more challenging to play with than UMFK. Their requirements for our teachers are much more stringent and difficult for us to meet than UMFK. Therefore, in an effort to make this opportunity available to students, we are going to continue to work with UMFK. In addition, we are looking to provide students with an in-person college level experience. Our students have had access to online classes through all the area institutions and have done really well. But online isn’t for everyone – which is another reason we are looking to partner with UMFK.

Rural U is open to high school sophomores, juniors, and seniors, and homeschooled students at the sophomore, junior, and senior levels in good academic standing. Tuition is free, but students are responsible for the cost of textbooks when required. The Maine Aspirations program allows students to take a maximum of 12 credits per academic year at public colleges and universities.

We are making this effort as part of an ongoing commitment to provide our students with opportunities to take dual enrollment classes and not have to navigate the gauntlet of the College Board. Our AP offerings, which are associated with the College Board, require our students to pay for and take a test that our teachers have no input into and are left to guess on the content of the test based on previous years. In addition to paying for the test, students only receive college credit for a test score which in some content areas is borderline unattainable. While the rigor is great, to me it makes much more sense to connect our students with college courses and allow them to gain the confidence and the credits while still in high school. In addition, we save the bank accounts of our parents, who would not have to pay for the AP test and may see their child earn college credits that are cheaper than taking those classes while enrolled as a college student.

Wednesday

Last month I shared with you that we hired an Educational Technician to serve in the role of a “Hybrid Learning Support Specialist”. I can now officially say that we have about 20 students who are in person with us - more than just the two days per week that they are scheduled to be with us. These students still attend their in-person classes depending on which day they are scheduled to be with us, and then join Ms. Guido in our hybrid learning support classroom on one or both of the other two days. She assists them with organizational skills and supports them in learning/understanding/accessing the online learning offerings of our teachers.

Ms. Guido works closely with our administration and guidance staff and she is beginning to build a working relationship with some of our teachers. She has been very

impressive thus far and has done a wonderful job of reaching out to parents to garner their support, which is so vital in our current learning situation.

While it is still early, I am encouraged with what we have seen so far and I am hopeful that this program will make a difference for many of our students.

Grade 8 - soon to be Grade 9

After February break, we will commence with our annual “visits” to area middle schools. You may have heard that some other schools have already been there. We traditionally wait until a bit later, because we have received feedback that once 8th graders start thinking about high school, they “checkout” of middle school. We also joke that we like to have the last word. :)

Much like last year, this will look a little bit different. We will be joining our incoming students via a Zoom meeting, but they will still have a chance to see our faces and ask questions - of our administration and school counselors. Later in March, we are going to put together a video to share with each of the schools - in order to better share some of the offerings at Old Town High School. With both the visits and the video, they will be student-driven - as we have current OTHS students lined up to assist us. We have also found over the years that adults become “white noise” and students listen to other students much more intently.

Band Update

Our band classes are up and running successfully. The band is split, of course, into the two cohorts - (Monday/Tuesday & Thursday/Friday) which helps the numbers a bit. In addition, the full band practices in the gymnasium with chairs spaced for distance. All students, instructors and even some of the instruments have masks on! We have been able to secure two music students from UMaine to give us one extra helper per day. The UMaine students are working with percussion and provide Mr. Priest with a much needed helping hand. The entire arrangement has gone extremely well.

MPA One-Act Play - Update

Our theater students are still actively working on a production called “Pirates” which is a family-friendly comedy that they are preparing for the MPA One-Act drama festival. A dedicated group of 15 students, under the guidance of Rachel Peterson are currently rehearsing via ‘google meets.’ They will create the show within this platform, which is a challenge that did not exist for them a year ago. While there have been some challenges, our students have persevered and learned a lot along the way about how to make this work. They won't be able to do the performance live, due to the fact that any freezing or sound glitch would really take away from the production. However, they do plan to record it and splice it together to make sure that it looks clean. They will present it for whatever happens for the annual MPA Drama festival and they are brainstorming ways to do a public showing in the future.

Upcoming Athletic Contests & links

- No Ice Hockey or track meets included in the list below.

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|------------------------|---|
| Friday, February 12 | Boys' Basketball @ Schenck Girls' Basketball vs. Schenck Swimming - virtual meet vs. George Stevens |
| Tuesday, February 16 | JV & Varsity Boys' Basketball vs. Brewer JV & Varsity Girls' Basketball @ Brewer |
| Thursday, February 18 | JV & Varsity Boys' Basketball vs. Foxcroft JV & Varsity Girls' Basketball @ Foxcroft |
| Friday, February 19 | JV & Varsity Boys' Basketball vs. Mattanawcook JV & Varsity Girls' Basketball @ Mattanawcook Swimming - virtual meet vs. Bangor |
| Tuesday, February 23 | Invitational Virtual Cheering Meet JV & Varsity Boys' Basketball @ Bangor JV & Varsity Girls' Basketball vs. Bangor |
| Wednesday, February 24 | JV & Varsity Boys' Basketball @ Mattanawcook |
| Friday, February 26 | JV & Varsity Boys' Basketball @ Orono JV & Varsity Girls' Basketball vs. Orono Swimming - virtual meet - PVC Championship |

Link to view Basketball

<https://www.nfhsnetwork.com/>

Link to view Swimming

<https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCL7MsAYDCqWiKtAmAX-nocw>

By the Numbers

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|-------------------------|------------------------------|
| <u>Total Enrollment</u> | 534 |
| Grade 9 | 134 |
| Grade 10 | 135 |
| Grade 11 | 127 |
| Grade 12 | 138 |
| Monday/Tuesday Cohort | * 197 |
| Thursday/Friday Cohort | * 169 |
| All Remote | * 129 [(-7) from last month] |

* = numbers taken from 1/25/2021 - as those numbers fluctuate daily

Always In (Self-Contained) 15

UTC Students (Monday/Friday) 28

As always, if you have any questions or concerns - please feel free to drop me an email.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be the name of the principal, written over a horizontal line.

Principal, OTHS