Current State Analysis

PRESENTED TO:

Soaring to Excellence

School Administrative Unit #34

September 17, 2019

Battelle for Kids

Realizing the power and promise of 21st century learning for every student

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SUMMARY

To inform its strategic planning process, School Administrative Unit 34 (SAU 34) engaged Battelle for Kids (BFK) to conduct a high-level analysis of its current state based on archived process and performance data, various district documents (see references), and relevant research.

As such, BFK is pleased to provide SAU 34 this summary report of strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats (SWOTs) to inform the SAU 34's strategic planning process. The next sections of this report are as follows:

Approach

Explains the approach taken for collecting and reviewing materials and information for this report.

SWOT Analysis Findings

Summary analysis of leadership meeting observations and interviews, materials review, and survey review.

Recommended Next Steps—Vision

Summary statements based on the information we currently have for the district to consider.

APPROACH

The data collection project approach included the following steps and timelines.

Data Collection

- **June 13, 2019:** BFK facilitated the first Strategic Design Team meeting with 24 community members who represent different stakeholder groups. During this meeting, BFK collected perception data on strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats (SWOT) using a crowdsourcing tool. Through this process, the Strategic Design Team generated 179 comments, observations, and thoughts, which were rated 3,959 times. The submissions from the Strategic Design Team and the ratings surfaced a set of ideas that informed the current state analysis.
- **July 8, 2019:** SAU leadership established a google folder to house data for the current state analysis, which was populated with data the same day.
- **July 25, 2019:** BFK checks-in with SAU leadership about the sufficiency of the data observed in the analysis thus far. BFK requests three years of staff attendance data for review.
- **July 29, 2019:** SAU 34 notifies BFK about a second round of data uploads to the shared Google folder.
- **August 12, 2019:** SAU 34 confirmed the August 20th meeting had been moved to September 3, 2019 to review the current state analysis with SAU leadership. BFK had already made travel plans, so will use the August 20th date as a data check.

- **August 14, 2019:** BFK requested additional data related to student chronic absenteeism, 2017 Youth Risk Behavior Survey Report, National Student Clearinghouse data, and the most recent spring raw data file for the Northwest Evaluation Association (NWEA) assessment data.
- **August 20, 2019:** BFK met with SAU 34 leadership, although the original meeting had been postponed until 9/3/19. This meeting was used as a status update of the current state analysis, as well as a check-in on the most recent data requests. Not surprising and very much appreciated, more data was captured during the visit.

Data Review

For the current state analysis, BFK:

- Compiled and examined original source data, such as community insights from the Strategic Design Team, 3 years of staff attendance data, 3 years of student attendance data, 9 years of SAU 34 community election/ballot results, etc.
- Reviewed a variety of materials to gain deeper understanding about SAU 34's policies, practices, and programs (the References section of this report includes a list of documents reviewed and cites additional supporting references throughout the report).
- Supplemented the data with a review of recent news stories about the SAU, research on relevant district practices and pursuits, and insights from relevant organizations in the region.

SWOT ANALYSIS FINDINGS

To provide a meaningful frame for current state analysis, BFK organized the themes that emerged from the data collected, based on strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats (SWOTs).

Strengths

1. **Established Leadership**: A core of educational leadership positions in the SAU 34 Supervisory Union have been held for a number of years, evidenced by the following facts. The superintendent, assistant superintendent, and the high school principal have been in place since 2011/2012 (Concord Monitor, 2012). Each of these three have either served in their role before in a previous district or have been in SAU 34 in a different role prior to 2012, bringing valuable experience in the district or in the role to their present post. The middle school principal has been in the present role for five years, after having served as a middle school principal in another state (Forest Lake Times, 2014). Consequently, four of six positions are filled with seasoned leaders (four principals, assistant superintendent, and superintendent). As continued evidence of leadership strength, one of the principals was accepted into fellowships at Yale (Hillsboro-Deering School Board Regular Meeting Minutes, 2019).

2. **Duncan-Jenkins Trust**: For almost twenty years, the Duncan-Jenkins Trust has supported SAU 34's innovation and enrichment (SAU 34). At the time of its inception, only a minority of school districts—about 25%—had supportive educational foundations (McCormick et al., 2001). The Duncan-Jenkins Trusts shows that SAU 34 was a pioneer ahead of its time. It continues to provide greatly appreciated support, enriching the learning experiences of both students and staff. The Duncan-Jenkins Trust was among the top strengths cited in the Design Team's perception data.

3. **Community Support for Schools**: Over the last nine years, the Hillsboro-Deering community has supported 88% of the ballot articles/warrants (83 out of 94) put to the public during its annual meetings (Hillsboro-Deering School Board, 2019). The Washington community, through its representation on its school board, approved 100% of board actionable articles proposed at its annual meetings since 2010 (Washington School Board, 2019). Though none of these articles reflected new levies, conventional interpretations would find this record to indicate a supportive community. However, given this current state analysis document is part of a strategic planning process, which represents change and likely eventual resource-dependent strategies for significant improvement, will the community continue their support? Plans without significant resources lack the fuel to be realized. A statewide example of such appeals for significant community support might be seen here.

