

Sachem Central School District

Holbrook, New York 11741

MEMORANDUM

TO: Members, Board of Education

FROM: Charles J. Murphy, Ed.D.
Superintendent of Schools

DATE: August 18, 2006

RE: **Board of Education Goals and
Strategic Action Plan 2006-07**

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Last year, as we embarked on this new journey together, a strategic action plan was developed designed to target specific areas to help us in the pursuit of excellence for our schools. In the past few years, a number of initiatives have been launched which have begun the school improvement process. As we continue to move in to the future, no one in the organization or community should ever be satisfied with the status quo. My cabinet and I have set out to create a professional learning community designed to ensure that all students meet or, in fact, exceed, the high expectations set forth by state and national standards.

The emergence of No Child Left Behind (NCLB) as an educational way of life is pushing the Sachem Central School District to new heights. As an administrative team, we will not be fully satisfied with the work we are doing until we can genuinely state that every student in our district is meeting the state and national standards. In order to help us reach this lofty goal, we have, once again, developed a strategic action plan, one that will clearly state our goals, define specific implementation steps, outline timelines for completion and, most importantly, determine methods for assessing the results of our work. Indeed, to be an exemplary school district, the entire community of educators, support staff, parents, and community residents must work together to achieve our goals. Naturally, our primary focus must remain on the educational program.

For the 2006-07 school year, we have begun to make significant strides in several areas. More students than ever before have enrolled in Advanced Placement programs. Students who have had the most difficulty in meeting the state standards will be provided with a more comprehensive means of addressing their needs through a true academic intervention services program. The new language arts initiative that began in our elementary schools will continue into grades two and three. In addition, we are participating in several New York State studies in the area of mathematics to determine which programs and materials support our teaching practices in the elementary grades. While we continue to improve our educational program, we must also be mindful of the internal and external supports needed to facilitate school improvement.

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As you know, this summer, the cabinet and I attended a weeklong program at the Harvard University Graduate School of Educational Leadership. The main focus of the seminars was looking at large scale school improvement plans. In fact, the beginnings of the attached plan were formulated in the academic environment provided at Harvard. The 2006-07 District Improvement Plan cites specific strategies to be taken in each of the five goals.

These five goals will serve as a guide in our efforts to continue to improve the Sachem Central School District.

The goals are:

1. Enhance Student Achievement and Quality of Instruction.
 - a. Create a Professional Learning Community.
 - b. Use assessment and comprehensive data analysis for targeting academic assistance and instructional decision-making.
2. Improve Parent, Community and Staff Communication.
 - a. Ensure a strong community-to-school connection.
3. Improve Fiscal Responsibility and Accountability Throughout the District.
 - a. Develop a school budget that is both cost effective and taxpayer sensitive.
4. Provide Safe and Secure Schools.
5. Technology Integration.
 - a. Upgrade and integrate technology into the curriculum.

The strategic action plan provides timelines for implementation, and the evidence that will be used to show that progress has been made. Clearly, a number of these initiatives will be ongoing and evidence will be collected over the next few years. However, we must be mindful that desired results in student performance may not be immediately evident. While a strategic plan provides a framework in which specific strategies are identified to achieve goals, the human factor in changing the collective expectations of the Sachem learning community are less predictable and may take some additional time to come to fruition. Ideally, the notion is to hold everyone accountable, from the Board of Education, district administration, all staff, students and even the community, to ensure the highest quality education for our students.

If we are to succeed in the overall improvement of our school system, we will need the support and resources from the Board of Education. In return, we pledge that we will be fiscally responsible to the community in the development of our initiatives. This will continue to be a true team effort that is necessary to keep the focus where it belongs – improving student performance. This can only be done by holding all of our staff to the highest of standards.

Change is never easy. In a district like Sachem that is so steeped in its rich tradition, the challenge of changing the way we do business is particularly difficult. A number of changes were made during the 2005-2006 school year. Admittedly, some were met with resistance, others were enthusiastically embraced. What is clearly evident is that change takes time; it is an ongoing process that slowly unfolds and reshapes all that we do. However, if we keep our focus where it truly belongs, namely, the instructional core, our students will not only get what they need, but what they deserve.