

INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

The RSU5 Strategic Framework is the result of nine months of joint effort between the community, district educators, and the Board of Directors to develop a forward-looking document to guide decision-making at multiple levels. This is a living document that will change and adapt as situations warrant. This is intended to be ambitious and bold, a necessity for the ever-changing world that our children will inherit.

The RSU5 Board of Directors intends to use this document to create a broader system of *community* accountability and transparency for the towns of Durham, Freeport, and Pownal, as well as their schools. As such, we acknowledge that there are many pivotal roles required to provide quality education for the students in our district.

- As Board members, providing leadership which upholds the Vision and Mission of RSU5, as well as dedication to the school/community collaborations and communication that is fundamental to continuous improvement.
- As community members, adequate funding for the programs, learning opportunities, physical buildings, and professional development requirements of our system is essential.
- As parents, direct involvement and support in learning are critical to the success of our children.
- As educators, commitment and innovation are crucial to finding new ways to meet the learning needs of our students.
- As students, engagement and full participation are fundamental for learning and fulfilling personal aspirations.

This document is the framework for the strategies this community will use to help RSU5 realize the goal of educational excellence while demonstrating a greater efficiency in the use of our resources.

SECTION I DISTRICT VISION AND MISSION STATEMENT

Our Mission:

To provide our students with a world-class education that will challenge minds, engage creativity, develop self-discipline, and advance inherent strengths.

Our Vision:

- Our schools provide a safe, engaging environment that fosters a passion for life-long learning.
- Our educators are mentors dedicated to providing our students with the knowledge and skills that will help them adapt to our changing world.
- Our community supports the concept that each individual—be they student, educator, parent, or community member—bears responsibility to the success of our mission.
- All stakeholders understand that financial responsibility is a facet of each decision that is made and tirelessly seek the resources to support our mission and vision.

SECTION II DISTRICT COMMITMENTS

RSU5 is committed to supporting the following activities over the next four years in order to enhance the quality of learning for our students. This plan is deliberately broad and not overly prescriptive. Each school will design specific and innovative strategies to meet the learning needs of their students. The RSU5 Board of Directors intends to hold themselves and our educators accountable for implementing strategies to achieve the following academic and financial goals.

Our academic program commitments over the next four years are to:

- 1) Identify and adopt a set of work and college readiness skills
- 2) Create assessments that demonstrate work and college readiness
- 3) Recruit and retain high quality educators
- 4) Implement standards-based education
- 5) Use technology effectively to enhance learning
- 6) Explore multiple pathways for learning
- 7) Support ongoing leadership development

Our financial commitments over the next four years are to:

- 1) Establish the optimal use of our 6 physical buildings to most efficiently advance our K-12 programming goals
- 2) Explore strategies to increase revenues beyond taxes
- 3) Establish a meaningful measure to compare and track our per pupil expenditure to other state and regional schools
- 4) Review state and regional comparative data regarding account areas for school expenditures to ensure spending most closely to students
- 5) Explore and implement a range of strategies to support energy efficiency and cost savings
- 6) Evaluate and maintain financial health

Each commitment is further described below.

ACADEMIC PROGRAM COMMITMENTS:

Identify and Adopt a Set of Work and College Readiness Skills

The world has changed rapidly over the past 20 years. The knowledge and skills required for success at work, in further education, and as involved citizens have correspondingly shifted. There is significant research identifying that students need to learn both the content traditionally associated with pre K-12 public education and the skills directly associated with success in both college and the new world of work. Examples of the latter include - but are not limited to - themes like financial and entrepreneurial literacy, global awareness, productivity and accountability, and initiative and self direction. The district will commit to identifying a comprehensive set of skills representing work and college readiness skills for broad implementation across instruction, curriculum, and assessment. This identification process will build on current district efforts and make use of the research that has been conducted in this area.

