Happenings in RSU5
By Dr. Becky Foley, Superintendent

Happy February to each of you! Hope this newsletter finds you well. Lots of flu and other winter illnesses are gripping our staff and students, but I see us all persevering through it, knowing that this too will soon pass!

Budget Update
On January 23rd, I presented the superintendent’s recommended budget to the Board. Our overarching goal is focused on increasing student achievement through improved student-centered teaching and learning. Our four key strategic objectives for this year are as follow:

- Continued implementation of proficiency-based learning PreK-12
- Improved teacher and administrator effectiveness
- Creation of an updated strategic plan
- Incorporate engagement with stakeholders

We decided to prioritize the three following key areas for the budget to meet these goals: maintain class sizes, increase student support, and increase nursing services. The budget includes the following requests focused on those three target areas:

- Two Additional Classroom Teachers, one at MSS and one at DCS
- One Special Education Teacher
- One Special Education Technician
- Three RTI-B Ed Techs @ PES, MLS, & MSS
- Nursing - .3 Freeport Middle School
- Expansion of Endeavor Program @ FHS

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We Need You!
The School Board has created a Sustainability Advisory Committee and is looking for three parents/community members from each town to serve on the committee. Please turn to page 6 for additional information on the committee.

2019-2020 School Calendar
The 2019-2020 school year calendar has been adopted. The calendar can be found on the RSU5 website located HERE

Mentoring Opportunities
Turn to page 7 to read about mentoring opportunities at FHS
We believe that each one of these positions will support increased student achievement. Our projected enrollment for next year shows enrollment remaining the same or increasing slightly. We are expecting 1993 students in the fall which is the same as this year which is the highest enrollment since the RSU was formed in 2009. The greatest increase will be at the high school with a projected enrollment of 588.

Currently our proposed budget is a 3.3% increase in expenditures compared to this year’s budget, with an increase to the local tax impact of 4.98%. There are still many 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.

The complete budget powerpoint presentation may be seen HERE.

I want to thank each of you as we work together to help all of our students to succeed. I see evidence of this every day throughout the District. Most recently, I saw the video of one of our Unified Arts Basketball players playing in the senior varsity game. I was impressed by the support and persistence our players as well as the competing team’s players gave to him as he scored two points. The kindness shown is an example of how we are doing a great job of not only preparing our students academically for the world, but most importantly, instilling in them empathy and kindness for others.

Snow Days
To Call or Not to Call: That is the Question!

Living in Maine has so many benefits, but winter weather is a challenge for all school districts. At a recent Board meeting, I was asked to explain the process used for deciding whether to have a snow day or not. The day begins early with Dennis Ouellette, Transportation Director, waking up at 3:30 a.m. and driving through Durham, Freeport, and Pownal, checking out the conditions of the roads. He frequently contacts the road commissioners in each of the three towns. At 4:30 a.m., I begin checking the weather forecast in all three towns. Usually around 4:40 a.m. I am on the phone with Brunswick and RSU 75 (Topsham) as we all send students to Region 10, the vocational school. All three superintendents try and make the same decision, but don’t always, depending on the road conditions in each of our communities. At the same time, I am texting Yarmouth to see what their thoughts on the day are, as they border us to the south, and the superintendent there is talking with Falmouth and 51. At the same time I’m texting, either Topsham or Brunswick will contact Bath. Altogether, seven superintendents are discussing weather and sharing options for the day. Brunswick contracts with Weatherman Russ Murley, and he weighs in with his thoughts. Around 4:45 a.m., I have a phone conversation with Dennis about the road conditions in our district before making a final decision.

Usually, by 5:00 a.m. I make the call of whether to have school or not because of the notifications that need to go out to different groups. Obviously, sometimes I make the wrong call, just as the weatherman
does when forecasting the weather, but getting our students to and from school safely is always first and foremost on my mind.

