

**LEADERSHIP IS NOT A POSITION OR A TITLE, IT IS AN ACTION AND EXAMPLE**

**Somerville Public Schools  
2021 Evaluation of the Superintendent of Schools**

**Unsatisfactory** = Performance on a standard or overall has not significantly improved following a rating of *Needs Improvement*, or performance is consistently below the requirements of a standard or overall and is considered inadequate, or both.

**Needs Improvement/Developing** = Performance on a standard or overall is below the requirements of a standard or overall but is not considered to be Unsatisfactory at the time. Improvement is necessary and expected.

**Proficient** = **Proficient practice is understood to be fully satisfactory. This is the rigorous expected level of performance.**

**Exemplary** = A rating of *Exemplary* indicates that practice significantly exceeds *Proficient* and could serve as a model of practice regionally or statewide.

	Unsatisfactory	Needs Improvement	Proficient	Exemplary
<p>Standard I: Instructional Leadership. The education leader promotes the learning and growth of all students and the success of all staff by cultivating a shared vision that makes powerful teaching and learning the central focus of schooling.</p> <p><b>Comments</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The district continued to prioritize both trauma informed practice and equity initiatives, even during a pandemic.</li> <li>• During an unprecedented year, Superintendent Skipper worked very hard to collaborate with staff and support high quality teaching while schools stayed remote and then worked even harder to ensure that in-person learning was done in a safe environment. She has dramatically expanded summer and other out-of-school learning opportunities and has a vision for equity that imbues all her work.</li> <li>• Superintendent Skipper has articulated the shared vision of continually strengthening instruction across the district and with community early education partners participating in SPS professional development opportunities. Prior to the pandemic, she directed instructional resources to higher need students in a targeted way. During the pandemic, Superintendent Skipper has broadened programming, interventions, and recovery to more students. She also led the reinvention of instruction delivery from in-person to remote learning.</li> <li>• The Superintendent supports instructional innovations that engage students and educators in new ways.</li> <li>• Under Superintendent Skipper’s leadership, the district is making thoughtful improvements to its multilingual and special education programming.</li> </ul> <p><b>Examples/Evidence</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• In the fall of 2020, the district launched a redesigned educational experience, working around the limitations and leveraging the advantages of remote video education.</li> <li>• Within days of shutting down for the pandemic, hundreds of educators were participating in professional development designed to help them effectively engage with students in a remote learning environment.</li> <li>• Impressed with data analysis on several variables in support of the recommendation to change the Unidos enrollment policy to align with equity and program goals.</li> <li>• Superintendent Skipper has overseen significant grant money brought into the district to reform the academic schedule at the high school and NW/FC and support the cross-curriculum, project-based educational program redesign at NW/FC.</li> </ul>				X

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Robust, fun, and free-to-families summer programming after a year where academic growth possibly lagged due to virtual/hybrid learning during the pandemic.</li> <li>• Brought the Sonrisas early childhood program for bilingual Spanish/English pre-k students</li> </ul>				
<p>Standard II: Management and Operations. Promotes the learning and growth of all students and the success of all staff by ensuring a safe, efficient, and effective learning environment, using resources to implement appropriate curriculum, staffing, and scheduling.</p> <p><b>Comments</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• In past years I've expressed concern over the Superintendent spreading herself too thin. In a year where EVERYONE was spread too thin and too often dealing with incomplete data and fragmented resources, her and her staff's ability to rise to the occasion is a direct testimony to the Superintendent's skill not only as a leader but as a manager</li> <li>• The administration continued efforts to improve transparency and increase clarity in the budget process – specifically the differentiation between standard school budget and federal pandemic relief funds.</li> <li>• Disappointed that the changes proposed to the High School Schedule, created by a team of educators through research and analysis (and somewhat piloted during COVID), could not be implemented in the 21-22 school year. Understand that drastic changes in working conditions and expectations this year, combined with a new building and changes in leadership, did not create the best climate to embrace change and hope this opportunity will be explored for the 22-23 school year.</li> <li>• Superintendent Skipper is an exemplar regarding diversity, equity, and inclusion who makes a conscious and concerted effort to grow, hire, and train staff with a focus on equity and access.</li> <li>• Superintendent Skipper and her team were constantly pivoting in managing student placement as students returned to school while also managing the changing requirements around masks and COVID testing. There was also a lot to juggle with the brand-new high school opening and wanting to do right by graduating seniors.</li> <li>• Superintendent Skipper continues to secure significant new sources of funding and to leverage resources effectively. She is skilled at planning for both short- and long-term district needs. She and her staff created COVID 19 protocols and policy, which have kept infection rates remarkably low especially for a dense urban district. Her responsibilities have increased with the transfer of the school nurses from the Department of Health and Human Services to SPS. This is another example of Superintendent Skipper's commitment to caring for and educating the whole child.</li> </ul> <p><b>Examples/Evidence</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• In response to changing perspectives on building safety and the ever-evolving status of COVID in the community, the district created numerous return to school plans, processes and schedules in an accelerated manner, with the highest level of professionalism.</li> </ul>				X

