

## 2011-2012 REPORT OF THE SUPERINTENDENT OF SCHOOLS

Several recent positive signs are pointing in the direction of economic growth for our country. These include a reduction in the national rates of the unemployed and the underemployed, a 3.8% increase in holiday spending in December 2011, and a 3.6% increase in social security payments beginning in January 2012. The US military has completed its work in Iraq and the United States is preparing for another presidential election in November 2012. There are sentiments of hope in the air.

Within School Administrative Unit 16 that sentiment of hope is captured in the lives of the students who are preparing for a future that will be filled with complexities and challenges yet to be identified. This includes work that needs to be done in health fields, in science and research, in further space exploration and world travel, in global warming, in media, in instant communication, in politics, and in the economy. Each of these areas also bears levels of ethical duty and responsibility. The challenges facing public schools today are enormous because it becomes our collective responsibility not only to share culture with our growing student population, but also to provide our students with a rigorous learning environment that will help them to deal effectively with problems yet to be born.

For a moment, think back to how education was only 40 years ago. The Internet was not available to the general population. Daily newspapers and weekly magazines were the major sources of current events. Encyclopedias filled libraries and homes as cradles of history and information. Movies were only available in theaters. High schools offered only three types of courses: college prep, business, and general. Art and music classes were considered “frills” and only a handful of high school students drove to school. Families and churches provided many of the services that fall within the expected realm of public schools today. Special education laws did not exist and most students either went home for lunch or brought their own lunch to school. Breakfast programs and before/after school enrichment or daycare programs did not exist.

As life has changed since 1970, think ahead to what life will be like for our students in 2050. Just as parents and educators in 1970 were not able to predict that cell phones would be an integral part of life today, so too are parents and educators today not able to predict some of the cultural transformations that will enhance life for today’s students in another 40 years. Nevertheless, it is critically important that citizens commit themselves to providing the best possible, and affordable, public education to our students so that they will be as well equipped as possible to set the stage for their own futures.

Ten, twenty, thirty, and forty years ago voters did the same for the current adult generation. Today, it is our collective responsibility as citizens to repeat that pledge to the next generation. The administration and staff of SAU 16 is committed to continue to provide the best possible public education for the most affordable cost because our children are our future.

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

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

**Curriculum and instruction** go hand-in-hand. This work for teachers and administrators extends far beyond the daily activities in the classroom because it is essential that teachers meet together both at the same grade level and with those in the same academic department on a regular basis. The successful transition of students from grade-to-grade and from course-to-course is enhanced when these professionals gather to review course content and strategies for successfully engaging students of all ages and abilities in the learning process. Teaching today is not easy! It takes time, energy, and passion to do it well. Fortunately, SAU 16 has a tradition of hiring and retaining very qualified teachers, administrators, and staff members. We will continue to do the same because we are laying the foundation for the next generation of students and educators.

Much of the curriculum work done by teachers and administrators in the past and renewed recently is available on the SAU 16 website ([www.sau16.org](http://www.sau16.org)). This cycle of work is never completely finished. It is a dynamic process because research leads to new material, emerging technologies, and brain-based teaching strategies that have to be considered.

Because the New Hampshire Department of Education has adopted the Common Core State Standards (CCSS) in Literacy and Math, the districts within SAU 16 continue to move forward with their implementation. Awareness is the first phase of the transition plan. In this phase each school has completed activities to familiarize teachers with the curriculum and the grade level expectations. Administrators have worked to further educate School Board Members and the public about the CCSS. Phase Two of the transition plan is to have teachers begin to put the CCSS into action in the classroom. Full implementation of the curriculum is set for August 2013 to ensure our students are prepared for the spring 2015 CCSS Assessments.

It is important to note that 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.

Beyond the comprehensive array of courses available at EHS, students may also enroll in Extended Learning Opportunities (ELOs) that allow them to earn course credit in non-traditional methods that often extend beyond the regular school day. These individually-designed opportunities demonstrate the importance of helping individuals extend their learning in creative ways.

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.

**Communication** with various constituent groups remains crucial in today’s information rich, and easily accessible, society. Websites for both the SAU and individual schools are updated regularly to provide valuable information to students, parents, and community members. Newspapers consistently carry a variety of stories from athletics to fine arts accomplishments and from budget to human interest stories.

Information is conveyed to families via AlertNow, our Rapid Communication System, and districts are sensitive to reducing the consumption and distribution of paper as one means of emphasizing the need to reduce our collective use of natural resources. Individual schools regularly issue electronic newsletters to parents and classroom teachers use a variety of methods to communicate with families. This includes everything from weekly newsletters to Power School which is the Internet-based format used to convey information to parents and families. Many of the school’s newsletters, including reports from principals, are available online.

The SAU website also carries information about news and events, as well as a monthly superintendent report and details about specific school board agendas and meeting minutes.

The SAU Educational Channel is available on cable access networks broadcasting on Channel 13 (or Channel 22) in all six SAU 16 communities. This provides the public with important “bulletin board” information and programming about school activities and events that display the important work of students and staff. The fact that EHS students are directly involved in the complex workings of a television studio is another excellent example of the comprehensive educational opportunities available to students. Tune in!

