The fall is quickly passing and I am grateful for all of the learning I see occurring across the District. This fall we had professional learning days where colleagues were engaged in collaborative discussions across the district. Math teachers throughout the district are working on improving their instruction as we work to strengthen the Everyday Math Program PreK-5, and implement a new math program, Big Ideas, 6th grade through high school. Additionally, we are working on the Board adopted goals for the 2017-2018 school year. Our overarching goal continues to focus on improving student achievement through student-centered teaching and learning. Our three key strategic objectives for this year’s work are as follows:

- Implementation of proficiency-based learning PreK-12
- Improved teacher and administrator effectiveness
- Creation of an updated strategic plan

A more detailed description of the goals is located on the website at www.rsu5.org/board. The primary focus for the teacher/administrator effectiveness will be devising an easily manageable system for collecting the data to track student growth.

Our current ninth graders will be the first class in RSU5 to graduate with a proficiency based diploma, so it is critical that we get all policies and procedures in place to ensure this can occur as seamlessly as possible.

The RSU5 Strategic Planning Advisory Committee (SPAC) will oversee the process to create an updated RSU5 Strategic Plan. This group, consisting of teachers, administrators, parents, students, and community members is comprised of stakeholders from the three towns. The group will create the plan with final authority for all decisions relating to the strategic plan resting with the RSU5 Board of Directors. Monthly meetings of the SPAC will be held on the first Wednesday of each month from 7:30 a.m. to 8:30 a.m. at the Central Office. The first meeting will be held on December 6th. The RSU
Board appointed the following individuals to the SPAC at their November 8, 2017 meeting: Julie Nickerson, Seth Koenig, Stephanie Paine, Jonathan Dawson, Rhea Fitzpatrick, Lindsay Sterling, Nancy Drolet, Valy Steverlynck and Cynthia Alexander. Thanks to all who are willing to serve on this committee!

We are grateful for the passage of our current school budget. Last year, the Board voted to return any extra money received from the State after the adoption of the budget to the three towns. The adopted budget for 2017-2018 is $32,310,685. The additional subsidy given to the District after budget approval in June was $168,645. This was returned to the towns. Durham is using the majority of that money to reduce taxes for the 2018 fiscal year; Freeport elected to use the money for tax relief in 2017-2018; and Pownal has elected to set aside the money in a separate fund that will be used for tax relief in 2019.

Lots of quality learning is happening in RSU5! Here are a few of the happenings that occurred this fall:

- At Morse Street School, the expansion of PreK is going well. The goal is to help students be better prepared for kindergarten.

- At Mast Landing School, 27 students across grades 3-5 completed the Noetic Learning Math Contest, a semiannual problem-solving contest designed to encourage students' interest in math, to develop their problem solving skills, and to inspire them to excel in math.

- At Pownal Elementary School, 2nd and 3rd graders did an outstanding performance with their November musical: Biomes- Animals and Plants in Their Habitats.

- At Durham Community School, the focus of school culture work has been on kindness as children participated in a number of activities during kindness week in October. The recent Peaceful Bus meeting was focused on ways to show kindness to others on the bus. Activities included making “kindness quilts,” “mix it up” lunches, sharing kind comments, and looking out for each other. Adding to the theme of kindness, families donated 642 items of pasta/sauce. This will supply the local outreach group with all the pasta and sauce they need from now until May!

- At Freeport Middle School, all of the 6th grade students have attended Kieve Leadership School, to help integrate the Freeport and Pownal students together in a new learning environment. The 7th grade students have completed an interdisciplinary unit in language arts and social studies focused on the Salem witch trials, while the 8th grade students have completed their marble roller coaster building projects in STEM, science and math classes.

- At Freeport High School, students competed against eight nearby high schools in the School Spirit Challenge and won! Through donations of non-perishable foods and cash donations, they raised 40,000 pounds of food for the Good Shepherd Food Bank. Students and staff also participated in a 6:00 a.m. pep rally that aired live on Channel 13. It was an incredible demonstration of school and community spirit!
High School Project

Our high school project is all but completed except for a few minor items. Tours of the newly renovated high school space were given to all interested parties during the open house in September. The staff and students are loving their renovated space. Thank you to all who supported this project.

