

## 2012-2013 REPORT OF THE SUPERINTENDENT OF SCHOOLS

With some strong trends of economic growth reported regionally and nationwide, it does appear that the lengthy fiscal “downturn” is now moving upward. Unemployment rates have slowed and more jobs are available. Greater numbers of home sales have been reported in southeastern New Hampshire. During the November 2012 elections, President Barak Obama was re-elected and our state earned the unique distinction of having six women in key positions in all three branches of government. Exeter resident Maggie Hassan was elected Governor; Kelly Ayotte and Jeanne Shaheen are continuing US Senators; Annie Kuster and Carol Shea-Porter were elected to the US House of Representatives; and Linda Dalianis is the Chief Justice of the NH Supreme Court. Today 20% of the US Senate is comprised of women. It is a new era on many fronts!

There is a new and revitalized era within SAU 16 as well. Greater emphasis on curriculum, instruction, and assessment, in line with the SAU Strategic Plan, are more and more evident as the Common Core State Standards (CCSS) begin to be implemented. As in the past, teachers and administrators from all seven districts within the SAU are collaborating. However, now there is greater common focus on what needs to be accomplished because of the adoption of new and more stringent academic standards. This common focus is joined with the creativity of better and different instruction along with the national “Smarter Balance” assessment protocols which will replace the New England Common Assessment Program (NECAP) within the next two years.

Technology is also playing an increased role as schools are making preparations for more wireless connections to the Internet while districts continue to move toward a one-device-to-one-student platform. This demands increased accessibility to both equipment and “the cloud” where access to information is far easier than the days of note cards, periodicals, and encyclopedias. Thanks to the support of the Exeter Region Cooperative School District, and the leadership of Assistant Superintendent Sandra MacDonald, an SAU-wide study was completed in late 2012 by the Massachusetts-based firm, CELT (Connecting Education, Leadership, and Technology.) This study highlighted several key commendations including:

1. SAU Strategic Plan includes technology goals and objectives.
2. SAU leadership and individual school districts are committed to the infusion of technology tools and support their Informational Technology (IT) staff.
3. SAU 16 is in the process of transitioning to cloud-based Google Apps for education productivity and related communications tools.
4. Expertise and quality of support provided by the district-level technical staff is exemplary.
5. SAU 16 has developed and published exemplary technology policies.

To help move the SAU forward even more, this CELT study is also providing a series of key recommendations that will help to guide the focus in this area. Included among the recommendations are:

1. Review and revise Vision, Mission, and Technology Goals to ensure that they align with each other and provide a consistent technology program direction.
2. Develop and implement a collaborative model to engage SAU district schools to cooperatively analyze and align current curriculum with the technology competencies integrated into the Common Core State Standards (CCSS).
3. Convene a one-to-one Bring-Your-Own-Technology (BYOT) committee to a) define one-to-one and BYOT pilot content areas and potential devices; b) set pilot policies,

- procedures, priorities, timelines, and evaluation metrics; and c) research funding, ownership strategies, and develop a budget for a phased full scale implementation.
4. Continue to offer and expand a diverse array of professional development options to all staff that support the attainment of the National Education Technology Standards (NETS) for teachers and administrators.
  5. Continue to develop and adopt technology proficiencies for all staff. As positions become available, revise job descriptions to reflect required technology responsibilities, proficiencies, qualifications, certifications, and experience.

It is a new era on many fronts!

Even with all of these changes—and an exponential pattern of growth—our students today still need to be exposed to—and need to develop—strong citizenship skills that will more than adequately equip them for the “future shocks” which have yet to be anticipated. This is part of the reason why SAU 16 remains committed to developing solid communication skills and community service action to serve others. After all, I contend, that in the long run our students are going to remember far more about how we treat them than what we teach them!

Even with all of these changes, the safety and security of our students remains the highest priority of our schools because learning and teaching cannot take place successfully unless this basic need is met. In December 2012, a tragedy of absolutely horrific proportion took place when 26 students, teachers, and administrators were violently murdered by a young, lone, mentally ill, gunman in Newtown, CT. That event brought our nation to our knees as we struggled to learn “Why?” while also wanting to guarantee the well-being of all of those who cross the thresholds into our schools each day. SAU 16 serves approximately 6,000 students with 1,200 regular employees. Although there is no absolute guarantee that everyone is safe from harm 100% of the time, the public may rest assured that our administrators and staff are working closely with law enforcement personnel to provide the safest possible environment for all who are in and around our schools each day.

