

Superintendent for Mary Skipper - Summative Evaluation Report
Summative Evaluation Report Form

Complete:

Primary Evaluator Name/Title:

School Committee

School Committee Chairperson:

Laura Pitone

Superintendent:

Mary Skipper

Evaluation Cycle (Start and End Dates):

July 2016-June 2017

Progress Toward School Committee Goals: 2016-2018

Progress Toward Goal #1: Increase achievement and access for all students. Reduce all performance gaps by half.

Did Not Meet	Some Progress	Significant Progress	Met	Exceeded
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Rationale, evidence, and feedback for improvement for student learning goals:

Under the leadership of Ms Skipper the district is utilizing data more effectively to understand gaps, areas for growth, and inform practice. Ms Skipper has invested time in training administrators and staff on collaborative data analysis. Several enhanced and new programming has been initiated, targeting populations with performance gaps as well as improving teaching and learning for all. Overall, there is confidence in the data informed investments Ms Skipper is making in programming, staff and in fostering staff collaboration. Additionally, work on social-emotional and behavioral supports, including new programming, will be a key aspect to gap closing, which Ms Skipper has made a priority. Developing better assessments is important to increasing achievement by all students and Ms Skipper is actively participating in initiatives in the district and the Commonwealth. Interim milestone targets would be helpful to better understand district progress on this ambitious goal.

June 2017 Additional Comments: In the Spring of 2017, SHS was recognized by the College Board for the highest increase in access for Advanced Placement Courses. Ms Skipper led the development of the systems to track and evaluate this longer-term goal (5+ years) initiating a significant shift in SPS culture and expectations to be realized over the next several years. 2017 data shows a 2.9% increase in college enrollment between 2015 – 2016.

The SC will consider specific future goals that will identify milestones over time for this longer-term goal.

Progress Toward Goal #2

Progress Toward Goal #2: Develop and implement a comprehensive PreK-12 social-emotional learning framework that provides students with the skills they need for social and academic success.

Did Not Meet	Some Progress	Significant Progress	Met	Exceeded
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Rationale, evidence, and feedback for improvement for professional practice goals:

Under Superintendent Skipper, full implementation of the Student Support team for at risk students and reconsideration of and re-commitment to our investment in Second Step (SEL curriculum) for all students have created a framework for additional social/emotional supports for students. The significant re-design of the health instruction as well as increased access to therapy (including embedded) through partners are significant achievements. The School Committee is interested in how future school wide programs that impact culture and SEL, such as Responsive Classroom, PBIS, Mindfulness, or Restorative Justice, will be considered and potentially adopted, recognizing that not all programs are a fit for all schools.

The School Committee looks forward to furthering the discussion on how to effectively assess efforts to support social/emotional development providing a more balanced view of the Whole Child at SPS (beyond traditional standardized testing.)

June 2017 Additional Comments: The SC will consider specific future goals that will identify milestones over time for this longer-term goal.

Progress Toward Goal #3

Progress Toward Goal #3: Increase engagement with the community to reflect the community in which we live.

Did Not Meet	Some Progress	Significant Progress	Met	Exceeded
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Rationale, evidence, and feedback for improvement for professional practice goals:

Ms Skipper continues to support investment in the Somerville Learning Collaborative and leverages their skill sets to reach out to the community for targeted events and communication. Her energy and drive to connect is very visible and can be felt even with language or cultural barriers and is a great model for all district leadership. Superintendent Skipper has demonstrated deep compassion and skill working with our diverse community during several complicated situations including the death of a SPS student, the potential ramifications of national politics on Somerville students and their families, and resolving individual conflicts in the district. As a district, one question is the balance between central office responsibility and that of schools to reach out and connect with people not traditionally involved, as well as maintain current involvement.

June 2017 Additional Comments: The district is in the early stages of defining the scope of the metrics for this goal and the School Committee has decided to not evaluate progress on Goal 3 for the spring of 2017.

Progress Toward Goal #4

Progress Toward Goal #4: Continue to develop and implement innovative ways of measuring student academic performance and school quality such as formative assessment, performance-based tasks, and whole quality indicators.