I do understand the dilemma calling off school causes for working parents. For every day we miss, we make up, ensuring our students go to school 175 days every year, regardless of how many snow days we have. We also try to ensure that the curriculum that is missed is taught. We have yearly expectations of the material to be covered in the different grade levels. One of the essential characteristics for all teachers is flexibility. When a snow day or late start occurs, teachers modify their lessons as needed. We know that the teachers will ultimately ensure that the essential content is taught.

Thus far we have had four snow days this year. Here’s hoping that we are finished for this school year, although we did have a couple of big storms in March last year. I’m hopeful because rumor has it that Punxsutawney Phil from Pennsylvania failed to see his shadow this year, thus predicting an early spring is on its way!

### Upcoming Q & A’s with the Superintendent

Please join the superintendent and assistant superintendent for any or all of the following question/answer sessions. We want to hear what you have to say about what is going well and areas that we can improve. Here are the days and times:

- **Thursday, February 28th** - Superintendent’s Tea - 3:30-4:30 a.m. @ PES Library
- **Thursday, March 21st** - Mugs & Muffins - 9:00-10:00 a.m. @ FHS Conference Room
- **Wednesday, April 3rd** - Dessert with the Superintendent - 6:00-7:00 pm. @ DCS Library

### Curriculum Updates

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

### Supporting Students in RSU5 Through Our New Peer Mentor Support Program for Newly Hired Educators!

The newly Board adopted educational vision in RSU5 is “*To inspire and support every learner by challenging minds, building character, sparking creativity, and nurturing passions.*”

The goal of any educational effort is to facilitate student learning that by graduation prepares students to be respectful citizens who learn and contribute to their communities for life. Our educational mission includes that our school culture fosters well-being, respect and curiosity while challenging students with clearly defined and rigorous expectations.

As we hire new educators, we want to support them in every way so that the children within the RSU5 community have the educational experiences that foster creative problem solving and critical thinkers who can communicate in our ever evolving world. We believe that with the launching of our Peer Mentor and Support Program for educators this fall, mentors, mentees and students will all feel the positive impact.

Research shows that having a strong peer mentoring program for newly hired educators has positive outcomes for mentors, mentees and students. It builds teacher leadership, improves
educator retention and has positive impact on student learning. Mentors provide ongoing support to mentees that help them acculturate to their school and the overall school system and assist them as they manage the challenges of starting out in the profession. The support the mentee receives will help to strengthen the instructional strategies that impact student achievement. Mentors will partner with their mentees to guide professional development through reflection on their practices and on learning, making a positive impact on the lives of their learners.

**Business Office Updates**
By Michelle Lickteig, Director of Finance and Human Resources

I hope your holidays were wonderful and that you are faring well through the winter season.

The Finance Committee is researching and developing a recommendation for our cost sharing formula. For those that don’t know, when the RSU was formed in 2009, a formula was put together that calculates how each town contributes tax revenue to the school district. This formula has not changed since the formation of the RSU. The School Board has tasked the Finance Committee to review the current formula, assess what other districts are doing, talk with the three towns and come back to the Board with a recommendation for whether to continue with the current formula or change to a different formula. Per pupil enrollment and state valuation are two of the key factors most districts use in creating their cost sharing formula.

The Finance Committee has been meeting about twice a month through most of this fiscal year. They have been working hard to not only understand what other districts are doing, but how and why our district adopted the current formula. The Finance Committee is hoping to provide a recommendation to the Board by the end of May.

**Special Education Updates**
By Bonnie Violette, Director of Instructional Support

Teaching children to be independent learners is a valuable skill that will carry them through life. When children struggle, our first inclination is to challenge them less. Typically, children get increased support – we may do the task for them, give them more explicit instructions, or repeat the same directions. Although increased support may get children through the task at hand, are they learning to persevere or rely on themselves to get through the next challenging obstacle? Creating opportunities that encourage children to be independent is essential.