The community at large, including the eighty percent of our families who do not have children in our schools, has an ethical responsibility to support public education in a reasonable and prudent manner. We, as educators, have an equally important moral obligation to provide the best possible education to the students entrusted to us. “*Schools Cannot Do It Alone*” as the businessman, attorney, and author Jamie Vollmer has made so clear in his 2010 book with that title.

### **SAU 16 VISION STATEMENT**

To provide a rigorous and comprehensive education that will prepare our students for diverse post-secondary educational opportunities, a competitive workplace, and active civic participation.

### **SAU 16 MISSION STATEMENT**

To help students gain knowledge and skills that build intellect, character, and a lifelong thirst for learning.

### **SAU 16 STRATEGIC PLAN**

One of the most significant driving forces of the continuing work in SAU 16 is the Strategic Plan that was adopted by the SAU Joint Boards in October 2010. This document emphasizes work in seven key areas: Communications; Community Involvement; Curriculum and Assessment; Design and Philosophy; Governance; Lifestyles; and Special Education. Local Boards have selected various components within these areas to stress in their respective schools and regularly reported those to the SAU Joint Board.

Three major trends have emerged and are being implemented at this time: Curriculum, Communications, and Community Service.

### **Curriculum, Communications, and Community Service**

Curriculum, instruction, and assessment each play a key role in the educational process. Much of this work today is driven by New Hampshire's adoption of the Common Core State Standards which lay the foundation for the national Smarter Balance assessment that will begin in 2015 in at least 27 states. SAU 16 educators are well underway in making the transition from the NH Curriculum Frameworks to the more vigorous demands of CCSS. Its implementation in math and language arts has already begun. The SAU is facilitating both a language arts committee and a math committee which are comprised of teachers and administrators from each school within the SAU. These committees meet regularly to create common assessments that address the major standards in each content area. They are also identifying the professional development plans that are needed to support the required instructional shifts within the curriculum areas.

It is important to note that one of the key components of the CCSS transition is increased depth within the curriculum. Essentially, it means exposing and challenging students with more frequent and more difficult reading and writing works. It means more complex and informational texts. It means effective and well-grounded writing. It means more research and inquiry to analyze. Even though the primary focus of the CCSS appears to be language arts and math instruction, the shift to the Common Core State Standards is primarily a shift to more overall depth across the entire curriculum. SAU 16 has always prided itself at being on the forefront of educational "rigor" and this important work fits well with that philosophy and that goal.

Music, guidance, library/media, and health committees are also meeting on a regular basis this year. The goal of these committees is to review and revise their respective curricula to ensure alignment with state and national standards. This curriculum mapping process also includes creating common assessments and identifying possible instructional resources for teachers. The schools and the SAU are committed to preparing elementary students for the transition to a large middle school and for making the transition from middle school to high school.

As educational initiatives continue to unfold around the country, it is important to note that students and teachers in SAU 16 are finding more extensive and creative ways to meet the growing individual needs of each student. This includes having students involved in learning outside of the traditional classroom through online learning with the Virtual Learning Academy Charter School (VLACS) or through Extended Learning Opportunities (ELO). Consideration is also being given to establishing an Exeter High School Summer Institute where students may earn additional high school credits in a variety of non-traditional courses that will serve to expand their learning. Remember: It was long ago when Mark Twain stressed that "schooling should not interfere with one's education!"

Middle and high school students are challenged in ways that help them to gain high school and college credit aside from the traditional ways. Students in the Cooperative Middle School (CMS) who choose to take and successfully complete Algebra I as eighth graders earn high school credit. Similarly, CMS students who successfully complete two years of the same world language (French, Latin, and Spanish are available) in grades seven and eight also earn high school credit. In addition to the traditional Advanced Placement (AP) courses taken at Exeter High School (EHS) to earn college credit, both EHS and the Seacoast School of Technology (SST) offer Project Running Start courses that allow students to simultaneously earn high school and college credit. In many cases, these alternatives help graduates to "jumpstart" their college career and reduce overall costs in the long run.