4. **New Collective Bargaining Agreement with Teachers**: A new agreement was reached with the Hillsboro-Deering Federation of Teachers (Hillsboro-Deering Cooperative School District Annual Report, 2018). Such agreements contribute to stability and predictability, which can be a significant factor influencing a workplace culture of support, innovation, risk taking, and productive interdependence. This agreement led to the elimination of the bottom three steps on the salary schedule, which, according to Superintendent Hassett, has already impacted teacher recruitment and hiring patterns.

5. **Caring Staff**: Perception SWOT data collected from Strategic Design Team members cited caring staff as one of the strengths of the district. The pursuit of restorative practices shows a caring disposition toward discipline than more traditional approaches. The teacher representatives on the Strategic Design Team demonstrate a clear understanding and concern for making changes to the system that align education with broader and more inclusive notions of success for SAU 34's kids.

6. **Agile, Nimble, and Close**: With approximately 1,163 students, the relatively smaller student populations should allow the SAU to adapt and evolve with relatively less struggle than most districts, given the average size district in the country. There are 13,225 local school districts (U.S. Census Bureau, 2018) and 50.6 million K–12 public school students (National Center for Education Statistics, 2017), making the average district size approximately 3,825 students, more than three times larger than SAU 34. Additionally, SAU 34's size provides a close setting for all students to have meaningful relationships with each other and adults as they progress through grades. Reid (2016) captured this notion when interviewing SAU 34 teacher John Bramley, a high school math and engineering teacher at the 2016 graduation.

Bramley said it's through "the beauty of a small school" that he got to know each one of the graduating seniors. He demonstrated this to the reporter by listing off each graduate and the way he met him/her.

7. **History of Turn-Around:** The Hillsboro-Deering High School (HDHS) was ranked near the bottom of the state around 2011 and became the target of deep community concern. Nearly five years later, the high school received commendations from the state for distinguished performance (Pierce, 2016). Turning around a school is a challenging task, especially high schools, which tend to be larger in size with layers of complexity not normally seen in middle and elementary schools. With this kind of success in its recent history, there should be belief and faith that the district can continue improving its approach, practices, and systems for the benefit of all students and community members.

8. **Responding to Dark with Light**: Sometimes the darkest times call for "gut checks" to get to the real core of an issue. HDHS serves as vivid example. After a series of bomb scares throughout 2017–2018 and at the beginning of the 2018–2019, HDHS staff, in a most vulnerable and introspective way, weighed their relationships with their students. Each staff member considered and recorded his or her relationship with each freshman, sophomore, and junior student. Then, each student did the same regarding each staff member. Not only did this pursuit give space and time for each adult to consider their standing with each teenager, but as a collective endeavor, it also provided actionable information. The results provoked, alarmed, yet affirmed the SAU. Reassuringly, there were relationships viewed mutually between a large number of staff and students, and this fact was celebrated. But there were concerns on both sides. Some staff members had minimal students list them as a trusted adult. Upon reflection, questions were raised if we as adults sometimes overestimate our relationships with students. Perhaps as or more concerning, there were students for whom no adult identified them as having a relationship. These same few students have damaged school property, which may have been, in part, desperate cries for help. The depth and meaning of this reflective experience can't be overstated. Quality learning cannot occur without quality relationships.

9. **Extensive Professional Development System**: There is a carefully thought-out professional development program, conceived for the long-term, which offers for both choice and coherence. Also, it is designed to minimize the time that teachers are out of the classroom, providing opportunities for professional learning outside the school day and school year. In addition to district sponsored professional development, SAU 34 also provides tuition reimbursement to both certified and support staff through their respective contracts.

10. **Extracurricular Participation**: SAU 34 has experienced noticeable increase in the number of students participating in extracurricular activities at the middle school. With the addition of after-school athletics program in the 18–19 school year, the number of students pursuing organized afterschool programs increased by 75%, climbing from 117 students to 205 students.

Weaknesses

1. **District Facilitation of Student Learning**: Conventional measures, such as student learning outcomes documented on state report cards, don't distinguish the SAU 34 schools necessarily in redeeming ways. As an example of this, please consider the following Niche scores, reflecting the SU's affiliated schools:
    a. Hillsboro-Deering School District most recently received a "C-" grade
    b. Hillsboro-Deering High School most recently received a "C+"
    c. Hillsboro-Deering Middle School most recently received a "C-"
    d. Hillsboro-Deering Elementary School (HDES) most recently received a "C-" by Niche and received determination status of "Comprehensive Support and Improvement" by the New Hampshire Department of Education
    e. Washington Elementary School most recently received a "B+"

    The "Comprehensive Support and Improvement" status carried by HDES prompted external actions to improve teaching and learning. As one of those steps, WestEd (2019) performed a diagnostic analysis of HDES recently and documented their findings. Recommendations from the diagnostic include calls to make professional performance expectations clearer and supported by more dedicated structures and processes; better align curriculum, assessment, and instruction systems; and provide more effective student behavior approaches, systems, and support.

    Another approach in addition to the reporting of conventional student measures is to consider telling of real and demonstrable success students are having with other admirable pursuits. But these probably shouldn't be limited to anecdotal, episodic reports, but, like the traditional measures, tell how ALL the students doing with newer, and possibly more relevant, measures of success? This is part of taking control of the narrative in meaningful ways that tell a story that needs to be told.

