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May 24, 2011

Report from Assistant Superintendent

On May 13, 2011, I attended a three-day Summit Meeting of the Maine Physical Sciences Partnership at Point Lookout. As you may recall, RSU #20 is participating in a five-year grant with the University of Maine and the National Science Foundation to adopt a research-based science curriculum in Grades Six through Nine, Region-wide. At this time, three teachers will be attending a week-long summer science academy and will participate in professional development in inquiry-based science instruction. Teachers from both middle schools have agreed to pilot modules of the curriculum next year, in either Earth or Physical Science. Physics teacher Michelle Andre from Searsport District High School has been selected as a teacher in residence by the University of Maine, and will be working on various aspects of professional development and science curriculum work during the summer. This continues to be a very exciting and active project for our Region, and next year we look forward to the beginning of the curriculum pilot phase of the project.

I have two new projects to report to the Board of Directors. The first is an opportunity for our middle level math and science teachers to participate in a year-long series of professional development in “data literacy,” that is learning about the art and science of teaching students to collect, represent and utilize data in ways integrating science, mathematics and social science. RSU #20 was selected to be a partner region by the Schoodic Educational Research Center, who will be providing five workshops during the 2011-2012 school year. This work will be fully paid for as part of a math and science grant. At this time we are developing plans and dates for the workshop series.

The second project is the submission of a grant through the Department of Environmental Protection and the Belfast Bay Watershed Coalition to provide elementary and middle level teachers opportunities to participate in professional development in Environmental Science teaching. In addition, funding would be available for field trips, as well as equipment for classes participating during the 2011-2012 school year. This project is still in process and I will update the Board of Directors when I have further information.

Teachers at Belfast Area High School have been working on a number of projects to help students become more successful on the SAT exam. This year, four teachers, Pam Lynam, Diana Leighton, Tonya Ballard and Jan Banks have volunteered their time to run after-school tutorials in SAT prep in math and English language arts. Fifty-six students participated in the tutorials.

Next year, BAHS will offer SAT prep embedded in English language arts classes, as well as elective classes available for up to 120 students.

Lastly, the K-5 Regional Mathematics Curriculum is ready to be reviewed by the Curriculum Steering Committee and will be given to the Board of Directors in June for review and adoption. I will be contacting Board members who serve on the committee to schedule a meeting.

Respectfully submitted,

John C. McDonald
Assistant Superintendent