

SAU 7 Superintendent Board Report
April 2021
Report of Progress: Superintendent Goals 2020-2021

Goal # 1:

Provide leadership during the pandemic in 5 key areas: 1) health and safety; 2) finance, policy, and communication; 3) logistics; 4) curriculum, instruction, and assessment; 5) social-emotional learning and support.

Executive Summary: A great majority of our time this year has been devoted to planning, flexing, and enacting safety protocols in response to the pandemic. We are fortunate to have the full cooperation and support of our community partners each step of the way. This combined emergency response in our region, along with the extraordinary efforts of our collective school staff has demonstrated what we can accomplish together in challenging times. While many would appreciate knowing what lies ahead, we continue to battle the uncertainty that the COVID-19 pandemic has brought forth. As we have seen cases climb again over the last 2 weeks, we could soon be facing yet another surge of illness wreaking havoc in our communities. Due to the fluid nature of a pandemic situation, and this recent upswing in cases, we must remain vigilant and continue to enforce the necessary precautionary measures until the threat is over in its entirety. With the ease of travel restrictions, and less than 20% of the NH population vaccinated, there is some potential for cases to continue to rise into the summer months, as well as some of the more contagious variants to arrive in our area. Vaccinations continue to be given and may present a glimmer of hope, as NH opens up vaccine availability to all on Friday, April 2nd.

Progress and Plans:

Re-Opening Planning

During the reopening phase, the administrative team recommended the following guidelines be enforced to mitigate and control the spread of COVID-19:

1. Face coverings are required at all times for staff and students unless eating or drinking, at which time a face covering may be momentarily removed but must be reapplied once eating/drinking is complete. All eating and drinking must be done with a spacing of 6' or greater when the mask is removed. Face coverings are also required during all sporting events, including practices, games, and team meetings.
2. Group activities should be avoided whenever possible. If group activities are required, limit the number of students to 3 or less, with a minimum of 3' between students at all times. Students should be placed into groups based on seating assignments.
3. Singing may only occur with all parties masked and if 8-10 feet of space is available between each participant.
4. Students/staff unable to comply with guidance face disciplinary action

5. Notes from medical providers clearing symptomatic children will not be accepted without a clear and acceptable diagnosis
6. Any time eating occurs, no staff or student shall be closer than 6' in proximity, even if others are masked.
7. No further temperature checks will be completed at the door in the morning, as fever is not a reliable indicator of COVID-19. Parents are responsible for fully screening their students for symptoms, including fever, and disclosure of travel or exposure, prior to the school day.

Current Situation Data:

1. Active cases impacting schools, by district:
 - a. CAES: 4
 - b. PSD: 0
 - c. SCS: 0
2. Reported active cases in communities per DHHS dashboard:
 - a. Colebrook: 6
 - b. Columbia: 1-4
 - c. Errol: 0
 - d. Pittsburg: 0
 - e. Clarksville: 1-4
 - f. Stewartstown: 1-4
 - g. Coos County, total: 49
3. Cumulative Staff Impact
 - a. CAES: 49 quarantine episodes to date
 - b. PSD: 6 quarantine episodes to date
 - c. SCS: 6 quarantine episodes to date
 - d. SAU 7: 1 facility closure to date
4. Cumulative Student Impact:
 - a. CAES: 80 quarantine episodes to date
 - b. PSD: 18 quarantine episodes to date
 - c. SCS: 6 quarantine episodes to date
 - d. 36 student quarantine episodes since return from February break
5. Community Impact:
 - a. Community transmission of COVID-19 continues to be substantial throughout our communities and all of Coos County
 - b. Local indicators: 7 day positivity average of 13%
 - c. State indicators: Coos County 7 day positivity average of 4.5%
 - d. Deaths: 38 in Coos County, 16 in the local nursing home
6. Vaccination Status:
 - a. SAU #7 Closed Pod vaccination clinic held 3/12 with approximately 70 participants
 - b. The vaccination rate in SAU #7 estimated to be at least 80%*
 - c. Some staff continuing to seek vaccination after closed pod, we are grateful to UCVH as they have been able to accommodate this
 - d. Vaccination offered to all NH residents 16 and older starting 4/2

Recent/Ongoing Process Changes:

1. Align with NH DHHS guidelines and follow current recommendations.
2. Travel guidance recently changed:
 - a. Travel continues to be discouraged
 - b. No quarantine required after domestic travel
 - c. Quarantine is still required after a cruise or international travel
 - d. Exemptions apply for fully vaccinated individuals and/or individuals who have tested positive for COVID-19 within the previous 90 days
3. Daily screening no longer required for staff or families, as largely was to evaluate travel and exposure. Parents/staff are reminded of current guidelines and requirements including keeping sick/exposed household members home.
4. Contact tracing updates specific to schools allow 3' distancing rule in monitored, controlled settings (such as classrooms) but only if they are consistently compliant. Uncontrolled settings will still be assessed at the 6' rule. Students/staff must be 6' apart any time a mask is removed.

Goal # 2:

Support the advancement of curriculum, instruction and assessment with the goal of improving student achievement within the context of personalized, competency-based education with a futuristic focus.

Executive Summary: This year we have established a Curriculum Committee and instituted regular professional development which focuses on curriculum, instruction, and assessment with our teachers across the region. We will use a digital tool for curriculum planning, sharing, refining, and collaborating for teachers (Canvas). Next, we will align our supervision and evaluation instrument with our high-quality curriculum and instructional practices to ensure full implementation and student growth. With the addition of our shared curriculum coordinator position, we intend to continue to provide cohesive professional learning opportunities and coaching for teachers, which is critical to ensuring that teacher and student learning is deep and purposeful.