2. **Aging Infrastructure/Facilities and Their Effect on Student Learning (Part 1)**: With aging facilities, it may be wise to gauge the burden of energy costs which are often a school district's second greatest expense after employee wages and benefits (Addison, 2019; U.S. Department of Energy, 2008). Energy costs can be standardized in the form of a metric called cost-use-intensity (Jordan Institute, 2008). This measure is calculated by dividing total facility energy costs by the building's square footage, making this energy cost metric a fair "yardstick" across all buildings of interest. To that end, useful comparisons of cost-use-intensities across school districts in the nearby region are available for informing SAU 34's annual energy costs for decision-making (Vadney et al., 2012).

    Energy benchmarking can be really helpful for interpreting how heavy a burden energy costs are, relative to defensible norms. The chart below combines data from an energy audit of Washington Elementary School (WES) (GDS Associates, 2011) with a large scale study of school energy consumption and costs completed by the American Council for an Energy-Efficient Economy (2012) during a similar time frame. Schools from four states of the Northeast were included in the study, with 201 New Hampshire schools in that sample.

Figure 1: Comparing Relative Energy Expenditures Across Different Samples of Schools

Organization	Data Collection Time Frame	Number of Schools	Total Square Footage (sf)	Number of Students	Total Energy Expenses [1]	Cost-use-Intensity (by space) (Total energy Costs / sf)	WES departure from comparison references (Cost-Use-Intensities)
NYSERDA	2003–2011	1,038	94,061, 000	495,498	$138,286,884	$1.47/sf	+ 42.58% per sf
New Jersey Board of Public Utilities	2008–2011	179	16,853,000	108,227	$32,504,989	$1.93/sf	+ 24.61% per sf
PPL Electric Utilities	2009–2011	292	27,376,000	160,826	$38,959,410	$1.42/sf	+ 44.53% per sf
New Hampshire Public Utility Commission	2010–2011	201	13,332,000	78,769	$19,207,462	$1.44/sf	+ 43.75% per sf
Total		1,710	151,622,000	843,320	$228,958,745	$1.51/sf	+ 41.02% per sf
Washington Elementary School	2011	1	13,240	64	$33,943	$2.56/sf	N/A

[1] electricity, natural gas (if applicable), and fuel oil costs (if applicable)

As might be seen in the chart above, WES energy consumption back in 2011 was significantly beyond the norms of NH and the Northeast Region for that time. It may be conceivable that SAU 34 spent upwards of 40% more money on energy costs than other districts, proportionally speaking, money that otherwise could be funneled into efforts more closely impacting student learning. This is a recurring expense, meaning the re-allocation of energy cost savings to teaching and learning efforts, if energy savings measures were taken, wouldn't just be realized once. This would imply a structural change to the annual budget.

While the data may seem outdated, any differences in energy costs over those years would likely be a factor applied to all the districts, maintaining the 40% unfavorable comparison. The "bricks-and-mortar" nature of school facilities doesn't lend itself to substantial change, likely making the square footage variable relatively constant over time, again, keeping the unfavorable comparison equivalent across time. Student enrollment, on the other hand, has changed. Washington Elementary School's (WES) student population dropped from 64 students to around 45, resulting in higher energy costs on a per-pupil basis (New Hampshire School Profiles, 2017). If these assumptions are true, then the relative comparisons observed between WES and the reference schools may still largely be true for WES. The other SAU 34 buildings should also be evaluated for their energy efficiency.

3. **Aging Infrastructure/Facilities and Their Effect on Student Learning (Part 2):** Infrastructure and facilities influence student learning to the degree to which they support needed

programming for student learning. How a facility is equipped, configured, and maintained informs the educational programs and experiences it can provide to students. To this end, an argument can be made that the lacking vocational education facilities and opportunities in SAU 34 limit students' options for the future. The post-secondary outcomes made available to students will depend, in part, on the educational programs, platforms, and practices students regularly experience. The limited programs and platforms available on campus might be seen in the post-secondary data below.

Figure 2

Graduation Year	Total Graduates	% Entering College (any type)	% Entering Military	% Unknown
2012–2013	105	65	10	25
2013–2014	95	63	6	31
2014–2015	97	55	3	42
2015–2016	81	71	5	24
2016–2017	102	61	5	34
2017–2018	78	50	6	44
Average	93	61	6	33

As seen in Figure 2, the percent of students entering college is decreasing, while the percent of "unknowns" is increasing overtime. We optimistically assume "unknown" students are going directly into the workforce, not unemployment. Moreover, the data above collected from the published state report cards (2017-2018, for example) may overstate the number of students who actually enroll in post-secondary learning institutions, as indicated by the information published on the New Hampshire State department website. All the more, then, if students are going directly into the workforce, how prepared are they to start a career, where they can eventually achieve at least a middle-class standard of living, without at least some post-secondary education?

To that end, the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics (U.S. Department of Labor, 2017) continues to report data affirming that the more post-education education students acquire, the more likely they will earn compensation commensurate with a middle-class livelihood. Ostensibly, this continued education serves as greater preparation for a career. However, how do we support students with continuing their education if students are not choosing to further their education? History may be instructive here.

