

# THE SCHOOL COMMITTEE OF THE CITY OF BOSTON



## Boston Public Schools Superintendent’s Performance Evaluation Dr. Brenda Cassellius, School Year 2019-2020

<b>Evaluator’s Name</b>	Michael Loconto, Chairperson
<b>Date of Completion:</b>	7/29/2

<b>RATINGS</b>	<b>DEFINITIONS</b>
<b>HIGHLY EFFECTIVE (Exemplary)</b>	Performance far exceeded expectations due to exceptionally high quality of work performed in all essential areas of responsibility, resulting in an overall quality of work that was superior; and either 1) included the completion of a major goal or project, or 2) made an exceptional or unique contribution in support of unit, department, or district objectives. This rating is achievable by any employee though given infrequently.
<b>EFFECTIVE (Proficient)</b>	Performance consistently exceeded expectations in all essential areas of responsibility, and the quality of work overall was excellent. Annual goals were met.
<b>DEVELOPING (Proficient)</b>	Performance consistently met expectations in all essential areas of responsibility, at times possibly exceeding expectations, and the quality of work overall was very good. The most critical annual goals were met.
<b>MINIMALLY EFFECTIVE (Needs Improvement)</b>	Performance did not consistently meet expectations – performance failed to meet expectations in one or more essential areas of responsibility, and/or one or more of the most critical goals were not met. A professional development plan to improve performance must be attached, including timelines, and monitored to measure progress.
<b>INEFFECTIVE (Unsatisfactory)</b>	Performance was consistently below expectations in most essential areas of responsibility, and/or reasonable progress toward critical goals was not made. Significant improvement is needed in one or more important areas. A plan to correct performance, including timelines, must be outlined and monitored to measure progress.

**UNDERSTANDS ROLE AND RESPONSIBILITIES AS SUPERINTENDENT**

**Corresponds to DESE Standard IV: Professional Culture**

- Demonstrates discretion and tact in their leadership
- Understands the political and ethical context to position
- Interacts effectively with the School Committee, City Council, and State on policy.
- Is able to effectively articulate the position of, and be a proxy for, the School Committee
- Interacts with the public and external stakeholders with respect
- Builds trusting relationships with their staff
- Acts with integrity

	<b>HIGHLY EFFECTIVE</b>
<b>X</b>	<b>EFFECTIVE</b>
	<b>DEVELOPING</b>
	<b>MINIMALLY EFFECTIVE</b>
	<b>INEFFECTIVE</b>

**COMMENTS:**

Dr. Cassellius has worked admirably since her hire to engage with stakeholders across our community. Specifically, Brenda has been instrumental in securing the support of the City Council for the BPS budget, worked to build relationships with the Boston Delegation on Beacon Hill, and her colleagues in the Cabinet at City Hall. She has also created a meaningful working relationship with the Department of Elementary & Secondary Education that emerged from the decennial review of our district. Her 100-day tour across all 125 schools in the district was a great effort to get out and greet the community across all City neighborhoods, learning about our students, teachers, staff, school leaders and buildings in the process.

Moving forward, Dr. Cassellius will be well-served to proactively reach out and continue to build her relationship with individual School Committee members as she gains understanding of the key issues that are important to each member.

**COMMITMENT TO ACADEMIC EXCELLENCE AND INNOVATION**

**Corresponds to DESE Indicator I-E: Data-Informed Decision-Making, and Indicator IV-A: Commitment to High Standards**

- Understands the educational landscape of the Boston Public Schools and can speak to strengths, challenges, and successes
- Understands education policy direction of the Boston School Committee and can effectively articulate them to the public
- Is committed to improving education for all students in the Boston Public Schools, especially those in historically marginalized populations
- Recognizes the importance and appropriate role of school-level autonomy and shared responsibility between schools and central office departments

- Demonstrates a sharp focus on data in the continuous improvement of student performance
- Is committed to supporting teachers and schools to share best practice and research to improve academic achievement

	<b>HIGHLY EFFECTIVE</b>
<b>X</b>	<b>EFFECTIVE</b>
	<b>DEVELOPING</b>
	<b>MINIMALLY EFFECTIVE</b>
	<b>INEFFECTIVE</b>

**COMMENTS:**

Dr. Cassellius led a productive process to update the School Committee’s 5-year strategic plan, and has transitioned to the process of implementing that strategic plan. Implementation has been complicated by the current COVID-19 public health emergency, of course; however, the Committee expects Brenda to continue this development during the 2020-2021 academic year, with the introduction of policies to reflect an urgent focus on closing achievement and opportunity gaps within our district’s student body. Dr. Cassellius brings an equity lens to this work, which is necessary to serve the high-needs population in our district.

