



Cambridge Public Schools
Evaluation of
Superintendent of Schools

SCHOOL COMMITTEE

(Official Minutes)

Special Meeting

September 13, 2018

Called for 6:00 p.m. in the Community Room, Cambridge Public Library, 449 Broadway, Cambridge, for the purpose of conducting and discussing an evaluation of the Superintendent of Schools.

Members Present: Ms. Bowman, Ms. Dexter, Mr. Fantini, Ms. Kelly, Mr. Kimbrough (ABSENT), Ms. Nolan, and Mayor McGovern

Also Present: Dr. Salim, Superintendent of Schools
Dr. Turk, Deputy Superintendent of Schools
Mr. Maloney, Chief Operating Officer
Elizabeth Liss, Educational Liaison to the Mayor
Robert Travers, CEA Representative

Vice Chair Kelly in the Chair

A quorum of the School Committee being present, the Chair called the meeting to order at 6:10 pm. Vice Chair Kelly explained the process used to complete the Superintendent's evaluation for 2018.

The Vice Chair asked Mr. Fantini to speak first, due to family obligations. Mr. Fantini thanked the Superintendent for the very comprehensive End-of-Cycle Summative Report that was presented to the School Committee in July 2018. The evidence book was a lot to digest and Mr. Fantini suggested it would be very helpful to get something like it on a quarterly basis going forward. The Superintendent is heading in the right direction with the strategic plan, however we need to do a better job on student achievement, as this is a critical area that needs work. We have to teach our kids how to learn before we can teach them what they need to learn. Academic progress and personnel issues need more tough decisions and stronger leadership, he would like Dr. Salim to be more relentless and insistent on increased tutoring for better grades. Overall there are a lot of reasons to be hopeful; the Superintendent has earned the respect of the rank and file.

Mayor McGovern stated that he sees things going in a positive direction both from hearing many good things from other parents and as a parent of three children. He is concerned that we still have students struggling with the MCAS, and wonders what the answer is. He would like to see something more intentional to decrease chronic absenteeism; he wonders what would happen if we went to a kids home that is chronically absent to physically see what is going on.

Ms. Bowman commented that she witnessed his systemic approach to accomplish the vision that he has in place. He knows how to manage systems and make them work. Overall, she feels he is doing a good job as the leader of the district. She would like to see more leadership in his dealing with the Members. She feels it would be good to push back more. These past two years have been laying the groundwork, and setting the initiatives and now it is time to see how the goals and outcomes will ensure that we are going in the right direction. We need context outside of test scores. Ms. Bowman stated that he has done a good job of figuring out how to manage a very complex school district.

Ms. Nolan agrees with everything that has been said in many respects. She would like student achievement to always be front and center. Every time we have an initiative, we should have a goal in mind and also smart goals. Changing the culture of not being afraid of smart goals is very hard, but is a good direction to go in. As it relates to the achievement gap, we are doing pretty well. She asked that

he step outside his comfort zone and suggested he work more on an intensive tutoring program. She would like the entire School Committee to work together for a stronger relationship with Dr. Salim. She wrote a lot in her evaluation wanting to see a lot of improvement in community and family engagement saying it needs work and indicated that this work includes students. She feels that he has done a wonderful job of working with the faculty and staff, it has been very positive.

Emily Dexter stated it has been a successful two years having Dr. Salim in Cambridge and she does continue to see progress. She would like more focus on instruction, realizing it takes time to set things up. There are going to be a lot of issues with the OSS department with the new leadership coming on board. It is a huge part of our staff, a large part of inclusion; he will need to focus on that department a lot. His relationship with the CEA looks good with Mr. Monahan, however, she does not know if the teachers feel included or empowered. Emily Dexter also commented that its one thing to have a district plan, it is another thing to communicate in order for everyone to know what the district plan is.

Vice Chair Kelly stated that she is glad to see progress among the conversations on equity and what they have meant for the district. The Level Up initiative, even with the ups and downs, will have significant impact on students. The 3D: Dynamic Diversity Development initiative has been well received. The difference in what we will be doing at the Roundtable meetings by including teachers in the conversations will also be very good. She is in agreement with witnessing continuous improvement and would like to see progress reports every few months. The End-of-Cycle Summative Report was very large and hard to digest all at once at the end of the year. She can see how his entry plan and the action plans at all of the schools are working in alignment with each other, she recognizes his leadership over all of this.

Dr. Salim thanked everyone for the comments and the feedback. He appreciates the affirmations around the development of the district plan and agrees with the questions of what are the ways to measure student achievement and the SEL work. Dr. Salim stated that working with a team of people about how SEL work relates to student achievement work may not always have the same interpretation. We are all aspiring to the same outcomes and measures but we may not agree on the benchmarks to get there. He understands the importance of the work around family engagement and that it needs to be looked at and we need to be able to define how we are successful in it.

