

# SCHOOL COMMITTEE

(Official Report)

## Special Meeting (Evaluation of the Superintendent of Schools)

August 18, 2015

Called for 4:00 PM in the 1<sup>st</sup> Floor Conference Room, Cambridge Police Department, 125 6<sup>th</sup> Street, Cambridge, for the purpose of conducting an evaluation of the Superintendent of Schools.

Members Present: Ms. Cronin (ABSENT), Mr. Fantini, Mr. Harding, Ms. Kelly, Ms. Nolan, Mr. Osborne, Mayor Maher

Also Present: Dr. Young, Superintendent  
Dr. Turk, Deputy Superintendent  
Ms. MacDonald, Assistant Superintendent  
Mr. Maloney, Chief Operating Officer  
Ms. Spinner, Chief Financial Officer  
Mr. Smith, Mayor's Chief of Staff

Mayor Maher in the Chair.

A quorum of the School Committee being present, the Chair called the meeting to order at 4:15 PM.

Mayor Maher asked Mr. Fantini to chair the remainder of the meeting and thanked him for his work on compiling the composite evaluation.

Mr. Fantini in the Chair.

Mr. Fantini opened public comment.

There being no one signed up to speak, on a motion by Mr. Harding, seconded by Mr. Osborne, it was voted to close public comment.

Mr. Fantini explained that the Superintendent was being evaluated under the new Massachusetts Educator Evaluation System which is the same evaluation system used for teachers. He noted that each member prepared an End-of-Cycle Summative Evaluation Report (on file in the School Committee office) which he compiled and prepared a composite evaluation (on file in the School Committee office). Mr. Fantini indicated that under the guide for Superintendent Evaluation from the DESE Model System for Educator Evaluation, it states that the School Committee Chair compiles the End-of-Cycle Reports compiled by each member of the School Committee and prepares a single summative evaluation. Ms. Nolan mentioned that the Attorney General recommends that an administrative assistant compile the individual end-of-cycle reports.

Mr. Fantini summarized the Superintendent's evaluation indicating that he was rated proficient overall. He made significant progress on his professional practice goals; made some progress on his student learning goals; and made significant progress on his district improvement goals. He was rated proficient on all four standards and rated moderate on impact on student learning. The Members evaluated the Superintendent using the following categories:

### ***End-of-Cycle Summative Evaluation Report: Superintendent***

- *Step #1 Assess Progress Toward Goals*

- ✓ *Professional Practice Goal(s)*
- ✓ *Student Learning Goal(s)*
- ✓ *District Improvement Goal(s)*
- *Step 2: Assess Performance on Standards Indicators:*
  - ✓ *Standard I: Instructional Leadership (Three elements being evaluated)*
  - ✓ *Standard II: Management and Operations (Three elements being evaluated)*
  - ✓ *Standard III: Family and Community Engagement (Three elements being evaluated)*
  - ✓ *Standard IV: Professional Culture (Three elements being evaluated)*
- *Step 3: Rate Overall Summative Performance (Based on Step 1 and Step 2 ratings)*
- *Step 4: Rate Impact on Student Learning*
- *Step 5: Add Evaluator Comments*

Mr. Fantini read a few of the comments from each of the sections on the End-of-Cycle Summative Evaluation Composite Report as follows:

Positive Comments:

Clear accomplishments have emerged. Most notable is the restructuring of the elementary school system. Three years ago the Superintendent successfully created four Upper Schools, converting the system from a K-8 model to a K-5, 6-8 structure. To accomplish this required tremendous district-wide contributions to create physical space, develop new administrative teams, new curriculum and consensus amongst strong opinions within the community.

Major curricula reforms of ELA, Science, and World Languages are in progress to enhance horizontal and vertical alignment amongst the district's 17 schools. Efforts to make the instructional core more rigorous and to better conform to MA Frameworks shows great promise. A smooth transition to a new K-8 math curriculum has occurred district-wide.

Constructive Comments:

The district unfortunately remains unable to adequately address the persistent achievement disparities so often associated with race and economic station. Achievement goals were substantially unmet.

Relationships with the School Committee have been strained throughout the Superintendent's tenure. The Committee hopes this last year will see significant improvement in this relationship. There is a joint committee working on establishing operating norms.

Comment from Standard I Instructional Leadership:

The Superintendent tasked the Assistant Superintendent of Curriculum, Instruction and Assessment to determine and assess quality of curricula content and student effort but did not impose consistent school-based accountability or expectations of fidelity to task with regard to recommended reforms. As noted by the Superintendent: "Still the gaps between student groups and between groups and proficiency remain too large and therefore trouble us." The Superintendent did not meet his goal to move Level 3 schools to Level 2 or Level 1.

Comment from Standard II Management and Operations:

Our fiscal leadership team creates generous budgets nationally recognized for their excellence. While fiscal systems adhere to the highest professional standards, budget alignment to measurable S.M.A.R.T. goals has been lacking and fidelity to budgeted initiatives at times unclear. The district would benefit from a disciplined development of a District-Wide Improvement plan that would clearly establish high-level and long-term goals that would inform and align the budget to key initiatives and measurable outcomes. Further, greater oversight and transparency of department by department spending relative to goals would enhance transparency and efficacy of allocations.

