

SUPERINTENDENT'S REPORT

Michael A. Morgan, Superintendent of Schools—SAU 16

October 2012

Community Gathering—Wednesday, October 17, 2012

In response to many community concerns regarding untimely high school student deaths, a special “Community Gathering” will be held on Wednesday, October 17, 2012 from 6:00 pm to 7:30 pm at the Cooperative Middle School in Stratham.

The primary focus of this presentation and question-answer session will be the “Prevention” of untimely student deaths, family and community “Healing” in the wake of such deaths, and the “Next Steps” with which our community should be engaged when confronted with such tragedies, including student suicides.

Representatives from Seacoast Mental Health, Core Physicians, and the National Alliance on Mental Health (NAMI) will collaborate with SAU 16 administrators and school counselors to serve on the evening’s panel.

In April 2012 a similar community forum was held as a follow-up to the results of the Youth Risk Behavior Survey that was completed by Exeter High School (EHS) students. Approximately seventy people attended that information session. Since five high school students have died from tragic and untimely circumstances within the past 33 months, it is very important that the October 17 Gathering have greater community participation and involvement.

Enrollment Trends

Officially the New Hampshire Department of Education requires each school district to report its student enrollment on October 1 annually. Trends are determined from this consistent data point.

For the **eight school years** beginning on October 1, 2005 through October 1, 2012, the following changes are noted:

Brentwood-391 to 367-Decrease of 6.13%
East Kingston-188 to 179-Decrease of 4.78%
Exeter-1013 to 1029-Increase of 1.58%
Kensington-208 to 165-Decrease of 20.67%
Newfields-165 to 125-Decrease of 24.24%
Stratham-644 to 632-Decrease of 1.88%
Cooperative Middle School-1326 to 1365-Increase of 2.94%
Exeter High School-1611 to 1752-Increase of 8.75%

The **one-year change** from October 1, 2011 to October 1, 2012 is as follows:

Brentwood-398 to 367-Decrease of 7.79%
East Kingston-197 to 179-Decrease of 9.13%
Exeter-1028 to 1029-Essentially Unchanged
Kensington-187 to 165-Decrease of 11.76%
Newfields-134 to 125-Decrease of 6.71%
Stratham-652 to 632-Decrease of 3.07%
Cooperative Middle School-1365 to 1356-Decrease of 0.66%
Exeter High School-1703 to 1752-Increase of 2.88%

Cost Per Pupil by District

Each year the State of New Hampshire receives information relative to the cost per pupil for the past school year. This actual cost includes all services provided to students. It encompasses staff salaries and benefits, books, supplies, facility upkeep and maintenance, and extracurricular activities. In order to maintain some level of consistency among school districts in the state, this figure does not include student transportation, food service, debt service, or out-of-district special education costs. These numbers are subject to change after review by the New Hampshire Department of Education and the New Hampshire Department of Revenue Administration. Preliminary figures for **2011-2012**:

Brentwood--\$11,359.80
East Kingston--\$12,585.86
Exeter----\$15,242.67
Exeter Region Cooperative----\$13,380.04
Kensington--\$14,388.83
Newfields--\$14,284.10
Stratham--\$13,953.51

STATE AVERAGES for 2011-2012 are not yet available.

For comparison, the following was the official per pupil cost in **2010-2011** as reported by the NH Department of Education:

Brentwood--\$12,577.53
East Kingston--\$12,351.73
Exeter--\$14,086.69
Exeter Region Cooperative--\$12,310.73
Kensington--\$13,669.04
Newfields--\$13,573.91
Stratham--\$13,544.50

The STATE AVERAGE for Elementary Schools was \$13,120.20.
The STATE AVERAGE for Middle Schools was \$12,114.55
The STATE AVERAGE for High Schools was \$12,649.66

Health Insurance—Guaranteed Maximum Rate Increase

After experiencing a 10.37% average annual increase in health insurance premiums for the past 15 years (1998-2012), the Guaranteed Maximum Rate (GMR) Increase for school districts who are part of the Local Government Center network (featuring Anthem Blue Cross Blue Shield products), **will be an average of 15% for 2013-2014**. For the past two consecutive years (2011-2013) the GMR has been under 5% annually. The final rate for those two years averaged less than 1%! This new projection will have a significant impact on proposed budgets within the SAU.

SAU Joint Board Meeting—October 29, 2012

The third annual meeting with area legislators will take place as part of the regular meeting of the SAU Joint Boards on Monday, October 29, 2012, at 7:00 pm at the Seacoast School of Technology (SST) in Exeter. The primary purpose of this meeting is a discussion with local state senators and representatives dealing with the impact of state downshifting of costs to local school districts and municipalities. In particular, this impacts mandatory employer contributions to the NH Retirement System, reductions in funds for career and technical education, catastrophic aid, and potentially building aid. Always a concern is funding for state adequacy grants which are dependent upon the Legislature.

