

SCHOOL COMMITTEE

(Official Report)

Special Meeting (Evaluation of the Superintendent of Schools)

September 12, 2017

Called for 6:00 p.m. on Tuesday, September 12, 2017, in the CRLS Pearl K. Wise Library, 459 Broadway, Cambridge, for the purpose of conducting an evaluation of the Superintendent of Schools.

Members Present: Ms. Bowman, (~~ABSENT~~) Ms. Dexter, Mr. Fantini, Mr. Harding,
Ms. Kelly, Ms. Nolan, and Mayor Simmons

Also present: Dr. Kenneth Salim, Superintendent of Schools
Dr. Carolyn Turk, Deputy Superintendent
Mr. James Maloney, Chief Operating Officer
Mr. Dan Monahan, CEA President
Mr. Tony Clark, Educational Liaison to Mayor
Ms. Jean Cummings, Cambridge Day reporter

Mayor Simmons in the Chair.

A quorum of the School Committee being present, the Chair called the meeting to order at 6:05 pm.

Mayor Simmons welcomed everyone present and opened public comment.

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

Mayor Simmons invited Ms. Kelly, Ms. Nolan and Mr. Fantini to chair the remainder of the meeting and thanked them for their work on compiling the composite evaluation.

Ms. Kelly in the Chair.

Ms. Kelly explained the process used to complete the Superintendent's evaluation for 2017. She informed everyone that the process began this past June with the Members gathering information for the purpose of evaluating the Superintendent's performance. The Superintendent completed a self evaluation, and provided his document to the School Committee this past July. The School Committee completed their individual End-of-Cycle Summative Evaluation Reports, and turned them in to the co-chairs of the Ad-Hoc Committee. The individual evaluations were collated and combined into a single composite evaluation by mid August (on file in the School Committee office). Ms. Kelly explained that the Massachusetts ruling on conducting evaluations includes a public hearing component. Having no public comment, the School Committee convenes in this open session for the purpose stated. Once the evaluation is completed in this meeting, the Ad-Hoc Committee will re-convene, review the process and propose any changes in the process in an open forum for consideration by the full Committee for next year's evaluation. There will be a process in place for this current 2018 school year incorporating feedback from the 2017 evaluation. Research will be done into best practices in other districts.

Ms. Nolan in the Chair.

Ms. Nolan discussed the composite evaluation, which is comprised of the thoughts of the Committee as a Whole and has been summed up into a one page narrative. She explained that the form used includes the numerical rankings. The Superintendent will be offered an opportunity to share his thoughts and reflections on this past school year and this process. Members will be allowed to contribute to the

discussion. If something needs to be changed, there will be a discussion around the proposed change. In conclusion, the final report will be voted on and accepted by the Members to stand as the official evaluation of the Superintendent.

Ms. Nolan stated that overall this was a very good first year with a lot of good work having been done. There is also a hope that in the future they continue to build on the work already done. There is a commitment of the School Committee to work together with the Superintendent and administration on a very strong and very clear strategic vision for the district.

Very Strong Successes

- The thoughtfulness and broad outreach in the District Entry Plan
- District Planning Process
- World Language Program
- Level-Up Initiative at CRLS

Constructive Comments

- Be more bold in leadership with the district
- Develop a stronger, respectful relationship with all seven bosses, the entire School Committee wants to feel included in decisions
- The Members want a sense of urgency to continue and be more proactive with achievement issues.

Ms. Nolan thanked Dr. Salim for his self evaluation report on the work he has done over a year ago; it was a very good document. The narrative of the composite showed numbers of what was strong, what needed improvement and proficiencies. Overall there was strong proficiency with a few different variations.

Dr. Salim thanked the Committee for the valuable and helpful feedback, stating for any new Superintendent and Committee, the evaluation process is never easy; it is always hard to get all pieces in place. He thanked the Ad Hoc Committee for working with him. He realizes it is important to identify goals and solidify a process. Dr. Salim reflected back on some of the things he was able to do last year which included:

- Recognizing that the entry process allowed him to introduce himself to the community and the district
- He was able to communicate his core beliefs. There was strong, helpful support from the Committee in the entry process.
- Adapt and make adjustments based on the feedback from the district, Committee and community
- Draft Strategic Objectives
- Community engagement team, communicating with families
- Leadership Development, supporting new principals and administrators
- Implementing The Instructional Support Educators
- District Plan Framework
- World Languages
- Level-Up

