

Shrewsbury School Committee Evaluation of the Superintendent

April 24, 2019

<p>Student Learning Goal By the end of 2018, the Superintendent of Schools will have worked with the leadership team to a) determine key data elements related to academic performance and other indicators of student success and well-being; b) analyze these data elements in order to identify areas for improvement and performance gaps between student populations; and c) create a tool or tools that enable effective communication of these indicators to external and/or internal audiences and allow progress to be tracked over time (such as a "dashboard").</p>	<p>Some progress</p>	<p>Comments: Some progress on this front has been made, with the software necessary for the "dashboard" concept a part of the FY20 budget request. This is a goal that is a work in progress. Work has begun, under the effective leadership of Amy Clouter, but will continue to need more time to mature and adequate resources to support it. On a daily basis, Dr. Sawyer is student-centered in his work and his passion for all children to be academically successful. He is passionate about the current work in the district to address the well-being of staff and students. He takes a holistic approach to education and considers the whole child when advocating for funding for our school district so that all children, regardless of learning ability, receive a high quality education. An effective evaluation tool is key to moving the curriculum towards standards based learning. Effective models are limited and it makes sense to take time and pilot. Dr. Sawyer and his Assistant Superintendent of Curriculum made some progress with this goal, working with his leadership team and curriculum leaders to review & pilot various software tools. In the UMASS Collins study on SPS Front office capacity, the report highlighted the need for a data analyst to support the need for curriculum & educational data tracking. This will be pivotal in making significant progress for next years Student Learning goal.</p>
<p>Professional Practice Goal By the end of 2018, the Superintendent of Schools will have worked with the leadership team to build widespread awareness and understanding of the district's vision and strategic priorities, so that at least 80% of parents and 90% of staff agree that they are well informed regarding the Portrait of a Shrewsbury Graduate and the 2018-2022 Strategic Priorities & Goals.</p>	<p>Significant progress</p>	<p>Comments: [...] awareness regarding the district's Strategic Priorities is widespread. Reference to the Strategic Priorities has been consistent in district projects and communications, at all levels. [...] this goal has seen significant progress. I believe that Dr. Sawyer has done a good job to ensure that all staff understand the district's vision and strategic priorities. Due to his messaging, the district's plans are ingrained in the fabric of the schools as well as the great work done by all educators. This goal depends significantly on communication which for staff, families and the general public has been outstanding (see Standards III, IV) He created a hashtag "#ShrewsburyLearns" to allow educators to use as a means to provide updates from the classroom. This is a great way to showcase the great initiatives that are happening throughout the district.</p>
<p>Progress toward District Goals</p>	<p>Significant progress</p>	<p>Comments: Steps have been taken on most all goals, with only a few still in the earliest stages. The timelines for some initiatives may have been overly ambitious, considering the demands on educators, staff and administration. Three initiatives (school start-time, homework, and project-based learning inventory) are critically important to the strategic priorities, and their impact on students will be significant, so it makes sense not to rush through them for the sake of meeting a deadline. Dr. Sawyer, along with other members of the district's leadership team, spent a significant amount of time working with the Beal Building Committee and the MSBA to present a new school building proposal that met the needs of the district and students, as well as the taxpayers. Their detailed work resulted in an overwhelmingly positive public vote to support funding the new Beal School building project. Goals are rather ambitious and may be more than can be addressed at once. Plans for addressing these progressively seem realistic. Dr. Sawyer also continued the focus on inclusive learning and created a steering & building based committees to address the critical district focus on Social-Emotional Learning. Dr. Sawyer was also able to secure significant funding for leadership in th areas of SEL and Community Partnerships, at no cost to the town in FY 20.</p>
<p>Link to District Goals 2018-2020</p>		

