

Salem Public Schools Strategic Plan

2026-2029

Where belonging leads to opportunity.

SALEM PUBLIC SCHOOLS

Our Mission

Salem Public Schools is a diverse and welcoming community that promotes the academic, social, emotional and physical development of each student through the equitable delivery of challenging, relevant and joyful learning experiences. We empower all students to chart a personalized path to success that includes a commitment to the common good.

Our Vision

All students will be locally engaged, globally connected and fully prepared to thrive in a diverse and changing world.

Our Values

- **Belonging.** We believe all members of our community are valued and that our relationships are built on empathy and respect.
- **Equity.** We believe in promoting social justice to ensure an inclusive school community where all members are empowered and engaged.
- **Opportunity.** We believe all students should receive a personalized experience to achieve academic success, find joy in their learning, and have multiple choices for their post-secondary plans.

Our Equity Statement

Equity is a core value within the Salem Public Schools. We support each student's unique path to achieving high standards, regardless of ethnicity, race, color, economic status, national origin, age, abilities, religion, parental or immigration status, political beliefs, sex, sexual orientation, language, gender identity, or gender expression. Valuing equity means that we:

- Reflect and embrace the greater diversity of our students and families
- Recognize that systems of oppression marginalize some populations and suppress some voices
- Bear a collective responsibility to recognize, interrupt, and transform educational inequities
- Champion access and inclusion for all students/families/staff
- Allocate resources so that the students/families/staff who need the most get the most
- Work to be an anti-racist and culturally responsive community
- Create a more just and equitable world for all of our students.



October 2026

Dear Salem Public Schools Community,

Salem is a city defined by its vibrant spirit, rich history, and an unshakable commitment to all of its children. As I step into my role as Superintendent of Schools, I am deeply honored to present the Salem Public Schools 2026–2029 Strategic Plan, which embraces these values of our city.

This three-year plan builds directly upon the strong foundation created under former Superintendent Dr. Stephen Zrike. Rather than resetting our course, our team is expanding our progress to achieve even more for our students, families, and staff, while laying the groundwork for continuous improvement and innovation over the next 10 years.

As I begin my superintendency, this strategic plan serves as our guiding beacon, aligning our team's daily priorities around four core pillars:

- **Elevate**: Delivering high-quality, engaging instruction PK–12 so every student reaches key academic milestones and realizes our *Portrait of a Graduate.*
- **Empower**: Supporting, developing, and expanding leadership pathways for our entire staff, and recognizing that every member of our district team is an educator.
- **Belong**: Fostering inclusive, joyful school environments grounded in our belief that belonging leads to opportunity.
- **Strengthen**: Building coherent, efficient operational and technological systems and community partnerships that enable innovation and sustain long-term growth.

In these early stages of my transition, my immediate focus is to "**hit the ground learning**" by actively listening to the students, families, educators, and partners supporting our school communities. However, immersing myself in our classrooms and engaging with families will not be a temporary phase. Rather, it will remain a constant priority throughout this plan. Staying deeply connected to our schools is how I will observe instructional growth firsthand and ensure our strategic priorities deliver meaningful impact for every student.

Together, led by gratitude, grace, and *ganas*, we will shape an even brighter future for Salem Public Schools.

With gratitude and optimism,

Dr. Tommy Welch
Superintendent of Schools, Salem Public Schools


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Wonders Why

Introduction

Imagine a public school system where every young person has the experiences, support, and opportunities they need to drive their learning and truly thrive from the first day of preschool until the day they graduate from high school. Where learning is joyful, relevant, and connected to the world beyond the classroom. Where educators have agency, time to collaborate, and are empowered and supported to innovate and test new ideas. Where families, caregivers and community partners are heard, connected, and have opportunities to help shape what comes next. Where alumni feel pride in their alma mater. Where school feels welcoming to everyone, every day.

Hard to imagine? Picture this:



Mateo is a curious four-year-old who loves buses and speaks Spanish with his family at home. He begins his school day drawing a model of Salem's bus system alongside some of his classmates, while the other half of his group works in the garden outside his classroom planting flowers. Later, the class walks to a neighborhood bus stop to observe the city in motion and ask questions of a local driver. His teachers capture what he is learning in a digital portfolio, which his family adds to from home. Before dinner, he reads a book with vibrant pictures about buses to his parents in English.



