

RSU5 Community Newsletter

To inspire and support every learner by challenging minds, building character, sparking creativity, and nurturing passions.

Happenings in RSU5

By Dr. Becky Foley, Superintendent

On January 26, I presented the superintendent's recommended budget to the Board. We decided to prioritize three core areas to move student achievement forward: maintaining class sizes, increased student support, and maintaining adequate staffing. The budget includes the following requests focused on those target areas:

• ELL Teacher	\$87,000
• MLS 3rd Grade Teacher	\$87,000
• DCS 1st Grade Teacher	\$87,000
• Special Education Teacher	\$87,000
• Occupational Therapist	\$87,000
• Speech Therapist	\$87,000
• FHS .5 Ed Tech	\$18,500
• DCS Ed Tech	\$37,000
• MLS Ed Tech	\$37,000
• FMS Ed Tech	\$37,000
• Bus Driver/Custodian	\$56,000

We believe that each one of these requests are aligned with our strategic plan and will better support our students. Our projected enrollment for next year is 2007, 17 additional students than the current year. If we meet our projected enrollment, we will have added 181 students since 2014. The greatest increase will be at the elementary level which is where the additional classroom teachers are being requested.

Currently our proposed budget is a 4.37% increase in expenditures compared to this year's budget. There are still a few unknowns, so the final recommendation is likely to change before the Board adopts the budget. I believe this proposed budget is both fiscally responsible to taxpayers, and creates a stronger organization that will support increased student learning.

We welcome community feedback about the budget. There are two public comment periods at every budget meeting. Additionally, on March 16 there is a board meeting focused on public input and deliberation. We hope you will join us at that meeting.

The complete budget powerpoint presentation may be seen [HERE](#)



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Superintendent
Foley on Twitter:
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Upcoming Dates

**February 4th
Professional
Learning Day -
No School**

**February 17th
Community
Q&A, see next
page for details**

**February 21st
Presidents' Day
- No School**

**February 22-25
Winter Break -
No School**

**March 11th
Professional
Learning Day -
No School**

***RSU5: Striving to Make All Students Feel Welcomed
by Dr. Becky Foley, Superintendent***

There was an unfortunate incident that occurred in Freeport in November regarding race. On November 20, 2021, a 61 year-old white male allegedly approached and threatened a black man at the Antonia's parking lot in Freeport because he was dining with a white woman.

Attorney General Aaron Frey filed a complaint against the man. There are also charges including criminal threatening with a dangerous weapon that have been filed stemming from this incident.

The U.S. Department of Justice reports that hate crime statistics increased between 2019 and 2020 in the United States from 7100 to over 8000 incidents. These statistics and the most recent incident are sobering. We know that those numbers are probably underreported - that on a daily basis many more incidents of hate crimes occur in our homes, schools, workplaces, and communities.

Attorney General Aaron Frey filed similar complaints in September, against two 15 year-old girls from Bangor, alleging they spray painted racial slurs on the car of a Pakistani-American. Last March, he filed a complaint against a Portland man who was accused of attacking an Asian-American woman and her daughter and telling the woman to "go back to your country." All of these incidents occurred due to the color of the person's skin or their place of origin. This is very alarming and reminds us of how important the work that we continue to do around diversity, equity, and inclusion is and needs to continue to be, not only in our schools, but also in our communities, workplaces and homes.

We, in RSU5, condemn all acts of hate for they spread ripples of fear, and anxiety throughout our community and schools and send the opposite message of who we aspire to be. These incidents send the message that because of the color of one's skin, that someone is not welcome here. We have zero tolerance for such bigoted messages and want all individuals, regardless of skin color or origin, to be a vital part of our community and to feel safe, and come to school each and every day without fear. We want our most recent newcomers from Angola, the Republic of Congo, and Nigeria to feel the same excitement and pride that we have in being a part of RSU5. Our teachers will embrace our new students, as they do with all students, and will welcome them into our classrooms. Collectively, we will rise above the prejudice of the incident that occurred in November in Freeport.