**Community Service** continues to be ingrained in the culture and climate of SAU 16 schools. This takes shape in many different ways, but particular mention must be made of the significant contributions to local food pantries and families in need of basic necessities. Holiday giving is enormous. However, it is the on-going spirit of sharing with others—that lasts throughout the year—that conveys the true elements of helping one another.

Limited space here does not allow for the extensive enumeration of all of the outstanding acts of service that our students and staff perform each year. However, a few examples this year include: the “Canstruction” project at Stratham Memorial School (SMS) collected more than 2,000 canned goods for the local St. Vincent de Paul Community Assistance effort while learning to build familiar structures of London on the SMS stage; the Play Production class and the Comic Relief Club at Exeter High School led a community-wide food drive that directly benefited two local food pantries; second graders at East Kingston Elementary School learned about the hardships that many domestic animals have when they do not have a home and that inspired the class to raise money for the local Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (SPCA); at Swasey Central School the second grade participated in the Holiday Stockings for Soldiers effort that involved gathering needed items, such as toiletries and putting them in stockings for troops serving overseas; at the Seacoast School of Technology, the Wright Start Preschool students collected more than 100 canned goods during its “Cans for Our Castle Drive” and added those to the Marketing Technologies effort that collected an additional 1,400 food items during its fourth annual food drive; NH Special Olympics benefited financially from the Penguin Plunge participation from several students, teachers, and administrators throughout the SAU.

It is essential to note here that the modeling of community service in our schools is rooted in the dedication and efforts of the people who work in SAU 16. Without their individual and collective commitment to serve others—and to teach our students the importance of service—there would be far fewer demonstrations of this initiative.

### **NEASC ACCREDITATION COMPLETED**

Exeter High School is to be commended for its successful completion of the every-ten-year accreditation process conducted in concert with the New England Association of Schools and Colleges (NEASC). The work involved from the Self-Study to the hosting of the Visiting Committee demands significant time and preparation. Recognition and appreciation are extended to the entire administration and staff at EHS. Principal Vic Sokul and science teacher Mark Foley who served as chairperson of the accreditation process are commended for all of their leadership and effort in this regard.

### **CHAMPIONS FOR CHILDREN**

The SAU 16 Champions for Children award was established last year 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 60 individuals have been recognized for their outstanding contributions to our districts. This year’s award recipients include the following school board recognitions: Exeter Region Cooperative – Frank Montmarquet, Katherine McDonnell, Kenneth Deem, Bill Blum, John Byra, Laurie Eldridge, and Barbara Clark; East Kingston – Laura Conant, Lynne Walker, Nancy Leavitt, Kim Kemp, Christine Silverman, Mary George, Chris Benson, Patricia Law, Anne Atkins, Kim Gallant, and Stacy Penna; Exeter – Maureen Barrows and Carroll Barrows; Kensington – Gloria Chase, Julie Hall, Mark Finerty, Jen Feiden, and Tom Feiden; Brentwood—Donna Vadeboncoeur; Stratham – Jan Streelman and Phyllis Danko. These individuals have significantly impacted their respective schools and communities. Congratulations to each of them!

## **BLUE RIBBON AWARDS**

For 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. In October 2011, every elementary school in SAU 16 and the Seacoast School of Technology distinguished themselves 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.

## **COOPERATIVE MIDDLE SCHOOL PRINCIPAL CHANGE**

Mr. William Furbush became the Principal of the Cooperative Middle School (CMS) in July 2011. He replaced Mr. Thomas O'Malley who retired and subsequently accepted the position of Principal at Westbrook High School in Westbrook, Maine. Mr. O'Malley faithfully served the SAU 16 community for eight years. His dedication to the students and families of the six communities that comprise CMS is sincerely appreciated.

Mr. Furbush moved to Kensington from Kittery, ME during this school year. He came to SAU 16 from Rollinsford Grade School where he served as Principal from 2008-2011. From 2006-2008 he served as Assistant Principal at Lynnfield (MA) Middle School and prior to that was a teacher of German at York (ME) Middle School.

## **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, 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 continue to be strong relative to their statewide peers.

East Kingston, Lincoln Street School, Exeter High School and the Cooperative Middle School are all designated "Schools in Need of Improvement" as defined by the New Hampshire Department of Education (NHDOE). As a result of this designation, each of these schools has worked with building level teams comprised of parents, teachers, and administrators, including representatives from the SAU, to develop a school-specific plan focused on student achievement. Completed plans were sent to the NHDOE for approval. All plans have been approved and are currently being implemented in their respective schools. The same process was followed for the Exeter, East Kingston, and the Exeter Region Cooperative School Districts as the NHDOE identified these as "Districts in Need of Improvement" because there is more than one school in each of these districts. All plans are posted on the school websites for public review.

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 and better inform their instructional practice. Many schools are also in the beginning stages of implementing a Response to Intervention (RtI) framework in order to better meet individual student learning needs. The RtI process has teachers consistently reviewing student data in order to inform day-to-day instruction. It is important to remember that 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."