Sofia is a multilingual Salem High student interested in health and science whose family came to Salem from the Dominican Republic. She spends her morning learning about wind energy and its potential impact on Salem through an interdisciplinary project-based approach that includes science, math, history, politics and literature, in preparation for an end of year public presentation. After lunch, she earns credit through an internship at a children's mental health clinic. She ends the day supporting younger multilingual students and sharing her progress with her family in the language they know best.



Sara is a seventh-grade teacher who has taught in Salem for 12 years. She begins her day planning with a small team of educators, reviewing student work and adjusting the interdisciplinary project they are co-teaching on how Salem's waterfront should respond to climate change. She spends the morning teaching two groups of students, leading a history seminar, and helping students prepare proposals they will eventually present to city leaders. After lunch Sara has time to collaborate with a community partner and coach a newer teacher. She ends the day meeting with students and their families to reflect on their progress and identify what they want to pursue next.

Welcome to the Salem Public Schools, 2036.

Our Why



Salem is a city shaped by history, imagination, resilience, and reinvention. As the community celebrates its 400th anniversary, we have a unique opportunity to closely examine our schools, interrogate their purpose and impact, and reimagine the type of public education system Salem's students will need in the future.

The next decade will bring continued changes in the economy, the workforce, climate, technology, language diversity, wellness, and the skills young people need to succeed in college and career. It is our responsibility to shape that future with intention, and to build a clear vision for every student that positions Salem to fully deliver on its core values of equity, belonging, and opportunity.

In the past, Salem has mapped out that vision in its strategic plan, a bold but achievable three-year roadmap. But preparing Salem's students for a more distant future, and readying the district for true innovation requires us to use a broader lens to see well beyond the three-year horizon.

Salem is no stranger to innovation. In fact, across the district there are already powerful examples of what the future can look like when the system moves to meet the needs of its students: Consider Salem's expanded PreK programs; dual language programs that center and celebrate students' bilingualism; expanded college-prep coursework and pre-college opportunities; career-connected learning through internships and learning immersions; strong community partnerships; the redesigned middle school experience; the launch of the new Sarah Parker Remond School; and planning for a new, state-of-the-art high school facility.

We have the people, we have the ideas, we have the will to innovate, and we have momentum showing up in student performance: In 2026 the graduation rate hit 89%, more than 73% of secondary students participated in advanced coursework, the chronic absenteeism rate dropped from 34% to 19.2%, and our dropout rate fell to 1.7%.



But these numbers tell only part of the story. Last year, just 65% of pre-K students were on track to early literacy (2026 STAR Early Literacy), 30% of third graders could read independently (2025 MCAS), 27% of sixth graders were writing proficiently (2025 MCAS), and by the end of ninth grade 62% of students had passed Algebra I.

Our work is unfinished, and we have no time to waste. The next step is to build the systemic conditions to ensure all students—not just some—have continued access to engaging, relevant, personalized, powerful learning experiences in every school, in every classroom, every day.

This plan has been co-designed by the Salem community and grounded in a commitment to strengthening the systems, habits, and capacity of a learning organization: listening deeply, designing with students, staff and families, testing new ideas, learning from evidence, scaling what works, and letting go of what no longer serves students well.

Salem's Innovation Agenda will be the bridge between our community's current strengths and its future promise. This new strategic plan is the first phase of readying the system to make that promise real. The district's **Innovation Agenda** will build on this foundation and establish a bold, long-term vision for what every Salem student will experience by 2036. During his first 100 days and throughout the 2026-27 school year, Superintendent Welch will engage with the community to further refine that vision.

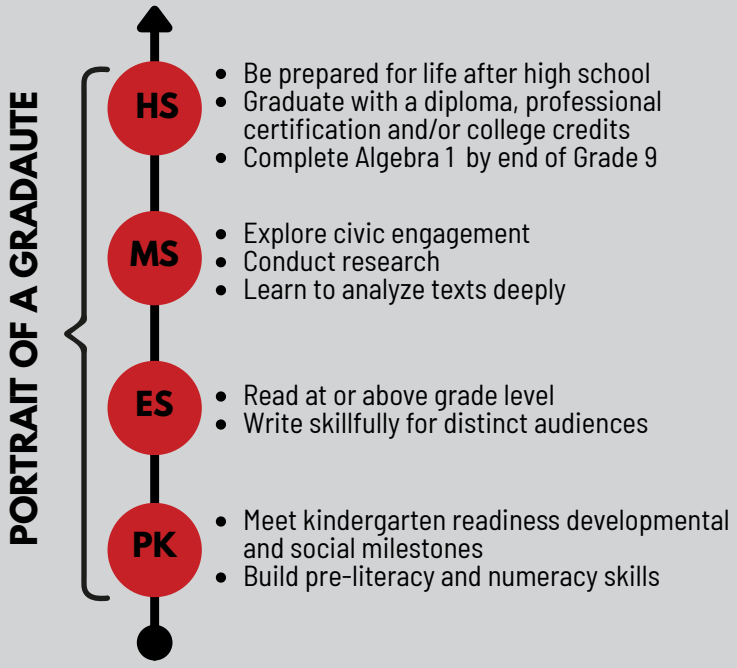
Let's get started.

