The following represents the Superintendent’s status review of the Board’s 2015-2016 goals. A goal assessment should help with the Board’s discussions and decisions at the goal setting session scheduled for Saturday, June 4, 2016. The principles have appropriately sustained much of our work for many years, and it remains important to maintain them.

A school district’s foremost responsibilities relate to student achievement. As I’ve stated in past years, it’s of great benefit to have a policy and decision making body that isn’t afraid to challenge the status quo or district officials’ decisions while it strives to maintain a closely aligned philosophy for educational programs. Our work consistently addresses the critical elements of instruction and assessment; an environment to facilitate learning; the effective application of technology; and using effective communication to engage community support. Several years ago the Board added an emphasis on recruiting and retaining excellent staff, which speaks to the expectation that we provide our students with the best and most well-intentioned instructors.

The four strategies of our District’s Strategic Plan remain a focus. While not every indicator has been met, we have made dramatic progress in technology, facility improvement, communications, and 21st Century learning. That work continues. Our interest is ensuring the community’s satisfaction with our schools’ performances. We continuously seek new strategies and related resources to meet our students’ needs for future success. Leadership Team members are consistent in the routine challenges that teachers of all levels and in all disciplines meet high performance standards and expect the best possible work from students and themselves. I’m proud of the administrators, the teachers, and of this entire school community.

The Board’s goals continue to help to focus everyone’s work.

MWD:Idc
Analysis of Goal Status
2015-2016 SSB Goals

Principles:

1. To continue to improve the delivery of all instruction, including non-traditional instruction methods, with priority on literacy and mathematics instruction, and to quantify the educational performance of all students through a multi-dimensional assessment model.

Rating – Developing

This long-standing principle remains a core responsibility, and we continue to be in the developing stage. This is a principle that will always evolve. Three literacy specialists at the elementary level; a literacy specialist at the middle school; and a separate and very accomplished reading specialist serving district-wide all offer modeling and coaching in support of our Director’s work and expectations. This support model works well as it ensures that similar effective strategies are shared across schools and throughout grade levels. Our Director of Literacy oversees the specialists and works very closely with the Assistant Superintendent to coordinate content and instruction. Of significance last year was the development of four instructional units at each K-8 grade level with an expectation that each grade teach at least one formal reading and writing unit. All of the work is based upon Lucy Calkins models has been the development of instructional reading and writing units based upon Lucy Calkins’ work. Most of our teachers completed more than one unit of study. The content continues to be refined as we develop better understanding of our students’ achievement levels.

In addition to the literacy work, our Director of K-8 Mathematics has been working with the high school Director to develop a system of content continuity throughout the system. This is something we’ve worked on for years, but with two effective Mathematics Directors in place, the vision is becoming a reality. In addition, and with the K-8 Director’s help and support our teachers are much more aggressively differentiating lesson expectations based upon student understanding. Finally, at the middle school, the Algebra program is offered to all students who accept the challenge of a more rigorous program. This is not done without conversations with students and their parents, but students can undertake the challenge if they want to make such a commitment. Finally, S/T (for spatial/temporal) Math is now used in all our elementary grades after a successful grade four pilot last year.

We continue to use iReady testing for the usefulness of its immediate results. Teachers and administrators can better support students when they have information about what students have learned over the course of several months. Schools continue to use an intervention block of time to help students struggling with specific concepts. The iReady assessments provide data to help develop the interventions while also denoting where challenges have to be extended.

The high school has developed specific learning standards and competencies for every course, and in most cases teachers have developed common course assessments. Teachers’ assessments continue to evolve based upon the course competencies, and this year administrators set the expectation that students are expected to learn those course competencies. This has meant that teachers are providing time for students to demonstrate their learning beyond the one
traditional test date. This process will evolve during 2016-2017, and at one point, we’ll make a presentation to the Board about assessment practices and recommending changes to our grading policies and practices to reflect contemporary thinking about student learning.

In addition to the assessment work, and as mentioned previously, we continue to work with our Pulse data management tool. A small group of administrators, including our Director of Finance, Debbie Payne, continues to develop strategies to make Pulse more readily available to school principals. Eventually, we want teachers to have access to some of the reports that they can use to view a snapshot academic profile of their students’ growth throughout the year.

