

Superintendent Report to the School Boards
School Administrative Unit 7
January 1, 2021

All Schools Reopen on January 4th

We will reopen schools for in person instruction on January 4. Our focus will continue to be on health and safety as well as to provide high quality instruction for our students. I meet weekly with our regional COVID 19 Task Force to review area data and collaborative efforts to address cases, communication and future vaccination distribution. We believe that partnering with our community will mitigate the spread of the virus. We are continuing to monitor active cases and staffing levels to maintain in person instruction.

School Budget Information

School budget development is well underway in our communities. The SAU 7 budget was approved by the school board at the Board hearing on December 10. Much time was devoted to budget preparation and discussion with each school board. School district budgets have been presented to school boards and will be finalized later this month. We are scheduling public hearings and annual school meetings in February and March. Due to COVID restrictions, the procedures for these meetings may be adjusted.

Community school budget information sharing will ensue after budgets are approved. This year, I have invited our principals to provide a school update during the Annual Meetings. We are also in the process of preparing school district publications of our Annual Reports.

Preparation for Town Meeting

School Board Elections -

Eight of our twenty-one collective school board positions are up for election this spring. Below is our list of open positions and terms:

Town	Position	Future Term
Clarksville	One School Board Member	3-Year Term - Expires 2024
	One School Board Member (Vacant)	1-Year Term - Expires 2022
Colebrook	One School Board Member	3-Year Term - Expires 2024
	One School Board Member	3-Year Term - Expires 2024
Columbia	One School Board Member	3-Year Term - Expires 2024
Pittsburg	One School Board Member	3-Year Term - Expires 2024

	One School Board Member	3-Year Term - Expires 2024
Stewartstown	One School Board Member	3-Year Term - Expires 2024

The following members' terms will expire in March 2021:

- Heather Mitchell, Clarksville
- Deborah Greene, Colebrook
- Tracey McKinnon, Colebrook
- Chris Brady, Columbia
- Bob Ormsbee, Pittsburg
- Reggie Parker, Pittsburg
- Jamie Boire, Stewartstown

Filings begin on January 20, 2021. January 29, 2021 is the last day for candidates to file a declaration to appear on the ballot as school board candidates for Town Meeting. Filing declarations are available at each Town Clerk's office, with the exception of Stewartstown. The declarations can be filed for Stewartstown with Patricia Grover, School District Clerk, at 10 White Birch Drive, Stewartstown..

The following statement will be included in our school newsletters:

Join the School Board!

YOU have an opportunity to make a difference in our schools and in our community. You do not have to be a teacher, a parent, or an expert to join a school board. All you need is an open mind, good will, and an interest in supporting the education and development of our children and students, who are the most important resource any community has.

If you have the desire to make a positive impact on the lives of the next generation, visit your Town Clerk's office by January 29 and complete the required paperwork. That will place your name on the Town Meeting Day ballot as a candidate for the School Board. If you have any questions, please contact Superintendent Dr. Debra Taylor (dtaylor@sau7.org) or your school board chair. (School board information is located on the SAU 7 website (www.sau7.org))

Annual Report -

Our annual report preparation for each district has begun! The report will feature highlights from each school from the prior year as well as our proposed budgets for the 2021-22 school year.

School Board Review

We held a Board Policy Committee meeting in October and another is planned on January 14. Several policies were subsequently adopted by our school boards.

The Board Technology Committee met in October and reviewed the state of technology in our school districts. Upgrades and additions to equipment, such as 1-1 chromebooks for all students and new laptops for teachers, were implemented based on the addition of federal funds. This equipment has helped us to better serve our students and equip our faculty during remote learning this year.

The Colebrook School Board completed negotiations with support staff in November. The Board and union have ratified a three year contract pending voter approval in March.