In the latter half of the 20th century, national and state policy and funding measures pushed support for more academic pursuits and college preparation (Jacob, 2017). For example, the landmark report "A Nation at Risk" (The National Commission on Excellence in Education, 1983) mentions "college" 28 times, "work" sixteen times, and "vocation" twice. The balance of our nation's formula for success tilted in favor of a de facto college mandate. Our nation's public schools and colleges were inextricably linked with national prosperity and wellbeing. Subsequent national policies reinforced this college readiness aim with the No

Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) in 2001 and the Race to the Top (RTTT) competitive grant program in 2009. College was the path to success. Over the same time period, evidence shows that participation in vocational and career and technical education (CTE) in public schools declined (Kreisman and Stange, 2019; Jacob, 2017). Some observers trace the decline of vocational education in favor of college preparation back to the passage of the GI Bill in 1944, which, among other benefits, paid for college for military veterans (Samuelson, 2012; St-Esprit, 2019). These policy efforts were successful at some level. The proportion of American adults between the ages of 25 and 34 with at least a bachelor's degree doubled since the 1970s (College Board, 2010).

However, this college push likely had unanticipated consequences: education policy may have unwittingly drained the workforce of needed skilled jobs in the trades (Krupnick, 2017) and it may have limited access to hands-on, practical learning experiences for students who learn and aspire differently than their more academically minded peers (Wyman, 2015; Robinson, 2015). National and state policies may have short-circuited a non-trivial number of students' motivation and purposes for furthering their education. Said differently, national and state support for continued post-secondary education may have become conflated with "college for all," which made a once-size-fits-all policy solution insufficient at both societal and individual levels**.** *So how do we reconcile the empirically supported fact that more post-secondary education relates to greater probability of attaining middle-class standard of living WITH the fact that a significant student body doesn't engage with learning in the "college-prep" manner? How do we provide this balance in our schools?*

We may need to reconsider how we have thought about past offerings. Robinson (2015) succinctly says "bring back shop class," which many high schools eliminated when national and state polices de-emphasized vocational education. Coincidentally or not, one of the most prevalent and highest rated observations of SAU 34 weakness made by the Strategic Design Team related to the lacking opportunities for students to engage in hands-on learning. A proportion of our students find their purpose and passion using their hands, and our society needs them for supporting services in high demand. "The work of electricians, builders, plumbers, chefs, paramedics, carpenters, mechanics, engineers, security staff, and all the rest is absolutely vital to the quality of each of our lives." (Robinson, 2015).

But if students work with their hands, what about post-secondary education's relationship with higher standards of living? Wyman (2015) provides an effective reconciliation of post-secondary education with vocational education, explaining:

> "Contrary to what many parents believe, students who get job specific skills in high school and choose vocational careers often go on to get additional education. The modern workplace favors those with solid, transferable skills who are open to continued learning. Most young people today will have many jobs over the course of their lifetime, and a good number will have multiple careers that require new and more sophisticated skills."

Vocational and CTE education—programs frequently associated with more hands-on and practical experiences—often provides a greater purpose and motivation for pursuing more

education to students who don't feel the purpose and motivation on a "college preparation" track.

To this end, SAU 34's infrastructure and facilities should be reviewed for its ability to provide more CTE and vocational course offerings. While it is well-documented that these facility considerations are more expensive, the cost of not doing so may very well be a greater burden, in terms of unrealized individual human potential and lacking vital societal services.

For SAU 34, since 2013, the immediate post-secondary whereabouts of more than two SAU graduating cohorts (n=184 students) cannot be accounted for. Perhaps the best case here is that each of these former students cheated the odds and found gainful employment and developing careers, despite their limited education. Students may be put on better trajectories to increase the odds for their well-being if SAU 34 provided more vocational programming in school, but the facilities must have the ability to do so. Currently, they do not.

4. **Aging Infrastructure/Facilities and Their Effect on Student Learning (Part 3):** Finally, inflexible infrastructure, HVAC systems beyond their useful life, building layouts not conducive to 21st century learning design, among others, are examples of outdated facilities that provide questionable support to student learning and wellness (Allen et al., 2017). HDHS was built in 1988, over 30 years ago. Much has changed since then, in terms of what we know about student learning conditions, effective instructional practices, healthy learning environments, and the accelerating pace of change. Public education facilities represent a school system's most conspicuous investment in the value the community places on educating its youth. For reference to the current effort to maintain the facilities as they are, let alone upgrades to address how educational needs have evolved over the last 30 years. For more information, please see Appendix 1.

   WES itself, the building and what is signals, prompts questions about the prudent use of resources for student learning, because of the disproportionate financial effort it takes to support education for relatively few students. Such patterns in spending across the SAU might raise questions about equity concerns. To keep this school maintained and current means regularly investing in the physical plant, the personnel, and the materials at rates that notably exceed the same investments in other buildings on a per pupil basis. In the end, the community may continue to support the operation of WES, knowing these disparities, but at least the community understands the opportunity costs.

5. **Student at Risk:** Suicides have become the second leading cause of death among teenagers, overtaking homicides in 2016 (PRB, 2016), nationally and in New Hampshire (National Alliance on Mental Illness – NH, 2017, p. 21). The suicide rate among teenage girls is the highest it has been in 40 years (the Atlanta Journal Constitution, 2017). In New Hampshire, the issue is particularly acute (Willingham, 2018). Perhaps driving the point more to SAU 34, Hillsboro-Deering High School students reported a higher rate of incidences of suicide-

related thoughts and behavior than the region's students and the state's students (Youth Risk Behavior Report, 2017).

