

THE SCHOOL COMMITTEE OF THE CITY OF BOSTON



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

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| Evaluator’s Name | Alexandra Oliver-Dávila |
| Date of Completion: | 7/6/2020 |

| RATINGS | DEFINITIONS |
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| HIGHLY EFFECTIVE (Exemplary) | 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. |
| EFFECTIVE (Proficient) | Performance consistently exceeded expectations in all essential areas of responsibility, and the quality of work overall was excellent. Annual goals were met. |
| DEVELOPING (Proficient) | 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. |
| MINIMALLY EFFECTIVE (Needs Improvement) | 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. |
| INEFFECTIVE (Unsatisfactory) | 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

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| | HIGHLY EFFECTIVE |
| X | EFFECTIVE |
| | DEVELOPING |
| | MINIMALLY EFFECTIVE |
| | INEFFECTIVE |

COMMENTS:

The Superintendent has been placed in a position where there are no playbooks or guidelines for schools to run during a pandemic. She has done an amazing job in harnessing resources for BPS students and families as well as aligned her team to tackle the many challenges faced by the district in closing schools to run remote programming. In her first year, the Superintendent led a citywide community process to develop a Strategic Plan for the district and also faced a review by DESE. Tackling all of this would be hard for even a seasoned Superintendent. Throughout all of this, Dr Cassellius has been extremely professional and has maintained a positive demeanor.

The Superintendent has worked extremely hard to visit every school at least one time in her first few months. Although these visits were short and not as in depth as she or school personnel would have wanted, (I am sure she will be making longer visits moving forward), it was an important step in team building as well as one way to begin to learn the Boston landscape. The Superintendent continues to demonstrate her willingness and eagerness to learn Boston and the political context. These visits were also a first step in hearing directly from principals and teachers who are closest to students and families. The Superintendent’s strategic planning process held citywide and enlisting external partners, I believe helped to begin to rebuild trust that had been lost over the previous years. These meetings were held in various languages in an effort to hear from the diversity of families enrolled in BPS.

The Superintendent has been placed in an unprecedented situation dealing with the fall out created by a pandemic and she has done an amazing job in harnessing resources for BPS students and families. Because of the unprecedented nature of the situation, she has not been able to spend as much time with school committee members or with school leaders. In this upcoming year, I would encourage the Superintendent to further engage school committee members as thought partners. I would also encourage in year 2 that the Superintendent focus on working more closely building the internal team and working more closely with central office staff as well as school leaders. The Superintendent has a strong personality and vision which is a great strength. This can also create an environment where

others do not feel that they are heard or can express themselves. I think greater dialogue and reflection upon feedback from others will be a wonderful thing to focus on and will be instrumental in creating a cohesive, strong team. I believe this year should be more internal facing work as opposed to the external facing work.

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

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COMMENTS:

From as early on as her public interviews, the Superintendent has been very vocal regarding equity, racial justice and academic excellence. With an eye towards closing the achievement gap, the Superintendent has been working on replacing the exam school test, revamping high school graduation requirements, creating more 7-12 schools, re-designing the high school experience and investing heavily in BPS’ most struggling schools. I encourage the Superintendent to continue to unearth the inequities in our system working more closely with school leaders and the school committee in the design of programs and policies with a deep exploration of what might be some unintended consequences and how to mitigate those.

I would encourage the Superintendent to continue to work on implementing the Look Act as well as re-building a strong OELL department.

The Superintendent has inherited a system of great autonomy without specific accountability benchmarks. I thank the Superintendent for being transparent about the issues and inherent inequities in this model. I encourage the Superintendent to work side by side with school leaders to come up with a structure for earned autonomy, as I believe everyone ultimately shares the same end goal of high performing schools with happy, successful and engaged students.

The Superintendent has always said that the district is only as strong as its teachers. She cares very deeply for the students and families of BPS, but just as deeply for our teachers and student facing staff. The Superintendent has articulated a vision for BPS to be a top place to work in. She has continually brought in resources for professional development for teachers. It would be great for the upcoming year to bring back programming and/or mentorship to support principals.

