
TO: School Committee
FROM: Superintendent Mary Skipper
DATE: July 26, 2023
RE: Self Evaluation

This evening I will present my self evaluation to the School Committee.

Coming back to serve as the Superintendent of Boston Public Schools is such an incredible honor. I regularly say to my team that before us is a *once in a lifetime opportunity* to help transform our district into a high performing, sustainable system that truly serves every one of our 48,000 students.

Over these past 10 months since becoming Superintendent, I have learned and relearned a great deal about the BPS. Our Systemic Improvement Plan (SIP), Council of Great City Schools reports, EY data audit, school visits, and meetings with students, families, staff, and partners have all helped me understand what has worked, is working and what we need to change.

I know the tendency and expectation for new superintendents is often to abandon what has been done previously and chart an entirely new course that they can call their own. That has never been my style or way of working. I believe much good work has been done in BPS over the years under some very talented leaders. My style is one of assessing all that is; determining strategically what is working; listening to the experiences of those who work for the system and are served by the system; and then build forward ensuring the foundation is strong and can support what is to come.

This past year, I have worked to do that assessment while also actively making improvements and prioritizing building back a strong foundation with the creation and strengthening of critical systems and structures. As I have said many times, I also fully believe that this work is best done by a team and so my other focus has been in hiring a strong, diverse and experienced team, many of whom have or currently work for BPS so that we can keep momentum and create the improvements and lasting systems our district needs and our students, families and staff want and deserve.

I need to be clear– there remains a tremendous amount of work ahead of us and some very difficult decisions that have been deferred for decades to make. I believe that bold transformation is possible and required in BPS to move from a district that was built with an intent to segregate and perpetuate disparate outcomes to one that truly serves all children regardless of their zip code, race, culture, spoken language, or disability. To do this deep and difficult work, we need to celebrate and mark the progress we make along the way, but never be satisfied until we have made this vision the reality for our students and families, current and future.

As we build the foundational systems we will need, we must demonstrate each year concrete progress toward our goals and evidence that the systems we are creating and strengthening will lead to positive student outcomes, especially for our most underserved students--Black and Brown students, students with disabilities and Multilingual Learners with and without disabilities.

Progress on our work and tangible student outcomes must be the measurement of success for me, my team, and our District. Just a few quick examples of the type of progress we are monitoring and I will share:

1. **Providing safe, reliable and on time transportation is critical for ensuring our students can access their education.** We will enter the school year 2023-2024 in a very different place than a year ago. The district is fully staffed for bus drivers and has additional drivers in queue who will complete training so that we start the school year ready to meet our transportation goals. We have a new contract in place with Transdev that builds on the progress we have made with this vendor and for the first time has financial incentives and penalties aligned with our transportation goals in place through our bus contract. We have redesigned the system so that every bus will have a minimum of one monitor and we continue to make significant progress in hiring bus monitors so that families of special education students do not experience the disruptions that happened this past year. Looking at the data from last year, as a system we improved On Time Performance (OTP) and resolved a greater percentage of missing GPS data as the year progressed. Although we finished the year below the 95% OTP that is in our Systemic Improvement Plan (SIP), we have made significant operational improvements to improve on-time performance every month, ensure all routes are covered on a daily basis, and provide families with real-time communications about any delays or service challenges through our Transportation Hotline that has a multilingual staff to serve our families.
2. **Keeping our labor contracts and salaries competitive and current is critical to building a diverse, talented staff who see BPS as a place to work, develop, and advance in service of our students and families.** All of the 18 labor contracts with our unions were outstanding, some as long as 3 years. We finish this year with all 18 contracts settled and current. We are continuing to build strong relationships and collaboration with our unions to do the critical work that is needed in the future for BPS. Each of these unions represent the staff who along with our school leaders have worked tirelessly throughout the Pandemic, doing whatever was needed, for our students and families. When contracts are not kept current, especially over several years, staff do not feel respected or valued. We also restructured our school leader contract that had not been updated in seven years and in collaboration with school leaders have built what I believe is one of the most competitive school leader contracts in Massachusetts. The contract is rooted in the deep belief of how vital a strong talented school leader core is to transforming our District. We now have a labor schedule that allows us each year to focus on negotiations across a few units at a time and keep our District competitive and a place where staff feel valued.
3. **We are making progress with our vision and plan that every Boston Public School is inclusive and can offer a continuum of services to all students to meet their needs. Inclusive Education in the BPS means that we are increasing access to native language learning**

opportunities for multilingual learners and increasing access to least restrictive environments for students with disabilities, including those who are multilingual.

- a. More of our multilingual learners are receiving the services they are entitled to than previous years and while we still have a great deal of work to do, we have the highest percentage to date as part of our Department of Justice agreement of multilingual learners receiving appropriate services. We grew from 89% receiving the appropriate amount of English instruction required to now 94% of multilingual learners who are receiving the appropriate amount of English instruction required. We are expanding bilingual education, access to Native language and working towards implementing our OMME strategic plan.
- b. This past year we worked with a cohort of more than 22 schools to form their inclusion planning teams as they begin the work of transforming their schools to support inclusive practices. Taking lessons learned from this year, we are actively working on our Inclusive Education Plan that includes many of the recommendations from the Council of Great City School (CGCS) report and will be submitted in August as part of our SIP. In school year 2023-2024, we are asking all schools to have their Inclusion Planning Teams up and running so we can roll out inclusion by grade span and provide additional professional development for our educators so we can ensure staff have the training and resources they need to serve our students in inclusive settings where students have access to native language instruction and to the least restrictive environments. We have also further developed and increased resources in our recruitment and retention efforts by expanding internal and pipeline programs so that we have the linguistically and culturally diverse staff, certified in special education and ESL, that we need to support our Inclusive Education Plan.

These are just three examples of how the work is progressing, and it is why we must stay focused on building systems that sustain and support that progress. In my self evaluation, I have provided additional examples and organized the work in the four DESE Standards for a superintendent evaluation. I've included those four standards here and the topics I will dive into for each one:

Standard I: Instructional Leadership

- Equitable Literacy
- Inclusion
- Bilingual/OMME plan
- Early College
- Career Technical Education Expansion
- Student Support: Youth Opportunity and Chronic Absenteeism
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Standard II: Management and Operations

- Team Structure: Deputies
- Team Structure: Regional Model
- Facilities Planning
- Emergency Management Office/School Safety Planning
- Communications Systems
- Labor Contracts

Standard III: Family and Community Engagement

- Restructuring: Elevating Equity, Family and Community Advancement
- School Site Council Improvements
- BPS Family Helpline
- Expansion of Parent Mentoring

Standard IV: Professional Culture

- Internal Communications
- Professional Development Focus
- School Leader Contract
- Meeting Structures

As is the case in many large districts with frequent leadership change, BPS has operated with a focus on compliance and had difficulty reaching a broader and more adaptive set of goals that are grounded in student outcomes. We as a team are determined to shift that mindset and move the district to a place where the BPS exceeds expectations and supports all of our students, especially those who have been underserved. This will take everyone doing their part. It will take consistency and accountability from our team leading the work and a goal of sustainability and continuous improvement.

Thank you for this opportunity to serve the district that has made me the educator I am today. I care deeply about the work, about our students and families, and about our hardworking staff who show up every day to support our students. We are in this together and although there are presently and will be challenges ahead, I believe we can and must make the needed changes to transform BPS into a District grounded in student outcome and success.