



TO: Waltham School Committee

FROM: Drew Echelson, Superintendent

RE: Superintendent Evaluation

DATE: May 4, 2016

It is hard to believe that we are almost at a year mark. I want to thank you for selecting me as the Superintendent. I am immensely proud to serve in this role and to serve the community, children and families of our great city. I also want to thank you for the opportunity for me to share artifacts, resources and tools related to my evaluation. I have tried to be fully transparent about our work. Therefore, I hope that none of this is new information for you. I also hope that you share my excitement of where we stand and my confidence that with sustained focused efforts that we will become a Level 1 district that continues to commit to a well-rounded, enriching and rigorous education for ALL students.

### **Standard 1: Instructional Leadership**

- **Observations at schools:** As you can see from the screenshots of my calendar (<https://goo.gl/9t9yn3>), I continue to prioritize observations at schools. These observations time in classrooms (with clear observational focus), Instructional Leadership and Student Support Team meetings, as well as professional development opportunities. In addition, all of our principal professional development (see bullet below) is hosted in our schools. Drawing on the workshop model, all of our principal PD has explicit content (30-40 minutes), observational time for collecting evidence and data related to the explicit content (90 minutes) and time for reflection, discussion and integrating our learning (60 minutes). In addition, Paul has led parallel PD for all Housemasters, APs and Directors directly in our schools. Moving forward, we need to determine a system that links these stakeholders together. As a result of time in our schools and my 1-1 time with principals, I think I have a very strong sense of where each school stands with their improvement efforts and with implementing the work discussed at our principal PD. I also have a strong sense of where there is instructional talent in the organization, which has been useful in pushing some key initiatives (i.e. Dual Language, NewComers, implementing CCSS, and filling in our hole of ELL leadership).
- **Principal Professional Development:** I continue to be very proud of the professional development implemented for our principals. You can find a link to all the PD folders at this link here: <https://goo.gl/QT4zkl>. As you sift through this folder, you will see an explicit focus on building the instructional leadership of our leaders. In addition, I think you can find an explicit, pragmatic strategy of how to begin work without panicking the organization. I think you can also tell from these folders that an emerging level of collaboration is beginning between and among schools. These folders are chock full of tools and resources for principals and school-based Instructional Leadership Teams to use. Principals are working together both in our professional development to discuss and decide how to implement but also

are inviting each other to their respective ILT meetings to watch and consider how principals are using with their teacher leaders. In addition, in the QSP section you will note folders that highlight schools giving feedback to each other.

- New Professional Development Opportunities: I have asked all administrators to respond to the following:

*Dear Amazing Administrators,*

*I expect that the strategic planning team will recommend to increase high -quality PD options to educators in our system, particularly options that align well to core actions, CCSS, data inquiry/action planning, increasing content and pedagogy knowledge and skill, and providing more opportunities for teacher leadership. I also have a vision of publishing in mid-May all the PD opportunities that will be available to educators over the next 5-6 months (particularly summer and fall PD) by mid-May. Could you please email Paul and me the following information about any PD that you would like to either propose or lead?:*

- *Name of Proposed PD Session:*
- *Proposed Audience:*
- *Description of Proposed PD: (no more than 3-4 sentences. Keep it concise and clear!)*
- *Proposed Date(s) and Time(s):*
- *Proposed Locations:*
- *Proposed Presenters:*

*It should be clear from the description of how the PD opportunity aligns to organizational priorities that have been articulated in the monthly PD sessions or other core work that your departments and schools are driving. Please also communicate now any potential costs for us to consider.*

*Please submit by Monday, May 2.*

*Contact Paul and/or me if you have any questions related to second request. We are happy to be thought partners with you.*

You can see **some** of the examples of responses that we have received at this link: <https://drive.google.com/folderview?id=0BwrDrNpsUIr-UTVyVIZBbEiYWFk&usp=sharing>. From here, Paul and I will review the submitted professional development opportunities and publish a final booklet that will be made available to all teachers by mid-May for their review and for them to sign up. This will respond to a series of concerns raised by teachers during my entry discussions that the district needed for PD opportunities for teachers.

- Quality of SC presentations: I do understand that some members feel like our School Committee meetings are long, have too many presentations and that staff members need to learn to “get to the point faster.” I will continue to work on this and have been trying to coach around this feedback. However, I do think the presentations are more focused on instructional leadership and teaching and learning than in the past. This demonstrates a larger organizational focus on teaching and learning and models the primacy of this leadership standard. It is my experience that a focus on teaching and learning moves outcomes and increases access for teachers. I am excited to roll-out a more explicit support system for teachers beginning this summer as you will note by looking at the PD options we have received from Directors and Principals.

