

REGULAR MEETING OF RSU NO. 5 BOARD OF DIRECTORS
WEDNESDAY– JANUARY 13, 2021
FREEPORT HIGH SCHOOL - CAFETERIA
6:30 P.M. REGULAR SESSION
AGENDA

Due to the public health emergency, Board members may participate in this meeting on a hybrid basis, with members having the option to attend in person or via remote participation, as authorized by 1 M.R.S.A. § 403-A. Members of the public may participate in this meeting in person or remotely. <https://networkmaine.zoom.us/j/83813923502> Webinar ID: 838 1392 3502
Join by telephone: 1 312 626 6799

1. Call to Order:
The meeting was called to order at _____p.m. by Chair Michelle Ritcheson
2. Attendance:

| | |
|----------------------|--|
| ___Jeremy Clough | ___Elisabeth Munsen |
| ___Candace deCsipkes | ___Maura Pillsbury |
| ___Lindsey Furtney | ___Michelle Ritcheson |
| ___Jennifer Galletta | ___Valeria Steverlynck |
| ___Susana Hancock | ___Madelyn Vertenten |
| ___Angela King-Horne | ___Liam Hornschild-Bear – Student Representative |
| | ___Brady Grogan – Student Representative |
3. Pledge of Allegiance:
4. Consideration of Minutes:
A. Consideration and approval of the Minutes of December 9, 2020 as presented barring any errors or omissions.

Motion: _____ 2nd: _____ Vote: _____
5. Adjustments to the Agenda:
6. Good News & Recognition:
A. Outstanding Contribution to Community Service by a FHS Student
B. Report from Board's Student Representative (10 Minutes)
7. Public Comments: (10 Minutes)
Public comment will be taken in person and via Zoom (connection information below)
<https://networkmaine.zoom.us/j/83813923502>
Webinar ID: 838 1392 3502
Join by telephone: 1 312 626 6799
8. Reports from Superintendent: (10 Minutes)
A. Retirements (effective at the end of the school year):
 - Nancy Drolet, FHS Health Teacher
 - Rose Pinette, DCS Office Secretary
 - Linda Pritchard, FMS Special Education Teacher
 - Peter Wolinsky, School Psychologist

9. Administrator Reports:
 - A. District Scorecard - Cynthia Alexander & Administrators (20 Minutes)
 - B. Update on 2020-2021 District Goals - Becky Foley (20 Minutes)
 - C. Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Audit Findings - Becky Foley (45 Minutes)
10. Board Comments and Committee Reports:
NA
11. Policy Review:
NA
12. Unfinished Business:
NA
13. New Business: (10 Minutes)
 - A. Consideration and approval to appoint Board members to the following committees for the 2020-2021 school year.

Professional Negotiations: _____
Maine Region 10 Technical High School Board: _____

14. Personnel: (5 Minutes)
 - A. Consideration and approval to employ a FHS Technology Integration Teacher for the remainder of the 2020-2021 school year (one year position)

Motion: _____ 2nd: _____ Vote: _____

15. Public Comments: (10 Minutes)
Public comment will be taken in person and via Zoom (connection information below)
<https://networkmaine.zoom.us/j/83813923502>
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16. Executive Session:
 - A. To enter executive session to discuss labor contracts and proposals pursuant to 1 M.R.S.A. Section 405(6)(D).

Motion: _____ 2nd: _____ Vote: _____

Time In _____ Time Out _____

17. Action as a Result of Executive Session:

Motion: _____ 2nd: _____ Vote: _____

18. Executive Session:

A. To enter into Executive Session as outlined in 1 M.R.S.A § 405(6)(A) for the purpose of discussing the Superintendent's Evaluation Performance Goals.

Motion: _____ 2nd _____ Vote _____

Time In _____ Time Out _____

19. Action as a Result of Executive Session:

Motion: _____ 2nd _____ Vote: _____

20. Adjournment:

Motion: _____ 2nd: _____ Vote: _____ Time: _____

Item #4.A.

**RSU No. 5 Board of Directors Meeting
Wednesday, December 9, 2020 – 6:30 p.m.
Freeport High School - Cafeteria / Hybrid Remote Meeting
Meeting Minutes**

(NOTE: These Minutes are not official until approved by the Board of Directors. Such action, either to approve or amend and approve, is anticipated at the January 13, 2021 meeting).

1. CALLED TO ORDER:

Chair Michelle Ritcheson called the meeting to order at 6:35 p.m.

- 2. MEMBERS PRESENT:** Jeremy Clough, Candace deCsipkes, Lindsey Furtney, Jennifer Galletta, Susana Hancock (attended remotely), Elisabeth Munsen, Maura Pillsbury (attended remotely), Michelle Ritcheson, Valeria Steverlynck, Madelyn Vertenten, Liam Hornschild-Bear, Student Representative

MEMBERS ABSENT:

3. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE:

4. CONSIDERATION OF MINUTES:

VOTED: To approve the minutes of November 18, 2020.

(Steverlynck – Vertenten) (10 – 0) The student representative voted with the majority.

5. ADJUSTMENTS TO THE AGENDA:

Unfinished Business Item 12A - Consideration of revising the Solar Agreement

Unfinished Business Item 12B - Discussion of hybrid Board meetings

6. GOOD NEWS AND RECOGNITION:

A. FHS Mock Trial Team - State Champions

B. Report from Board's Student Representative - Liam Hornschild-Bear

7. PUBLIC COMMENT:

None

8. REPORTS FROM SUPERINTENDENT:

A. Items for Information

1. District Happenings

2. Resignations:

Jim Grant, Technology Director

Danielle Peterson, FHS Office Secretary

Tracy Soloway, MSS Ed Tech

Derek Cerjanec, Van Driver

9. ADMINISTRATOR REPORTS:

A. Instructional Support Report/Goal Review - Bonnie Violette

10. BOARD COMMENTS AND COMMITTEE REPORTS:

A. Board Information Exchange and Agenda Requests

Candy deCsipkes provided an update on the Title IX policies.

Jeremy Clough spoke about Esports and video game teams.

Susana Hancock spoke about a new survey discussion and more input from the teachers.
Michelle Ritcheson provided an update on the three-town leadership meeting held last week
Maura Pillsbury provided an MSBA update on paid sick leave and student counts for funding.

11. POLICY REVIEW:

A. VOTED: To approve 2nd Read of Policy JHB-Truancy. (Vertenten – Steverlynck) (10 – 0) The student representative voted with the majority.

12. UNFINISHED BUSINESS:

A. VOTED: That the Vote entitled, "Vote to Authorize Consent to Assignment and First Amendment to Solar Power Purchase Agreement," be adopted in form presented to this meeting. (Clough – Munsen) (10 – 0) The student representative voted with the majority.

B. VOTED: The Board believes that being in person is best but wants to ensure hybrid remote is accessible to any member who has a health concern for the remainder of the 2020-2021 school year. (Steverlynck – Vertenten) (10 – 0) The student representative voted with the majority.

13. NEW BUSINESS:

A. VOTED: To add coverage for the position of Food Service Director under its MainePERS, Regular Plan AC effective January 1, 2021 and:

To authorize Superintendent Foley to sign the Amended Agreement between RSU5 and the Maine Public Employees Retirement System.

To allow its Food Service Director who is currently employed by RSU5 on January 1, 2021, upon electing to join MainePERS, to purchase prior service upon the employee's full payment of all associated costs. RSU5 will not participate in the purchase of prior service and so the employee is responsible for paying the full liability associated with this service.
(Steverlynck – Vertenten) (10 – 0) The student representative voted with the majority.

14. PERSONNEL:

None

15. PUBLIC COMMENT:

None

16. ADJOURNMENT:

VOTED: To adjourn at 8:56 p.m. (Furtney – Munsen) (10 – 0) The student representative voted with the majority.


Becky J. Foley, Superintendent of Schools

December 9, 2020

Motion: I move that the Vote entitled, "Vote to Authorize Consent to Assignment and First Amendment to Solar Power Purchase Agreement," be adopted in form presented to this meeting.

**REGIONAL SCHOOL UNIT NO. 5
VOTE TO AUTHORIZE CONSENT TO ASSIGNMENT AND FIRST AMENDMENT TO SOLAR
POWER PURCHASE AGREEMENT**

WHEREAS, on May 13, 2020, Regional School Unit No. 5 (the "RSU") authorized the Superintendent to enter into a Solar Power Purchase Agreement on behalf of the RSU with Camden Solar LLC, dated May 18, 2020 (the "PPA") in order to purchase a percentage of the electric energy, net energy billing credits, and related renewable energy credits ("RECs") generated by a solar facility in an amount not to exceed 75% of the RSU's historical annual electricity usage; and

WHEREAS, Camden Solar LLC intends to assign the PPA to Acton H Road Solar 1, LLC ("Acton"), as allowed under and contemplated by Section 19 of the PPA (the "Assignment"); and

WHEREAS, the RSU and Acton both wish to amend the PPA to clarify certain terms of the PPA to reflect the Assignment and to allow the RSU to purchase additional available electric energy, net energy billing credits, and related RECs generated by the Acton solar facility.

NOW, THEREFORE, the Board of Directors of the RSU hereby VOTES, as follows:

1. That, under and pursuant to the provisions of Title 20-A M.R.S. sections 1001 and 1055, the Superintendent of the RSU is authorized to execute and deliver a Consent to Assignment and First Amendment to Solar Power Purchase Agreement with Acton or its nominee, in the name and on behalf of the RSU, to amend the PPA to purchase additional available electric energy, net energy billing credits, and related RECs generated by the Acton solar facility in a quantity equivalent to not more than 85% of the RSU's historical annual electricity usage, on such terms not inconsistent herewith as the Superintendent may approve;
2. That the Superintendent is authorized to execute and deliver on behalf of the RSU such other contracts, documents, and certificates as may, in the Superintendent's judgment, be necessary or convenient to effect the transactions authorized by this Vote and qualify the RSU to participate in net energy billing, including without limitation documents required to establish net energy billing pursuant to Title 35-A M.R.S. section 3209-B and Chapter 313 of the Maine Public Utilities Commission's rules, any consent to collateral assignment of the PPA, and any amendments to the RSU's existing electricity supply agreement(s); and
3. That an attested copy of this Vote be filed with the minutes of this meeting.

A true copy, attest:


Dr. Becky J. Foley, Secretary
Regional School Unit No. 5

RSU5 DISTRICT SCORECARD

January, 2021

Item #9A

Academic Achievement

ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENT - MEA

Achievement: % of Grade 3 Students At or Above State Standards on the MEA

| GRADE 3 | 2015-2016 Percentage | 2016-2017 Percentage | 2017-2018 Percentage | 2018-2019 Count | 2018-2019 Percentage | 2018-2019 State Percentage |
|----------------------------|-------------------------|-------------------------|-------------------------|--------------------|-------------------------|----------------------------------|
| <u>Reading</u> | | | | | | |
| District Total | 64.7% | 59.6% | 53.8% | 80 / 130 | 61.5% | 51.1% |
| Economically Disadvantaged | | | 33.3% | 11 / 29 | 37.9% | 39.4% |
| Identified Disability | | 18.2% | 23.8% | 7 / 30 | 23.3% | 19.5% |
| <u>Math</u> | | | | | | |
| District Total | 70.6% | 66.7% | 66.7% | 73 / 132 | 55.3% | 43.2% |
| Economically Disadvantaged | | | 48.1% | 11 / 29 | 37.9% | 30.6% |
| Identified Disability | | 50.0% | 47.6% | 7 / 30 | 23.3% | 18.0% |

ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENT - MEA

Achievement: % of Grade 4 Students At or Above State Standards on the MEA

| GRADE 4 | 2015-2016 Percentage | 2016-2017 Percentage | 2017-2018 Percentage | 2018-2019 Count | 2018-2019 Percentage | 2018-2019 State Percentage |
|----------------------------|-------------------------|-------------------------|-------------------------|--------------------|-------------------------|----------------------------------|
| <u>Reading</u> | | | | | | |
| District Total | 64.0% | 65.7% | 63.4% | 99 / 142 | 69.7% | 56.4% |
| Economically Disadvantaged | | | 42.1% | 15 / 30 | 50.0% | 43.2% |
| Identified Disability | | 12.5% | 18.2% | 4 / 21 | 19.0% | 20.2% |
| <u>Math</u> | | | | | | |
| District Total | 63.4% | 66.4% | 59.5% | 82 / 142 | 57.7% | 40.5% |
| Economically Disadvantaged | | | 31.8% | 9 / 30 | 30.0% | 26.8% |
| Identified Disability | | 12.5% | 36.4% | 5 / 21 | 23.8% | 13.3% |

Academic Achievement Continued

ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENT - MEA

Achievement: % of Grade 5 Students At or Above State Standards on the MEA

| GRADE 5 | 2015-2016 Percentage | 2016-2017 Percentage | 2017-2018 Percentage | 2018-2019 Count | 2018-2019 Percentage | 2018-2019 State Percentage |
|----------------------------|-------------------------|-------------------------|-------------------------|--------------------|-------------------------|----------------------------------|
| <u>Reading</u> | | | | | | |
| District Total | 61.0% | 70.8% | 67.8% | 104 / 153 | 68.0% | 53.3% |
| Economically Disadvantaged | | | 52.0% | 23 / 38 | 60.5% | 38.9% |
| Identified Disability | | 12.5% | 15.0% | 4 / 21 | 19.0% | 16.3% |
| <u>Math</u> | | | | | | |
| District Total | 54.9% | 58.1% | 59.9% | 87 / 153 | 56.9% | 32.8% |
| Economically Disadvantaged | | | 44.0% | 20 / 38 | 52.6% | 19.6% |
| Identified Disability | | 15.0% | 20.0% | 5 / 21 | 23.8% | 8.4% |
| <u>Science</u> | | | | | | |
| District Total | 71.6% | 83.7% | 84.4% | 111 / 152 | 73.0% | 61.3% |
| Economically Disadvantaged | | | 70.8% | 22 / 37 | 59.5% | 49.1% |
| Identified Disability | | 64.7% | 55.0% | 8 / 21 | 38.1% | 31.5% |

ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENT - MEA

Achievement: % of Grade 6 Students At or Above State Standards on the MEA

| GRADE 6 | 2015-2016 Percentage | 2016-2017 Percentage | 2017-2018 Percentage | 2018-2019 Count | 2018-2019 Percentage | 2018-2019 State Percentage |
|----------------------------|-------------------------|-------------------------|-------------------------|--------------------|-------------------------|----------------------------------|
| <u>Reading</u> | | | | | | |
| District Total | 59.6% | 62.1% | 63.7% | 102 / 142 | 71.8% | 56.3% |
| Economically Disadvantaged | | | 38.2% | 14 / 25 | 56.0% | 41.7% |
| Identified Disability | | 17.6% | 5.9% | 6 / 22 | 27.3% | 17.5% |
| <u>Math</u> | | | | | | |
| District Total | 55.1% | 49.7% | 53.5% | 85 / 143 | 59.4% | 29.8% |
| Economically Disadvantaged | | | 29.4% | 10 / 25 | 40.0% | 18.20% |
| Identified Disability | | 11.8% | 5.9% | 3 / 22 | 13.6% | 7.3% |

ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENT - MEA

Achievement: % of Grade 7 Students At or Above State Standards on the MEA

| GRADE 7 | 2015-2016 Percentage | 2016-2017 Percentage | 2017-2018 Percentage | 2018-2019 Count | 2018-2019 Percentage | 2018-2019 State Percentage |
|----------------------------|-------------------------|-------------------------|-------------------------|--------------------|-------------------------|----------------------------------|
| <u>Reading</u> | | | | | | |
| District Total | 67.4% | 60.9% | 60.3% | 134 / 167 | 80.2% | 59.7% |
| Economically Disadvantaged | | | 37.8% | 17 / 32 | 53.1% | 44.6% |
| Identified Disability | | 32.1% | 5.6% | 5 / 18 | 27.8% | 18.9% |
| <u>Math</u> | | | | | | |
| District Total | 59.3% | 54.0% | 44.2% | 98 / 167 | 58.7% | 34.0% |
| Economically Disadvantaged | | | 21.6% | 10 / 32 | 31.3% | 19.8% |
| Identified Disability | | 25.0% | | 2 / 18 | 11.1% | 7.9% |

Academic Achievement Continued

ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENT - MEA

Achievement: % of Grade 8 Students At or Above State Standards on the MEA

| GRADE 8 | 2015-2016 Percentage | 2016-2017 Percentage | 2017-2018 Percentage | 2018-2019 Count | 2018-2019 Percentage | 2018-2019 State Percentage |
|----------------------------|---------------------------------|---------------------------------|---------------------------------|----------------------------|---------------------------------|---|
| Reading | | | | | | |
| <u>District Total</u> | 66.7% | 70.0% | 70.0% | 105 / 145 | 72.4% | 58.5% |
| Economically Disadvantaged | | | 55.2% | 18 / 34 | 52.9% | 43.6% |
| Identified Disability | | 6.3% | 11.1% | 2 / 17 | 11.8% | 18.7% |
| Math | | | | | | |
| <u>District Total</u> | 45.0% | 46.5% | 59.4% | 77 / 147 | 52.4% | 36.0% |
| Economically Disadvantaged | | | 27.6% | 13 / 35 | 37.1% | 21.5% |
| Identified Disability | | 31.3% | 5.6% | 3 / 19 | 15.8% | 8.3% |
| Science | | | | | | |
| <u>District Total</u> | 79.4% | 83.2% | 84.8% | 126 / 146 | 86.3% | 69.9% |
| Economically Disadvantaged | | | 63.3% | 21 / 33 | 63.6% | 56.6% |
| Identified Disability | | 47.1% | 22.2% | 6 / 16 | 37.5% | 34.2% |

ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENT - MEA

Achievement: % of High School Students At or Above State Standards on the MEA Science

| High School | 2015-2016 Percentage | 2016-2017 Percentage | 2017-2018 Percentage | 2018-2019 Count | 2018-2019 Percentage | 2018-2019 State Percentage |
|----------------------------|---------------------------------|---------------------------------|---------------------------------|----------------------------|---------------------------------|---|
| Science | | | | | | |
| <u>District Total</u> | 46.7% | 53.8% | 60.9% | 83 / 118 | 70.3% | 48.1% |
| Economically Disadvantaged | | | 31.8% | 4 / 17 | 23.5% | 32.3% |
| Identified Disability | | 18.2% | 16.7% | | | 15.8% |

Source: DOE: ims.backpack.education/public/maine

Report: eMPowerME Report

Academic Achievement Continued

ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENT - PSAT

Achievement: % of Grade 10 Students Meets or Exceeds Benchmarks

| GRADE 10 | 2016 Percent | 2017 Percent | 2018 Percent | 2019 Count | 2019 Percent | 2019 State Percent |
|---|--------------|--------------|--------------|------------|--------------|--------------------|
| <u>Evidence-Based Reading and Writing</u> | | | | | | |
| School Total | 85.5% | 76.7% | 70.9% | 105 / 146 | 71.9% | 62.0% |
| <u>Math</u> | | | | | | |
| School Total | 69.9% | 45.7% | 51.5% | 65 / 146 | 44.5% | 32.0% |

*2017 First year of full grade level

Source: College Board

Report: PSAT/NMSQT Instructional Planning Report

ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENT - PSAT

Achievement: % of Grade 11 Students Meets or Exceeds Benchmarks

| GRADE 11 | 2016 Percent | 2017 Percent | 2018 Percent | 2019 Count | 2019 Percent | 2019 State Percent |
|---|--------------|--------------|--------------|------------|--------------|--------------------|
| <u>Evidence-Based Reading and Writing</u> | | | | | | |
| School Total | 75.0% | 89.7% | 71.4% | 92 / 114 | 80.7% | 60.0% |
| <u>Math</u> | | | | | | |
| School Total | 55.9% | 64.4% | 37.8% | 47 / 114 | 41.2% | 30.0% |

*2017 First year of full grade level

Source: College Board

Report: PSAT/NMSQT Instructional Planning Report

Academic Achievement Continued

ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENT - SAT

| GRADE 11 | 2015-2016 Percentage | 2016-2017 Percentage | 2017-2018 Percentage | 2018-2019 Count | 2018-2019 Percentage | 2018-2019 Maine State Percentage |
|------------------------------|-------------------------|-------------------------|-------------------------|--------------------|-------------------------|--|
| English Language Arts | | | | | | |
| District Total | 60.8% | 63.2% | 68.4% | 81 / 121 | 66.9% | 55.9% |
| Economically Disadvantaged | | 25.0% | 47.8% | 4 / 17 | 23.5% | 37.2% |
| Identified Disability | | 10.0% | 15.4% | | | 17.3% |
| Math | | | | | | |
| District Total | 39.2% | 38.7% | 54.4% | 50 / 121 | 41.3% | 32.6% |
| Economically Disadvantaged | | 5.0% | 30.4% | 3 / 17 | 17.6% | 16.7% |
| Identified Disability | | | | | | 8.7% |

Source: DOE - Maine - lms.backpack.education/public/maine -

Report: SAT Performance Report

Academic Achievement Continued

ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENT - F&P

Achievement: % of Grade K Students at or above the benchmark for Fountas & Pinnell (May=C/D)

| GRADE K | Spring 2017 Percentage | Spring 2018 Percentage | Spring 2019 Count | Spring 2019 Percentage |
|-----------------------------------|---------------------------|---------------------------|----------------------|---------------------------|
| Reading | | | | |
| District Total | 52.2% | 53.0% | 70 / 152 | 46.1% |
| <u>Economically Disadvantaged</u> | | 32.0% | 10 / 31 | 32.3% |
| Identified Disability | | 39.3% | | |

ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENT - F&P

Achievement: % of Grade 1 Students at or above the benchmark for Fountas & Pinnell (May=I/J)

| GRADE 1 | Spring 2017 Percentage | Spring 2018 Percentage | Spring 2019 Count | Spring 2019 Percentage |
|-----------------------------------|---------------------------|---------------------------|----------------------|---------------------------|
| Reading | | | | |
| District Total | 62.4% | 47.1% | 63 / 125 | 50.4% |
| <u>Economically Disadvantaged</u> | | 29.2% | 7 / 19 | 36.8% |
| Identified Disability | | 11.1% | 3 / 12 | 25.0% |

ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENT - F&P

Achievement: % of Grade 2 Students at or above the benchmark for Fountas & Pinnell (May=M/N)

| GRADE 2 | Spring 2017 Percentage | Spring 2018 Percentage | Spring 2019 Count | Spring 2019 Percentage |
|-----------------------------------|---------------------------|---------------------------|----------------------|---------------------------|
| Reading | | | | |
| District Total | 53.3% | 47.1% | 57 / 123 | 46.3% |
| <u>Economically Disadvantaged</u> | | 34.5% | 5 / 24 | 20.8% |
| Identified Disability | | 18.5% | 2 / 10 | 20.0% |

Academic Achievement Continued

ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENT - F&P

Achievement: % of Grade 3 Students at or above the benchmark for Fountas & Pinnell (May=P/Q)

| GRADE 3 | Spring 2017 Percentage | Spring 2018 Percentage | Spring 2019 Count | Spring 2019 Percentage |
|----------------------------|---------------------------|---------------------------|----------------------|---------------------------|
| Reading | | | | |
| District Total | 69.2% | 54.6% | 56 / 135 | 41.5% |
| Economically Disadvantaged | | 33.3% | 8 / 29 | 27.6% |
| Identified Disability | | 17.4% | 5 / 19 | 26.3% |

ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENT - F&P

Achievement: % of Grade 4 Students at or above the benchmark for Fountas & Pinnell (May=S/T)

| GRADE 4 | Spring 2017 Percentage | Spring 2018 Percentage | Spring 2019 Count | Spring 2019 Percentage |
|----------------------------|---------------------------|---------------------------|----------------------|---------------------------|
| Reading | | | | |
| District Total | 58.8% | 56.4% | 75 / 143 | 52.4% |
| Economically Disadvantaged | | 43.2% | 10 / 30 | 33.3% |
| Identified Disability | | 17.9% | 8 / 18 | 44.4% |

ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENT - F&P

Achievement: % of Grade 5 Students at or above the benchmark for Fountas & Pinnell (May=V)

| GRADE 5 | Spring 2017 Percentage | Spring 2018 Percentage | Spring 2019 Count | Spring 2019 Percentage |
|----------------------------|---------------------------|---------------------------|----------------------|---------------------------|
| Reading | | | | |
| District Total | 68.3% | 50.3% | 63 / 152 | 41.4% |
| Economically Disadvantaged | | 38.5% | 12 / 37 | 32.4% |
| Identified Disability | | 9.5% | | |

Source: District EOY Scores (Literacy Strategists)

Report: DCS Data Wall , MLS 3-5 Data Wall , PES 3-5 Data Wall

Academic Achievement Continued

ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENT - NWEA - Measures of Academic Progress (MAP)

Achievement: % of Grade 3 Students Scoring in the average percentile or above on NWEA (41% - 99%)

| GRADE 3 | Fall 2016 Percentage | Spring 2017 Percentage | Spring 2018 Percentage | Spring 2019 Percentage | Fall 2020 Count | Fall 2020 Percentage |
|----------------------------|-------------------------|---------------------------|---------------------------|---------------------------|--------------------|-------------------------|
| Reading | | | | | | |
| District Total | 78.0% | 74.6% | 74.1% | 74.4% | 86 / 116 | 74.1% |
| Economically Disadvantaged | | | 36.0% | 58.6% | 13 / 23 | 56.5% |
| Identified Disability | | | 52.0% | 36.7% | 8 / 20 | 40.0% |
| Math | | | | | | |
| District Total | 80.1% | 71.8% | 73.3% | 88.7% | 70 / 115 | 80.9% |
| Economically Disadvantaged | | | 78.0% | 58.6% | 13 / 23 | 56.5% |
| Identified Disability | | | 60.0% | 33.3% | 6 / 20 | 30.0% |

ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENT - NWEA - Measures of Academic Progress (MAP)

Achievement: % of Grade 4 Students Scoring in the average percentile or above on NWEA (41% - 99%)

| GRADE 4 | Fall 2016 Percentage | Spring 2017 Percentage | Spring 2018 Percentage | Spring 2019 Percentage | Fall 2020 Count | Fall 2020 Percentage |
|----------------------------|-------------------------|---------------------------|---------------------------|---------------------------|--------------------|-------------------------|
| Reading | | | | | | |
| District Total | 83.2% | 79.6% | 78.0% | 75.2% | 82 / 110 | 74.5% |
| Economically Disadvantaged | | | 80.8% | 53.3% | 7 / 16 | 43.8% |
| Identified Disability | | | 57.9% | 30.8% | 4 / 17 | 23.5% |
| Math | | | | | | |
| District Total | 83.1% | 73.2% | 77.4% | 71.3% | 71 / 110 | 64.5% |
| Economically Disadvantaged | | | 87.1% | 43.3% | 7 / 16 | 38.9% |
| Identified Disability | | | 86.4% | 42.3% | 5 / 15 | 33.3% |

ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENT - NWEA - Measures of Academic Progress (MAP)

Achievement: % of Grade 5 Students Scoring in the average percentile or above on NWEA (41% - 99%)

| GRADE 5 | Fall 2016 Percentage | Spring 2017 Percentage | Spring 2018 Percentage | Spring 2019 Percentage | Fall 2020 Count | Fall 2020 Percentage |
|----------------------------|-------------------------|---------------------------|---------------------------|---------------------------|--------------------|-------------------------|
| Reading | | | | | | |
| District Total | 84.0% | 83.3% | 80.4% | 77.3% | 95 / 121 | 78.5% |
| Economically Disadvantaged | | | 72.7% | 65.8% | 16 / 26 | 61.5% |
| Identified Disability | | | 47.6% | 33.3% | | 48.1% |
| Math | | | | | | |
| District Total | 84.7% | 74.4% | 78.2% | 71.9% | 94 / 122 | 77.0% |
| Economically Disadvantaged | | | 81.8% | 55.3% | 16 / 26 | 61.5% |
| Identified Disability | | | 42.9% | 34.8% | 12 / 25 | 48.0% |

Academic Achievement Continued

ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENT - NWEA - Measures of Academic Progress (MAP)

Achievement: % of Grade 6 Students Scoring in the average percentile or above on NWEA (41% - 99%)

| GRADE 6 | Fall 2016 Percentage | Spring 2017 Percentage | Spring 2018 Percentage | Spring 2019 Percentage | Fall 2020 Count | Fall 2020 Percentage |
|----------------------------|-------------------------|---------------------------|---------------------------|---------------------------|--------------------|-------------------------|
| Reading | | | | | | |
| District Total | 79.3% | 81.3% | 82.0% | 83.4% | 105 / 132 | 79.5% |
| Economically Disadvantaged | | | 69.2% | 73.1% | 16 / 23 | 69.6% |
| Identified Disability | | | 47.1% | 34.8% | 10 / 22 | 45.5% |
| Math | | | | | | |
| District Total | 70.1% | 70.1% | 78.6% | 82.8% | 98 / 132 | 74.2% |
| Economically Disadvantaged | | | 48.1% | 69.2% | 9 / 23 | 39.1% |
| Identified Disability | | | 38.9% | 34.8% | 4 / 22 | 18.2% |

ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENT - NWEA - Measures of Academic Progress (MAP)

Achievement: % of Grade 7 Students Scoring in the average percentile or above on NWEA (41% - 99%)

| GRADE 7 | Fall 2016 Percentage | Spring 2017 Percentage | Spring 2018 Percentage | Spring 2019 Percentage | Fall 2020 Count | Fall 2020 Percentage |
|----------------------------|-------------------------|---------------------------|---------------------------|---------------------------|--------------------|-------------------------|
| Reading | | | | | | |
| District Total | 82.8% | 78.6% | 84.2% | 90.9% | 122 / 151 | 80.8% |
| Economically Disadvantaged | | | 75.0% | 71.0% | 24 / 36 | 66.7% |
| Identified Disability | | | 47.6% | 58.8% | 11 / 25 | 44.0% |
| Math | | | | | | |
| District Total | 75.3% | 78.9% | 74.8% | 85.8% | 112 / 152 | 73.7% |
| Economically Disadvantaged | | | 75.8% | 63.3% | 18 / 36 | 50.0% |
| Identified Disability | | | 47.8% | 31.3% | 10 / 25 | 40.0% |

ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENT - NWEA - Measures of Academic Progress (MAP)

Achievement: % of Grade 8 Students Scoring in the average percentile or above on NWEA (41% - 99%)

| GRADE 8 | Fall 2016 Percentage | Spring 2017 Percentage | Spring 2018 Percentage | Spring 2019 Percentage | Fall 2020 Count | Fall 2020 Percentage |
|----------------------------|-------------------------|---------------------------|---------------------------|---------------------------|--------------------|-------------------------|
| Reading | | | | | | |
| District Total | 86.4% | 87.1% | 85.1% | 84.1% | 121 / 139 | 87.1% |
| Economically Disadvantaged | | | 71.4% | 66.7% | 26 / 35 | 74.3% |
| Identified Disability | | | 46.2% | 37.5% | 10 / 22 | 45.5% |
| Math | | | | | | |
| District Total | 80.6% | 77.0% | 80.4% | 77.3% | 114 / 136 | 83.8% |
| Economically Disadvantaged | | | 55.6% | 67.6% | 25 / 35 | 71.4% |
| Identified Disability | | | 33.3% | 35.0% | 9 / 21 | 42.9% |

Academic Achievement Continued

ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENT - NWEA - Measures of Academic Progress (MAP)

Achievement: % of Grade 9 Students Scoring in the average percentile or above on NWEA (41% - 99%)

| GRADE 9 | Fall 2016 Percentage | Spring 2017 Percentage | Spring 2018 Percentage | Spring 2019 Percentage | Fall 2020 Count | Fall 2020 Percentage |
|----------------------------|---------------------------------|-----------------------------------|-----------------------------------|-----------------------------------|----------------------------|---------------------------------|
| Reading | | | | | | |
| District Total | 84.9% | 84.7% | 89.1% | 88.0% | 137 / 147 | 93.2% |
| Economically Disadvantaged | | | 53.6% | 65.5% | 14 / 21 | 66.7% |
| Identified Disability | | | 10.0% | 40.9% | 7 / 14 | 50.0% |
| Math | | | | | | |
| District Total | 80.6% | 72.8% | 74.1% | 78.1% | 140 / 150 | 93.3% |
| Economically Disadvantaged | | | 28.1% | 48.3% | 16 / 23 | 69.6% |
| Identified Disability | | | 8.3% | 33.3% | 7 / 14 | 50.0% |

ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENT - NWEA - Measures of Academic Progress (MAP)

Achievement: % of Grade 10 Students Scoring in the average percentile or above on NWEA (41% - 99%)

| GRADE 10 | Fall 2016 Percentage | Spring 2017 Percentage | Spring 2018 Percentage | Spring 2019 Percentage | Fall 2020 Count | Fall 2020 Percentage |
|----------------------------|---------------------------------|-----------------------------------|-----------------------------------|-----------------------------------|----------------------------|---------------------------------|
| Reading | | | | | | |
| District Total | 82.9% | 72.4% | 81.0% | 92.5% | 116 / 130 | 89.2% |
| Economically Disadvantaged | | | 6.7% | 81.8% | 21 / 28 | 80.8% |
| Identified Disability | | | | 18.7% | 4 / 10 | 40.0% |
| Math | | | | | | |
| District Total | 80.7% | 72.4% | 83.2% | 80.3% | 115 / 130 | 88.5% |
| Economically Disadvantaged | | | 13.3% | 58.8% | 22 / 27 | 81.5% |
| Identified Disability | | | | 16.7% | 5 / 10 | 50.0% |