**PRODUCTIVITY, ORGANIZING AND PLANNING**

**Corresponds to DESE Standard II: Management and Operations**

- Understands related position functions and performs daily activities without supervision
- Establishes effective and challenging task priorities
- Schedules time with staff effectively and resolves conflicts
- Manages calendar request in a timely manner
- Meets deadlines, demonstrates effective time use and simultaneous handling of several assignments
- Appropriately organizes work so others can find work in progress and/or necessary files and information, when necessary
- Ensures all contact whether by telephone, email, or mail with colleagues, families, and students is positive and productive in nature - constructive criticism followed by problem-solving suggestions
- Responds promptly, within 24 hours, to all internal and external requests whenever possible
- Shows initiative and demonstrates learning and expanding knowledge to further enhance performance

	<b>HIGHLY EFFECTIVE</b>
	<b>EFFECTIVE</b>
<b>X</b>	<b>DEVELOPING</b>

	<b>MINIMALLY EFFECTIVE</b>
	<b>INEFFECTIVE</b>

**COMMENTS:**

Dr. Cassellius has focused intensely on rebuilding trust between the district and the community we serve over the first year of her tenure. She was a consensus selection in the eyes of many community advocates and district partners, given her approach to communications and partnership.

As she moves forward, that focus must shift to creating a sustainable internal structure. Sustainability, stability and consistency are keys to the long term success of BPS and the improved student outcomes that we urgently need and expect. While COVID-19 has posed difficulty for everyone in maintaining and growing relationships, Dr. Cassellius needs to find areas for creating partnership with school leaders in order to enact key policy and operational changes. At the same time, Dr. Cassellius needs to complete the buildout of her senior team, maintain a limited number of direct reports, and empower her cabinet chiefs to execute and be held accountable for district initiatives. In particular, Dr. Cassellius would be well served to empower a Chief of Staff or Deputy Superintendent to assist with maintaining focus on key initiatives, ensuring policy and practical ideas move from concept to implementation along a planned timeline, and maintain oversight over key non-academic Operations (food, facilities, transportation and assignments) that require specialized expertise. Effective delegation and key hires will support the superintendent in carrying out her role as the chief executive officer of this \$1.3 billion organization, with over 55,000 students and 10,000 employees spread across more than 130 facilities.

**FISCAL RESPONSIBILITY AND BUDGETARY CONTROLS**

**Corresponds to DESE Indicator II-E: Fiscal Systems**

- Uses resources effectively and conservatively and is a good steward of resources
- Forecasts accurately and maintains budgetary projections consistently
- Controls operating costs effectively, optimizing human and other capital
- Is resourceful in securing funding to accomplish goals and ensure team has capacity to follow through

	<b>HIGHLY EFFECTIVE</b>
<b>X</b>	<b>EFFECTIVE</b>
	<b>DEVELOPING</b>
	<b>MINIMALLY EFFECTIVE</b>
	<b>INEFFECTIVE</b>

**COMMENTS:**

Dr. Cassellius has done an admirable job in leading her first budget cycle, marked by the achievement of a three-year, \$100 million investment in the district from Mayor Walsh. While the district expected additional resources from the Commonwealth following enactment of the Student Opportunity Act, state revenues are likely to decline in the wake of the COVID-19 public health emergency. This makes the City’s investments more important, while reinforcing the need for the district to continue the multi-year budget forecasting begun by the former CFO and continued in the current administration. Moving forward, the superintendent will need to continue to seek operational efficiencies in areas like transportation while redirecting resources to classrooms and student supports to drive our mission of closing opportunity and achievement gaps.

