



May 23, 2011

Good Evening, I am honored to present the State of the Schools for the 2010-2011 school year. This is an opportunity to summarize accomplishments of the past year as well as to take a moment to outline the challenges ahead. Despite the many challenges that were a result of a poor economy and reductions in state revenue, all seven districts in SAU 29 passed their budgets, contracts and bonds. This was an amazing accomplishment. Certainly many of our neighboring districts are envious of our success. This strong level of community trust stems in large part from your willingness to work hard and for us to collectively communicate successes and plans for continuous school improvement.

We should also celebrate the opening of the new Marlborough School and the successfully renovated Westmoreland School. Thanks to our business department the bond for Westmoreland School was sold at 2% for five years.

The Business Department successfully arranged interim financing for the early stages of the Keene Middle School building project which allowed the District to only budget for a half-payment in 2010-11. The KMS Bond came in at 4.4% well under the 6.5% we projected when the bond passed.

Thanks to our Boards and our HR Department, with help from our business department we were able to successfully negotiate and pass four contracts this past year; Keene Education Association, Marlborough Education Association, Keene Paraprofessionals, and the Chesterfield Support Staff. Each of these contracts added two new medical benefit plans and significantly reduced the individual boards' contributions to the medical plans over the life of the contracts. Each contract was acceptable to the voters on the first vote.

Of particular note in the Keene Education Association contract is the creation of a competency based salary schedule that will go into effect during the final year of this contract. This schedule accomplishes several things; it creates a salary ladder that incents staff towards National Teacher Certification and increased responsibility, it provides teachers a career path, and it eliminates the jump step.

**Wonderful things** have happened in all of our schools this past year.

### CHESTERFIELD

- IMPLEMENTED A MENTOR PROGRAM FOR K-3 STUDENTS IDENTIFIED BY TEACHERS AS NEEDING EXTRA SUPPORT AND ATTENTION. THE PROGRAM IS GRANT FUNDED BY THE CHESTERFIELD PUBLIC SCHOOL FOUNDATION AND IS FULLY STAFFED BY COMMUNITY MEMBERS.
- THE CHESTERFIELD DESTINATION IMAGINATION TEAM MOVED ON TO THE GLOBAL COMPETITION IN KNOXVILLE, TN
- ON THE ANNUAL STATE ASSESSMENTS CHESTERFIELD HAD THE FOURTH HIGHEST MATH SCORE AMONG THE 14 SCHOOL DISTRICTS IN THE REGION, CHESTERFIELD STUDENTS ALSO ACHIEVED THE FIFTH HIGHEST SCORE IN READING AND THE SECOND HIGHEST SCORE IN WRITING.

### HARRISVILLE

- HAS CONTINUED TO MAKE ADEQUATE YEARLY PROGRESS....ONE OF TWO SAU 29 SCHOOLS TO MAKE IT EVERY YEAR.
- HARRISVILLE TEACHERS DESIGNED AND IMPLEMENTED A SERVICE LEARNING PROJECT CONNECTING LEARNING STANDARDS TO COMMUNITY NEEDS.
- OF THE 14 AREA SCHOOL DISTRICTS HARRISVILLE STUDENTS SCORED FIRST IN MATH AND FOURTH IN READING ON THE NECAP.

### MARLBOROUGH

- STAFF CONTINUE TO MAKE GREAT STRIDES IN DEVELOPING RESPONSE TO INTERVENTION STRATEGIES.
- DEVELOPED A 3-YEAR TEACHER RESIDENCY PROGRAM WITH KEENE STATE TO BEGIN IN THE FALL.
- ON THE ANNUAL STATE ASSESSMENTS MARLBOROUGH HAD THE FOURTH HIGHEST MATH SCORE (TIED WITH CHESTERFIELD) AMONG THE 14 AREA

SCHOOLS. MARLBOROUGH ACHIEVED THE THIRD HIGHEST SCORE IN READING.

- MARLBOROUGH STUDENTS AND STAFF CONTINUE TO SUCCESSFULLY SETTLE INTO THE NEW SCHOOL BUILDING CELEBRATING THE OPENING OF THE SCHOOL WITH THE COMMUNITY.

#### MARLOW

- MADE AYP IN LANGUAGE ARTS AND MATH.
- LAST YEAR THE MARLOW STUDENTS LED THE STATE WITH A 31% GROWTH IN READING AND A 42% GROWTH IN MATH ON THE NECAP.

