DATE: May 31, 2017

MEMO TO: Salem School Board

FROM: Michael W. Delahanty, Superintendent

RE: Analysis of Goal Status

The following represents the Superintendent’s status review of the Board’s 2016-2017 goals. This status analysis is intended to help Board members in discussions and decisions during the upcoming June 3 goal setting session. As has been true for several years, the principles have sustained much of our work, and due to their pivotal roles, I am recommending that the Board continue to maintain them.

The guiding principles provide a framework for essential school district work. We have many different curriculum responsibilities, but our fundamental emphasis has to remain at the core. Technology and communication skills continue to elevate in importance. However, literacy and mathematics will remain foremost areas of emphasis at all levels of the district. Determining how best to measure the effectiveness of district teaching and the extent of student learning through appropriate assessments should continue to be a work focus. As we refine curriculum content standards and teaching strategies, our assessment practices will remain a significant information source for us.

As mentioned, technology has and will continue to be as essential a content area as are the arts and related programming. Students benefit from participating in fine and performing arts as well as health related programs. Now, technology as an emphasis for twenty-first century skills is a critical area to continue to support. Our technology capacity will continue to grow, improve, and be essential to our success as a school district.

I’ve written in the past that a school district’s foremost responsibilities relate to ensuring it provides opportunities for students to achieve to their potential. A stable and forward thinking Board and effective administrators very much support the critical elements of our Principles – instruction and assessment; an environment to facilitate learning; the effective application of technology; and emphasizing recruiting and retaining excellent staff; and further provide necessary attention to the school district’s Strategic Plan, which remains an essential document.

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

I consider this principle to be our foundation goal. It’s long-lasting and likely won’t ever be identified as secure. Instruction work, and specifically in literacy and mathematics, will continue to evolve as we learn more about our students and their learning habits and these specific content areas and how grade level and content standards change. Further, assessments to determine how our students respond to instruction also are continuously evolving as we more deeply understand how our students can provide us with information about their learning. Our teachers are developing formative and summative assessments that are intended to reduce variations between teacher priorities. To the extent possible we want to ensure every student receives consistent programming regardless of the classroom teacher.

We’re fortunate to have content area directors that support our Assistant Superintendent for Academic Support. These specialists ensure that our elementary teachers and support staff have common models of instruction and a curriculum that’s consistent regardless of school. Our elementary school principals discuss common expectations and then work to ensure the expectations are met. All this work is overseen by Mrs. Palmer as she facilitates conversations about coaching and modeling that occurs every day.

Our middle school content efforts have become more focused and intensified this year, will intensify more next school year. We’re identifying what types of inconsistencies might be present now, and we’ll work with middle school administrators to diminish these inconsistencies while ensuring that elementary level programming emphasis transfers successfully to the middle school and then to the high school. This is an ongoing effort, and maintaining this goal is paramount to ensuring a focus can remain on this important work.

Our K-8 Mathematics Director has advanced ideas started last year to elevate math content standards at each grade level, which resulted in offering Algebra content programming to all of our eighth grade students. She also advanced a non-verbal math supplement program titled S/T Math, for Spatial Temporal. Feedback about students’ perseverance with non-verbal problem solving opportunities and parents’ comments about their children’s enjoyment of the program clearly indicate the program has an opportunity to benefit our students’ understanding of difficult math concepts. Finally, our Director has taken responsibility for working with staff members to develop our implementation of Next Generation Science Standards. These new standards present a good opportunity to breathe life into our elementary school and middle school science instruction programs.
Use of iReady testing remains through grade 9. School teams, teachers, principals, and central office administrators use the data to inform curriculum and instruction changes as well as to provide instructional support for struggling students. We hope to have a data analyst on Board this summer to help us take further advantage of longitudinal data afforded by iReady results.

I encourage the Board to maintain this principle as it remains a core of our work as a school district. As mentioned in last year’s analysis, technology instruction, we expected to introduce and gain support for a science, technology, and engineering program at the elementary and middle school levels that would better prepare students for technology-rich programs at the high school. When the renovation project is complete, we expect many opportunities for students and want them taking advantage. As hoped, we will have Project Lead the Way’s Launch program at grades four and five, and we’ll have computer programming offered at Woodbury. This is a good initial step to provide programs that support literacy and mathematics efforts as well as efforts in other curriculum and instruction programming.

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

We work at this goal on a daily basis. We’re not always successful, but our school environments are safe and welcoming. Times occur when student to student or staff to student interactions are not respectful and do not promote student self-worth. However, we work at this every day.