Create Assessments through which Students can Demonstrate Work and College Readiness

Once identified, we take the next step to track the acquisition of these skills over time. Currently, there are numerous examples of classroom-embedded assessment strategies in place in RSU5 that measure these readiness skills. The district will use these existing models as a framework to develop additional assessments that will be largely “demonstration-based,” requiring students to apply these skills and demonstrate acquisition over time. We anticipate that students would have multiple opportunities to work through these assessments and that student learning—rather than calendar time—will dictate when and how students engage with these assessments. The data gathered from these assessments will be used to improve instruction and curriculum, to provide feedback to students and parents, and as a community accountability measure.

Recruit and Retain High Quality Educators

Ultimately, the most significant impact on student learning under the control of the district is the quality of the educators in our buildings. To this end, the district is committed not only to recruiting, but also retaining teachers who bring strong skills and knowledge into the system as they enter our schools. To demonstrate our commitment to life-long learning, the district will ensure ongoing professional development for our educators. Our investment in this area is recognition that the rapidly changing world requires constant updating of teacher skills and knowledge. Professional development will be aligned with our district and school strategic commitments, coordinated and designed by the educators, and embedded in the daily work of our administrators and teachers.

Implement Standards-based Education

The district is committed to finding a means to ensure that all students will achieve at the highest levels of learning the knowledge, skills, and abilities necessary to succeed in a rapidly changing world. To accomplish this, the district will implement a standards-based education which requires empowering and engaging students in their learning, and ensuring all students can demonstrate the desired knowledge and skills at high levels of proficiency. The district will develop standards-based curriculum, instruction, assessment, and reporting linked to clearly defined standards. There are many existing models within our schools that can be used as a framework to develop a more consistent, effective, and innovative educational program for the district. This will require the involvement of educators, parents, and students working together over time.

Use Technology Effectively to Enhance Learning

There is little doubt that future success in life is—and will continue to be—tightly tied to adept use of technology. We are committed to pursuing technology that broadens and deepens student learning, that increases student responsibility for learning, and that prepares them for work and or college. To meet these goals we will need to help our educators learn how best to graduate “tech-literate” students, financially support appropriate technology in the classroom, and continually review best practices with the use of technology for life-long learning.

Expand our Commitment to Multiple Pathways for Learning

Every effective teacher and parent knows that a good learning opportunity for one student is not necessarily a good learning opportunity for another. RSU5 has been an innovator in this area providing students with multiple pathways at the elementary level for many years. During the next four years we will explore options to expand this commitment to multiple pathways. This expansion may result in the creation of different programs within other district schools, differentiated learning within classrooms, or the creation of different organizational structures across the district. The main criteria for expansion will remain to continually increasing quality learning for students while remaining fiscally responsible.

Support Ongoing Leadership Development

Each individual within the organization bears a responsibility for the success of our mission. As such, leadership needs to be supported at all levels including students, teachers, administrators, and Board members. For students, leadership development will enable them to grow as leaders while in our schools, but more importantly, to be confident leaders in their lives after school. We believe that school leadership must be shared across teachers and administrators, even as we recognize the different job requirements of these positions. We need to explicitly encourage and support educator leadership to ensure that decisions continue to be made in the best interest of students. Also as a new Board of Directors, members of the Board need ongoing development to fully understand their roles and responsibilities.

FINANCIAL COMMITMENTS:

Financial resources are—and will continue to be—scarce and often less than optimally desired. Knowing this, all members of RSU5 need to be vigilant in ensuring that our resources are best spent in ways that will continue to promote our mission and vision. As such we are committed to the following goals:

Establishing the optimal use of our 6 physical buildings to most efficiently advance our K-12 programming goals

We will examine the best strategies for using our 6 physical buildings to provide a safe and effective environment in which to achieve our mission. We will seek efficiencies by carefully considering factors like transportation costs, transportation time, square footage per student, maintenance, and debt service along with other key metrics to determine quality solutions that ensure both fiscal efficiency and quality student learning.

Exploring strategies to increase revenues beyond taxes

We recognize that in both good economic times and bad that alternative funding sources are important to sustain our commitment to excellence. We will explore strategies that will diversify our revenues such as attracting grant dollars for innovative programs and initiatives.

