

PUBLIC
SCHOOL
Choice



New Hampshire

About This Booklet

Public school choice in New Hampshire education means many things to many people. This publication aims to highlight a few of the choices available to New Hampshire families. In these pages, you will see what the Commissioner and the New Hampshire Department of Education mean when they speak of “choice” and “Following The Child.” You will see some of the excitement that is being felt in our state’s educational community. New Hampshire is trying new approaches, fostering strong learning environments, and assessing the effectiveness of those approaches. Read on to see how students are reaping the benefits of the care, concern, and the comprehensive approach to learning that are the hallmarks of New Hampshire education.



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A Note from the New Hampshire Commissioner of Education, Lyonel B. Tracy

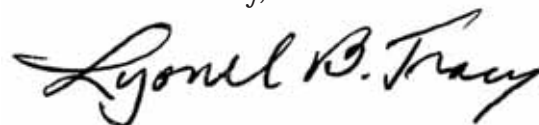
Opportunities for public school choice have been growing quietly in New Hampshire. More and more districts are grasping the fact that one size does not fit all students. New Hampshire has changed the rules, giving families greater choice in educational opportunities and allowing a personalized learning experience for each student that includes the student's own passions, interests, and unique learning style. Central to this is the Follow The Child initiative, in which school districts document tangible evidence of growth for each student. Educators, parents, and community members facilitate the students' progress by drawing on the experience and resources in and out of the school.

Public school choice initiatives have been leading the expansion and exploration of community resources through online distance learning, internships, independent studies, community service, and college instruction. School choice opportunities have been developed in a variety of locations across the state, from the Alternative Middle School in Nashua to the Mountain View Academy in Whitefield, the Monadnock Community Connections School in Surry, and the Seacoast Charter School in Exeter.

The new Minimum Standards for School Approval, passed by the State Board of Education in May 2005, will facilitate the growth of these opportunities for students and their families. Educators, administrators, and citizens from across New Hampshire contributed to the design of the state's education policy.

This booklet is meant to help students and their parents understand the school choices available to them. I hope that you find it informative and helpful in choosing your child's educational experience!

Sincerely,



Lyonel B. Tracy



A Message from the Chair of the New Hampshire State Board of Education, David B. Ruedig

Good things are happening in New Hampshire public schools. At the State Board level, we have listened to our citizens and to experienced educators and developed public policy that allows for high-quality, flexible, and personalized education. This personalization has many names—high-school reform, real-world learning, and extended learning among them. We prefer to use the term *Follow The Child*, which emphasizes personalized learning and supports the personal, social, physical, and academic growth of each student.

The Board has set the general framework for the Follow The Child initiative in its recently passed standards for school approval. After two years of statewide committee work with educators, citizens, and consultants, the State Board produced a draft of new state minimum standards for school approval. We then held five public hearings throughout the state and made revisions based on public input, finally adopting new state minimum standards in May 2005. We are focused on helping local districts develop a more personalized approach to education so that our students learn more, graduate from high school, and are better prepared for the next steps in their lives.

The new standards allow flexibility for local school districts. We have developed standards that call for proven student outcomes, and public schools throughout the state are developing policies that support that goal. We are encouraging schools and youngsters to make connections and integrate learning. We are developing policy that supports the flourishing of learning communities. And we are supporting schools and districts in thinking about ways in which to organize time and technology.

Through our grade-level and grade-span expectations, we have developed benchmarks for what students should know and be able to demonstrate in reading, writing, mathematics, science, and social studies. We have produced a state-wide testing system that provides for accountability. We want to make sure that every third-grader reads at grade level.

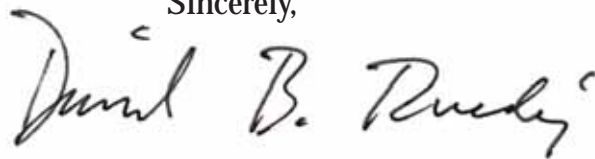
In New Hampshire, we have tested the waters of Charter and Choice schools as well as alternative programming. The Career Technical Education program promotes career and technical education as a total educational philosophy. We were one of the first states to offer post-

Early learning lays the foundation for success in later years and serves as a foundation for effective implementation of our Follow The Child initiative. – David B. Ruedig

secondary education credit for youngsters still in high school through our Running Start program with the technical and community colleges.