This principle should continue to remain a significant point of concentration for all of us. However, for the Board’s consideration, technology has become a mainstay in all our lives, and will continue to grow in complexity throughout the lives of our students. Therefore, in addition to reading and mathematics as significant focused content areas, I will be looking to introduce and add specific technology and science related content over the next several years from elementary through high school. I hesitate to use the term STEM, simply because I believe it’s overused. Engineering (E) is one concentration for students well versed in science, technology and math content, but other fields are also open to students with related interests and skill sets. As an aside, some organizations prefer to use the acronym “STEAM” and include the Arts. I believe it’s unnecessary to use acronyms but rather it’s necessary to be deliberate and intentional about growing our students’ understandings within the science and technology content disciplines as we are with reading and mathematics. Accordingly, we will propose strategies to provide students with these essential skills to be introduced over a few years.

2. We will sustain an environment conducive to learning whereby students show respect to staff and fellow students, and that school district personnel model and expect such conduct and promote student self-worth.

Rating - Developing

School climate and culture continue to be critical to successful student achievement. The more safe students feel, then the more easily they can concentrate on school and their school work. Our five elementary schools had to begin some new traditions this year as we closed Haigh School and realigned the defined neighborhoods. Some bitterness remains among several parents, but students have adjusted well. Changes in leadership at two schools influenced the cultures at both, but neither school’s culture was diminished. This reflects the deep strength of our entire district’s expectations for strong and positive school cultures that necessitate respect. Each school continues to have individual traditions and ways of operating, but all of them promote the strong values and principles of the District. Everyone expects a standard of deportment and conduct that reflects the community’s expectations. Our five elementary schools through their focus on values, and our middle school through its advisory program, and our high school through clear standards, emphasizes character development and focuses on the types of personal attributes that everyone can agree are worth promoting. Our administrators and school staff are expected to model respect every day.

The Board expects high standards of behavior and our staff routinely meets these standards. As a result, we are able to maintain a conducive to learning. Staff know what they should expect from students, and when it’s necessary to speak with parents about their son or daughter not meeting the behavior standard, more often than not we are fully supported. This
comes from setting a standard and expecting all to meet that standard. We remain consistent in this area because if we don’t it won’t take long for school cultures to diminish.

While we have our outliers who bully and mistreat others, our administrators consistently apply the behavior standards we expect, and use the resources necessary to ensure such inappropriate behaviors are sustained, let alone repeated. Often, at the middle and high school levels, the students themselves will accept responsibility to help maintain a healthy environment.

We should continue to maintain this principle so as to appropriately focus on the importance of respectful adult and student behavior.

3. To continue to appropriately infuse technology into every aspect of how the Salem School District operates and delivers services to students in the learning process, to teaching staff in the instructional process, to administrative staff in the way we do business, and to the community outreach and informational efforts.

Rating - Developing

I’m tempted to rate this goal as “secure” because we’ve made, and continue to make, significant gains with this goal. Infusing technology has become a matter of course, and this is due in large part to this very explicit expectation. Though technology is always changing, we embrace each opportunity and to integrate this way of meeting expectations. As I mentioned last year, I expect this goal to always be developing, but we are essentially secure in its evolution within the district as long as it remains a priority.

We expanded our use of social media resources, including the mobile parent application. The resources provide almost immediate access to many more parents than in the past. We used the telephone feature of the mobile app a couple of times during inclement weather days, and this is the first year our district has had such a resource.

Our finance department is constantly looking at ways to take advantage of electronic features in order to streamline our receivables and payables as well as payroll. The transition to Enterprise Bank has afforded us a closer relationship with the financial institution that retains our financial assets, and this current bank routinely discusses no cost options to take advantage of technology resources that we already have and are capable of using.

Additionally, with the help of our IT Department, we are now able to offer online registrations for many district procedures. This has created efficiencies and a much more ‘customer friendly’ environment.

We continued our cycle of purchasing and continuously developing our technology hardware resources. Laptops purchases and additional interactive projectors allowed us to continuing supporting teacher use of technology in the classroom. We need to continue this established direction. Our emphasis continues to be web-based applications that do not necessitate continuous district level upgrades. On-line applications provide efficient opportunities to reinforce classroom learning while avoiding the purchase of routine software packages installed locally. The primary expense for this service has been upgrades to the available bandwidth volume provided by the local cable and internet provider, which we
expanded this year at the recommendation of our IT Director. Without ongoing upgrades, the level of reliability and integrity for technology access would not be possible.

Our staff application programs continue to expand, and work this summer will result in consistent teacher websites across all schools K-8. When our elementary and middle schools are completed, we will address the high school. Again, our IT personnel will work to make this happen, and then administrators will establish clear expectations for maintaining information on each site.

