

BANFIELD: From SAU16/Exeter to SAU92/Hinsdale

Problems Persist for Superintendent David Ryan

By Ann Marie Banfield

May 21, 2026

Public trust in schools depends on accountability, transparency, and a culture where parents, teachers, and students can raise concerns without fear of retaliation. When that trust breaks down, families leave, teachers resign, and communities fracture.

New Hampshire has now seen similar concerns emerge in multiple school districts connected to Superintendent David Ryan's leadership.

Years ago, while serving as Superintendent of SAU16, Ryan faced significant public opposition from parents. Families circulated a petition expressing "loss of confidence" in district leadership. Their concerns ranged from prolonged school closures during COVID, masking policies, student surveillance programs, social-emotional assessments, and what they viewed as administrative overreach.

Whether one agreed with every criticism or not, the frustration was real. Some families ultimately removed their children from the district, and several parents invested their time and resources into launching a new charter school alternative.

Ryan eventually departed SAU16 after the school board agreed not to renew his contract.

Before arriving in SAU16, Ryan served in Manchester, where he publicly discussed encouraging students toward activism and civic engagement. Critics questioned whether schools should prioritize political activism over traditional civics education and academic instruction.

Today, many of the same concerns about leadership and accountability are surfacing again in Hinsdale, where Ryan became interim superintendent in 2023 and later received a three-year contract.

A recent petition in Hinsdale calls for the resignation of a school principal following allegations that a student experienced repeated racial harassment and physical assault. According to the parent who launched the petition, the family felt the administration failed to respond appropriately and instead redirected scrutiny toward the victim. As one resident reported, this resulted in the student protest and walkout over the racial harassment and assault allegations. They specifically cited the principal's previous record. The district punished the students involved, and the only other response was a letter from Ryan admitting the district "failed to prevent harm."

Bullying and racial incidents can occur in any school district. The real test of leadership is how administrators respond when they happen. Parents expect transparency, accountability, and decisive action that prioritizes student safety.

At the same time, Hinsdale teacher Timothy O'Neil recently published an op-ed describing what he called systemic failures within the district. He cited concerns about administrative accountability, inadequate vetting of school leaders, and retaliation against teachers who speak out. O'Neil stated that despite receiving strong evaluations, his contract was not renewed after raising concerns about district leadership and student welfare.

Separately, law enforcement has reportedly investigated allegations involving stalking connected to the school community. During a school board meeting, concerns were raised publicly about whether the administration responded adequately after reports were made.

These incidents deserve careful review, not dismissal.

For more than 20 years, I have worked with parents across New Hampshire who are trying to advocate for their children within public schools. One pattern appears repeatedly: many parents and teachers are afraid to speak publicly because they fear retaliation, professional consequences, or social targeting within their communities.

That fear alone should concern every citizen, regardless of political affiliation.

Healthy school systems do not silence criticism. They welcome transparency because transparency builds trust. Teachers should not fear professional consequences for raising concerns about student welfare. Parents should not feel intimidated for questioning school policies. Students should never feel unsafe in their schools.

Public education depends on strong relationships between families, educators, administrators, and school boards. When those relationships deteriorate, districts lose not only trust, but students, teachers, and long-term community support.

The people of Hinsdale — and communities across New Hampshire — deserve leadership that restores confidence rather than deepens division.

Ann Marie Banfield has been researching education reform for over a decade and actively supports parental rights, literacy and academic excellence in K-12 schools.