Mateo, Sofia, and Sara's stories are not meant to represent isolated experiences; rather, they illustrate what could become possible across Salem when the district's vision, priorities, people, partnerships, and systems work together to prepare for the future.

Grounded in this work will be the realization of **Salem's Portrait of a Graduate**, which defines the essential skills every student will develop throughout their PK–12 journey: Critical thinking, communication, creative problem solving, self-awareness, collaboration and cultural competence.

All of these skills will be intentionally embedded across Salem's PK–12 curriculum, and coupled with the academic and developmental milestones each student will be expected to reach as they move from preschool to kindergarten, elementary to middle school, middle to high school, and ultimately, to college, career and beyond.

MAINTAINING AN ACADEMIC FOCUS: Salem Public Schools is committed to ensuring that <u>every student</u> will be prepared to achieve all of these core foundational academic benchmarks as they transition between grade levels.





These will show up in different ways at every stage: A preschool student, for example, might demonstrate critical thinking by asking questions, making observations, and testing an idea through play, as they build their pre-literacy and numeracy skills before entering Kindergarten. A high schooler might draw on learning across multiple disciplines to design, defend, and refine a solution for an authentic audience as they move along their chosen pathway in preparation to graduate with credits toward a two- or four-year college degree.

Together, our work as a district is to create these and other clear milestones that define progression across all domains of the Portrait of a Graduate from the earliest years through graduation and build the clear measurement tools to track progress. This will help students understand their own growth; give families a clearer picture of what their children are learning and where they need extra support; guide curriculum, assessment, and learning experiences; and allow the district to determine whether, when and how every student is able to succeed in Salem's schools.

All of this builds toward one clear promise: that **every Salem student will graduate locally connected, globally engaged, equity-minded, and fully prepared to thrive in a diverse and changing world.**



Our Approach






We are doing this work now because it has to be done. What works today may not work in a few years, let alone a decade from now, and Salem Public Schools needs to be ready.

At the same time, we have a school district to run, 10 schools and more than 4,000 students who need our full attention every day. While we need to focus on our long-term vision, we can't ignore our current day-to-day priorities. We need to stay focused on our day-to-day priorities and also move the district in the direction of Salem's 10 year goals. To successfully achieve the goals of this strategic plan and advance promising pilots, and explore opportunities elevated throughout the innovation planning process, we need to work differently.

Every school and department already sets and monitors annual goals aligned to the district's strategic plan, but that is no longer enough. Currently we use a range of data to measure progress, course correct and pivot as needed, a culture of continuous improvement that keeps us laser focused on priorities and connected to the district's 3-year plan. Now we need to also braid in a new layer focused on unlearning old habits, identifying new ideas, determining what and when to pilot, and preparing for a distant future we can only imagine.

Building the capacity and culture for long-term innovation will take time, discipline, and a willingness to learn as we go. We will create clearly defined guardrails to sharpen our focus and direct our finite capacity toward a small number of promising ideas, aligned with Salem's Portrait of a Graduate. Each year, we will research, pilot, reflect on, and refine these ideas, investing in only those with the greatest potential for longterm, districtwide impact.



This will be hard work, but worth it: Over time, this will help us create the conditions necessary to make sure that we are planning for true innovation, connecting daily decisions to our 10-year goals, understanding where and why we are making progress, learning from what is and is not working, and changing course before moving too far in the wrong direction.

Community Engagement

This plan was built *by* the Salem community *for* the Salem community.



This work has been deeply informed and shaped through a wide-reaching stakeholder engagement process designed to reflect the experiences, priorities, and aspirations of the Salem community. The process was deeply informed by input from the district's first-ever Innovation Advisory Committee, a group of 15 educators, parents, community partners and students brought together over 10 months to look beyond the district's immediate priorities, consider what students will need over the next decade, identify promising ideas, and help shape the final plan.

