

January 2024

Safety Update: What can Parents do to Support?

Don't call the office when you get a Robo-call – it plugs up the line '1960' - add it to your contact list

call will come from 207-338-2051

We will have a dedicated number in the future



December 2023 Update

Dear RSU 71 Students, Parents and Caregivers, Staff, School Board, and Community Partners,

So many RSU 71 students are involved in a wide variety of engaging, active, and relevant learning activities!

At the last Board of Directors' meeting, we congratulated Belfast Area High School E-Sports Team member **Reilly Newton** and Advisor **Mr. Ben Robson**, who spoke about the BAHS team and the experience of winning the state championship. We also congratulated the school board's student representative, senior **Chase Weaver**, for being selected to sit on the Student Cabinet of the Maine Department of Education, where he'll be able to influence decisions at the state level and have opportunities to converse with legislators.

Next month's newsletter will boast photos and a video of the newly revitalized and energized **chorus** and **band** at **Troy Howard Middle School**, which had been seriously setback during the coronavirus pandemic but is now back on track to becoming bigger and stronger than ever.

Our **THMS Math Team** remains competitive, with a strong showing at the last regional math meet, which will be shared in January.

More good news: **Ames Elementary School** has been recognized by U.S. News and World Reports as one of the best elementary schools in Maine. We have fabulous teachers in all our schools; Ames is one of the spots in our district where high-leverage instructional strategies are especially pronounced and widespread, with strong student results.

One of the measurable goals in our RSU 71 Education Plan is **student engagement** (see the blue link to the RSU 71 Education Plan below), which enables every student to have a personalized education plan that is presented and reflected upon at least twice a year during student-led parent-teacher conferences. The fall conferences showed very high participation rates, and every school met or exceeded its target for the fall, resulting in a 95% overall participation rate. We won't be satisfied until we achieve 100% student-family participation. And, of course, we will continue to work toward making every conference well-prepared and genuinely meaningful for students, the supportive adults in their lives, and teachers. Many thanks to parents, other family members, and teachers for supporting and bearing witness to the learning of 1,360 students this fall. Audience matters when it comes to giving students a strong voice, strengthening their sense of agency, efficacy, and can-do, and recognizing and encouraging their unique talents, skills, and pathways.

We want every one of our students to succeed, and we know this is an achievable goal. Slowly but surely, we are making the collaboratively developed vision for RSU 71 a reality, “engaging students to become leaders who understand their strengths, explore their interests, and embark on pathways leading to fulfilling lives.”

Fall 2023 SLC (Student-Led Conference) Data:

Ames Elementary	90%
Gladys Weymouth Elementary	100%
East Belfast Elementary	98%
Kermit Nickerson Elementary	99%
CASS	95% and counting
Troy Howard Middle School	80%
Belfast Area High School	95% and counting
BCOPE	100%

Alas, the coronavirus pandemic continues to impact our school system, albeit less virulently, with central office staff being its latest target. A reminder to all students, parents, and staff members: if you or, in the case of parents, your child tests positive for the coronavirus, you should call the school nurse assigned to your school(s) to get directions about what to do; this includes taking a picture of your positive test results, staying home for five days or longer – until symptoms dissipate – and wearing a mask for five days after returning to school and work. This is the fifth school year of the coronavirus: 19-20, 20-21, 21-22, 22-23, and 23-24.

This holiday season is impacted by local and international strife, political polarization, hatred, and war, making the need to keep love alive all the more critical. It is also top of mind that, locally, many people within our community are heavy-hearted and carrying exceedingly heavy loads this year. Nevertheless, I send you holiday wishes for moments of deep joy, the warm glow of a light brighter than bling, a penchant for spreading it around, and, at the risk of sounding preachy, a quote from Michael Curry's book *Love is the Way: Holding on to Hope in Troubling Times* about the pragmatism of love:

Where selfishness excludes, love makes room and includes. Where selfishness puts down, love lifts up. Where selfishness hurts and harms, love helps and heals. Where selfishness enslaves, love sets free and liberates. The way of love will show us the right thing to do every single time. It is moral and spiritual grounding – and a place of rest – amid the chaos that is often part of life. It's how we stay decent in indecent times. Loving is not always easy, but like with muscles, we

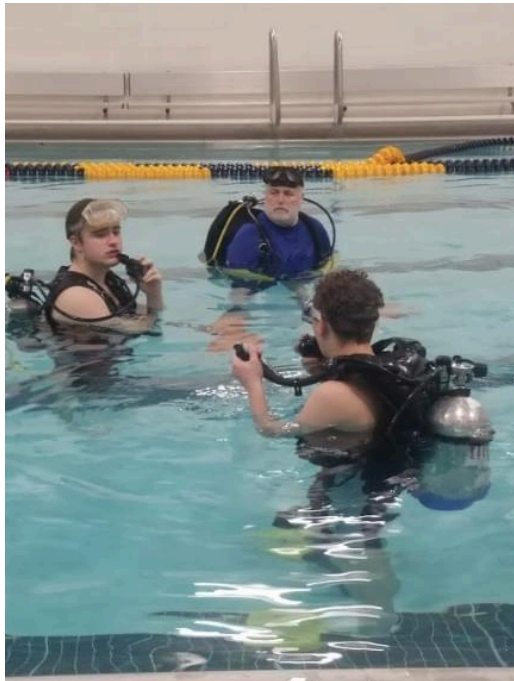
get stronger both with repetition and as the burden gets heavier. And it works (p. 27).

Mary Alice McClean

[Printable version of RSU 71 Education Plan](#)

[More Good News: from BAHS](#)

BAHS students volunteering at the Wreaths Across America event!



The Marine Institute funded a second round of Scuba Exploration in the BAHS pool, an opportunity for students to try out the experience of scuba diving- free of charge!



College acceptances are rolling in! Congratulations to our many seniors who are well on their way to finalizing their post-graduate plans!



The Kelp Farm is back in the water! Visit the Belfast Marine Institute website for more information: <https://bahsmarineinstitute.rsu71.org/>
[Athletics](#)



The BAHS Boys Basketball team is wearing these warm-up shirts in honor of their teammate Caden's mom, Amy Nickerson, who was killed in November by Domestic Violence.

BAHS Varsity Football platers Andrew Fairbrother, Ryker Evans, Elias Higgins, Andrew Haas, Eli Veillux, Luke Littlefield, Tanner Carson, and coach Art Fairbrother at the Big 11 Conference Class D Awards Banquet (missing Curtis Littlefield).