Preparing our children for the challenges ahead of them is a big job. But the New Hampshire Department of Education, the State Board of Education, and local districts are supporting that preparation in many ways. Good things are happening in New Hampshire public education.

Sincerely,



David B. Ruedig

What Parents Should Know About Educational Choice in New Hampshire

Parents can exercise choice for their children's education in many ways. The most common may be in choosing where to live based on the reputation of a school or school district. They may also choose to send their children to charter or private schools (religious or secular), or to educate their children at home. This booklet is designed to give parents and families information about some of the programs offered by various types of public schools in New Hampshire.

Why Should You Choose Your Child's School?

You know your own child's personality, strengths, and weaknesses. You know what interests will light up your child's eyes and what types of environments will help him or her thrive. Being a part of your child's education is the best way to ensure academic achievement and individual growth and development for your son or daughter.

Step One: Consider Your Child and Your Family

Think about what you want a school to do for your child. Write down the things that are most important to you in a school. If appropriate, ask your child to write down what he or she wants from a school. You may want to refer to these lists as you read about the various programs in this booklet.

You should also consider your child's age and developmental level. Picking a school for a young child is different from selecting one for an adolescent. As youngsters move through academic life, they begin to take more ownership of their school programs. They need to identify themselves as individuals, apart from their families, but hopefully



Jack Callhoun



of their families. They want to feel reciprocity between the adults around them and themselves—a new understanding of themselves in their world. Upon entering their teens, they no longer want to be treated like the 12-year-old they were but recognized as the 13-year-

old they are. Finally, they need to feel that they are responsible for their own lives. They are often not very articulate about the subtle changes they undergo, nor are adults always able to recognize these changes. As schools and families listen to the aspirations of youngsters, they encourage that growth and responsibility. Schools are often the bridge to a youngster's future, and educators often say that it is the middle years of schooling that are crucial to higher education, high school completion, or employment readiness.

Step Two: Gather Information about Schools

This booklet is designed to help you start this process and become familiar with some of the educational choices available throughout the state. You will want to supplement the information contained here with additional research relevant to your school district or area. You may have to make phone calls, collect written and electronic material from different schools, and look for reports in your local newspapers. Please see the Resource Guide for a list of additional resources and Web sites.

Specific areas you may want to look at include:

Curriculum – Does the school have a strong program of core academic subjects such as English, history, mathematics, science, arts, and world languages? What courses does the school offer in addition to the core subjects?

Approach to Learning – Does the school have a particular approach to teaching and learning (this may include project-based assessments, individual portfolios, and frequent testing)? Do you think your child will enjoy and learn from the approach the school employs?



Academic Performance – How do the school’s test scores compare to those of other schools? How well have children similar to yours performed on these tests?

Behavior Policy – Does the school have a discipline policy that makes sense for your child? What does the school do to help develop character and citizenship? Does the school have a program and support mechanisms to prevent and address behavioral problems?

Safety – What measures has the school taken to ensure safety? How does the school prevent and handle problems with drugs, alcohol, and tobacco?

Special Offerings – What extracurricular activities does the school offer? Do all students have the opportunity to participate?

Facilities and Services – Do students have access to computers and to the Internet in the classroom and library? Is there a well-stocked library or media center where students can check out books and do research?

Admissions Procedures – Is there an application process? Are there eligibility criteria? Are there other admissions requirements?

Step Three: Visit and Observe Schools

You may always visit a school before selecting it as the right fit for your child. If possible, tour the building during school hours and visit a few classes. Avoid visiting schools during the first or last week of a term in order to get a realistic sense of how the school operates. Meet with the Principal to get your questions answered. You may also want to attend an open house or a parent-teacher association meeting.

Adapted from Choosing a School for Your Child, U.S. Department of Education, 2005

at: www.ed.gov/parents/schools/find/choose/pub_pg4.html#choosing



Jack Calhoun

New Hampshire's Follow The Child Initiative

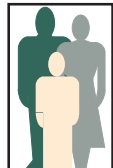
New Hampshire's Follow The Child initiative helps schools foster student success by emphasizing personalized learning and assessment. With its focus on measuring growth through all areas of each student's life, Follow The Child puts New Hampshire children at the center of the state's educational system. The Follow The Child initiative captures and expands upon the spirit of the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 and the urgency to move each child to academic proficiency and beyond.