Source: NWEA: <https://sao.nwea.org>

Report: Grade Report

Academic Achievement Continued

ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENT - ADVANCED COURSEWORK

Advanced Coursework while enrolled at Freeport High School

| | 2014-15 | 2015-16 | 2016-17 | 2017-18 | 2018-19 | 2019-20 |
|---|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|
| <u>Total Number of Students Enrolled in Advanced Placement (AP) Courses</u> | | | | | | |
| District Total | 79 | 70 | 71 | 102 | 133 | 130 |
| <u>Percent of Students Scoring 3 or Higher on at Least One AP Exam</u> | | | | | | |
| District Total | 78.5% | 74.3% | 71.8% | 71.6% | 61.7% | 79.2% |
| <u>Percent of US AP Students Scoring 3 or Higher on at Least One Exam</u> | | | | | | |
| US Total | | | 57.0% | 61.3% | 60.0% | |
| <u>Percent of AP EXAMS That Result in a Score of 3 or Higher</u> | | | | | | |
| District Total | 68.6% | 63.1% | 61.1% | 67.7% | 62.4% | 69.9% |

Source: College Board

Report: 5-Yr AP School Score Summary - *Percent of AP Exams 3+: AP Current Year Score Summary

Academic Growth

ACADEMIC GROWTH - NWEA - Measures of Academic Progress (MAP)

Growth: % of Grade 3 Students Meeting or Exceeding Projected Growth NWEA

| GRADE 3 | Fall 2016 to Spring 2017 Percent | Spring 2017 to Spring 2018 Percent | Spring 2018 to Spring 2019 Count | Spring 2018 to Spring 2019 Percent |
|----------------------------|--|--|--|--|
| Reading | | | | |
| District Total | 53.2% | 53.6% | 66 / 123 | 53.7% |
| Economically Disadvantaged | 46.4% | 47.6% | 15 / 28 | 53.6% |
| Identified Disability | 50.0% | 35.0% | 14 / 28 | 50.0% |
| Math | | | | |
| District Total | 33.1% | 55.6% | 63 / 124 | 50.8% |
| Economically Disadvantaged | 32.1% | 50.0% | 14 / 28 | 50.0% |
| Identified Disability | 36.4% | 52.4% | 9 / 28 | 32.1% |

ACADEMIC GROWTH - NWEA - Measures of Academic Progress (MAP)

Growth: % of Grade 4 Students Meeting or Exceeding Projected Growth NWEA

| GRADE 4 | Fall 2015 to Spring 2016 Percent | Fall 2016 to Spring 2017 Percent | Spring 2017 to Spring 2018 Percent | Spring 2018 to Spring 2019 Count | Spring 2018 to Spring 2019 Percent |
|----------------------------|--|--|--|--|--|
| Reading | | | | | |
| District Total | 58.1% | 54.5% | 65.7% | 73 / 137 | 53.3% |
| Economically Disadvantaged | 55.6% | 42.3% | 69.6% | 13 / 28 | 46.4% |
| Identified Disability | 46.7% | 50.0% | 50.0% | 12 / 24 | 50.0% |
| Math | | | | | |
| District Total | 38.8% | 39.6% | 68.9% | 75 / 136 | 55.1% |
| Economically Disadvantaged | 60.0% | 30.8% | 56.5% | 10 / 28 | 35.7% |
| Identified Disability | 61.5% | 31.3% | 60.0% | 11 / 24 | 45.8% |

ACADEMIC GROWTH - NWEA - Measures of Academic Progress (MAP)

Growth: % of Grade 5 Students Meeting or Exceeding Projected Growth NWEA

| GRADE 5 | Fall 2015 to Spring 2016 Percent | Fall 2016 to Spring 2017 Percent | Spring 2017 to Spring 2018 Percent | Spring 2018 to Spring 2019 Count | Spring 2018 to Spring 2019 Percent |
|----------------------------|--|--|--|--|--|
| Reading | | | | | |
| District Total | 60.0% | 55.3% | 64.1% | 83 / 141 | 58.9% |
| Economically Disadvantaged | 53.6% | 57.7% | 66.7% | 24 / 35 | 68.6% |
| Identified Disability | 57.1% | 50.0% | 38.9% | 14 / 22 | 63.6% |
| Math | | | | | |
| District Total | 41.6% | 35.8% | 72.3% | 73 / 141 | 51.8% |
| Economically Disadvantaged | 48.3% | 38.5% | 60.0% | 16 / 35 | 45.7% |
| Identified Disability | 40.0% | 11.8% | 33.3% | 7 / 21 | 33.3% |

Academic Growth Continued

ACADEMIC GROWTH - NWEA - Measures of Academic Progress (MAP)

Growth: % of Grade 6 Students Meeting or Exceeding Projected Growth NWEA

| GRADE 6 | Fall 2015 to Spring 2016 Percent | Fall 2016 to Spring 2017 Percent | Spring 2017 to Spring 2018 Percent | Spring 2018 to Spring 2019 Count | Spring 2018 to Spring 2019 Percent |
|----------------------------|--|--|--|--|--|
| Reading | | | | | |
| District Total | 60.8% | 60.3% | 59.1% | 82 / 135 | 60.7% |
| Economically Disadvantaged | 59.4% | 60.0% | 52.2% | 16 / 25 | 64.0% |
| Identified Disability | 47.1% | 47.1% | 47.1% | 12 / 21 | 57.1% |
| Math | | | | | |
| District Total | 58.7% | 58.3% | 67.3% | 84 / 134 | 62.7% |
| Economically Disadvantaged | | 36.4% | 39.1% | 13 / 24 | 54.2% |
| Identified Disability | | 53.3% | 35.3% | 13 / 21 | 61.9% |

ACADEMIC GROWTH - NWEA - Measures of Academic Progress (MAP)

Growth: % of Grade 7 Students Meeting or Exceeding Projected Growth NWEA

| GRADE 7 | Fall 2015 to Spring 2016 Percent | Fall 2016 to Spring 2017 Percent | Spring 2017 to Spring 2018 Percent | Spring 2018 to Spring 2019 Count | Spring 2018 to Spring 2019 Percent |
|----------------------------|--|--|--|--|--|
| Reading | | | | | |
| District Total | 63.9% | 58.9% | 63.9% | 102 / 156 | 65.4% |
| Economically Disadvantaged | | 48.3% | 44.8% | 23 / 29 | 79.3% |
| Identified Disability | | 52.2% | 35.3% | 13 / 16 | 81.3% |
| Math | | | | | |
| District Total | 63.7% | 57.1% | 56.3% | 103 / 154 | 66.9% |
| Economically Disadvantaged | | 48.3% | 60.0% | 20 / 28 | 71.4% |
| Identified Disability | | 50.0% | 66.7% | 10 / 15 | 66.7% |

ACADEMIC GROWTH - NWEA - Measures of Academic Progress (MAP)

Growth: % of Grade 8 Students Meeting or Exceeding Projected Growth NWEA

| GRADE 8 | Fall 2015 to Spring 2016 Percent | Fall 2016 to Spring 2017 Percent | Spring 2017 to Spring 2018 Percent | Spring 2018 to Spring 2019 Count | Spring 2018 to Spring 2019 Percent |
|----------------------------|--|--|--|--|--|
| Reading | | | | | |
| District Total | 56.2% | 65.4% | 62.0% | 78 / 129 | 60.5% |
| Economically Disadvantaged | | 48.7% | 57.1% | 18 / 27 | 66.7% |
| Identified Disability | | 38.5% | 37.5% | 11 / 12 | 91.7% |
| Math | | | | | |
| District Total | 45.2% | 54.5% | 61.7% | 78 / 133 | 58.6% |
| Economically Disadvantaged | | 36.1% | 50.0% | 8 / 30 | 26.7% |
| Identified Disability | | 41.7% | 47.8% | 8 / 15 | 53.3% |

Academic Growth Continued

ACADEMIC GROWTH - NWEA - Measures of Academic Progress (MAP)

Growth: % of Grade 9 Students Meeting or Exceeding Projected Growth NWEA

| GRADE 9 | Fall 2016 to Spring 2017 Percent | Spring 2017 to Spring 2018 Percent | Spring 2018 to Spring 2019 Count | Spring 2018 to Spring 2019 Percent |
|----------------------------|---|---|---|---|
| Reading | | | | |
| District Total | 48.3% | 52.7% | 83 / 140 | 59.3% |
| Economically Disadvantaged | 36.4% | 58.3% | 15 / 27 | 55.6% |
| Identified Disability | 33.3% | 37.5% | 10 / 21 | 47.6% |
| Math | | | | |
| District Total | 36.0% | 50.8% | 74 / 145 | 51.0% |
| Economically Disadvantaged | 30.0% | 60.7% | 10 / 27 | 37.0% |
| Identified Disability | 33.3% | 40.0% | 10 / 21 | 47.6% |

ACADEMIC GROWTH - NWEA - Measures of Academic Progress (MAP)

Growth: % of Grade 10 Students Meeting or Exceeding Projected Growth NWEA

| GRADE 10 | Fall 2016 to Spring 2017 Percent | Spring 2017 to Spring 2018 Percent | Spring 2018 to Spring 2019 Count | Spring 2018 to Spring 2019 Percent |
|----------------------------|---|---|---|---|
| Reading | | | | |
| District Total | 39.5% | 44.9% | 62 / 121 | 51.2% |
| Economically Disadvantaged | 31.3% | 30.8% | 12 / 28 | 42.9% |
| Identified Disability | 23.1% | 42.9% | 4 / 6 | 66.7% |
| Math | | | | |
| District Total | 44.2% | 66.3% | 58 / 125 | 46.4% |
| Economically Disadvantaged | 50.0% | 53.8% | 11 / 32 | 34.4% |
| Identified Disability | 20.0% | 57.1% | | 50.0% |

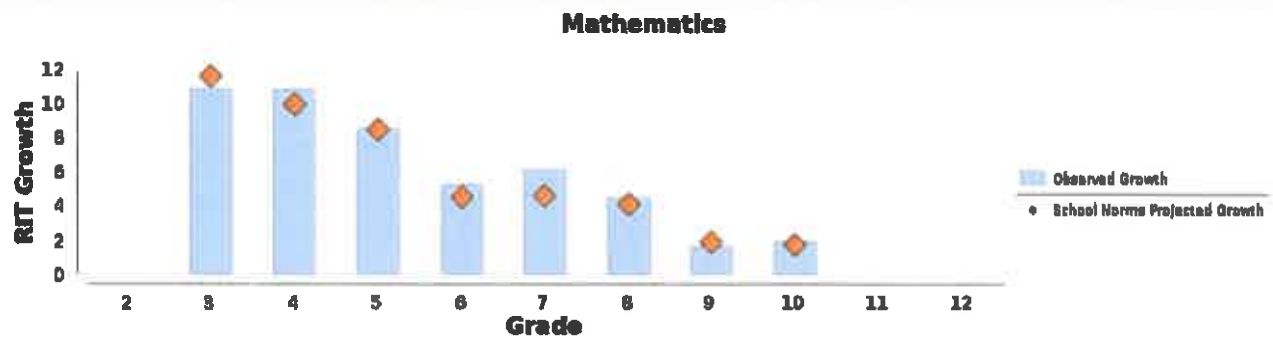
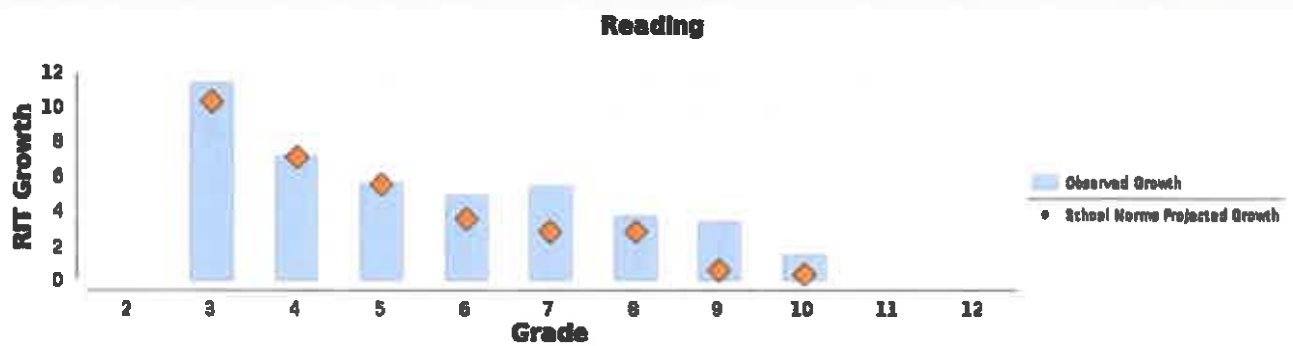
Source: NWEA: <https://sso.nwea.org>

Report: Student Growth Summary

Academic Growth Continued

ACADEMIC GROWTH - NWEA - Measures of Academic Progress (MAP)

NWEA Student Growth Spring 2018 to Spring 2019



Source: NWEA: <https://sso.nwea.org>

Report: District Growth Summary

Post Secondary Readiness & Success

GRADUATION COHORT

FREEPORT HIGH SCHOOL

| | 2014 Cohort | 2015 Cohort | 2016 Cohort | 2017 Cohort | 2018 Cohort | 2019 Cohort | 2020 Cohort* |
|----------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|--------------|
| District Total | 92.5% | 98.4% | 94.3% | 90.3% | 96.3% | 93.2% | 96.2% |

* uncertified

Source: Data Warehouse, DOE-NE Report: Graduation Rates (2018 NEO 4YR Graduation Rate)

Post Secondary Enrollment and Persistence

Number of Students Enrolled in College or Program in the First Year After Graduation

| | Class of 2014 | Class of 2015 | Class of 2016 | Class of 2017 | Class of 2018 | Class of 2019 | Class of 2020 |
|-----------------------------|---------------|---------------|---------------|---------------|---------------|---------------|---------------|
| District Total In Class | 81/129 | 83/125 | 72/116 | 80/114 | 75/110 | 98/139 | |
| District Percent Enrolled | 62.8% | 66.4% | 62.1% | 70.2% | 68.2% | 69.1% | |
| Total Enrolled in Public | 44 | 38 | 39 | 41 | 49 | 50 | |
| Total Enrolled in Private | 37 | 45 | 33 | 39 | 26 | 48 | |
| Total Enrolled in 4-Year | 66 | 69 | 57 | 67 | 58 | 85 | |
| Total Enrolled in 2-Year | 15 | 14 | 15 | 13 | 17 | 11 | |
| Total Enrolled in State | 48 | 33 | 38 | 42 | 44 | 58 | |
| Total Enrolled Out of State | 36 | 50 | 34 | 38 | 31 | 38 | |

Source: National Clearinghouse, Page 11 of 45

Report: Count of Students Enrolled in College During the First Year After High School

Second Year Students Enrolled in Postsecondary Experiences

Number of Students Continuing College or Programming for a Second Year

| | Class of 2012 | Class of 2013 | Class of 2014 | Class of 2015 | Class of 2016 | Class of 2017 | Class of 2018 |
|-----------------------------|---------------|---------------|---------------|---------------|---------------|---------------|---------------|
| District Total In Class | 73/116 | 71/121 | 68/129 | 73/125 | 68/116 | 72/114 | |
| District Percent Enrolled | 62.9% | 58.7% | 52.7% | 58.4% | 58.9% | 63.2% | |
| Total Enrolled in Public | 40 | 41 | 33 | 30 | 35 | 36 | |
| Total Enrolled in Private | 33 | 30 | 35 | 43 | 31 | 38 | |
| Total Enrolled in 4-Year | 58 | 58 | 60 | 64 | 56 | 64 | |
| Total Enrolled in 2-Year | 15 | 13 | 8 | 9 | 10 | 8 | |
| Total Enrolled in State | 39 | 45 | 35 | 24 | 32 | 37 | |
| Total Enrolled Out of State | 34 | 26 | 33 | 49 | 34 | 35 | |

Source: National Clearinghouse, Page 21 of 45

Report: Count of Students Enrolled in College Freshman to Sophomore Persistence

Other Academic Indicators

RSU5 Pre-K Programs as of October 1st Enrollment Numbers

Number of Students Enrolled in RSU5 Sponsored Pre-K Programs

| Pre-K | 2014 | 2015 | 2016 | 2017 | 2018 | 2019 | 2020 |
|----------------------------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|
| District Total | 39 | 60 | 66 | 95 | 95 | 109 | 92 |
| Economically Disadvantaged | 9 | 15 | 8 | 12 | 20 | 20 | 16 |

Source: October 1 EPS Certification

Report: Enrollment Report

**Board Goals Update
January 13, 2021**

Board Strategic Goal 1: All RSU5 students experience a joyful learning climate that is safe, nurturing, and fosters curiosity.

Objective 1.1 Strengthen and align all social/emotional development systems

- E. Implement recommendations per details in the plan:
 - a. Revision of advisory of FMS
 - i. Paused due to the pandemic
 - b. Trauma informed PD
 - i. Social workers and guidance counselors have been trained
 - ii. Professional development has been postponed due to pandemic
 - c. Screener implementation PK-8
 - SRSS (Student Risk Screening Scale) is beginning to be implemented in all schools
 - This measures externalizing/internalizing behaviors and flags students who are at risk students socially/emotionally

Board Strategic Goal 1: All RSU5 students experience a joyful learning climate that is safe, nurturing, and fosters curiosity.

