



▶ PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT REMAINS AN IMPORTANT PRIORITY 1



▶ 175 ATTEND STRATEGIC PLANNING FORUM 1



▶ BUDGET PROCESS TO BE A CHALLENGE AGAIN 2

The Schools of Arundel, Kennebunk, and Kennebunkport

RSU 21 *focus*

CHALLENGING AND SUPPORTING ALL LEARNERS TO ACQUIRE THE ACADEMIC KNOWLEDGE AND PERSONAL SKILLS NEEDED TO BE RESPONSIBLE, CONTRIBUTING CITIZENS IN A GLOBAL SOCIETY.

Each year, staff members throughout the district participate in a wide variety of activities aimed at sharpening instructional methods and improving student learning.

Professional development in RSU 21 remains a high priority as the link between teacher quality and student learning is undeniable. The primary goal of professional development is to improve student learning and raise achievement.

Professional development is not a one-time event, but a sustained, job-embedded approach to improving instructional practice. Professional development in RSU 21 is structured in many forms. At the elementary schools, professional development typically occurs on monthly early release Wednesdays. At the middle and high school level, late start Wednesdays provide time for development activities. The school district has worked diligently to carve out more time for professional development time while maintaining a balance with student instructional time. Professional development offerings include on-site courses, a menu of workshops in a variety of formats, summer curriculum

development opportunities, professional learning communities that support continued professional reflection and growth, leadership opportunities through K-12 curriculum teams and district level committees, and tuition reimbursement options for advanced studies.

Professional development for the elementary schools for 2009-2010 has concentrated on sharing curriculum and practices across grade levels throughout our newly formed district. Other professional development has focused on technology, Response to Intervention, Early Mathematical Thinking training provided by the Maine Math and Science Alliance, and positive behavior supports.

Middle and high school professional development has centered on International Baccalaureate approaches, differentiation,

technology training, Response to Intervention, and examining student data to inform instruction. As a district, we have made a commitment to provide professional development to all teachers in the area of neuroscience. Our goal is to help teachers better understand brain research in order to connect brain and cognitive science to the classroom. Many staff have attended this valuable professional development opportunity and are making changes in their instructional practice as a result.

RSU 21 has identified staff development as a top priority. Professional growth opportunities are a worthy investment for the long-term benefit of our students.

Professional Development: What's it All About?

Strategic Planning Update

On Monday, January 11, more than 170 members of the school community engaged in a Public Forum at the Middle School of the Kennebunks. The participants were provided with an overview of the Strategic Planning Process followed by a review of district data. Lively discussions were held in which members were asked to respond to specific questions regarding the future of our schools and where we should focus our energies. The Planning Committee will reconvene on February 9 to look at the data and determine its next steps. Thank you to all who participated!



Budget Process: Kicking into Gear

A significant reduction in Maine's General Purpose Aid for Education will force the district to choose between asking for more from local taxes, making harmful cuts to programming, or some combination of the two.

Here's a recurring theme in schools and society today: there just doesn't seem to be enough money to do what needs to be done. With discouraging news from Augusta citing a shortfall in statewide revenues, public schools all over Maine are bracing for a reduction in General Purpose Aid (GPA) for the 2010-2011 school year. We anticipate a reduction in GPA of approximately \$1.8M in RSU 21 alone. As a result of this, coupled with a desire to minimize the impact on the local tax base, the RSU 21 Board of School Directors has directed the administration to create the 2010-2011

budget by reducing the bottom line of this year's budget by approximately \$2.6M. This represents just over 7% of the total budget (\$36.2M). Building principals and district level administrators are currently working to prepare budgets that meet this parameter by searching for potential savings in every area of their respective cost centers. Clearly, this is an ominous task; not one the administrative team will take lightly. Our goal will be to develop strategies for maintaining the high quality of education for which our schools have come to be known, but it is likely that these

significant reductions in spending will translate to a reduction or loss of programming in several areas. We encourage you to stay tuned to our budget process by accessing the district website (rsu21.net) and following the links for Board of School Directors meetings and minutes. Your input at Board of Directors' meetings is always encouraged – the Board meets the first and third Monday of each month at locations in each of our three towns.

Please stay apprised of upcoming meetings to participate in this important process.

FOCUS ON: SPORTS

It seems just a short time ago that our athletes reported to fall pre-season with temperatures near 80 degrees. Since that first practice day in August, and nearing the end of the winter sports season, we have seen our fields, courses, gyms, rinks, pools, and mountains occupied by over 600 athletes in 23 different sports programs from our middle school and high school. And though it is hard to believe, with the temperature barely getting into the teens, the spring sports season is right around the corner (March 22nd).

Congratulations to all athletes and coaches and thank you for representing RSU 21.

Upcoming Board of Education Meetings

Monday, February 22
7:00 p.m. – Mildred L. Day School

Monday, March 1
7:30 p.m. – Kennebunk Town Hall

Monday, March 15
7:00 p.m. – Kennebunkport Town Hall