A key goal of Follow The Child is to improve the personal, social, physical, and academic well-being of each child. The New Hampshire Department of Education is working with the Quaglia Institute for Student Aspirations to help schools with this challenge. The Institute has identified **8 Conditions that Make a Difference™** in increasing student aspirations and their ability to reach their full potential. The institute's conditions are:

- Belonging** – Feeling like you are part of a group, while knowing you are special for who you are.
- Heroes** – Having someone who believes in you and who is there when you need him or her.
- Sense of Accomplishment** – Being recognized for many different types of success, including hard work and being a good person.
- Fun and Excitement** – Enjoying what you are doing, whether at work, school, or play.
- Curiosity and Creativity** – Asking “Why?” and “Why not?” about the world around you.
- Spirit of Adventure** – Being excited to try new things, even when you're not sure whether you will be good at them.
- Leadership and Responsibility** – Making your own decisions and accepting responsibility for your choices.
- Confidence to Take Action** – Setting goals and taking the steps you need to reach them.

When schools foster the eight conditions, student and staff aspirations flourish. These conditions provide a framework for the **Follow The Child** initiative.

TIPS FOR



PARENTS

Check out this publication's resource guide for a list of sources and Web sites on Follow The Child. See the Quaglia Institute Web site at:

www.qjsa.org

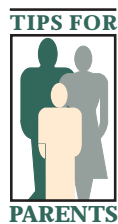
Understanding Grade-Level Expectations for Your Child

The New Hampshire Department of Education, Rhode Island Department of Education, and Vermont Department of Education have developed a common set of grade-level expectations, known as the New England Common Assessment Program Grade-Level Expectations (NECAP GLEs), and test specifications in mathematics, reading, and writing. In addition, each partner has developed local expectations that articulate concepts and skills that students should know and be able to do that would be difficult to capture in an on demand test. The partner states were committed to building coherent sets of expectations that would focus, not narrow, the curricula and that would support good instruction.



With the GLEs, parents can understand what their child is expected to know at the completion of each level of education.

Throughout the development process of written expectations, each of the NECAP partners has relied on the expertise of educators in their states, who made numerous insightful contributions in an effort to help support meaningful instruction in mathematics and reading/language arts.



You can find the complete set of grade-level expectations and grade-span expectations on the New Hampshire Department of Education Web site:

www.ed.state.nh.us/NECAP and

www.ed.state.nh.us/education/doe/organization/curriculum/NECAP/HS_NECAP.htm

Alternative Educational Programs

Highlight on:

- **The Pemi-Baker Academy, Plymouth**
- **The Academy of Learning and Technology, Nashua**

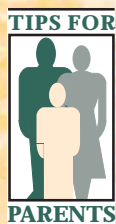
Many New Hampshire public schools recognize that not all students learn best in a traditional classroom setting. Some students require a different approach to teaching, learning, and assessment. A number of New Hampshire schools have successfully created programs to meet the needs of these non-traditional learners.

Research shows that the most effective alternative programs have most, if not all, of the following components:



- Opportunities for real-world learning (internships, service learning, etc.) to make the classroom more relevant
- Teachers who know how to differentiate their instruction
- Smaller classes with more individual instruction
- Better communication between parents and school

These components can be the factors that keep a student in school until graduation and provide the foundation for their continuing education beyond high school.



Visit the New Hampshire Department of Education Web site at:
www.ed.state.nh.us

The Pemi-Baker Academy

94 Highland Street

Plymouth, New Hampshire 03264

(603) 536-5348

www.pemi-baker.sau48.k12.nh.us/pemibakeracademy/PBA-home.htm



Jack Calhoun

Pemi-Baker, an alternative high school in Plymouth, New Hampshire, features a low student-teacher ratio and cross-campus programming with Plymouth Regional High School. Students who choose Pemi-Baker Academy (PBA) come from a variety of academic backgrounds and levels of success. The courses offered

The Pemi-Baker Academy

are designed to prepare graduates for both postsecondary education and immediate entry into full-time employment. Every student completes and follows a Personal

Plan, which includes a plan for behavior management, a plan to complete the required course of studies, and a plan for life after graduation.

