



**C A M B R I D G E
S C H O O L C O M M I T T E E**

(Official Minutes)

Special Meeting

August 24, 2020

Called for 5:00 p.m. recorded and held in the Dr. Henrietta S. Attles Meeting Room, Cambridge Rindge and Latin School, 459 Broadway, Cambridge, for the purpose of conducting and discussing an evaluation of the Superintendent of Schools.

Members Present: Vice Chair Bowman, Member Fantini, Member Rachel, Member Rojas, Member Weinstein, Member Wilson, Mayor Siddiqui

Also Present: Dr. Salim, Superintendent of Schools

A quorum of the School Committee being present, the Chair called the meeting to order at 5:00 p.m.

The Chair read the call of the meeting and explained that this meeting is not being televised, votes will be taken and there will be public comment.

The meeting proceeded to the first order of business with the following roll call: Member Weinstein YEA; Member Wilson YEA; Vice Chair Bowman YEA; Member Fantini YEA; Member Rojas YEA; Member Rachel YEA; Mayor Siddiqui YEA.

Public Comment:

There being no one signed up to speak, on a Motion by Vice Chair Bowman, seconded by Member Rachel, on the following roll call vote, public comment was closed: Member Weinstein YEA; Member Wilson YEA; Vice Chair Bowman YEA; Member Fantini YEA; Member Rojas YEA; Member Rachel YEA; Mayor Siddiqui YEA.

Mayor Siddiqui turned the meeting over to Vice Chair Bowman.

Vice Chair Bowman in the Chair

Vice Chair Bowman explained the process used to complete the Superintendent's evaluation for 2020. 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 Vice Chair. The individual evaluations were collated and combined into a single composite evaluation by mid-August (on file in the School Committee office). Vice Chair Bowman further explained that the Members will have two rounds to speak about Superintendent Salim's strengths and areas that need improvement, adding that Members be mindful of the time when speaking.

The Chair asked the Superintendent to give opening comments before the Members take their two rounds and then close us out as well at the end of the two rounds.

Dr. Salim thanked the Vice Chair for facilitating this process during these unusual times of not all being able to be in the room together. There are five new Members which joined the CPS team in January, mid-way through the evaluation cycle – which presents its own challenges - and less than three months

into the School Committee term, MA State Governor Charlie Baker shut schools down due to the Covid-19 pandemic. We have reached the third year of our Three Year District Plan and the district is moving in important ways to meet the needs of the entire community, focusing on the tremendous loss to our students' education as a result of this pandemic. Superintendent's self-evaluation included the following:

Highlights of Success

- Student performance
- Dynamic Diversity
- Using data for informative decision making
- Restructuring the leadership team

Member Fantini stated that most evaluations are private, but with the Superintendent of Schools, it is always interestingly a public meeting. He looks forward to working together with a constructive process.

Areas of Strength

- Leadership
- Incredible stamina and ability to keep the district moving forward during this pandemic
- Level Up accomplishments
- Dynamic Diversity
- Building Equity Bridges Initiative
- Project Elevate Program
- Improving the Budget process

Area for Improvement

- Closing the Achievement Gap for our most vulnerable students

Mayor Siddiqui acknowledged that she is one of the five new Members that joined this Committee coming toward the end of the evaluation process, adding that she is not in favor of the evaluation tool because it doesn't include or focus on any the Covid-19 pandemic. The Mayor agreed with the strengths outlined by Member Fantini.

Areas for Improvement

- Maximizing clear communication with Committee Members and families
- Improvement on family engagement
- Improvement of chronic absenteeism in our schools, which is exasperated by Covid-19

Member Rachel thanked Dr. Salim for working 24 hours per day during the pandemic. Regardless of the evaluation, we do appreciate that you are giving it your all. It will not hurt to review how we approach this evaluation process. She wants Dr. Salim to be like a conductor over one symphony instead of over many quartets. No one knows what others are doing. She agreed with the successes Member Fantini stated.

Area for Improvement

- There is room to grow in communication. There is a difference between communicating *to* and communicating *with* groups and individuals.

Member Rojas stated that overall Dr. Salim did meet a proficient performance.

Area of Strength

- Standards – strong instructional leadership in management, operations & professional culture

- Strong communication in taking steps forward during this crisis

Areas for Growth

- Student support continues to need improvement
- There is a serious gap in what is communicated and what is done

Member Wilson acknowledged that this is an extremely hard time to be in a role of leadership on any level. There is no question or doubt to the fact that Dr. Salim has given 100% to making the best of this pandemic and acknowledged there is no blueprint for the Superintendent to go by, no one else has successfully done what Dr. Salim is doing.

Areas for improvement

- Focus on better communication
- Develop a master plan for the mental health scholars with social emotional needs, for how these scholars are dealt with.
- Find a way to leverage the School Committee and to work better with the School Committee

Member Weinstein thanked Dr. Salim for the intensive work he has done. It is clear that he cares about every child in this district. There is an issue within the community that makes the citizens wonder whether they were heard or not by Dr. Salim. It will be a good idea to explain why there is no response to an email or whether or not you plan to work for or against a suggestion from the public. Data is not personal or individualized enough. He is looking forward to looking over the goals together going forward.

Vice Chair Bowman stated that we get powerful PowerPoint presentations and in this way communication is very clear. She was here when Dr. Salim was putting his leadership plan in place. She stated there is room for growth on the data dashboard, to his credit, before his arrival in CPS, there was no dashboard.

Areas of strength

- A strong point for Dr. Salim is that he is data driven.
- Is always prepared.
- His budget process (pre-Covid-19) was very clear.
- Dr. Salim knows how to hire very good people.