The IAC also helped plan and facilitate Salem's first-ever community-wide Design Day, an open and interactive event that brought together students, families, educators, district leaders, and community members to imagine the future of Salem Public Schools. Through small-group conversations and future-focused scenarios—including artificial intelligence, personalized learning, student belonging, life after high school, extracurricular opportunities, facilities, and the new high school—participants considered what Salem should preserve, change, and create over the next decade. The ideas generated through Design Day helped shape both the district's new three-year strategic plan and will inform the Superintendent's long-term Innovation Agenda.

In addition to the feedback gathered at Design Day, these plans were also shaped by input gathered through a community survey (230 responses), empathy interviews with students and teachers, regular meetings with the Executive Leadership and District Leadership teams, Principal Cabinet, Teacher Advisory Group, Student Advisory Group, and other stakeholders, including higher education and community partners. This array of input allowed us to identify shared priorities, and ensure that both plans are grounded in Salem's strengths, responsive to current needs, and reflective of the broader community's vision for the future.



Core Priorities of the Salem Public Schools 2023-2026 Strategic Plan

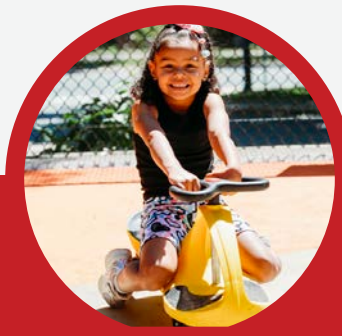
This strategic plan is a comprehensive map of the strategic work of the Salem Public Schools will prioritize from 2026-2029. **This plan** builds on, scales and sharpens the current work of the district across four pillars: Elevate, Empower, Belong, Strengthen. This plan is designed to build collective trust across the adults both in and out of the public schools, address challenges, build on existing wins, and make space for innovation.

Throughout this plan we intentionally refer to the adults in the system - from the classroom teachers to the bus drivers to the custodians to the administrators - as "*educators*." We believe that everyone employed by the Salem Public Schools is here because of their commitment to students, and we all contribute to their success. In other words, **we are all educators**.



Pillar 1: ELEVATE

Support every student to learn, explore and thrive in school and beyond.



Pillar 2: EMPOWER

Build a diverse, thriving workforce of educators who want to grow, stay and lead.



Pillar 3: BELONG

Build collective trust and inclusive school communities where everyone feels safe, and is known, seen, heard and connected.



Pillar 4: STRENGTHEN

Create future-ready systems to support and accelerate growth and innovation.



Pillar 1: Elevate



Support every student to learn, explore and thrive in school and beyond.

Student success requires a strong academic foundation, which includes much more than just the mastery of content and standards. Over the next three years, Salem will ensure every student has access to rigorous, grade-level instruction and the individualized support they need to succeed. This will mean expanding the boundaries of learning so students can explore their interests, develop greater ownership of their education, apply their knowledge in authentic settings, and begin building meaningful pathways to success in college and career.

Pillar 1 Measures of Success

- *Increase classroom engagement from PreK-12 to 90% across schools*
- *Increase 3rd graders meeting/exceeding ELA MCAS expectations to 65%*
- *Increase SGP on MCAS to 60+ for all subgroups and subject areas*
- *Increase MCAS performance to 45% ELA/Math/HS Science, 40% Gr 5/8 Science, 35% Civics*
- *Decrease scores ≤2 on writing idea development in MCAS to 30%*
- *Increase 9th-grade Algebra pass rates to 70%*
- *Increase 4-year high school graduation rates to 94%*
- *Increase college matriculation and persistence to 80% and 85%*
- *Increase student reporting of belonging to 85%*

Over the next 10 years Salem is committed to creating a system where students will experience learning in ways that cultivate their curiosity, honors and grows their individual strengths and genius, and positions them to pursue pathways that are meaningful and rewarding after graduation.

This could look like:

- *Enhanced opportunities to learn and reinforce core academic skills through play, design, movement, the arts, civic action, invention, and community problem-solving.*
- *Giving students greater agency over what they explore and when they explore it, how they demonstrate learning, and how their work connects to their identities, interests, languages, cultures, and communities.*
- *Offering expanded and accelerated opportunities to earn credit and demonstrate growth through experiences including internships, community projects, early college, independent study, the arts, athletics, technical learning, and community service.*

Pillar 1: Elevate

Support every student to learn, explore, and thrive in school and beyond.