We are more mindful now of potentially harmful consequences that might occur when students feel disaffected or unwelcome. This way of thinking has been elevated by our middle and high school staff training on the program, Signs of Suicide, which has provided everyone with better awareness of indicators students might reveal in day to day interactions. Staff understands the resources they can turn to if concerns arise about a student or a group of students. Further, groups of high school students have also been trained in the program to help them identify signs they should report in support of a friend. This goal helps to maintain our attention to these type issues, and similarly related mental health awareness efforts. It’s critical to attend to our environment to ensure support structures are in place.

Our elementary schools continue to attend to qualities and characteristics that promote belonging and respect as well as personal responsibility. We must continue to attend to this effort while elevating our efforts in support of mental illness simultaneously.

In addition to other programs and efforts, the middle school strengthened its advisory program this past year with an updated formal curriculum and advisory activities that include watchfulness for classmates and friends. Again, we focus on this principle, and our school environments will benefit.

We continue to have incidents of inappropriate behavior, bullying, and demonstrations of disrespect. We continue to address such incidents as they occur and try to learn from them to ensure similar behaviors don’t occur. Because we have consistent expectations and fairly standard responses, our school environments are conducive to learning.
With the aforementioned stated, we will continue to review programs and practices that promote positive behavior, support every student in his or her interests to feel a part of their school, and expect staff members to demonstrate respectful behavior.

As I stated last year, 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

This goal is close to being secure. Nonetheless, there is more work to do, and the rapid pace of changing technology supports that we maintain this as a principle. Examples of advances we make are evident at every turn.

This year all kindergarten registrations were completed online; seating for our musical was completed as an online seat selection process; and summer enrichment program registration is completed online. Our professional development practices include the use of Google Docs; Lib Guides, and other interactive experiences; and our provided technology tools continue to be replaced and upgraded on a fairly convenient schedule.

The machines we use will continue to have a fairly robust useful life, and we’ll have to decide how frequently we want to replace hardware. What changes continually is software and applications that can support teaching, learning, and business operations. Our IT department is continually searching for opportunities to provide efficiencies and faster service. We are fortunate to have an outstanding IT Department and will continue to use the Director’s and others’ guidance and support.

We continue to grow our use of social media resources, including the mobile parent application. We continue to take advantage of communication strategies that encourage parent and community support.

The established cycle of hardware purchases, including smart projectors, will have to be evaluated. We’ve taken advantage of our renovation projects to acquire important hardware resources, and continue this practice at the high school. We cannot ignore our replacement needs, but we will confront a significant purchase need in the near future if we don’t develop a financially reasonable replacement plan that supports the continuation of technology use and its current dependability and reliability.

Technology continues to be used effectively and efficiently in all aspects of our district.
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

We continue to advance several elements that have supported community engagement efforts. Our social media strategies are established and parents respond favorably. We have not generated a wider community audience, but we’ll continue to consider how this might be done. We won’t take these efforts for granted, and we’ll continue to seek strategies that support the goal.

We also continue to work with Community Services, the Chamber of Commerce, and members of non-profits and the faith community to bring together Salem Pride events. Many of these are or will be on their second rotation, and though there are no plans for new activities or events, we will continue to grow the current ones.

One exciting activity we’re in the process of developing is video and photo messaging of core focus areas. For example, we’re creating short videos to focus on “students as individuals”; “passionate teachers”; “facilities designed for student growth”; and “schools that promote a spirit of community pride”. Once we have a video to exemplify what I mean by this, and how we will use the products to market our school district, I’ll show the Board. It will take more effort during the summer to bring an example to life. However, it’s an exciting initiative.

I encourage the Board to retain this goal as a principle.

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

I cannot say enough about the consistency of effort applied to this goal. We continually work to recruit and retain outstanding educators; we have an intentional training and development program at each of our levels, albeit some more effective than others, but we’re working to improve this; and we have an advanced and robust evaluation system and specific performance standards that provide clear language about expectations.

I believe the very best teachers don’t simply look for the highest paid opportunity, but they’re looking for personal and professional support as well as environments that support excellent teaching. We provide that type of structure, and therefore retain good people. Nonetheless, we have been having conversations about compensation strategies and may have an interesting proposal for Board members before the start of fall SEA negotiations.
Non-Capital Goals:

- To continue 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 only our second year working with this goal. Our Director of Special Education, Margaret Bentley, developed opportunities for trainings programs and practices that focused on our instructional goals while also considering their roles as paraprofessionals. As mentioned last year, we’re working on the premise that this goal is directed at paraprofessionals with some teaching and instructional support responsibilities.

Collective bargaining contract improvements have been made to help attract more highly educated and better prepared individuals, but more efforts will have to be made as the pool for that caliber candidate remains small.

We will continue to provide opportunities to enhance this group’s skill set. We will also begin to reconsider the roles paraprofessionals play and whether or not this group is where we want to place such significant resources.