Establish a meaningful measure to compare our per pupil expenditure to other state and regional districts

Benchmarking and communicating our per pupil expenditures against relevant state and regional school districts will help our community gauge our relative effectiveness and help us better

plan for the future. We are committed to establishing a metric that reflects both our desire for excellence in educational programming and financial efficiency – and one with data that is readily available from comparable systems.

Establish meaningful comparative measures to demonstrate financial focus on students and programming

Benchmarking and communicating the percentage of our total budget that is spent on educational programming against the same metric from relevant state and regional school districts will ensure that the Board and district educators constantly strive to align expenditures with actions that focus on the district mission and vision.

Explore and implement a range of strategies to support energy efficiency and cost savings

This initiative is as important to the district financially as it is educationally. This effort will enable us to research ways to reduce our budgets in all areas while we demonstrate effective use of sustainable resources for our students.

Evaluate and maintain financial health

In order to ensure long-term sustainability and viability of the education mission of the RSU, we will utilize banking advisors, our auditors, and other financial advisors to:

- a. Analyze district financial practices; and
- b. Develop targets and strategies to ensure district financial health

SECTION III PERFORMANCE INDICATORS TO DEMONSTRATE OUR PROGRESS

The RSU5 Board of Directors is committed to establishing performance indicators which will gauge our success relative to this strategic framework – specifically our vision and mission, and district commitments listed above.

RSU5 will include the following school systems as part of a comparison region to gauge our progress. The systems include: Brunswick, Cape Elizabeth, Falmouth, MSAD 15 (Gray/New Gloucester), MSAD 51 (Cumberland/North Yarmouth), MSAD 75 (Topsham, Bowdoin, Bowdoinham, and Harpswell) and Yarmouth.

Demographic information from each system will include free and reduced lunch percentages for a socioeconomic comparison.

STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT:

RSU5 endorses the notion that a comprehensive understanding of student learning requires multiple measures, and that these measures need to be drawn from a variety of assessment methods. This is true both in the case of individual students and in gauging the overall success of the district in achieving its goals.

Type	Standardized Tests			
Measure	NWEA	NECAP	SAT	PSAT
Metric	Percentage of students who meet their growth targets from spring to spring administration of the test. When an individual student's scores come from two different schools, growth will be reported from the school involved in the second administration of the test.	Percentage of students who meet or exceed the standard in grades noted.	Percentage of students who meet or exceed the standard in grades noted.	Percentage of students who meet or exceed the standard in grades noted.
Target	Math & Reading	Math & Reading	Math, Reading, and Writing	Math, Reading, and Writing
Grade(s)	4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9	3, 5, 8	11	10
Baseline	Spring 2009 and Spring 2010	2009/10	2008/09	2008/09
Guidance	Only include students who are enrolled at RSU5 for both administrations of the test. Scores will be combined into one score for math and one score for reading for the district as a whole. School-by-school data will be available upon request.	Measures change from one class to the next class. Data will be reported in the aggregate at the district level.	Measure changes from one class to the next class. Data will be reported in the aggregate.	Measure changes from one class to the next class. Data will be reported in the aggregate.
Comparison Set	NWEA national norm group	RSU5 aggregate scores will be published with similar scores for Brunswick, Cape Elizabeth, Falmouth, MSAD 15, MSAD 51, MSAD 75, Yarmouth, and Maine	RSU5 aggregate scores will be published with similar scores for Brunswick, Cape Elizabeth, Falmouth, MSAD 15, MSAD 51, MSAD 75, Yarmouth, and Maine	RSU5 aggregate scores will be published with similar scores for Brunswick, Cape Elizabeth, Falmouth, MSAD 15, MSAD 51, MSAD 75, Yarmouth, and Maine
Data Points	2	6	3	3
Scoring	External	External	External	External
Status	Existing	Existing	Existing	Existing