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Carefully balanced multiple voices and perspectives while figuring out when and how to safely reopen schools, which resulted in a high rate of return for all students across the district.</li> <li>• Patience, grace, and creativity in negotiating contracts largely focused on safety of staff and students</li> <li>• Memo of Agreement for remote learning with educators was a model in the Commonwealth.</li> <li>• Implementation of school’s mitigation strategies that were in the top 1% of the nation, as well as detailed execution plans to reconfigure schools, schedules and testing protocols.</li> <li>• Clear budget timeline that included increased time for community review of superintendent’s budget and sufficient time for SC deliberation.</li> <li>• Prioritized enhancing social and emotional support in 20-21, including additional staff and PD for classroom educators.</li> <li>• Strategic use of grant dollars to better support mental health needs of students – including hiring many more counselors, trauma informed PD, and wellness mini grants to better support students.</li> <li>• Designing opportunities for the district’s youngest learners to engage with each other and with educators in person when classroom learning was almost exclusively remote.</li> <li>• Ensuring that students had access to computers, Internet, food, and other essential resources was an enormous lift, requiring the re-distribution of staff and re-allocation of funds</li> </ul>				
<p>Standard III: Family and Community Engagement. Promotes the learning and growth of all students and the success of all staff through effective partnerships with families, community organizations, and other stakeholders that support the mission of the school and district.</p> <p><b>Comments</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The communication demands were significantly higher in the 20-21 school year due to the pandemic, which pushed the district to innovate as well as highlighted gaps and challenges. Specifically timing, appropriate scope/depth of content and sequencing of messaging was challenging due to continuously changing conditions and information, as well as staff capacity.</li> <li>• Appreciate that language service capacity, for translation and interpretation, has increased. Looking forward to increased use of translation and interpretation and targeted communication strategies to increase access to district in school and out of school time.</li> <li>• Support efforts to enhance the district communication strategy, including considering technology investments (increase personalization via accessible platforms) to address gaps and challenges.</li> <li>• New support staff will increase organizational capacity to help students, however for student facing roles, especially at the high school, the updated structure and roles may be confusing to students and families.</li> <li>• District and school-based organizational charts are an important tool for both staff and the community to understand the increased investment to support students and educators. Enhancing staff information on the SPS website, in addition to posting organizational charts, would be an excellent resource to encourage family and school relationships.</li> <li>• As a district we made a number of decisions that were loudly and publicly not universally supported this year. Even in the face of controversial decisions, the fundamental faith in the district held thanks to the leadership of Superintendent Skipper.</li> <li>• The superintendent encouraged all educators to prioritize connection and communication with families during the pandemic.</li> </ul>				X