Objective 1.4 Strengthen diversity, equity and inclusion practices

- A. Conduct DEI audit
 - Creation of DEI advisory committee
 - o Completed & the committee has had an initial meeting
 - Contracted with MAEC to conduct audit
 - Focus groups completed
 - Received initial audit on January 4, 2021
 - All schools have presented equity goal to Board
 - Policy revisions for Title IX
- B. Develop and recommend a plan based on audit
- C. Other work:
 - 10 staff are enrolled in the Cultural Competence Institute. This group meets monthly.
 - RSU 5 group meets an additional hour outside of the meeting to discuss and plan for next steps.
 - Administrators having monthly book discussion on *How to be an Anti-Racist*

- Melissa Hewey, attorney from Drummond Woodsum, attended policy meeting on Sept. 11th for discussion about policy work
- Building administrators discussed and agreed upon needed revisions to student handbook regarding DEI

Board Strategic Goal 2: All RSU 5 students regularly engage in meaningful student centered learning.

Objective 2.3: Provide strong support for professional practices that foster collaboration and staff voice, and strengthen instruction to meet the needs of all learners.

- E. Evaluate the effectiveness of new practices and revise as necessary
 - Continue to meet monthly with Association President to ensure that staff voice is included in planning for professional development
 - Most work for this year has been paused to allow for more teacher planning time

Board Strategic Goal 2: All RSU 5 students regularly engage in meaningful student centered learning.

Objective 2.5: Establish formalized systems for annual identification of goals for the improvement of student achievement.

- B. Implementing the protocol
 - Assistant Superintendent continues to work with data specialist to ensure that ongoing data is collected in a systematic and timely manner
- C. Evaluating the protocol
 - Reflection/evaluation will be completed in May

Board Strategic Goal 3: All RSU5 school-parent-community partnerships are based on strong communication and active involvement to support student success.

Objective 3.1 Expand avenues used to proactively distribute information about RSU5 schools and seek feedback from stakeholders about the schools.

- D. Develop and implement a plan to improve parent and community communication, including feedback from all stakeholders.
 - Distributed staff survey in fall to gather feedback about satisfaction of current school year

- Reviewed current communication list October 16
- Strategic Communications Committee is in process of coding Student Exit Survey
- Next scheduled meeting on January 22
 - Review budget communication; assess effectiveness and make adjustments as necessary

Board Strategic Goal 3: All RSU5 school-parent-community partnerships are based on strong communication and active involvement to support student success.

Objective 3.2 Engage all RSU5 learners in community based learning both in the classroom and out in the community.

Objective 3.3 Encourage and support strong staff-parent partnerships to enhance student success.

- This work has been paused to allow for more planning time due to remote/hybrid learning.

Board Strategic Goal 4: RSU 5 has well developed and refined finance, facilities, transportation and food service systems to support the learning of all students.

Objective 4.1 Ensure that all staff and students have quality facilities to meet their needs.

- A. Review and update the existing Capital Improvement Plan
 - This work has been completed by the Director of Transportation/Operations. Presentation to Board in fall of 2020.
- B. Explore options for improving facilities expansions/renovations
 - a. Enrollment study
 - Currently looking at two different options for companies to complete enrollment study.

Board Strategic Goal 4: RSU 5 has well developed and refined finance, facilities, transportation and food service systems to support the learning of all students.

Objective 4.2 Attract and retain highly effective staff

- D. Review and improve protocols for required trainings, i.e. Target Solutions
 - Ongoing
 - Moving to new platform July 1: Infinite Visions
 - Expectation is that this will create opportunities for new efficiencies

Board Strategic Goal 4: RSU 5 has well developed and refined finance, facilities, transportation and food service systems to support the learning of all students.

Objective 4.3 Improve and assure student access to the highest quality school nutrition program.

- A. Review the quality of the school nutrition program and the equity of its access to all students.
 - Board policy to eliminate debt with free/reduced application is being implemented
 - Worked this fall through the yearly audit to eliminate debt to nutrition department
 - Nutrition audit has recently been completed by State
 - Protocol for remote meals created to ensure equal access for all students

Board Strategic Goal 4: RSU 5 has well developed and refined finance, facilities, transportation and food service systems to support the learning of all students.

Objective 4.5 Strengthen community engagement and support in short and long term financial planning.

- A. Assess existing community engagement in financial planning processes.
 - New director of finance hired in August 2020
 - Reviewing current processes

Board Strategic Goal 4: RSU 5 has well developed and refined finance, facilities, transportation and food service systems to support the learning of all students.

Objective 4.6 Ensure that all facilities are operating efficiently and effectively

- A. Conduct Energy Audit to identify needed improvements in RSU5 facilities.
 - Mechanical Services conducting audit
 - First needs identified were with reviewing ventilation systems
 - Rest of audit should be completed before the end of the year
 - Will prioritize needs with Board once audit is completed

Other

A. Teacher Negotiations

- Association has selected negotiating team
- Board has identified majority of team - still need one additional member due to resignation of Board member
- Review of current contract is being conducted by administration
- Setting up meeting times with Association

B. Reopening Plan

- Much of fall has been spent on the reopening of schools
 - Move from hybrid to hybrid plus
 - Identifying ways to support teachers in planning
 - Identifying ways to support synchronous learning
 - Identifying ways to support more students returning to school five days a week
 - Writing and managing CARES Act/ federal funding to support learning during the pandemic
 - Work with Association on MOUs.
 - Covid Sick Bank
 - Consideration of continuation of benefits when hours are reduced

Equity in Regional School Unit 5

Summary of themes from focus groups

January 4, 2021



| | |
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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Overview

In the summer of 2020, Regional School Unit 5 (RSU 5) reached out to the MAEC Inc. to engage in technical assistance and professional development around the issue of equity in the district. RSU 5 is a district in Maine that serves the communities of Durham, Freeport, and Pownal. MAEC Inc. is a private education non-profit whose mission is to promote excellence and equity in education to achieve social justice. MAEC has a 26-year record of providing high-quality technical assistance and training to states, districts, and schools to increase access, educational opportunities, and academic achievement for ethnically, economically, culturally, and linguistically diverse students.

In November of 2020, as a part of its technical assistance, MAEC conducted 10 focus groups with RSU 5 stakeholders: parents/caregivers (4 groups), students (3 groups), staff (2 groups), and administrators (1 group). The length of each focus group ranged from 30 to 90 minutes. These focus groups focused on gathering stakeholders' opinions related to equity in the district and served as the first part of a needs assessment to identify potential barriers to achieving equity in the district.

The purpose of this document is to provide an overview of key takeaways from these focus group discussions. A final report that incorporates other information, including a review of discipline data, as well as findings from the policies and procedures review will be submitted to RSU 5 at a subsequent date.

Key Findings from the Focus Groups

1. **Equity:** Overall, when asked what equity means to them, RSU 5's focus group participants generally defined equity as fair and equal access to opportunities and resources, fair and impartial treatment, and ensuring that all students/families feel welcome.
2. **Demographics of RSU 5:** All stakeholder groups described RSU 5 as homogenous in regard to race, ethnicity, and primary language. Stakeholders noted some increase in the number of students/families of color in recent years.
3. **Race and Ethnicity:** Many discussions were centered around race and ethnicity. While most students did not report knowing or witnessing equity problems related to race and ethnicity, parents/caregivers did. Several parents who have children of color reported incidences of unfair treatment or disciplinary practices, bullying/harassment, and/or lack of support by staff or the school. Some parents alluded to perceptions of tokenism. Staff/administration largely discussed their need for professional development around how to thoughtfully converse with students about race/ethnicity in the classroom. Staff and parents/caregivers also discussed the need for lessons and texts to be more representative of and sensitive to diverse cultures.
4. **Special Education/Ability:** Some students observed inequitable treatment of students with special needs such as disciplinary inequities, while some staff/administrators noted lowered expectations for students in special education who come from lower-SES backgrounds and racially disproportionate enrollment in special programming. In contrast, families who have children with special needs felt positively about their school's approach to special education.
5. **LGBTQ+:** Staff discussed the training they have received in how to provide LGBTQ+ inclusive practices, but they also expressed a need for more training in how to engage with LGBTQ+ topics in a more universal way (see Professional Development). One parent expressed their satisfaction with their

school's support for transgender and nonbinary students and their families while one student noted that LGBTQ+ history is absent from school curriculum.

6. English Language Learners: Several participants mentioned that more should be done to help non-English speaking families feel more welcomed and a part of the community. For example, one administrator noted that home notices are only provided in English and a one parent noted that some students speak for their parents or serve as the conduit between the school and their parent. Another staff member noted that their ELL teacher is the person who typically reaches out to non-English speaking families but that this responsibility should not fall solely on this position; a parent expressed similar sentiments and experiences as well.
7. Socioeconomic Considerations: A place where many participants felt that the district and community are doing a good job of meeting the needs of students and families is by providing community resources to support students from low-income households. Staff discussed community resources such as the Freeport Brigade and noted that food is provided to families who need it for the weekend. However, one staff member noted that there is a population of the community that is quite wealthy and wonders if that community has more power than others.
8. Family Engagement: Staff noted that many families and community members at large volunteer their time or resources to their school/RSU 5 community. In addition, the provision of childcare during family engagement events was noted as helpful. However, staff also expressed that more inclusive language needs to be used when communicating with families and that staff should put forth more effort toward engaging families of color and other families that are not as engaged/involved in the school community.
9. Student Voice and Engagement: Staff/administrators and parents/caregivers agreed that student experiences and perspectives are a crucial to equity work at RSU 5. Staff noted the existence of a civil rights group at certain schools, which provides students with a space to engage in equity-related activities. However, staff also noted that they should allow students to be more directly involved in schoolwide equity conversations, particularly at the high school level.
10. Curriculum: Stakeholder provided many recommendations regarding curriculum including the need for lessons to be more historically accurate and representative of and sensitive to diverse cultures (e.g., LGBTQ+ history). Parents also noted that books that contain racial slurs have been discomforting to students of color and that they would like information about their school's curriculum to be more readily accessible.
11. School Climate: While parents stated that they feel their school is welcoming and has a positive climate, administrators reported that there is some student self-segregation by socioeconomic status and race. Staff also noted a need to better support students, specifically around creating safe spaces to engage in equity-related conversations with them.
12. Bullying/Harassment: Parents/caregivers stated that student behavioral expectations are clear and their children understand them. However, one parent noted that their school's response to bullying can be slow and challenging to navigate. Parents and staff/administrators noted that school policies should discuss racism and hate speech more explicitly.
13. Discipline: While positive discipline practices such as restorative justice are practiced in the district, there is a need to determine whether or not discipline is applied equitably as there have been reports of

inequitable practices based on race and special education status. There were also reports that the dress code is not evenly applied across the student body.

14. **Trust:** Students and parents/caregivers generally reported having trusting relationships between themselves and school staff/the district. However, there were reports that there is a lack of trust between students/families of color and their school and/or the district and some parents stated that they are distrustful that the district will engage in meaningful, enduring change regarding equity.
15. **Professional Development:** In general, the predominantly requested professional development from staff was training on how to have more intentional and thoughtful conversations with their students about sensitive equity topics such as race/ethnicity and gender. In addition, staff/administration reported a strong desire to have this work on equity to be authentic, sustained, and proactive instead of reactive, and part of a larger shift in school culture.
16. **COVID-19:** The majority of parents expressed that the district has been responsive to and putting in great effort to meet the needs of families during COVID-19. The district has largely been able to address technology needs of students, despite the challenge presented by the pandemic. However, some parents did not receive communication from their school about the provision of technological resources/devices. In addition, there was varied discussion around the hybrid model among stakeholders. Since the recent transition to the hybrid model, stakeholders have noticed discrepancies between students who have access to family learning support at home versus students who do not have that support/access. Staff reported having challenges executing the hybrid model as well. Some parents are pleased with how the school has handled the provision of education to students with Individualized Education Programs (IEPs). However, there are parents that cite concern regarding students with IEPs having an equitable access to education. Lastly, students reported that some teachers have not been fully adhering to mask-wearing guidelines, which has affected their feelings of safety in the classroom.

INTRODUCTION

In the summer of 2020, Regional School Unit 5 (RSU 5) reached out to the MAEC Inc. to engage in technical assistance and professional development around the issue of equity in the district. RSU 5 is a district in Maine that serves the communities of Durham, Freeport, and Pownal. MAEC Inc. is a private, education non-profit whose mission is to promote excellence and equity in education to achieve social justice. MAEC has a 26-year record of providing high-quality technical assistance and training to states, districts, and schools to increase access, educational opportunities, and academic achievement for ethnically, economically, culturally, and linguistically diverse students.

The technical assistance provided by MAEC consists of five phases:

1. Conducting an equity audit and needs assessment including focus groups
2. Providing expert consultation, training, and technical assistance in the development of educational practices designed to increase equity and reduce disproportionality in discipline.
3. Provide policy and procedural recommendations
4. Develop training and tools to create equitable and safe learning environments for all students
5. Through coaching, support training participants in using equitable decision-making procedures and practices.

This report presents the findings from the focus groups conducted as a part of the equity audit and needs assessment. As a part of the needs assessment, in addition to the findings from these focus groups, MAEC is going to examine the districts data disaggregated by race/ethnicity, ELL status and Special Education Status, including discipline data from the district to check for disproportionality. The findings from the focus groups and the data review will be used to develop trainings and tools to create an equitable and safe learning environment for all students in RSU 5.

METHODOLOGY, DATA COLLECTION, AND ANALYSIS

Methodology

The Mid-Atlantic Equity Consortium (MAEC) conducted ten focus groups with parents, students, staff (including teachers), and administrators to learn about strengths and challenges related to equity within the RSU 5. Participant recruitment was facilitated by the district; a recruitment message and link to an online sign-up form was posted to the RSU 5 website and Facebook (see Appendix A for sample message). Recruitment emails were sent to all staff, all students in grades 6-12, and all parents in the district. Prior to the focus group, reminders were sent to all groups.

Figure 1 summarizes the number of focus groups and participants in each group. In total 68 stakeholders took part in the focus groups.

Figure 1. Summary of number of focus groups and participants by stakeholder group.

| Stakeholder group | Number of focus groups | Number of participants |
|--------------------|------------------------|------------------------|
| Parents/Caregivers | 4 | 30 |
| Students | 3 | 11 |
| Staff | 2 | 20 |
| Administrators | 1 | 7 |

MAEC staff created a unique Zoom link for each focus group. RSU 5 central office personnel recruited focus group participants and invited them to a focus group by sharing the respective Zoom link with each stakeholder. Conducting these focus groups through Zoom allowed MAEC to use small group interviews to generate qualitative data for an articulated purpose (Krueger & Casey, 2008), while at the same time remaining respective of CDC guidelines limiting in person meetings due to COVID-19. MAEC selected this approach to understand stakeholders' views and experiences related to critical issues in the district, identify emerging issues, and uncover factors that may contribute to or address the issues. Focus group designs are advantageous as they can create a space for participants to express a range of opinions or ideas within groups and provide varying information across groups. They can also reveal deep insights related to the shared concerns of stakeholders.

Data Collection

A team of two MAEC facilitators who are experienced TA providers trained in equity and three members of MAEC's evaluation team conducted the virtual focus group sessions between November 2-9, 2020. Focus group discussion followed an unstructured interview format where facilitators asked eight questions during the parents and teachers' sessions and seven questions for the student sessions (See Appendix B for focus group protocol). Parents were informed about the scope of work between MAEC and the District. Prior to the start of each focus group, participants were asked to sign a virtual consent form that discussed that informed them their participation was voluntary and that they were under no obligation to participate. Participants were asked to consent to being audio/videotaped and that notified that their identities would remain anonymous (See Appendix C for consent forms).

With the unstructured interview format, participants are able to respond with flexibility and the format increases self-awareness of the participants (Corbin & Morse, 2003). The focus group sessions ranged in length from 30 minutes to 90 minutes. Members of the evaluation team took notes that were used for analysis and the focus group sessions were audio-recorded. The audio was transcribed using the transcription service “Rev” and transcriptions were analyzed for key themes using MAXQDA software.

Analysis

The analysis of focus group data began by de-identifying each transcript to make sure all comments made by participants during the focus groups that might reveal the identity of the participants were removed. Following this, the research team met to identify ideas and themes within and across focus groups. First, the team reviewed notes from the focus groups to begin generating broad thematic categories. Second, three members of the evaluation team read all transcripts from the focus groups and coded them using MAXQDA to the appropriate emergent themes. Third, MAEC researchers pulled quotes from the coded transcripts and looked at them holistically. This allowed MAEC evaluators to select common themes and points of differences within and across focus groups and stakeholders. Fourth, after reviewing the excerpts, MAEC staff created summaries for each theme that succinctly and accurately represented what was discussed in the focus groups. Finally, MAEC staff engaged in further analysis to conceptually link themes together.