Outcome			
Measure	AP Scores	Graduation Rates	Post Secondary
Metric	Percent of students taking the AP exam who score 3 or higher.	Percentage of 9 th grade students who meet graduation requirements within four years.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Percentage of graduating seniors who attend 2 year institutions or 4 year institutions, within the 1st year, the 2nd year, and the 5th year after graduation. •Percent of graduating seniors who enter the military, certificate programs, employment, and/or other within the 1st year and the 2nd year after graduation.
Target	Outcome	Outcome	Outcome
Grade(s)	All	All	All
Baseline	2010/2011	2008/09	2008/09
Guidance	Measure changes from one year to the next. Data will be reported in the aggregate.	Will use state issued metric.	RSU No.5 will start with NSC data. The high school will follow up with individual students who are not identified.
Comparison Set	RSU5 aggregate scores will be published with similar scores for Brunswick, Cape Elizabeth, Falmouth, MSAD 15, MSAD 51, MSAD 75, and Yarmouth	RSU5 aggregate scores will be published with similar scores for Brunswick, Cape Elizabeth, Falmouth, MSAD 15, MSAD 51, MSAD 75, Yarmouth, and Maine	If possible, NSC data from comparison districts will be published with RSU5 scores. As involvement with NSC is not a requirement, access to such data may not be possible.
Data Points	1	1	10
Scoring	External	External	External and Internal
Status	Existing	Maine DOE	NSC data provided by Maine DOE

Type	Performance Assessment
Measure	Demonstration Based Assessments
Metric	Percentage of students meeting the standard
Target	Cross-curricular standards for work and college readiness
Grade(s)	Propose 2, 5, 8, 12 <i>Could be 2, 4, 7, 12. TBD during Exhibition development.</i>
Baseline	2014/2015
Guidance	Structure developed 2011/2012; pilot in 2012/2013 and 2013/2014; gather baseline data in 2014/2015. This will build off from preexisting demonstration based assessments in place within RSU5. Allow flexibility to adjust during development process.
Comparison Set	No comparison districts
Data Points	4, most likely
Scoring	Internal
Status	Piloting at all grade levels

Type	Constructed Response	
Measure	Fountas & Pinnell	District Writing Prompt
Metric	Percentage of students scoring at different reading levels	Percentage of students scoring at different writing levels
Target	Reading	Writing
Grade(s)	K, 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8 to reflect current practice	Propose 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12 <i>TBD during development</i>
Baseline	2011/2012	2013/2014
Guidance	Norming across district needs to occur	Structure developed 2011/2012; pilot in 2012/2013; and gather baseline data in 2013/2014. This will build off from preexisting prompts already in place within RSU5. Allow flexibility to adjust during development process.
Comparison Set	No comparison districts	No comparison districts
Data Points	9	11
Scoring	Internal	Internal
Status	Grade 2 data is available	9-12 complete; baseline data is available for grades 7 and 8

Type	Participation	
Measure	Co-curricular Participation	Advanced Placement Participation
Metric	The percentage of students who participate in school sponsored activities that occur outside of the school day or outside of class periods. This could include before school, after school, or during lunch. Students do not earn course credit for these activities.	The percentage of students who participate in Advanced Placement courses.
Target	Student Involvement	Student Involvement
Grade(s)	6-12	9-12
Baseline	2009/2010	2008/2009
Guidance	<p>Data will be collected in the following ways:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Percentage of students in grades 6-8 participating in at least one activity • Percentage of students in grades 6-8 participating in three or more activities • Percentage of students in grades 9-12 participating in at least one activity • Percentage of students in grades 9-12 participating in three or more activities <p>From each 6-8 building and the HS, we will need the total number of students for each of the two applicable categories, and the total number of students enrolled at any point during the school year.</p> <p>Students who leave the school are not removed from the total count of students. Students who are enrolled, leave and return are only counted one time.</p>	The percentage will be determined by calculating the number of students enrolled in an AP course on April 1 st , over the total number of students enrolled in the school on April 1 st .
Comparison Set	No comparison districts	No comparison districts
Data Points	4	1
Scoring	Internal	Internal
Status	Data is available	Data is available for years 2008-2009 through 2012-2013

FINANCIAL EFFICIENCIES:

RSU5 endorses the notion that effective use of financial resources is vital to the development of a high performing school system. We look to the community to provide adequate funding. In return, the community expects that financial responsibility will be a facet of each decision made by the RSU as we work to attain our mission and vision.