1.1 Implement Salem's Instructional Vision to cultivate a love of learning in all students as they become independent, self-directed learners.

A. Implement the daily instructional cycle to ensure every student in every classroom engages in deep, standards-aligned, grade-level learning each day.
B. Establish clear academic benchmarks, milestones, and aligned grade-level expectations that are developmentally appropriate and rigorous for students for students in grades PK-12.
C. Meet the needs of every child through daily differentiated instruction and coherent interventions, with a focus on multilingual learners and students with learning differences.
D. Build a system to facilitate deeper learning by integrating hands-on civic engagement, college readiness and early college, CTE skills, and community-based experiences, all aligned with grade level standards and curriculum.
E. Accelerate the district's innovation journey by closely monitoring new and existing initiatives to determine how and when to refine, sustain and scale.

1.2 Provide all students with high-quality, engaging and relevant learning experiences to realize the vision of the Portrait of a Graduate.

A. Increase access to high-quality PreK by offering mixed-model early childhood programs in partnership with the City of Salem and community organizations.
B. Increase opportunities and access for all PK-12 students to engage in out-of-school time programs that are aligned and driven by student interest, identities, and college and career aspirations.
C. Conceptualize, pilot, and refine new approaches to teaching and learning in order to leverage the new space, technology, programmatic options, CTE facilities and capacity that will be available in 2030 when the new high school opens.
D. Empower students with the skills and mindsets necessary to advocate for their passions, their futures, and changes that are important and relevant to their communities.

1.3 Enhance the student experience to cultivate curiosity and prepare all learners for success in college and careers after high school.

A. Expand and strengthen student ownership of their learning and self-advocacy skills through MyCap, personalized, career-connected pathways, and by offering opportunities for leadership and independent learning grounded in real-world skills.
B. Support all students, especially our most marginalized, to navigate to, through, and beyond the PK-12 continuum, and utilize Salem's community resources and opportunities.
C. Build anytime/anywhere learning opportunities to extend learning and for-credit experiences beyond the traditional school day and classroom.
D. Equip all students and educators to be informed, ethical users of information and technology, including whether and how to use artificial intelligence (AI), as it continues to evolve.

1.4 Infuse wellness, joy and identity into each day for every student.

A. Ensure all students experience welcoming school and classroom environments that foster belonging among students, educators, and families.
B. Integrate social-emotional learning standards and practices into academic instruction to help students develop the skills defined in the *Portrait of a Graduate*.
C. Expand partnerships and programs that ensure Salem celebrates cultural traditions, prioritizes wellness, and creates meaningful connection points within and across our school cultures and communities.



Pillar 2: Empower



Build a diverse, thriving workforce of educators who want to grow, stay, and lead.

Salem is committed to investing in the educators and staff who bring its vision for students to life each day. This means building a diverse workforce, creating meaningful opportunities for educators to learn and lead, and providing the time, tools, feedback, and support they need to grow professionally while remaining connected to students. Ultimately the district aims to ensure that all of the educators and staff in the district feel valued, connected, motivated, and inspired to build their career pathways in this community.

Pillar 2 Measures of Success

- *Increase educators and staff whose demographics reflect student diversity and lived experiences to 80%*
- *Increase educators who meet annual student learning goals to 80%*
- *Increase subgroup-disaggregated retention and proficiency rates for teachers and staff to 90%*

Over the next 10 years Salem is committed to becoming the most desirable district for educators at all levels by empowering them to lead, design, and continuously improve student learning through flexible roles, meaningful collaboration, professional growth, increased autonomy, and stronger connections to the broader community.

This could look like:

- *An experienced teacher becomes an instructional coach or innovation fellow, supporting colleagues and designing new approaches to deeper learning using AI tools while remaining connected to students and the classroom by piloting those ideas in a new seminar elective.*
- *A team of teachers, paraprofessionals, community partners, artists, and career navigators receives dedicated time to design and pilot a standards-based interdisciplinary project that connects classroom learning with Salem's people, places, and resources.*
- *Educators who regularly observe one another, co-plan and co-teach, study student work, and receive meaningful feedback from peers, leaders, students, and partners to continuously improve and deliver on the Portrait of a Graduate for every child at every age.*

Pillar 2: Empower

Build a diverse, thriving workforce of educators who want to grow, stay, and lead.

