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**To: Members of the Salem Board of Education
Dr. Patrick Michel, Superintendent of Schools
Administrators, Teachers, and Support Staff
Students, Families and Community Members**

From: Dr. William Librera

Re: District Goal 2015-2018

It has been five years since the initial goal setting occurred in the district. I have been privileged to work with stakeholders in the district and community when they established the initial goals. Additionally I have visited the district many times in the past five years and in so doing met with professionals as well as support staff in addition to making presentations to the Board of Education. I regard the invitation to work again with the district on the next set of goals and objectives as a significant opportunity for the Salem School Community and specifically for the students and their families.

The initial goal and objectives that were set remained through the five years as the focus of the important work in the district. There was only one goal and it is:

Salem School District shall become a high performing district not only in New Jersey but in comparison with other states as well.

What is significant about this goal is the commitment in the district through the leadership of the Board of Education, the Superintendent of Schools, Principals

and Teachers has not wavered. The commitment remains the same as I learned from many conversations in the four days that I visited the district in this school year as I prepared to make recommendations to the Superintendent of Schools and the Board of Education. Only minor changes were occasionally proposed with the many conversations I had with educators in the four days that I spent in the school district. If anything the commitment to the single goal remains stronger at this point than when the goal and subsequent objectives were established. This I believe is largely the result of a positive and optimistic view of what can happen for students when the professional and support staff share the same vision for students. In my conversations with everyone not only in the recent four days but throughout these past four years is that no one devoted any time or thoughts to the idea that Salem students could not perform at a high level. That is no one said our students are incapable of high performing work.

It is my recommendation that the goal therefore should remain but the objectives must change. Specifically there is much that the district has accomplished in the five years of the initial goal setting but it is in my estimation very clear that the rate of progress has been slow and therefore not adequate. Although the environment in schools and classrooms in all three schools is very positive, it is also clear from achievement reports and the report cards of the Department of Education of the State of New Jersey that levels of achievement still are in many instances below comparable school districts. That status is of course significantly below what a high performing district accomplishes in terms of student achievement and progress.

The recommendations for objectives that I am making for your consideration are aggressive but possible in terms of accelerating student achievement and progress. It is not in my estimation possible for the Salem School District to become a high performing district without serious attention and implementation of at least some of the following recommendations.

1. Achievement progress and growth must be evaluated for every student every year. Progress can only be made if there is strong focus on what each student has accomplished and how it compares to previous years. A year of growth will not change the overall achievement in the district. An emphasis of more than one year of growth needs to become the new norm.

2. All achievement reports should be assembled in one annual report presented publicly to the Board of Education and Community. It is misleading to review one report at a time the way the state often presents results to a school community. The absence of such an annual report does not enable the Board, the professional and support staff as well as parents to compare progress thoroughly from year to year and that must be the basis for significant acceleration in progress.

3. A benchmark or a few benchmarks for each school must be established and reported at the conclusion of each school year. Such benchmarks are:

- A. 90% of students who attend John Fenwick for at least two years must leave their elementary school able to read on grade level.**
- B. By the conclusion of grade five in the Salem Middle School, 90% of the students who have attended Salem Middle School for at least a year and a half must be able to read on grade level and perform at least at the average of state wide achievement records.**
- C. By the conclusion of grade eight, 50 % of the students who have been in the middle school for at least three years must be able to demonstrate mastery of Algebra while the remaining students must be well prepared to take Algebra in Salem High School.**
- D. All students in Salem High School must take and pass at least one AP level course when they graduate. 90% of Salem students who have been in the high school for at least two years must also demonstrate they are ready for college by their acceptances to colleges.**
- E. For the students who do not or suggest strongly they will not meet these benchmarks, should be in the mandatory summer program as identified by the Superintendent and approved by the Board of Education.**
- F. When the district makes a decision as they have made with the International Baccalaureate Program, there must be some part or aspect of that program that becomes a part of every students' experience in the district. For both the Middle School and the John Fenwick School, there**

should be for every student the necessity of demonstrating successful mastery of the assignment or at least one aspect of what the curriculum is in the International Baccalaureate.

- G. A requirement for all high school students who graduate from Salem High school must be a significant project that they have designed and successfully completed. All students who graduate from the Middle School must be able to complete an assignment with at least one other student that represents important and independent thinking that they have designed. This kind of work is often called a senior project in some of the high performing public as well as private schools in the state and the country.**
- H. A careful set of requirements that all students from grades 3 through 12 should accomplish in the summer should be established and monitored.**