Begin by fostering each child’s innate curiosity to learn. We all have our own learning style, motivations, interests, strengths, and weaknesses. Most of us learn about our interests and strengths from trusted people in our lives. We observe the people we admire and try to emulate them. We look for qualities that we like and try to develop them in ourselves. Our interests and strengths motivate us to try harder, particularly when confronting a challenge. As children grow up, teach them to identify their personal strengths and learning styles.

- Model the behaviors and language you want children to learn.
- Identify and talk to children about their strengths.
- Create opportunities in which children can use their strengths to shine at home and school.
- Teach children ways to persevere through tough tasks.
- Encourage children to try again when they are not successful the first time.
- Talk to children about ways to enhance their strengths.
- Take pride when children use their strengths to excel.

Learning occurs when we feel excitement about interests or skills that help us grow and develop. Just as we need clear explanations, novel activities, and encouragement to learn skills that will help us -- so do children. Creativity and novelty are key in learning. Learning is a
discovery process. Create opportunities in which children can discover their interests and unique skills.

- Take time to get to know children and build trusting relationships with them.
- Talk to children about their interests and plan activities that match their interests.
- Model excitement about learning.
- Take pride when children discover and get excited about new learning.

Teaching children to be independent requires that we challenge ourselves as well as our children. Be a role model that children will admire and emulate. Be a champion for children.

**Mast Landing Students Take the School Lunchroom Reins**

By Erin Dow, Director of Nutrition

In late January, Mast Landing Students were given a suggestion box and the chance to brainstorm new ideas for the school lunch program. MLS nutrition team members, Dorothy Curtis and Deanna Coro, along with Director Erin Dow, developed six new menus from the most popular themes from the students. Erin presented them at an all-student assembly, whose loud cheering was a sure indication that they approved of their options. Each grade had two menus to choose from and cast their ballots for their favorite, which were then featured on the MLS menu on each Wednesday in February. Grade 3 chose an Italian meal of Homemade Cheese Lasagna with Garlic Bread and Caesar Salad. Fourth graders had a pick of two Asian-themed menus, deciding on a PuPu Platter-style meal of Miso Soup, Pork Fried Rice, Teriyaki Skewers, Crab Rangoons and a Fruit and Veggie Bar. The fifth graders had their pick of two “Land and Sea” themed menus, and the runaway winner of that vote was Baked Maine Haddock with Butter & Crumbs, Salisbury Steak and Gravy, Cheddar-Chive Mashed Potatoes and Oven-Roasted Corn.

The nutrition staff want to thank the students for all of their enthusiasm and great ideas, and we expect to roll many of these new items out to the rest of the district in the near future. Please check out our latest menus by going to the RSU5 website located [HERE](#).

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**Technology Assistance for Community Members**

The RUS5 Information Technology Department has been focusing on customer support this year. Part of our efforts have been to be a resource for the community. In cooperation with RSU5 Community Programs, we have offered a post-holiday drop-in session, “I got this new device as a holiday gift... now what?” where we helped community members setup and use their new tech gadgets. We currently are hosting “Tech Tuesdays,” a drop in time from 3:00 - 4:00 p.m. for the community to stop by and gain assistance with technology. These drop in sessions are held at Freeport High School in the technology room. Our staff is also instructing in adult education classes with a full range of apps like Chrome, Gmail, Calendar, Drive, Backup & Sync, Docs, Sheets, Slides, Forms and more. While this is a start, we hope to offer more community programing in the spring. For more information, contact Jim Grant, Technology Director at grantj@rsu5.org.
WE NEED YOU!

RSU5 Board of Directors
Sustainability Advisory Committee

Committee Charge:
Whereas the RSU5 Board of Directors recognizes the importance of promoting practices that strengthen the sustainability of RSU5 operations and facilities, while providing opportunities for environmental learning, we hereby charge the RSU5 Sustainability Advisory Committee (SAC) to inspire a sustainability ethic or mindset in RSU5 employees, students, and departments with the intent of identifying greener opportunities for RSU5 while being fiscally responsible.