#### NELSON

- WAS IDENTIFIED BY THE NEW HAMPSHIRE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION AS ONE OF THREE OF BLUE RIBBON SCHOOLS. SELECTION TO THE BLUE RIBBON SCHOOLS PROGRAM HONORS PUBLIC AND PRIVATE SCHOOLS BASED ON SCHOOLS WHO'S STUDENTS, REGARDLESS OF BACKGROUNDS, ARE HIGH PERFORMING.
- NELSON HAS ALWAYS MADE ADEQUATE YEARLY PROGRESS.

#### WESTMORELAND

- PASSED A BOND FOR A CONSTRUCTION PROJECT SCHEDULED FOR THIS SUMMER.
- ON THE ANNUAL STATE ASSESSMENTS WESTMORELAND HAD THE SECOND HIGHEST SCORE IN MATH AND IN READING AMONG THE 14 SCHOOL DISTRICTS IN THE REGION. IN ADDITION TO THE GREAT SCORES IN READING AND MATH WESTMORELAND STUDENTS SCORED FIRST IN WRITING.

#### JONATHAN DANIELS SCHOOL

- MADE ADEQUATE YEARLY PROGRESS IN ALL SUBGROUPS.
- ALL JD SCIENCE FAIR WINNERS PLACED IN THE CITY COMPETITION.
- INSTITUTED A SUCCESFUL RESPONSE TO INTERVENTION MODEL IN MATH.

#### FRANKLIN

- MADE SIGNIFICANT PROGRESS ON THEIR SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT PLAN.
- A FRANKLIN STUDENT PLACED FIRST AT THE STATE SCIENCE FAIR.

## FULLER

- CELEBRATED ITS 75<sup>TH</sup> BIRTHDAY!
- MADE AYP IN MATH IN ALL SUBGROUPS.

## SYMONDS

- IS NO LONGER A SCHOOL IN NEED OF IMPROVEMENT...SYMONDS MADE AYP FOR TWO CONSECUTIVE YEARS IN ALL SUBGROUPS.
- INSTITUTED A 'RESPONSE TO INTERVENTION' MODEL THROUGHOUT THE SCHOOL.

## WHEELLOCK

- MADE AYP IN READING.
- WHEELLOCK STUDENTS FOLDED PAPER CRANES FOR JAPAN INITIATING A \$200,000 DONATION FROM THE BEZOS FAMILY FOUNDATION.

## KMS

- STUDENTS FROM KEENE AND THE THREE SAU TOWNS THAT SEND STUDENTS TO KEENE MIDDLE SCHOOL ARE GETTING CLOSE TO MOVING INTO A WONDERFUL NEW SCHOOL.

THERE HAVE BEEN SEVERAL CHALLENGES ALONG THE WAY BUT THE END RESULT INCLUDES:

A BOND THAT IS GRANDFATHERED UNDER THE STATE BUILDING AID PROGRAM, A MAGNIFICENT LOCATION, A HIGH LEVEL OF NATURAL LIGHT, AN ENERGY EFFICIENT HEATING SYSTEM, INTERACTIVE SMART BOARDS IN EACH CLASSROOM, APPROXIMATELY 20 CUBIC FEET OF FRESH AIR FOR EACH STUDENT EACH MINUTE WHICH ACCORDING TO RESEARCH LEADS TO IMPROVED STUDENT LEARNING AND REDUCES ABSENCES DUE TO ILLNESS, GOOD ACOUSTICS WHICH ARE FUNDAMENTAL TO CONSISTENTLY HIGH ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE – ESPECIALLY IMPORTANT WHEN DEALING WITH STUDENTS WITH ATTENTION ISSUES, THIS SITE IS LESS PRONE TO OUTSIDE NOISE THAN THE CURRENT KEENE MIDDLE SCHOOL AND AS A RESULT SHOULD CONTRIBUTE TO IMPROVED ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE.

- THIS YEAR STUDENTS AT KEENE MIDDLE SCHOOL PLACED 1<sup>ST</sup> IN THE REGIONAL MATHCOUNTS COMPETITION.

- SEVERAL STUDENTS HAD PERFECT SCORES IN THE NATIONAL WORDMASTERS COMPETITION.
- TWO STUDENTS WERE FINALISTS IN THE NH MIDDLE SCHOOL ASSOCIATION'S WRITING CONTEST.

