

SUPERINTENDENT'S REPORT

Michael A. Morgan, Superintendent of Schools—SAU 16

APRIL 2016

New Assistant Superintendent Selected

Mr. William (Bill) Furbush, currently the principal of the Cooperative Middle School in Stratham, has been selected as a new Assistant Superintendent for SAU 16.

Mr. Furbush brings a long, varied, and successful career as an educator to this important position. Mr. Furbush earned his BA degree in German and International Affairs from the University of Maine in Orono. He has a Master of Science degree in Teaching and Learning and a Certificate of Advance Study (CAS) in Educational Leadership in Administration from the University of Southern Maine in Gorham. He is currently enrolled in the Doctor of Education (Ed.D.) program at New England College in Henniker where he is engaged in the extensive study and implementation of Competency-Based Learning.

Mr. Furbush began his teaching career as a Fulbright Teaching Assistant in Grades 9-12 when he worked for the Austrian Ministry of Education in Althofen, Austria during the 1997-1998 school year. Subsequently, he taught German at York (ME) Middle School and served in Iraq for 16 months with the Maine Army National Guard. He served as the Principal of Rollinsford (NH) Grade School from 2008-2011. Before moving to Kensington with his family, Mr. Furbush lived in Kittery, ME where he served on the Kittery School Committee from November 2007 through November 2010. Mr. Furbush begins his work as Superintendent on July 1, 2016. He replaces Ms. Sandie MacDonald who resigned from this position in early March to become the Director of Accountability and Assessment at the New Hampshire Department of Education in Concord.

Exeter High School Honored by the College Board

The College Board recently announced its [6th Annual AP District Honor Roll](#) — a list of 425 districts across the U.S. and Canada being honored for increasing access to Advance Placement AP[®] course work while simultaneously maintaining or increasing the percentage of students earning scores of 3 or higher on AP Exams. Reaching these goals indicates that these districts are successfully identifying motivated, academically prepared students who are likely to benefit from rigorous AP course work.

National data from 2015 show that among black/African American, Hispanic, and Native American students with a high degree of readiness for AP, only about half of students are participating. The first step to delivering the opportunity of AP to students is providing access by ensuring courses are available, that gatekeeping stops, and that the doors are equitably opened so these students can participate. AP Honor Roll Districts are committed to expanding the availability of AP courses among prepared and motivated students of all backgrounds.

Helping more students learn at a higher level *and* earn higher AP scores is an objective of all members of the AP community, from AP teachers to district and school administrators

to college professors. Many districts are experimenting with a variety of initiatives and strategies to determine how to simultaneously expand access and improve student performance.

Inclusion on the 6th Annual AP District Honor Roll is based on the examination of three years of AP data, from 2013 to 2015, for the following criteria:

- Increased participation/access to AP by at least 4 percent in large districts, at least 6 percent in medium districts, and at least 11 percent in small districts;
- Increased or maintained the percentage of exams taken by African American, Hispanic/Latino, and American Indian/Alaska Native students, and;
- Improved performance levels when comparing the percentage of students in 2015 scoring a 3 or higher to those in 2013, unless the district has already attained a performance level at which more than 70 percent of its AP students are scoring a 3 or higher.

When these outcomes have been achieved among an AP student population in which 30 percent or more are underrepresented minority students (Black/African American, Hispanic/Latino, American Indian/Alaska Native) and/or 30 percent or more are low-income students (students who qualify for free or reduced-price lunch), a symbol has been affixed to the district name on its national publications list to highlight this work. Exeter High School (EHS) is so indicated.

Only two other New Hampshire high schools (Merrimack and Windham) were recognized for this 2016 honor. EHS achieved this distinction for the second year in a row and is proud to have earned and been recognized with this outstanding national recognition!

Source: <https://secure-media.collegeboard.org/digitalServices/pdf/ap/ap-district-honor-roll-6th-annual.pdf>

School Business Administrator of the Year

SAU 16 Business Administrator **Amy Ransom** was honored recently as the *2016 NH School Business Administrator of the Year* by the NH Association of School Business Officials (NHASBO). Her commendation is noted for her outstanding knowledge of the financial matters dealing with the nine (9) key—and different—budgets with annual expenditures totally \$100 million. She was also recognized for her ability and willingness to look to the future and find ways to improve the delivery of services required by the SAU. In addition to her work within SAU 16, Ms. Ransom is also involved in various leadership roles for NHASBO and will serve as her Association's President in 2016-2017. Congratulations, Amy!

