



October 2017

Dear Lamoille North Supervisory Union Parents and Community:

Welcome to fall in Vermont!

It has been an unusual beginning of the season in that we have had recent days that have felt like summer, both in terms of degrees and humidity, and days that have felt like fast approaching winter chill. We are off to a busy and exciting start to the school year. Some recent highlights include the 2017 Spelling Bee, the Lamoille Union High School 50th Anniversary celebration, and the beginning of an exciting school renovation. School athletic events have had an atmosphere of togetherness and camaraderie. In addition to our regular sports, this fall was also the inaugural season for a formal VPA cooperative agreement between Lamoille Union and BFA Fairfax for football.

As I think about what I want to say in this letter, I reflect on the things you have stated that are important to all of you. At times, I have shared the successes and celebrations we have to report from our schools. Other times I have shared how we make decisions about things like school closings or what the roles and responsibilities are of our Board members; still other times, I have talked about legislation or trends that we are seeing in the world of education. However, from recent conversations with members of our school community, I am responding to a request for a focus based on the interests identified by students, families and community partners. So the theme of this letter will be the safety and security of our students.

As a mother, my responsibility is to protect my two children and to keep them safe at all costs. As a superintendent, my primary obligation is to protect the almost 2000 children who comprise the Lamoille North Supervisory Union community. I sometimes reflect on the mission of other professions: Doctors help diagnose and treat disease and promote wellness; the media reports news it believes will draw an audience or will resonate with some or many people; and educators do everything they can do to ensure the academic success and emotional well-being of children and consider it a privilege to do so. In my mind, there is no greater calling.

So, what are some of the ways we ensure the safety and well-being of our students? We deliver instruction about the dangers of drug and alcohol use; we facilitate social skills groups to support conflict resolution; we mentor our students; we have school-based clinicians on hand to support those in need; we have tools for monitoring who has access to our buildings to ensure that we are welcoming our students, staff, and trusted community while simultaneously being able to identify people who are unknown to our administration and whose intentions may not always be clear.

Our safety and security systems also aid us in our legal and ethical obligations to investigate bullying, harassment and hazing. We contract with a School Resource Officer who works with us to provide outreach and education and who occasionally teams with us to investigate situations. We protect the privacy rights of our students and handle conflicts that arise according to law, policies and procedures. We pay the utmost attention to the care of students and create environments that ensure emotional well-being. Our student-run clubs and groups are flourishing at the elementary and secondary levels and they offer the opportunity for all students to explore and nurture their interests in the safety of the school environment.

Why is all of this information important? As parents, you have the right to hear about what our schools do to protect your children. As with anything in life, there will be people who agree or disagree with policies or programs we have in place, but that is the beauty of living in a world where freedom of speech and the ability to offer many perspectives is encouraged. It is in that spirit that I invite any and all of you to reach out to me to express your views, concerns, or questions. I am always happy to talk to you about how decisions are made, or why we have certain policies. I place the highest value on knowing what is important to you as parents and thus, the people who know your children best. I can be reached directly at 851-1171. I look forward to many conversations with you.

My very best to you,

Catherine Gallagher, M.Ed.
Superintendent of Schools