

# **RSU 18 Athletic Complex is an Embarrassment**

As a teacher and athletic director at Messalonskee Middle School and a 25-year employee of Regional School Unit 18, I am embarrassed at the state of disrepair of our high school athletic complex. In fact, I believe we should all, as members of the RSU 18 school community, stand in front of each and every student-athlete and coach and apologize for letting them down.

The No. 1 responsibility of any educator, even before the duty we have to educate, is to do everything in our power to keep our students safe. Right now we cannot look parents and students in the eye and say we can keep our kids safe throughout the day. When we are sending students off campus in cars in order to practice because our facilities are not adequate, that is a problem. When a track athlete is hit by a car while running on the streets of Oakland because of our lack of facilities, that is a problem.

We all were 17 and 18 years old once and we know that nothing good can come of teenagers traveling in cars just so they can practice because we cannot provide safe facilities on campus. Aren't we tempting fate and unimaginable tragedy when we put them in this precarious position?

Some have said we are throwing money at athletics when it is an extracurricular activity, an add on, not part of the educational process. I could not disagree more. Anyone who has ever been part of an athletic team, band, chorus, robotics, drama productions, etc. knows the incredible value that each has in the education of a young person. The life lessons taught are the things that make up the content of a person's character and mold them into productive citizens.

Did I mention the obvious benefit to our communities and our youth programs throughout the district?

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