Superintendent Evaluation
FY2021

Boston Public School Committee
June 16, 2021
Evaluation Process

• Steps
  • At the start of the fiscal year, we agreed on the Superintendent’s Professional and System Goals
  • Starting in March, the Superintendent prepared a self-evaluation for the BSC to review
  • Each member reviewed that self-evaluation and prepares their response
  • I am the BSC member who has been charged to present a composite summary of our responses that I am presenting tonight and on which we will vote in our next meetings.
  • In our first meeting of FY2022, we will review the Superintendent’s proposed Professional and System Goals for that year.

• Tonight
  • We will share with the Superintendent our evaluation of her performance domain by domain.
  • We will give her time to respond to our evaluation on each domain
  • We will then have an opportunity to ask any clarifying questions
  • I will then summarize any proposed changes to the evaluation.
Context

• This has not been a normal year
  • PANDEMIC
  • Change in the Mayor’s Office
  • Change in the City Council
  • DESE MoU
  • Change in Leadership and Composition of the School Committee
  • Major review of central policies, e.g.
    • MassCore
    • Exam Schools Admissions
    • Student Grading
  • Lack of Long-term Leadership since Carol Johnson left
  • Other Crises (e.g., BSAC)
  • The end of “school reform” and the beginning of ??
  • A Society in Turmoil and Conflict

• The fact that we have performance to evaluate is an accomplishment in and of itself
Understands role and responsibilities as Superintendent - Effective (4)

• Through this chaos, Dr. Cassellius has continued to make herself available to our diverse community, has lead a reorganization of the central office and recruited local and national talent to fill important positions. She has created a nested set of Equity Roundtables from individual schools to the district as a whole in which the community has opportunities to engage in problem solving efforts with the Superintendent and her staff. Throughout this demanding period, Dr. Cassellius has made significant efforts to maintain open lines of communication with all of the BPS constituents to hear their voice and integrate those views into the development and implementation of policy. Her efforts to build a powerful professional culture in the district that is centered around the needs of all of our children in the face of substantive barriers has been remarkable. Obviously, not everything has gone well, but she has engaged in an integrative process of change that is moving us forward.

• Going forward, developing a productive working relationship with the BTU is critical to the overall well being of our schools and district, particularly in advance of contract negotiations. Developing a productive working relationship with DESE is also critical as we move from the pandemic reactions to creating gap-closing approaches to educating all of our students.
Commitment to Academic Excellence and Innovation – Effective (4)

• As indicated in her self-evaluation, Dr. Cassellius is focused on creating coherence to the academic expectations within BPS through the implementation of the MassCore and the Panorama Student Success platform. Through the re-organization of the central office and implementation of the nested equity roundtables, she is working on clarifying the relationship between the central office and schools. Working with her Chief of Staff and Chief of Accountability, she has moved school committee meetings to be more focused on data than theory and policy to focus on improving student performance. The Office of Academics needs to significantly improve its ability to meet the professional needs of teachers and schools to identify and implement evidence-based best practices in all of our schools. The early childhood division is providing a model that is worth replicating throughout the district. The Superintendent is to be recognized for taking on challenging practices, such as the grading policy initiative.
Productivity, Organizing, and Planning - Effective (3.6)

• As Dr. Cassellius works to create a highly effective organization, she is deeply engaged in the iterative process of developing policies and procedures that can be applied to develop a coherent and cohesive organization. One can hope that one outcome of responding to the pandemic is most of the district’s weak links have been exposed so that we can systematically re-invent an efficient and effective organization. Taking a risk of doing the Gallup poll is indicative of her commitment to use data to guide change and improvement. The district has made a great effort to provide a large and diverse number of opportunities for staff, families, and community members to listen to, respond and provide feedback to district plans.

• The School Committee and City would be well served exploring alternative models of managing complex public operations, such as BPS, particularly as it relates to issues such as around operations--facilities; development of talent from within; allocation of resources; communications etc.
• The Committee is in agreement with the Superintendent’s self-assessment in this domain. The process she has initiated to direct the use of new funds seems reasonable. Evaluating it’s effectiveness will be part of the FY2022 evaluation. Looking forward to seeing a comprehensive facilities work plan for EVERY school facility and an appropriate completion time line
Judgment and Decision Making – Developing (3.2)

• It is clear that Dr. Cassellius consults, both internally and externally, broadly prior to making decisions. It is also clear that she is willing to be held responsible for the outcomes of her decisions, both positive and negative. Most important, she is able to learn from these outcomes and use that learning to guide subsequent decision-making. Taking time to build consensus around decisions has been challenged by the pandemic and the Superintendent’s urgency for improvement. Not every decision has been as clearly understood as would allow a rating of highly effective and accounts for the variance of ratings by the committee members.
Collaboration/Teamwork – Effective (4)

• In general, the committee supports the Superintendent’s self-evaluation in this domain. In the next few years, we are going to get lots of post-hoc analysis of how districts responded to the pandemic. We can predict that the ones that look “successful” will be the ones with lots of resources. When, however, they look at the Great City Schools, one can hypothesize that, thanks to Dr. Cassellius, Boston will be seen as one of the districts that effectively collaborated with public health organizations, community based organizations, and public officials to address emerging crises in a manner that was centered on the needs of children. No one is going to be happy with many of the outcomes, but our process will be well reviewed. That will be driven by this Superintendent centering collaboration in her process and a willingness to make final decisions when there is no consensus, and then adapt to new data. In the next year, the Superintendent would be well served by taking a strategic approach to talent development both within schools and the central office.
Focus on Equity and Excellent – Highly Effective (4.6)

• Dr. Cassellius stands out for her consistent philosophical and practical commitment to creating equitable access to high quality learning for all of our students. This demands, at times, addressing some of Boston “sacred cows,” which includes school autonomy and the policies for exam school admissions. She is to be recognized for creating data dashboards that will allow us to track our progress and use the data to improve our system. At this time, we are in support of the process in which the Superintendent is engaged. We will be, however, be tracking the degree to which movement in the data demonstrates the efficacy of the process.
Communication and Interpersonal Skills – Effective (4.2)

• Dr. Cassellius, on a daily basis, is getting to practice her skills in having difficult conversations. While addressing numerous crises and working on system change, there is no way that everyone is going to feel heard and supported. These differences are real. Dr. Cassellius has, however, managed to communicate that she is putting our children first and is willing to adapt her approach to make changes in our system that serves their learning and aspirations. As part of her efforts at talent development, the Superintendent could empower her staff to engage and speak on behalf of the district. One person alone cannot do the engagement and communication needed to advance the goals of the district.
Summary Ratings

• 8 Domains and Rating
  • Understands role and responsibilities as Superintendent – Effective (4)
  • Commitment to Academic Excellence and Innovation – Effective (4)
  • Productivity, Organizing, and Planning - Effective (3.6)
  • Fiscal Responsibility and Budgetary Controls – Effective (4.4)
  • Judgment and Decision Making – Developing (3.2)
  • Collaboration/Teamwork – Effective (4)
  • Focus on Equity and Excellent – Highly Effective (4.6)
  • Communication and Interpersonal Skills – Effective (4.2)

• Summary
  • Average of Domains - Effective (4)
  • Overall Rating – Effective (4.2)
4 Standards and Ratings

• Instructional Leadership – Proficient (2.75)
• Management and Operations – Proficient (2.75)
• Family and Community Engagement – Exemplary (3.75)
• Professional Culture – Proficient (3.25)
• Overall – Proficient (3)