We know that diversity strengthens us. This most recent incident occurring in Freeport is the action of one person and he does not represent who we are or want to be as a community in RSU5. I also ask that we follow the example of Attorney General Frey and do what we are individually capable of doing to combat racism and other forms of discrimination. Attorney General Frey is filing charges and is showing that he and the State of Maine have zero tolerance for racial hate crimes. We, individually and collectively, should send the same message. Whether it be in our classrooms, at home, at work, or on social media, when we hear comments or witness acts of intolerance, we must say something and hold one another accountable. It is imperative that we look in the mirror and examine our own inherent biases, and commit to staying informed about the suffering of others in our community and in our world. It is only through our individual actions that we will collectively make the systemic change that is needed to make all feel welcomed and safe in RSU5.

Community Q & A

This year, we will hold our question and answer periods virtually throughout the year. In the past, we have held sessions in each of the three communities primarily during budget season. We feel this change in format will allow for more input on a variety of topics throughout the year. Please join us for our second community question and answer period on February 17, 2022 from 7:30 - 8:30 am. We would love to hear how the year is going or any other topic of interest to you. Hope to see you there! To join, use the Zoom link below:

<https://networkmaine.zoom.us/j/81909513713>

Webinar ID: 819 0951 3713

Join by telephone at 1 646 876 9923

Curriculum Updates

By Cynthia Alexander, Assistant Superintendent of Curriculum, Instruction and Assessment

Equity In Its Many Forms

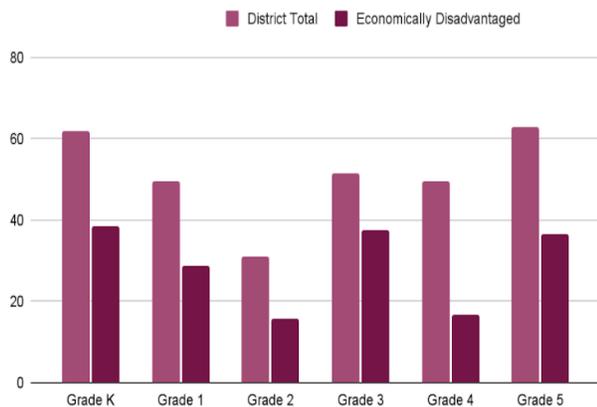
Equity in education involves an extensive process of examining practices, policies, and procedures at the school and district levels to support academic fairness and inclusion. This ensures every child has the resources, teachers, and interventions to be successful.

Each year we take a deep dive and review student academic achievement and growth data using district wide assessment results. When looking at equity, it is important to consider students in the following subgroups: economically disadvantaged, identified disabilities, limited English proficiency.

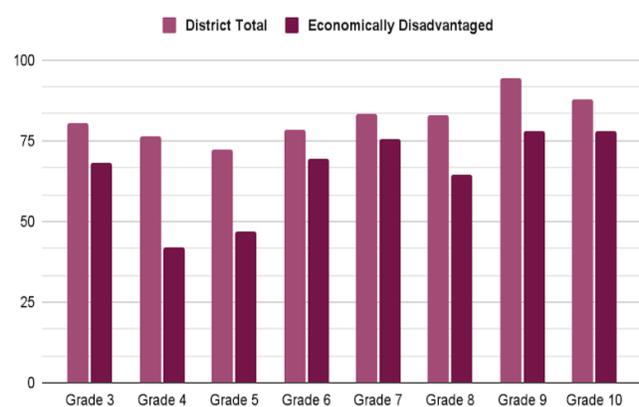
As we look at this data we find significant discrepancies among the economically disadvantaged subgroup. We ask the question, "How do we support economically disadvantaged students and provide resources to address their needs?" The graphs below show that the discrepancy starts at the kindergarten level and continues as students progress through the grade levels.