2.1: Cultivate a diverse educator pipeline and workforce that reflects the culture, languages, and lived experiences of our students and community.

A. Implement Salem's *Pathways to Teaching* strategic plan to expand and diversify educator pipelines and create flexible career pathways that allow educators to grow professionally within and beyond the classroom.

B. Increase and diversify opportunities to collaborate with community-based partners and experts during the school day and in after-school, summer and out-of school time.

2.2 Develop leadership practices that foster continuous growth, instructional coherence, and high expectations for all learners.

A. Develop systems that promote aligned practices, clear communication, shared leadership, continuous improvement, and coherence from early education through high school.

B. Bolster the work of instructional leadership teams at every school by analyzing student work, identifying trends and targeting gap areas to improve instruction, track impact, and accelerate progress.

C. Strengthen student well-being, belonging, engagement, and sense of joy by leveraging existing tools, data, and systems.

2.3 Build Salem Public Schools into a system where educators want to work, stay, grow, and lead.

A. Strengthen onboarding, mentoring and coaching to support and foster the professional growth of educators, especially those early in their careers.

B. Create equitable time and space for all educators to collaborate, plan, and innovate with and learn from their peers and external partners.

C. Design opportunities for educators to identify, advocate for, and shape instructional and systemic improvements.



Pillar 3: Belong



Build collective trust and inclusive school communities where everyone feels safe, and is known, seen, heard and connected.

A strong sense of belonging begins when every student and adult feels known, valued, supported, and connected to their school community. Over the next three years, Salem will nurture welcoming and inclusive schools where students, educators, families, and community members see themselves reflected, know their voices matter, and feel safe seeking support. By creating meaningful opportunities for people of all ages to connect, contribute, and lead, Salem will strengthen the relationships and shared commitment that make its schools true centers of community.

Pillar 3 Measures of Success

- *Reduce suspension risk ratios to 1 for students of color and MLs, and 1.5 for SWDs and students from low income families*
- *Decrease chronic absenteeism rates to 10% for students, teachers, and staff*
- *Increase student, teacher, and family reporting of belonging to 85%*
- *Increase favorable responses from community partner surveys (from baseline established in 2026-27)*

Over the next 10 years Salem is committed to codesigning and centering strategies to ensure that Belonging remains visible in every classroom, school, program, and family interaction to empower the collective community to share ownership of our students' futures.

This could look like:

- *A personalized circle of support for every student, including trusted educators, peers, family members, mentors, specialists, and community partners who know their strengths, understand their needs, and help them pursue their goals.*
- *Opportunities for students with disabilities, multilingual learners, neurodiverse students, and students with varied learning profiles to learn alongside and fully engage with their peers and have full access to advanced coursework, the arts, athletics, internships, leadership roles, and community-based experiences.*
- *Students and families help shape the school system by sharing their expertise, taking on leadership roles, and influencing decisions about learning and the student experience.*

Pillar 3: Belong

Build collective trust and inclusive school communities where everyone feels safe and is known, seen, heard, and connected.

3.1. Create and sustain safe, inclusive, joyful school communities where everyone is known, seen, and supported.

A. Provide all students with the skills, knowledge and resources needed to access high-quality, confidential, and accessible mental health and wellness support when desired.

B. Equip all educators and administrators with the skills, knowledge and resources needed to use developmentally appropriate restorative practices with students and one another in order to proactively prevent issues, and address harm when it occurs.

C. Create opportunities for the community to welcome new arrivals, elevate and celebrate pride in the Salem Public Schools, and honor the city's culture and history.

3.2. Collaborate with members of the community to build a culture that enables all students and families to be heard, connect, take action and lead.

A. Invite students and families to engage in meaningful and accessible opportunities to help shape school culture, provide feedback, and inform decision-making.

B. Partner with community members to identify and embrace strategies to celebrate, reflect and honor our students' cultures, languages, traditions, lived experiences and identities, including (but not limited to): gender, race, sexual orientation, religion, culture, ethnicity, age, and ability.

C. Collaborate with each school to develop bold, tailored family and community engagement goals in order to build stronger school communities.

3.3 Build community connection and commitment to the Salem Public Schools.

A. Increase engagement with alumni to keep them connected to the community, provide them with as-needed support, and to share their post-graduation experiences and successes with current students.