- Quality School Plans (QSP): I am so proud of the strategic work schools have done through their QSP process. I believe all schools are more focused on what they need to achieve for ALL students and have much clearer thoughts on how they will achieve these goals. I am also encouraged that the emerging district strategic priorities that will come from the strategic planning team will align closely to the school-QSP goals. See how the strategic priorities and initiatives are developing at this link: <https://goo.gl/o2HyNM>
- Mid-Cycle QSP Plans: We have worked to ensure these QSP documents are living documents. Principals and I often have discussions about progress toward the goals during our 1-1 meetings. During our April PD (and again during May PD), principals have been asked to bring a teacher leader(s) to respond to the following:

*Dear All,*

*Our next two PD sessions will focus on teams providing concrete tools and resources you have been using to drive a focus on data, standards, core actions, and tasks. We want this to be both a learning and accountability opportunity for all of you.*

*Here is a general framework for a presentation:*

- *Slide 1: Introduction*
- *Slide 2: QSP Goals (to provide context)*
- *Slides 3-5: Key Levers (provide supplemental information as appropriate to support colleagues) (i.e. ILT, Data Inquiry Teams, Structured observational feedback on Core Actions). Remember, everyone likes tools!*
- *Slide 6: Progress you have made on QSP goals as a result.*
- *Slide 7: Short and Long Term Next Steps*
- *Slides 8: Reflections on Integration of the Holy Quaternity (data, standards, core actions and tasks) at the school level.*

*If you need more detail, please reach out to Paul or me.*

*I encourage you to bring a teacher leader or someone from your team to co-present (preferably someone from ILT). That person is welcome to stay for the whole PD or just for the portion that focuses on your school.*

*We will provide an exact schedule as we get closer. However, the following teams will present at our next PD: Whittemore, MacArthur, FitzGerald, Waltham High School and Kennedy.*

You can see the presentations in the April PD folder. One point of discussion for principals has been that we need to improve our assessment systems so that principals and schools have better measures on their progress toward QSP goals.

- Dual Language and NewComers: The CPR makes clear that we have a number of technical issues that need to be resolved especially for ELL students. It also makes clear that a number of equity issues remain especially for our ELL students. I believe that I have demonstrated strong instructional leadership by responding to the needs of our learners by pushing Dual Language and a NewComers Academy. For sure, I have not done the “heavy lifting” on these initiatives. However, I have been instrumental in

driving them forward and remain committed to strong programs in both areas. It is also clear from a resource allocation and staffing perspective I have strongly supported these programs.

**Managerial and Operational Leadership**

- Grants: I have actively pursued private grant opportunities, a strategy that has largely not been leveraged in the past. I provided a list of grant opportunities that I have pursued and/or secured to support the district priorities:

| <b>Grant Opportunity</b>   | <b>Brief Description</b>  | <b>Grant Amount</b>  | <b>Status</b>             |
|--|---|--|---------------------------|
| <b>Nellie Mae Foundation</b>   | Improve access to student learning and transform central office to support schools to implement principles of student centered learning | \$175,000 (increase expected and eligible for re-application upon successful year 1 implementation)  | Granted                   |
| <b>McCarthy-Dressman Foundation Teacher</b>  | Improve access to educational technology and increase number of teacher leaders who can support.  | \$30,000   | Granted                   |
| <b>Massachusetts Life Sciences Center</b>  | Increase high-quality supplies to support inquiry-based science materials at high school  | \$99,000   | Granted                   |
| <b>Screening, Brief Intervention, and Referral to Treatment (SBIRT)</b>  | Implement a universal screener and secure partnerships to support interventions for students  | \$20,000   | Granted                   |
| <b>In-kind donations, support, and grants secured through a STEM partnership with BC and Dr. Mike Barnett.</b> | Support improvements in STEM education  | Summer robotics: \$25,000<br>OST STEM (middle school): \$20,800<br>I-Create: \$891,000 (across 3 communities)<br>February Vacation: \$10,000 | Granted                   |
| <b>21<sup>st</sup> Century Out-of-School Time (OST)</b>  | Focus on engaging youth in community  | \$250,000  | Waiting for DESE response |

|  |   |  |                      |
|--|---|--|----------------------|
| <b>Grant</b>                                 | and project-based learning projects that are geared to providing them with the skills to be successful in high school and to develop their confidence and efficacy to pursue a STEM field for their careers.  |  | (mid-June?)          |
| <b>New Venture Fund and Gates Foundation</b> | A network of district and charter school organizations (Newton, Somerville, Framingham, Waltham and Excel Charter CMO) will focus on educating, engaging, and retaining secondary ELLs.   | \$1.4 million/three years and five districts | Waiting for Response |
| <b>New Venture Fund and Gates Foundation</b> | A network of district and charter school organizations (Lawrence, Randolph Salem, Waltham, and a CMO) will focus on developing knowledge and skill of K-8 leadership team and teacher leaders with CCSS, core actions and moving toward continuous improvement. | \$1.5 million/three years and five districts | Waiting for Response |