School Library Media Paraprofessional of the Year

Swasey Central School (SCS) School Library paraprofessional **Laurie Monsell**, has been selected as the recipient of the *2016 New Hampshire School Library Media Association (NHSLMA) Paraprofessional of the Year*. Ms. Monsell's nomination was presented by Library Media Specialist Cherie Smeltzer and Learning Disabilities Specialist Lisa Zach-Swasey who highlighted many of Laurie's gifts and talents that she exhibits daily at SCS.

They emphasized how “indispensable” Laurie is and stressed her expertise, interactions with students, collaboration with staff, and caring for the entire school community which is regularly displayed in her work. “Everyone in our school loves Laurie, and comes to visit her in the library, from administration right on down to our youngest students. We all know that we will be guaranteed a listening ear, a big smile, a word of kindness, and maybe even a hearty laugh when we come to see Laurie.” Congratulations and Thank You, Laurie! The Brentwood School community celebrates your success!

Board Chairs Selected

Each year after the March election, each School Board chooses a chairperson to assist in conducting its regular business. Chairpersons selected for the 2016-2017 term include:

SAU Joint Board—Travis Thompson (Stratham)
Brentwood—Melissa Litchfield
East Kingston—David McBride
Exeter—Patrick O’Day
Exeter Region Cooperative—Helen Joyce
Kensington—Dennis Roffman
Newfields—James McIlroy
Stratham—Eric von der Linden

Best Communities for Music Education

The National Association of Music Merchants (NAMM) Foundation—for the second consecutive year—has designated the SAU 16 school districts as one of its 2016 “Best Communities for Music Education” in the United States. This outstanding recognition acknowledges the “example that you set in providing quality school-based music education programs to young people in your community.” This designation is a testament to the music teachers, parent supporters, and our communities-at-large for realizing the key role that music plays in our schools and in the current and future lives of our K-12 students. Much has been written about the intrinsic value of music and how it impacts other important areas of learning while also transmitting artistic culture to our students and communities. Congratulations and many thanks to everyone who has been inspirational and dedicated to enhancing SAU 16 in this manner!

Exeter Lions Club Vision Screenings

The Exeter Lions Club recently completed free preliminary vision screenings in nine (9) SAU 16 schools. The purpose of this program is to detect vision problems in children as soon as possible so that they may be able to receive the appropriate remediation and care. Coordinated by long-time Seacoast School of Technology (SST) Principal Lang Plumer (1980-1994), this extremely important service has been able to identify and assist children who might otherwise have gone undetected. Of the 2,067 students screened in the SAU, 133 were referred to medical providers for follow-up. The Lions Club has been known for years as a service organization that helps individuals of all ages with eyesight issues and problems. “By conducting vision screenings, equipping hospitals and clinics, distributing medicine and raising awareness of eye disease, Lions work toward their mission of providing vision for all.” Many thanks are extended to all administrators,

teachers, school nurses, and members of the Lions Club who made this community service initiative work so successfully!

Health Insurance Rates for 2016-2017 Announced

Most SAU 16 employees who are eligible for and elect to carry health insurance through their respective employer do so through *Health Trust* which is a New Hampshire-wide consortium of public employers. *Health Trust* competitively bids for the best prices for health care services. Currently SAU 16 has most of its coverages provided by Anthem Blue Cross Blue Shield. Annual rates are heavily determined on “usage” of services in the previous 18-month period. During budget preparation season each fall, *Health Trust* provides school districts with a Guaranteed Maximum Rate (GMR) for the upcoming fiscal year (July 1 to June 30). The GMR is used to prepare budget figures that are presented to the voters. Final rates are provided to school districts usually in late March or early April after operating budgets are finalized.

The average GMR presented to SAU 16 school districts for 2016-2017 was approximately 8%. The final rate is approximately 1%. This means that surplus funds will be returned to taxpayers in the next budget preparation cycle.

Since 1998-1999, average health insurance rates in SAU16 have had an annual rate increase of 8.64%. The average annual rate since 2006-2007 has been 4.66%. Employees are becoming more and more conscious of wellness programs and finding more efficient ways to decrease usage, such as using local “Walk-In Clinics” rather than hospital emergency rooms which are far more expensive. Efforts in this regard are continuing.