Comment from Standard III Family and Community Engagement:

The Office of Student Services has the mechanisms to adequately identify students in need of additional academic services and has put forth effort to better structure the delivery of in-class services and supports. However, the ability for families to adequately access services district-wide lags. Response to students in need of mental health services is reactive and not aligned to best-practices. Testimony from parents, teachers and school principals has made clear an urgent need for resources in support of the social and emotional needs of students at all grade levels. Overall, the district continues to lag in a true commitment to supporting the needs of its diverse student body and their families.

Comment from Standard IV Professional Culture:

CPS articulates a mission to provide academic excellence and social justice for all students. However, this is not universally reflected throughout the district due to poor oversight of high standards in all dimensions of the CPS program. Evaluations are not timely; oversight of accountability varies and tools for consequences due to poor performance are compromised. The Superintendent himself has stated: "We have a way to go before I feel comfortable saying that our entire staff subscribes to the concept of education equity or even the belief that all students are capable of achieving high levels. Building consensus in Cambridge is not easy, but we never give up trying."

Mr. Fantini opened the floor to the Members for their questions, comments and concerns.

Prior to the Members commenting, Mr. Harding asked that the Superintendent give his thoughts on his work over the last year noting that the Superintendent would also have time to respond at the end of the meeting.

Dr. Young was heard regarding progress made over the year and the challenges ahead. He acknowledged having staff members who are dedicated to students' success.

Each Member had an opportunity to ask the Superintendent questions or make comments related to his evaluation.

Mr. Osborne asked the Superintendent what challenges concern him the most. The Superintendent responded that he asks himself why is it that these gaps in societies and schools persist despite the sincere and best efforts of well intentioned people and how can the schools make a difference in the lives of students and families. How can we help human beings reflect upon their own lives and step out and try something new.

Ms. Nolan expressed concern under instructional leadership noting that a more robust system of measurement is needed. She also had concerns under management and operations, ethical behavior. She noted that under family and community engagement, there is still a lack of diverse representation at all events. She noted that in overall achievement, the gap for every subgroup is mostly unchanged over 6 years. In the middle school restructuring, she indicated that going forward we need to identify best practice. She indicated her concern in the provision of data for this evaluation report. She asked the Superintendent to reflect back on what he might have done differently.

Ms. Kelly reflected on the positive experience under instructional leadership with the Putnam Ave. Upper School and bringing in the developed measures. Ms. Kelly commented that two issues are key to her: inclusion and equity. She asked how we might move forward in the budget process in having equity being of greater value and to give more resources to the schools and areas in most need. She asked how we could look more closely on the goals we want to achieve and have the budget move in that direction. Ms. Kelly asked how an environment can be created where people feel safe to take risks.

Mr. Harding noted that the student profile is not moving and that numbers are stagnant across the board. He suggested that the Superintendent take every opportunity to focus on making the

middle schools succeed indicating that the Innovation Agenda would be known as Dr. Young's legacy. He spoke positively on the budget which he noted is better each year and a true model of continuous improvement. He praised the Superintendent on his work in retaining educators of color. He indicated that he placed his trust in the Superintendent to handle any issues related to ethical behavior. Mr. Harding indicated his desire to think collectively on how the Superintendent and the Committee can be productive this year and have a better understanding on what the focus will be.

Mayor Maher appreciated Mr. Harding's insightful comments and agrees with Dr. Young's legacy around the upper schools. He noted from conversations with families that the middle school students are having a better experience. He acknowledged the Superintendent's advances to bring two of the level 3 schools out of that level. He expressed his wish for there to be more effort made in the relationship between the School Committee Members and the administrative team. He indicated that this would apply to every Superintendent. He stated that the city and school system have benefitted from Dr. Young's leadership and he looks forward to working with him and his administration in the following school year.

Dr. Young thanked the Members. He acknowledged Dr. Turk, Ms. Spinner, Ms. MacDonald and Mr. Maloney who attended this meeting. Dr. Young indicated that he would reflect and take into consideration the Members comments and concerns and talk more as the year goes on. He stated that he is really looking forward to this year hoping for great things to come and that his main focus will be on the success of the upper schools. He plans to spend much time in the upper schools making sure they are supported. He wishes to "set the table" for his successor in leaving this position with things in good shape. He spoke of the "planning fallacy" which is a systematic tendency towards unreal expectations on the time it takes to complete projects. He noted that the measurement obsession culture instills fear in people and he is trying to help people move beyond measurement and into possibility. He also indicated that he hopes to find time to write this year.

Mr. Osborne moved, seconded by Ms. Kelly, the adoption of the End-of-Cycle Summative Evaluation Composite Report on the Superintendent. On a voice vote, the End-of-Cycle Summative Evaluation Composite Report on the Superintendent was adopted.

Mr. Fantini thanked the Members for their high level discussion with the Superintendent. He indicated that the State Rubric is about continuous improvement, setting goals and moving forward and that the next step would be for the Superintendent to do a self assessment. Mr. Fantini thanked Dr. Young for being a great instructional leader and a good will ambassador for our school system. He acknowledged Dr. Young's strong relationships with the students, businesses and communities and his skills in minority hiring. He stated that the initiatives Dr. Young has put in place show great promise and he thanked him for his service.

On a motion by Mr. Harding, seconded by Ms. Kelly, it was voted to adjourn (5:35 PM).

Judith T. Martin  
Executive Secretary to the School Committee