Unquestionably, technology is used effectively and efficiently in all aspects of our district, and we will continue to intentionally advance in this area with the Board’s support.

4. To foster community support and engagement through (i) coordinated and proactive communications employing various methods and technologies, and (ii) creation and enhancement of partnerships with key community organizations.

Status - Developing

Strides were made this year to expand our communication efforts and solicit the involvement of several groups to engage the school district as well as the broader community. Some efforts were more public than others, but there were three significant key drivers.

First, as previously mentioned, social media strategies, which include several Facebook and Twitter accounts, have become core to this goal. We also have the mobile application that more than a thousand parents have downloaded, and Woodbury initiated an Instagram account to try and reach middle school students. Second, our community service groups reaching out to the community, including Kindness Matters at SHS hosting events and coordinating activities for seniors and other specific populations. Third, our Community Engagement Committee has very intentionally worked to develop a Salem Pride Theme and sponsor special projects and events, including initiating a store for apparel purchase. Although the concept of ‘Salem Pride’ will take time to catch on we’re headed in the right direction. Finally, members of our Engagement Committee have worked with Community Services and the Chamber as well as local safety officials to coordinate and host specific community events. The Night of Lights event was the first; our Light Up the Sky 4th of July event will be next; and a Salem Scramble for elementary and middle school kids is planned for the fall. Many hands are helping to move this goal forward including key district individuals such as Bob Berthel and David Halpin.

After almost three years of effort we’re seeing some positive signs.
5. To employ methods of recruitment, training, compensation, evaluation, and retention of Salem School District personnel to attract and retain employees committed to advancing the school district in areas of student achievement, technological advancement, and business operations.

Status – Secure

We continue our intentional efforts to hire talented and skilled employees who we expect to result in added value to our district. With a goal of continuously raising the bar, and as we develop the skills of our employees, such an expectation is by necessity.

The Board’s interest in this matter, and making deliberate decisions to remain competitive for top notch staff, significantly supports this goal. Though it isn’t always about monetary resources, in order to retain highly skilled individuals, we have to be cognizant of our market.

We still have work to do in the support staff area, but we continue to look for and try to keep the very best people. To this end, within the last seven or eight years, administrators have been more cognizant of support staff members’ work performance and part ways with those who are not meeting expectations. Though difficult, it’s the only way to ensure we find the best staff.
Non-Capital Goals:

- **To assess the role of the paraprofessional and work to enhance the position (hiring practices, professional development opportunities, responsibilities, special education support) in order to maximize student success.**

  Status – **Beginning**

  This is our first year working toward this goal. We generally think of the paraprofessional as special education assistants, but others share this title, including reading and office assistants, as well as recess and cafeteria monitors. The Board has improved hourly rates and offered a differentiated compensation scale for those earning a level of certification. More than a year ago, the Board improved health insurance options for paraprofessionals in an effort to secure individuals with greater levels of education, certification, or licensure.

  This year, our special education and district administrators, including Mrs. Palmer, designed specific training opportunities for this employee group. We will continue to provide opportunities to enhance this group’s skill set. One improvement we’ve made, with Mrs. Palmer’s support, is to track employee certification with the program that tracks professional employees’ professional development.

- **To develop 3 year financial projections to guide near term budget decisions.**

  Status – **Beginning**

  The Board has continued to successfully earn community support for proposed operating budgets and collective bargaining agreements. This indicates a strong level of confidence from the community. Nevertheless, we have to remain vigilant to opportunities that help us remain prudent.

  With changes in our finance department, and the total retirement of the former business administrator last fall, I have not given this particular Board goal the attention it needs. In addition, with some measure of uncertainty related to a community reevaluation and the State Adequacy Aid we’re expecting, it will be necessary to wait until the fall to revisit this goal.

- **To provide the necessary resources to support and achieve the objectives and key results of the district’s strategic plan and specifically to meet performance indicators identified for the 2015-2016 school year within each strategy.**

  Status – **Developing**

  This goal continues to develop as we address the four key strategies and objectives established within each. We owe the Board another update, which will come at a June meeting, but attention has been paid to the performance indicators within each strategy as we try to advance the district and meet the strategic objectives established in 2013.
The Board has continued to provide necessary support for professional development opportunities to toward our 21st Century Learning elements as well as our Technology advancement efforts. The high school project will be completed at the conclusion of the 2017-2018 operating budget that we will propose in the fall. It will be important for the Board to discuss a possible timeline for improvements to Woodbury School and specifically whether or not funds should be included in the upcoming proposed budget for pre-bond schematics and renderings.