**JUDGMENT/DECISION MAKING**

**Corresponds to DESE Indicator II-D: Law, Ethics, and Policies**

- Identifies and evaluates issues, reaches sound decisions and generates alternatives
- Takes into account the effects/impacts of decisions
- Understands the political nature of the position and takes care to see all sides
- Seeks prior advice and approval if needed before taking action
- Demonstrates well-balanced thinking between taking “risks” and practical consideration

	<b>HIGHLY EFFECTIVE</b>
X	<b>EFFECTIVE</b>
	<b>DEVELOPING</b>
	<b>MINIMALLY EFFECTIVE</b>
	<b>INEFFECTIVE</b>

**COMMENTS:**

The superintendent has brought strong practices to her role from prior experience as a long-serving state education commissioner and previous senior roles in large urban districts. In particular, Dr. Cassellius has been adept at adapting to the political landscape in Boston and in the Commonwealth, and has utilized her skills as a visionary and a warm and caring individual to develop her relationship with the communities that she serves.

The nature of this role as a change agent means that, at times, it can be a tiring and frustrating role - as well as an exhilarating and fulfilling one when we achieve successes that are measured in equity and improved student outcomes. The superintendent has the skills and the will to balance these competing aspects, and the desire to continue working with the community toward achieving a better system for the benefit of our kids.

**COLLABORATION/TEAMWORK**

**Corresponds to DESE Standard III: Family and Community Engagement and Indicator IV-E: Shared Vision**

- Is a good team player - demonstrates positive, motivated behavior, provides support, accepts guidance, and keeps an open door
- Keeps others informed of the status of initiatives, including the Strategic Plan, on a consistent basis
- Uses and values the talents of other staff and/or team members
- Provides support and feedback to team members
- Participates fully and collaborates with internal and external stakeholders
- Modifies individual objectives and desires to support the efforts of the team
- Demonstrates openness to new ideas and suggestions
- Shares responsibility for outcomes and workload equity
- Is dependable and can be counted on

	<b>HIGHLY EFFECTIVE</b>
	<b>EFFECTIVE</b>
<b>X</b>	<b>DEVELOPING</b>
	<b>MINIMALLY EFFECTIVE</b>
	<b>INEFFECTIVE</b>

**COMMENTS:**

The superintendent has done an admirable job in getting out into the community to build relationships and trust on behalf of BPS. She has been instrumental in reaching out to communities of color, parents, and teachers, and her love for our children and their education shines through any time she interacts with students. Brenda is responsive when anyone reaches out, and has shown an eagerness and willingness to get deeply involved in many of the critical issues facing the district.

Over the next year, she will need to continue to build her relationships with the district’s school leaders in order to create sustainable change in our upper grades, and sustain the changes in our lower grades that have been initiated over the last several years, including K1 expansion, the early learning curriculum, equitable academic opportunities in the middle grades, and grade reconfigurations. Effective, sustainable change for the benefit of our children requires not only innovative ideas, but buy-in and support from those across the district that are closest to the classroom and are able to implement the strategies that will improve academic outcomes and opportunities across the city.

Continuing to strengthen partnerships with out-of-school time and enrichment providers in our schools will also assist in providing the wraparound services that have been critical to the socioemotional wellbeing of our students, which creates the conditions for success in our classrooms.

**FOCUS ON EQUITY AND EXCELLENCE**

**Corresponds to DESE Indicators I-D: Evaluation; II-D: Law, Ethics, and Policies; III-C: Communication; and IV-A: Commitment to High Standards**

- Supports and actively builds a culture of excellence and equity
- Engages diverse stakeholders in decision making
- Provides effective supervision to direct reports through clear expectations, appropriate levels of feedback and support, and accountability for results.
- Ensures that all contact whether by telephone, email, or mail with colleagues, families, and students is positive and productive in nature - constructive criticism followed by problem-solving suggestions

X	<b>HIGHLY EFFECTIVE</b>
	<b>EFFECTIVE</b>
	<b>DEVELOPING</b>
	<b>MINIMALLY EFFECTIVE</b>
	<b>INEFFECTIVE</b>

**COMMENTS:**

Equity is at the heart of Dr. Cassellius’s approach to leadership in our schools, and this is where her work and commitment shines through on behalf of our students and our community. Practically speaking, she has capably led the process to update the School Committee’s Strategic Plan, with a focus on strategies to close opportunity and achievement gaps. Her Equity Toolkit has greatly advanced the policy review process for matters before the School Committee, and has brought more clarity to the decision making process in the district.