The academic day at PBA has two sessions, one in the morning devoted to independent study with a focus on credit recovery classes, tutoring sessions, and doing makeup work. An additional component of the morning session is called Reconnecting Youth, a program that addresses the

needs of a small group of students who are disconnected from society and their peers. The afternoon session is more structured, with the emphasis on teacher-facilitated classes, team activities, and group assignments. Finally, there is an afternoon study hall for students in need of additional help and support to complete their studies.

The goal of the Pemi-Baker Academy is to help students attain the knowledge and experi-

Staff Quote

“There seems to be a growing number of kids who have the motivation to graduate, but they just can’t do it in the regular high school. They just need a different place to learn. Alternative programs are a great resource for them.”

*— Tom Fish, Director,
The Pemi-Baker Academy*



ence necessary to succeed socially, academically, and professionally in today's society. The school's commitment is to the philosophy that the longer students can be kept in school, the more opportunities there will be to effect positive change. *(Based on the Pemi-Baker Academy Web site and interviews. Used with permission.)*



Misty Gorski

Student Profile

As a young woman, Brenda (not her real name) lacked self-confidence. She had trouble controlling her emotions and often dissolved into tears at the slightest provocation. She moved out of her parents' house while still in high school and had to work to support an apartment and car. She says that she "was going to quit [school] hundreds of times." Instead, she enrolled at Pemi-Baker, and as she got closer to graduation, she began to talk about joining the military. She followed through, became a Marine, and served for three years, doing two tours in Iraq. She saved money and is now planning to attend college. She says that without Pemi-Baker Academy, she would have been completely lost.



The Academy of Learning and Technology

Boys and Girls Club

47 Grand Avenue

Nashua, New Hampshire

(603) 594-4326

www.nashua.edu/alt/default.htm



Deanna Lawlor

The Academy of Learning and Technology (ALT) is an alternative middle school in Nashua. According to the school's Web site, a primary focus at ALT is to build a positive and caring learning environment for students who have not always met their full potential. The school's staff believes that a positive learning environment is one that students enjoy, one where they know that the teachers, principal, and support staff like and respect them and have a vested interest in their academic and personal success.

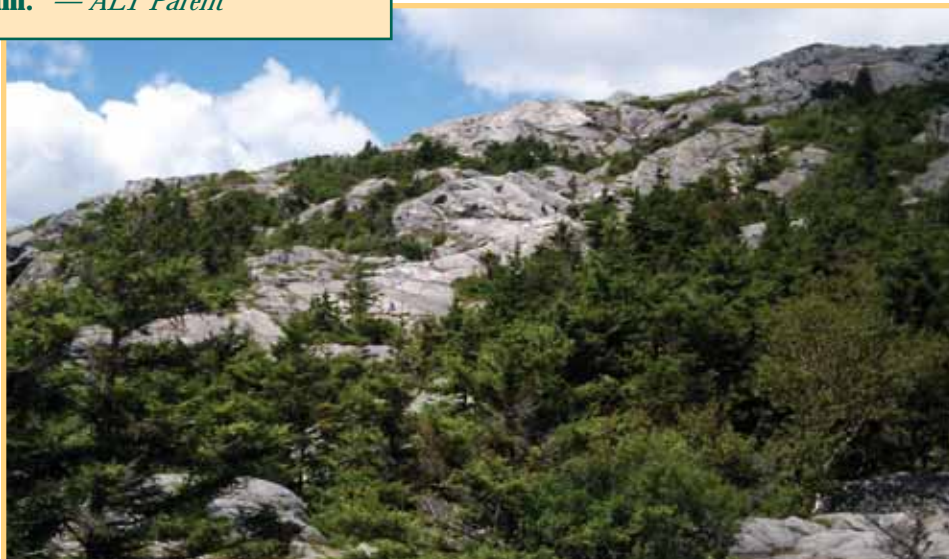
The Academy of Learning and Technology

ALT is a community of students and adults committed to the success of each learner. The school received the 2006 New Hampshire Middle School of Excellence Award from the New Hampshire Excellence in Education Awards Committee.

