

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

I want to begin with a huge note of gratitude to each of you for partnering with us to ensure a smooth opening of school this fall. Students have settled into their routines nicely.

We continue to navigate the daily challenges presented by the pandemic. Cases of Covid continue to increase. We are now at 37 cases districtwide. Last September we had four cases districtwide compared to twenty-nine this year! Last October we had one case. We currently are already at eight cases. Our best protection against COVID is the vaccine or participating in pooled testing. Our staff vaccination rate is 95.43%. Pooled testing will be available in all of our schools by the beginning of November. My hope is that with the arrival of the vaccine for our younger students that we will begin to see a decrease in the number of cases in RSU 5.

Our work on the strategic plan continues to move forward. This year we are focused on reflecting on ways to expand opportunities to strengthen student voice. We define student voice as the expression of values, opinions, beliefs and perspectives that

- Leads to choice
- Influences decision making

In RSU 5, student voice takes on many forms, some more formal than others. Student voice in our youngest learners begins with greeting one another in voices that can be heard, developing classroom norms, and writing letters to the principals to influence lunch choices or special days of celebration. As students become older, there are more formal ways to elevate student voice. Four years ago, two student representatives to the RSU 5 School Board were added. They report on current happenings at the high school and have weighed in on such matters as returning to school five days a week. Additionally, all of our schools have active Civil Rights Teams that ensure we foster cultures of respect and inclusiveness. A student leadership team was created this year which further elevates student voice at the high school. This team adds another avenue for students to be heard, in addition to the already existing student council, class officers, club leaders, and athletic captains. Another new initiative to expand student voice is the creation of advisory student leaders who will meet regularly and help to plan and facilitate advisory activities.

These initiatives are strengthening the student voice in RSU5. "There is no better engine to pull the train of school reform than the student voice, and once it picks up steam it is difficult to derail..."(Beaudoin, 2006). Student voice is critical in developing healthy school cultures. In RSU 5, we are committed to lifting all voices.



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Superintendent
Foley on Twitter:

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Upcoming Dates

**November 11th
is Veterans Day
- No School**

**November 12th
Professional
Learning Day -
No School**

**November 24th
Professional
Compensation
Day - No School**

**Nov. 25 & 26
Thanksgiving
Break - No
School**



Immunizations

As you may remember, there has been a recent change in legislation regarding vaccines. The new law took effect on September 1, 2021 that removed both philosophical and religious exemptions from immunization requirements. Students will not be permitted to attend school without evidence of immunization or proof of immunity against disease. We also received news recently that there are two additional rules that we must follow:

- We can no longer accept letters of exemption from a naturopathic physician;
- All exemptions must be from doctors that are licensed to practice medicine in the State of Maine.

Freeport High School Scholarship Foundation

Last spring Freeport High School Scholarship Foundation was created. The Foundation's goal is to raise money in order to provide scholarships to Freeport High School students annually. The scholarships will also provide mentoring to students during their post-secondary years. Recipients must have strong potential, demonstrate significant engagement in their communities, and be in need of financial assistance in order to go on to higher education.

The Foundation's scholarships are unique in RSU5, both in the size of the awards and allowing eligibility to 11th graders to help incentivize their post-graduation plans. Two scholarships, in the amount of \$5,000 per year for up to four years, were awarded this past spring - one to a graduating senior and one to a junior at Freeport High School. John Paterson, President of the Foundation said, "Our long term goal for the Foundation is to raise \$2,000,000 so that we can extend our impact to more students." The scholarship fund currently has almost \$800,000! To learn more about the Foundation, visit the website at www.fhsscholarships.org. As you consider organizations for charitable giving this season, we hope you will think about donating to the Freeport High School Scholarship Foundation. These scholarships have the potential to alter the course of students' lives and create ripples of positive change throughout our 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 first community question and answer period on November 1st from 6:00 – 7:00 pm. We would love to hear your latest thoughts on how the school year is going or any other topic of interest to you. Hope to see you there!

Join Zoom Meeting

<https://networkmaine.zoom.us/j/87451668608>

Webinar ID: 874 5166 8608

Join by Telephone:

+1 646 876 9923

Curriculum Updates

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

Addressing Anxiety in Students

Anxiety in our youth and adults has existed for a long time. We all know of a colleague, friend or family member that has suffered from anxiety at some time in their lives. In the early spring of 2020, this didn't get any better. COVID-19 and its impact on schools and social situations increased our awareness of anxieties related to food insecurities, lack of face to face interactions, virtual learning, and cancellations of sporting, arts, and family events.