Dr. Salim stated that the tone, energy, and enthusiasm of the teachers have been quite positive. As with any new effort, there will be bumps in the road, but as the team meets regularly to respond, he is confident it will all work out in the end. Everyone in the central office has to own responsibility to participate in making sure each person is heard and responded to in a timely manner. Innovation and Design Thinking will be examined closely. He wants to be able to think creatively with partners. He hopes the School Committee sees his work in Level Up as an important implementation. It is not just the idea, but the support and implementation that are very important along with alignment; they cannot operate on separate tracks. We are looking at data, how we gather that data and feedback. Dr. Salim stated that using a survey with 9th graders is one way to look at progress monitoring. He is looking forward to continuing to forge relationships with all of the Members. If topics for consideration during this upcoming year arise, he hopes he can have forums set up similar to what happened last year. He wants to look at targets for setting goals for outcomes. He thanked the Committee for the information and feedback. He is looking forward to talking about next steps in the future.

Ms. Nolan opened the floor for comments from the Members.

Mayor Simmons began by stating that the assessment is very good. She feels she has a good relationship with Dr. Salim; they value each others' opinions. Mayor Simmons comments were that Dr. Salim works very hard at making sure the Mayor's office knows what is going on. She expects his transparency to continue no matter who is Mayor. It is important that the School Committee figure out its own path and that it be in concert with the plan of the Superintendent. She does admit, when Dr. Salim first explained his strategic plan, she was concerned however the district planning process helped her through it. Mayor Simmons indicated that she wants improvement with respect to teachers of color. She does not feel that enough has been done in terms of the hiring and retention. She also stated that the Level-Up was an important first step and she is interested in seeing how it moves forward. Although the roles of Family Engagement and Family Liaison are still weak, she gives Dr. Salim high marks for the extraordinary outreach efforts he has done. Mayor Simmons also asked how do we get family involvement to be front and center and how will it impact special needs families.

Ms. Dexter stated that she feels very positive about Dr. Salim's first year. She had three positive statements about Dr. Salim's work so far.

- Very much appreciates his outlook on systems, everything is much more efficient
- The Weekly communications and the presentations in the School Committee Roundtables have been outstanding. They have been very clear, very focused, and concise
- Intentional Design and Design Thinking is a great term for a place like Cambridge.
- Adjusted very well to the economic and population changes when coming from the Boston district into the Cambridge district

Since everyone always needs improvement she prefers to think of this evaluation in terms of a work in progress always improving and developing. She suggested we don't focus too much on the negativity that is attached to the term needs improvement. She thanked him for his first year.

Ms. Bowman joined the meeting at 6:40 p.m.

Mr. Harding agreed with the praise from other Members. Mr. Harding reflected on his first year and complimented Dr. Salim on the following:

- The manner in which Dr. Salim conducts himself is always thoughtful
- He has an ability to listen and to process information
- He is not impulsive
- During the budget season the Superintendent demonstrated that he listens
- Shows great patience and is always accessible
- Thoughtfully approaches issues and interacts
- Open communication with the Members, at least with him
- Has not heard any negative comments from administration and faculty

Mr. Harding wants Dr. Salim to lead, and jump out at School Committee a bit more. Dr. Salim has an easygoing and relaxed style; he still thinks this district needs a bold leader. Level UP and World Language have been worked on for years; Dr. Salim picked them up and finished them. He wants him to create his own initiatives, adding that he wants to know what his stamp will be on the district. Not having any measureable outcomes should be a learning point for you. PAUS having only one student to pass the algebra test for two consecutive years has to be addressed. Someone else in the district should have warned Dr. Salim that this is a priority.

Ms. Kelly shared

- She appreciates the calm meetings
- He is thoughtful, is able to quickly evaluate, looks for the challenges and weaknesses
- Introduced the 3D's; she's excited to see where that goes
- She has received very good feedback from parents and teachers
- Teachers, parents, and community members in Cambridge now have a voice
- Listening is a good strength

- Doing things on a small scale first, then going larger is smart
- Going to special education parents and having conversations on a monthly basis, made them feel secure as part of the process

Ms. Nolan noted a few more of the written composite comments

- A cultural shift is required for existing staff and incoming staff. It is appreciated that he is starting on that with leaders and hopefully it will extend to others
- There is an expectation that he is going to look outside of Cambridge for answers

Mr. Fantini thanked Ms. Nolan and Ms. Kelly for all of the hard work of putting this summary together, adding that the Superintendent was evaluated under the Massachusetts Educator Evaluation System which is the same evaluation system used for teachers. He noted that the Superintendent had a good first year. He complimented the district strategic plan put together by the Superintendent as a bottom up plan, which is a much stronger plan than a top down plan. Dr. Salim has made a key shift from measuring our success by initiatives to measuring our success by progress. The Committee is looking forward to the action steps he plans on taking. The Committee wants Dr. Salim to be successful. We are not in a crisis we have the blueprint to move forward. Mr. Fantini stated that he expects the Superintendent to take us to a very high level.

