

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

Let's Help All Children Flourish

The school year is drawing to a close across Maine. Unfortunately, due to COVID-19, we are unable to bring closure to the year in our normal celebratory way. It also makes it difficult to respond and help students process current events such as the recent killing of George Floyd in Minnesota and the protests concerning systemic racism. Between the virus, the economic upheaval, and the killings, the world feels uncertain and unsafe during these dark moments. Bigotry and hate must not be tolerated in a democratic society. In RSU5, we are committed to building safe, welcoming environments for all of our students, especially our students from diverse backgrounds.

"Justice will not be served until those who are unaffected are as outraged as those who are" (Benjamin Franklin). Seeing the photos of George Floyd under the knee of an officer has ignited the national outrage and discourse that will hopefully lead to change. Education is key to change. In RSU5, we are committed to building communities and schools that are more equitable, just, and safe.

Last September, after receiving input from all stakeholders, the Board approved a 5-year Strategic Plan for RSU5. A principal component of the plan addresses the need for strengthening and aligning all of our social/emotional supports. The plan states, "All RSU5 students experience a joyful learning climate that is safe, nurturing, and fosters curiosity." Part of strengthening social/emotional systems includes building skills in students and staff to become more socially aware. Learning how to empathize with others' points of view, advocate for people from diverse backgrounds and cultures, and maintain healthy and rewarding relationships with individuals who look and think differently than we do is critical in creating strong democratic societies. This is just a beginning as we have much more to learn, especially in the area of unconscious bias. In the coming year, we will continue to examine our curriculum and reflect on actions that will sow seeds of inclusiveness, and create systemic change.

Each one of us must reflect on what we can do individually to expedite the change to end all systemic discrimination. It is incumbent on each of us to live our lives free of bias and as a model for our children and others to observe. Our children watch us and how we respond to events. Let's stand up to attitudes that further divide our country and deny justice to others. Even in the midst of moments of darkness, I remain optimistic about our future when I look into the faces of our students. I see joy; I see hope; I see our future. In solidarity with black families, we will listen and learn, until we create a district, a state, and a country in which every child has the opportunity and right to flourish.



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Superintendent
Foley on
Twitter:
[twitter.com/
rsu5_super](https://twitter.com/rsu5_super)

Important Budget Dates

June 24, 2020
*Public Hearing
6:30 p.m. via
Zoom

*July 14, 2020
Budget
Validation
Referendum
in each Town

Revised 2020-21 School Calendar

The 2020-2021
calendar was
revised on May
27th. Please
see page 5 for
the revised
calendar

Budget Updates

On April 1st the Board of Directors adopted a budget, but as the economy worsened, they decided to revisit the budget. On May 13th, the district administrative team and Board of Directors worked diligently to reduce the budget by an additional \$447,010.00 from what was originally adopted. We hope with reducing the tax impact that our communities can support the proposed FY21 Budget.

Currently, the budget reflects a 2.32% expenditure increase. This aligns directly with the projected student enrollment growth of 2.4%. Most of the expenditure increases in the FY21 budget are non-discretionary. These include additional costs in the following areas: contractual salary and benefits, funding for substitute teachers, new hires, and one additional bus to support the projected enrollment growth (49 students), insurance, Region 10, nutrition, fuel and electricity.

The proposed budget creates more equity between schools in the district, and it responds to growing enrollment needs. This budget expands programming, including the addition of a .5 guidance counselor, .5 PreK teacher, and .5 ed tech at DCS; a .5 social worker, a 1.0 math teacher, and a .5 ed tech at the Freeport High School; a .5 ed tech at Freeport Middle School; a .2 teacher at Mast Landing School; and a .1 PreK teacher at Pownal Elementary School.

These cuts include all staff taking a furlough day in the upcoming year. Asking our staff to take a cut in their anticipated pay at a time when many employees have never worked harder was difficult. However, we recognize that these are tough economic times for all.

