

THE SCHOOL COMMITTEE OF THE CITY OF BOSTON



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

Evaluator’s Name	Dr. Lorna Rivera
Date of Completion:	7-23-20

RATINGS	DEFINITIONS
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

	HIGHLY EFFECTIVE
X	EFFECTIVE
	DEVELOPING
	MINIMALLY EFFECTIVE
	INEFFECTIVE

COMMENTS:

Dr. Cassellius has been a very effective leader dealing with the challenges of new leadership transitions, negotiations for new BTU contract, strategic planning, restructuring of academics, and the implementation of emergency remote learning and school closings.

Her commitment to engaging with stakeholders is exemplified by her listening tours and visits to all of the schools in the district. Dr. Cassellius also demonstrated great leadership with the passage of the historic education reform bill (Student Opportunity Act) and her advocacy with DESE and other leaders to increase resources for BPS.

One area for improvement is related to strengthening interactions with school committee members and having more individual check-ins. As well, feedback to BSC members from school leaders and central office staff suggests that more trusting relationships need to be developed. Decisions regarding changes in staffing and restructuring in academics have come as a surprise to some staff, and has affected staff morale in central office.

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

	HIGHLY EFFECTIVE
X	EFFECTIVE
	DEVELOPING
	MINIMALLY EFFECTIVE
	INEFFECTIVE

COMMENTS:

Dr. Cassellius has demonstrated she understands the strengths, challenges, and opportunities for growth in the district. Her responsiveness during the COVID-19 crisis has been impressive and she has definitely gone above and beyond to support students’ needs. Her leadership in the distribution of food, chrome books, hots spots, and even feminine hygiene products to our students has been exemplary. The formation of Equity Round tables at each school demonstrates her commitment to ensuring that our most vulnerable students’ needs are being met.

Overall, the major area of suggested improvement is related to advancing the success of English Learners and English Learners with disabilities and making their success a priority for the school district. Improving the educational outcomes for these students and closing achievement gaps should be a central focus for 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

	HIGHLY EFFECTIVE
X	EFFECTIVE
	DEVELOPING
	MINIMALLY EFFECTIVE
	INEFFECTIVE

COMMENTS:

Dr. Cassellius has assembled a great administrative team and Patti Feeney responds very quickly to requests for meetings. Dr. Cassellius is easily accessible via text and email, as well as late evening and weekend phone meetings.

Dr. Cassellius could delegate some of her responsibilities to a Chief of Staff and have more effective communication with her executive team and the BSC.

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

	HIGHLY EFFECTIVE
X	EFFECTIVE
	DEVELOPING
	MINIMALLY EFFECTIVE
	INEFFECTIVE

COMMENTS:

Dr. Cassellius has assembled a great finance and budget team that effectively secured a 3-year 100 million dollar investment from the city of Boston. She should be commended for successful negotiations with the districts’ unions and for increasing the numbers of nurses in schools.

An area for improvement could be the criteria: “optimizing human and other capital.” There could be more strategic alignment with the racial equity goals of the district and the office of human capital with regards to recruitment and retention of linguistically diverse staff. Stronger efforts are needed to maintain the integrity of the OELL office team, hire a permanent director and hire culturally competent staff for the more than eleven openings in OELL. Interpretation at parent council and other BPS meetings is often not available. And there is a lag in the timely translation of materials/school communications for families in multiple languages.

Dr. Cassellius has also acknowledged the inequalities in fundraising capacity at individual schools where some schools have their own nonprofits (e.g., “Friends of X school”). There are racial/ethnic disparities in the representation of parents in school councils, and some challenges to family engagement at individual schools that need to be addressed.

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

	HIGHLY EFFECTIVE
X	EFFECTIVE
	DEVELOPING
	MINIMALLY EFFECTIVE
	INEFFECTIVE

COMMENTS:

Dr. Cassellius is a bold and visionary leader and has been effectively navigating the politics of shared leadership with the school committee and the Mayor. She has been a great listener, attending many community meetings, and enthusiastically embracing new partnerships and engaging community stakeholders and leaders.

Dr. Cassellius could more effectively engage with the perspectives of Latinx and other immigrant communities. Her cabinet leadership, central office staff, and teachers do not reflect the Latinx demographics of the school district, or the city’s Latinx population.

Dr. Cassellius notes in her self-evaluation that she meets regularly with the OAG Taskforce, but does not attend the EL Taskforce meetings regularly. She could do more to engage with EL Taskforce expertise, and seek advice about the issues affecting English learners and especially English Learners with disabilities. Little progress has been made in rolling out innovative bilingual education models since the Look Act was passed in 2017.

There could be a stronger commitment to reforming the admissions policies at the Exam Schools where the racial inequities in school enrollments are unacceptable.

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

	HIGHLY EFFECTIVE
X	EFFECTIVE
	DEVELOPING
	MINIMALLY EFFECTIVE
	INEFFECTIVE

COMMENTS:

Dr. Cassellius is to be commended for her efforts in developing work plans and improving data collection to better inform practices. She has assembled an excellent leadership team with well-regarded leaders such as Chief Andrea Zayas and Chief Charles Grandson.

An area for improvement is the criteria “keeps others informed” and “provides support and feedback to team members”. As a BSC member I have not been as informed as needed about some initiatives such as the development of the MOU with DESE or the planning process at the McCormack School property. Another example of lack of communication is the recent restructuring of the Academic team

to a “teacher-led coaching model” which led to the unexpected dismissal of department heads and individuals, many of whom were BIPOC. Letters from high school leaders and K-8 principals suggest some of them do not feel listened to, and they would like to have more decision-making power.

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

	HIGHLY EFFECTIVE
X	EFFECTIVE
	DEVELOPING
	MINIMALLY EFFECTIVE
	INEFFECTIVE

COMMENTS:

Dr. Cassellius has demonstrated excellence in engaging diverse stakeholders in decision making, and this is evident in her approaches to the multiple stages of the strategic planning process. She is to be highly commended for establishing the Office of Strategy and Equity.

Dr. Casselius always exhibits a very positive energy and she embodies the JUICE mission for the district. Her use of social media platforms is entertaining and accessible, and positive messages are conveyed that build trust and community support for Boston Public Schools.

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

	HIGHLY EFFECTIVE
X	EFFECTIVE
	DEVELOPING
	MINIMALLY EFFECTIVE
	INEFFECTIVE

COMMENTS:

Dr. Cassellius has done an excellent job in building community relationships and rebuilding external trust with BPS stakeholders.

An area for improvement is addressing the lack of morale and trust among central office staff and school leaders because of staffing changes and other unintended consequences of restructuring.

There is a need to strengthen communications with individual school committee members prior to school committee meetings.

GOAL PROGRESS (SEE EMPLOYEE DEVELOPMENT PLAN, ATTACHED)

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

Goal #	Goal Rating	Comments
1		
2		
3		

OVERALL RATING (Consider progress toward goals and performance categories)

	HIGHLY EFFECTIVE (Exemplary)
	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	
				Standard I: Instructional Leadership
				Standard II: Management and Operations
				Standard III: Family and Community Engagement
				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

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