Did Not Meet	Some Progress	Significant Progress	Met	Exceeded
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Rationale, evidence, and feedback for improvement for professional practice goals:

Superintendent Skipper is a district, state, and becoming a national leader in this area by serving and leading subgroups in several consortiums and councils. She has made improving assessments from the classroom to the state standardized assessments a priority. In district, she is pursuing the full scale implementation of the Whole

School Quality work (begun under the previous administration) and adding a formal Learning Management System (LMS) to enable more sophisticated communication, collaboration and calibration of formative assessment across the district, in addition to expanding use of technologies from Maker Spaces to 1:1 programming to allow for integrated performance-based assessment opportunities.

June 2017 Additional Comments: SPS is one of the founding districts of the MCIEA Consortium (founded in 2016) created to pursue development of performance based task evaluations and other alternatives to current assessments. The MCIEA is innovative in both the scope of the work and the structure including collaboration between union and administration.

Under Ms. Skipper's leadership, SPS is incubating competency based assessments at Next Wave/Full Circle. In addition to also exploring competency based assessments at Somerville High School, the new High School education plan includes the aspiration to explore portfolio based assessments in the future.

Progress Toward Goal #5

Progress Toward Goal #5: Develop a comprehensive plan for Universal Kindergarten Readiness that supports intellectual, physical, and social/emotional growth from birth to Pre-K

Did Not Meet	Some Progress	Significant Progress	Met	Exceeded
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Rationale, evidence, and feedback for improvement for professional practice goals:

The district continues to invest in this complicated, but exciting mission. Ms Skipper's participation in the city cabinet, expansion of the SPS/Headstart program, therapeutic and integrated Kindergarten classrooms, strengthening of Partners (Lesley, Tufts and CHA), and assessments are only some of the initiatives for the pre-k population. We have real talent and passion in the district with a strategy of slow and steady investment/piloting and wonder if the additional focus on 0-3 could slow these efforts without additional resources/robust partnerships. Looking forward to seeing a data that captures the outcomes associated with the investments over the last several years. Instinctively it appears we are making sound decisions, but seeking evidence for continued and future investment.

June 2017 Additional Comments: In the spring of 2017, administration presented and is currently implementing a plan to engage children and families of the 0-3 population. The SC will consider refining this goal beyond plan development for the future, including targets based on metrics created in spring 2017.

Progress Toward Goal #6

Progress Toward Goal #6: Develop and implement a strategy to recruit, develop, and retain a diverse and talented staff.

Did Not Meet	Some Progress	Significant Progress	Met	Exceeded
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Rationale, evidence, and feedback for improvement for professional practice goals:

Ms Skipper has restructured the Human Resources group, including adding staff, to allow it to grow into the proactive organization SPS needs to attract, develop and retain top talent. New practices, such as earlier hiring, an SPS career fair, and a more welcoming office space for potential and new hires, are encouraging. Additionally, her organizational changes, including re-establishing her cabinet, adding targeted support roles and creating a professional development forum (the affinity group) for principals supports both our students and our staff which contributes positively to job satisfaction. Ms Skipper understands that it is not good enough to attract the best talent, you must make it worthwhile for new AND experienced talent to stay.

One of the largest challenges is increasing the diversity of staff to better reflect the diversity of the student population. There is strong competition for talent from our nearest neighbors necessitating that SPS is recognized as an excellent place to work. From the innovative paraprofessional contract to pathway programming for dual certification, Ms Skipper and the HR team are pursuing creative solutions to attract top talent and send messages to our current employees that they are valued. We look forward to future data on new hires and retention to understand the impact of these investments.

Rating on Each Standard

I: Instructional Leadership

Unsatisfactory	Needs Improvement	Proficient	Exemplary
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I. Rationale, evidence, and feedback for improvement:

Ms. Skipper's high expectation to truly leave no child behind is consistent and clearly echoed by staff. She has built upon SPS's past experience in data-driven decision making, increasing the focus and enhancing the student-centered perspective, to improve practice. She has created new positions and programs, based on priorities defined by data analysis, to improve instruction and accommodate diverse learning styles. In addition to her keen focus on data, Ms. Skipper also demonstrates the power of understanding a student's story in order to define appropriate support and interventions.

Principals state they are expected to be the instructional leader in the school and that time and resources are allocated to realize these expectations. The decision to invest in an Educator Evaluator position demonstrates Ms. Skipper commitment to an effective and consistent process and its value in improving instruction and practice. SPS has been fortunate to gain Ms. Skipper's vast expertise in both high school and middle school. Developing a greater understanding of effective elementary and early child practices will be important for the future.

