

## RSU 18 February 2020 Rome school Board director's update

### "Rome - Helping RSU 18 set the standard for academic excellence for public schools in Maine"

*This note reflects exclusively my personal perspective as your Rome Town RSU 18 School Director. It in no way or manner represents the perspective of the Superintendent or the School Board. You are encouraged to access the RSU 18 web site or contact the Superintendent for information.*

#### The Good news:

1. **Academics** – Our Chief Academic officer, Keith Morin, and our Superintendent, Carl Gartley, are focused on the students' academic performance. In the spring 2019 NWEA Assessment 68.3% of our students met grade level expectations in reading, 59.6% of our students met grade level expectations in math. A district goal this year was to achieve a 5% improvement in our reading and math scores. In reading, 12 out of the 20 grade level cohorts met the 5% increase. In math, 8 out of the 20 met the 5% increase. We are improving but are well below where we want to be. To help educational technician support in our classrooms was increased and special education staffing was added in two buildings. At the high school, we added a drug / alcohol / mental health counselor.
2. **Attendance** – a key to improve our students' success is getting them to school. All the schools are closely monitoring attendance and "truancy." Parents of truant students are being asked to assist. This will ensure their children get a first class education Six of our eight school met our district goals for both truancy and chronic absenteeism. We have made this a goal again for FY 20 and hope for continued improvement. Our absences/truancies are better than in the past but also not at the level we desire.
3. **Bond issue, safety, energy efficiency and the new athletic fields** - Of the \$13.9M bond issue (that we all voted on and approved) **68%** has been spent. The balance (~\$4.4M) is literally in the bank. Here is the good report:
  - a. **68 of the 80 "fire safety" improvements identified by the State Fire Marshall's office (Rich McCarthy) have been resolved.** The upgrades are all preventing the children, faculty & staff from experiencing injury or death.
  - b. **100% of the \$2.9M Energy Efficiency contract work has been completed.** This is also positive. We have better lighting, more flexible lighting options, better heating and lower electric power and fuel bills. Good deal.
  - c. **Facilities improvement projects** – About **68%** of this work has been done. A local example is the upgraded Belgrade Central School drop off/pick up area. The RSU leadership is committed to completing the needed improvement work. Their commitment has been demonstrated by the work completed.
  - d. **Athletic fields** – The Superintendent **completed this project under budget.** Stop by. Be impressed.
  - e. **These improvements are wonderful.** They are because of the bond, planning by the facilities committee, board direction, work by the Superintendent and aggressive pursuit by the administration of State revolving renovation funds. This is excellent work by the RSU leadership (Carl Gartley and his team).

#### Areas for consideration:

1. **The 2020/2021 budget** – it looks like we may see a >2.4% increase in our part of the "revenue" budget. The reason is twofold. We expect the budget itself to go up by 2.4% and Rome's property valuation relative to the other four towns has increased. This means we will have to absorb a larger share of the cost.
2. You can impact the budget by being involved. The public budget works shops are on March 24 & March 25 (6 pm) at the Middle school. Be heard. It's all about academic excellence. Excellent schools mean people & businesses will move here. If they come our tax base will broaden and jobs will be created.
3. **Even if you don't have children in the schools – come.** Your life knowledge is invaluable in the budget process.

4. We aspire to giving our 129 Rome students the best start in life that we can afford. I, and all of us, are concerned about all 2,900 students in the district. As your sole representative (the other towns all have at least two), I very much value your thoughts and direction. It is a privilege to represent you. Thank you for the opportunity.

**Rome a great place to live – a great place to grow up.**

Yours in achieving academic excellence for the benefit of our children,



Dr. Andrew G. Cook,

Rome School Board Director

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