### KHS

- FOUR YEARS AGO THE CUMULATIVE DROP-OUT RATE FOR KHS WAS 15.8% AND THE YEARLY DROP-OUT RATE 4.2%. THIS YEAR THE CUMULATIVE DROP-OUT RATE IS 5.4% AND THE YEARLY IS RATE IS 1.38%
- SEVEN JUNIOR STUDENTS WERE NAMED AS NATIONAL MERIT SCHOLAR SEMI-FINALISTS THIS MONTH.
- KHS HAS TWO NATIONAL MERITS SCHOLARS THIS YEAR, THEY ARE TWO OF 8,000 STUDENTS NAMED THIS YEAR AS NATIONAL MERIT SCHOLARS.
- KHS RAN AN INTENSIVE ANTI-BULLYING CAMPAIGN WHEREAS EACH STUDENT READ "NINETEEN MINUTES".
- GUEST SPEAKERS WERE BROUGHT IN WHICH INCLUDED: DR. MALCOM SMITH (AUTHORED THE NH ANTI-BULLYING LAW), DR. JUSTIN PATCHIN ("BULLYING CZAR" FOR THE OBAMA ADMINISTRATION), AND JOHN HALLIGAN (CONNECTICUT FATHER WHOSE SON COMMITTED SUICIDE AFTER BEING BULLIED AT SCHOOL).

One final celebration – Congratulations to the Keene Board for having been named "New Hampshire School Board of the Year.

Our Central Office work this past year has centered around the following strategic SAU goals:

- To Increase Student Learning,
- To Improve Efficiencies
- To be Effective Student Advocates

One of the initiatives in place and continuing to take shape related to our first goal of increasing student learning across SAU 29 is that of Professional Learning Communities or PLCs.

Leadership has been shown by the SAU 29 Professional Development Committee which has made PLCs one of two multi-year goals. I believe the use of a professional learning communities

approach coupled with an individual student growth model is the best, least expensive, and most professionally rewarding way for SAU 29 schools to ensure continuous improvement.

Our biggest initiative has been the articulation of a guaranteed and viable curriculum. A curriculum that is guaranteed and viable is a curriculum that we can promise will be implemented and that instructional time is properly matched with prioritized content.

At the building-level, principals have worked with our Director of Curriculum and Assessment to ensure that our student schedules meet the needs of delivering the guaranteed-and viable curriculum. She has trained principals in a tool to monitor the implementation of curriculum at the building and classroom level.

Last summer, teachers in art, physical education, and health worked hard to update these curricula. Now posted on the Internet and on our SAU 29 website, teachers and the community have access to vertically articulated content.

We are also making great strides in providing tools to partner with parents in their child's education.

This year, all SAU 29 students in grades 2-10 were assessed using the NWEA Measure of Academic Progress in the fall and spring in both reading and math. Engaging in these two testing dates allows us to capitalize on important reporting software (Dynamic Reporting Suite) that measures student growth, projects NECAP proficiency, and allows teachers to better use data to inform instruction. Additionally, at the December (parent/teacher) conferences, teachers shared with parents the NWEA generated goal sheet with target scores for this spring's testing.

The MAP (Measure of Academic Progress) assessment coupled with a guaranteed and viable curriculum will enable staff to make diagnostic assessments that will drive instruction.

As you are aware, the national Common Core Standards were finalized and released in June 2010, and adopted by the New Hampshire Board of Education in July. Forty three states have adopted these common grade-level expectations. The Common Core is the precursor to the Nationwide Assessment likely to be implemented by 2014.

It is likely that Congress will complete the revision to NO CHILD LEFT BEHIND this session. President Obama's recommendations are summarized in the document "Blueprint for Reform" which is posted on the top left corner of the SAU 29 web page.

Instead of focusing on schools' ability to achieve adequate yearly progress (as required by NCLB), the blueprint sees preparing college – and career-ready students as the goal, with accountability based on student growth over time. No longer would federal law require only measurement of where students scored in a single year; instead, students would be assessed on both their status and their year-to-year growth.

Last summer open to teachers throughout SAU 29, our Guaranteed and Viable Curriculum Institutes allowed grade-level teams to interact with the new Common Core. These teams took the mandatory math and English language arts curriculum and put it into sequenced units. The standards broaden the responsibility of teaching literacy and numeracy across the curriculum. All teachers in grades K-8 will have the chance to pilot this curriculum during the 2011-2012 school year and provide input on pacing and teacher resources (such as Everyday Math, Trailblazers, Open Court, etc.).

We have worked hard this year to implement Response to Intervention. We know from spring test scores that not all our students are realizing their academic target growth.

Last year 59% of 2<sup>nd</sup> through 8<sup>th</sup> grade students across the SAU met their growth goal in reading as determined by NWEA testing and 58% met their growth goal in math. Individual student goals need to be followed for each student. We need to evaluate individual students by analyzing student performance data and we need to use that data to inform instruction. The establishment of professional learning communities is crucial to that outcome.

