

SUPERINTENDENT'S REPORT
Michael A. Morgan, Superintendent of Schools—SAU 16
December 2012

Champions for Children

Community members and school staffs continue to recognize and celebrate the dedication of School Administrative Unit (SAU) 16 individuals by nominating them for a local Champion for Children award. This award is given to persons who have distinguished themselves by demonstrating significant involvement in programs and/or services that directly benefit the students and families of School Administrative Unit 16.

This month the Exeter School Board is presenting this award to Helen Benedetto for her outstanding support of the children at Main Street School (MSS). Ms. Benedetto regularly collects money from the Red Hat Society and from other individuals in the community who share her commitment to helping students and families in need at MSS. Helen has also helped to coordinate the sewing of beautiful hats and gloves for students and the children enjoy visiting with her when the kindergarteners perform their holiday concert at the Water Street Apartments. Helen Benedetto is a classic Champion for Children because she devotes her time and talents to MSS even though she is retired and only wants to help children in the community.

Tax Rates Finalized for 2012

Local tax rates for the six towns within SAU 16 have been set. The finalized 2012 rates (per \$1,000 of assessed property valuation) are as follows:

Brentwood--\$23.24 (Increase of \$0.23)-Increase of 1.00%
East Kingston-\$23.56 (Increase of \$0.37—Increase of 1.60%
Exeter--\$25.92 (Increase of \$0.64)-Increase of 2.53%
Kensington--\$20.08 (Increase of \$1.23)-Increase of 6.52%
Newfields-\$23.02 (Increase of \$0.86)-Increase of 3.88%
Stratham--\$19.31 (Increase of \$0.36)-Increase of 1.89%

Contract Negotiations

This school year has two collective bargaining groups within SAU 16 involved in contract negotiations with their respective school boards. One is the Kensington Teachers' Association and the other is the Exeter Paraprofessional Association. Both groups have reached tentative agreements. The goal is to present each of these to voters in March 2013.

It is important to stress that voter turnout has been relatively low in recent years and directly impacts the results. In March 2011 and March 2012, less than 20% of registered voters participated in this process.

Did You Know?

Winners of the New Hampshire Constitution Day essay contest were honored recently at the NH Supreme Court. They included **Rebecca Gowing**, an eighth grader at the Cooperative Middle School and **Peter Dionne**, an Exeter High School sophomore. Congratulations to each honoree!

Exeter Area Junior High School opened in 1967 and closed in 1998 when the Cooperative Middle School (CMS) opened in Stratham. During those 31 years, the school only had two principals. Mr. Frank Kozacka served from 1967 to 1979 and Mr. Thomas Meehan served from 1979-1998.

The **Seacoast School of Technology** opened in 1980 and has only had three principals over the past 33 years. Mr. Langdon Plumer served from 1980 to 1994. Mrs. Nancy Pierce served from 1994-2007. Ms. Margaret Callahan has been the principal there since 2007 and is currently in her sixth year in this position.

Exeter High School sophomore **Aubrey Harris** performed on-stage at the County Music Awards in Las Vegas this month with popular country singer and songwriter Keith Urban. She is a bassist and was chosen to be in the seven-piece band by the Grammy Foundation after attending Grammy Camp in NYC this past summer. Aubrey and Keith Urban performed "Crossroads," the Robert Johnson tune made famous by Eric Clapton and Cream. The performance is meant to "highlight the need to support music-based initiatives that attract young people to music and encourage their musical pursuits."

Several years ago the **New Hampshire Interscholastic Athletic Association** (NHIAA) sanctioned "Bowling" as a new, competitive sport for high school students in our state. At the December meeting of the group's Executive Council, on which I serve as only one of two NH superintendents, the group approved "Bass Fishing" as a coed sport beginning this spring. A Kick-Off Tournament for Bass Fishing is tentatively set for early May 2013.

Honor the Past: Superintendent of Schools—SAU 16 SAU 16 was formed in 1915

1915-1919—Maro S. Brooks
1919-1945—Clifton A. Towle
1945-1948—Aura W. Coleman
1948-1968—Raymond A. Hoyt
1968-1972—Dr. Edward A. Adamo
1972-1974—Jerome F. Melvin
1974-1983—Frederick B. King
1983-1987—Wayne Gersen
1987-1997—William Clancy
1997-2008—Dr. Arthur L. Hanson
2008-Present—Michael A. Morgan

Change in Stratham School Board Membership

Mr. Luke Pickett, one of the five members of the Stratham School Board, recently resigned his position on the Board. The Board will meet in January 2013 to determine how to proceed since Mr. Pickett's term of office was already expiring in March. The Stratham School District is grateful to him for his service.

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

Community Service at **Statham Memorial School (SMS)** focused recently on "Holiday Missions." At Thanksgiving a number of local families received classroom-based food baskets and gift cards to local supermarkets. Each basket contained a turkey and all of the essential trimmings for a special holiday meal. The spirit of community service is extending through December as the Stratham Teachers' Association (in lieu of gifts to teachers) is asking for items to stock local food pantries. More than 15 large boxes of food will be provided to various organizations to help needy families in the area.

Several recent activities at **Kensington Elementary School (KES)** nurtured and expanded community spirit and involvement. The *Exeter Newsletter* captured the "One Book, One Town" initiative which features "*Have You Filled a Bucket Today?*" by Carol McCloud. The Student Council sponsored "Follies Night" which involved twenty student acts presented to the community. Through those efforts, \$365 was raised for the American Red Cross to help victims of Hurricane Sandy. The third annual "Jingle Bell Jaunt" involved students walking laps on the walking track for which students collected pledges of food donations which were given to church groups in Kensington, Exeter, and Greenland. Over 7,100 items were collected. The PTO sponsored the Scholastic Book Fair during which time a teacher breakfast, a grandparent tea, and an evening family gathering were held to emphasize the importance of reading in a family.