Lynn Lyons, a Licensed Clinical Social Worker, who is well known for her work specializing in anxiety, helped the families and staff members of RSU5 have a better understanding of how our bodies react to worries and how we can manage anxiety with concrete strategies. On the evening of Oct. 6, Lynn presented a two hour session, *Managing Mental Health During Uncertain Times*, that was open to all families and community members in the RSU. A recording of this session was made available online for two weeks. If you were not able to view the event, Lynn has a podcast at: Flusterclux.com and her website is lynnlyons.com. Two days later, Lynn Lyons delivered a full day presentation, *Managing and Preventing Anxiety and Depression in the Classroom* to educators.

So often we get trapped in the specific content of the anxiety rather than the process. This leads us into "doing the disorder." One statement that Lynn says we should never say to children is, "As long as you do your best." For perfectionists, your best is never done. This often leads to late work for perfectionists. The second comment to avoid is, "What's the worst that could happen?" This question makes them think in catastrophic terms. Both are examples of doing the disorder and making the anxiety worse.

Anxiety wants certainty and wants to feel safe or it wants out! Lynn provided us with concrete ways to incorporate emotional management into daily learning. We learned that we need to help children normalize the discomfort of worry and prepare them for the uncertainties of life and not to avoid them. We all have situational worries. Examples may be speaking or performing in front of a group or taking a test. This requires flexibility and the ability to problem solve.

If you have more interest in this topic, please check out lynnlyons.com. Her website provides links to her podcasts that provide strategies for managing anxiety.

Special Education Updates

By Bonnie Violette, Director of Instructional Support

Celebration of Reading

Let's celebrate our students who are learning to read! It's not as easy as it appears. The cognitive brain has to integrate phonological, orthographic, meaning, and context processing systems. What does that mean? Phonological processing is the production of speech sounds in words; meaning is word retrieval, context is attaching words to background knowledge, and orthography is the printed word (Seidenberg, 2013). It all has to do with learning sounds, meaning, context, and print. Sounds simple, doesn't it?

Explicit instruction is required for students to assimilate all four systems. Teachers in RSU5's elementary grades are teaching these systems to our younger students. They are aligning instructional practice to the science of reading. Most recently, reading researchers debated how best to publicize reading research in a usable, manageable format that

teachers could easily utilize (Seidenberg, 2013). Some states are offering professional development through university teacher training programs, others are offering workshops, conferences, and in-service sessions through professional organizations. RSU5 teachers are reading the research and implementing strategies to hone and perfect delivery of reading instruction. This will benefit all students! Over time this means that up to 80% of students will learn to read within the general education curriculum.

As we celebrate National Dyslexia Awareness in October, RSU5 teachers have begun administering universal screening to all students in kindergarten through third grade. Students who need a more structured, intensive reading approach are identified early and receive targeted interventions through a multi-tiered system of support (formerly response to intervention) at each school. Students identified through this systematic approach will receive the reading instruction needed in all four systems described above. Some of these students may have dyslexia, a “brain-based type of learning disability that specifically impairs a person’s ability to read” (National Institute of Neurological Disorders and Strokes, 2013). Learning to read will be more difficult; however with structured, intensive reading instruction, students will improve and become effective readers.

Even though students with dyslexia may have difficulty learning to read, remember that they are highly intelligent, creative, and can compensate for their reading disabilities. They will become successful adults! Some famous people with dyslexia include filmmaker Steven Spielberg, musician John Lennon, artist Leonardo DaVinci, Apple founder Steve Jobs, and space scientist Dr. Maggie Aderin-Pocock. Our students with dyslexia will influence and change the world because committed teachers provided them with structured, explicit reading instruction.

This article is a testament to our teachers who have embraced the science of reading and are conscientiously following the research to provide integrated reading instruction to all students, and more intensive instruction to some. We are fortunate that all of our students will meet adulthood head-on with the skills they need to inspire others.

FY 23 RSU5 Budget Timeline
9-15-21

September 15, 2021	Budget Timeline
TBD	Leadership Meeting w/ Towns
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January 26, 2022	Superintendent's Recommended Budget
February 2, 2022	Budget Review: DCS, FMS, FHS, Athletics
February 9, 2022	Budget Review: MSS, PES, MLS, 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 @ DCS	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