Coupling nicely with PLCs, Response to Intervention is not dependent on a teacher resource, but rather on an established protocol at the school level. Though part of the reauthorization of IDEA, RTI is a regular education initiative that ensures that all teachers intervene when a student does not learn the information the first time.

An audit of Keene Elementary School Special Education reveals the need to have clearly-articulated, accessible regular education curriculum for teachers, administrators, special educators, student support services, and related service providers. Improving coordination between special and regular education curriculum through our new Guaranteed and Viable Curriculum and using RTI will help to address the task of addressing special education issues.

Our second goal is

- To Improve Efficiencies

First we are working with a renewed focus to ensure that across the SAU we have clear and attainable goals so that the staff doesn't have to guess what the strategic priorities are. We are working with all our principals all day on June 27<sup>th</sup> toward that end. Clear goals should Improve Efficiencies Systematically.

Each of the four contracts passed this past year added provisions that reduced paper work and increased organizational efficiencies. For example the KEA contract clarified prep time adding a provision that will allow teachers to voluntarily work (and be paid) during prep time. This will provide greater flexibility and increased course offerings at a reduced cost.

A significant accomplishment this year was the implementation of AESOP, our automated sub calling system. This system was cost neutral and has a cumulative fill rate of 96%. This system has also allowed principals and central office administrators to create reports and analyze data concerning absences and sub costs.

In the benefits area, we were able to save over \$25,000 when we took our LTD and Life Insurance business out to bid. In addition, we have been consistently generating revenue through

our participation in the RDS Medicare Part D subsidy program. As of April first we have received \$105,059. We continue to refine our ESS (employee self serve) portal and will once again be doing the bulk of our benefits open enrollment electronically. As we move into the next year we will be able to do away with pay stubs completely for all KEA and KAPS members and start moving other groups in that direction through negotiations. This will translate into significant cost savings by reducing printing, postage and labor costs.

Our Director of HR is in the process of forming a committee that will look at the performance evaluation process, and will develop forms that can be used to complete the process.

We have several issues that will mandate a very busy summer. First we still have a high degree of uncertainty as to the revenue our individual districts will receive from the state.

This summer in addition to the safety renovation in Westmoreland we also anticipate the completion of the Keene Middle School and the new SAU Building –That will require many components as the projects “wind down”. The construction budget must be finalized, building aid forms completed, move-ins to the new facilities accomplished and sale of the present properties closed. It should be a very busy but satisfying time with results that benefit the community for many years.

SAU 29 is in line to negotiate with nine unions next year – Keene Association of Principals and Administrators, Keene Educational Office Personnel Group, Keene Tutors, Speech/Psychs, Custodians, Harrisville Education Association, Chesterfield Education Association, Westmoreland Teachers Association, and Marlow Education Association. As the negotiations occur in the middle of the budget process period, this large a group will present an extreme challenge.

**The third** SAU 29 goal is to achieve greater levels of student advocacy. To that end, in December, Central Office administrators met with area Senators and Representatives where we discussed issues important to SAU 29 school districts. Senator Molly Kelly joined in this important discussion and brought insight into the legislative process and to the impact educational funding legislation would have on SAU 29 school districts. The main impetus behind this meeting was to foster the communication channels between school district administration

and legislators. Issues like fulfilling the promises related to bond payments were discussed. Our discussion also covered funding sources in terms of adequacy aid (main source of educational aid), catastrophic aid (funding for most severe special education cases), and special education funding.

We anticipate continuing this open dialogue with our legislators in the future, ensuring that our voice is heard in Concord.

In addition to testifying before the state house and senate I also met with Senator Shaheen's education representative to communicate our concerns related to the authorization of ESEA better known as No Child Left Behind. One of our concerns had to do with New Hampshire not receiving any of the 3.5 billion in Race To the Top funds. SAU 29 students would have benefited from a decision to include New Hampshire in the group for approved funding. Mr. Gurney, Ms Cargill and I also met briefly with U.S. Secretary of Education Arne Duncan on issues related to No Child Left Behind while Secretary Duncan was visiting Keene State College. I spoke to him about our belief that we should move to a student growth model to determine school Adequate Yearly Progress.

We have tried to keep our communities aware of state and federal legislation initiatives that will help solve problems or create problems. We have used Board reports, annual reports, blogs, radio and television to communicate our concerns.

Based on our track record this past year our communities truly support our schools. I believe we must not become complacent – our support will be strong only as long as we do our best to create schools that provide a safe and productive school environment.

I am convinced as long as we continue to put students first, while being fiscally responsible our school communities will continue to support our work. The Central Office staff, Bill and I thank you for your hard work on behalf of these students.

It continues to be a privilege to serve you.