The school's focus is on enhancing academic achievement, particularly in the

"[My son] has really taken to this school, and I am pleased that ALT is here for him and children like him." — ALT Parent

areas of literacy and reading. The Scholastic READ 180 Program, along with other



Deanna Lawlor

Student Profile

John, 15, is currently a straight-A tenth-grader. He came to ALT as a retained seventh-grader, with failing grades in all subjects and approximately 50 days of absenteeism from a local middle school. His family situation is extremely difficult and involves substance abuse and sporadic incarceration of a parent. During his first year at ALT, he failed to come to school, and a truancy petition was lodged. He turned this around, and he did not miss one day of school in the rest of the seventh grade and on into the eighth grade, and he brought his grades up to B's. As a ninth-grader, John received all A's, attended school daily and was the top end-of-the-year award recipient. When asked why ALT works for him, John says, "My teachers here work with me one-on-one and care about me."



Deanna Lawlor

nationally recognized best practices, is the cornerstone of the school's language arts curriculum. The school's core curriculum includes math, social studies, and science. Students also participate in art and physical education. They are given opportunities to learn in a variety of ways—small classroom settings, one-on-one attention, socio-emotional support, and nontraditional approaches. *(Adapted with permission from the ALT Web site.)*

"Since joining ALT, we have seen unbelievable improvement in my son's attitude towards school. ... He is finally learning. The teachers at ALT are respectful and understanding towards my son. He is actually happy to go to school." — ALT Parent

Career Technical Education

Highlight on:

- **The Mountain View Academy Hospitality Management Program, Whitefield**
- **The Veterinary Technology Program (Vet Tech), Hudson**

New Hampshire has a robust system of Career and Technical Education (CTE) that consists of 30 centers statewide (including two in Vermont) that this year are preparing 11,324 students for jobs and careers. CTE is an eleventh- and twelfth-grade program funded by the Federal Carl Perkins Career and Technical Education Act. CTE centers offer students a choice of career paths that include:

Finance, Business, Management, and Administration; Agriculture, Food, and Natural Resources; Law, Public Safety, and Security; the Arts, Audio Visual Technology, and Communications; Health Services; Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics; Information Technology; Transportation, Distribution, and Logistics; Architecture and

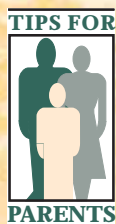


A lodging management program student of The Mountain View Academy.

Construction; Education and Training; Manufacturing; Human Services; Government and Public Administration; Marketing, Sales and Services.

Many CTE centers allow students in the ninth and tenth grades to take CTE courses as part of a career exploration. If a student elects to focus on one career path, he or she may take a double period of that class in the eleventh and twelfth grades. In this way, centers offer students exposure to a variety of careers, hands-on experiences, real work learning opportunities, internships, and in some cases the opportunity to earn college credit while still in high school.

Two associated programs provide additional opportunities for students. Tech Prep serves 6,002 students in thirty-seven programs statewide, and the Registered Apprenticeship Classroom Training program is offered in seven locations to 887 apprentices, primarily in electrical and plumbing disciplines. Tech Prep has fostered innovation for both high-school and community technical college programs by enabling students to follow career paths from high school to college in such areas as Pre-Engineering and Manufacturing (Project Lead the Way), Biotechnology, Financial Services (the Finance Academy), Travel and Tourism (in association with the New Hampshire Restaurant and Lodging Association), and Information Technology. *(Adapted from the NHDOE Web site. Used with permission.)*



Find information on the Tech Prep program at: www.ed.state.nh.us/techprep
See facts on the Registered Apprenticeship Classroom Training Program at: www.ed.state.nh.us/education/doe/organization/adultlearning/Career%20Development/FAQapp.htm

The Mountain View Academy Hospitality Management Program

*Arthur T. Paradise Technical Center
White Mountains Regional High School
127 Regional Road
Whitefield, New Hampshire 03598.
(603) 837-2528*



The Mountain View Academy Hospitality Management Program is a Lodging Management Program for students in the seven northern New Hampshire school districts that compose Vocational Region #3.

The Mountain View Academy Hospitality Management Program

According to the SAU 36 Web site, this unique program is a cooperative project between the White Mountains Regional School District and the Mountain View Grand Resort and Spa in Whitefield, New Hampshire. Additional support comes from the New Hampshire Lodging and Restaurant Association and the North Country School-to-Career/Tech Prep Partnership. Students who are selected for the program learn management and leadership skills as they develop an understanding of the various facets of the hospitality industry.