The SAC will reference a multitude of documents as resource materials to influence their decision-making. These include but are not limited to the following:

➢ Sustainability plans from other school districts;
➢ RSU5 Mission and Vision documents; and
➢ Other related materials.

Committee Membership:
The SAC will be comprised of stakeholders representing staff, students and the community. The committee will be comprised of representatives from the three towns and the following stakeholder groups.

➢ Teachers (2)
➢ Building Administrator (1)
➢ Parents/Community Members from each town (3)
➢ Students (2)
➢ Board of Directors representative (3)
➢ Superintendent of Schools (1)
➢ Director of Maintenance and Operations (1)

Decision-Making Considerations:
The SAC will strive to build consensus among committee members when making recommendations to the RSU5 Board of Directors. Final authority for all decisions relating to the sustainability plan rests with the RSU5 Board of Directors.

Meetings:
Monthly meetings of the SAC will be held the first Tuesday of each month from 7:00 a.m. to 8:00 a.m. at the Superintendent’s Office (17 West Street, Freeport). The initial meeting will be held on April 2, 2019. Additional meetings may be scheduled as needed.

Individuals who wish to be considered for membership on the SAC should submit a letter indicating what strengths you would bring to the committee to Ginny McManus, Assistant to the Superintendent, by February 28, 2019. The letter can be e-mailed to mcmanusg@rsu5.org

The RSU5 Board will appoint individuals to the SAC at the March 13, 2019 Board of Directors’ meeting.

Approved by Board of Directors: 2/6/19
New Mission and Vision Statement for RSU5

At a recent Board meeting, we adopted a new mission and vision statement. Thank you to all who filled out surveys over the last several months giving us your thoughts and feedback. Following is our new mission and vision statement:

RSU No. 5 Mission:
To inspire and support every learner by challenging minds, building character, sparking creativity, and nurturing passions.

RSU No. 5 Vision:
Our Students:
In RSU No. 5, learners become healthy, empathetic, and responsible citizens who contribute to their local and global communities. Students are creative problem solvers and critical thinkers who communicate effectively in an evolving world.

Our Learning:
RSU No. 5 responds to individual needs and prepares students to thrive in their personal and professional lives. Learning is personalized to challenge students and explore their passions. Students choose from a variety of diverse and engaging experiences, including opportunities for active, experiential, real-world learning.

Our Culture/Community:
In RSU No. 5, students learn in joyful environments that are physically and emotionally safe. The school culture fosters well-being, respect, and curiosity while challenging students with clearly defined and rigorous expectations. Partnerships involving parents and community inspire and support enriched learning for all students.

Students graduate as compassionate, honest, and respectful citizens who learn and contribute to their communities for life.

Freeport High School Mentoring Program brings together outside adults in the community to meet regularly with a student who may be disengaged, struggling academically and/or socially, and can benefit from a trusting and positive connection with a caring adult. For more information contact Dede Bennell at 865-4706x307 or bennelld@rsu5.org

Why?
- Mentorship in high school has the power to impact the course of students' academic and personal life trajectories.
- Positive human connection built in trust with at least one caring adult can have tremendous benefits for the student: reduce dropout rates, bullying and improve social emotional capacities.
- Studies show that behavior, relationships and attitudes improve when a student has an adult mentor.

How
- Fill out an application.
- Meet with Mentor Program coordinators to get trained.
- Background check and fingerprinting required by the Department of Education.

When
- Mentors can start once the application process and training are completed.
- Background check procedure needs to be in process or completed to start mentoring.
- Meet weekly or bi weekly with student at a mutually agreed upon time.
- Once background check is cleared, mentors may take students off campus.

Goals
- For the mentor and student to develop a positive and trusting relationship.
- Be a good listener.
- To get students in engaged in school and to learn about opportunities and life beyond high school.
- Enable the students to develop their own skills, strategies and capability so that they are able to handle challenges and obstacles more effectively.
- To reduce the rate of dropouts.
- Increase students’ chance for success.