

Regional School Unit Education Sub Committee Report

Education Subcommittee Charge

Whereas the Durham/Freeport/Pownal Reorganization Planning Committee (RPC) recognizes that the quality of education provided to our students is our highest priority, we hereby charge the Education Advisory Committee to serve as advisory committee in regard to student educational programming and to be responsible for making recommendations for the Regional School Unit (RSU) Board of Directors and administrators to use in early decision making in regard to:

- + K - 12 Programming
- + Supports for Students
- + Professional Development

The role of this subcommittee is advisory only with the final decision making authority resting with the Durham/ Freeport/ Pownal RPC.

Introduction

The RSU Education sub committee consisted of teachers, parents, administrators and school board members from Durham, Freeport and Pownal.

This Educational Advisory Committee's discussions included comparisons of current programming, quality of delivery, staff development: topics-methods-support, communication, and data management systems. Evolving from these analyses came the recognition of the positive cultural aspects unique to the individual schools, which are essential to preserve and celebrate. Our committee has determined that school consolidation, if implemented in a systematic, purposeful manner, could enhance and improve both learning and teaching opportunities across the three communities.

Potential Educational Program Enhancements:

- Utilize unique strengths and attributes of individual schools within the new RSU
- Offer a larger variety of electives and Advanced Placement offerings.
- Share special education services.
- Share in extra curricular activities and programming (K-12).
 - Robotics
 - Band
 - Jazz Band
 - Co and extra curricular activities
- Allocate/collaborate on technology resources.
- Provide itinerant teacher positions for specialty courses, as in languages, the arts, music, school psychologist, Physical Therapy/Occupational Therapy, creating more full-time equivalent positions rather than part-time or consultant positions and be responsible for program delivery in any/all of the RSU schools.
- Share visiting artists and other visual and performing arts enrichment.

- Collaborate with local colleges and community colleges for program enhancements and the Early College for ME. Program.
- Have within the district a cadre of in-house expertise to support peer training in effective instruction. (Writing instruction, numeracy, literacy)
- Have a RSU curriculum coordinator to support teaching and learning.
- Greater data pool to evaluate student progress and teaching strategies.

Potential Opportunities for Students:

Grades K-12

- Alternative programming versus out of district placements.
- Expanded programming will include, but is not limited to, the following areas:
 - Literacy
 - Math
 - Student Support
 - Gifted and Talented
 - Title I
 - Early intervention strategies/support
- Shared services for small populations of students.
- Summer academy – support enrichment
- Student opportunities for placement with schools within the RSU
- Art teachers sharing expertise in different mediums.

K-5

- Increased foreign language offerings.
- Increased Special Education resources and support services.
- Shared Visual and Performing Arts services
- Technology

Grades 6-8

- Increased co-curricular opportunities:
 - Fly fishing
 - Music
 - Art
 - Gifted and Talented
 - Jazz
- Increased extra curricular opportunities:
 - Hockey
 - Baseball
 - Swimming
 - Skiing

Transition into High School:

It is essential that students have a positive transition into high school in order to be

successful. To help students transition successfully into Freeport High School:

- The High School hosts an informational Tea for Parents and students in February.
- Counselors meet with each student and parent for an hour long session to discuss courses for ninth grade and the transition process.
- High school students and staff visit the respective eighth graders in the spring to discuss what the high school life is like, to answer questions and to begin a rapport with the incoming ninth grade class.
- Over the summer the incoming ninth graders are grouped together with upper class students as part of a mentor program.
- Students are given information about athletic programs offered over the summer and the preseason schedule – it is encouraged that students partake as the camaraderie eases the transition process.
- The first day of school is a day that is set aside specifically for ninth graders, their parents and the student mentors.
- Each student is assigned to an advisory.

As part of the transition process, all students are encouraged to take part in the various activities and opportunities that high school has to offer. It is the goal of the transition program for all students to connect with both the adults and other students in the high school.

Grade 9-12

- More course offerings
- More electives and AP offerings.
- Offering summer support programs
- Fewer singletons
- More opportunities to participate in co and extra curricular activities due to size of high school student body.
- Expanded co and extra curricular activities:
 - 9th grade teams
 - Robotics
 - Animation
 - Development of more varsity sports (football, hockey etc.)
- Ownership of high school by all communities.
- The prospect of being placed higher on the state allocation list for renovations and expansion opportunities.
- The benefits that occur when students from different communities meld:
 - Diversity
 - Increased social and academic opportunities.

Potential Opportunities for Staff:

- Professional development opportunities.
- Curriculum and data comparisons
- Enhancement of Professional Learning Communities (PLC's).
- Teacher Induction Programs: recruiting and retention.

- Common calendar
- Leadership opportunities/ collaborative efforts.
- Graduate courses that are custom designed to address District needs.
- Regular education and Special Education teachers would benefit from a more uniform and reliable system for modifications and accommodations.
- Teachers and Specialists have job-alike peers for Professional Learning Communities.
- Response to Intervention strategies. (RTI)
- Greater collective expertise/knowledge in regard to teaching methods, management, strategies.
- Sharing of staff
- A uniform K-12 system for student information to help facilitate student placement and assure continuous progress for each student.
- A more aligned and consistent k-8 curriculum and expectations that would facilitate Grade 9-12 course and program design and staffing patterns.

Summation/Recommendations:

This committee finds that consolidation could present many opportunities for program enhancement and provide a framework to strengthen educational delivery to our students. For that to occur successfully there must be a balance of structural supports and systematic change that consistently promotes the success of all students. Towards accomplishment of that goal our committee makes the following recommendations.

Curriculum

- The RSU establish a full time curriculum coordinator.
- The RSU develop a consistent K-12 curriculum and incorporate appropriate funding and professional development. (Priority areas being math, writing and reading).
- The RSU aligns its curricula for grades 6-8 to facilitate the successful transition of students into a single high school.

Data systems and grading

- The RSU establish a consistent grading system in grades 6-12.
- The RSU establish a committee to determine grading practices and reporting methods in grades K-5.
- The RSU establish a universal student data system for the benefit of placement and informational purposes.
- The RSU continue using NWEA, and/or some other summative assessment, and provide professional development on the use of data to inform teaching and learning.

Student interventions and supports

- The RSU put in place the proper supports to ensure that each student is able to be successful.
- The RSU provide specialists in literacy and math to support teachers in grades K-12 to facilitate classroom instruction and to give direct instruction to students.
- The RSU adopt a program that addresses early intervention AND provides supports for all at-risk students.
- The RSU provide a comprehensive Gifted and Talented program for all identified students throughout the district.
- Shared support and resources for health professionals.

Professional Development

- The RSU will need to develop a common calendar with aligned professional development activities.
- The RSU increase the number of professional development days for PLC's to meet and for teacher groups to examine data to review and revise programs.
- The RSU provides adequate professional development time to transition into a consolidated district, with the purpose of aligning teaching and learning strategies to support student success.

Communications

- Use school district consolidation to foster better communication and transparency in decision-making
 - Recognize the importance of ensuring timely and effective communication among staff within schools, as well as dispensing information into the three communities.
 - Develop communication formats that inform and engage staff, students, parents and the community for the purpose of stimulating comprehensive involvement in the educational process.
 - Communication is vital during the transition process and should be considered a cost.
 - Part of the communication should entail a description of the schools within the RSU, the programs offered, and what makes each school unique.
- The RSU should review district goals currently in place, prioritize and meld those with our recommendations in order to first compose a philosophy/mission statement, and then formulate short-term and long-term educational goals with specific timelines. The outcome of those two tasks would create clarity of purpose in the hiring of administration and staff.