### **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 \$205,000. This money helps to reduce overall health care costs to the districts.

### **CONTRACT NEGOTIATIONS**

There are now eleven formal collective bargaining associations within SAU 16; eight of them were open to negotiations with their respective school boards during the current school year. Three of these were the result of voters not approving settlements in March 2011. This year all eight groups reached tentative agreements that will be presented to the voters in the respective districts for action in March 2012. Voter approval is necessary in order for the agreements to become effective. These involve the teacher associations in the Brentwood, East Kingston, Exeter, Stratham, and the Exeter Region Cooperative School districts; the administrators association in the Exeter Region Cooperative; and the paraprofessional organizations in Newfields and the Exeter Region Cooperative. During the 2012-2013, the three remaining contracts will be open for negotiations.

Of significant interest last year is the fact voter turnout was low in each of our communities. This means that relatively few people actually make important financial decisions for the majority of residents and taxpayers. Brentwood and Stratham each host traditional school district meetings in March. Of the 2661 registered voters in Brentwood, only 181 people (6.8%) attended the meeting; in Stratham, of the 5860 voters, 539 people (9.2%) attended the meeting. In each case, more than 90% 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. Those districts showed greater voter participation than Brentwood or Stratham. In East Kingston, 504 (30.23%) of the 1667 voters participated; in Exeter, 1743 (16.33%) of the 10,672 voters participated; in Kensington, 397 (22.62%) of the 1755 voters participated; in Newfields, 374 (29.99%) of the 1247 registered voters participated; for the Exeter Region Cooperative, 4132 (17.32%) of the 23,862 registered voters participated.

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

### **THE AMERICAN REINVESTMENT AND RECOVERY ACT (ARRA) GRANT**

This two-year initiative closed on September 30, 2011. The initial grant application and subsequent amendments/revisions to the grant was totaled \$1,216,441.00. The full amount was awarded to SAU 16. At the close of the grant, the entire available/awarded amount was allocated and spent, with the exception of \$2.96. This ARRA grant was primarily managed by the SAU Special Education Office. Following is a summary of the project categories that were funded by this federal grant:

- Technology
- Professional Development
- Supplement of salaries
- Curriculum materials
- Contracted services

Some of the notable projects that were completed with funding from the ARRA Grant include:

#### Elementary Schools:

- **Technology Infrastructure:** This project increased the bandwidth at the Exeter and Stratham elementary schools to expand the technology options and serve as a foundation for all types of e-learning, Response to Intervention (RtI) efforts, assessment and instruction.
- **Installation of accessible playground equipment:** Accessible playground equipment was installed at the Newfields Elementary School and Stratham Memorial School to provide increased opportunities for students with disabilities to interact with their non-disabled peers.
- **Professional Development – Training for “Open Circle”:** Staff from Kensington, Exeter and Brentwood participated in training to learn to utilize “Open Circle,” a program that builds social and emotional skills and establishes safe, caring learning environments.

#### Cooperative Middle School (CMS):

- **Installation of FM/Audio System:** Installed at CMS to enhance the quality of classroom audio for students with sensory needs and communication disorders.
- **Curriculum Materials: Language!:** Specialized language arts curriculum designed to remediate reading and written language deficits.
- **Purchase of Smart Boards and iPads:** Technology was purchased and installed to allow increased access to the general curriculum for students with disabilities.

#### Exeter High School (EHS):

- **Transition Services:** Programming for students 18 – 21 years of age, supporting their participation in the community to increase independent living skills.
- **Purchase of Smart Boards and iPads:** Technology was purchased and installed to allow increased access to the general curriculum for students with disabilities.
- **Assistive Technology:** Purchase of equipment to enable students age 16+ to meet their post-secondary transition goals.

## 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 137 students in grades 8-12 with approximately 56% of those students coming from one of our six communities. The Exeter Region Cooperative School District continues to provide substantial funding for its students at GBeCS.

The **Exeter Adult Education** program captures the interest of over 900 students who choose from among 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 45th 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 outstanding 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.

## **TECHNOLOGY**

The SAU 16 Technology Committee is focusing its efforts on revision of the SAU 16 Technology Plan along with continuing its efforts to develop technology-infused curricula. Subcommittees have been formed and committee members are working diligently to achieve their goals.

Nearly all schools in SAU 16 will complete the update of their networks this school year to high speed access which will allow students increased opportunities to learn and use 21<sup>st</sup> century skills in our SAU 16 classrooms.

SAU 16 increased its eRate funding in the past year from \$19,000 to \$48,292 and plans to continue to increase the use of the eRate program. In addition, SAU 16 schools have worked this past year 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).

This detailed report is presented to the public to provide current information about the significant work taking place in our schools and to sustain an historical record of annual progress. On behalf of all of the students, families, and staff served by SAU 16, please accept my gratitude for your support of our schools. It is a pleasure for me to be working with you in this most important undertaking.

Respectfully submitted,

MICHAEL A. MORGAN  
Superintendent of Schools