Standard I: Instructional Leadership		
I-A. Curriculum:Ensures that all instructional staff design effective and rigorous standards-based units of instruction consisting of well-structured lessons with measureable outcomes.	Exemplary	
I-B. Instruction:Ensures that practices in all settings reflect high expectations regarding content and quality of effort and work, engage all students, and are personalized to accommodate diverse learning styles, needs, interests, and levels of readiness.	Exemplary	
I-C. Assessment:Ensures that all principals and administrators facilitate practices that propel personnel to use a variety of formal and informal methods and assessments to measure student learning, growth, and understanding and make necessary adjustments to their practice when students are not learning.	Exemplary	
I-D. Evaluation:Ensures effective and timely supervision and evaluation of all staff in alignment with state regulations and contract provisions.	Proficient	
I-E. Data-Informed Decision Making:Uses multiple sources of evidence related to student learning—including state, district, and school assessment results and growth data—to inform school and district goals and improve organizational performance, educator effectiveness, and student learning.	Proficient	
Overall Rating for Standard I: Instructional Leadership	Exemplary	Comments: While much of the work in sub-categories A, B, and C is delegated to the Assistant Superintendent for Curriculum, Instruction, and Assessment, processes and outcomes under each sub-category are exemplary, and reflected in the district's strong academic standing and overall student success. During his ten years as superintendent, Dr. Sawyer has evolved in the role from one of manager to one of facilitator. He gives his leadership team opportunities to be reflective, collaborative, innovative and honest about the successes and challenges that they daily face. Areas of improvement are to increase visibility in classrooms (some years allow for more time to be in schools than others; it's the ebb and flow nature of this environment) and to be more timely in completing evaluations for his direct reports. In my eleven years of working with him in his capacity as Superintendent I have seen him grow in his management style and understand that delegating responsibilities to his direct reports is not only empowering to them, but also provides him with time to more fully devote to his work. Many elements have been delegated and the team functions effectively and quality of instruction in our schools is excellent. Dr. Sawyer is the "encyclopedia" of public education. The depth of knowledge he brings to this district is invaluable.

Standard II: Management & Operations		
II-A. Environment: Develops and executes effective plans, procedures, routines, and operational systems to address a full range of safety, health, emotional, and social needs.	Exemplary	
II-B. Human Resources Management and Development: Implements a cohesive approach to recruiting, hiring, induction, development, and career growth that promotes high-quality and effective practice.	Exemplary	
II-C. Scheduling and Management Information Systems: Uses systems to ensure optimal use of data and time for teaching, learning, and collaboration, minimizing disruptions and distractions for school-level staff.	Proficient	
II-D. Law, Ethics, and Policies: Understands and complies with state and federal laws and mandates, school committee policies, collective bargaining agreements, and ethical guidelines.	Exemplary	
II-E. Fiscal Systems: Develops a budget that supports the district's vision, mission, and goals; allocates and manages expenditures consistent with district- and school-level goals and available resources.	Exemplary	
Overall Rating for Standard II: Management & Operations	Exemplary	<p>Comments: Despite daily challenges, staff strain, and demands that can exceed capacity, the schools are managed without significant incident in a way that fosters strong student success and performance, staff continue to be among the most talented in the region, and the district's financial situation is healthier than it has been in a number of years. His attention to planning for a new Beal elementary school was focused and informative as he educated stakeholders about the need for a new school and updated staff about the ins and outs of a debt exclusion campaign. [...] there has never been a year when grants and sponsorships have been so generous, and it is Dr. Sawyer's leadership and initiative that have contributed to the success of some of them. The change in formulation of the budget and the manner in which it was provided to the public and other town boards has created a shift from what will be reduced if funding is not provided to what amount of funding is needed to meet goals and strategic priorities. Dr. Sawyer approached the idea of using Interest Based Bargaining (IBB) versus traditional bargaining, which Committee members praised. This work coupled with Town Manager, Kevin Mizikar's budget approach has resulted in an improved budgetary understanding for the committee as well as the public. [...] the UMass Collins Report provides a number of recommendations to improve Central Office efficiency and effectiveness. I am hopeful that this report will be carefully analyzed in order to determine short, medium and long term work that can be done to improve the work environment in Central Office and hopefully free up time for current and future work needs. Budgeting process has progressively improved over the years. Consultant report made concrete recommendations. Dr. Sawyer runs a solid, highly transparent operation. He is forward thinking and always finding ways to do more with less, ensuring his organization works within its allotted budget.</p>