This year approximately 80 current state representatives and senators, as well as those vying for office on the Executive Council and for the Governor's seat, have been invited to attend this meeting. Area superintendents and Board Members in adjacent communities have also been invited.

Stratham School Board Seat Vacated

Mr. Mark Sykas, a member of the Stratham School Board, announced this week that he was resigning his seat on the Board because he is moving out of the community. The School Board has the option of filling this seat until the regular March 2013 election. It is taking this matter under consideration and will discuss it at its November meeting.

2012 Annual Report

The most recent edition of the SAU 16 Annual Report is now available for information and distribution throughout our communities. It highlights events from the past school year and provides some statistical information and data to area residents and businesses, as well as to those individuals and families who may be considering moving into the area.

The report is distributed to school, libraries, and town offices and may also be available in various local business establishments and real estate offices. A black-and-white copy is also available on the SAU 16 website (www.sau16.org).

Food Pantries Continue to Need Help

Community service efforts continue to focus on food pantries around the state. Many individuals and families struggle to make ends meet and often need to avail themselves of local food banks. The schools in SAU 16 will continue to find ways to gather food and funds to assist those who are struggling to meet some of the most basic of needs. Please encourage our respective communities to join this effort as much as possible especially with major holidays approaching.

Contract Negotiations

This school year has two collective bargaining groups within SAU 16 involved in contract negotiations with their respective school boards. These include the Exeter Paraprofessionals Association and the Kensington Teachers Association. If settlements are reached between the respective collective bargaining group and its local school board, the proposed contract will be presented to the voters in March 2013 for action at the annual School District Meeting.

EdCamp Seacoast

A FREE professional development opportunity “for Teachers by Teachers” will be held on Saturday, October 27, 2012 at Portsmouth Middle School. This full day of learning will offer many options for interested individuals. A session might explore a technology tool or host a discussion about best practices in technology and teaching, or be a collaborative presentation with multiple facilitators. Lunch will be provided. For more information visit the EdCamp website at <http://edcamp.wikispaces.com/edcamp+seacoast>. Several SAU 16 teachers are involved in the planning, preparation, and presentations involved at this “unconference.”

The 2012 Christa McAuliffe Technology Conference--UPDATE

The 26th annual Christa McAuliffe Technology Conference will be held in Manchester from November 27-29, 2012 to explore the role of technology in 21st Century Teaching and Learning. This outstanding conference brings together well-respected national, regional, and local educators to share and learn more about ways that students may be engaged more fully in the technology that continues to shape our world. Over 2,000 participants are expected to attend. Some current and recent SAU 16 educators will lend their expertise and knowledge by presenting sessions at the conference. This includes Jennifer Middaugh, Director of the Seacoast Professional Development Center; Amy Cantone, Swasey Central School teacher; Steve Gagnon and Jessica Valenti, Stratham Memorial School teachers; Helen Burnham, Lincoln Street School library/media specialist; Ben Clapp and Rich Descoteau, Cooperative Middle School teachers; and Tony Baldasaro, former SAU 16 Assistant Superintendent who is now the Chief Human Resource Officer at the Virtual Learning Academy Charter School (VLACS).

Coop Budget Advisory Committee

Two vacancies currently exist on the nine-member Budget Advisory Committee that serves the Exeter Region Cooperative School District. Any resident of Exeter or Kensington is welcomed to apply for a seat on this Committee to fulfill the unexpired term of recent members who chose to resign. Anyone interested in serving the community in this capacity may contact SAU Business Administrator Amy Ransom at aransom@sau16.org or 775-8671.

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

Community Service usually brings to mind such initiatives as collecting money, goods, or providing services to those in need. At **East Kingston Elementary School (EKES)**, an effort is underway to combine both community service and a curriculum initiative to emphasize that “going above and beyond” is helping the community on several levels. Last school year, fifth grade student, John Martel, loved science so much that he wanted to share his passion with others—so he created the anonymous “Science Dude” (SD) at the school. Each week he would respond to a single question chosen from those presented. At the regular Friday morning meeting when the whole school was present, the selected student with the question would repeat his/her question to the whole student body; Principal Jim Eaves would read the Science Dude’s response. The students loved the experience. Eventually there were so many questions submitted each week that the anonymous SD created a Wonder Board that allowed multiple questions and answers to be posted each week. All year long the students tried to guess who the Science Dude among them was—and John Martel finally revealed himself at the end of the school year. EKES now has a new Science Dude or “Science Dudette” and only time will tell who this is.

The Exeter schools have established a new committee with representatives from both **Main Street School (MSS)** and **Lincoln Street School (LSS)** “to focus on curriculum and assessment as they relate to the SAU 16 Strategic Plan.” This “Enhanced Learning Committee” was formed as the result of a School Board goal to support the initiatives in the Strategic Plan and to improve instruction for all students. Some of the key topics to be considered by this Committee include: How is curriculum selected and implemented? How is assessment selected and implemented? How can communication be strengthened between MSS and LSS? Review “progress monitoring” tools at each school.