Track and Field Project

The new track and field is nearing completion, with the hopes that it will be finished soon. The track and field will be ready for use by our athletes this spring. The final coat to the track will be installed after school is out in June, but it can be utilized by athletes in its current condition in the spring. Fundraising is continuing as there are items that we still do not have such as the bleachers, a garage to store the equipment, and a sound system. Nike has graciously funded an art project, selected by the students, that will go on the back of the high school that says, “Falcon Pride.” When the entire project is completed, it will be a state of the art facility. If you haven’t seen it recently, please drive by and take a look!

School Nutrition Program

By: Erin Dow, Director

My name is Erin Dow and I am the new School Nutrition Director. I joined RSU5 in late August. Previously, I was the director at Winthrop Public Schools. I am also a caterer and the Expert Chef for Guiding Stars Licensing Company. I wanted to take this opportunity to share some of the exciting things my staff and I have been working on for the last few weeks.

New changes to our program are supporting RSU5’s commitment to provide a learning environment most conducive to student success. Loaded with fresh veggies and fruit, our newly revamped garden bars at each school are a huge hit with students and staff alike. Simplified menus featuring more homestyle meals, daily vegetarian fare and healthy grab-and-go options are increasing participation in the program, and that means our students are well-nourished and ready to learn.

Please remember that animals are not allowed on the new track and field, or any of the schools’ fields.
School Nutrition con’t

We are working on a new initiative to introduce whole food cold meals such as the one pictured here. These meals, along with an expanded snack and beverage program, will ensure that students have as many options as possible to meet their needs during the school and even during after-school activities.

To help the nutrition program continue to improve and ensure that all students can access every aspect of the program (such as à la carte items and beverages) we ask that parents and guardians pre-pay for student meals and bring past due balances current. This can be done in person at the cafeteria, by sending in a check or cash with students or by paying online (one-time or recurring) at www.myschoolbucks.com. Enrolling in this service requires your student’s district ID number, which can be obtained from your school office or by emailing me at dowe@rsu5.org. If you are having difficulty affording your child’s meals, please contact me to confidentially discuss your eligibility for free or reduced price meals.

Special Education
By: Bonnie Violette, Director

Child Find Obligation
School districts have a legal obligation to “find” all students with disabilities who reside in the district. This is carried out through screenings or evaluations as follows:

1) Kindergarten screenings conducted at each elementary school in the spring prior to entering public school; or
2) Screening conducted within 30 days of enrolling in school for K-students or transfer students; or
3) Parent-referred students who are receiving home instruction; or
4) Students attending a private school in the district’s geographic area.

Executive Functioning Skills
As we go through life our brain is wired to process information entering its sensory channels. Executive functioning is one aspect of sensory processing that some people have difficulty mastering. Some children and adults develop executive functioning skills over time, while others make a conscientious effort to develop life long strategies to compensate for some executive functioning gaps.
What are executive functions? They are the brain’s ability to organize and act on information. They enable people to plan, organize, remember things, prioritize, pay attention and get started on tasks.

The general steps in the executive functioning process include:
1. Analyze a task and figure out what needs to be done.
2. Plan how to manage the task.
3. Get organized and break down tasks into a series of steps.
4. Calculate and set time aside to carry out the plan.
5. Make adjustments as needed.
6. Finish the task in the time allotted.

Under-developed executive functioning makes it difficult to keep track and manage time, create and carry out a plan, finish work on time, organize, analyze, and problem-solve, and look for information when needed.

If executive functioning skills are working well and the task is fairly simple, the brain may go through these steps in a matter of seconds. Many children and adults may find simple tasks challenging and, as a result, develop compensation strategies to function optimally.

