

ADMINISTRATIVE REPORT

Superintendent's Report

When I first assumed the Superintendent position here at Plainfield Elementary School (PES), I began what has become an annual tradition with the School Board. During the summer before each school year, the School Board meets with the Administrative Team in a retreat to discuss the major issues facing the School District. Out of that session, the Board develops a series of goals that it wishes to accomplish in the next school year. In some cases, these goal statements become a multi-year effort, with progress measured each year toward their conclusion. Each year the number of goals statements is limited in number, to allow for a better chance of meeting the targets within the one year timeframe. There were five goal statements set for the 2014-15 year:

- 1. Re-evaluate the option of providing full-day kindergarten and, if appropriate, make a recommendation to the 2015 School District meeting for approval.*
- 2. Continue evaluation of Special Education delivery model and make sure appropriate services are delivered to all students.*
- 3. Review reports from the AREA Review and Cornish Collaboration Committees and develop a comprehensive strategy for keeping PES independent in the future.*
- 4. Continue to maintain our school building to ensure a safe, sound and healthy learning environment for our students and staff.*
- 5. Provide the necessary supports to enable the new Principal of Plainfield Elementary School to have a good first year.*

The progress which the District has made in these goal areas is reported under the School Board Report in this Town Report. There are certain other areas on which I would like to offer comments since they are not addressed elsewhere and they are part of my own goals for this year.

Last spring the District received a very comprehensive report about the Special Education program at PES. This report (which is available on the School Board website) outlined the current status of the Special Education program and offered specific recommendations for improvement to the program. This report has served as the impetus for a more in-depth review of our Special Education program, including the delivery model currently being used. Under the leadership of Sue Blair, the new Principal of PES, and Anita McDowell, the new Director of Special Services, a more detailed examination of the manner in which students with special needs are receiving services was conducted.

The result of this study was a re-structuring of the Special Education Department at PES and the provision of a new manner of delivering services for students with special needs. The proposed budget for next year reflects this new model. The revised program better utilizes the skills and talents of the staff and is much more cost-effective for the taxpayers of the community. The most important aspect of the changes, however, is that it enables the District to continue to improve the strong, comprehensive Special Education program that meets the identified needs of the students.

Last year in this report I wrote about the new class size policy that was developed and adopted by the School Board. This is the first year of operating under this new policy and I am pleased to report that it is working well. Our classes are all well-balanced and meet the intent of the policy. As the budget was being assembled for presentation this year, the policy was again used to develop the class configurations. There are no further changes recommended for this policy since it seems to be operating as intended.

PES continues to experience declining enrollment. This phenomenon is not unique to PES since most other New Hampshire schools are facing the same challenge. We will continue to see slight declines in enrollment over the next several years and this will mean that we will have to use creativity and ingenuity to keep a strong educational program. We continue to explore ways in which we can join with Cornish to offer solid offerings for the students of both school districts.

Finally, as many of you in the community may already know, I have resigned as Superintendent of the Plainfield Elementary School, SAU 32, effective June 30, 2015 for personal reasons. I will end my report by paraphrasing what I wrote in our school newsletter in January.

I have truly enjoyed my service as Superintendent over the past four years. As I learned when I was first interviewed for the position in the spring of 2011, PES is a special place filled with wonderful students and a solid educational program staffed by dedicated adults. During my tenure, I have made every effort to make PES a safe and enjoyable place where children can learn and grow. The students have always been my first priority.

Bolstered by a hardworking and dedicated School Board, a supportive community, a strong faculty and fantastic students, PES continues to strive to be the “best small school in New Hampshire.” As we have travelled toward this goal, I wish to thank the Plainfield community for their support over the past four years. I wish you all only the best as you continue to support education and work to resolve some of the issues associated with being a small community school.

As the School Board begins the search for a new Superintendent, I hope you will work with them to find the right individual who will continue and expand upon what has been started. I look forward to finishing up as much as I can with you during the next few months, so that PES will be in a good position for the 2015-2016 school year.

Thank you for the opportunity to serve as your Superintendent!

Principal's Report

"Children are apt to live up to what you believe of them."

~Lady Bird Johnson

It is my honor to respectfully submit this report to you as the new Principal of Plainfield Elementary School. Over the past several months I have learned a great deal about the

community of Plainfield. The outpouring of support has been tremendous and is greatly appreciated.

