

Dover-Sherborn Union #50 Superintendency Committee
Dover-Sherborn Regional School Committee
Dover School Committee
Sherborn School Committee
Meeting Minutes – April 28, 2014
Dover-Sherborn Middle School - Dover, MA

Present:

Union #50 Committee

Frank Hess, Chair
Dawn Fattore, Secretary
Anne Hovey
Tim Caffrey
Lauren Doherty

Sherborn School Committee

Frank Hess, Chair
Susan Hanlon
Anne Hovey

Dover School Committee

Dawn Fattore, Chair
Lauren Doherty, Secretary
Tim Caffrey
Kristen Dennison
Adrian Hill

Dover-Sherborn Regional School
Committee

Dana White, Vice Chair
Lauren Balk
Michael Lee
Clare Graham

1. Call to order – Ms. Fattore called the meeting to order at 6:30 pm. There was a quorum for the Union #50 Committee, the Dover Sherborn Regional School Committee, the Sherborn School Committee and the Dover School Committee.

2. Superintendent Evaluation -

Dawn Fattore, Chair of the Superintendent Evaluation Sub-Committee (members Dawn Fattore, Richard Robinson, Frank Hess, Dana White) spoke first about the process. A few points and topics of conversation:

- The public documents will be 1) the 2-page Summative Evaluation, 2) the compilation of ratings and 3) these minutes.
- As this is the first time through the Evaluation process, there was discussion about historical precedence, legal requirements and advanced notice of what will be made public.
- It was noted that the numbers used in the compilation record corresponded to the categories in individual member's reports and were used solely to determine an average across 16 members.
- The original goal document annotated by Mr. Bliss with specific benchmark examples was noted as extremely helpful.
- There is continued discussion on the timing of the evaluation (April) vs. the end of the school year (June).

Each member was given the opportunity to enter comments into the public record. They have been forwarded from each member verbatim:

Dover School Committee

Dawn Fattore

Overall - An overall rating of proficient for a new superintendent should be interpreted as a huge accomplishment. I think everyone is always in a position to learn more and also to learn from others. I highly recommend Steve consider participating in the New Superintendent Induction Program in the coming year. The structured exposure to other new superintendents as well as seasoned veterans, could be an invaluable opportunity.

Std 1 - My ratings on this standard reflect the lower level of exposure and discussion in this area for School Committee members, as there were many more pressing issues to address this year. I look forward to hearing more about the work being performed in connection with curriculum, instruction and assessment in the coming year.

Std 4 - Steve is the definition of high standards and sets high expectations for all members of his team. It is important to mention again that high standards do need to be managed to ensure a proper balance between school responsibilities and family/personal time. The right balance will ensure a positive professional culture and ensure excellent team members stay in the district. His mentoring of the new principal at Chickering, I believe, has played a large role in her success as she has navigated a very active school year. Communications are obviously top-notch and greatly appreciated by all stakeholders.

Kristen Dennison

Steve has had an excellent first year as superintendent. He has given the district fresh energy, and he has worked extremely well with his nearly all new administrative cabinet to bring positive change to the whole district.

Steve's knowledge of MA law is always very impressive. I was also very pleased with his preparation and organization during the budget process.

Steve is very open to families. One mother who was a little concerned with Steve's announcement about the Chickering lock-down drill said she got an immediate email back from him responding to her concern in a very positive way.

I marked Instruction as "Progresssing Towards Proficient" because I don't know if all students are being reached. I realize that's a little nit-picky, but I'm not sure that we are as good at differentiating instruction at Chickering, particularly at the high end, as we could be. But we are definitely making progress.

As Steve brings about change in the district, I think it will be important for him to bring in various stakeholders even earlier than he is now. While I understand there was a sense of urgency around the Sped reorganization, and the panel available to talk with SEPAC was very impressive, the whole process seemed

rushed, and the SEPAC meeting should have been scheduled as soon as Steve knew he was going to propose the change. It's a fine line to walk between not getting bogged down in lots of meetings before anything happens and making sure people feel informed and involved.

Lauren Doherty

1. My ratings on the Summary Sheet provided at the Joint Meeting need to be amended from a 2 to a 3 which is found in the first three column entries for line item, Dover, LD.

2. I read an excerpt of my evaluation to highlight the point Steve was making about prioritizing the need to update our data collection systems, as follows:

(The District) should move towards outcomes based performance tracking because it will surely improve student learning, not because it will measure the effectiveness of teachers. The one area of improvement I highlighted above is in the area of management information systems and its use to ensure optimal use of data. The new educator evaluation system has forced the state's schools to use student data to inform practice and monitor academic progress. If Aimsweb and Aspen is our technological solution, I haven't seen how these foster effective and efficient data use in classrooms, across the schools and the district. This may be just a matter of visibility, so I would encourage Steve to use some of his DSC meeting airtime next year to educate the community about how the student information systems employed by the district (aimsweb and aspen) collect student achievement data tied to standards that can be (is) used to report across grade, school, and district using pre, interim and post assessments that informs practice.

Adrian Hill

I scored Steve highly in his evaluation because I felt that he achieved an impressive level of success towards the specific goals set for this year. I would like to thank the evaluation committee and the Superintendent for the careful selection of the verbs and words used in the goals and also for the evidence provided through the SC Google Drive function; this aided the evaluation process greatly. I would like to record that I feel that Steve has particularly impressed in the standards of Family & Community Engagement and Professional Culture. I have been fortunate enough to witness his powerful skills of engagement in a variety of situations and with a number of types of audiences. Similarly, it has sometimes been daunting such has been the large amount of evidence of Steve's rigour and relentless pursuit of high standards in the area of Professional Culture. I feel the energy and drive that Steve brings to the role is of large value to our community and he ought to be congratulated on navigating myriad and many challenges in his first and successful year.