Parents and teachers play an important role in supporting children to learn strategies that help develop executive functioning skills. Strategies may involve giving them tasks or chores to do, helping them create a plan to get tasks completed by due dates, and offering positive praise and encouragement when the tasks are done. As children mature and become young adults they learn to use electronic devices that help maintain to-do lists, alarms that alert about upcoming meetings, and devices that record number of daily steps walked each day. Be proactive and teach your children the skills they need to be happy, functional kids at home and school.

Business Office
By: Michelle Lickteig, Director

It’s hard to believe it is already December. It seems like school just started last week, except I know the holiday season is upon us already by the beautiful display of lights throughout our district (one of my favorite things about this time of year).

The business office is bustling; however, December brings budget season to the forefront and is our number one priority for the next few months. I am currently in the midst of putting together the first draft of the budget, which includes meeting with each administrator and director of the RSU throughout December. These meetings and discussions will form the basis for the superintendent’s budget, which Dr. Foley will present to the School Board on January 24, 2018, followed by Board meetings on
February 7, 14, 28 and March 14 where our administrators and directors will have the opportunity to explain and answer questions related to their individual budgets. We invite every member of the district to come to, or watch the livestream, of these Board meetings.

The goals for our budget are always to focus on initiatives which improve student achievement, including curriculum materials, teacher professional development, facilities repairs, maintenance, and transportation. Each administrator and director assembles their budget with this overarching goal in mind. While student achievement is the priority of the budget, we also recognize that we must do this in a fiscally responsible way. We make sure that each decision is weighed through both of these lenses. We hope you follow the budget process through the School Board meetings and communications via our website and home mailings.

For the full budget schedule, please visit our website www.rsu5.org/budget1819

Math Focus for RSU5
Research and experience demonstrate that high-quality mathematics instruction involves students in making sense of the mathematics they are doing, working together to solve challenging problems, using technology when appropriate, and communicating about their thinking. RSU5 math programs promote all of these mathematical practices daily.

Our primary academic focus for the 2017-2018 school year is the improvement of math achievement. Last year we developed a District Scorecard (www.rsu5.org/scorecard) which captured assessment data from grades PreK through 12 in the areas of reading and math. Our math data points included the NWEA Measure of Academic Progress, the annual Maine Education Assessment, and the SAT and Advanced Placement tests in high school. Through analyzing and reflecting on this data, it was decided that this would be part of the focus on proficiency.

Four years ago, we transitioned from an earlier version of Everyday Math to Everyday Math 4 in grades K-2. The following year, the same transition was made in grades 3-5. During this phase-in period, there were significant enough changes to the math program to warrant professional development to support teachers.

This fall, Denise Porter and Ellen Dairyko, math consultants from the University of Chicago conducted a math audit at the PreK-5 level. We are using recommendations from the audit to plan for continued math professional development.
Last spring, the Board adopted the Big Ideas Math program that spans from grade 6 through high school, Algebra II. To support the implementation, ongoing professional development is provided for all middle school and high school teachers of math. Our 6-8 Math Strategist, Nate Garnett and our Big Ideas Math consultant are focusing on mathematical practices, essential program components, and technology to help teachers with successful implementation.

As the year progresses, we will provide high quality ongoing coaching from our math strategists and additional professional development for teachers with the goal to improve our math achievement for the students of RSU5.

Math Program Resources For Parents and Students

K-5 Everyday Math:
https://connected.mcgraw-hill.com/connected/login.do

Your child has an online account that is part of the Everyday Math program. He/she can access their account from home, providing them with lots of tools to help them succeed in math. Please contact your child's teacher for information about your child's login and password.

There are many resources that can help you support your child's math experiences at home:

- Access homework online
- Virtual tools like protractors or fractions shapes
- Online versions of the games
- E-book version of the Student Reference Book
- Video tutorials

6-8 Big Idea Math:
www.bigideasmath.com
Use: Student’s login

Lesson Tutorial Videos can be found in the online student resource library, or as embedded links in the student eBook app.

Thank you for partnering with us to help your child reach their full potential in math!