Equity: Academic Achievement, Reading

F&P BAS Spring 2021



MAP Assessment Reading Spring 2021



The chart to the left shows the Fountas and Pinnell (F & P) benchmark assessment given to students each spring in grades K-5. In kindergarten, 62% of students met the benchmark academic achievement level as compared to 38.5% of the students who are economically disadvantaged. The discrepancy continues throughout the grades. At RSU5, we believe it is imperative to begin addressing discrepancies as early as possible. In this year's proposed budget, you will see a request for extra support for students in PreK and kindergarten across the district.

Other examples of resource inequity surfaced during the pandemic. Some families did not have internet access during remote learning. Through grant funding, we were able to provide those families in the RSU5 community with internet access.

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Although we don't see an academic achievement discrepancy in the race subgroup, we are mindful of the racial incidents that occurred within our district and community. Last week you may have read about an incident of a white man physically threatening a black man in a parked car at a Freeport pizzeria. RSU5 condemns this and any other racist acts in our school communities. Together we can support our community in combating all inequities that align to our vision where students learn in joyful environments that are physically and emotionally safe.

Instructional Support Updates

By Dr. Bonnie Violette, Director of Instructional Support

A Family's Journey of Hope

Most of you already know that we have new students from Angola, Congo and Nigeria entering RSU5. Their families traveled long distances and experienced arduous, challenging journeys to enter the United States. I had the privilege of talking to one of the parents who gave me permission to share some of her family's experiences.

Her family left their country in Africa because the president of the country ordered the killing of the people of her tribe. She described some of the killings she witnessed and reported they had no choice but to flee, or get killed themselves. They saved what little money they could, just enough for four family members, to fly to Brazil. They worked five years in Brazil to save enough money to begin the journey to the United States. She described working in low paying jobs in Brazil that would never get them a living wage job because of the racism toward Africans and Haitians. People mocked them and made it difficult for them to aspire to anything beyond low paying jobs. They knew if they stayed in Brazil they would always be poor. They set their sights on making the journey to the United States with the hope of going to school and eventually being employed in better jobs.

She and her husband began the journey with two young children and a small amount of money which they hoped would be enough to get them to the United States. She carried the smallest child on her back and her older child walked along with them, frequently needing encouragement because he got very tired, hungry, and thirsty. They used different modes of transportation in each country - buses, jumping on cargo trains, traveling in box trucks and often walking miles and miles to make it from Brazil to Mexico.

They left Brazil by bus and traveled nearly two days to get to Bolivia. The journey was long but eventually they made it to Bolivia where they paid someone to drive them from Bolivia to Peru. The driver dropped them off at the Peru border where they had to fend for themselves and decide how best to make the trip to Ecuador. They paid bus fare to make the four-day journey from Peru to Ecuador, took another bus in Ecuador, and traveled another full day to Colombia. They waited three weeks in Columbia. The days were long with two small children while carrying all their belongings and food in a backpack. Eventually they traveled to Colombia by boat. Once in Colombia they had to prepare themselves for the longest and most difficult part of the journey -- making it across the Darien Gap, known as one of the most brutal trails in the world. The parent said, "I wouldn't tell my worst enemy to go through the Darien Gap."

The Darien Gap in Panama is a jungle with steep cliff-like mountains with branches and vines growing through the rocks that people grab onto and hoist themselves up to the next person ahead. She demonstrated how the person ahead will pull you up until you grab another vine. If you miss your footing, you could very well drop off the cliff which is a constant fear. Walking across the Darien Gap is 60 miles of going up and down steep mountains and crossing muddy rivers with no bridges. In order to cross the rivers, one must depend on another person to grab them so they don't sink in the mud and drown. She frequently emphasized that one cannot make the journey alone; each person has to depend on another to climb the mountains - either someone has to be ahead of you to pull you up or behind you to give you a boost. The rivers are no easier - someone has to pull you along in the river in order to avoid sinking.