During the winter SAU 7 School Board meeting, The board received a report on the Superintendent's entry plan and approved specific goals to guide the districts' work for the coming year. The goals are in the following areas:

1. Provide Leadership During Pandemic in 5 Key Areas:
 - Health and Safety;
 - Finance, Policy and Communication;
 - Logistics;
 - Curriculum, Instruction and Assessment;
 - Social Emotional Learning and Supports
2. Support Advancement of Curriculum, Instruction and Assessment with Goal of Improving Student Achievement within the Context of Personalized, Competency Based Education with a Futuristic Focus
3. Ensure High Quality Professional Development Activities for All Staff
4. Support the Work of the Connecticut River Collaborative Planning Committee

Superintendent Goal Progress Update

1. Provide Leadership During Pandemic
 - a. COVID - 19 Health and Safety - Updated requirements approved by the school board in November, reviewed with the union leadership, presented at a full in SAU 7 and all school staff meeting on December 10, incorporated into our plan and pandemic procedures.
 - b. Remote Learning Improvements - While nothing can replace in person instruction, the training and preparation for remote learning has paid off. We regularly receive positive feedback about the care and attention our teachers are providing to our students.
 - c. COVID Community Outreach- The Regional COVID response team has begun to meet at least weekly to collaborate, support and address concerns. Our first COVID Community Forum (co-sponsored by SAU 7, UCVH and Indian Stream) was held on Tuesday, December 15 at 4:30 pm. The link to this recorded meeting is on our website: www.sau7.org. To date we have held seven virtual community forums.
2. Curriculum, Instruction and Assessment
 - a. Our regional curriculum committee continues to meet monthly.
 - b. We have planned a super series of all teacher professional development opportunities with well respected educational leaders. The first in the series was held on December 9 P
3. Professional Development
 - a. Just as in person instruction is most effective for students, professional development for adults is most effective when our staff are together. However, we are taking advantage of

the virtual platform, and improving our skills along the way.

- b. Focus areas for professional development this year have included: Technology, Competency Based Personalized Learning and Social Emotional Learning. In addition our office staff have participated in virtual training concerning computer programs and reporting procedures.

4. Connecticut River Collaborative Planning Committee

- a. The Committee held its most recent meeting on December 21.
- b. Areas of focus and ongoing work include:
 - i. Articles of Agreement which will govern the new district
 - ii. Financial modeling for various district configurations
 - iii. Facility options which align with the models
- c. More information may be found at the committee website:
connecticutrivercollaborative.org
- d. Future meeting dates for January and February are as follows.
 - i. January 13
 - ii. January 28
 - iii. February 5

New Year - New Beginning!

Here is a copy of my message shared with the school community this week:

Superintendent Debra Taylor
New Year Message
School Administrative Unit # 7
January 1, 2021



Let me begin by wishing you a very ***Happy New Year*** filled with many successes and continued progress!

At School Administrative Unit # 7, we place great value on our students continued *success* and academic *progress* as they move through their academic journey.

I trust that you had a wonderful winter break spending time with family and friends and getting some well-deserved rest. I am excited to welcome you back as we continue our work for the second half of the year to ensure that student growth and learning continues.

The new year stands before us, like a book, waiting to be written. Today is the first blank page of the 365-page book. Write a good one. As you begin your journey into 2021, take this advice from Helen Keller to heart: *Resolve to keep happy, and your joy and you shall form an invincible host against difficulties.*

As we approach the midpoint of the school year, it is our responsibility to ensure that our students are academically strong and that our instructional and support teams remain energized. Our in person and remote learning this year has been remarkable. As we look forward to resuming in person instruction on January 4, together our great students, families and staff working together will reach the milestones necessary for a bright future.

We have begun to implement a Curriculum, Instruction and Assessment plan. We plan to engage and honor the work of our faculty, align with state expectations, ensure that our instructional program remains strong and that student achievement is at the forefront. To this end, we will refine and expand our professional learning experiences, resources and support for all staff, for we know that through transformative adult learning, we elevate student learning.

Hope is on the horizon as we look ahead to a healthy new year. COVID 19 has challenged us to live, teach and learn in new ways. Let's continue to reimagine schooling together in 2021.

Thank you for your commitment to making sure that ALL students are provided with all of the tools, resources, opportunities and choices to support their individual paths to be successful – something our communities have come to expect. I look forward to working with you in the coming months.

Happy New Year!

Yours in Education,

Debra Taylor

Debra Taylor, Ph.D.
Superintendent

Connect via Email: dtaylor@sau7.org
Visit Our Website: www.sau7.org
Follow Us on Twitter: [@SAU7Super](https://twitter.com/SAU7Super)

“There are far better things ahead than any we leave behind”

—by *CS Lewis*