B. Partner with the City to leverage and strengthen the Salem Children's Cabinet to share ownership of and responsibility for learning districtwide.

C. Communicate regularly with community members and partners about district priorities, stories of success, opportunities, and impact.



Pillar 4: Strengthen



Create future-ready systems to support and accelerate growth and innovation.

For students and educators to thrive, they need strong systems working behind the scenes to manage the day to day and prepare for the future. Over the next three years, Salem will strengthen how people, time, funding, technology, and learning spaces come together to support schools each day and foster an innovation culture. By building a responsive and forward-looking foundation, the district will be better equipped to meet current needs, learn from experience, and bring promising new ideas to life.

Pillar 4 Measures of Success

- *Increase favorable responses on Central Office and school climate surveys to 95%*
- *Increase positive response rates on professional development surveys to 85%*
- *Increase trust and respect in schools among adults to 85%*
- *Annually implement one strategic process to assess and equitably allocate district resources.*

Over the next 10 years Salem is committed to becoming a future-ready learning organization able to accelerate innovation by expanding where, when and how learning happens.

This could look like:

- *Salem's central office, schools, students, families, and partners operate as one learning and continuous improvement system.*
- *Budgeting, staffing, scheduling, transportation, enrollment, facilities, and procurement are fully aligned to the district's vision for learning and the Portrait of a Graduate.*
- *School buildings, outdoor spaces, city spaces, community organizations, businesses, higher education settings, and virtual environments function as an integrated and empowering part of Salem's learning ecosystem.*

Pillar 4: Strengthen

Create future-ready systems to support and accelerate growth and innovation.

4.1 Develop, sustain and grow clear, coherent and responsive internal systems to advance ongoing innovation districtwide.

A. Review and align the use of resources (people, time and money) to create the conditions necessary to pilot innovative ideas, learn from results, and rapidly scale effective new programs and strategies.

B. Interrogate and address systems, policies, and the actions of individuals that create and/or exacerbate inequities.

C. Refine Central Office operations systems and structures to provide schools with timely, responsive support, and to eliminate barriers that interfere with school priorities.

4.2 Invest in the future of Salem Public Schools to support continuous improvement and innovation.

A. Maximize impact and capacity through strategic resource allocation and expanded fundraising to advance our priorities in light of the uncertain funding landscape.

B. Engage key stakeholders in the development of the measures and systems needed to track and share progress, and enable systemic learning.

C. Maintain and continue to **enhance** safe, accessible, and future-ready buildings and indoor and outdoor spaces for the arts, learning, athletics, play, and community use.

D. Design and implement a community-informed, comprehensive and clear strategy for the purposeful use of technology to support teaching, learning, and districtwide operations, including what role, if any, AI will play.

4.3 Build a districtwide culture of continuous growth through relevant professional learning and meaningful feedback.

A. Build educator ownership of their professional growth by creating an annual educator-driven and informed professional development agenda that is responsive to trends in student data.

B. Explicitly connect professional learning and growth opportunities and overall expectations for all staff to Salem's anti-bias and anti-racist agenda.

C. Build and lead a culture for all staff that prioritizes feedback and collaboration as key drivers for growth.

D. Create a trust-based culture where adults in our school communities can have meaningful, respectful, two-way dialogue about all topics, including difficult ones.


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Salem Public Schools
2026-29 Strategic Plan Key Strategies

Pillar 1: Elevate

Support every student to learn, explore and thrive in school and beyond.

1.1. Implement Salem's *Instructional Vision* to cultivate a love of learning in all students as they become independent, self-directed learners.

1.2. Provide all students with high-quality, engaging and relevant learning experiences to realize the vision of *Portrait of a Graduate*.

1.3. Enhance the student experience to cultivate curiosity and prepare all learners for success in college and careers after high school.

1.4. Infuse wellness, joy and identity into each day for every student.



Pillar 2: Empower

Build a diverse, thriving workforce of educators who want to grow, stay, and lead.

2.1. Cultivate a diverse educator workforce and pipeline that reflects the culture, languages and lived experiences of our students and community.

2.2. Develop leadership practices that foster continuous growth, instructional coherence, and high expectations for all learners.

2.3. Build Salem Public Schools into a system where educators want to work, stay, grow, and lead.



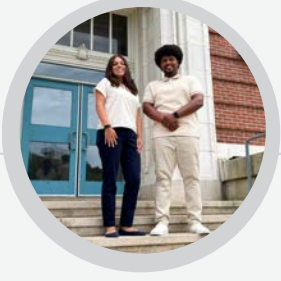
Pillar 3: Belong

Build collective trust and inclusive school communities where everyone feels safe, and is known, seen, heard and connected.