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Superintendent Skipper is incredibly accessible to students, parents, community members and other stakeholders.</li> </ul> <p><b>Examples/Evidence</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The site coordinator and longtime employee of one of the SPS after school and early childhood partners died suddenly and unexpectedly on a Tuesday night. This person was also the parent of a SHS student. By the time I reached out to Mary about it at 8 am the next morning, she was already marshaling resources to support the SHS student who had lost a parent as well as figuring out which SPS staff should be sent to support the grieving colleagues of the person who had died. It was a wonder to behold. So much compassion and kindness.</li> <li>• Created full time family liaison positions whose support during the COVID-19 pandemic was invaluable.</li> <li>• multi-lingual town halls, as well as live interpretation of School Committee meetings.</li> <li>• Incorporation of additional third-party communication resources to support the communication complexities.</li> <li>• Superintendent Skipper established clarity in budget timeline with School Committee with intentional time for deliberation during a tight window and changing circumstances.</li> <li>• Carefully balanced multiple voices and perspectives while figuring out when and how to safely reopen schools. Resulted in a high rate of return for all students across the district.</li> <li>• Worked cohesively with SHS leadership and city-side counterparts to plan, partner and contract for facilities upgrades that improve building air quality.</li> <li>• Engagement with Teen Empowerment, the Welcome Project, Somerville Education Foundation, school-based and citywide PTAs, and the various City and private organizations the district partnered with for out of school time learning and enrichment opportunities</li> <li>• Successful collaboration with parents and staff for the formation of various affinity groups</li> </ul>				
<p>Standard IV: Professional Culture. Promotes success for all students by nurturing and sustaining a school culture of reflective practice, high expectations, and continuous learning for staff.</p> <p><b>Comments</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Maintained positive spirit and attitude during this incredibly difficult year. Even when the challenges seemed insurmountable, the Superintendent lead by example in a tough situation by pausing when spirits were down and returning with creativity and new energy. This was infectious within the leadership team resulting in thoughtful problem solving and creative solutions that minimized safety risks for educators and students.</li> <li>• Emotions were high, information constantly changing or incomplete and different parties had very different views on return-to-school plans. Leadership was empathetic, thoughtful, and poised in these complex times, in working with all players including the SC, City, staff and families to resolve differences and created the best educational experience for students.</li> <li>• The superintendent continues to build and grow the leadership team. With vast pressing demands, prioritization of initiatives and efforts must continue to be thoughtful and in concert with the leadership team and the SC. With new administrators, clarity in communications, roles/responsibilities and a focus on systems and processes will continue to be critical in creating a sustainable organization.</li> </ul>				X

- As a district we made a number of decisions that were loudly and publicly not universally supported this year. Even in the face of decisions not everyone liked, the fundamental faith in the district held thanks to the leadership of Superintendent Skipper.
- We can trust Superintendent Skipper to say what she means and means what she says. That is a fabulous gift to have in a district leader and partner with the School Committee.
- Superintendent Skipper continues to strengthen the professional culture of SPS. She leads by example: demonstrating her own high level of professionalism, commitment to creating an inclusive community, and continually raising expectations across the district. She expects that all members of the SPS community continue to learn – both students and adults. Superintendent Skipper demonstrates her commitment to equity in both hiring and developing current staff.

**Examples/Evidence**

- Launching the 21-22 school year with the themes of reflection, recovery and refocus to acknowledge the strain and challenges of the last 18 months, understand the impact on both students and educators and positively frame and actively plan for the challenges and opportunities that lie ahead.
- Continued support of community partners brought on in the last few years.
- Superintendent Skipper is always first to compliment her staff, never takes credit for accomplishments as an individual but is instead always thanking and acknowledging her team and underscoring and highlighting their work and contributions.
- Teacher led (both remote and in-person) professional development provides teachers the opportunity to take on leadership roles while providing timely professional development in the district.
- Distributive leadership at multiple levels
- We now have equity teams at every school, a district-wide Advancing Equity Task force, and educators are about to start an equity audit of the curriculum.