Financial indicators include:

- 1) Establish the optimal use of our 6 physical buildings to most efficiently advance our K-12 programming goals.
- 2) Exploring strategies to increase revenues beyond taxes.
- 3) Establish a meaningful measure to compare our per pupil expenditure to other state and regional districts.
- 4) Establish meaningful comparative measures to demonstrate financial focus on students and programming.
- 5) Explore and implement a range of strategies to support energy efficiency and cost savings.
- 6) Evaluate and maintain financial health.

Section V. PUBLIC COMMUNICATION COMMITMENTS

The RSU5 Board is committed to building effective communication with parents and the larger community so that they understand and engage in actively supporting the education of our students. To this end, the RSU5 Board, in conjunction with the superintendent, will coordinate the following activities:

- 1) Create an annual *State of the Schools Report* indicating annual progress as measured by the Strategic Framework Indicators and present this report to the RSU5 Board.
- 2) Host annual *Community Education Conversations* where the *State of the Schools Report* is distributed and discussed with all interested community members. This gathering will also provide the opportunity for the community to engage in conversations about the report.
- 3) The annual *State of the Schools Report* will be made available on-line at the RSU5 web site. A link will be provided for comments or questions.
- 4) The superintendent will hold an annual gathering with district educators to share the *State of the Schools Report* and to engage in conversations about the report. Principals and leadership teams will then use this information as a springboard for action planning for the following school year.
- 5) The RSU5 Board will use the *State of the Schools Report* and conversations with the community

members and district educators to review the Strategic Plan on an annual basis and make adjustments for the ensuing year as appropriate.

- 6) Building administrators and the superintendent will present annual school and district-based action plans to the RSU5 Board. These plans will work in alignment with the district Strategic Plan and any annual adjustments made by the RSU5 Board.

APPENDIX A. GLOSSARY

- Annual Indicators:** data measures collected on an annual basis that define annual progress. Indicators may include both student learning outcomes and process implementation practices. RSU5 will also collect and report on financial indicators.
- Baseline:** The starting data point. Whenever possible, in this Strategic Framework, the baseline data are determined by a three year average including the year prior to the start of this plan and the two proceeding years.
- Maine High School Assessment:** The SAT Reasoning Test does not measure science. In this case, the State of Maine has developed an additional standardized test to measure science attainment. Taken collectively, the SAT Reasoning Test and the Maine science test are the Maine High School Assessment in compliance with federal law.
- Mission:** Defines the fundamental purpose of an organization describing why it exists and what it does.
- NECAP:** The New England Comprehensive Assessment Program. This is a statewide standardized test given annually in Maine in grades 3 through 8. This is the federally mandated state test and replaced the Maine Educational Assessment starting in the 2009/10 school year.
- NEASC:** The New England Association of Schools and Colleges, the regional accrediting agency for high schools in Maine.
- NWEA:** The Northwest Educational Assessment, a computer based assessment tool that can be used multiple times during the course of a year to measure student learning progress
- RIT:** Rasch Unit is a scale used to measure student achievement and growth.
- SAT:** The SAT Reasoning Test is a standardized test predominantly used as a measure for college admissions. In Maine, all 11th grade students are required to take the SAT as part of the federally required testing program.
- Standards Based Assessment:** This refers to assessment strategies that specifically target a set of common learning standards.
- Standards Based Instruction:** This refers to instructional practices that specifically address a set of common learning standards.
- Standards Based Reporting:** This refers to the practice of providing learning reports based on a common set of learning standards. The reports could be numerical or narrative, but focus only on student learning in relation to the learning standard, not other commonly measured aspects such as homework completion, attendance, participation, or timeliness of response. In most cases, grades are not averaged. And in most cases, schools provide additional information regarding other commonly measured issues such as student attendance, participation, or effort.
- Three-year goals:** These describe student learning outcomes to be achieved over a three-year basis.
- Vision:** a clear and inspirational picture of what an organization seeks to achieve over a longer time frame. Visions serve to energize an organization and push the thinking beyond current capabilities, conventions and organizational structures.