3.1. Create and sustain inclusive, joyful school communities where everyone is known, seen and supported.

3.2. Collaborate with the community to build a culture that enables all students and families to be heard, connect, take action, and lead.

3.3. Build community connection and commitment to the Salem Public Schools.



Pillar 4: Strengthen

Create future-ready systems to support and accelerate growth and innovation.

4.1. Develop, sustain and grow clear, coherent and responsive internal systems to advance ongoing innovation districtwide.

4.2. Invest in the future of Salem Public Schools to support continuous improvement and innovation.

4.3. Build a districtwide culture of continuous growth through relevant professional learning and meaningful feedback.



Glossary of Terms

- **Career and Technical Education (CTE):** Programs that provide students of all ages with a blend of academic and technical skills, knowledge and training necessary to succeed in future careers and today's labor market.
- **Co-design:** A collaborative process in which the people most affected by a decision help shape the ideas, programs or solutions from the beginning.
- **Coherent interventions:** Coordinated, evidence-based supports that work together across classrooms, grade levels and schools to address students' academic, behavioral or social-emotional needs.
- **Deeper learning:** Learning that enables students to apply knowledge, think critically, solve complex problems and communicate their understanding in meaningful ways.
- **Differentiated instruction:** Teaching that is intentionally adapted to respond to students' different strengths, needs, interests and ways of learning.
- **Equity:** Ensuring that every student has access to the opportunities, resources and support they need to succeed, particularly when historical or systemic barriers have limited access.
- **Generative AI:** Artificial intelligence that can create new content, such as text, images, audio or code, in response to a user's request.
- **Historically underserved students**: Students whose access, opportunities or outcomes have been limited over time because of systemic inequities or barriers.
- **Inclusive classrooms**: Learning environments designed so that students with a wide range of identities, abilities, languages and learning needs can participate fully and meaningfully.
- **Instructional coherence**: The alignment of curriculum, instruction, assessment, professional learning and student support around a shared vision for teaching and learning.
- **Instructional Vision:** Salem's shared description of the engaging, inclusive and rigorous teaching and learning every student should experience in every classroom.
- **Learning differences:** The varied ways students process information, develop skills, demonstrate understanding and engage in learning.
- **Mixed-model early childhood programs:** Early childhood programs that bring together children with different learning needs. May include classrooms operated by the district and community-based partners.
- **Multilingual learners:** Students who are developing proficiency in English while drawing on the strengths and knowledge they have in one or more additional languages.
- **Pathways to Teaching:** Salem's plan to create accessible, equitable pathways to support and empower local students, staff, and neighbors interested in becoming the community's next generation of teachers.
- **Personalized learning:** Learning designed around each student's strengths, needs, interests and goals while maintaining high expectations for all.
- **Portrait of a Graduate:** The core skills and competencies that students are expected to develop and exemplify by the time they graduate: critical thinking, creative problem solving, collaboration, communication, self awareness, cultural competence.
- **PreK / PK–12:** PreK refers to learning before kindergarten, while PK–12 describes the full educational journey from prekindergarten through grade 12.
- **Restorative practices:** Approaches that strengthen relationships, build community and respond to harm through accountability, reflection and repair.
- **Salem's anti-bias and anti-racist agenda:** The district's commitment to identifying and addressing bias and racism in its policies, practices, curriculum and school communities.
- **Self-directed learning:** Learning in which students set goals, make choices, manage their progress and reflect on their growth with appropriate guidance and support.
- **Social-emotional learning (SEL):** The process of developing skills to understand and manage emotions, build relationships, make responsible decisions and navigate challenges.
- **Standards-aligned instruction:** Teaching and learning designed to help students develop the knowledge and skills identified in state academic standards.
- **Student agency:** A student's ability and opportunity to make meaningful choices, take action and influence their learning and school experience.
- **Student ownership:** A student's active responsibility for understanding their goals, monitoring their progress and making decisions that support their learning.
- **Systemic learning:** The process of using evidence and shared reflection across the district to understand what is working, improve practice and guide future decisions.
- **Universal Design for Learning (UDL):** A framework for designing flexible learning experiences that provide multiple ways for students to engage, access information and demonstrate what they know.

Acknowledgements

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