"She has a strong understanding of curriculum and instruction and how to change practice to address the achievement gap."

"...she has made it clear that Instruction is the job of SPS and of every employee"

"She shows a tremendous capacity for instructional leadership and her support for leadership staff is refreshing."

"...a doubling down on data-informed decisions and interventions..."

"...[Superintendent Skipper] cares deeply about all of our students as individuals, but is especially focused on kids at risk....She has connected with the staff around how we can think outside the box to support these kids and families."

"I have also been in awe of the breadth and depth of her understanding of different kinds of instruction, creativity in proposing new programs and collaborative spirit when trying new pathways for student success."

Examples:

- GOAL program for over-aged ELL students
- Restructure of SEEK program for social/emotionally challenging 1-6 students
- PATH and PROMISE programs to serve social/emotionally fragile middle school and high school students
- Extension of Head Start/SPS pre-k program
- Collaborative creation of the SHS Building Educational Plan

- Universal Design for Learning, based on triad of curriculum, instruction & assessment
- Enhanced Student Support Team implementation and increased imbedded student therapy
- Collaborative revision the School Improvement Planning process
- Addition of Educator Evaluator position
- Systems supporting data-driven decision making and assessment - Student Insights for Student Support Team (developed over several years with Code for America), Elevation for ELL student data, introduction of LMS (Learning Management System) for collaborative planning & formative assessments

II: Management & Operations

Unsatisfactory	Needs Improvement	Proficient	Exemplary
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II. Rationale, evidence, and feedback for improvement:

Superintendent Skipper puts students at the center of how she manages the district. She has implemented a fundamental shift in her organization by expanding her Cabinet to include all district leaders (Special Education, ELL, and Early Education, and others were added) and organizing principals into an affinity group to work more closely together and develop a deeper sense of shared responsibility for each student at the school and district level. The amount of infrastructure changes and enhancements, from staff to systems, is impressive and exciting, but significant for a district to absorb. Ms. Skipper has demonstrated an aggressive pace for action, but what is most impressive is it is achieved thoughtfully with buy in. However, there is some concern about the sustainability of such rapid growth. Additional or growing initiatives and programs may necessitate long-term planning for staffing and/or systems needs to insure longevity and effectiveness. Staff commented on needing a cohesive approach to assessment of the full impact of new systems/programs and a specific concern was voiced about clearer consultation with principals about adding positions post the budget process.

It is clear that administrators like working with her and respect what she is trying to accomplish. Ms. Skipper is investing time and money to set up current staff to succeed and grown, as well as bringing in the best and brightest to fill open positions. Significant enhancements to Human Resources, including earlier hiring, additional staff and advocating for development of an HR Strategy as a top priority has placed staff quality, growth and retention at the center of the district's work.

"I was specifically impressed with the Entry Plan... In it, she laid out the values that I have seen over and over again guide her communication and direction of this district."

"I have appreciated how intentional [Superintendent Skipper] has been about delegating responsibilities regarding operations in particular, and her longer-term goal of restructuring administration"

"Praise for her vision, her integrity, her willingness to listen, and her fiscal stewardship come from all comers"

"Expansion of the HR department shows a purposeful shift from a reactive to a proactive strategy that bodes well for the future."

"Superintendent Skipper is managing both individual and organizational growing pains with great skill."

"Looking forward to development of a simple but comprehensive 'dashboard' to track key indicators of success, either district wide or within a program or initiative, understanding that systems work to make this happen is in-progress. "

Examples:

- New Paraprofessional contract to encourage retention and includes true professional development
- Reconvening and guiding the Powerhouse studios discussions
- Additional SPED school leadership roles
- HR strategy and staff to implement
- Applying her knowledge of systems and technology to develop important system infrastructure and engaging staff in this process through the Technology Blueprint activities
- Additional cabinet members better reflecting the needs of all students, principal affinity group fostering leadership growth and collaboration, strategic new positions to better serve students
- More comprehensive, elevated view of social/emotional learning across the district including new collaborations among staff.

III: Family/Community Engagement

Unsatisfactory	Needs Improvement	Proficient	Exemplary
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III. Rationale, evidence, and feedback for improvement:

Ms. Skipper leads by example in her responsiveness to parents concerns with words like "warmth and sincerity" found in the staff evaluations. She is extremely sensitive and effective in her personal interactions with families (leading by example), however as a district we still have work to do to realize her vision of "meeting families where they are" within our schools consistently. Ms. Skipper effectively balances the concerns of active parent advocates and those who do not have a voice, a testament to her sophisticated listening and communication skills and commitment to all children.