Progress and Plans: We are in the process of transforming our curriculum in SAU 7.

Curriculum is the heart of the solution to educational improvement because it is a container for so much that happens during each school day. The design of curriculum shapes teaching and teaching affects how a student experiences school—whether they believe it is engaging or boring, challenging or easy, and even if it feels fair and just. A high-quality curriculum includes lessons that empower students and develop their critical thinking and communication skills, which in

turn creates a classroom culture that nurtures students' leadership and agency and encourages critical analysis of the world. We have begun the journey this year to refocus our teaching and learning in three primary ways: integrating equity-focused social-emotional learning into the curriculum; designing curriculum with "windows, mirrors, and doors"; and ensuring that curriculum is scalable and accessible as an open educational resource.

Integrating Equity-Focused Social-Emotional Learning into Curriculum

Students learn best in classroom environments where they have an opportunity to build connections with their teachers and peers (Darling-Hammond, Flook, Cook-Harvey, Barron, and Osher, 2020). A holistic education that integrates strong relationships, social-emotional learning, rigorous and engaging content, and precise pedagogy is most supportive of young people's developing brains.

Designing Curriculum with Windows, Mirrors, and Doors

A high-quality curriculum offers students texts and topics that contain mirrors, windows, and doors: mirrors that affirm and celebrate their own identities and cultures, windows that help them learn about and understand others, and doorways that present them with opportunities to be agents of change. Choosing these texts and topics is an enormous responsibility because it affects students' sense of belonging in their learning community. A curriculum with mirrors has the potential to appeal to students' interests and also reflect their lives so that they feel connected to the books they read and the topics they study. It is equally important for students to see *new* worlds—these are the windows they look through that develop social-emotional skills like empathy and respect for others. Helping students look through those windows, particularly at events in the past, with a critical eye for how they are connected to life today is key.

Ensuring that Curriculum is Scalable and Accessible as an Open Educational Resource

A high-quality curriculum is our goal, and we can't stop once the curriculum is written. We must think beyond who the curriculum is written for—students and teachers. Who will have access to the curriculum, what resources are required to use it, and how will it be distributed?

We must do two things to ensure that a curriculum continues to advance educational equity:

1) disseminate it in a way that ensures access, and 2) support teachers with professional learning opportunities so that they can maximize the potential of the curriculum to build agency and belonging in their students.

High-quality curriculum that is available as an open educational resource levels the playing field by offering free material that teachers can use and customize. Integrating social-emotional

learning into academic curricula, in addition to the benefits for students' developing brains, may have real financial benefits for schools if it can reduce the need for additional social-emotional learning resources.

We truly want the curriculum to be the engine that drives change in our schools. We understand that we must focus on the details of the daily instructional experience. There is no stronger entry point than a high-quality curriculum, especially when it is combined with accompanying professional learning and coaching for teachers. Such a curriculum will challenge, engage, and empower our students.

Goal # 3:

Ensure high-quality professional development activities for all staff.

Executive Summary: As you can see from the Professional Development Master Plan which is recommended for adoption at this meeting, we will continue to plan and implement professional development which mirrors the mission of the school system, reflects the schools' improvement plans, incorporates student needs and goals and aligns with our high-quality curriculum.

As we work together to plan and resource our professional development for 21-22, we aim to help educators, teams, and schools implement high-quality curriculum, make sense of personalized learning in a way that is meaningful, and work with each school's existing and aspirational culture. School safety and security techniques will also be included along with effective technology integration in our classrooms. Our professional development delivery will include monthly online workshops, half- and full-day in-services, instructional coaching, leadership consultations, online courses, and partnerships. We understand the importance of professional development as the engine that can transform education.

Goal # 4:

Support the work of the Connecticut River Collaborative Planning Committee.

Executive Summary: The Collaborative Committee has met at least monthly throughout the 20-21 school year. During the summer, high school counselors met to consider options that would be possible for a reimagined regional high school. In the fall, a financial firm, RHR Smith, was contracted to review the options through an equity and financial lens. A facility analysis was completed in the winter. Hebert Construction assisted the facility committee in analyzing

various options including the use of existing (Black River Study) and new facilities. RHR Smith incorporated the facility data in the report presented to the committee in March. Through the first half of the year, meetings were held remotely. Now the meetings have been held in a hybrid format, with some in-person and some participating virtually. We look forward to the day when the committee can meet fully in person as their work continues into the spring and summer.

Progress and Plans: Over the past two years, the school boards, superintendents, and representatives from the communities of NEK Choice & Canaan, Vermont; and the New Hampshire communities of Clarksville, Colebrook, Columbia, Pittsburg, and Stewartstown have been meeting regularly to research and develop a model that would provide more educational offerings for students at a reasonable cost to the taxpayers.

As a result of these meetings, the CRCPC was established in 2019 to investigate the pros and cons of creating an Interstate School District committed to improving education in the North Country. A stronger Career Technical Education (CTE) program, extensive dual enrollment college courses, increased foreign language offerings, and a larger variety of Science, Technology, Engineering and Math (STEM) related options were all seen as necessary and important to help students be successful in whatever path they choose beyond high school.

In 2019 and 2020, students were able to participate in high school courses throughout the region. Student participation has increased, including in the CTE program. Transportation is provided for half-day participation. We have also recently been able to share teachers across the region by semester. This novel approach to collaboration has been a good stop-gap measure, but we know that we could provide more opportunities if our secondary and CTE students were on one campus.

These goals remain a focal point as the collaborative committee reviews financial projections and facility options. The committee will continue their work in the spring and summer. An updated timeline will be established.

*Goals Approved by SAU 7 School Board on December 10, 2021
Report to the Boards in April 2021*