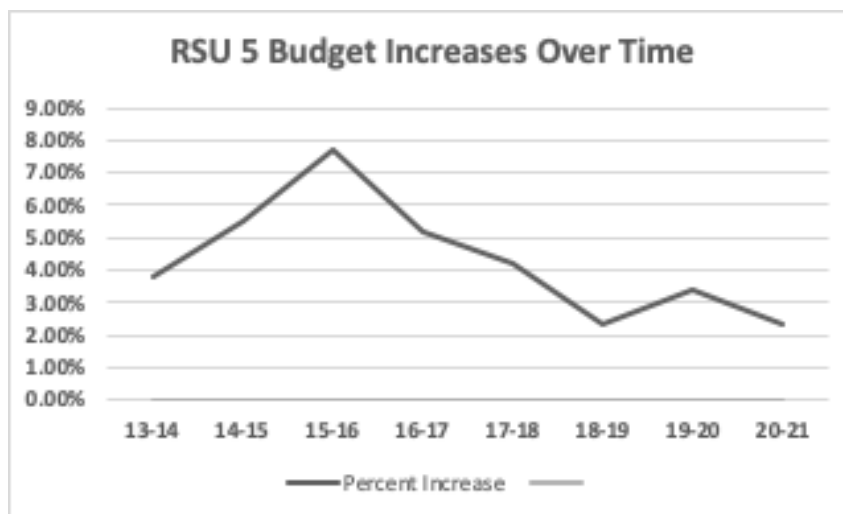
The Board also decided to use an additional \$389,000 from the undesignated fund balance to lower the tax impact to -0.91% in Durham, +0.25% in Freeport, and +0.14% in Pownal. Based on 2019 valuations, a homeowner of a \$200,000 home in Durham would see an estimated \$36.93 reduction in taxes, whereas in Freeport and Pownal taxes would increase by \$7.13 and \$5.14 respectively.

Due to COVID-19 and a recent executive order from Governor Mills, RSU5 **will not have their annual budget meeting on June 17th as previously communicated. Instead, on June 24th at 6:30 p.m., there will be a public hearing via Zoom to solicit public comment and questions on the FY 21 budget.**

We believe this budget is fiscally responsible to our taxpayers while still supporting our learners and staff. We hope our communities can support this budget during these difficult economic times. Please remember to vote on July 14th. There will be five questions on the ballot regarding the RSU 5 budget:

- One question on whether you support the overall budget
- One question on support of the adult education budget
- Two questions on supporting the vocational school (Region 10) budget
- One question on support of additional monies to the track and field reserve account.

All budget documents can be found and reviewed on the RSU5 website under [Budget 2020-2021](#)



Curriculum Updates

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

Returning to School Plan: What Will It Look Like?

What will school look like in the fall? This is the most frequently asked question we are hearing from parents, staff and students these days. We would love to say with absolute certainty that students and staff will be on campus on the first day of school and that all school activities will continue as usual, but that will likely not be the case. Instead, we will be spending the next several weeks developing a plan for three possible models of learning:

- a continuation of remote learning,
- a hybrid model that may include in person and/or remote learning,
- everyone coming back to school on a typical schedule.

Over the past eight weeks, we have experienced significant key learnings that have prepared us for any type of reopening model we end up having, whether we continue with virtual learning, have in person learning for all, or have a hybrid model.

In some elementary schools, grade level teachers have taken a content area and developed video lessons for asynchronous learning benefitting the entire grade, not just their homeroom class. During weekly grade level meetings, these same teachers are watching each other's videos and providing one another with feedback for improvement. They are sharing in the learning of all students in that grade. This collaborative process is creating an even higher level of professional practice for all.

As we grapple with several unknowns, we will be looking at an If/Then approach to decision-making about where we will pivot in the plan. Since the middle of March, information we have received and decisions that were made at the national and state levels have changed dramatically from week-to-week and sometimes even day-to-day. The data about the community transmission of COVID-19 continues to evolve. The possibility of additional waves of the virus outbreak is real, and although work is being done to develop a vaccine, it is not within reach at this time.

RSU5 has recently put together a 24 member Reopening of School Advisory Team that includes representation from our school community stakeholders. The goal of the team is to advise the superintendent on needed components in each mode of learning. We will be meeting twice monthly during the summer, and once the plan is developed, it will be presented to the Board for its consideration. A communication will be sent out to our school community some time in August to share the plan and its details.

The Team will consider several key conditions while planning what our reopening will look like this fall. The plan we develop will be designed to be responsive to the current and evolving local conditions of the pandemic. This may require us to pivot with short notice and comply with any national, state and local government mandates and Maine CDC recommendations.

The Reopening of School of Advisory Team will be meeting on the following dates from 3:00-4:30 p.m.

June 9, June 23
July 7, July 21
August 4, August 18

If you would like a recap of the meeting and would like to provide additional input, there will be an opportunity after each of these meetings from 4:30-5:30 to meet with the superintendent and me via Zoom (see information below). If you are unable to attend these sessions, you can access the minutes at this [link](#) on the RSU 5 website. No matter what the model is when we return, we will work diligently to ensure a smooth transition for our students on August 31st!