In the few short months of my tenure, I have had opportunity to work with our Police Chief, Paul Roberts. I have been introduced to several community members as they have come to PES to welcome me and extend their congratulatory wishes. I have been invited to KUA for a tour and have met with KUA administration and staff to discuss PES students and their mathematical readiness for high school.

In addition to having a discussion with KUA regarding math readiness, Plainfield Administration and staff have embarked on a collaborative conversation with Lebanon Middle and High School staff and SAU Administration regarding the academic readiness and needs of PES students as they enter ninth grade. We are also exploring the Virtual Learning Academy as an option for students who have mastered the eighth grade curriculum in mathematics.

We are pleased to inform you that for the 2014-2015 school year several highly qualified professional positions were filled. They include: Reading Specialist: Mrs. Linda Bohrer, Fifth grade teacher: Mrs. Jennifer Lizotte, Third /Fourth Grade Teacher: Miss Hannah Gage, Science Teacher, Ms. Heidi Magario, Art teacher, Ms. Alex Mathis and ESOL Teacher, Mrs. Anita McDowell. Mrs. Laura Spratt accepted a position as a Third/Fourth grade teacher and Mrs. Anita McDowell accepted the position of Director of Student Services. In addition, Mrs. Ruth Cassedy, Mrs. Laurel Hall and Mr. Chris Rosinski were hired as para-educators.

The staff at PES has established the following goals to assist us in maintaining and enhancing our positive school climate, so as to improve student achievement by supporting students' academic, social/emotional, physical, behavioral needs through a consistent school-wide focus on proactive and respectful approaches which:

- Provide team building opportunities for all staff;
- Support professional training in Responsive Classroom and Developmental Designs models by Origins;
- Provide staff-wide Crisis Prevention Intervention awareness;
- Provide opportunities for participation in discussions and trainings related to the identification and support of different learning styles; and
- Offer staff-wide study groups.

As PES's new principal, the following goals were developed with the support of the Superintendent of Schools.

- Work with Director of Special Services to define roles and responsibilities in building a strong, comprehensive Special Education program that meets the needs of students.
- Work with Administrative Team to build a comprehensive vision for the future of PES.

- Work with the Facilities Director and Building Facilities Committee to develop a comprehensive plan for building improvements for the 2015-2016 budget.

This school year we continue to successfully employ technology tools outside of our computer laboratory and inside grade level classrooms. Two solutions are being utilized: Smart boards and laptop carts. In addition, some of our classroom teachers are working collaboratively with the librarian and technology integrator to design and provide richer learning opportunities for students. An example of this is Genius Hour. It is our intent to continue to grow in the area of technology. Our desire is to become more proficient in the capacity of STEAM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts and Mathematics)

During the 2014-2015 school year, the average daily membership was 206 students and our student enrollment averaged 215 students for the year. The number of students who receive special education services held steady at approximately 38 students in Preschool through grade eight.

A focus of the Administrative Team was the Southeastern Regional Education Service Center, Inc. (SERESC) Report which was authorized by the Plainfield School Board during the spring of 2014. It is the review of this report and the evaluation of our students' needs that has provided us with the foundational data to develop the Special Education model for the upcoming school year. This model is outlined in the Director of Special Service's report below.

PES is a small community school which benefits from the continuing support of the community of Plainfield. Research has proven that children are noticeably more successful in their educational endeavors, if their parents promote, support and are actively involved in their child(ren)'s education.

In closing, on behalf of the staff and myself, I would like to thank the community of Plainfield for their ongoing support. I am thrilled at the opportunities that lay before us. With a dedicated staff and community, the possibilities for our children are endless. We thank our parents and Parent Teacher Organization (PTO) who, on a daily basis, work with us to support our children as we promote and enhance student learning while improving student outcomes.

We thank you today, and some day so will your children!

Special Education Report

As the community's new Director of Special Services in PES, I have noticed several important factors that speak highly of service delivery for Special Education here in Plainfield. They are: a dedicated and committed staff; involved and caring parents; and collaboration between special educators and regular educators on behalf of the District's identified children. The following is not a comprehensive list, but rather my strongest early impressions.

