



December, 2015

Over the last few weeks much has been said in our community about our schools and district. I feel that it is time that the community understands where I stand as the educational leader.

Sunapee is a wonderful community. We are all very blessed to live or have the good fortune to work in such a place that has dedicated students, parents, teachers and administrators who share the same high regard for education. Our schools' community works hard each day to deliver the most adequate and appropriate education for all children who walk through our doors. We recognize that being in a small school district has its advantages and disadvantages. We also understand that we must work even harder to ensure that we continue to grow and make necessary changes which will have a positive impact on our students.

We have listened to the concerns of students who have reported being bullied in our schools. This issue is not isolated to Sunapee but is an issue which all towns and schools have to deal with. Human conflict is a bi-product of human existence; how we deal with this conflict is what will allow us to grow and evolve into better people.

Dr. Malcom Smith is one of the nation's leading educators on stopping the cycle of meanness, incivility and violence which has permeated the culture and climate of our nation's schools. We are pleased that he will be coming to our district, speaking with our students (grades 6-12) and engaging in honest conversation and dialogue that can allow us to address this issue. Dr. Smith will also be spending time training our teachers with strategies that will help them recognize and address these issues so that our students know that school is a safe place. The final piece, and maybe the most important, would be a time for everyone in our community to gather, listen and share so that we can work together to bring our schools forward. On January 14, 2016 Dr. Smith will be making his initial visit to Sunapee; we will communicate the specific dates, times and venue once we finalize a schedule.

While, like most things in life, schools change, these changes are based on many different factors, but what should always drive change in our schools should be what is in the best interest of our students. If that question can be at the forefront of our decision-making process, then the outcome should be positive. This may not always mean that everyone agrees with the decisions, and some may feel they are not correct. We always welcome listening to both sides of each decision, and while both sides may not agree, we can at least feel we have been heard so that we can move forward.

The district will continue to provide professional training for our faculty so that they can be up to date with new techniques and teaching approaches to help all children learn. We understand that students enter our schools in many different stages of their development. It is our job to reach students where they come in and move them down a continuum to help them reach their optimal life success. We all react and respond to life's situations based on our past experiences; it is these experiences which make us who we are and allow us to achieve success in life. We must work together with respect and appreciation for what each of us brings to the



table. We must build upon our strengths and look to improve on our weaknesses, but only working together can we bring about positive change.

The district will be holding a forum with the Superintendent every other month when we return from the holiday vacation. The purpose of these forums is to present an opportunity for dialogue about our schools and to work with parents, students and teachers to continue to move our schools forward in a positive direction.

This community values high expectations for all students, and in our schools that is one of our primary goals. While many of the values in our community are similar, some are also very different. We must learn to be respectful of those people whose values differ from our own. While we all may agree that stealing is wrong, for example, we may never agree on many of our other values. With respect and open minds, we can seek common ground so that we can grow as a community and discover the value that our schools have in our town and for our children. I believe that, synergistically, (“when aggregated output of a system is greater than that which is individually possible by any of its components parts”) we are achieving success for all students.

While this may not be the response some people want, for others it may be too much. We must continue to move forward together so that each child can grow in our schools. It is my job to ensure that your children receive an education, and that will be and has been my focus every day.

Russell Holden  
Superintendent