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

Status – **Beginning**

This is the second year I’ve identified this goal as beginning. With relatively uncertain revenues, we can likely create a projection for the expense side but will have difficulty on the revenue side of the ledger. Although the Board has continued to successfully earn community support for our proposed operating budgets and collective bargaining agreements, there may come a day when this support is no so readily forthcoming. It will be helpful to create a three-year vision for what our budget needs will be.

This will be an area to address later in the summer and before our budget preparation processes begin.

- To complete an evaluation of the 2012 Strategic Plan by examining each goal and performance indicator to determine the extent to which goals have been achieved; identify completed items; and determine whether additional work is required; and plan for initiating a new or updated strategic planning process.

Status – **Secure**

We have maintained vigilant attention to our strategic plan, formally adopted by the Board in the spring, 2013. The four strategies have served the district well in advancing programs and initiatives. We intentionally developed a plan to run from three to five years because we know strategies, objectives, and key indicators do not always remain strategic for a longer term. In fact, our plan includes several objectives that have not been advanced due to their
non-strategic nature. Nonetheless, the strategies and several objectives continue to form the basis of our priorities and current efforts. It will be prudent to plan a revision or re-write of the plan beginning in fall, 2018.

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

**Status – Beginning**

We’ve started preliminary work to determine our budget, staffing, and facilities needs for implementation of full-day kindergarten in the 2018-2019 school year. Regardless of the longer-term facilities plan, we will not have sufficient classroom space in the current elementary schools for the anticipated number of classrooms. We will use results of the coming enrollment projections to give us clearer understanding of coming enrollments. However, it appears quite certain we’ll have to find more immediate solutions to our longer term facilities needs.

I expect to continue consideration of Haigh classroom space now that our high school pre-school is moving out. I continue to envision a model that includes an age 4 & 5 pre-school that might possibly include our special education students.

The Board can expect more about full-day kindergarten implementation in the summer and fall.

- **To initiate a comprehensive re-evaluation of the structure and instructional model at Salem High School, focusing on the structure of the school day, including:**
  
  - **Start time**
  - **Length of School Day**
  - **Instructional Schedule**
  - **Freshman Academy**

  with the goal of enhancing student performance and achievement through supportive learning opportunities; coordinated paths of instruction; student elective opportunities, supporting and enhancing co-curricular involvement in school life and expanding options for college credit/placement opportunities where available.

**Status – Beginning**

It’s been a challenging year to undertake such a comprehensive effort, but Mrs. Collyer has established a group that’s considering factors such as those included above. The group has developed some surveys and considered the feedback. An important point to consider is that no schedule is an ideal schedule, but a foundation of any structure is the schedule.

Although there was interest in bringing a consultant to help facilitate a comprehensive study, I don’t feel there’s anyone qualified to provide what we have to consider. Ultimately, staffing implications and collective bargaining language will direct some decisions. A teacher work day is defined in the CBA.
Length of the school day and the school start time will have budget implications but also shouldn’t be considered until we define a school schedule designed to meet our flexibility and opportunity intentions.

Work on this goal will continue into the fall, and sometime in that time frame, we’ll provide a progress update to the Board.
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**

   We identified several projects to address, and we provided funding for them. Consideration for significant capital projects, including anything done to Woodbury School, will have to be considered in the context of a school renovation plan and answering the question, “What monetary investment made now will be undone by a comprehensive Woodbury renovation project?” It’s our last school, and it may not be prudent to invest much more in its infrastructure until we have a concept and a specific timeline.

   We included funding in the current 2017-2018 budget to address the high school track. We will have to include funding for the field in the 2018-2019 budget. Then, we can hope to raise funds privately to take care of the related stadium facilities such as the blockhouse, concessions, and bleachers. We have a ‘cafeteria plan’ budget from Gino Baroni that I’ll review with the Board in preparation for a fall budget discussions.

2. **Develop plans for enhancement of Grant Field and related athletic facilities serving Salem High School with a goal of completion of the plans by the fall of 2018.**

   Status – **Developing**

   I am continuing to pursue this project and this established timeline. We have a field design architect; however we’ve yet to receive any visuals. I will continue to work with Mr. Baroni and the architect to have something for the Board’s consideration in September. I remain convinced that we must use public funds to the extent possible and some private funds will be more likely to follow. My efforts to day to raise some funds have been unsuccessful. Nevertheless, I will continue to pursue this option.

   I believe completion of a renovated field can coincide with the high school project.

3. **To continue work on the future renovation of Woodbury Middle School by updating previously completed design concepts, securing initial cost estimates, and developing a plan for utilization and/or disposal of district owned lands associated with the school campus.**

   Status – **Beginning**

   The Board is aware of the funds provided in the 2017-2018 operating budget to address a Woodbury design and schematic. The Board authorized contracting with Trident to serve as Owner’s Project Manager as we consider architectural firms to begin this work. The Board will be kept informed of our progress.