National Technical Honor Society for 2016

Fifty-three students, representing all of the region’s high schools, were recently inducted into the National Technical Honor Society at the Seacoast School of Technology (SST). This impressive ceremony recognizes the outstanding qualities that membership in this elite organization demands: Skill, Honesty, Service, Responsibility, Scholarship, Citizenship, and Leadership. Each student is vested with an Honor Sash that he/she is able to wear at graduation.

Master in the Middle for 2016

The New England League of Middle Schools (NELMS) recently honored Cooperative Middle School (CMS) teacher **Ms. Juliana Jones** during its annual conference in Providence, RI. She received outstanding recognition as a “Master in the Middle” for her passionate commitment to her students both as “an extremely impressive teacher” and for being “a truly inspiring person.” Ms. Jones has been a CMS for the past 19 years.

One specific example of her understanding and dedication to middle school students came in the form of this year’s school musical. Every year Ms. Jones co-directs the school’s musical. This year’s production involved over 200 middle school students and required a great deal of time and energy to perform the stellar performances to which the school community has become accustomed. This year Ms. Jones did something very different and wrote her own musical *Adolessons*. Through this medium she gave her

students, past and present, “a real voice, some solid validation of their fears and dreams.” It is best described by one of the performers: “We love Mrs. Jones, but when she told us what the play was about, we all thought: How could a grown-up possibly have any idea what goes on in middle school? Then we read the script and we were amazed at how much of what we all go through was written on paper. That made it even more exciting, because then we had a chance to tell the world. Not only does Ms. Jones have a strong understanding of what it means to be a middle school student, she also wrote a musical about it! This musical was an honor for the CMS students to perform because they knew that their teacher took the time to write it and give them a voice with it. We felt it was written just for us. It was a truly special performance!”

Congratulations, Ms. Jones, and thank you for all that you do for CMS students and their families!

End 68 Hours of Hunger

Approximately 85 children within SAU 16 are being provided with weekend backpacks of food to assist them and their families who are in serious need. Thanks to the generous donations of many local individuals and sponsors, program coordinators Kim Army of Newfields and Sue Abizaid of Stratham, are helping families in all seven elementary schools, the Cooperative Middle School, and Exeter High School. School principals, nurses, nutrition workers, and guidance counselors have been extremely helpful in identifying and working with families who are most in need.

This outstanding community service program began in February 2013 with four backpacks provided to Exeter children. Over the past three years, it has expanded to its current level and includes 90 volunteers. These groups have been organized into eight different packing groups in addition to the group of “Fruit Ladies” who provide two pieces of fresh fruit each week for every backpack. Food donations (cereal and canned fruit is particularly needed now) may be dropped off at the Tuck Learning Campus (Door B) or financial contributions may be made directly to End 68 Hours of Hunger, 7 Finn Avenue, Newfields NH 03856.

Did You Know?

Several Exeter High School (EHS) French and Spanish students recently went to the Museum of Fine Arts (MFA) in Boston to study Spanish paintings, French Impressionists, Pre-Columbian Art, and the Picasso exhibition. Teachers Nicole Vernon and Sam Heath accompanied the group.

During the first five years of its operation, the Cooperative Middle School had three different principals: Mr. Jeff Hillier (1998-1999); Mr. Jerry Frew (1999-2002); and Ms. Cassandra Donovan (2002-2003).

From the Exeter School Board Policies of 1969: *“The Patch Test or a chest Xray should be given every two years to all school personnel including students, teachers, secretaries, and janitors and is required for hot lunch workers.”*

Lincoln Street School (LSS) third grader Matthew Crowley has had one of his original poems selected for inclusion in the *2016 Young American Poetry Digest* published by the

National Schools Project which will make a copy of this publication available in the LSS Library in October 2016. Congratulations, Matthew!

Exeter High School (EHS) senior Katherine Lietz recently received the Good Citizen award presented by the Exeter Chapter of the Daughters of the American Revolution (DAR). Her scholarship essay which focused on celebrating and preserving religious freedom captured second place in this local competition. Congratulations, Katherine!

EHS Science teacher, Dr. Angela Lennox, recently served as a panelist for the University of New Hampshire (UNH) Robert Noyce Teacher Scholarship Program workshop. She presented information about her experience in competency-based teaching, learning, and assessment.

Ms. Cindy Freyberger, Curriculum Administrator for Grades 6-12, recently defended her doctoral dissertation and will be awarded the degree of Doctor of Education (Ed.D) during Commencement Exercises at Rivier University in Nashua in early May. Congratulations, Dr. Freyberger!