DEMOGRAPHIC INFORMATION ABOUT FOCUS GROUP PARTICIPANTS

At the conclusion of each focus group, participants were asked to fill out a short survey that collected the demographic information about the focus group participants (See Appendix C). The information from participants across all the focus groups was aggregated to protect the identity of individual focus group participants. Of the total 68 focus group participants, 59 participants answered the survey, which constitutes an 86% response rate. Twenty-five survey respondents were parents/caregivers, 19 were staff, 7 were administrative personnel, and 8 were students (see Figure 2). The survey showed that a majority of those participating in focus group were white and female across all the participant roles.

Figure 2: Demographic survey respondents by role (n=59)

| Role | Count |
|------------------|--------------|
| Parent/Caregiver | 25 (42%) |
| Staff | 19 (32%) |
| Administrative | 7 (12%) |
| Student | 8 (14%) |

Parent/Caregiver Demographics

A total of 25 out of the 30 parents who participated in the focus groups completed the demographic survey. Of those that completed the survey seven parents/caregivers had only one child in the school system, 11 had two children attending schools in RSU 5 while 5 parents/caregivers had three students. The majority of the parents/caregivers (n=18) who participated took the survey were white. Five parents/caregivers indicated they were Black or African American, and two parents didn’t indicate their race. Seventeen parents/caregivers indicated they are female, six indicated they are male, and two parents/caregivers chose not to answer the question. Twenty of the parents indicated English as the main language spoken in their home, while one parent indicated speaking English and other languages in their home. Four parents chose not to answer questions related to language.

Staff and Administrator Demographics

In total, 26 of the 27 staff and administrators who participated in the focus groups took the demographics survey (see Figure 3). Of those, 13 indicated being teachers, seven are principals or assistant principals, and

six indicated they served other functions including guidance counselors, librarians, and a secretary. Twenty-five indicated they are white, while 1 indicated being another race, ethnicity, or origin without indicating which group specifically. The majority of staff responding (n=21) were female, while 5 staff members indicated being male. All 26 respondents indicated English being their primary language, while one participant also indicated speaking Spanish in addition to English.

Figure 3: Staff and Administrators (n=26)

| Role | Count |
|--|----------|
| Teachers | 13 (50%) |
| Principal/Assistant principal | 7 (27%) |
| Other (including guidance counselor, librarian, and secretary) | 6 (23%) |

Students

Of the 11 students who participated in the focus groups, eight filled out the survey. Among the eight students, five were 6th graders, one was an 8th grader, and one was a 9th grader. One student chose not to indicate a grade. All students indicated being white, but one student also indicated having Arab roots. Five students indicated they are female or female and cisgender, one student indicated they are non-binary/third gender, one preferred not to say, and one skipped this question. All students indicated speaking English as their primary language, with one student also speaking a bit of Italian.

FINDINGS

DEFINITIONS OF EQUITY

Each focus group began by asking participants how they would define equity and what equity means to them. Some students were unfamiliar with the term “equity in education”, while others had a general sense of the term’s meaning. Many students equated equity with fairness and making people feel welcome. One student referred to civil rights (specifically for minorities) and the lack thereof.

Parents largely defined equity in education as it relates to access to all aspects of education (such as extracurricular and classroom activities, food, etc.) to *“to students of all backgrounds, all different kinds of different types of learners”*, and providing *“the tools and methods and resources needed”* for equitable educational access. One parent stated equity in education was taking into account the different backgrounds of students, teachers, and administrators *“when you’re creating the entire environment and policies.”* Additionally, two parents discussed *“acknowledging implicit and explicit biases, and working through those biases”* and *“being aware of the barriers that are not necessarily intentional barriers, but the ones that are created because of a lack of awareness on the part of administration, or a staff member, or other students.”* Relatedly, one parent said equity is *“a place where you can voice discomfort and for other people to accept and understand your discomfort.”*

Staff and administration referred to the importance of fairness and being treated impartially, equally, and fairly as well as having access to opportunities/resources to be successful/have needs met. They also stressed the importance of representation (i.e., what students seeing themselves represented at school and in the curriculum). A few administrators from the middle and high school levels specifically referred to socioeconomic factors in their definition of equity while one staff member referred to the importance of ensuring all students feel welcome stating, *“I think that no matter who the child is, they feel that they are welcome, supported, and celebrated for who they are.”*

DEMOGRAPHICS OF RSU 5

All three stakeholder groups stated that RSU 5 is largely homogenous in regard to race, ethnicity, and primary language. Students reported very little diversity among students, and the majority of parents and a few staff referred to the predominantly white community and/or lack of racial diversity. A few administrators and one parent referred to the increase of students/families of color in recent years. One elementary administrator mentioned that there appears to be a relationship between low-income status and students who have special education needs.

While there was general consensus among parents in regard to the homogeneity in RSU 5, one parent stated: *"I feel that there's a perception that a typical student profile in our district is white, privileged, middle-class, heteronormative. And I don't think that's the reality. But I think that is the perception . . . I do think that can feel a real barrier to opportunity."*

RACE & ETHNICITY

Students largely reported not witnessing equity issues regarding race and ethnicity. Across all three student focus groups, there was only one occasion where inequitable treatment of students based on racial and ethnicity was explicitly mentioned by a high school student: *"I know I've noticed this year especially that some teachers seem to call out students of color more and bring attention to them more than white kids in class. And I just noticed that this year, especially, I think because in past years it wasn't something that was on my mind, but now I'm starting to think more."* The rest of the students that discussed race and ethnicity in focus groups said they didn't believe there were any issues of inequity.

According to parents, students of color do not feel supported. During the focus groups, parents expressed that students of color do not feel supported. One parent stated that his son *"just doesn't believe the administration is supportive of him and his race"* and wants to transfer to a different high school. Another parent recounted that during a June 2020 Black Lives Matter (BLM) protest a student of color shared that she was called racial slurs and felt that the school administration did not respond in a way proportionate to the seriousness of the comments made.

A parent shared that their children have had some difficulty adjusting to their schools following a move, stating *"they are almost too Black for their school. They have a hard time making friends. They have a hard time communicating without becoming or being perceived as being rude or too quiet. They just don't know how to speak to people."*

Another parent stated that their Latinx child does not have a staff member they feel they can reach out to, and this parent said that they can tell, based off of the feedback they get from their children, *"that the school is making attempts to get to reach to these kids, but it's really not reaching them. It's really not finding them where it needs to."* This parent suggested that the district *"rely on the students' lead."* Another parent further wondered if the district makes attempts to hire racially diverse staff.

Two staff members noted it is important to not tokenize students of color while pursuing this equity work, and one administrator expressed that there are some uncertainties on how to best support students of color in a racially homogenous district.

"I want to actually validate the real child in front of me and celebrate who they are individually, but not create some poster child."

"Tokenism is really tricky and something to be avoided, but at the same time, when a student specifically or someone shares something with you or what the whole class, that's such a great teachable moment that can bring in conversation."

"I think what I would like more is around breaking out of the colorblind curriculum. How do we support when we have one student of color in the class? How do we make sure that our practices are doing what we need to do to support all kids . . . What I've found in supporting families is different families have different perspectives on what they need, and what they want for how we support their children. And I just want to make sure that we're hearing those voices, so that we can make sure that all students feel valued, and supported as they go through RSU 5."

Incidents of racial harassment were reported in different situations.

One parent discussed inequitable disciplinary responses when "the N word" was used around their child on the playground in middle school, and their child retaliated against the student who had said it. This parent's child was not allowed to attend a school social. However, the student who used the racial slur was allowed to attend. Additionally, this parent's other child in elementary school was told to go back to Africa by a classmate (this incident was also brought up in another focus group).

"What disappointed me—the school's response to those incidents—it didn't come to light until my wife had to go to the school to bring up the topic with the administration. I think if it was the other way around, this is my gut feeling, that if my kids had done something else inappropriate or spoke poorly about another kid, it would have been a different situation, they probably would have been punished severely."

Another parent said their son shared with them that students were using "the N word" during class. Parents also discussed what was shared by students during a June BLM protest, such as a student being called the "*N word*" or a few different really racialized terms" and her belief that school administration didn't respond in a way that was proportionate to the seriousness of the comments made.

Incidents of racial harassment between students are not responded to in a targeted way.

Two parents of children in elementary school and one parent with a child in middle school said the school handles bullying and harassment overall in a responsive way that makes clear what is acceptable and what is not. A parent from an elementary school said *"there's no excuses made for anyone that is exhibiting the bullying behavior. So when something happens, it is addressed in a way that the kids don't feel like it's just being passed off as anything that's acceptable behavior . . . [the students] know that they're kind of being looked out for."* However, this practice is in contrast with how parents with students of color discussed disciplinary responses, or lack thereof, when incidents of racial harassment occurred.

Discussing an incident where "the N word" was used on the playground and a student of color retaliated, the parent of this student said *"[they were] punished, which is fine with me; [they were] prevented from attending a school social on a Friday afternoon. But for some reason the other kid was in the altercation was allowed to participate."*

Another parent of a student of color was told by their child that other students were saying "the N word" and *"the teacher said, 'don't say that in my classroom.' Which implies it's okay to say at other places" . . . That's maybe not bullying [in the teacher's] opinion but that is the definition of bullying. That is making [students] an "other" in a school setting where everyone should be at the premiere of their safety ... you cannot learn if you do not feel safe."*

Relatedly, an administrator at the elementary school level stated that **there have been racist incidents in the past that were not labeled as such— "we're treating [it] as though there's this bucket of unkind behavior, and all unkind behavior is just that. And to what extent are we naming when something is different**

than kids being unkind to one another?" In the same vein, a parent stated that *"silence is consent. It's not about just not ever talking about it. It's actively being actively anti-racist."*

In another focus group, a parent was discussing how the administration will conduct an investigation if an incident occurs¹, and in one specific instance felt the scope of the investigation could have been broadened and the disciplinary action taken against a student of color was likely unfair:

"Perhaps the administration could broaden who they talk to, because there were people that weren't part of the investigation that witnessed something different than what the people that were questioned about. And it ended up being that a student of color was punished, and quite frankly, probably was not fair. It certainly could have been a broader investigation. So, I know that there have been at least a couple of instances like that in the high school. Now, I don't think it's, again, purposeful, but certainly it's there. And it's tough, because if there's nobody to back up that student, they're going to be seen as the perpetrator, and that may not be the case."

There is a need for training on how to have conversations about race with students. Staff and administrators have a strong desire to make RSU 5 more equitable for students and families of color. For example, five staff members and one administrator discussed the need for more training on how to have race-focused conversations either as part of teachable moments in the classroom or as part of addressing racially-charged aggression between students.

"We don't know what to do about this thing that happened, because now we're in the middle of this very hard conversation that no one is comfortable having that no one has practiced in facilitating. And some of our kids are feeling a little neglected by that or unseen by that."

Six parents discussed a need and/or suggested professional development for school staff and administration on race and ethnicity, with one parent stating that *"there appears to be a high level of unconsciousness across all the respective schools in RSU 5"* regarding the understanding of individual needs and provision of resources based on where students are for students of color. Another parent said:

"I have friends with students of color in our school district, and I know the experiences that they've had and I don't think the administration is actively trying. I mean, I think they want deeply to do the right thing. I just don't think the training is there to handle certain experiences and certain students' needs."

The BLM protest that took place during June 2020 was discussed in two of the four parent/caregiver focus groups. In one of the focus groups, a parent said that what the students said during the protest was upsetting and eye-opening. Similarly, a parent in a different focus group stated that what was shared by a student speaker was *"really heartbreaking . . . I don't believe that those people perpetrated any wrongdoing intentionally at all, but are doing the best that they can to do the work that they're being asked to do, and maybe haven't had the kind of support that they need to evolve and grow their perspectives in the context of their job."* (For more information about findings related to professional development, see "Professional Development").

Difference of opinions regarding the role of the school in discussing and learning about race

While staff, administrators, and many parents discussed the need for training on how to have conversations about race with students, one parent stated firmly that they believe that discussions on morality (i.e., racism)

¹ RSU No. 5 Bullying Reporting, Investigation and Intervention/Resolution Process NEPN/NSBA Code: JICK-E4
https://www.rsu5.org/docs/district/policy/jick-e4-bullying%20reporting.%20investigation%20and%20intervention_resolution%20process.pdf

should be coming from home, not from the school. However, three parents in the same focus group felt discussions about race are important to include in instruction.

"It has become more of an appropriate place for schools and for teachers and maybe advisors or perhaps teachers who are teaching specific curriculum, to delve into those topics . . . it's not coming from home in a lot of places.

"When kids who aren't getting it from home go to work and use words like that [such as racial slurs], they're not going to be protected the way their kids have been protected at school."

SPECIAL EDUCATION/ABILITY

Students observed that some staff may need additional training on how to address the needs of neurodivergent students, noting the presence of ableism in the classroom.

"It's mostly ableism that I can see, from a neurodivergent perspective. A lot of my friends are also neurodivergent and just witnessing the stuff they have to tolerate in a classroom is usually really bad . . . Someone I know also has autism. They are not trained to deal with that in the normal classroom environment . . . When they do end up dealing with it, they often punish the student for their behaviors, whether the behavior is acting out, they get the same normal punishment like it's a neurotypical person and it's never taken into any consideration what they might have going on mentally . . . I just have a feeling that some of the teachers just are very slightly biased against people who have a rough time with their mental health."

Regarding discipline, students revealed disciplinary inequities that revolved around deliberate targeting and inappropriate punitive actions pertaining to neurodiverse students and students of color (see Discipline and Race & Ethnicity sections). Some students suggested that favoritism impacted disciplinary action.

"There [were] that I think were less favorited and they both had, I think were disabilities. They both had a problem with paying attention and stuff. But my [elementary school grade] teacher didn't really understand that and that's in my opinion. So I think they were treated a little bit differently, but not by that much . . . My [elementary school grade] teacher found little things that they really shouldn't get in trouble for."

"[The discipline of neurodiverse students] swings two ways. It's either they don't take into any consideration that you are neurodivergent and give you the same punishment as if you were neurotypical, or they treat you like a child, like a[n] infant or toddler, and you don't get any consequences for your actions because of it. I have never seen it being the middle. Never."

Equity with regard to special education/ability was discussed more frequently in relation to COVID-19 for both parents/caregivers and for staff/administration. Outside of COVID-19, there was some discussion about special education among staff and administrators. For example, one staff member noted that playaways are provided for students who need auditory accommodations and that they are integrating more books with people of color and varied abilities and experiences.

Staff and administrators identified lowered expectations for special education students from families with lower-SES and racially disproportionate enrollment in special programming. One administrator noted the intersection between special education and socioeconomic status such that they feel there is a lowered expectation for students who are identified as requiring special education services who come from families with lower-SES. A staff member who described special programming as programs *"that are designed to help students specifically [with] different levels of ability"* as well as with *"behavioral issues"* said that they think the number of students of color in these program is *"very disproportional and I don't know why that happens or where it's coming from."*

Outside of COVID-19, two parents/caregivers feel positively about their school's approach to behavioral issues and special education. One parent stated that they feel their child's school has done a good job responding to behavioral issues, and another caregiver stated that they feel their child's school is *"very open and accepting of kids at all levels and all abilities"* and in having a child that has accessed a lot of the various services there *"totally complement[s] all that goes on there."*

See Race & Ethnicity section for discussion on disproportionate representation of students of color in special programming, and Family Engagement section for discussion on the district's communication with families who have students in special education. See COVID-19 section for discussion on how COVID-19 has affected the learning of students with IEPs.

LESBIAN, GAY, BISEXUAL, TRANSGENDER, QUESTIONING/QUEER+ (LGBTQ+)

While most students reported being unaware of any discrimination taking place, one student discussed a comment made by another student, and another student discussed the absence of LGBTQ+ history in the curriculum. In one, a student said to a student participating in the focus group that he didn't date bisexual girls—*"I was kind of mad at him, but I didn't say anything because he could get really mad . . . I think I should have said something. And I kind of feel bad about it . . . people have worked really hard to look up the guts to try to come out say, 'I'm Bi. Accept me.' It's kind of really hard for some people."* One student stated that LGBTQ+ history is not taught at the school (see Curriculum section).

Positive steps towards addressing the needs of LGBTQ+ students were reported by staff. One staff member mentioned there has been *"some work done"* in terms of sexuality and that *"language was really helpful as a classroom teacher."* Another staff member mentioned that their school has engaged in LGBTQ+ inclusive practices such as discussing making bathrooms gender neutral and being supportive of students who are gender nonconforming. Additionally, one staff member said that they have not seen any issues with regard to LGBTQ+ students being treated unfairly or being bullied.

However, staff also desire more training on how the school can engage with LGBTQ+ topics in a more overarching, universal way and one staff member discussed that it can be difficult to make minor changes to the language of school documents (see Professional development; the need to make equity and conversations about equity part of universal school culture). Similarly, two parents felt that inclusion of and education on non-binary gender identities could be improved and suggested that schools have a gender-neutral bathroom, include definitions and educational information in newsletters, and provide training for parents through an existing parent organization and for staff.