Ms. Bowman stated that she approached his evaluation from working with him on his onboarding process as well as his district wide entry plan. She acknowledged that this is not an easy School Committee, yet he demonstrated a calm demeanor and has been able to stay focused and get his work done. He deserves a lot of credit. Opportunities for growth and improvement need to have more measureable outcomes as it relates to the district plan. She is sure he knows it is a high priority for this body and she is sure he is able to do it. She would like to see it happen sooner rather than later.

Mayor Simmons stated that if his laid back style delivers positive results, she is all for it.

Mayor Simmons also pointed out that having seven different personalities for bosses is both good and bad. The Mayor wants to know

- What the timeline is for increasing the number of teachers of color
- How to lower the achievement gap for children of color
- When will Leveling-Up information go to the middle schools
- How to explain the fact that certain schools have absolutely no diversity
- What he thinks is his greatest accomplishment
- What changes he wants to see in his relationship with the School Committee

It will be useful to go back to this time next year and see what improvements have been made.

Dr. Salim responded that he believes his early work with the Committee was centered on the budget. There were not enough opportunities to come together at retreats as he wanted. He is looking forward to having these retreats to identify targets. Clearly the next very important step is getting to targets and outcomes and measures. There will be a continuous improvement mindset. He has a schedule of regular check-ins with the Committee at one on ones that he wants increased. He wants to identify the steps related to the best practices for relaying information to the public. The vision and the 5 objectives that fall under the vision is an important touchstone for work that is going to continue with administration leaders. Input from students' voices was a very meaningful experience; teachers need to hear what rigorous, joyful cultural responsive learning is from the student perspective.

There was a long discussion around goals and policy and when the two lines blur into each other. Ms. Dexter suggested that going forward, we work as a team. She feels it is the School Committee's responsibility to make sure the district moves forward in collaboration with the Superintendent. Mayor Simmons followed up on what Ms. Dexter said, stating that we may be out of sync and there may be a misunderstanding about who is supposed to set what goals.

Mr. Harding stated that the Superintendent's onboarding process took over the guiding document of setting goals.

Ms. Nolan stated that ideally this past summer was when that conversation should have happened and we should have updated our goals.

Ms. Kelly agreed that the process of hiring a new superintendent threw everything off.

Ms. Bowman added that thinking about the future, as a body, to set the Superintendent up for success, we need to take into account the framework and goals and figure out how we want to effectively move big chunks of policy forward.

Mr. Harding stated that one thing that is a learning opportunity for Dr. Salim is to know that an entry plan framework without any measureable outcomes will not work. Mr. Harding made mention of the NFL Rooney rule as a way to make sure there is diversity in the recruitment and retention of people of color. He mentioned a student can go through the entire system and never have a teacher of color. Dr. Salim may have to change the process in order to give a chance to something different.

Dr. Salim stated that as it relates to evaluation and goals this year was different because it was the first year. There is guidance from the State on how to do goals in the first year. They center around three things: Entry, Vision Planning and Leadership. The next stage of work with the district plan is the next iteration of the goals that were referred to in 2014. In his evaluation for next year based on what he has done in the past are 3 district goals and two individual goals of professional practice and a student learning goal.

Ms. Nolan went over Next Steps:

- Goal setting for the district and Outcome Measures
- We need to set the process and improve the process for next year. The timing to begin the evaluation process needs to be completed before summer's end – early July, so we can work on the actual evaluation in mid August.

Mr. Fantini explained that the Superintendent was being evaluated under the Massachusetts Educator Evaluation System which is the same evaluation system used for teachers.

Mr. Fantini motioned, seconded by Ms. Bowman, to accept the evaluation of the Superintendent. On a voice vote, the evaluation was accepted by unanimous consent. On a voice vote, all Members voted to accept the summary narrative of Dr. Salim's first year evaluation.

On a motion by Mr. Fantini, seconded by Ms. Bowman, on a voice vote the meeting was adjourned at 7:40 pm.

Dosha Beard
Confidential Secretary
to the School Committee office

Distributed Back-up Documents (copy on file in the School Committee office):

- Summary narrative of Superintendent Salim's first year evaluation: July 2017