People travel in groups because a larger number of people offers protection against wild animals and criminal activity. She shared that she traveled with her two children, a single woman, and two brothers as they made their way over Darien Gap's mountains and rivers. At one point they traveled with a group of Haitians and paid a man to help them navigate the trail that led to the border of Panama. Little did the group know that they were following a man intent on stealing their money. When one of the Haitians refused to give any money, he was shot. The rest of the group ran as fast as they could to escape the man and made it to another area. She cried as she ran hoping she would survive. She showed me pictures of her bruised and swollen feet and was thankful that she, along with the others, escaped.

They traveled during the day because they feared being killed by wild animals and people with criminal intent at night.

After several weeks of trudging through the mountains and rivers of Panama, they finally arrived at the Panama border. At one of the camps, the patrol officers recorded their names and other information, and sent it to the Texas checkpoint. After going through several Panama checkpoints, they paid to take a bus to Costa Rica, another bus to Nicaragua, another to Honduras, and then to Guatemala. They rode in the back of a box truck for eleven hours from Guatemala to Mexico, only to be deported to Guatemala when they arrived in Mexico. She showed me pictures of the many people jammed into the back of the truck with very little room to move, no bathroom stops/facilities, and little food available for any of them.

Back in Guatemala, people from other groups told them to walk a different route to Mexico. They walked a different route and eventually the group they were with jumped on a cargo train. She jumped with a small child on her back and held her other child. When they finally arrived at the border of Mexico, people told them

to walk another hour or so and walk across the Rio Grande River to Eagle Pass, Texas. She described that they walked across the river in shallow areas and had to swim some sections of it. When they were close to the U.S. border, the patrol agents spotted them and threw life jackets to the people that were tired and had difficulty swimming.

When onshore at the Texas border, the patrol agents gave them space blankets to maintain an adequate body temperature and food to eat. She shared how grateful she was that the patrol agents were kind and helped them. When asked the reason she wanted to come to Maine, she reported they had heard that people were friendly and would provide assistance when they got here. Within a month they flew from Texas to Maine. They are now living at the Casco Bay Inn with twenty other families. She is looking forward to having her children attend school at RSU5. She, herself, looks forward to going to school and eventually getting a job in the medical field where she can help other people.

It was a pleasure interviewing this parent who never wavered from her goal to make the journey to the United States. Many people lost the physical strength and endurance to make it through the Darien Gap. Her vision of hope for a better life gave her the strength to keep going. She said she could never turn back - it was the only opportunity they had to realize something better than the country they fled and all the countries they traveled to get here. My message to all of you is to be thankful for all that you have. Embrace these young people from Africa who made this complicated, arduous journey to gain the same opportunities that we take for granted everyday.



FY 23 RSU5 Budget Timeline

September 15, 2021	Budget Timeline
December 2, 2021	Leadership Meeting w/ Towns
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January 26, 2022	Superintendent's Recommended Budget
February 2, 2022	Budget Review: MLS, FMS, FHS, Athletics
February 9, 2022	Budget Review: MSS, PES, DCS, Inst. Support
February 16, 2022	Budget Review: Technology, CIA, Nutrition, Community Programs, Facilities & Transportation
March 9, 2022	Review of FY 23 Superintendent's Budget Board Deliberations on Budget
March 16, 2022	6:00-6:30 p.m. Q&A with Individual Board Members regarding FY 23 Budget Review of FY 23 Superintendent's Budget Public Input on Budget Board Deliberations on Budget
March 23, 2022	Adopt FY 23 School Budget
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April 13, 2022 @ PES	6:00-6:30 p.m. Q&A on FY 23 Board Adopted Budget Signing of Warrants for ABM & Referendum
April 27, 2022 @ DCS	6:00-6:30 p.m. Q&A on FY 23 Board Adopted Budget
May 11, 2022	6:00-6:30 p.m. Q&A on FY 23 Board Adopted Budget
May 25, 2022 @ FHS	Annual Budget Meeting (ABM) on the FY23 Budget Board Meeting
June 14, 2022	Budget Validation Referendum (BVR)
June 15, 2022	Computation & Declaration of Votes Assessment Warrants