One staff member mentioned how a student asked about how to change their pronouns in the student handbook, and was happy that the student felt comfortable enough to raise this question. While this staff member said it would be a welcome change, the staff member also expressed that *"of all the things in the world right now, this should not be a mountain, but it feels it's going to be a mountain for that student. So I do think even minor changes in language of documents that we have definitely is a hindrance."*

One parent approved strongly of the school's support for transgender and nonbinary students and their families. Regarding the school's response to a student identifying as transgender, a parent stated that in their understanding *"the school handled it beautifully and has been extremely supportive and very, very invested in making that transition as smooth as possible for the child, as well as helping the family find whatever supports they needed."* This same parent also has nonbinary children and praised their children's school's response, saying *"I feel like I can depend on them to support us in any way that makes sense for a school to help out. And I really feel like they go above and beyond just to make sure that we're all good and that our children are comfortable, that my children are comfortable in school, and feel safe."*

ENGLISH LANGUAGE LEARNERS

There is a general sense from both staff/administrators and parents/caregivers that more can be done to support families that speak a language other than English in the broader community and in regard to the district's effort to engage families. One elementary school staff member mentioned that more should be done to help non-English speaking families feel more welcomed and a part of the community. The staff member also discussed the role of the English language learner (ELL) teacher and that this person usually does reach out to the families of their students as a way to engage them. This staff member also alluded that this responsibility of family engagement should not fall solely on the ELL teacher. This staff member also mentioned that they feel that their school/RSU 5 is not giving all that ELL students need to be part of the program/on par with other students.

Furthermore, two parents were curious about the interaction between families who speak a language other than English and the school. One parent stated that they *"find a lot of children speaking for their parents"*, and wondered what the interaction between parents and the school was like. An additional parent was curious to know if the district relies solely on English as a Second Language teachers to be the conduit between the district and the families of ELLs. One parent felt there is a lack of support for families moving to the district from another country and lack of support for ELLs.

"One thing that I've seen in schools in recent years is that there isn't enough support for somebody who is moving here from any country that speaks a different language than English as their first language. And then what I've seen happen, unfortunately is them kind of getting dumped into programs that are maybe for a smaller group settings...or not having enough staff to appropriately address ESL needs. So I just wonder what's going on."

Communication materials should be provided to families in the language(s) they can understand. One high school administrator noted the small population of ELLs at the high school, and noted the school does not send home notices in languages other than English. The administrator said, *"It's harder, I think, to be a language learner in our district than it is in a district with a huge population of language learners."* This administrator also mentioned sending parent notices to students so that the student can translate for the parent, a practice they said they want to rethink.

SOCIOECONOMIC CONSIDERATIONS

Staff and administrators discussed resources that the community and district provide for families with financial needs. Staff discussed the community resources that are available to families with financial needs such as Freeport Brigade, and that food is provided to families who need it for the weekend. There was also discussion about the provision of scholarships and other funding to prevent students/families who struggle financially from being excluded from activities. One staff member stated that students are provided school supplies at the start of the school year as well. Administrators also discussed socioeconomic factors; one high school administrator cited efforts like eliminating lab and art fees and that they have previously examined disproportionality due to socio-economic status.

One staff member noted that there is a population of the community that is quite wealthy and wonders if that community has more power than others. For additional information related to socioeconomic factors, see the Family Engagement, School Climate, Discipline, and COVID-19 sections below.

FAMILY ENGAGEMENT

Schools in the district offer childcare and meetings through Zoom to mitigate barriers for families when attending family engagement events. Three staff members discussed the number/different types of family engagement events they host (e.g., literacy night, parent-teacher conferences), and one staff member at an elementary school level mentioned that childcare services are offered for some of their events but they would like to offer it more consistently. Another staff member at the elementary school level mentioned

that they use Zoom to connect with parents/caregivers if they are unable to attend a parent-teacher conference in-person.

Schools should utilize more inclusive language in communication with families. Two staff members discussed the importance of using language that is more inclusive in communication materials to families, such as not exclusively using the words “mom and dad” and not referring to the winter holiday break as “Christmas break” as is currently done in the district.

There is a need to increase family engagement efforts with families of color. One parent stated that there is a lot of outreach for certain things, but not enough family engagement about issues pertaining to race: *“I don't feel like we're engaged about that or asked about that.”* Among administrators there was some overlapping discussion between family engagement and its effect on trust. One administrator mentioned there has been less concentrated effort in recent years to develop strong relationships with families who are not currently very engaged and they want to remedy this shortcoming. Another administrator mentioned that when they reached out to a new family of color, the parent responded to the outreach in surprise, thinking that the approach was because their child was in trouble.

Staff mentioned that more should be done to reach and engage families that historically have been more difficult to reach and engage. One staff member noted that families of color are less likely to see themselves represented in the community; therefore, they may feel less connected and are less likely to engage.

“I would be curious to know the perspective of families who have students of color or our families of color or different ethnicities. And do they feel that we're providing all of these things or what are we missing.”

Families engaged in special education programming have a high level of communication with the school. One staff member mentioned that special programming for students of “*different levels of ability*” can serve as a mechanism to communicate with families and that this communication is quite constant. This high level of communication was validated by a parent, who stated:

“Because I have children that access special education and services, I've had lots and lots of conversations with [two RSU 5 administrators] and I feel fully comfortable reaching out to them with any of my concerns.”

However, families/students who do not participate in these programs do not receive the same volume of communication from the school.

There is a need to ensure that information pertinent to student wellbeing, such as the extension of the free and reduced-price meals program, is communicated to families. A high school staff member, during a conversation about free and reduced-price meals (FARMS), mentioned that information about the extension of the FARMS program for all students through the school year is not advertised. As a result, this has placed the responsibility on the family or students to ask about FARMS, and while this staff member said that they don't think *“that there's been an intention to withhold [information about the extension]”*, it is a practice that they've witnessed that has been *“a little troubling.”*

There is a highly engaged group of parent and community volunteers. A staff member discussed that neighbors will donate supplies such as water bottles, and that parents will volunteer their time to build cubbies or work on the school's outdoor space. However, this staff member also said that it might be the same families who are volunteering/engaging/helping provide for other families, and that they think *“we still need work to make sure that we're really hitting everybody”*. This discussion then led to staff wondering

about how to engage families that don't and/or can't come to meetings and don't respond to questionnaires sent out by the school asking about family needs.

Family engagement was discussed once in the student groups, with one student saying the district reached out to families to ascertain technology needs for remote learning. Two parents felt there was not enough family engagement around curriculum and wanted more transparent communication from the district about COVID-19 (see Curriculum and COVID-19 sections).

STUDENT VOICE & ENGAGEMENT

Student experiences and perspectives are crucial and necessary elements in equity work. Three parents felt that students see and recognize equity or inequity in a way their parents do not, with one parent stating that youth are *"incredibly more accepting of differences than we give them credit for."* Five parents said they wanted equity work that is student driven, such as the student-led civil rights group described by a parent as a *"really effective approach."*

One parent said something student driven might mitigate the challenge presented by student reluctance to involve an adult, and three parents liked the idea of having high schoolers teach elementary schoolers on *"all things equity."* Additionally, one parent said that they see surveys for parents but not for students and felt that the school *"pretty much assume[s] they know what the kids want without surveying the kids."*

Interwoven with staff and administration's conversations about professional development and race and ethnicity was both the presence of and the need to increase the inclusion of student voice. Staff discussed the civil rights group that is active at certain schools, stating that this is a way for students to have a voice in equity-related activities. Staff expressed a desire to see this civil rights group launched at more schools:

"That group really helps, not only [to] educate each other, but also works to educate the rest of the school and staff on all of the topics that we talk about for the civil rights team: race and skin color, national origin and ancestry, religion, sexual orientation and gender identity and expression, etc."

However, staff also expressed a need to involve students more directly in schoolwide equity conversations, particularly at the high school level.

"I think one other thing that might be helpful practice-wise, I don't know what this looks at the elementary level, but at the high school level, I think that in moments where we have had some of these meetings and conversations, we tend to do it as adults behind closed doors, using very big language . . . And I would really like to see students being more present in those moments. So they can see this is not easy for the [faculty and staff], but they're trying, at least."

Staff and administrators discussed the protests that occurred last spring as well and noted that they were glad that the student who spoke had the courage to share their experience.

CURRICULUM

Lessons need to include different cultures. Most of the staff/administrators' discussion around curriculum was intertwined with desire for PD to gain skills in conversing about sensitive, equity-related topics (see Professional Development and Race & Ethnicity sections). However, staff also discussed the need for lessons to be more representative of and sensitive to diverse cultures.

"I think there are piecemeal efforts being made to have greater diversity in the materials kids have access to. But there haven't been systematic changes in terms of what the scope of our curriculum is, how we revisit and refine what we're teaching."

"I know one of the things that [a student who spoke at the BLM protest in June] talked about was the frustration about what was taught as far as history. And so in school, leaving out a lot of key time periods and was feeling what was focused on was not what should be focused on. And so that has actually trailed to now as well, parents reaching out to us. I know I had a parent reach out recently to me to talk about civil rights team, but also to talk about what we're teaching here at [elementary school], as far as history."

Lessons need to have historically accurate information. One parent said that they look for historically accurate and full information, and that *"traditionally, a lot has been omitted, and RSU 5 follows suit in that tradition, and continues to be traditional in that way, and the way that things are taught."* Another parent said that in their understanding, it was only at the urging of parents was the inclusion of indigenous people brought into the education on the history of Freeport and stated *"that needs to be part of the education."* Discussing what was shared by a student during the June protest one staff member said that one of the things shared by a student was *"the frustration about what was taught as far as history. And so, in school, leaving out a lot of key time periods, and [the student] was feeling [that] what was focused on was not what should be focused on."* This staff member additionally stated that at the time of the focus group, they had a meeting with one parent and planned to meet with a couple other parents regarding what was being taught in regard to history.

The curriculum should include LGBTQ+ history. Although students deemed some coverage to be appropriate, one student generally expressed the belief that RSU-5 curriculum could be more inclusive. When asked if teachers might be receptive to a more inclusive curriculum, one student responded that such an initiative felt low priority.

"For ethnicity and race . . . they teach a lot more. The curriculum is fit, specifically [for middle school grade . . . the curriculum and learning itself is pretty good. Overall, it teaches a lot about history and doesn't edit it to make someone else look superior. Never did. As a matter of fact, it was the first school I've ever gone to that did not make Christopher Columbus out to be this huge hero, which really shocked me. I learned about him at the school, he was not the big guy everyone really likes." In regard to learning about LGBTQ+ history, this student said "I have never been taught about Stonewall, and I'm pretty sure they just skipped right over Stonewall to get to something else. It's never covered as a significant thing. I can't say that for absolute certain, because I personally have not gotten there yet, but I'm pretty sure, since we have never even trailed on that genre whatsoever, that it will not be taught during my time at RSU 5."

When asked if teachers would be receptive to a more comprehensive and inclusive curriculum, this student stated *"I have a feeling that if I were to bring it up with history teachers and possibly even the principal, the curriculum could be changed. I just don't think it would be their top priority at the moment. I do not think so."*

Books with racial slurs are used and have caused discomfort to students of color. In one focus group the use of *To Kill a Mockingbird* in the curriculum was discussed, with one parent cautioning against censorship of this book and felt that *"It should be a discussion. What is this language mean to you? And why is it uncomfortable? And do you understand why it's uncomfortable to certain people?"* However, another parent in this focus group stated *"it's really difficult for a [teenage] boy, who is the only minority in a class with all white kids to feel comfortable with a book like 'To Kill a Mockingbird' being read ...the book did make him very uncomfortable."* Additionally, this parent expressed that they did not think *"the teachers or the principal even took a moment to think about how this book would impact the students and*

as such he was subjected to a very uncomfortable situation” and that “it’s very disappointing that the school would have moved forward with this book, we don’t have any dialogue with the parents prior.”

In another focus group, a parent discussed what was shared by a student during a June BLM protest: The student said that their teacher singled them out as the only student of color in the class and said *“‘Oh, sorry, I didn’t tell you what we’re going to read [either the Adventures of Tom Sawyer or the Adventures Huckleberry Finn]. The ‘N word’ is in this, I hope you don’t mind.’”*

Parents recommend diversifying books. One parent recommended replacing books *“that use discriminatory or offensive language with other books”* and feels there should be an effort to include books outside of *“the traditional white American cannon that would not have stereotypical or offensive or damaging language, and might broaden exposure of all students to other cultures and other people, rather than continuing to use offensive or damaging books, just because they’re damaging or offensive to only a small number of students in the class.”*

Discussing the importance of books which represent diverse voices, one parent felt that reading books from different viewpoints is a *“great way to learn about other experiences, experiences other than your own, as a white kid growing up in suburban like Maine . . . I just feel like we owe our kids more . . . If a teacher feels comfortable with facilitating conversations about some of these hard topics, that’s really what our children need to be learning because we live in such a diverse world.”*

Another parent stated that they were *“pretty horrified”* with the books their child was bringing home in kindergarten because *“they showed cis-gender white families where dad came home from work and mom was cooking a pot roast and kids were playing with the dogs in the yard. And that’s just not representative of America . . . I’m a breadwinner in my household. I’m a woman . . . and I think a lot of families in Freeport are dual working.”*

Curriculum information needs to be more accessible to families. Two parents expressed that curriculum information is not accessible to families, with one stating *“it is impossible to get curriculum information.”* Two additional parents felt that increased communication and transparency regarding curriculum would *“help parents feel like they had more say”, “and “have a better understanding of the various issues at play.”*

“It would be nice for parents to have input and to be able to have a voice as to if they agree or not agree with what is being presented in the classroom and how that’s being presented or portrayed. That would be a welcome change.”

“If the curriculum is going to be responsive to the people in the school, the school will have to not be defensive about the curriculum and, and be able to hear feedback and respond to that feedback in a way that is favorable, especially to people most directly impacted by the curriculum. That defensiveness has been very real, and that’s relationally, between the school and parents; I think [that] is one thing that needs to shift.”

There is disagreement amongst some parents on whether or not the district offers differentiated instruction. During focus groups one parent stated that there *“has been some differentiation in the work given to different students in my experience”*, however two parents disagreed with this notion, with one parent saying it feels there are not enough opportunities for *“both advanced and struggling learners.”*

SCHOOL CLIMATE

Staff interactions with students further indicate the need for professional development on facilitating equity-related conversations. The need for more professional development on facilitating these conversations discussed during the staff/admin focus groups was corroborated by what staff noticed in their interactions with students:

"We sat down trying to figure out, how do we support these students? And I feel like something... there was an outcome, something happened, it's not like it was ignored. All of the right words were said to the public. And then at the end of the day, we still had kids that were not feeling support, that weren't feeling they had the space to really have open conversations about the impact of that in other things as well." (see Race & Ethnicity section)

An elementary school staff member noted that assessing student climate may be more difficult for staff who teach younger students, saying *"I don't know if those kids walk away feeling heard because they're five and they don't come back and tell me."*

Parents report that schools promote positive school climate. Three parents stated they feel the school is welcoming and has a positive school climate, with two of these parents specifically stating that they feel the school administration has made an effort to know their children personally. One of these parents stated that whether they're at the school or on a phone call, they've been able to *"to reach and be responded to by the administration with any concerns"*, and that the school administration has shown in those interactions *"an immediate awareness of who my child is in their school—and that is pretty reassuring."* Two parents felt that the district creates an inclusive environment, with one parent stating *"They talk a lot about be kind, and everyone is a friend, and embracing differences, and I love that kind of environment. It feels very supportive and safe and I think they're doing a really good job from that perspective, from my experience."*

"I believe in my heart, in everything that I've seen over the past five years, you've got a dedicated group of people from the administration and staff to the teachers who are doing everything humanly possible to make this as positive a learning experience for every single student there."

Administrators reported students self-segregate on lines of socioeconomic status and race. Concerning school climate and students' relationships with their peers, there were reports from three administrators about student segregation by socioeconomic status and race: *"The 'who's sitting with who' in the cafeteria is, definitely, income correlation there for sure."* One of these administrators stated that following an increase in the number of students of color at a high school *"it was more noticeable than ever of [students of color] sitting together."*

BULLYING/HARASSMENT²

Parents/caregivers generally reported satisfaction with behavioral expectations. Three parents stated firmly that they feel behavioral expectations are clear and their children understand them. These same three parents discussed their school having a zero-tolerance policy, with one parent saying zero-tolerance means something different depending on the age group as they do not believe *"any of us think that [expelling a third grader for bullying behavior] would be appropriate."* One parent felt the school has done a good job of *"delineating [the] difference between having a bad experience with a child who may potentially be having a bad day and taking it out on you, versus persistent bullying"* because their children have *"a very firm sort of understanding"* of this.

