

Health and Wellness

The ORCSD recognizes that the health of our community of learners is both a prerequisite to their education and a part of that education. Beyond keeping our students healthy, we aspire to teach them how to stay healthy throughout life. Recognizing that “problem free is not fully prepared,” we will develop in our students the skills that will help them resist risky behaviors in the future. Our goals are:

1. Healthy students, families and school community.
2. Students with the knowledge and habits of a healthy lifestyle.
3. Students equipped with the information and the skills avoid behaviors that pose health risks.

Safety

Students are most likely to engage in learning if they are safe and feel secure at school, at home and in transit. The Strategic Plan addresses a variety of safety issues, some of which also overlap with health.

Freedom from environmental hazards is an important concern. The ORCSD will test all buildings regularly for indoor air quality, specifically with respect to radon, asbestos and lead. We will test drinking water in all schools and document the use of pesticides, cleaning fluids and other chemicals in school buildings in conjunction with the sustainability committee. Longer term, we may make environmental health risks a part of the curriculum and involve students in the testing, if appropriate.

School security is an area where the ORCSD has taken many recent actions, including the installation of cameras and secure entry procedures. The district has a detailed policy on school building safety, including fire safety. Mindful of the tradeoff between security and a welcoming atmosphere, all of the measures implemented to enhance safety and security in the buildings have not compromised the welcoming atmosphere, which is maintained by friendly front office personnel. Longer term, we plan to monitor best practices with respect to school security, gathering input from teachers and administrators as well as Aramark and our insurers. We will update security procedures periodically to coincide with best practices and make sure that security procedures and emergency response plans are coordinated.

Food safety is a small but obviously necessary piece of the larger plan for food service in the schools. It involves making sure that food coming into the school is safe and that once it arrives, it is stored, prepared and handled safely so that it is safe to eat when it reaches the students. The Food Services Director is certified in safe food handling and can teach the Safe Food Handling course offered by the National Restaurant Association. All managers and most of the non-management employees in the District’s food services have the certification. Our goals include obtaining certification for all food handling employees and offering the course on Teacher’s workshop days to also benefit interested High School students and members of the community. In addition, the ORCSD will explore how to ensure the safety of more locally grown and sourced foods so that they can be included in the school lunch menu.

Playground/ Fields/ Outdoor Safety is another concern that the ORCSD takes seriously. Any playground equipment purchased meets or exceeds current safety standards. The District’s liability insurer, Peerless Insurance, has the buildings and grounds inspected by third party experts and meets with administrators

annually to suggest safety-related improvements. Goals are to establish procedures for monitoring best practices with respect to outdoor areas, consider prohibiting the use of herbicides, fertilizers or other chemicals that can be harmful to those who use the outdoor areas, balance risk of pesticides with risk of insect borne diseases, address the issue of reducing children's exposure to Ultraviolet radiation, and make sure that outdoor safety rules and procedures are communicated to teachers, parents, maintenance personnel, coaches and students.

Student transportation safety is a subject on which the ORCSD has established policies. All bus drivers, after participating in drug screening and finger printing, are trained and must pass a test administered by the state Department of Transportation. They also must complete required training annually. Bus stops are established with student safety in mind. Standards for student conduct on buses are laid out in a School Board policy and principals can suspend riding privileges if rules are not followed. Our goals are to monitor best practices for student transportation safety (including the ongoing seat belt debate) and update policies regularly. We will ensure that the buses and other equipment, as well as rules and procedures, are in compliance with policies, communicate regularly with parents regarding safety procedures and behavior expectations of riders, conduct drills and safety training for students on a regular schedule, and establish a click count or other system so that drivers will know the number of students on board at all times. Shorter term, we will include school bus ridership rules in parent/student handbooks for all schools.

Emergency response plans include preparedness and response to any emergency, such as but not limited to fires, storms and other severe weather, loss of power, heating system failure, structural collapse, loss of water supply, health emergencies, general public emergencies, intruders, violent incidents, exposure to toxins, etc. Emergencies may indicate lockdown, sheltering on site, sheltering off site and/or evacuation. The ORCSD Emergency Response Plan is directly linked to the individual building emergency response plans for each of the four schools. Our goals are to review the district-level and school-level emergency response plans regularly to make sure they are up to date with current best practices, establish schedules for training new and existing employees and conducting drills, with particular attention to the more likely types of emergencies, gather input from teachers, administrators and first responders on how to improve emergency response plans and procedures, make sure that infrastructure exists to support emergency response plans (such as classroom door locks for lock downs), and include procedures for notifying parents and keeping them informed.

Programs to deter bullying and promote inclusion are high priorities at Oyster River. The ORCSD has designed policies to deal with sexual harassment and violence, bullying and cyber-bullying. The policies deal with defining the offensive behaviors, reporting offenses, handling and investigating reports and training. Although these policies exist, the ORCSD actually takes a much more positive, preventative approach by encouraging a culture of inclusion and respect within the community of learners. The concepts of respect and inclusion are central to the mission and philosophy of each school. The school district provides age-appropriate education/ prevention programs for students and parents, including many that are part of curriculum. The strategic plan emphasizes these positive actions, prevention programs and culture of respect rather than the handling of occasional infractions.