

RSU 18 Rome Director's April update School Security, academic excellence, and the 2018/19 budget

4/22/18

Everyone,

As always I hope you will reach out to me by phone, in person or email to share your thoughts and perspectives. (397-5332 acook@rsu18.org). I hope you dodged this respiratory flu. I didn't and it is really something. Ugh!

Some news:

Creation of a plan to achieve academic excellence:

The Chief Academic Officer did provide the board, at our meeting on April 4th, with a timeline to complete the "comprehensive needs assessment." This is a State mandated plan/analysis for fiscal year 2019 "Title 1" funding. Title 1 funding is:

"the largest federal program aiding elementary and secondary education. States receive funds on the basis of a formula that takes into account the number of school-aged children living in poverty and other factors, such as the cost of education in the state. It targets the Title I funds they receive to schools with the highest percentages of children from low-income families. Unless a participating school is operating a schoolwide program, the school must focus Title I services on children who are failing, or most at risk of failing, to meet state academic standards."

I asked again if this would be district wide plan (not school specific), would it address all students and have as a focus making RSU 18 one of the leading school districts in the state. The Chief Academic Officer, Keith Morin, indicated that this was his intent. This would be superb.

I still sense a reluctance (for reasons I don't understand) to create a plan for achieving academic excellence. Every business (the successful ones) have some sort of strategic plan – and then they do it. I looked around on the internet and found such a plan for RSU 38 (Maranacook). It is superb. It is more, I think, than we need as a start, but for sure it sets a very good example. It is worth a look.

I am going to say the Comprehensive needs assessment (which is due to be completed by June 15) constitutes a plan to achieve academic excellence. Hence I will vote to support the budget. However I wait (and hope) to be impressed with the potential actual district wide plan to achieve academic excellence.

Testing: To that end the Superintendent provided us a list with the many hours of "testing" all of grade three through twelve students will be undergoing in April and May. These include the State assessments and also the collegiate Scholastic Aptitude tests (SATs). It is impressive and maybe a bit of over kill. In New York state starting in ninth grade we did do several days of "Regents" exams. They did serve to help drive all the NY state schools to high levels of academic performance. I went for my last two year to one

of the premier private high schools in the US. The only standardized tests we ever took were the SATs. All our focus was on the subjects themselves. We had great teachers, great resources, hard class room tests and very high standards set for us. Those who didn't cut it, didn't stay. I am not sure public schools have that last option but we can for sure can have the first four (great teachers, great resources, hard tests and high standards).

In any case there is still much work to be done here on academic excellence. But I am impressed to see how RSU 38 has embraced a strategic planning approach. You can see the results in their test scores- it's clear – they got results! You might want to take a look at their plan. The link is below.

<http://www.maranacook.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/07/Strategic-Plan-2012-17.pdf>

Yours in helping our students by helping RSU 18 set the standard for academic excellence for public schools in Maine.

Rome – a great place to live, and a great place to grow up!

Dr. Andrew Cook
397-5332

p.s. If you want to talk or have thoughts, please call me (397-5332) or email me!
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