

# 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>	Quoc Tran
<b>Date of Completion:</b>	7/28/2020

RATINGS	DEFINITIONS
<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

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

**COMMENTS:**

In my own assessment, factual breakdown on concrete tasks and projects Dr. Cassellius had performed in her first year may be summarized as below:

1. BTU contract and negotiation—done excellently. Keeping the Committee informed every step along the way. No qualm here for me.
2. Citywide community process—done in the shortest time possible. Input from stakeholders are valued and considered as reflected in the five-year strategic plan. She exceeded my expectation.
3. Strategic Plan—carefully drafted with School Committee’s and community input. Moving forward and implementing the plan remain a future evaluation. For the 2019-2020 academic year, some goals and benchmarks are already in place.
4. DESE Review and MOU—although I do not essentially agree with DESE review, the superintendent took the task head on and reached with them an MOU that is not only livable but addressing stakeholders’ concerns as well.
5. Student Opportunity Act—the superintendent helped with the Act passage by showing her political and public involvement strength in getting people from all educational perspectives to rally together.
6. Working relationship and partnership with School Committee—the superintendent keeps members of the School Committee abreast of what’s happening around the district with her

weekly check-in memo. She responds to my concerns by phone not only in a timely manner but offering satisfactory information to my issues as well.

7. Stakeholders' concerns—Given the diversity of educational beliefs, interests, and commitments of Boston citizens, groups, parents, and various communities, navigating, balancing, and ameliorating public conflicts are always arduous, at time untenable, even for skilled consensus builders. When facing with a community or administrative conflict, I have observed that the superintendent always placed a very high weight in equity in her conflict resolution. Naturally, when handling administrative and/or internal issues, there bounds to be dissension. After all, running a tight ship is within the superintendent's domain so long as the students' best interest and equity in the district remain at the top. On the other hand, the superintendent works well with members of the political arena. Demonstrably, despite the current fiscal constraint existing in all level of government, the superintendent was able to work with the Mayor in getting an additional 100 million dollars to the school budget to be spent over three year for student programs. In my opinion, the superintendent exceeds my expectation in this area.
  
8. Covid-19 pandemic—the catastrophe changes the entire game plan for the district. I observed that the superintendent spent countless hours in dealing with the current climate for a workable and agreeable solution that would address conflicting concerns from all communities in Boston. She had garnered expert opinions, resources, and best practices around the country along with input from School Committee. The demand to revisit and reconsider the Exam School Entrance Test, a long simmering issue, has aptly arisen. It is a policy issue that must be addressed by the School Committee in concert with the superintendent. Thus far, I believe that the superintendent is showing full cooperation by providing the Committee with resources and options. The superintendent continues to judiciously deal with the effects (after-effects, I hope???) of the pandemic on the coming school year.

**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

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

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

**COMMENTS:**

Before the superintendent’s arrival, the district has adopted and been practicing a system of school autonomy without much guidance to the schools in upholding their accountability. As a result, the system, inadvertently or not, contributes to the problems of inequities and want of diversity. The superintendent has been tackling these issues in a “peeling the onion’s layers” manner. Creating a uniformed preK-12 literacy curriculum is a first step at peeling said onion. Putting together a community equity roundtable that meets weekly is another. I believe she is on the right path.

In addition, the countless hours the superintendent spent in formulating and implementing steps and projects in response to the effects of the Covid-19 pandemic undoubtedly showed her commitment and innovation to academic excellence. These steps could be seen in the distribution of food, computer-related equipment, accessing public software to all students and their families.

While the coming school year of 2020-2021 will present a myriad of complicated hurdles to teaching and advancing students’ education due to the pandemic, I have no hesitance in cooperating with and lending my support to the superintendent. In her first year so far, she has shown me her commitment to advancing the academic excellence of the 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>X</b>	<b>EFFECTIVE</b>
	<b>DEVELOPING</b>
	<b>MINIMALLY EFFECTIVE</b>
	<b>INEFFECTIVE</b>

**COMMENTS:**

Immediately after assuming her position, the superintendent surrounded herself with highly knowledgeable and committed inner-circle team. With their cooperation, the superintendent was able to move forward with her work calendar very expeditiously. I observed that the superintendent placed much focus on gaining trust from community and stakeholder, and rightly so, before formulating her work agenda. At the same time, the superintendent has always kept School Committee members abreast of all things occurring, internally and externally, in a timely manner. Her approach helped BSC members better prepared for every public hearing we had so far.

