

Oyster River to Survey Residents
Dr. James C. Morse, Sr.
Superintendent

Tuitioning students into Oyster River Cooperative School District (ORCSD) is a significant decision, which has resulted in the School Board deciding to survey residents of Durham, Lee and Madbury. The District has entered into an agreement with District resident, Dr. Andrew Smith who runs the UNH Survey Center, to do a scientific random digital/telephone survey.

Due to the additional capacity at the high school, the School Board is considering tuition students, as a way to maintain and enhance program opportunities for our students. Additionally, the tuition revenue offsets funds that would otherwise be raised by District taxpayers. A capacity study completed by the New Hampshire School Administrator Association (NHSAA) in the fall of 2012, and following the District Policy IIB, indicates that ORHS can accommodate 915 students of 18-22 students per class, or 1205 students using State of New Hampshire guidelines. Currently there are 620 resident students.

The District has been approached by three school systems, Barrington, Deerfield and Newmarket about the possibility of sending their students to Oyster River High School (ORHS). Barrington is currently sending 64 students to ORHS; but allows their students to have 'choice' to attend ORHS, Dover or Coe-Brown. Deerfield sends their students to Concord High School. They do not afford their students choice; they have an exclusive arrangement with Concord that is up for review, thus their interest in sending 188 students to ORHS. Newmarket currently has a high school but it does not meet state standards and must be vacated by 2015. Newmarket is investigating either tuitioning their students to ORHS or building a new high school. Newmarket has 280 students and they would like an exclusive tuition arrangement with the District, if that were the direction they choose.

So, in conclusion we have the capacity and we have three school systems vying for those seats, but none of these school districts has come forward yet and stated that we want our students to go to ORHS. The ORCSD School Board is attempting to collect data and information that will help it make a quality decision on behalf of our school system that will have generational impact. The questions before them are:

- 1. Do we want more tuitions students;
- 2. Do we want to have just Barrington students;
- 3. Do we want just Deerfield students;
- 4. Do we want Barrington and Deerfield students; or
- 5. Do we want just Newmarket students?

The UNH Survey Center will assist our School Board in collecting information to bring to the meeting by asking our three communities a broad cross section of questions that will guide and enlighten them. This decision is bigger than the school system because it impacts not just programming at the high school but also taxpayers. As an example, the 64 Barrington students fill classroom space that is available without the cost of hiring additional staff and brings in approximately \$800,000 in revenue. Had the District not had the revenue the Board would be faced with passing on the loss to our taxpayers or cutting programming.

This survey is random which means not everyone in the District will be contacted. However, if you receive a call from the UNH Survey Center we hope that you will spend five minutes with them answering their questions.