Dr. Salim feels good about how we are using data. He agrees that we need to communicate how we use preliminary data on assessments. He appreciates the comments on how hard it was to process all of the data in the End of Cycle Summative Report; he says it was also hard to put it all together. He also would like to have Roundtables that have more time for discussions. Sometimes it is the first time for presenters being around the Members and the excitement or fear may be a detrimental factor. The piece around priorities has been difficult; there are areas that he is curious about and wants ideas on how to best do. This is an area he wants to improve on, however in the absence of a full consensus of the Members it becomes difficult to know which way to go. He is committed to making an improvement. He does not always share how much time he spends in classrooms and in prep periods, it is a core belief of his and he enjoys seeing teachers and students in action. He meets on a monthly basis with representatives at each school. Family and student voice will continue to improve. The Nellie Mae grant will help contribute to student voice becoming better along with the work of the DesignLab. Having opportunities and the proper settings for teachers and students to participate are coming along nicely. What is unusual about the Superintendent's evaluation is trying to represent all of the many things that happen across the district.

Vice Chair Kelly spoke about the importance of students' receiving the proper and necessary educational supports early, when problems are first recognized in OSS. Another piece is the way accountability is changing at the state level. The state is not relying as heavily on MCAS and is looking more at absenteeism and drop out rates. She is happy to see the state doing that.

Ms. Bowman followed up on two things the Superintendent said. She feels that the way of a leader in communicating with the Members will be an opportunity of learning and instruction. She suggested that he give the presenters instruction on how to give good presentations. She used his term of data rich and information poor as a very good term. Leadership is in part saying no. He is very collaborative and it is a great skill to have as a leader, however, she does not believe she has ever heard him say no.

Dr. Salim mentioned that he hopes his schedule of Roundtables gives the Members the chance to know what they are walking into ahead of time. He believes in no surprises. Dr. Salim mentioned wanting more understanding on what policies to take up at meetings and what gets brought forward.

Mr. Fantini exited the meeting at 6:55 p.m.

Ms. Dexter suggested meeting in groups of three instead of individually every month. The presentations are very important; we get more information through the questions and discussions. Emily Dexter brought up the issue of getting information to the Members. There is a weekly which includes a two page memo but it is not quite enough, she prefers more reports. She would like the staff and principals to have more training in conflict training. Ms. Dexter acknowledged that working with elected officials means the Members have different models of governance and different issues and goals that are important to them, which can make them define his job in different ways.

Ms. Nolan suggested including a table of contents in his End-of-Cycle-Summative Report. She hopes the next level of data will include district wide information, for instance the district wide data on the Compass Program. She wants the data all in one place, not having to go to three different sources for information. She feels it would be better to have the information on the presentations at Roundtables ahead of time, not the day of or one day before. It is very hard to go through it all in one day. Ms. Nolan asked if he saw all of their individual comments, Dr. Salim answered in the affirmative.

Ms. Bowman stated that she worked with Dosha and Elaine to incorporate technology into one place as it relates to presentations. She would like to cut down on the millions of emails and begin to centralize information into one drive. She also stated that it will take some strong leadership to manage the many different voices when thinking about the diversity of our district, family engagement may mean many different things.

The Superintendent stated that accountability measures are at a low of 25%. Under No Child Left Behind, and others, some districts sub-groups are so small that it didn't matter. The lowest rate was measured on previous year's MCAS scores. We didn't have that measure last year with our targets. We don't know enough about it, because it just started. Vice Chair Kelly has information about it. We have three year targets; the state only has one year targets, no three year targets yet. It is a big shift and is based in part on the new report card.

Ms. Bowman asked what the School Committee approach will be for Next Steps for the Superintendent's goals. Dr. Salim answered, the Evaluation Sub-Committee will give feedback after he presents his drafts; as part of the state process, on professional practice goals, student learning goals and district goals, which will happen this fall. Dr. Salim passed out a Superintendent Rubric At-A-Glance. He suggested focusing on two elements under each standard, instead of four as in the past. Ms. Nolan suggested that at the one on ones, they can go over this issue and it can also be placed in the Weekly. The one on ones should happen before the meetings with the Superintendent Evaluation Sub-Committee.

Mayor McGovern stated that if we get the presentations early, we can submit questions ahead of time, then we can save time on questions and some questions may be able to be answered in emails. Ms. Nolan added that we can look at the different kinds of questions. Superintendent Salim stated that it is challenging getting the information Mondays because of cabinet meetings.

On a motion by Mayor McGovern, seconded by Emily Dexter, the meeting adjourned at 7:30 p.m.

Attest:



Executive Secretary
to the School Committee

Documents Submitted> (on file in the School Committee office

- Meeting Outline
- Superintendent Rubric At-A-Glance
- E-mail – Robert Travers,
MTA Representative