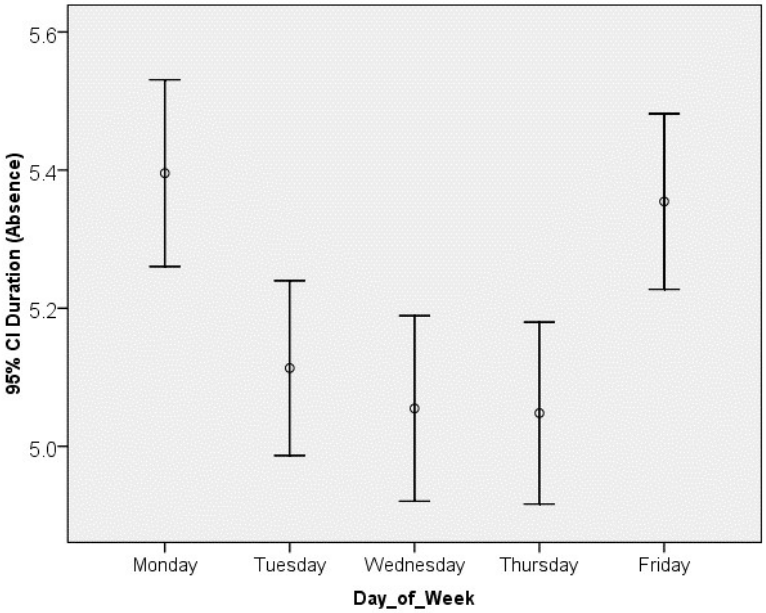
6. **Stable, but Vulnerable Enrollment Trends:** Over the past ten years, most of the SAU 34 schools experienced multiple years of decreasing student enrollment (New Hampshire Department of Education). Currently, student enrollment populations may be stabilizing in the short-term. Over the next decade, however, further enrollment declines may occur. A 2016 study on state and county populations shows that the "[state] population under age 15 will decline from 232,182 in 2010 to 214,819 in 2040 and fall from 17.6 percent to 15.0 percent as a proportion of the total population" (The New Hampshire Office of Energy and Planning, 2016, p. 4). The National Center for Educational Statistics (2019) cites similar trends for school-age enrollment over a shorter timeline, indicating that elementary and secondary student populations may drop by 5 percent or more by 2027 compared to 2015. There are several challenges associated with declining enrollment (RIF'ing staff, under-utilized facilities, etc.).

7. **Staff Absences as an Indicator of Culture:** SAU 34 has approximately 15,000 instances of staff absence—for some part of or whole days—over the past 3 years (from the 16–17 through 18–19 school years). Staff attendance often offers insight into the culture of an organization. Cultures operating at high levels often have a diminished relationship between employee-initiated absences for illness and days of the week. This pattern of absences across the days of the week particularly emerges when absences are focused on whole-day instances (absence duration => 6.5 hours) (chi-square = 105.03, df=12, p < 0.000).

Figure 3: Frequency of Full-Day & Non-Full Sick Day Absences across Days of the Week

		Weekday					Total
		Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	
Full Day (>= 6.5 hrs)	**No**	598	795	739	766	681	3,579
		16.7%	22.2%	20.6%	21.4%	19.0%	100.0%
	Yes	805	829	719	756	861	3,970
		20.3%	20.9%	18.1%	19.0%	21.7%	100.0%

Figure 4: Average Duration of Illness Absences across Days of the Week



Another item observed from the staff absence data relates to the concept of chronic absence (being out of school 10 or more days a year). State education agencies typically track chronic absenteeism ***in students*** as a non-academic measure and many states elected to include this measure in their accountability systems under the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA). By extension, chronic absenteeism ***in teachers*** may be of interest, given the importance effective teachers have for student learning. To give context to what the three-year staff attendance data reveals about chronic absenteeism in SAU 34, the results of a Fordham Institute study of chronic absenteeism (Griffith, 2017) may help with the interpretation of this SAU data. The study found traditional public schools have a chronic absentee rate among its teachers of 28.3%, while charter schools typically had a teacher chronic absentee rate of 10.3%. Against that backdrop, we can report out the following rates of teacher chronic absenteeism for each of the last three years:

Figure 5: Chronic Absenteeism Among Staff

School Year	Number of teachers with 10 or more sick or personal day absences (Total Certified FTE's as reported on State Report Card)
2016–2017	31 (110.5) = 28.05%
2017–2018	27 (107.6)= 25.09%
2018–2019	25 (107.1) = 23.34%

As seen above, the rates of chronic absenteeism don't stray far away from the rates of chronic absenteeism reported for public school teachers in the Griffith (2017) study. Additionally, the table above shares the combined number of sick and personal days taken by the average teacher over the previous three years. Whether or not these numbers are

acceptable rates or not, it would appear that, to the extent possible, one would want to keep those rates as low as possible for the sake of student learning and as indicators of teacher well-being. No doubt, teachers, as with all employees, get sick and need to take care of themselves. However, district and school climate and working conditions can influence the number of instances teachers take time off. Thriving, upbeat and stimulating environments likely have less teacher absences than teachers in less supportive environments. In what ways can SAU 34 continue to push toward the optimal climate/culture that supports its new vision for its students/graduates?