At the elementary school level, many teachers are also creating and enhancing diverse opportunities to engage students more in their own learning. Using the benefits of technology, introducing students to writing blogs, and developing a variety of innovations in classroom that extend the teaching of basic skills for implementation in 21<sup>st</sup> century learning is happening every day in SAU 16 schools. Students are able to share their work beyond their own classroom walls and among other schools. This is the world in which these students will flourish and many teachers are actively preparing our students for their present and future.

Please refer to the SAU 16 website ([www.sau16.org](http://www.sau16.org)) for regular news and updates about some of the curriculum and learning that is taking place in our schools.

**Communication** is more important and more easily available today than at any other time in our history. For this reason, individual schools and the SAU offices choose a variety of methods to communicate with students, parents, staff, and the community. The use of traditional newsletters has expanded to enhanced websites, principal blogs, extensive coverage in local newspapers, 24-hour availability of the SAU cable access educational channel (Channel 13 for all Comcast subscribers), AlertNow messages, and email.

Please note that SAU 16 schools have worked over the past two years to build robust school websites that are informative, up-to-date, and user-friendly. This has been a large project and has involved dozens of people throughout our schools. Visit our main SAU 16 site at [www.sau16.org](http://www.sau16.org) to gain access to the various schools' sites.

Keeping news current about school programs and services was a priority of the SAU Strategic Plan and efforts in this area are constantly emphasized. The substance and length of this Superintendent's Report is one more link that the community has to gather and synthesize information provided. After all, SAU 16 is comprised of six towns, seven independent school districts, eight school boards, 33 school board members, four budget committees, and 11 collective bargaining groups. It is the third largest SAU in New Hampshire when considering total enrollment of students. (Only Manchester and Nashua serve more students than does SAU 16.) The size of our SAU alone is another reason why communication is so important!

**Community Service** is vital to the lifeblood of any town or city. Each of our schools actively and aggressively supports a wide variety of projects which lead to helping others. Local food pantries have been the largest recipient of student and staff efforts. However, there are many consistent strategies used to support the organizations such as the SPCA, the Pease Greeters, and NH Special Olympics. At holiday times, schools go out of their way to help individual families as this strongly reinforces the need for each of us to be good citizens. I am extremely grateful to all of the students, families, staff members, and administrators who commit themselves to these very important efforts each year.

## **EXETER HIGH SCHOOL PRINCIPAL CHANGE**

Mr. Sean Kiley of Merrimac, MA, was selected by the Exeter Region Cooperative School Board to be the new principal of Exeter High School beginning in July 2012. Originally from Methuen, MA, Mr. Kiley earned his BS degree in Sports Biology from Springfield (MA) College in 1992 and then completed his M.Ed. degree in Health Studies from Springfield College in 1996, during which time he was a Graduate Teaching Fellow for the college. This provided him experience in teaching undergraduate students for two years while he also served as assistant coach of the intercollegiate varsity wrestling team. He completed his certification for school principal through the Educational Leadership Program at Northeastern University in Boston.

Mr. Kiley replaced Mr. Vic Sokul who retired on June 30, 2012 after seven years of service to the students, faculty, staff, and parents of Exeter High School.

### **SWASEY CENTRAL SCHOOL GETS NEW PRINCIPAL**

Mr. Ronald Kew of Manchester, NH was selected as the new principal of Swasey Central School (SCS) in Brentwood. Mr. Kew most recently served as the principal of Gossler Park Elementary School in Manchester. He earned his BS degree in Elementary Education from Saint Joseph College in Standish, ME and his M.Ed. degree in Educational Administration and Supervision from the University of New Hampshire. Mr. Kew has 17 years of experience teaching at the elementary level and was a school administrator in Manchester for the past five years. He began his new position in July 2012 and replaced Mrs. Joan Ostrowski who served SCS faithfully for 12 years.

### **CHAMPIONS FOR CHILDREN**

The SAU 16 Champions for Children award was established two years ago as an opportunity for each school district to recognize individuals who have distinguished themselves by demonstrating significant involvement in programs and/or services that directly benefit the students and families of SAU 16.