Comments:

"I've heard nothing but positive feedback about every interaction with families... "

"She is particularly engaged in supporting families in crisis, and has earned the respect from our staff and community partners who work specifically with families in need. "

"...continue to work with our principals to develop successful communication strategies that are not just unidirectional."

"Looking forward to see if her model of connecting directly with families will trickle down to school leadership and staff."

"Would like to see more targeted proactive communications with families, which necessitates systems. So much is going on in the district it is often difficult as a parent to discern what is relevant and messages get lost."

"As an educational professional, it is not always clear when to engaged the community in discussion. In the case of piloting the combined CP/Honors classes some parents were surprised and distressed, thought the staff was confident in the idea."

"I give her kudos for the way she communicates with parents/guardians in more comfortable situations, who are often not as acutely attuned to the high needs and steep challenges confronting many SPS families - yet who have a very valid and commendable interest in their own children's education. She has a very good skill of looking for positive answers rather just saying 'no because...'"

Examples:

- Addition of Parent Liaison for translation/interpretation in 1st budget
- Overhaul of Special Education Annual District Meeting to include an overview of current and planned programming with staff present (in addition to the director)
- Going above and beyond to support a family who lost their son and support his school community
- Being discriminating and proactive when sending home formal communications from the Superintendent (start of school, response to clown fear, post-election)
- More intuitive new SPS website

IV: Professional Culture

Unsatisfactory	Needs Improvement	Proficient	Exemplary
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IV. Rationale, evidence, and feedback for improvement:

Ms. Skipper has done tremendous work to build a shared vision, both with staff and the School Committee. District leadership echoes her vision – often using her exact phrasing– a powerful testament to how the vision resonates and the strength and consistency of her communication. Her high expectations for all – students, staff and herself – and her positive modeling (“leading by example”) were two of the most repeated comments in this evaluation process. Overall, Ms. Skipper is an effective communicator, however sometimes with speed of change the message may lag. Change and improvement will necessitate continued investment in administrator and staff growth and development. Ms. Skipper exudes positivity (grounded in reality) and her work ethic, collaborative spirit and belief that all students can (and will) succeed is infectious.

“...she identified some structural and personnel changes ...and kept the interests of our district foremost while working with staff with compassion”

“She has been an open communicator, with a refreshing eagerness to tackle the district’s challenges head on.”

“I have received very favorable feedback from teachers and staff...”

“[Superintendent Skipper] has clearly high expectations...the staff [has taken] ownership for realizing the District vision within their own domain (principals: schools; teachers: classroom).”

“She is clearly very skilled at conflict resolution, and diffusing contentious situations. Her creative problem solving is also very impressive.”

“Overall I think [Superintendent Skipper] leads by example in creating a professional culture of high expectations and accountability...but...she can spread herself too thin, overschedule herself, and then either be forced to cancel meetings or arrive late. This can affect morale...”

“...supported and guided, without micromanaging, the much needed “professionalization” of [an] entire program in a collaborative and positive way, so that staff are encouraged to give input and take ownership of their contribution to the District’s vision, rather than feeling just like cogs in a machine. “

“Ms. Skipper has strong communication skills, using multiple vehicles, but with the speed of change sometimes this School Committee Member has been surprised by new initiatives.”

Examples:

- Commend Superintendent on her reconsideration of her MCAS recommendation, based on feedback from staff. Extremely thoughtful and brave early in her tenure.
- SPS participation in the By All Means and RIDES programs at Harvard, an opportunity for staff growth and collaboration with educators across the country.
- Representing SPS at MCIEA (Mass Consortium for Innovative Education Assessment) and AAAC, working to improve education systemically, benefiting all students of the Commonwealth
- Human Resource strategy as a top priority
- Open door for all SPS staff to resolve conflicts
- Identifying talented staff to work on improving the safety, quality and alignment to the vision of SPS of our Summer Program and empowering them to lead the creation of a sustainable system

Overall Performance Rating

Rating:

Unsatisfactory	Needs Improvement	Proficient	Exemplary
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Date Completed:

June 2017