

Rolling Up Our Sleeves Together: Strategic Planning in RSU 5

By Tom Gray, RSU 5 Superintendent, RSU 5

As I settle into my new role as superintendent of RSU 5, I feel grateful for the timing. Right from the start, I get to roll up my sleeves and dive into the work of building a new strategic plan. That might sound like just another document on a shelf—but in reality, a good strategic plan is anything but. Done right, it's energizing. It's affirming. It's a chance for us, as a community, to step back and ask: *What do we really want for our students? What should it mean to graduate from RSU 5?*

From those questions, everything else flows. If we know our vision of a graduate, then we can look at everything we do—our classes, our activities, even how we care for our buildings and grounds—and ask, *does this serve that vision?*

The plan itself matters, but here's the part I really want to emphasize: the process matters just as much. Maybe even more. When we come together to talk, listen, and share ideas, we strengthen our schools in the very act of doing it. None of us can say exactly what the finished plan will look like yet, and that's exciting. The conversations we have along the way will make sure the final product reflects who we are and what we value.

This fall, we'll be gathering your input through surveys and focus groups. We're also working with the Great Schools Partnership to make sure our communications are clear, ongoing, and offered in lots of different ways so everyone has a chance to participate. Please spread the word. The most powerful part of this process isn't just in the formal meetings—it's in the everyday conversations you'll have with friends, neighbors, and coworkers. Talking about what matters for our kids is how we start to find common ground.

And that brings us to the heart of it all: developing a vision of a graduate. This isn't just about what knowledge our students should leave with, but also about the skills, habits, and qualities of character we want to nurture. Each child's path will be unique, but our goal is to make sure they all have the support and opportunities they need to thrive.

So here's my invitation: lean in. Be part of the process. Share your voice. This work is about more than writing a plan—it's about building the future of our schools together.

Community Focus Groups:

- Pownal Elementary School Cafeteria- Monday, September 22 - 6PM-7PM
- Durham Community School Cafeteria - Thursday, September 25 - 6PM-7PM
- Freeport Public Library - Saturday, September 27 - 10AM-11AM
- Freeport High School Cafeteria - Tuesday, September 30 - 6PM-7PM
- Virtual Session - October 1 - Noon - 1:00PM