Figure 6: Distribution of Absences across Reason Codes for SAU 34 and National Sample

Absence Reason	Percent of Staff Absences	
	SAU 34 (last 3.0 years)	Frontline Data* (2017-2018)
	N=14,875 absences	N=51,803,260 absences
Bereavement	1.4	1.5
Vacation	3.0	6.1
School Business***	10.7	6.7
Professional Development	2.3	8.5
Other **	9.1	13.4
Personal Days	12.6	17.1
Illness	50.7	45.9
Vacant Position	10.2	N/A

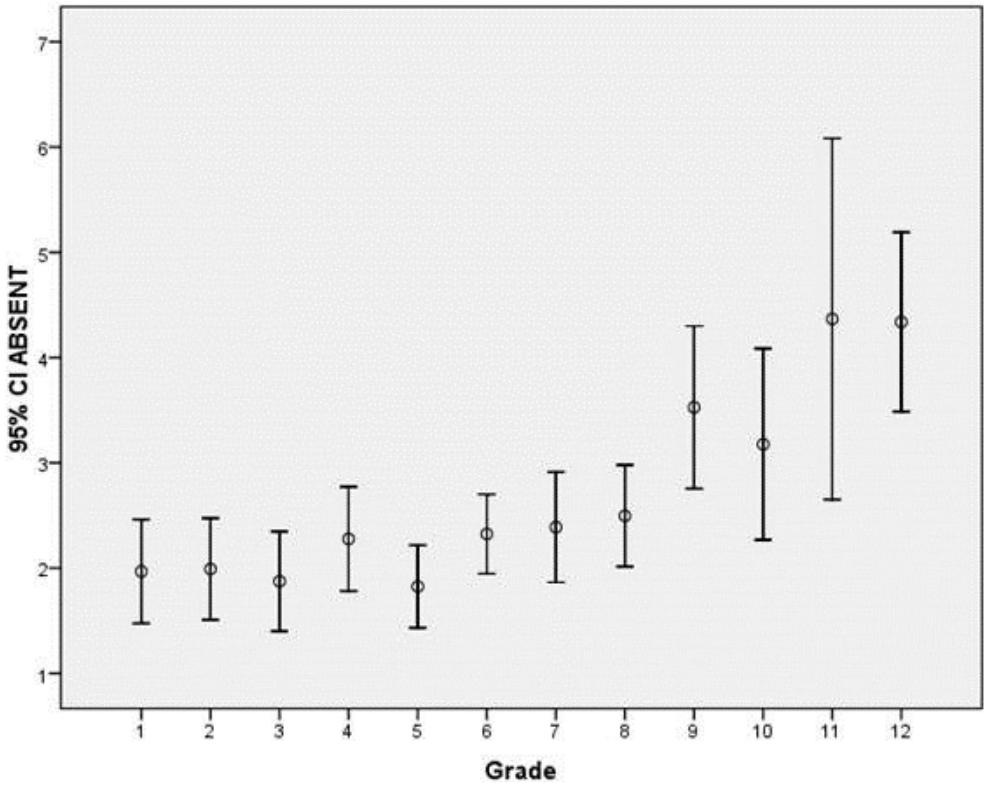
** Over 5,000 K-12 organizations using Frontline's absence and substitute management tool, representing data from 3,789,535 employees and 51,803,260 absences. This data is so comprehensive that the Center for Research and Reform in Education at Johns Hopkins University has declared it to be representative of national trends*

*** Jury duty, administrative leave, religious holidays, Sick day buybacks, PPC union-related, military leave, unexcused absences, workers' compensation, etc.*

**** .Off-site work, internal meetings, etc.*

One take-a-way from the chart above is the notable frequency of "Vacant Position" absences for SAU 34, as compared with the national sample. Coding absences for vacant positions evidently hadn't hit national trends by the time of Frontline's (2017–2018) report, but apparently has grown to be such an issue in SAU 34 that it has its own absence code. When this data was reviewed with leadership, there was speculation that the "Vacant Position" reason code might not be implemented correctly; there really aren't support staff or otherwise positions going unfilled. If this is true, then perhaps that should be addressed so that other trends—potentially concerning or redeeming—aren't masked by this possible erroneous data coding error.

8. **Student Engagement and Motivation**: Student engagement is related to many desired student and school outcomes (Gallup, 2017). Yet, it is very well documented student engagement drops every year students are in school, typically from the end of elementary school through high school (e.g., Busteed, 2013; Marks, 2000; Idaho DOE, 2019). In New Hampshire, student surveys have become more difficult to administer in schools (NHDOE, 2017). Given that, the rate of student attendance across the grades could be explored to see how "students are voting with their feet." Three years of student attendance records were analyzed, and a snapshot of the results are shown below:



To the extent that increasing student absence rates across grades reflects decreasing student engagement in school, the above trend reflects a long-standing pattern of student motivation over their k–12 experience. Relatedly, and perhaps more of a general question for the education industry, why are education leaders, policy makers, and consumers not more concerned by decreasing student motivation and engagement the longer students are in the system? It would seem that the community would want students leaving their k–12 experience at their highest levels of motivation—students engaged and excited for what schools have prepared them for. But, herein, may lie the rub. At least at a local level, to the degree these and other data further confirm this speculation, SAU 34 can do something about this.

Student engagement and motivation are highly related concepts (Ryan & Deci, 2000). Given that, it is not difficult to see that schools, in general, challenge several of the tenets of some of the most robust and current models of human motivation (Kohn, 1994, 2004; Pink, 2006; Darling-Hammond, 1997), often believing that the major drivers of human inspiration are personally endowed versus environmentally provided. The motivational theories and beliefs district and school decision-makers have about human behavior undoubtedly inform the choices they make about student learning conditions. It might be worth reviewing the Daniel Pink TED Talk on human motivation to review what the latest science says on the topic. SAU 34 may find this affirming to what they already do or refreshingly new for their educational landscape.