Areas for improvement

- There is an enormous gap in communication with people of color.
- His understanding strength doesn't show as much as his academic strength does.

Member Fantini stated that he has not seen this amount of passion from a Superintendent in equity for thirty-eight years. It is surprising that he has not been embraced more in this work. Dr. Salim needs to disaggregate the data as much as possible. Member Fantini suggested a mid-year evaluation as well, just to keep the process going forward. Rolling out the individual success plans for each student is going to eliminate the achievement gap and he is looking forward to how Dr. Salim plans to do it. He believes in the Superintendent and believes he can take us to a good place.

Member Rachel stated that Dr. Salim can delegate more. She believes it is related to the communication goal as well. She would like him to cultivate goals of others instead of always creating the goals.

Member Rojas stated that he trusts Dr. Salim and is confident that Dr. Salim can lead the students to a good place. He reiterated communication in an emergency situation. Dr. Salim's communications are very detailed, and comprehensive but Dr. Salim makes assumptions that the reader knows why he is deciding to do what he is communicating. As for student support, this area continues to need improvement.

Member Wilson wants Dr. Salim to make space for our scholars. Think more about our special education and scholars people from marginalized communities. She would also would like for the district plan to include hiring more teachers of color and women in leadership. Dr. Salim has done very well in recruiting and hiring so far, but more attention needs to be paid to retaining the new recruits in our system once we get them. Work with using the strengths of the wonderful people you hired. She liked the idea of a mid-year evaluation, acknowledging that it is hard to evaluate a person during a pandemic.

Member Weinstein stated that being more visible to the community, including students and teachers will be good. He appreciates that Dr. Salim is very attentive and thoughtful to suggestions, data and feedback. He needs to share it more; many don't know about Dr. Salim's strength of attention to detail. Collaborating with partners can be improved.

Mayor Siddiqui mentioned that Dr. Salim needs to lift up student voice. It is related to the rubric of getting great ideas from our student School Committee Representatives. When it comes to the PowerPoints, they are beautiful but they can be shorter or there needs to be more opportunity to pause and ask questions. Mayor Siddiqui noted one important quality of Dr. Salim is that he is very good at responding to feedback.

Vice Chair Bowman mentioned another area of growth is being able to make hard decisions. There needs to be a framework in place and we have to make decisions. Some will approve and some will not, we all are feeling that right now, but we have to stand by decisions. Dr. Salim needs to be able to say he values and respects the decisions of others, and then make his own decisions. The PowerPoints are too long, fifteen to twenty slides would be better. The work that Superintendent Salim is doing in a world pandemic is incredibly hard and there is a high level of stress. What it means to be a Superintendent right now is unimaginable. Vice Chair Bowman stated that Superintendent Salim is leading from a place of integrity, please continue to do that.

Member Rachel stated that in fairness to Dr. Salim we are in the middle of a global pandemic and we are evaluating him about irrelevant issues, i.e. MCAS. The relevant issues are not aligned and we should talk about how to modify the evaluation in relation to leading during an emergency. She is interested in goal settings for the year ahead. Member Rachel recommends that we work with an outside contractor to do a 360 to learn whether Dr. Salim was able to improve on what was spelled out in this Superintendent Evaluation tonight as room for growth and improvement. Staff that reports to Dr. Salim may not feel comfortable engaging in this forum.

Vice Chair Bowman stated that changing the formal process mid-stream would not be fair to Dr. Salim. Moving forward, she agrees that the School Committee should evaluate what a new process would look like and incorporate it into the next evaluation.

Member Fantini stated that a 360 is a great idea, however, we should plan for doing it at a later time.

Member Killian stated that she did not receive the forms and cannot speak on his performance.

Vice Chair Bowman stated that according to State Regulations, student representatives do not participate in Executive Sessions and Superintendent Evaluations, this may be something to look into going forward. She also likes the 360 piece, and would like to establish a sub-committee to work toward these goals for the next evaluation.

Member Rojas asked a processing question regarding the comments from the Members and whether or not Superintendent Salim will be able to provide any feedback before the Members vote.

Mayor Siddiqui responded to the points of Member Rachel and Member Fantini: Feedback is always very important during these times so she supports the idea of a 360.

Dr. Salim responded that he has heard four common points tonight. First on communication. Communication includes *what* and *how*. What we share and how we share information is important and we need to build on the successes. Second, when it comes to partnerships and not working in isolation, he wants to work on that also. Third, working with the School Committee, he heard comments about a retreat a couple of times, with the pandemic continuing and affecting our communities of color, we really have to come together as a team. Fourth, he appreciates the feedback and ideas of opportunities for him as a leader of this district to continue moving forward the process of goal setting.

Vice Chair Bowman explained there are two more steps to this process, we will vote to accept the end of cycle composite summary report and also a one-page composite summary from Vice Chair Bowman which will be provided at a later meeting.

There was some confusion as to where assessments belong on the composite forms. Due to individual Member last minute changes after the deadline, mistakes have happened; the numbers don't add up in all places and these errors need to be fixed before voting on these last two steps can take place. It was decided that the Mayor will call a Special Meeting for the purpose of voting on accepting the Superintendent End-of-Cycle-Composite-Summary- Report and the One-Page-Member-Composite-Summary at once.

On a motion by Member Rojas, seconded by Vice Chair Bowman, on the following roll call vote, the meeting was adjourned at 7:30 p.m.: Member Weinstein YEA; Member Wilson YEA; Vice Chair Bowman YEA; Member Fantini YEA; Member Rojas YEA; Member Rachel YEA; Mayor Siddiqui YEA.

Attest: 

Doshia Beard
Executive Secretary to the School Committee