The Academy uses a curriculum developed by the American Hotel and Lodging Association's Educational Institute. The Lodging Management Program curriculum provides students with a comprehensive study of hotel operations. The hospitality students spend the first two periods of every school day





on site at the historic, five-star Mountain View Grand Resort and Spa. First-year students spend three days a week in the classroom located at the hotel, and the other two days are spent working with a department manager from one of the resort's ten departments. Second-year students spend two days in the classroom and the other three working on projects, such as developing marketing campaigns with the resort's general manager.

The program has been recognized with multiple national awards. Students participating in the program experience growth in personal confidence and communication skills and developing marketable skills in the hospitality industry.



Over ninety percent of the program's graduates have chosen to major in business or hospitality management after high school. *(Adapted from Mountain View materials. Used with permission.)*

The Veterinary Technology Program (Vet Tech)

Wilbur H. Palmer Vocational-Technical Center

Alvirne High School

200 Derry Road

Hudson, New Hampshire 03051

(603) 886-1260

www.alvirnehs.org/departments/voc/programs.php



Among the many programs offered by the Wilbur H. Palmer Vocational-Technical Center, some of the more unusual is its Agriculture Programs. The Center maintains a small herd of dairy cows and is involved in the production of milk. In the Production Agriculture program, students learn about agribusiness through such skills as record-keeping, site management, and animal restraining.

The Veterinary Technology Program (Vet Tech)

Additionally, the Center is one of the few to offer a program in Veterinary Technology. A solid science background lays the foundation for this animal technology program. In these complex times, it is difficult to get even an entry-level animal care job without science skills in diagnosis and disease prevention. In Vet Tech, students explore anatomy and physiology, genetics, breeding, kennel work, pet health, and grooming. Students have the opportunity to do hands-on work with small animals, don-



Joe Gallagher

keys, and cows and to work in a dog-grooming facility used by many local residents and faculty members.

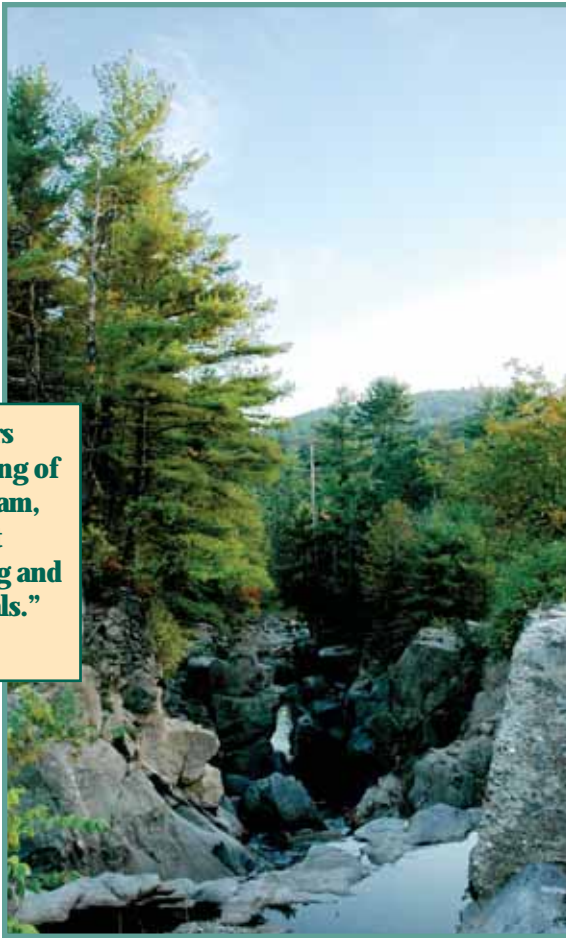
Sophomores, juniors, and seniors can participate in this two-year Career Cluster program, with the opportunity to

“The excellent Vet Tech Program offers lots of experience and hands-on learning of real animal care. Because of this program, my daughter is now able to apply at vet offices to begin working in a vet setting and has the confidence to work with animals.”

— *Vet Tech Parent*

earn college credit via the Running Start Program. The program is open to all Alvirne students, and those from sending schools may also apply. In

addition, some students intern at local veterinary practices. Students who participate in this Cluster are often members of the Future Farmers of America and have won many national awards at FFA competitions. *(Adapted from the SAU 81 Web site. Used with permission.)*



Joe Gallagher