First year Culinary Arts students at the **Seacoast School of Technology (SST)** recently traveled to Costa Fruit and Produce in Charlestown, MA along with their teacher, Jim Collins, to learn more about food distribution—particularly how fruits and vegetables from all over the world go “from the farm to the table.” This international corporation gave students a real-life global perspective and was made possible through the support of the Friends of SST Culinary Arts. The Friends paid for the students’ transportation and lunch provided by the Colonnade Hotel because their Executive Chef, Nick Calais, serves on the Friends committee.

Teachers at **Newfields Elementary School** (NES) continue to meet bi-weekly in Professional Learning Community (PLC) grade groups to work on the transition to the Common Core State Standards. Recently the Grade 3-5 PLC team implemented a vocabulary enrichment program. This program is aimed at exposing all students to words and their multiple meanings as well as the derivatives and history of the words. Principal Helen Rist is also promoting the power of words with a “Word of the Week.” Each week a new word is announced. Students are challenged to research the word’s meaning, synonyms, antonyms, part of speech, to use it in a sentence or story, illustrate it, or any other ideas the students want. Discoveries about each word are shared on the daily announcements and posted outside Mrs. Rist’s office on the “Word of the Week” board.

Two **Exeter High School** (EHS) English teachers, Rebecca Cole and Kristina Peterson, have begun the EHS Writers’ Club to enhance the school’s commitment to provide enriched writing opportunities of any interested student. The focus of this new club will involve writing prompts and breakout groups dealing with personal writing, writing for contests, and dedicated readers to provide feedback to students. Twenty EHS students are already involved in the club and some of those will be joining students from the Inkwell staff for the 2nd annual “Exeter Walk” on Saturday, October 20, to capture perspectives of downtown Exeter through writing, photography, and artistic expression in preparation for the next Inkwell publication.

Under the leadership of Bill Furbush, principal of the **Cooperative Middle School** (CMS), a new Parent-Teacher Organization (PTO) has begun. The group met in late September and mid-October to initiate and foster its important connections among families and between parents and staff at the school. The group’s Mission Statement stresses that “the purpose of the PTO is to enhance and support the educational experience at CMS, to foster relationships between school and home by encouraging parent and teacher involvement and communication, and to improve the environment at CMS through volunteer and financial support.” Interested parents should contact Mr. Furbush at CMS for additional information.

After school enrichment opportunities for students at **Stratham Memorial School** (SMS) have begun with 14 different offerings during this fall 2012 session. These include Pedal to the Medal (mountain biking); Train Running 101 (cross country in the woods); Jumpin’ Jiminy (jump roping); iPadders (technology); Recorder Club (recorders); Action Jackson (responsive classroom games); Adventures in Motion (occupational therapy exercises); and H2O Colors (watercolor painting). Over 100 SMS students are actively engaged in this exciting part of learning.

Because of the temporary closure of the Kensington Town Hall, the November voting on national and state offices will be held at **Kensington Elementary School** (KES) this year on Tuesday, November 6, 2012. To highlight the importance of the day and the connections between town and school all KES students will be voting for candidates for President and Vice-President that day.

Did You Know?

Kensington Elementary School (KES) is offering the option of full-day kindergarten to its families for the first time this year. Of the 17 children enrolled in kindergarten now, 15 of them are taking advantage of the full-day program.

Governor John Lynch will visit the Seacoast School of Technology (SST) on Friday, October 19, 2012 to show his support for career and technical education in New Hampshire in general and SST in particular.

Exeter High School (EHS) field hockey coach, Deb Grott, recently celebrate her 100th career coaching victory with the team. Coach Grott began coaching the varsity squad in 2003 and coached Exeter to the Class L state championship in 2006.

The Exeter Alumni Association is sponsoring a series of cable access television interviews of some graduates of EHS. Recent interviews have included professional cyclist Ted King '01; local attorney Justin Pasay '00; radio DJs, Nathaniel Goodrich '03, Dan Umbro '03, and Jeff Kiesel '03, and owner of Jeremy's Pizzeria in Newmarket, Jeremy Adams '03. Turn into the SAU Educational Channel 13 for more details.

Reflection

Since the 1970s so much has been added to the roles and responsibilities of our public schools. "It all started with breakfast" is one of my favorite themes. School breakfast programs were added to school lunch programs in the mid-70's. What else has been added since that time? (Answer: To name just a few: Special Education including occupational therapy, vocational therapy, and speech-language therapy; Title IX; full day kindergarten; computer education; full-time school nurses; distance learning; gifted and talented education; health and wellness education; bullying prevention; personal finance literacy; homeless education; and career and tech prep education.) It is no wonder that the cost of public school education has ballooned!