However, in a separate focus group, a parent indicated that her daughter has had some issues with a boy at school and there is work to be done to fully implement discipline and bullying policies *"so that kids understand where the bar is set when they step into school, what is respectable behavior."*

One parent cited that their respective school's response to bullying can be slow, and challenging to navigate. However, this parent expressed that it can feel like a *"painfully slow process"* and has a friend whose child was bullied on the bus and eventually took their child off the bus due to the slow response. The parent further stated that it can be challenging to address bullying because *"sometimes the children who are*

² See Race & Ethnicity section for discussion on racial harassment.

engaging in bullying behaviors are children who also have behavioral issues and receiving services at school” and it is unclear how much authority the school has in responding to something that happened on school property outside of school hours.

Policies should be specific in regard to race. Parents discussed RSU 5 policies ACA³ (Harassment and Sexual harassment of Students) and JICK⁴ (Bullying), and one parent felt strongly that school policy should clearly outline that hate speech (such as use of “the N word”) is unacceptable and noted that there is no distinct clause that identifies racism. Based on the focus group discussion, another parent stated *“it sounds like the policies are not being enforced.”*

Administrators stated there appears to be some ambiguity regarding what is specified in the discipline policy. Staff mentioned that while they have seen specific policies on harassment and sexual harassment, they were not sure if race or policies specific to supporting students of color were explicitly mentioned.

DISCIPLINE

One parent said that socioeconomic status (in addition to race) plays a factor in the expectation (i.e., assumption) that a student could not have engaged in a negative behavior in the classroom.

“Everybody knows each other, they hang out together on the weekends. And if you're associated with a certain group of them, I think there's an expectation that, 'Oh, well, that child couldn't possibly have done that in their classroom. Because, I know them, that can't possibly be the case.' And I think that both class and race play a factor in that.”

While there are positive discipline practices utilized in the district, there is a need for further investigation to ascertain if discipline is applied equitably or not. Administrators at the middle and high school level mentioned that restorative justice practices are used, however one high school administrator mentioned that more analysis needs to be done to examine whether or not disproportionality in discipline exists.

There are reports that the dress code is not evenly applied across the student body. Some students stated that the dress code was not equitably applied, and one parent said that they have heard from their kids, other parents, and *“probably even staff”* that *“at the middle school level, [there is] this perception that good kids don't get dress coded. What does that mean? So if you're perceived as good, a good student, an engaged student, and you were something that is in violation of the dress code, you probably going to get a pass. And if you are not, whatever that is, you probably going to get sent to the office.”*

Other findings related to discipline are addressed in sections including Race & Ethnicity and Special Education/Ability.

TRUST

Generally, students and parents have trust with school staff and the district. While many students reported generally trusting relationships with teachers and staff, a handful of students raised the issue of teacher lack of regard for pandemic safety (see COVID-19 section).

“I think that I trust teachers to a certain extent. I wouldn't trust a teacher if I told them something that was happening in my family, unless it was affecting the way that I perform at school. Then I would let them know so that they wouldn't be like, 'Why [are they] acting so weird? . . . I think it's better to tell them. And I trust all the teachers to tell them that, especially the ones in my grade.”

³ Student Discipline, NEPN/NSBA Code: JK <https://www.rsu5.org/docs/district/policy/jk-student%20discipline.pdf?id=7258>

⁴ Bullying, NEPN/NSBA Code: JICK <https://www.rsu5.org/docs/district/policy/jick-bullying.pdf?id=8139>

"I have a feeling that varies from person to person, obviously, but overall I have a strong intent that teachers trust the students as the students trust the teachers."

Two parents stated they have a trusting relationship with the school district because administrators are open to hearing, and are responsive to, feedback and questions. Two additional parents feel their children trust adults in the school: *"I don't think there's a limit to who they feel safe with, and who they can have access to really ... they tell me that there are adults they trust, that care about them."*

However, there were reports of a lack of trust between students and families of color with their school and/or the school district. A high school administrator also mentioned the previous year's protests and expressed *"that it took the protest to have [this knowledge about a student of color's experiences] come out"* indicates a lack of trust either between students of color and the school or families with students of color and the school (See Race & Ethnicity section for further discussion on topics which affect trust, and Family Engagement section for discussion on trust in relation to engaging families of color).

Some parents are distrustful that the district will engage in meaningful change. Three parents expressed doubt about the district engaging in comprehensive change. One parent shared that while they believe the school administrators, with whom they have a positive relationship with, are doing the best they can, they question the depth of the district's equity work: *"is this a new policy that somebody said, 'Hey, there's a new policy in place that says we need to have an equity thing' and they're just going to say, 'Okay, equity done.' Rubber stamp it and move along."*

Another parent had a more critical outlook, saying *"the change that we need is a little bit of a reckoning of our full education system. I don't believe RSU 5 will do the reckoning. I believe RSU 5 will do the minimal change and feel really proud of itself, unless something happens to make that different."*

Additionally, a parent stated that *"there still is a sense that Durham as a community doesn't have a whole lot of say, as to what happens within the RSU as a whole."*

The majority of participants in the staff/admin focus groups who responded to the question about trust were administration. When asked about trust between stakeholders at RSU 5, one elementary school administrator expressed that while they feel there is a trusting school-community partnership, they have concerns because there are some families that they have not been able to reach or engage, and there are families that they hear from disproportionately more.

The trust between stakeholders at RSU 5 is fragile, according to administrators. An administrator mentioned that the challenges of COVID-19 have created some distrust between teachers and administrators and possibly between families and schools as well, specifically calling it *"fragile trust."* Another administrator responded saying there is distrust between the school board and staff and agreed with the term *"fragile trust."* In the same conversation, a high school administrator referenced the June 2020 protest, stating that this event also affected trust.

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

The predominantly requested professional development topic from staff was training on how to have more intentional and thoughtful conversations with their students about sensitive equity topics. This request was corroborated by administrative staff. A staff member at the middle and high school level shared that *"the reality is that I think a lot of teachers are unsure and want to be careful and not do harm when being placed in that role of facilitator and trying to help students learn how to think critically, [ask questions]."* An elementary school level administrator stated that the administrator had teachers say they *"don't feel comfortable facilitating those conversations among students"*, and staff member at the elementary school level said that at the *"top of [their] list"* for what they want to see the district do is professional development and education so that teachers can feel *"more comfortable talking with our students."*

Staff and administration have a strong desire for work around equity to be authentic, sustained, and a natural part of the curriculum and classroom/school environment rather than a reactionary measure. A staff member stated that that conversations about equity should not be limited to when there is an incident or issue *“so that it doesn't have to get to the point of bullying and harassment and hate speech... [Students should have] a chance to talk about those issues in a safe environment and understand why a particular word is harmful to others.”* Another staff member stated *“this needs to be a constant work in progress”*, and an additional staff member shared that they *“would like to really feel that this is genuine and then it's going to continue and become part of our culture.”* Staff members stated that the district needs to prioritize this work and fully ingratiate it into professional development for all school staff (not just for teachers) in order to support the promotion of equity.

“I think that one thing that would be helpful is really having the district leadership prioritize this . . . this needs to be a part of our conversation and our work together as a district consistently. And it shouldn't be one group that is interested in doing this work and this talk. It needs to be prioritized by leadership saying, ‘This is the work we're doing.’ So that it's not a choice. It's something we all need to spend time talking about, learning about and moving forward with as a team throughout the district.”

“I want this work to continue and to embed itself within the culture of our RSU. But if they try to just tag it on like they do with some things . . . they come in these waves of fads and it feels it's never... that doesn't come back again. So if this can become something that's at the core of who we are in RSU 5 and be done well rather than loading more on so we feel burnt out and overwhelmed.”

Notably, staff also expressed that the responsibility should not have to fall solely on special interest groups like the civil rights groups or Gay Trans Straight Alliance (GTSAs). Two elementary schools partnered to together to create a diversity, equity, and inclusion team and this has been a beneficial initiative thus far. While those groups are important, they should not be the only channel through which conversations on equity occur:

“I would love to see it get to the point where we don't need a novel organization or a specific organization. So students can go over here to talk about it, but it's part of our vocabulary as a community. It's part of the experience. It's normal for teachers or for students to question each other and to think critically about these topics in whatever subject, whatever classroom, whatever teacher you have as opposed to being sort of isolated to a club and putting that responsibility on those clubs... It should [instead] be part of the [school] culture.”

From the perspective of parents and caregivers, there is a need for professional development in various equity areas.

“I think one of the pieces of evidence as to whether or not staff and teachers and administration are working on equity is if they're talking about it, if they're having continuing education, if they are making moves to have access be more equal.”

“There doesn't seem to be a lot of acknowledgement for that [dis]comfort that people may be feeling. And it's not by any bad will . . . but simply just not even understanding or knowing what to say.”

Eight parents explicitly expressed a need and/or recommended additional professional development for school staff on topics of equity, with the most salient topic being race & ethnicity (discussed six times). This was followed by curriculum (discussed three times), LGBTQ+ (discussed once), and equity in general (discussed once).

Two parents stated that they are aware teachers have a stressful job and are “*under resourced as it is*”, but feel that professional development on equity topics is important and is a matter of priority. One parent stated that they “*feel like even if we're not seeing a lot of big issues or challenges, it still is something that should be taught and should be well understood for the staff and the children.*” Another parent suggested the creation of “*opportunities for support and evolution and discussion*” (e.g., a book club) rather than professional development training in the traditional sense.

COVID-19

Four students stated that there has been a degradation of trust between students and teachers due to teachers not adhering to mask mandates.

“I think some students and teacher relationships are untrusting, especially with COVID. I know some teachers, mainly like one teacher in my school will just take down her mask, which I think makes a couple of us untrusting of her and feel pretty uncomfortable.”

“I actually think it might be letting down some trust. I'm putting my mask on for... It's kind of I'm putting my mask on. I'm protecting you because I might have symptoms and you might have symptoms, but you're not protecting me . . . It's not very fair that I'm protecting you, but you're not protecting me. I'm a kid, you're an adult. You should be setting the example.”

Students also stated that they feel uncomfortable asking the teacher to put their mask back on because of power dynamic between the student and teacher roles. One student said “*I've talked to some of my friends that are in the class and it makes all of us kind of uncomfortable, but nobody really speaks up because it's the teacher role.*” Another student said “*If someone who's older than you and who basically rules and rules, as in controls the classroom kind of . . . it's kind of uncomfortable for me or for most people, I think, just to catch it and correct them . . . I think I'll be a little bit awkward. You can't just, or I think that you can't just say like, 'You're supposed to have your mask on.'*”

“I think it's easier for us to tell the kids to put your mask back on, for us to tell the teachers to put their masks back on [is harder] because they're our role models and they're supposed to be our role models and they're supposed to be the ones that we look up to.”

The district has largely been able to address technology needs of students, despite the challenge presented by the pandemic. A staff member said that the state has done a great job at providing devices to remote students and access to Wi-Fi, which has helped lessen the socioeconomic gap between students during this time, and a parent stated that there were some limitations when initially it was one device per family, but now believes it has been remedied so that it is one device per student. One elementary school administrator shared that while the resources to provide students with devices and internet has been sufficient, it was still “a bigger lift”.

The majority of parents/caregivers stated that their respective schools reached out to families to solicit technology needs, however two parents did not. One parent said that rather than their child's school reaching out to them, they reached out to the school to get a Chromebook for their child. Another parent bought their child an iPad to access remote learning, saying “*in the spring, I didn't even know that technology was an option to get through the school. If I had known that, I definitely would have reached out.*” When asked what they think the district should do to outreach to parents as opposed to parents doing in-reach to the district, the parent who did not know they could get technology from the school suggested that the district “*advertis[e] what they offer now.*”

However, one student stated that *“a lot”* of their peers have unmet technology needs and one parent cited concerns regarding the digital divide. This student shared that while in Zoom meetings *“sometimes people won’t have that internet connection. And even sometimes they won’t have the right materials. Most of the time, a lot of people don’t have the MacBooks that they need.”* The parent who cited concerns regarding the digital divide stated that there is a *“huge difference”* in the school system between students—*“there’s a demographic that may not even have the means to have the technology that will allow them to access many different resources for their education.”*

Since the recent transition to the hybrid model, stakeholders have noticed discrepancies between students who have access to family learning support at home versus students who do not have that support/access. An administrator at the high school level mentioned that there are some students who are responsible for taking care of their siblings/are the primary caregiver due to COVID circumstances (e.g., parents are working and there are very limited or no childcare options) and that their learning has been affected since they are remote/not participating in in-person learning. An elementary school administrator remarked on the effect of remote learning on students whose parents are working stating:

“We had students here who were eligible for five days, who then opted to go remote because of the hourly wage job that their parents are doing. The fact that that child may or may not have to quarantine would jeopardize the fact that the parent could or couldn’t go to work. And so, they opted for their children to be fully remote when they’re probably the ones we want here the most. And so, that feels like a really helpless spot to be in for some of those children.”

One parent who said that they made the decision to have their child do fully remote learning based on their work schedule said that families are trying to *“accommodate their own work schedules with any version of the school’s schedule right now”*, and the need to accommodate schedules *“can create some challenges that [families] didn’t really experience before”*. Another parent from a separate focus group expressed that the school’s schedule is *“an almost impossible schedule for us to follow”* because both this parent and their spouse work fulltime, there are very limited childcare options, and they have an unstable internet connection at home. An additional parent voiced these same concerns if the district goes fully remote, asking *“how would the administration respond, how would they take care of families that have two parents working full time and don’t have necessarily the technology or the childcare?”*

The hybrid model has been challenging for teachers. One staff member stated that the hybrid model is *“really difficult”*, and one parent stated that teachers are on the same school schedules as families, and that *“they don’t have time to connect with each other, or for planning lessons if that’s all put on after hours, which is not fair.”* While three staff members were discussing different expectations for the staff at one school compared to the others in the district,

Three staff members stated that there are different expectations for the staff at one school compared to the others in the district, particularly around professional development; one staff member said other schools utilized all of their staff meetings during September to do prep-work for the hybrid and fully remote models, whereas at their school they *“have had to start a book club around a PD book, which in any other year would probably be a great use of our time, but maybe not during a pandemic.”*

Some parents are pleased with how the school has handled the provision of education to students with Individualized Education Programs (IEPs). At the same time, there are parents that cite concern regarding students with IEPs having an equitable access to education. In relation to COVID, one parent said they were impressed by the school’s ability to mostly meet child’s IEP *“despite only being on site a few days a week”* and the school’s plan to bring students back—5 days a week for students who need it most. In another focus group a parent shared that although they are able to provide learning

support at-home, their support is not enough to address the learning needs of their child, and that their child was attending school in-person at the time of the focus group.

In contrast, another parent expressed concern that students in special education do not have equitable access to education at this time, stating *"there are the kids with IEPs that aren't necessarily going to school five days a week at the middle school level. And that is what's concerning me at this point in time."* A separate parent said that there is a huge gap in remote learning due to *"not having a varied delivery model [which] limits equitable access to education for certain types of learners."* This parent feels that there is *"room for improvement, more creative ways to sort of open up access for those types of learners."*

Additionally, while one parent is glad students with IEPs seem to be getting most of their needs met, they are concerned about students with average or above average academic performance who are now not getting the opportunity to have in-person instruction. They feel that resources could also be spent towards these students, *"or just acknowledging the fact that unless your kid has a problem, you're just rubber stamped along."*

There is a need for transparency in communications from the district in regard to COVID-19 and concerns for dual-working families. One parent specifically referenced the hybrid learning schedule discussed above as *"really excessively challenging for families with two working parents"*, and said that other districts around RSU 5 set up their hybrid schedules to reduce the burden for dual-working families. *"I feel like it wasn't communicated to us from the administration, from the school board, from the superintendent, that they really took the time to consider all families and what that'll do."* This parent stated *"making it very clear that they're taking all different types of families into account when they make decisions . . . would make a big difference."* While this parent said that the plan for this school year *"could have been a little more inclusive"*, they also said the district made an effort to *"even out the playing field a bit with providing technology and services and such."*

One parent discussed that there was a section called "the Good News" during a previous month's board meeting, which had an administrator from each school in the district talk about what was going well for them. However, this parent knows a teacher in the district and said that what they're hearing from the teacher's perspective is not what is communicated from the district. This parent said they want more transparent communication from the district, and they'd like *"to hear a little bit more about, 'Hey, we are struggling, this is tough'."* Similarly, another parent stated *"their approach has been to be the most transparent about academics, at least what they're doing, and the least transparent about how it's going emotionally. And just like how everyone's doing. I have no idea what the mood is within those walls. And I would love to hear a little bit more transparency about for them just to say how it's going from their perspective."*

Conversely, there were also some parents that said the communication to families from their child(ren)'s school and the district was done well. One parent said that the district *"did a really fantastic job"* and another parent stated that their child's school and the district *"has been doing a really good job of communicating where they're at, what information they have to make their decisions with, and why they're making the decisions they're making . . . I think they're doing the best that they can, and I think that they're doing a good job. I have no complaints about how they've handled the situation that we're in."*

Parents largely feel like the district has been responsive and has put in great effort to meet the COVID-19 needs of families. A parent stated *"Just watching these school board meetings and everything that they're mulling over with all of the different strategies going on, and all the thoughtfulness*

of all the different families, I feel like the school is just at its max as far as what more they could do to reach out. And I'm getting surveys and emails from staff at 8:00 on a Sunday. I mean, they are working. And I have the utmost respect for them. So I'm hesitant to criticize them at all." Four other parents in this focus group agreed with this sentiment.

