**School System RSU 18**

**Contact Information**: Linda Laughlin, Assistant Superintendent, llaughlin@rsu18.org

Regional School Unit 18 decided to modify their education model by implementing a three-phase plan: establish strategic direction, strategic implementation and organizational alignment, and continuous improvement and refinement. The focus has shifted from education for all (mandatory attendance) to proficiency for all. Proficiency for all entails that schools must ensure all students are proficient in an essential set of skills, and that the learning experience for all students should be customized. Students should be prepared to succeed in society by demonstrating proficiency of a common set of rigorous standards. RSU 18 believes that learning takes place without boundaries of time and space so all students should be able to pursue multiple pathways inside and outside of the classroom to achieve their goals.

**Williams Elementary**

**Contact Information**: Kathy Harris-Smedberg, Principal, kharris@rsu18.org

**Location**: Oakland, Maine

**Grades**: 3rd-5th

**Number of students**: Approximately 200

**Phone**: (207) 465-2965

**Website**: <http://www.rsu18.org/index.php?id=389&sub_id=3848>

**Approach to learning**: Williams Elementary uses a proficiency-based model that encourages rigorous academic work in a safe and caring environment. Students are instructed in standards based, as well as Habits of Minds with the intent that all students will leave Williams Elementary as well-rounded citizens and lifelong learners. Every student at Williams has an individualized learning plan to best help them engage in the learning process and prepare them to become global leaders. Students are also given individual and small group guidance counselor time to discuss friendships, how to cope with stressful situations, dealing with loss, and ‘lunch bunches’ to help new students transition to the school.

**Messalonskee Middle School**

**Contact Information**: Mark Hatch, Principal, mhatch@rsu18.org

**Location**: Oakland, Maine

**Grades**: 6th-8th

**Number of students**: 588 (SY 2010-2011)

**Phone**: (207) 465-2167

**Website**: <http://www.rsu18.org/index.php?id=389&sub_id=262>

**Approach to learning**: Messalonskee Middle School uses a proficiency-based model that provides a balanced instructional approach which is safe, supportive, and accepting of differences. The whole child’s physical, emotional, and social health are valued and supported in an environment of mutual respect. Messalonskee Middle School supplies a student centered learning environment, providing for individual needs through collaborative and engaging real-world activities. Through their Advisory Program, made up of teachers and a small group of students, a close relationship is formed through engagement in a variety of activities from discussions on career guidance, academic counseling, and important student issues to assistance with the distribution of school-wide materials. Looping is a design the school has implemented that groups students into teams, which stay together after sixth grade. Four-person teams have about 75-80 students, two-person teams have 35-50 students, and Alternative Education has two teachers with 21 students. Teams not only allow teachers to get to know students and their learning styles better, but also encourage the teams to construct interdisciplinary units. Other than opening/closing times, lunch, and unified art times each team has the flexibility to decide its own daily schedule and make changes as needed. Lastly, the ‘Common Planning Time’ is one of the most valued preparation components since it requires all team teachers to have the same block of time when they are not teaching.