The pandemic did create situations and scenarios where the superintendent must take actions that, I believe, she deemed best for the district, its students, and the community at large. Some of these actions have caused negative impact on her relationship with some staff, both at the school sites and central office. While there is no doubt from me that these actions of hers were done for the operational, fiscal, and education-related health of the district, I partly share similar concerns as expressed by my other colleagues on the Committee, i.e., effective delegation.

No one could foresee how the pandemic evolves. Trusting senior team and delegating key initiatives moving forward can only help the superintendent in achieving her goals, as set forth in the strategic plan.

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

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

**COMMENTS:**

In her first year, the superintendent has not only been able to work within the assigned budget but to get an additional three-year, \$100 million commitment from the Mayor Walsh to support under-achieving schools. The superintendent adhered to the budget, as she had presented to the BSC.

With the passage of the Student Opportunity Act, additional dollars from the state will help with the district's financial picture in the years to come. In the round of the pandemic, numerous ad-hoc changes were implemented to maintain the education process in the district that may have required additional funding. Nevertheless, the superintendent pushed forward with those changes and did not suffer financial shortfall. That is a plus.

For the coming 2020-2021 school year, the unpredictability of the pandemic exacerbated by the unforeseeable state revenue support will be fiscally challenging for the district. I concur with advice and suggestions from my colleagues to the superintendent, i.e., realigning and redirecting dollars for operational efficiencies, and continuing to optimize human capital with strong focus on diversity and multiculturalism.

For the purpose of this year evaluation, the superintendent gets the highest mark from me in this area.

**JUDGMENT/DECISION MAKING**

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

- Identifies and evaluates issues, reaches sound decisions and generates alternatives
- Considers 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>X</b>	<b>HIGHLY EFFECTIVE</b>
	<b>EFFECTIVE</b>
	<b>DEVELOPING</b>
	<b>MINIMALLY EFFECTIVE</b>
	<b>INEFFECTIVE</b>

**COMMENTS:**

The superintendent has shown a good grasp of the political culture and landscape in Boston by setting aside an inordinate amount of time to meet and listen to the community at large, stakeholders, and various education-related politicians. Her attentive and active listening skills, as exhibited at community meetings, were excellent. Community members that I met with who had interacted with the superintendent had nothing but high praises for her demeanor, attentiveness, and sound responses.

I was particularly impressed with her knowledge on various federal laws in the area of education. Her decisions made administratively and internally aside (as I continue to believe these are her domain), her approach and decisions made in regard to policies, such as the creation and implementation of the new five-year strategic plan, involvement in the Student Opportunity Act, dealing with DESE review and MOU, the new Collective Bargaining Agreement, and the nascent rebirth of the Exam School Entrance Test issue had been with the advice and suggestions of the BSC. For that, she also deserves a high mark from me in this section.

**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

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

**COMMENTS:**

In my view, the superintendent is very approachable and a good team player. In addition, to meeting with the community, she meets several times with student council and groups, community advocacy groups for specific purposes (students with disability is one that I attended), and BSC sub-committees. The community-at-large's trust in the Boston School Department was not very high before the superintendent arrived, she helped abridged the wariness and facilitated more community involvement throughout the year (there was over 500 attendees in our last ZOOM public hearing).

That said, I echo my colleague, Dr. Lorna Rivera, in suggesting that the superintendent spend some more time with issues arising from English Language Learners needs.

**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:**

The strict degree to which the concept and practice of equity vary from one individual to another. In my assessment, what the superintendent had done programmatically through the school year, especially the year's second half while under Covid-19 pandemic, exhibits her commitment to equity. She deserves high mark from me in this section.



## 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

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

### COMMENTS:

The superintendent exhibits not only an ability to articulate complex issues but tactfulness and respect to those who listen. Her monthly oral report during public hearing is concise and full of relevant information. The superintendent also practices open-door policy in working with the community-at-large. Issues brought to her from community advocacy groups were responded to and resolved timely. When faced with conflicts from school personnel, the superintendent shows a willingness to cooperate in finding a consensus. These are the traits of a leader.

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

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

Goal #	Goal Rating	Comments
1	Met	Developed five-year strategic plan
2	Met	Secured an additional \$100M from the Mayor to the budget for school support.
3	Met	Negotiated MOU with DESE

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

X	<b>HIGHLY EFFECTIVE (Exemplary)</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	
X				<b>Standard I: Instructional Leadership</b>
X				<b>Standard II: Management and Operations</b>
X				<b>Standard III: Family and Community Engagement</b>
X				<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

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