Regarding the district's response to challenges presented by COVID-19, one parent stated *"not only are they been able to be a little bit more creative and resourceful, but I do see that especially with the superintendent level, they're constantly tweaking and improving where they can and reassessing and they're not just setting a benchmark of a timeline and saying, this is what we've got until then, they're really ... it seems like every week or they're able to include more families or meet more needs or solve problems and things like that. I think they've been very flexible and resourceful."*

LIMITATIONS

Data generated from focus groups depends on the selected participants and composition of the group. Thus, findings from focus groups may not represent the views and opinions of all stakeholders within an organization.

The demographic composition of the sample that participated in the focus groups was mostly white, female, and very few participants reported a language other than English as the primary language spoken at home. Very few high school students participated as well. Relatedly, even though reminder emails were sent to all participants, many students did not attend their registered time slot and the six sessions originally designated as student focus groups were reduced to four even though additional outreach was made to students.

In spite of these limitations, efforts were made to conduct a valid and reliable study. Validity was addressed using triangulation of more than one focus group for each stakeholder group and research biases were controlled by using skilled and experienced evaluators and having each group conducted by a team. MAEC believes that these limitations have not significantly impacted the results, conclusions, or the utility of the findings.

RECOMMENDATIONS

MAEC provides the following recommendations to RSU 5:

1. Create a district-wide equity taskforce committed to examining equity and climate issues. The taskforce should include students, families, teachers, and district administrators. The taskforce should review all district-wide and school-level practices and procedures to assess the presence and effects of inequities of the educational environment of the School and make recommendations to the Board. While students seem to be largely unaware of any equity issues across equity categories (see Findings), they represent a large and important sector of the district. We recommend that the district support student-led equity initiatives and support the development of programming that will increase student awareness and knowledge of equity issues. Solicit feedback from students and include their voice when developing equity initiatives by administering an exploratory survey about school climate and their experiences.
2. Appoint an Equity Officer for the School responsible for promoting equity and diversity throughout the School. The Equity Officer should provide support to students and staff through

culturally responsive practices, work with district administrators to break down barriers to academic excellence, respond to incidents of discrimination and injustices to students, provide periodic reports/updates on issues of non-discrimination, and conduct training and professional development for teachers and administrators including training on equity, bias, privilege, anti-bullying, and communication. The Equity Office should report directly to the School Superintendent.

3. Develop a district strategic plan for equity and diversity. The equity plan will promote the vision and mission for diversity and academic excellence along with core expectations and beliefs for students, teachers, administrators, parents, and the community. The plan will identify action steps that will be used to address focus areas and ensure equitable change and continuous improvement.
4. Adopt MAEC's policy changes related to student harassment, anti-bullying, student behavior, non-discrimination, and bullying procedures. The School should provide quarterly updates and reports to the district-wide equity taskforce to ensure its policies, practices, and procedures are implemented equitably for students and staff.
5. Offer in-depth and ongoing professional development opportunities for teachers, administrators, students, and the district-wide equity taskforce including training on equity, bias, privilege, anti-bullying, anti-racism, LGBTQ+ issues, disability, discipline, cross-cultural communication. This professional development should provide teachers with the necessary skills to have more targeted conversations around race and equity in the classroom and with each other. To get started with this, we suggest that the district survey staff members to assess their professional development needs.
6. Conduct periodic community forums with parents and other stakeholders in order to keep the community informed, receive input, and address any concerns related to the district's equity plan and other issues of discrimination and inequities in the district. Ensure that these community forums contain a diversity of voices and perspectives (e.g. families of color, non-English speaking families, families who have children with disabilities, are part of the LGBTQ+ community, etc.).
7. Engage in authentic, culturally responsive family engagement practices. For example, when communicating with families, use language that is more inclusive in materials (e.g., "Parents" or "Families" versus "Mom/Dad") and provide communication materials in multiple languages to families. Intentionally engage with families that historically have been harder to reach, etc.
8. Seek supports to conduct an assessment and review of the district's PreK-Grade 12 curriculum to ensure that it is culturally responsive and representative of the student body.
9. Strengthen and sustain the supports provided for families in need by continuing to leverage the connections the district has in the local community.
10. Provide clear and transparent communication to families about COVID-19 related decisions and procedures to ensure that all families and students have access to information, resources, and materials needed for success. In addition, ensure that health guidelines for mask-wearing are adhered to by all faculty, staff, and students while on school grounds.

REFERENCES

- Corbin, J., & Morse, J. M. (2003). The unstructured interactive interview: Issues of reciprocity and risks when dealing with sensitive topics. *Qualitative Inquiry*, 9(3), 335–354.
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- Krueger, R. and Casey, M. (2008). *Focus groups: A practical guide for applied research*. (4th ed). Sage Publications, Thousand Oaks, CA.

APPENDIX A

EQUITY AUDIT PARENT/GUARDIAN/COMMUNITY FOCUS GROUP INVITATION

Equity Audit Parent/Guardian/Community Focus Group Invitation

Date Options: Thursday, Nov 5 OR Monday, Nov. 9

Time: 6:00-7:00 PM

Good Afternoon Parents/Guardians/Community,

RSU5 has contracted with Mid-Atlantic Equity Consortium (MAEC) out of Maryland to conduct a comprehensive Equity Audit within the district. A significant part of the audit involves MAEC conducting several stakeholder focus groups. These focus groups are being conducted via Zoom from November 2 through November 9. One of the focus groups is for parents/guardians/community only, which is why you are receiving this invitation. There will be two separate focus groups each with 10-12 participants which will allow for a total of 20-24 participants. Selection will be representative of all schools and towns.

The focus group interview was designed to gain an understanding of parent/guardian/community perceptions on issues related to equity in RSU5 and provide a safe space for participants to explore the factors that create barriers to an equitable education. These conversations will enable the community and schools to recognize, examine, and gain an understanding of systemic, institutionalized, and structural issues and challenges.

The information you provide will help in the development of recommendations for how RSU5 can improve school climate, have meaningful conversations and determine what actionable steps we can take as a school community toward equity.

Participation in this focus group will involve up to 60 minutes of your time. You do not have to answer any questions in the interview/focus group you do not wish to answer. Your participation in this focus group is voluntary: that means that the choice to participate is up to you.

Everything you say during the focus group will be kept confidential and only be known to staff from CEE and the participants in the focus group.

Please complete this participation request form if you are interested in participating by 8 AM on Thursday, October 29th. You will be notified by Friday, October 30 if you have been selected to participate.

Thank you for your interest in participating,

Cynthia Alexander,

Asst. Superintendent

APPENDIX B

FOCUS GROUP PROTOCOL

District Administrators, Educators, and Parents/Caregivers

Before asking questions, begin with a brief but open definition of equity.

Define equity: Equity, in education, focuses on what is fair and just.

1. How would you define equity? What does equity mean to you?
 - a. Could you give us an example?
2. What does equity look like and feel like in your school/district?
3. From your perspective, what are critical issues related to equity in the district that the district needs to focus on?
 - a. If you could change something related to these issues, what would you change?
 - b. How would you resolve the issues? What are your recommendations?
4. How would you describe the policies that contribute to or hinder equity for students, families, or staff?
5. How would you describe the practices that contribute to or hinder equity for students, families, or staff?
 - a. How does the district engage families and ensure that families from diverse backgrounds are included in their child's learning?
6. How does race, language, or class play a role in how students are treated, taught, or disciplined?
7. The National School Climate Center defines school climate as school climate as the quality and character of school life. School climate is based on patterns of students', parents' and school personnel's experience of school life; it also reflects norms, goals, values, interpersonal relationships, teaching and learning practices, and organizational structures. In other words, it's how comfortable stakeholders like students, their families and teachers feel in a school: How would you describe the school climate?
 - a. Do you believe [stakeholder group] have positive relationships with [another stakeholder group]? Why or why not?
8. How would you describe the level of trust between [stakeholder groups]?
 - a. What can the district do to improve trust between [stakeholder groups]?
9. What challenges has the district faced due to COVID? How has the district overcome these challenges?

Students

Before asking questions, begin with a brief but open definition of equity.

Define equity: Equity, in education, focuses on what is fair and just. It means providing all students the supports and levels they need

1. How would you define equity? What does equity mean to you?
 - a. Could you give us an example? (An example might be two students doing the same thing, and one being punished, while the other does not get punished because of a reason other than the behavior)
2. What does equity look like and feel like in your school/district?

APPENDIX B CONTINUED

3. From your perspective, what problems do you know about related to equity in the district that the district needs to focus on?
 - a. If you could change something related to equity, what would you change?
 - b. How would you resolve the problems related to equity? What are your recommendations?
4. Do you think or feel that school practices are fair? Why or why not?
5. How does race, language, or income play a role in how students are treated, taught, or disciplined?
 - a. Do you feel that students are treated differently because of their race, the language they speak, sexual preference, religion?
6. The National School Climate Center defines school climate as school climate as the quality and character of school life. School climate is based on patterns of students', parents' and school personnel's experience of school life; it also reflects norms, goals, values, interpersonal relationships, teaching and learning practices, and organizational structures. In other words, it's how comfortable stakeholders like students, their families and teachers feel in a school: How would you describe the school climate?
 - a. Do you believe [stakeholder group] have positive relationships with [another stakeholder group]? Why or why not?
7. How would you describe the level of trust between [stakeholder groups]?
 - a. What can the district do to improve trust between [stakeholder groups]?
 - b. Do you think families of diverse racial and language backgrounds participate and/or engaged in school related activities?

APPENDIX C

FOCUS GROUP CONSENT FORMS

SCHOOL STAFF/ADMINISTRATOR CONSENT FORM

PARTICIPATING IN A VIRTUAL FOCUS GROUP

Purpose: RSU 5 and the Mid-Atlantic Equity Consortium (MAEC) are collaborating to gather data on the equity practices at the school you work for. Your feedback will help inform an equity audit process that is currently underway.

Procedure: Two members of the MAEC team will conduct the virtual focus group through the Zoom platform, and the duration of the conversation will be about 60 minutes. This focus group will be an open conversation and an opportunity for RSU 5 and the MAEC team to learn from you.

Participation: Your participation in this focus group is voluntary. You can change your mind and leave the focus group at any time. You can also choose to skip any question asked by the interviewers. Your decision to not participate in the focus group will have no effect on your relationship with the school you work for.

Confidentiality: The MAEC team will audio-record this focus group. Only MAEC staff involved in this project will have access to the audio recording. To protect your privacy, your feedback will be anonymous; your name will not be linked to your responses. Responses in this focus group will be reported in the aggregate. Your real name will not be used or appear in any publications or presentation of findings. We ask that all participants not discuss any of the information shared during this focus group with others.

Risks: There are no known risks associated with your participation in the focus group.

* I understand and consent to be audio recorded.

☐ Yes

☐ No

* Date and Time of Focus Group

| Date and Time | Date | Time |
|---------------|----------------------|----------------------|
| | <input type="text"/> | <input type="text"/> |

* Electronic Signature

* Email address

APPENDIX C CONTINUED

PARENT/CAREGIVER CONSENT FORM

PARTICIPATING IN A VIRTUAL FOCUS GROUP

Purpose: RSU 5 and the Mid-Atlantic Equity Consortium (MAEC) are collaborating to gather data on the equity practices at your child(ren)'s school. Your feedback will help inform an equity audit process that is currently underway.

Procedure: Two members of the MAEC team will conduct the virtual focus group through the Zoom platform, and the duration of the conversation will be about 60 minutes. This focus group will be an open conversation and an opportunity for RSU 5 and the MAEC team to learn from you.

Participation: Your participation in this focus group is voluntary. You can change your mind and leave the focus group at any time. You can also choose to skip any question asked by the interviewers. Your decision to not participate in the focus group will have no effect on your relationship with your child(ren)'s school.

Confidentiality: The MAEC team will audio-record this focus group. Only MAEC staff involved in this project will have access to the audio recording. To protect your privacy, your feedback will be anonymous; your name will not be linked to your responses. Responses in this focus group will be reported in the aggregate. Your real name will not be used or appear in any publications or presentation of findings. We ask that all participants not discuss any of the information shared during this focus group with others.

Risks: There are no known risks associated with your participation in the focus group.

* I understand and consent to be audio recorded.

- ☐ Yes
☐ No

* Date and Time of Focus Group

| | Date | Time |
|---------------|----------------------|----------------------|
| Date and Time | <input type="text"/> | <input type="text"/> |

* Electronic Signature

* Email address

APPENDIX C CONTINUED

STUDENT CONSENT FORM

PARTICIPATING IN A VIRTUAL FOCUS GROUP

Purpose: RSU 5 and the Mid-Atlantic Equity Consortium (MAEC) are collaborating to gather data on your school's equity practices. Your feedback will help inform an equity audit process that is currently underway.

Procedure: Two members of the MAEC team will conduct the virtual focus group through the Zoom platform, and the duration of the conversation will be about 60 minutes. This focus group will be an open conversation and an opportunity for RSU 5 and the MAEC team to learn from you.

Participation: Your participation in this focus group is voluntary. You can change your mind and leave the focus group at any time. You can also choose to skip any question asked by the interviewers. Your decision to not participate in the focus group will have no effect on your relationship with your school.

Confidentiality: The MAEC team will audio-record this focus group. Only MAEC staff involved in this project will have access to the audio recording. To protect your privacy, your feedback will be anonymous; your name will not be linked to your responses. Responses in this focus group will be reported in the aggregate. Your real name will not be used or appear in any publications or presentation of findings. We ask that all participants not discuss any of the information shared during this focus group with others.

Risks: There are no known risks associated with your participation in the focus group.

* I understand and consent to be audio recorded.

☐ Yes

☐ No

* Date and Time of Focus Group

Date

Time

Date and Time

* Electronic Signature

* Email address

* Date of Consent

APPENDIX D

DEMOGRAPHIC SURVEY

Thank you for participating in today's focus group. For aggregate reporting purposes, we would like to know more about our participants. If you so choose, please answer the following demographic questions. Your individual responses are kept strictly confidential and providing this information is optional. These data will not be used for a discriminatory purpose.

Are you a:

- ☐ Student
- ☐ Parent/Caregiver
- ☐ Staff
- ☐ Administrator

What grade are you in?

What is your role at RSU 5?

- ☐ Teacher
- ☐ Teacher: Special Education
- ☐ Teacher: ELL
- ☐ Speech Language Pathologist
- ☐ Guidance Counselor
- ☐ Dean
- ☐ Principal
- ☐ Assistant Principal
- ☐ Other (please specify)

Please list the grades and schools your children in RSU 5 currently attend.

Number of children in RSU.

5

Current grade(s)

Name(s) of current
school(s)

APPENDIX D CONTINUED

How do you identify? Check all that apply.

- ☐ American Indian or Alaskan Native
- ☐ Asian
- ☐ Black or African American
- ☐ Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander
- ☐ White
- ☐ Some other race, ethnicity, or origin
- ☐ Prefer not to say
- ☐ Prefer to self-describe

How do you identify? Check all that apply.

- ☐ Agender
- ☐ Cisgender
- ☐ Female
- ☐ Genderqueer
- ☐ Male
- ☐ Non-binary/third gender
- ☐ Transgender
- ☐ A gender not listed
- ☐ Prefer not to say
- ☐ Prefer to self-describe

What is/are the primary language(s) used in your home?

**RSU No. 5 Board of Directors
Sub-Committee Membership
2020-2021**

POLICY SUB-COMMITTEE

Lindsey Furtney
Candace deCsipkes
Maddy Vertenten

FINANCE SUB-COMMITTEE

Beth Munsen
Jeremy Clough
Michelle Ritcheson

NEGOTIATIONS SUB-COMMITTEE

Professional: Vacant, Michelle Ritcheson, Jen Galletta
Support: Candy deCsipkes, Lindsey Furtney

STRATEGIC COMMUNICATIONS SUB-COMMITTEE

Candice deCsipkes
Susana Hancock
Valy Steverlynck

RSU5 COMMUNITY PROGRAMS ADVISORY COMMITTEE

Jeremy Clough

MAINE REGION 10 TECHNICAL HIGH SCHOOL BOARD

Vacant
Karin VanNostrand (Community Member)

DROPOUT PREVENTION COMMITTEE

Beth Munsen

STIPEND REVIEW COMMITTEE

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STUDENT CENTERED LEARNING COMMITTEE

Beth Munsen
Maddy Vertenten

FREEPORT PERFORMING ARTS CENTER ADVISORY COMMITTEE

Maddy Vertenten

SAFETY COMMITTEE

Jeremy Clough

Maura Pillsbury

WELLNESS COMMITTEE

Valy Steverlynck

Board of Directors Approved: 9-9-20