Since my arrival in Plainfield, I have been privileged to:

- Transition into this role, with guidance from my predecessor, Laura Spratt;
- Work closely alongside new Principal, Sue Blair, to review the current model of Special Education service delivery, the SERESC report, and associated departmental revenues and expenses; and,
- Take part in looking ahead in order to help to envision and create a responsible and effective model for Special Education in Plainfield School District which will reach far into the future, and align with district wide long-range goals.

Currently, several trends align to alert us to carefully prepare for the future: declining enrollment, past increases in Special Education spending, SERESC report recommendations to the School Board, and the average cost of purchasing a local home. When funding is down, it is incumbent upon a public school district to both identify areas where cost savings are reasonable and responsible; and innovatively explore potentially trend-changing alternatives by which enrollment may be increased (such as this District’s consideration of collaboration with Cornish, withdrawal from the AREA agreement, and school choice). To do so is prudent and wise.

First and foremost, quality service provision to meet the needs of identified children of our District is about commitment and dedication. Both virtues are amply observable in PES. A day of school does not go by when I do not witness, firsthand, caring and supportive adults interacting with children with disabilities. So many here contribute from their hearts to ensure that children who are found eligible for Special Education services, receive the supports they need to successfully obtain a free and appropriate public education in Plainfield. And, there is that “something more” that I repeatedly see in operation in Plainfield – it is an unwavering commitment to building children up, and to helping all children to grow and develop into fine committed and dedicated people themselves. It isn’t quantifiable – but it is palpable. Every adult contributes to this caring and encouraging climate for learners. It lives - it breathes - it is PES. Because of it, I stand firmly behind our new model of Special Education, which ensures the continual provision of quality service delivery to identified children in PES.

2014-15 Special Education Data [as of 2-1-15]

<u>Age Group</u>	<u>Students with IEPs</u>
PK – 8	38 (includes 2 out-of-district)
Grade 9 – Age 21	8 (includes 1 out-of-district)

- Percent of PES students on IEPs in 2014-15: 17.68%

Other information:

- Number of out of district placements: 3 (includes PreK program)
- Number of identified students receiving individual speech services: 27
- Number of identified students receiving occupational therapy services: 9

- Number of identified students receiving individual physical therapy services: 2

Inclusive of carry-over amounts from 2013-14 and 2014-15, there is \$56,347 in combined Federal IDEA and Preschool grant funds available to supplement portions of the 2014-15 budget.

THE NEW MODEL OF SPECIAL EDUCATION IN PLAINFIELD IN 2015-16

- Staffed by an Upper (Grades 5-8) School and a Lower (Grades PreK – 4) School Case Manager, along with a Speech and Language Specialist in 2015-16 – each with an average caseload of approximately 13 students (an approximate 18% increase per Case Manager over 2014-15’s average of 11 students per Case Manager [Note: not inclusive of the Speech and Language Specialist’s 2014-2015 caseload of 5 identified students])
- Projected estimate of 38 identified students at PES in 2015-16, to be supported by 9.5 Special Education Assistants, which reflects a 1:4 identified student: Special Education Assistant ratio. The same ratio at PES presently is 1:2.3. Overall average of identified student: Special Education Assistant ratio reflected in 2013-14 area wide data comparing fifteen local districts was also 1:4. Of the fifteen comparison districts in then, 26% had an identified student: Special Education Assistant ratio as high as is found in the range of 1:5.2 to 1:7.26.
- Despite a 24% decrease in overall number of Special Education Assistants in next year’s planning, when considering staffing in surrounding districts alongside declining revenues and enrollment in the district, it is a reasoned and fair reduction in staffing. In comparison to the fifteen surrounding districts 2013-14 aggregated data, the new model also continues to be competitive. The new model assures that identified students will continue to be well supported in Plainfield. When one also factors in that “something more”, this conclusion can be made with confidence.

The presented vision requires unity. It requires community. It requires mutual cooperation, participation, and an unwavering commitment to continuation of quality service delivery for Special Education. Indeed, it requires what Plainfield is good at.

The successful functioning of the Administrative Team (which also includes Beth Bierwirth, Finance) is made possible by the support of a number of people: the School Board which provides guidance and direction; the entire staff who work hard to help our students succeed; and Bill Knight, Lisa Gradijan and Lynn LeBrun with whom we work daily and who offer us invaluable assistance.

Respectfully Submitted,

Gregory Vagt, Ph.D., Superintendent
Susan Blair, M.A., Principal
Anita McDowell, M.Ed.