While **Swasey Central School (SCS)** continued its successful tradition of Grandfriend's Day just prior to Thanksgiving break, and welcomed approximately 250 visitors to the school, it has also embarked on a "Book of the Month" initiative that supports language arts instruction in the classroom. Each month a different book is presented and shared by each member of the school. To enhance this each month, Mrs. Amy Cantone's class helps to prepare a book video that students may see at lunch. All classrooms create exciting lessons and activities that support and highlight the book.

Did you know that students completing at least one college-level course before graduating from high school are more likely to attend and graduate from college? This is according to a new study featured in the November 2012 *Newsleader*, a national publication on education news. More than 54% of students who earned college credit while in high school earn a post-secondary degree as compared with 36.9% who did not earn college credit while in high school - a difference of 17%! This study demonstrates the importance of dual enrollment for as many high school students as possible. The **Seacoast School of Technology (SST)** currently offers 15 courses through the Community College System of New Hampshire's (CCSNH) dual enrollment program,

Running Start. SST also offers two courses through Central Maine Community College. Although not the same as dual enrollment and not as valuable to students, SST also has dozens of articulation agreements with a variety of colleges.

One of the favorite holiday traditions at **Main Street School** (MSS) is the Kindergarten visit to the Water Street Residency Center and the Riverwoods Retirement Community. Each year MSS music teacher, Juliet Goyette, and the kindergarten teachers help the children learn a variety of holiday songs that they share with the residents at both housing centers. This tradition is a wonderful way for the children to share the holiday spirit with the community. Some of the children get a chance to see grandparents or relatives from their families. The children are greeted so warmly at each place that it makes it a special time for the children as well. These performances are a nice reminder for all of us of how important it is to reach out to others and bring the holiday cheer to everyone in our community.

In an effort to support New York and New Jersey schools impacted by Hurricane Sandy, **East Kingston Elementary School** (EKES) partnered with the new O'Neil Cinemas in Epping to host a fundraiser bringing a smile to movie buffs everywhere. For \$30, families were able to purchase a movie pack valued at \$66. All funds raised went directly to classroom teachers in need of books, supplies and materials through the nonprofit organization: www.donorschoose.org. Donorschoose.org allows contributors to select specific schools/classrooms they wish to help. Contributions are sent to donorschoose.org and they in turn send the requested materials to the specified school. This is a much better way to target need rather than simply filling a truck with miscellaneous goods and shipping it like many organizations have done. Donorschoose.org has the highest rating from the Better Business Bureau. The EKES staff thanks everyone who participated in this important community service effort. As of November 30th, the school had raised well over \$500. Special thanks need to go to EKES literacy coach, Emily Darby, for her leadership on this project.

At **Lincoln Street School** (LSS), the K-5 "Enhance Learning Committee" continues to meet twice each month. The Committee's major goal this year is to examine the various assessment tools utilized with our students in grades 3-5. The Committee has divided into three subcommittees looking at best practices, literacy assessments, and specific literacy tools that are used in our elementary program. Some staff members will travel to other schools to observe various Response to Instruction (RtI) models. Director of Instruction, Julie Lambert, continues to provide in-service training to LSS staff related to the upcoming curriculum shift to the "Common Core". Recently, she provided information concerning the "Smarter Balance" assessment program which will replace the New England Common Assessment Program (NECAP) in the spring of 2015. At the December Exeter School Board meeting Ms. Lambert made a presentation on changes that will occur in curriculum as the State and the school move to the Common Core State Standards (CCSS) in 2014-15. Dr. Susan O'Connor, the Director of Instruction at Main Street School, recently presented a workshop with paraprofessionals related to "Reading Comprehension Strategies." Each of the paraprofessionals was given a copy of "*Solutions for Reading Comprehension*" which Dr. O'Connor is using as a focus for this training.

This year, under the direction of health teachers at the **Cooperative Middle School (CMS)**, there is an alternative physical education program being offered to seventh and eighth graders to be certain that physical activity is available to all students in those grades. Units on biking, fishing, wheel chair polo, martial arts, and land navigation (geocaching) are some of the topics covered. The program has been so successful and innovative that there is currently a waiting list for students. If possible, the program will be expanded to sixth graders in the future.

The focus at the Professional Learning Community's (PLC) bi-weekly meetings at **Newfields Elementary School (NES)** this year has been different for the two groups of teachers involved in this aspect of professional development. The Grade 3-5 team has been working on vocabulary development. Through the use of data from Benchmark Assessments and NWEA data, they have established guidelines for teachers to use when working with students in the "Wordly Wise" program. Their next undertaking will focus on the Common Core State Standards (CCSS) for math in preparation for the January SAU Math Committee work. The K-2 PLC team has been sharing resources on writing. One of the teachers summarized a recent workshop on "Six Traits" and made a presentation to the team highlighting its major points. A second teacher shared websites and strategies gathered from a conference which focused on differentiated instruction. NES has found that these PLC team meetings have been extremely productive and informative.

The academic Chemistry class at **Exeter High School (EHS)** is putting together a "Nuclear Exposure Alert" display in the Green Commons of the school. The students hope to bring attention to the natural radiation to which people are regularly exposed. The students are using information from the American Nuclear Society to compute their own personal exposure. The creative display will provide information about each area of natural exposure including cosmic radiation, terrestrial radiation, food, water, air (radon), plane travel, smoke detectors, and medical treatments.

Reflection

When it comes to the season for giving gifts, may we each remember that the most important gift that we can give to our children—and to our students—is time! Happy Holidays!