- Cost savings recommendations: I made a number of recommendations since I have started to save the district money. For example, I recommended eliminating the Chef Manager and Administrator of Pre-K position. I was not compelled by the need for a chef manager. I do feel that at some point we will need to develop a strategy for Pre-K, but until that point I was not compelled that a leader for this unit was necessary. I also made a recommendation for a change in devices for elementary devices which saved the city/district \$250,000.
- Budget process: Leanne and I designed a collaborative budget process that included SC work session, multiple public iterations of budget presentation and included the voices of multiple stakeholders. Ensured tighter alignment between budget and SC priorities and guidelines that we agreed to as a team in

a work session. I completed a mid-year budget check-in with the City Council, which had not been done in a while. See mid-year budget check-in here: <https://goo.gl/D8lSAj>

- Whittemore and FitzGerald crises: In the early winter, we had two separate incidents (broken exhaust fan in boiler at Whittemore and a bomb threat at FitzGerald). In full transparency, I was on vacation in Hawaii during the latter. However, I remained actively involved in the planning and communication during these events. In the Whittemore case, I happened to be on site as the emergency personnel arrived. I believe both cases were extremely well handled and our positive working relationship with multiple city functions was critical to the success.
- Recruitment and Hiring: I have worked hard to recruit and select high quality educators for our district. You can see the bios of some of the candidates at this link here: <https://goo.gl/Xctm6H>. In addition, I have designed rigorous selection processes. For example, see examples of documents for the recruitment and selection of the Administrator of English Language Learner Education: <https://goo.gl/o5BeFn>. You can also find in this folder a brief PPT that I delivered to principals to communicate some expectations I held relative to recruitment and selection. You can also find resources from BPS that I shared with the principals to use as potential tools.
- Request for Services (OPM): I worked with my team to complete a very lengthy Request for Services for the Owner's Project Manager (OPM) for the new K-5/K-8 school. My actions have tried to keep us on track with these decisions and have followed through on commitments we have made to the community related to additional space. You can find the link here to the RFS: <https://goo.gl/NVEsi0>.
- High School Building Project: I have allowed Principal DeMeo to make decisions on the various subcommittees and stakeholders who participate. I have been a very active thought partner and support to him to ensure that we remain on target with all benchmarks and timelines. I have taken responsibility for writing large portions of the educational vision in collaboration with Principal DeMeo and teacher leaders. I have also planned for opportunities to ensure we do front-loading with our educators to ensure they are ready for the educational vision/plan of a new or renovated high school.
- Dual Language: I have collaborated with district leaders to keep us on track for the Dual Language facilities. I also worked to find space and collaborated with the community and multiple city partners to arrange.

### **Standard 3: Family and Community Engagement**

Upon selection of Superintendent, I made a conscious effort to meet with as many community stakeholders as possible through my entry process. I attended school community cook-outs, the local homeless shelter, Gardencrest community, Boys and Girls Club and YMCA, held PTO events at all schools where I was invited. In addition, I have provided multiple avenues for community members to express their opinions and beliefs about what Waltham Schools should deliver (i.e. entry and strategic planning meetings, community forums on boundary changes, etc).

I respond to phone calls and emails from members of the community. I also work with the local media to ensure good news stories about the district are constantly in the public domain.

I have also worked to employ a strong social media presence that keeps the community interested and knowledgeable about the work of Waltham Public Schools. I also listened to feedback from the community to revamp and overhaul the school website and ensure it had the resources for translation embedded within the site.

For sure, more work is needed in this area (and there likely could never be enough engagement). However, I would be happy to share countless documents and examples of community and family engagement should you be interested.

#### **Standard 4: Professional Responsibilities:**

I take my job as Superintendent of Waltham (MA) Public Schools very seriously. I work many hours well beyond typical workday to ensure that the district is moving forward. This includes attending events on evenings, weekends, and throughout the community. I have grown as a Superintendent because of these interactions. I would be happy to show you agendas, minutes, and other resources and tools that demonstrate effective running of meetings and strong communication between and among schools and central office. You can also see the draft strategic priorities and initiatives that the strategic planning team have designed (30 community stakeholders have participated): <https://goo.gl/o2HyNM>. You can also learn more about our strategic planning process by checking out this link: <https://goo.gl/xyRozH>

I have also worked to improve my practice by meeting with exemplary school superintendents from around the state. For example, as you will note in my calendar screenshots, I recently met with Dr. Kenny Salim (Current Superintendent in Weymouth and newly appointed Cambridge Superintendent). Also, as you will note in my calendar screenshots, I also met with former Superintendent Charlie Lyons to discuss CVTE programming and invited Principal DeMeo to attend. The CVTE area is not an area of strength and thus I wanted to discuss with others who have more expertise than I do.

I believe at my core that Waltham can become a Level 1 district. We have a committed and smart teacher corps, solid principals who are working to improve their instructional leadership knowledge and skill, and a community that is focused on and demands excellence. I continue to push on the things that I know will make a difference for students and families and move us further along in the areas of excellence and equity.