The Three C's—Curriculum, Communication, Community Service

While moving into spring at **Swasey Central School (SCS)**, the music program delighted the children with a wide variety of activities and experiences. Grade 1 students expanded their vocal range while learning a repertoire of songs that relate to spring and tie into their classroom curriculum. Grade 2 students are in their final weeks of rehearsals for their upcoming Patriotic Celebration when they will perform a selection of patriotic songs followed by a display of projects that they will be working on in their classrooms. Grade 3 students have been enjoying Native American songs, instruments, and stick games, and will be wrapping up their studies of Native American music with “Land of the Silver Birch” and “Rainbow Tribe.” Grade 4 students continue to amaze their well-known and respected music teacher, Juliette Gavin, with their memorization of states and capitols as they sing “Rap of the States.” They will also continue with their unit on American Folk Music through the month of April. Grade 5 students have done an amazing job with ensemble playing using pitched percussion instruments as they read and follow notation. They will soon begin to make connections with their social studies curriculum, as they begin their final song in this unit, “In Good Old Colony Days,” which will be orchestrated during the month of April. “The Sounds of Swasey” (the school chorus) are excited to be singing a repertoire of “pop” songs as they rehearse for the upcoming SCS spring concert. For the first time in many years, this concert will also include performances from the Swasey School Band and String Ensemble directed by Ms. Erin Murphy who also teaches music at East Kingston and Newfields Elementary Schools!

With a theme of “Hawks Take Flight to Waterville Valley,” **Newfields Elementary School (NES)** is extremely proud of its students for their excellent behavior and active participation in the Thursday, March 24, 2016 field trip to the ski area at Waterville Valley. The Sununu family of Newfields and all the folks at Waterville Valley did a spectacular job ensuring this was a fun and successful learning experience for the children. The rental folks, lift operators, and ski instructors were terrific. The children learned about snowmaking and snow grooming during a tour of the facilities. On the

coach bus ride to the mountain, everyone watched a historical ski video and on the ride home, they viewed a recent Warren Miller video to compare and contrast ski equipment, clothing, and lifts. There have been tremendous changes to the skiing industry in our country and in the state of New Hampshire over the last 75 years.

Just as importantly, the parent support and enthusiasm was fantastic. Over 30 chaperones supervised groups on the mountain and facilitating in the lodge. Appreciation and thanks are extended to Valerie Sununu, Reiko Johnson and Tara Whitney for preparing the snacks for the bus ride and providing apples, oranges, pears, and cheese sticks for the children and chaperones. The refreshments and ski video kept everyone's spirits up, particularly on the long ride home. The memories from this trip will last a lifetime. The pictures of NES children, parents, siblings, staff, and even grandparent are priceless. Thanks also to Mr. Matt Bennett and Nurse Kathy Bird for their organization and time preparing for this unique school and family opportunity, as well as the Newfields Parent Teacher Organization (NPTO) for providing the funds for the transportation!! This would not have been possible without this marvelous school and community partnership.

The Automotive Technologies Program at the **Seacoast School of Technology** (SST) is preparing for its NATEF (National Automotive Technicians Education Foundation) recertification which happens every five years. This extensive process concludes on April 22 with a day-long visit from an ETL (Evaluation Team Leader), along with two technicians from local dealerships. The teachers in this program have been preparing materials since the start of the school year in anticipation of this process and onsite visit. In addition to ensuring that the facility and curriculum meet NATEF standards, the teachers must maintain their ASE master certifications as well. SST was the first NATEF certified school in the state.

The **Lincoln Street School** (LSS) community is very proud of the accomplishments of its two Destination Imagination (DI) teams - *Brain Busters* (coached by Kate Cook) and *I.D. Switch* (coached by Shelly Gordon). The two teams competed at the regional tournament in Kingston in mid-March when *I.D. Switch* placed second which qualified the students to compete at the State Finals in early April in Nashua. At that competition, the team placed fifth in the state, but did not qualify for the Global competition in Tennessee this summer. Already the coaches and teams are looking forward to next year's DI competition. The students and teachers have been praised for their commitment to this wonderful program which has been so generously supported by volunteers and parents.