During the response to the COVID-19 public health emergency, Brenda has also convened a weekly Equity Roundtable to convene stakeholders across our community.

Furthermore, the superintendent's courage - barely a year into her tenure in a new city with a long history - in appointing a working group to tackle the decades-old issue of exam school admissions, particularly with respect to the effects of COVID-19 and remote learning in the current environment, is demonstrative of her tact in seeking a thoughtful approach to solving a complex issue while engaging the people with the skills, knowledge and desire to determine and implement effective strategies to address the issue.

Over the next year, the Committee looks forward to hearing from the Superintendent on a clear implementation plan to support the initiatives in the Strategic Plan, with strategies to address the ongoing facilities and reconfiguration efforts in the district, academic reform, centralization of services, improvements in food service, and efficiencies in transportation.

## COMMUNICATION AND INTERPERSONAL SKILLS

### Corresponds to DESE Indicator IV-C: Communications

- Conveys clear and concise communications, listens well and responds appropriately
- Is tactful, candid, and consistent in words and actions
- Comprehends the importance of interacting positively with stakeholders
- Analyzes complaints and takes steps to address issues immediately
- Demonstrates flexibility with unavoidable tension and pressure
- Demonstrates respect at all times

	<b>HIGHLY EFFECTIVE</b>
<b>X</b>	<b>EFFECTIVE</b>
	<b>DEVELOPING</b>
	<b>MINIMALLY EFFECTIVE</b>
	<b>INEFFECTIVE</b>

### COMMENTS:

Dr. Cassellius uses her skills as a long-term state education commissioner and senior leader in urban public education to effectively convey the needs of our district to elected and appointed leaders across the Commonwealth, and the many advocates working in common cause for the greater good of Boston's children. She has demonstrated the ability to build coalitions in the budget process, and has been an effective voice for BPS in the media and among our regional higher education partners. Brenda's weekly outreach to the BPS community has also been well received, and builds a sense of connection across the district.



**GOAL PROGRESS (SEE EMPLOYEE DEVELOPMENT PLAN, ATTACHED)**

**Ratings: Exceeded, Met, Significant Progress, Some Progress, Did Not Meet**

Goal #	Goal Rating	Comments
		N/A - 1st year evaluation

**OVERALL RATING (Consider progress toward goals and performance categories)**

	<b>HIGHLY EFFECTIVE (Exemplary)</b>
<b>X</b>	<b>EFFECTIVE (Proficient)</b>
	<b>DEVELOPING (Proficient)</b>
	<b>MINIMALLY EFFECTIVE (Needs Improvement)</b>
	<b>INEFFECTIVE (Unsatisfactory)</b>

**ED EVAL ONLY: STANDARDS RATINGS**

**(Place an 'X' in the appropriate rating box for each standard)**

E	P	NI	U	
	<b>X</b>			<b>Standard I: Instructional Leadership</b>
	<b>X</b>			<b>Standard II: Management and Operations</b>
<b>X</b>				<b>Standard III: Family and Community Engagement</b>
	<b>X</b>			<b>Standard IV: Professional Culture</b>

## Employee Development Plan (EDP)

Identify and describe 2-3 areas of strength and 2-3 areas for continued growth based on the categories above, as well as how you arrived at these areas.

Areas of strength	Areas for continued growth
Community Engagement	Complete work on Central Office and Senior Staff structures, with an eye toward clear reporting lines, sustainable planning and accountability
Equity Focus	Internal Communications and Relationships
Budget Advocacy & Drive for Reform	Long-term strategic planning

Create 2-3 goals from the competencies evaluated in the process.

Develop SMART goals: Specific, Measurable, Attainable, Results-oriented, and Time-bound.

Goal #	Goal	Measure of Success
	I agree with the superintendent's stated goals and thank her for taking the time to articulate clear, specific and attainable outcomes. In particular, her strategies to reopen schools in a safe, timely manner this fall, with attention paid to stemming and recovering from any student learning loss suffered over the last 6 months, will be a key consideration for the committee in reviewing her performance and that of the district over the coming year.	