9. **Purpose of Education in SAU 34**: It was difficult to locate in policy what the purpose of education is in SAU 34. Perhaps it was overlooked, but the explanation for why the

community educates its students was not clearly evident. As was reinforced in the most recent Harvard Business Review edition, organizations that emphasize purpose as a central part of their strategy stand out from the rest. Purpose adds clarity and helps to provide motivation for why staff and students meet at school every day.

Opportunities

1. **A Window for Planning the Next Capital Needs**: "Timing, Timing, Timing." SAU 34 has significant debt obligations expiring August 15, 2022 (SAU 34 Loan Agreement, 2002). The middle school construction bond will be paid off in less than two years. This $14,750,000 flow of money represents an investment the community is making to update its middle school. There's logic to not letting that tax support expire, as it will likely and eventually be needed for the school district again for other updates and improvements. However, another bond would need to be planned and presented to the community for its approval before the current one concludes. As the Town of Hillsboro recognizes in its Capital Improvements Program document, such a plan "… will contribute to stabilizing the town's tax rate and budget each year by planning and budgeting for major capital expenditures well in advance," implying that an on-again/off-again debt burden can have destabilizing and unsettling effects on the community's citizens (Hillsboro, 2018, p.2.). District sources indicate that such a plan would need to be presented and approved by the community by March of 2022, so that the debt acquisition could occur for the 2022–2023 school year (Schmidt, 2019). On the face of it, this would allow enough time for the strategic planning process to catalyze a Capital Improvement Program for the school district, much like the town has recently undertaken. There is more than preliminary data and information that capital is needed.

2. **Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA)**: ESSA, a federal law that updated the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA), increases local control and broadens definitions of success beyond state report cards. Under the law, state accountability and school report cards remain a necessity, but should not serve as the end goal for schools and districts. The field is moving more towards defining new and broader notions of student and district success (Dintersmith, 2018). More specifically, New Hampshire's ESSA plan includes federal approval for of only the few assessment demonstration pilot sites (Understanding ESSA, 2016). The assessment innovation, called PACE (Performance Assessment of Competency Education) is consistent with and supportive of Portrait of a Graduate competency implementation. SAU 34's continued pursuit of innovation under ESSA is encouraged, even if it means "breaking the box" of traditional school structures.

3. **Partnerships for Extended Learning Experiences:** Several of the most frequently cited opportunities mentioned by the Strategic Design Team during the perception SWOT related to increasing community-based partnerships to support student learning outside the classroom (Strategic Design Team Perceived Opportunities, 2019). These outside learning experiences may be considered extended learning opportunities (ELO) through work-based learning, internships, apprenticeships, mentoring, etc. The 2017 PDK Poll of the Public's

Attitudes Toward Public Schools found "[a] vast 82% of Americans support job or career skills classes even if that means students might spend less time in academic classes."

4. **Ideas for Change may be Found more Readily from those who didn't Succeed with the Current System:** Peter Senge, Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) professor and expert on systems thinking, argues change often comes more from the fringes of the system rather than the center, those who benefit most from the current system. If it's possible to reach alumni who did not thrive within the SAU 34 education system, their insights on their experience would be relevant to efforts to create systemic change. SAU 34 should consider the obligations—if any—to those who have not benefitted from their school system and the opportunities to make it more relevant and meaningful for students. SAU 34 should also consider opportunities to think "outside of the box" and tap into this unconventional resource for ideas.

5. **Streamlined Governance**: SAU 34 and its schools are governed by four boards of education (SAU 34). While this arrangement honors local control for the communities' schools, it may not be the optimal structure to organizational functioning, efficiency, and performance. The current governance structure is susceptible to redundancies, overlapping policies, confounding practices, inequality of resources, etc. Actions and behaviors often stem from decisions. If the decision-making process is unclear, then subsequent actions and behaviors will be affected.

Threats

1. **Too Narrow a Conception of Success**: A growing number of public education stakeholders and observers are calling for broader notions of success for our schools and students (PDK, 2017; NSBA, 2014; World Happiness Report, 2017; and Busteed, 20018). The current conceptions of success are often driven by state accountability systems, outdated school structures and practices, learning outcomes that are easier to measure, and inertia resulting from fear of the unfamiliar. However, science and our own observations are compelling us to look more broadly about what education success is and what it means. The implications of what we consider educational success are far reaching, so we must get the goals and subsequent practices right.

2. **Local, State, and Federal Funding**: The overall trend for state and federal financial support is not robust, especially in the last decade since the Great Recession. The general rule is that state and federal funding support cannot be counted on too far into the future (Leacham et al., 2017). Moreover, funding was the most frequently cited threat by the Strategic Design Team. The framing of school expenditures for our students can have an influence in how the community understands its school portion of the real-estate taxes: Are these taxes costs OR are they investments in our community? Or, the more recently quipped question, "If you think education is expensive, imagine the cost of ignorance and unpreparedness?" New Hampshire, like a majority of states in the nation, has been sued for how it allocates and provide financial support across districts. The Claremont decision in 1991 and, more recently, the Winchester et al. decision (2019) showed New Hampshire funding of

education is inadequate (Concord Monitor, June 6 2019). However, also like those states, New Hampshire has not corrected the situation, as enforcement of these state supreme court rulings is proving challenging.