Once again, the annual *Market Day* at **Kensington Elementary School** (KES) was a huge success! Students in Grades K-3 spent the weeks leading up to *Market Day* learning about basic economic principles and making goods and products for the day. When "businesses" opened at 9:00 am on Friday, April 1, there were already customers waiting! Students were immediately busy assisting shoppers and making change for buyers with large bills. As in years past, hundreds of dollars were raised by the sale of students' items and the money will be donated to a charity of each class's choosing. This year, charities such as March of Dimes, End 68 Hours of Hunger, the SPCA and St. Vincent de Paul Community Assistance Center are all being considered as possible donation sites. In addition to the money raised by the goods produced, each class also sponsored a raffle whose proceeds are being used to offset the cost of the buses for the KES school-wide field trip to Fenway Park.

Twenty-five staff members at **Stratham Memorial School (SMS)** have chosen to be part of a book club that meets before and after school with the book *A Mindset for Learning* by Kristine Mraz and Christine Hertz. The book is written by two elementary school teachers to help educators teach the “habits of mind” needed for academic success, a love of learning, and being good citizens in the world. Drawing on the work of Carol Dweck, Daniel Pink, Art Costa, and others, the authors show readers how to lead students to a growth mindset for school—and life—by focusing on five crucial, research-driven attitudes:

- optimism—putting aside fear and resistance to learn something new
- persistence—keeping at it, even when a task is hard
- flexibility—trying different ways to find a solution
- resilience—bouncing back from setbacks and learning from failure
- empathy—learning by putting oneself in another person’s shoes

This is an excellent example of staff-driven professional development.

Second grade students at **Main Street School (MSS)** participated in the Stop, Drop, and Read Program during the month of March. This is an annual program sponsored by the Exeter Fire Department to encourage and build a love of reading. This year MSS second graders read a total of 1,679 hours outside of school time during the month. As part of this program, two students were randomly chosen for a final prize of a ride to school on a fire truck, and one student received a backpack. Two classrooms received pizza parties; one for the most participation and one for the highest number of minutes read. A big thank you is extended to the Exeter Fire Department for continuing to sponsor this program and supporting MSS so well!

Seven Latin students from **Exeter High School (EHS)** recently participated in the New Hampshire/Vermont National Junior Classical League Forum at Phillips Exeter Academy (PEA). Teacher Emily Ellis coordinated this event for EHS. Students attended a presentation by Professor Trzaskoma from the University of New Hampshire entitled “Recreating the Classical Past in the Roman Empire.” They also participated in a “certamen,” that is a classics quiz bowl in which teams of 2-4 students compete against each other by answering questions about the Latin language, Roman history and culture, and classical mythology. EHS students also presented a humorous skit about Hercules’ fifth labor. This excellent educational opportunity provided them with the experience of meeting students from other schools who also are enthusiastic about Latin and the Classics.

Cooperative Middle School (CMS) eighth graders in Mrs. Janet Prior’s classes have created their own version of “Ted Talks” with “ED-Talks.” Students worked throughout third quarter on their chosen topic and a chosen mentor—someone who is an expert in their field or someone who is simply an expert in offering support and guidance in the “ED-Talk” process. This led to a three-to-six minute video recording with the goal of being chosen to present to the entire team. The eclectic array of topics was impressive and included: drag racing; power soccer (played in an adapted wheelchair); the anatomy of the human hand; the effect of birth order; and the reality of time travel. Congratulations to these students for taking risks and learning in some non-traditional ways!

Title I is a federal program that provides funding to local school districts to improve the academic achievement of disadvantaged and struggling students. School districts may choose how they target the use of the funding, but are required to follow strict federal program guidelines with its implementation. **East Kingston Elementary School (EKES)** uses Title I funding to implement a program called “Reading Recovery.” “Reading Recovery” is a twenty-week intensive one-on-one reading program for struggling first grade students. The program receives high marks from the U.S. Dept. of Education’s What Works Clearinghouse. To make sure that EKES is using federal dollars effectively, the N.H. Dept. of Education audits Title I programs every three years. Recently, EKES completed its audit and received high praise for its work. State officials are very impressed with the high quality of classroom teaching and related support services and the Response to Instruction (RtI) intervention model. A special thank you is extended to EKES reading coach, Emily Darby, Reading Recovery teacher, Kim Kady, SAU 16 Title I Coordinator Karen Mullen, and the first grade team for their extensive work in preparing for and interviewing with the Title I auditor.

Reflection

The best thing that any of us can spend on our children is time!