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

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COMMENTS:

The Superintendent is quick to respond to calls or emails. I don't know how she does it but she responds to all her daily emails! The Superintendent has been faced with an unprecedented crisis where

she has had to create an on line school overnight, assure students have the appropriate technology & access to it, that students have food and mental health supports as well as provide supports to schools so teachers can teach. She moved swiftly with her team to make sure that as much as was in her power, no student would be left behind. She created a weekly equity roundtable to get on the ground feedback from partners and families in an effort to address missed issues. The Academics team has worked tirelessly to make remote learning meaningful, engaging and where students are still learning. The IT team has worked tirelessly to deliver and hand out computers as well as get hot spots and work with internet providers for low or no cost internet. Food services has worked tirelessly to provide and deliver meals. The Community Engagement team has worked tirelessly to reach out to families to provide supports. Staff worked across departments to make this happen and all of this was under the Superintendents leadership.

The Superintendent has continued to lead work in areas of the Strategic Plan and the agreed upon DESE MOU pieces while simultaneously continuing to work on school year and summer remote learning and multiple plans for next school year. She has demonstrated that she can work on multiple tasks and priorities.

The Superintendent continues to look at how to reorganize central office to better support schools. I think this year the Superintendent should focus on finalizing this leadership structure including lessening the number of direct reports so that she can focus on internal team building and the most important priorities of the district.

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

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COMMENTS:

The Superintendent has been able to secure a multiyear funding commitment from the Mayor to support BPS' most struggling schools. These dollars will also support things like arts and ethnic studies that will positively engage students. The Superintendent presented a sound budget that shown support for outcomes of the districts strategic plan. The Superintendent was able to effectively communicate and represent budget priorities to the public and the city council.

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

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COMMENTS:

The Superintendent has made a very strong start meeting with the community, visiting all schools and developing a strategic plan. She has identified some of the district's major challenges and has begun to try to address those such as differing graduation requirements across schools, declining enrollment and underperforming schools. The Superintendent has understandably tried to meet the urgency before us of creating a Strategic Plan, tackling a DESE review and dealing with all of the issues created by Covid 19. The Superintendent is doing the job she was hired to do and I think she is moving many things in the right direction. I would encourage her to take more time in analyzing some of these major policy shifts as I believe there are unintended consequences that we need to do a better job in understanding. For example the decision to have more internal BPS summer programs severely impacted external summer programs as they competed for the same students within individual schools. We know there are more than enough students who could use summer programming but we need to be more thoughtful in the design. I would also encourage that we more thoughtfully include school leaders and teachers in these conversations as they are on the ground and much closer to the work. I would also encourage more conversations with individual school committee members as the Superintendent works through policy recommendations. Lastly, I would like to see the Superintendent have a very strong leadership team including a deputy #2 type person that would be charged with implementing the

Superintendents/school committee vision and also support by standing in for the Superintendent at external events/meetings. For example, a number 2 could stand in for the Superintendent at OAG and ELL Task force meetings. This person can also support building cohesion internally and having a consistent message for all staff.

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

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COMMENTS:

The Superintendent very much values the input of students, families, staff and external stakeholders. Some examples are: visiting 125 schools and hearing from principals, students & staff; the citywide Strategic Planning process held in multiple languages to hear from students, families & stakeholders; the weekly equity roundtables focused on problem solving to support our most vulnerable students; the addition of a point #6 to the Strategic Plan ensuring that external organizations would be partners in the work and have a voice in decisions made; and weekly meetings with students from the advisory council. The Superintendent has prioritized re-building trust with BPS families and I believe she has done a great job with that. I encourage her to continue to engage students, families and all stakeholders by regularly updating on strategic plan as well as all critical BPS issues.

I would encourage the Superintendent in her second year to focus on internal communication and team building. I would like to see more collaboration with school leaders and the Superintendent, with school leaders and central office and with the Superintendent and central office.

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

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COMMENTS:

The Strategic planning process involved a very diverse set of stakeholders, was held across the city, in multiple languages and included a student specific session. Through this process the district was able to hear back from students, families and stakeholders. The Strategic Plan is based on community feedback.