Since its inception, 70 individuals have been recognized for their outstanding contributions to our districts. This year's award recipients include the following school board recognitions: SAU 16—Susie Taylor, Officer Dan D'Amato and Officer Michael Oliveira; Exeter Region Cooperative – Bob Bailey; Exeter – Helen Benedetto; Kensington – American Legion Post #105, Mary Knightly, and Mary Jane Solomon; Brentwood—Tammy Heath; Newfields—Alyssa Caggiano; Stratham – Connie Adams and Linda Johansson. These individuals have significantly impacted their respective schools and communities. Congratulations to each of them!

### **CONTRACT NEGOTIATIONS**

There are now eleven formal collective bargaining associations within SAU 16; two of them were open to negotiations with their respective school boards during the current school year. These involved the teacher association in Kensington and the paraprofessional association in Exeter. Both groups reached tentative agreements which will be presented to the voters on their respective Warrants in March 2013. Associate Superintendent Paul Flynn is commended for his outstanding role in dealing with contract negotiations.

### **THE IMPORTANCE OF VOTING**

Generally speaking, voter turnout in each of our communities is relatively low. This means that a small percentage of eligible voters actually participate in the “school district meeting process” and they make important financial decisions for the majority of residents and taxpayers. Brentwood and Stratham each host traditional school district meetings in March 2012. Of the 2494 registered voters in Brentwood, only 135 people (5.41%) attended the meeting; in Stratham, of the 5159 voters, 117 people (2.27%) attended the meeting. In each case, more than 94% of the registered voters did not participate in this important process.

Each of the other five districts uses the “SB 2” voting format and people may cast ballots throughout an entire day in March. In East Kingston, 435 (27.39%) of the 1588 voters participated; in Exeter, 2128 (21.90%) of the 9716 voters participated; in Kensington, 476 (31.59%) of the 1507 voters participated; in Newfields, 338 (28.24%) of the 1197 registered voters participated; for the Exeter Region Cooperative, 4262 (19.68%) of the 21,661 registered voters participated. For the SB 2 voting in the Coop, Brentwood

and Stratham did have a larger voter turnout than at its regular District Meeting with 20.73% (517 voters) and 11.79% (608 voters) participation respectively.

It is extremely important that residents take their civic responsibility of voting seriously.

### **RX REBATE PROGRAM**

Due to the significant efforts of Associate Superintendent Paul Flynn, the Rx Rebate Program offered by the federal government for school districts who have retirees who do not participate in Medicare Part D is continuing to pay dividends. Since enrolling in the rebate program in March 2009, SAU districts have been reimbursed \$247,000. This money helps to reduce overall health care costs to the districts. Unfortunately, because of some eligibility requirements, our participation in this program ended at the end of the last school year.

### **E-RATE FUNDING**

Under the direction of Assistant Superintendent Sandra MacDonald and the work of Patti-Jo Roy in the SAU Business Office, SAU 16 was approved to receive over \$114,000 to help defray the costs associated with telecommunications services that include telephones, paging services, website hosting, and cell phones. The SAU has made significant improvements in securing funds from this federal program over the past two years.

### **BLUE RIBBON AWARDS**

For more than 30 consecutive years, New Hampshire Partners in Education has recognized the volunteer efforts of parents and community members who are directly involved in local schools. Every elementary school in SAU 16 and the Seacoast School of Technology distinguished itself by achieving this prestigious award. This is an outstanding accomplishment and a clear acknowledgement of the positive relationships that exist between our schools and their local communities.

### **CRITICAL INCIDENT MANAGEMENT**

Thanks to the outstanding work of Assistant Superintendent Esther Asbell, SAU 16 continues to focus on how to deal with “critical incidents” in our schools. During the summer of 2012, over 60 administrators and teachers participated in extensive training conducted by Harvard University expert, Dr. Robert Macy. This training included significant work on suicide prevention. SAU Special Education Administrator Carol Andre also worked closely on this initiative and spearheaded regional work for school officials on “post-vention” training. From January 2010 through September 2012, Exeter High School had to deal with five student deaths. This fact has impacted the school community in a dramatic way. School and SAU leadership teams have worked closely with the New Hampshire Alliance on Mental Illness and are expanding training in this regard for parents, community members, law enforcement personnel, and students during the current school year.

### **STUDENT ASSESSMENT/NO CHILD LEFT BEHIND**

Once again this past fall, all students in grades 3-8 and 11 participated in the New England Common Assessment Program (NECAP) exams in reading and mathematics. Fifth, eighth and eleventh graders participated in a writing component as well. In May 2011 and 2012, the NECAP Science Test was administered to all students in grades 4, 8 and 11. The results of those tests indicate that the performance of SAU 16 students continues to be strong relative to their statewide peers.

