

SAU 39 COST EFFICIENCIES FOR TODAY AND TOMORROW

The news of the day centers on the financial climate of our state and nation. It is no wonder, then that as SAU39 prepares its budget for next year, that we look closely at spending this year, and prepare cautiously for next.

Fuel oil costs already have caused us to examine our current budget. Last year the cost of oil was \$2.19 per gallon; this year we locked into a rate of \$3.59 per gallon. Fortunately, the Amherst Schools will see substantial savings in fuel consumption due to renovations to their buildings. Souhegan's energy-efficiency initiatives have continued to see declining rates of fuel oil costs and Mont Vernon Village School is putting efficiencies in place. With these efforts we hope that energy costs will not consume educational costs.

Spikes in the cost of energy and changes in the economy cause us to examine the advantages of the Amherst, Mont Vernon and Souhegan Districts belonging to a single School Administrative Unit (SAU 39). Obviously, the administrative costs of running three separate school districts would be much greater than the costs of sharing them through a single SAU. Instead of three superintendents, we have one; instead of three central office buildings, we have one—the Brick School. There are many other cost efficiencies that a combine SAU provides and that our particular SAU39 provides. We'll be presenting some of these at each SAU 39 Board meeting this fall.

At our last meeting, Director of Special Education, Renea Sparks, talked about the cost savings she realizes by administering each district's large federal grants centrally. Special education vendors give an SAU lower rates when they are assured of contracts across each district. Also, training of special education staff is more efficient in terms of time and consultant dollars used when people come together from each district.

Renea described how we work to share transportation costs with other SAU's for daily out-of-district students and how expensive specialized equipment even is shared among districts. These past several years, we also have computerized the individualized education plans (IEPS's) and streamlined the SAU budget system resulting in better tracking of special education costs.

These and other efficiencies are always part of the decision-making at SAU 39. As we begin to develop our 2009-2010 budget with our School Boards, look for a continuation and refinement of our practices. And please feel free to let Board members or myself know of ideas you may have to make this year and next go well.

Mary Athey Jennings, Ph.D.
Superintendent of Schools, SAU 39