The Superintendent was tasked to seek out a more equitable exam school test and has done so. The test can be taken in Spanish, it is tied to standards & what students are learning, it can be given multiple times and also remotely.

In an effort to address the further inequities brought on by the pandemic the Superintendent has created weekly roundtables that focus on reviewing concerns witnessed by parents and external stakeholders for our most vulnerable students. The creation of weekly equity roundtables by the Superintendent has allowed for a variety of stakeholders to engage in real time issues and provide input into decisions and actions to address inequities. This has now been replicated at every school ensuring that more voices are part of decision making. I think this has been a very positive and transparent way to hear directly from stakeholders and make real time changes.

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

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COMMENTS:

In the interactions I have witnessed, I have found the Superintendent to be respectful. In my experience, the Superintendent has communicated tough messages to families, staff and school committee members. Since day one she has always maintained that if she feels she can not do something, she will always be honest. That is appreciated.

The Superintendent has been proactive in addressing school concerns when she learns about them and has maintained an open door policy in talking and working with schools. This has been refreshing and I encourage the Superintendent to create more spaces for dialogue with school leaders and with central office staff.

Most recently the Superintendent has been working with a number of groups to review BPS' student information sharing policy. In that space she has shown respect through careful listening. It is good leadership to be willing to listen to opposing sides and compromise.

It has been a very challenging year all around and the Superintendent has had to focus on responding to the emergency before. In year 2 as things calm down I encourage the Superintendent to have more proactive communication with school committee members as well as to work more closely with principals and central office. Year 1 was about laying the groundwork and re-building community trust. We have a solid strategic plan and resources to implement it. Year 2 should focus on greater team building.

GOAL PROGRESS (SEE EMPLOYEE DEVELOPMENT PLAN, ATTACHED)

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

| Goal # | Goal Rating | Comments |
|--------|-------------|------------------------------------|
| 1 | Met | Developed 5 year Strategic Plan |
| 2 | Met | Secured dollars for Strategic Plan |
| 3 | Met | Negotiated MOU with DESE |

OVERALL RATING (Consider progress toward goals and performance categories)

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| | HIGHLY EFFECTIVE (Exemplary) |
| X | EFFECTIVE (Proficient) |
| | DEVELOPING (Proficient) |
| | MINIMALLY EFFECTIVE (Needs Improvement) |
| | INEFFECTIVE (Unsatisfactory) |

ED EVAL ONLY: STANDARDS RATINGS

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

| E | P | NI | U | |
|---|---|----|---|--|
| | X | | | Standard I: Instructional Leadership |
| | X | | | Standard II: Management and Operations |
| | X | | | Standard III: Family and Community Engagement |
| | X | | | Standard IV: Professional Culture |

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 |
|--|--|
| Can connect with families and students authentically | Be more pro-active in engaging all school committee members on critical issues |
| Understands the importance of focusing on equity | Year 1 was working on a strategic plan and rebuilding community trust; Year 2 should be working more closely to build a stronger more cohesive team with school leaders and central office and building an effective leadership team including a strong #2 |
| Timely follow up with requests/emails | Creating a strong ELL department and implementation of the LOOK Act |

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 |
|--------|---|--|
| 1 | An engaged and knowledgeable school committee who are thought partners | More active SC members; better SC meetings; greater on-going and regular communication with SC members; greater collaboration between Sc and Superintendent |
| 2 | A unified, collaborative team between Superintendent, school leaders and central office | School leaders are included in design of programs/policies and are part of the decision making; central office collaborates with school leaders in design and decision making; Superintendent creates on-going opportunities for dialogue and listening sessions for school leaders & central office staff and works collaboratively taking into account all views when making decisions and recommendations to SC |
| 3 | Development of LOOK Act Programming | Review of other district work; |

| | | |
|--|--|--|
| | | design and implementation of LOOK Act programs in collaboration with OELL, ELL Task Force, central office, school leaders & SC |
|--|--|--|