Standard III: Family & Community Engagement		
III-A. Engagement: Actively ensures that all families are welcome members of the classroom and school community and can contribute to the effectiveness of the classroom, school, district, and community.	Exemplary	
III-B. Sharing Responsibility: Continuously collaborates with families and community stakeholders to support student learning and development at home, school, and in the community.	Exemplary	
III-C. Communication: Engages in effective communication with families, community stakeholders, and the media about key district issues, including student achievement, district needs, and best practices in education.	Exemplary	
III-D. Family Concerns: Addresses family and community concerns in an equitable, effective, and efficient manner.	Exemplary	
Overall Rating for Standard III: Family & Community Engagement	Exemplary	The Superintendent's public-facing communications are strong and continue to get better, with an especially robust social media presence that engages many. His level of engagement with the community is outstanding; he continues to be seen as the face of the district, and is well-respected by Shrewsbury citizens. I have been particularly impressed with Dr. Sawyer's response to several significant issues that occurred within the district over the past year. He interacts with teachers, principals, parents and students with respect and concern, and works with all stakeholders to reach equitable solutions. Decisions are made after careful, thoughtful analysis and listening to all parties who are involved. Between the cable TV show, School Journal, Twitter, Blog, engagement of PTOs and presence at school events the Superintendent has an excellent relationship with students, parents, staff. The enrollment process, which serves as an entry into the system, has been identified as an area that could be improved. Dr. Sawyer is very careful and thoughtful when it comes to managing challenging student and family issues. His leadership team sees this first hand and it has a positive impact on how Dr. Sawyer is seen by his Senior Leadership Team (SLT).

Standard IV: Professional Culture		
IV-A. Commitment to High Standards:Fosters a shared commitment to high standards of service, teaching, and learning with high expectations for achievement for all.	Exemplary	
IV-B. Cultural Proficiency:Ensures that policies and practices enable staff members and students to interact effectively in a culturally diverse environment in which students' backgrounds, identities, strengths, and challenges are respected.	Proficient	
IV-C. Communication:Demonstrates strong interpersonal, written, and verbal communication skills.	Needs Improvement	
IV-D. Continuous Learning:Develops and nurtures a culture in which staff members are reflective about their practice and use student data, current research, best practices, and theory to continuously adapt practice and achieve improved results. Models these behaviors in his or her own practice.	Proficient	
IV-E. Shared Vision:Successfully and continuously engages all stakeholders in the creation of a shared educational vision in which every student is prepared to succeed in postsecondary education and become a responsible citizen and global contributor.	Exemplary	
IV-F. Managing Conflict:Employs strategies for responding to disagreement and dissent, constructively resolving conflict and building consensus throughout a district or school community.	Exemplary	
Overall Rating for Standard IV: Professional Culture	Proficient	The Superintendent's commitment to the highest standards of academic achievement continues to be reflected in SPS staff at all levels, contributing strongly to a culture that attracts some of the most talented educational professionals to the district. One area of concern expressed by all School Committee members was that the Superintendent's communication with School Committee members this year has fallen below expectations, and requires attention and improvement going forward. He continues to be exemplary in his ability to share the vision and mission of the Shrewsbury Public Schools, and it is his leadership skill which will lead the district successfully for years to come. Dr. Sawyer is committed to and fosters high standards of service, teaching and learning throughout the district. He leads by example and expects as much of himself as he does of his staff. SPS has a culture of high achievement for all students, regardless of background and learning ability. Commitment to high standards is well recognized and appreciated.
Overall Summative Performance Rating	Exemplary	

For the Shrewsbury School Committee:

Superintendent of Schools:

Jason Palitsch, Chair, School Committee

Date

Joseph M. Sawyer, Ed.D., Superintendent of Schools

Date