3. **Community Embrace of the Status Quo:** Culture's embrace of the status quo has evolutionary value, as it can be a protective mechanism that leans towards the security of the "known." If things are going well now, then why change? However, this assertion needs to be tested. Our society and the world keep evolving, which necessitates communities to keep pace. This challenge stemming from embracing the status quo pertains to both internal and external communities and their comfort with the familiar. To the extent that a Strategic Plan represents change, focused attention should be applied to nurturing the culture; otherwise, it can stymie the reforms necessary to realize new and necessary visions.

RECOMMENDED NEXT STEPS

Vision, Mission, and Values

SAU 34 may plan on revising its current vision and mission statements, which should be informed by its Portrait of a Graduate and other visioning work recently completed. With this in mind, BFK recommends the school district consider the commonly used definitions below as it considers updating its vision, mission, and values.

Vision	A district's vision statement is its dream statement. It represents how things would look if this district is hitting on all cylinders. Vision statements are usually short phrases or sentences that illustrate the district's aspirations down the road. There are some characteristics that most vision statements share. Generally speaking, vision statements should: • Be easy to communicate— "T-shirt slogan-like" (i.e., succinct and easy to remember) • Represent a dream that is beyond what one might think is possible (i.e., audacious) • Clarify the future direction and ultimate priority of the district (i.e., clarifying) • Help employees see themselves "building a cathedral" rather than "laying bricks" (i.e., larger purpose) • Build on the district's strengths (i.e., capitalize on points of pride)
Mission	A mission statement is a concise description of an organization's main purpose. It answers the question, "why does our business exist?" (Ward, 2017, p.1). One advantage of having a mission statement is for ensuring everyone is "on the same page" and maintaining consistency of purpose over time. The main difference between a vision and a mission statement is that the vision statement looks to the future and the mission statement declares the here and now. The vision statement answers, "where are we going?" and the mission statement highlights "who we are." There are several steps to developing a quality mission statement: 1. Describe what the school district does 2. Describe how the school district generally operates (include a couple of the most important values) 3. Add why the school district pursues its mission (the "why" can be a motivator in itself!) Sources: Community Tool Box (2018), Cook, W.J. (1995), Gabriel & Farmer (2009), Olson, E. (2018), Ward, S. (2017)
Values/Beliefs	An organization's values are the essence of its culture. Values provide a set of expectations for the behaviors and dispositions needed to realize the vision. As John Coleman says in *Harvard Business Review*, "the originality of … values is less important than their authenticity" (2013, p. 1).

APPENDIX A: REFERENCES

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APPENDIX B: 5–YEAR FACILITY NEEDS

HILLSBORO-DEERING COOPERATIVE SCHOOL DISTRICT
FIVE YEAR CAPITAL MAINTENANCE PLAN

Item	District-Wide	Purpose	2019-20	2020-21	2021-22	2022-23	2023-24	TOTAL
1	Repair Pavement	Repair		$ 20,000		$ 20,000		$ 40,000
2	Kitchen Equipment Upgrades	Upgrade			$ 14,000	$ 19,000		$ 33,000
Item	Elementary School	Purpose	2019-20	2020-21	2021-22	2022-23	2023-24	TOTAL
3	Repair Roofs	Repair			$ 75,000		$ 120,000	$ 195,000
4	Exterior Brick Repairs	Repair					$ 35,000	$ 35,000
5	HVAC Trapper Brown	New	$50,000	$150,000				$ 200,000
6	HVAC Electric Wing	New		$350,000		$400,000		$ 750,000
7	Repave Main Parking Lot	Repair				$175,000		$ 175,000
8	Front Entrance Improvement	New			$140,000			
9	Replace Playground	Repair					$ 285,000	$ 285,000
Item	Middle School	Purpose	2019-20	2020-21	2021-22	2022-23	2023-24	TOTAL
10	Ductwork Cleaning	Repair			$150,000			$ 150,000
11	Repair Roofs	Repair					$ 50,000	$ 50,000
Item	High School	Purpose	2019-20	2020-21	2021-22	2022-23	2023-24	TOTAL
12	Replace Pneumatic HVAC Controls	New	$20,000	$100,000				$ 120,000
13	Repair Roofs	Repair				$ 60,000		$ 60,000
14	Second Floor HVAC	New			$150,000	$150,000		$ 300,000
15	HVAC Gym	New					$ 200,000	$ 200,000
16	Replace Upper Bleachers	Upgrade				$ 40,000		$ 40,000
17	Office Area HVAC Replacement	Repair	$90,000		$140,000			$ 230,000
18	Upper Field Redone	Repair					$ 250,000	$ 250,000
19	HVAC Control Panel Change Over	Repair		$ 50,000			$ 100,000	$ 150,000
	TOTALS:		$160,000	$670,000	$669,000	$864,000	$1,040,000	$3,263,000

Expenditure By Category

Paving	Roofs	HVAC	Other
$ 40,000			
			$ 33,000
	$195,000		
			$ 35,000
		$200,000	
		$750,000	
$175,000			
$285,000			
		$150,000	
	$ 50,000		
		$120,000	
	$ 60,000		
		$300,000	
		$200,000	
			$ 40,000
		$230,000	
			$250,000
		$150,000	
$500,000	$305,000	$2,100,000	$358,000