In addition to her other duties and responsibilities, Assistant Superintendent Esther Asbell coordinates the follow-up to these tests that have resulted in School in Need of Improvement (SINI) and/or District In Need of Improvement (DINI) status under the requirements established by the federal *No Child Left Behind* legislation. School Improvement Teams worked very hard over the 2012 summer to address issues related to student assessment data and performance. Various schools and districts in the SAU submitted plans to the NH Department of Education indicating how improvements were being made. All of the submitted plans were approved by state officials who added the comment that they were among the best in the state! That is a compliment to the administrators and teachers who have worked very hard in this regard and emphasizes why SAU 16 is a strong educational community.

In addition to the assessment information gleaned from the NECAP tests, it is important to note that in all of our schools, all students are assessed in a variety of ways including teacher-developed tests, projects, displays, and presentations. Elementary teachers use a variety of assessments such as the Dynamic Indicators of Basic Early Literacy Skills (DIBELS), California Achievement Tests, Terra Nova Tests, Gates MacGinitie Reading Tests, and other benchmark assessments to diagnose individual strengths and weaknesses to improve their instructional practice. Many schools are also implementing a Response to Intervention (RtI) framework in order to more effectively meet individual student learning needs. The RtI process has teachers constantly reviewing student data in order to inform day-to-day instruction. Any standardized test is one indicator and one type of assessment. In addition to using multiple measures, our teachers encourage and provide opportunities for students to demonstrate what they "know and are able to do."

## NUMBERS

The business operation of SAU 16 includes budgets, payrolls, federal grants management, accounts receivables and payables, insurance programs, audits, trust funds oversight, and accounting services for seven independent school districts plus the School Administrative Unit (SAU) itself. Under the watchful eye and very capable leadership of Business Administrator Amy Ransom, these important services are provided for 1,200 regular employees plus 300 temporary/substitute employees. The total budgets are approximately \$90 million. The SAU is committed to the respectful and ethical delivery of these services on behalf of the citizens of our communities who have placed their trust in us.

## TUCK LEARNING

The diverse educational avenues provided through the SAU continue to manifest the collective commitment to meet the many individual needs of our secondary school students. Consider the on-going success of the project-based **Great Bay eLearning Charter School (GBeCS)** that currently serves 158 students in grades 8-12 with approximately 46% of those students coming from one of our six towns. The Exeter Region Cooperative School District continues to provide substantial funding (\$300,000) for its students at GBeCS.

The **Exeter Adult Education** program captures the interest of over 900 students who choose from courses that enrich their lives to courses leading to high school diplomas or GED (General Educational Development). It is important to note that the Enrichment Program is now in its 46th year!

The **Exeter High School Alternative Education** program provides another educational opportunity that includes a combination of academic, behavioral, social, civic, and work based learning experiences. The goal of their program is to empower students to succeed as knowledgeable graduates leading productive lives within the community. Each year approximately 30 students participate in this program.

The **Seacoast School of Technology (SST)** offers an excellent array of career and technical education programs for students from six area high schools, including Exeter. The outstanding success of these programs is measured in both the consistent and regular work opportunities provided to students, and the significant community involvement by area businesses and leaders who provide support and serve on advisory boards that assist with funding and public relations for the school. Approximately 650 students are enrolled with 38% of those coming from Exeter High School.

The **Seacoast Professional Development Center (SPDC)** regularly provides college courses and a wide variety of workshops, especially designed to meet the needs of educational professionals from the entire state of New Hampshire. This local resource is invaluable for training and assistance to busy teachers and administrators. Many of its offerings are also available to the public, especially for those individuals who seek professional development credit for certification.

This is my fifth year working with you in this important educational process. I am very pleased to have this opportunity to work with you. I am most grateful to the outstanding teachers, support staff members, administrators, and school board members who share our common goal of providing the best possible education and facilities for our students and their families at a reasonable cost to taxpayers. Public education has changed dramatically over the past 50 years, but SAU 16 remains committed to preparing students to be good citizens who will emerge as powerful leaders and dedicated workers in our society.

Respectfully submitted,

MICHAEL A. MORGAN  
Superintendent of Schools