As previously mentioned in this narrative, our Community Engagement efforts continue.

- To complete a comprehensive evaluation of the District’s performing arts opportunities (band, chorus, theater arts) at the middle and high school levels with the goal of strengthening and expanding participation.

Status – Secure

Our committee made specific recommendations, which the Board supported. The first of these recommendations is met, and a Director of Performing Arts and Performing Arts Center is hired. In addition, we will have a new elementary music teacher in the fall as well as two new middle school teachers, one chorus and one band. The current staff members will be missed, but the new Director has an opportunity to begin to shape the performing arts program with his vision in mind. He knows the District’s expectations, and I have no doubt in his resolve to improve our overall program.

Administrators will work with the Director to consider other recommendation within the final report delivered to the Board.

- To develop a plan (including staffing and facilities) to implement full-day kindergarten by the 2018-2019 school year.

Status – Beginning

With the successful closing of Haigh School, it will be a difficult challenge to provide full-day kindergarten within our five elementary schools. Two of our schools have no additional classrooms, and I’ve set the self-imposed limitation of not transforming or re-purposing any specialty program spaces designed within the renovated schools. Consequently, we have the intended classroom spaces to work with. As a result, at two of our schools, there is no additional classroom space and very limited space at the other schools.

I plan to retain the neighborhood school concept, though some of our current full-day kindergarten students attend a school outside their neighborhoods due to space considerations.

With this stated, I will consider possibly using Haigh classroom space after our CTE preschool program ends at the end of the coming year. The model I’m contemplating is an integrated age 4 & 5 pre-school that might possibly include our special education students.

There is still much to consider. I can move forward with the understanding that the goal does not impose restrictions on the facilities at our disposal.
- To evaluate the cost/benefits of hiring or contracting a Public Relations Director

Status – Not Started

Admittedly, I did not address this goal. I continue to believe our option is to market the District by way of the staff we have. Our Community Engagement Committee has been working on a marketing strategy, and though we all have other roles we also fill so the process might be longer, we won’t be taking criticism for trying to “sell” the district via outside consultants. Nevertheless, if the Board wants to move in this direction, I’ll make every effort to initiate such discussions.
Capital Goals:

1. To fund Capital Improvement renovations to all district buildings in accordance with the systematic evaluation of district facilities (including buildings, exterior facades, grounds, and landscaping), recognizing such expenses are a necessary and ongoing (annual) budgetary expense if the community investment in such facilities is to be preserved.

Status – Developing

The Board invested a significant amount to upgrade the heating system at Woodbury School, and our operating budget maintenance lines increased based upon our electronic building maintenance plan. As we gain more experience with the cloud based maintenance program, we’ll be able to identify a fairly reliable monetary figure to include in operating budgets for routine and regular maintenance, and we’ll be able to establish the years when a large cost item is approaching its remaining useful life and determine whether or not to include costs in a construction services line. Again, as our maintenance department and director gains more experience, we’ll be able to provide better feedback with a greater level of confidence in our regular and longer term maintenance needs.

With this stated, we have Woodbury School to address, and as earlier stated the Board might want to consider a timeline for this. We should consider including funds in our 2017-2018 budget to begin to address concepts and schematics. This likely will be in the $100K range depending upon the scope the Board desires. Regardless, there should be some consideration of a timeline for a Woodbury bond article. This doesn’t have to be a separate goal, and it could be a planning session topic.

Also to consider is Grant Field. I’m still working with a group to address this facility as discussed in #2 following.

2. Develop plans for enhancement of Grant Field and related athletic facilities serving Salem High School

Status – Developing

I’ve met inconsistently with committee members working to address this goal. However, we have updated cost estimates and more individuals are aware of our efforts. To date, the groups with whom I’ve spoken have been unwilling to commit a sum of money to the effort. As I’ve mentioned to the Board, there may be a private locally based funding source available to us, but there has to be a good faith effort to raise at least half of the $2.4 million needed before this private source will entertain further discussions. I will continue to pursue this option.

With this stated, I believe one opportunity available to us is to include up to $750,000 in our construction services line to specifically address Grant Field and the track, and all related capital facilities to include the bleachers, the blockhouse, storage, and concessions. This will demonstrate a good faith effort to others that the district is committed to this project, and it will set a completion timeline consistent with the completion of Salem High School.