Reopening of School Recap Meetings via Zoom - <https://networkmaine.zoom.us/j/84700793864>
Meeting ID: 847 0079 3864

Join by telephone: 1 646 876 9923



Technology Assistance

The RSU 5 Tech Department is open all summer and offers office hours all year round from 7:30 AM to 4:30 PM. For general computer software and hardware tech support please contact the IT department at our help desk or group email: techsupport@rsu5.org / Website - RSU5 IT. General info, district wide question or concerns can be directed to Jim Grant, Director of IT - grantj@rsu5.org - FHS Tech dept. #: (207) 865-4706 ext. 630.

If you would like to contact a team member directly, please use the following based on school:
FHS, MSS, MLS - Keith Andrews, andrewsk@rsu5.org - FHS Tech dept. #: (207) 865-4706 ext. 300
FMS - Jack Horgan, horganj@rsu5.org - FMS Tech dept. #: (207) 865-6051 ext. 108
DCS, PES - Andrew Logan, logana@rsu5.org - DCS Tech dept. #: (207) 353-9333 ext. 114

Instructional Support

By Bonnie Violette, Director of Instructional Support

Changing Worlds, Changing Lives

There are events that change our world, and when we adapt to them, improve our lives. Who could have predicted that a pandemic was the disruption that would spearhead opportunities to use technology for instruction? Who could have guessed that technology would bring our lives together in so many interesting ways? Who would have thought that technology could empower learning in such a meaningful way?

Zoom and Google Meet have become the new platform for social connection. It allowed teachers and students to interact virtually. Special educators got a glimpse into the lives of their students, which offered them insights about more effective ways to teach individual students. Students learned how to make social connections and interact virtually – a necessary skill they will need in the workplace of the future.

Virtual reading instruction was impressive to observe. Special educators taught mini-lessons, shared their screens with students, and students navigated the screens with their tracking pads. Just as adults use technology to support reading and writing, our students have learned to use technology tools to assist with their learning - a skill that will be essential for them to access and share information in the future.

Special educators used online programs that offered students a variety of ways to learn content. Applications and virtual meetings serve different functions, yet both offer options to facilitate learning. Using different apps allowed students to learn content based on their individual learning needs and styles - a skill they will use to access their learning in the future.

In the short-term our staff learned many effective ways to use technology to teach and will continue to expand their skills in this area. In the long-term our students learned ways to use technology as a tool they will use when we return to school and long after they leave high school. The pandemic propelled us into uncharted territory, provided educators the opportunity to experiment with technology tools and instruction, and gave all students the gift of technology to access learning.

RSU5 School Calendar 2020-2021

AUGUST/SEPTEMBER					OCTOBER					NOVEMBER					DECEMBER					JANUARY									
M	T	W	TH	F	M	T	W	TH	F	M	T	W	TH	F	M	T	W	TH	F	M	T	W	TH	F					
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28	29	30								30																			
21					20					16					16					19									
8/26&27 Professional Learning Days					8 Early Release - Half Day					3 Professional Learning Day (1/2)					23-31 December Vacation					1 New Years Day									
8/31 First Student Day PreK-9					9 Professional Learning Day					11 Veterans Day										18 Martin Luther King, Jr. Day									
9/1 All PreK-12 Students					12 Indigenous People's Day					25 Professional Compensation Day																			
9/4 & 9/7 No School (Labor Day)										26-27 Thanksgiving Break																			
FEBRUARY					MARCH					APRIL					MAY					JUNE									
M	T	W	TH	F	M	T	W	TH	F	M	T	W	TH	F	M	T	W	TH	F	M	T	W	TH	F					
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14					22					16					20					11									
12 Furlough Day					12 Professional Learning Day					16 Professional Compensation Day					31 Memorial Day					13 Graduation									
15 Presidents' Day					31 Early Release - Half Day					19 Patriots' Day										15 Last day - If No Snow Days									
16-19 February Vacation										20-23 April Vacation										<div style="display: flex; align-items: center;"> <div style="border: 1px solid black; width: 15px; height: 15px; margin-right: 5px; position: relative;"> <div style="position: absolute; top: 50%; left: 50%; transform: translate(-50%, -50%); border-left: 1px solid black; border-bottom: 1px solid black;"></div> </div> Half Day Schedule Students </div>									
																				* Storm Make up Days (16-22)									



NO SCHOOL - Holiday/Vacation



PROFESSIONAL LEARNING DAY - No Students (4 1/2)



PROFESSIONAL COMPENSATION DAY - No Students (2)



EARLY RELEASE FOR STUDENTS - Half Day Schedule (2)



FURLOUGH DAY FOR STAFF - No Students



LAST DAY OF SCHOOL-(if no snow days)-PK-12 HALF DAY Storm Make-up days if needed: 6/16-6/22