Sherborn School Committee

Frank Hess

Mr. Bliss took advantage of the knowledge and experience gained as Assistant

Superintendent of the Dover Sherborn Public Schools to be able to move forward with initiatives without the usual “learning time”. Although many of the administrators were new this year, Mr. Bliss was able to lead his newly formed administrative cabinet to move forward with the new evaluation system, the Spanish Language program in the elementary schools, reorganization of SPED administration, improvements in IT, and several staff professional development initiatives.

Mr. Bliss was a key support person in the negotiation process for both the School Committee and Teacher teams. The guidance and information provided helped to bring negotiations to a successful conclusion.

Mr. Bliss and his team did an excellent job in the budget process. Aside from the preparation of a budget that met the needs of the students and the concerns of the Town, he was able to communicate those needs to the Sherborn School Committee, the Advisory and Capital Budget Committees and the Selectmen in a professional and open manner.

Frank Hoek (submitted to and read by Frank Hess)

I feel that the work that Mr. Bliss has done in the area of budget and revenue is stellar! He took immediate control of this issue, worked to improve the budget, presented in a thoughtful and acceptable manner, and has put the school system in a better light within our community. Not only has he worked on a one year cost reduction program, Mr. Bliss has put into place steps for long-term & future reductions. He has evaluated and implemented reductions that are not only significant and meaningful, they also do not jeopardize the quality of education. Along with the revenue committee he has also started to implement revenue generating projects such as renting Pine Hill School classrooms to the ACCEPT and TEC collaboratives. His work in this area is exemplary!

The recently developed/approved fiscal year 2015 budgets for all three districts reflected the Administrative Cabinet’s serious assessment of system-wide needs against the landscape of population shifts between the elementary and secondary schools. The Cabinet advanced fundamentally level-service budgets that are responsive to students’ needs and faithful to the guidelines of our member towns. The budgets presented to each school committee more accurately reflect staffing levels commensurate with student enrollment, include technology to meet students’ and educators’ needs, reduce overhead, and provide for capital projects to maintain a safe and educational sound learning-working environment for students and staff.

A special education reorganization plan has been authored and steps taken to enact the plan effective for the 2014-15 school year. The plan, as drafted, has programmatic and financial benefits for each district. More importantly, the reorganization puts in place measures to realize potential significant efficiencies moving forward with the vision of providing the best continuum of services for

students.

Anne Hovey

It has been a strong year for our new Superintendent. Successful contract results, a SPED reorg, year 1 of the new evaluation system, an almost entirely new set of building leaders, and ...a relatively smooth budget season- quite a list of accomplishments!

My major concern for Steve remains pace. Ending a mtg at 10pm and being back at his desk at 5:30 the next morning is not a pace anyone can maintain. It will be important to start to determine where and when work can be delegated. (And that sometimes the 80/20 rule must be applied...) I appreciate Steve's desire to make sure every T is crossed and that every aspect of his administration maintains his very high standards of excellence, but where the districts most need Steve is at the helm creating & leading the overall vision. I trust that Steve will continue to build a team... he feels confident can consistently perform at a very high level; this should be a priority over the next couple of years.

Further empowering and supporting staff (II-B) to take ownership of tasks and projects (as appropriate) would help serve the dual purpose of providing them with the opportunity for professional growth and removing these tasks from your busy schedule.

Faculty and administrators at DS too often define rigor by the quantity of work/material covered rather than by the depth of the analysis and ability to apply that material. Hard work is rewarded equally with thoughtful outcome, leaving no place for students who are both hardworking and adept at a subject. This is an area in need of improvement that has been acknowledged... more work needs to be done.

Susan Hanlon

Steve has performed amazingly well in his first year as a superintendent at Dover-Sherborn. He has instilled a sense of professionalism and accountability in the way the district is run at all levels. While assembling and re-organizing every aspect of the staff, including teachers, support staff, directors, etc. has been a big undertaking; he has made sure that all aspects of the district have gotten the attention needed as outlined in the goals and standards. In most areas he is progressing toward exemplary, the few exceptions have to do with results not yet attained but on target to be attained in the near future.

I have enjoyed working with Steve and his staff this year and I look forward to another year of successes in 2014-2015.

Regional School Committee

Dana White

Having just read Thanks for the Feedback [Stone and Heen], I am going to divide my feedback into 3 areas:

- a. Appreciation. Steve, we appreciate you. You have worked extremely hard, started to build a strong administrative team, shown impressive results for a first-year superintendent and have already started to make a difference. Your commitment is contagious. We are fortunate to have made such a smooth transition in leadership. Thank you for everything you have done this year.
- b. Evaluation. I know that new Superintendents are supposed to be at best Proficient for their first 3 years, but I feel that you are exceeding our already high expectations out of the gate. Your knowledge of the job, team-approach, single-minded focus on children, transparency and excellent communications drives your potential to be a top-quality Superintendent. Across many of the indicators of these Standards, the data indicates you are already beyond Proficient. For others, as you move from developing/initiating to executing/evaluating, the needle will move as well.
- c. Coaching. Given this fast start, how do we help you be even better? Three thoughts: 1) Make sure that your team is with you. You think quickly and you think big; make sure that you have a shared vision that has rolled up organically and is bought into by the team. 2) Pace yourself. This is a marathon, not a sprint. And your team needs to be able to maintain that pace as well. 3) Help keep us focused on what is best for kids. They deserve strong teaching across the board and a well-rounded educational experience that is not driven solely by test scores. Let's all work together to prioritize optimally.

Lauren Balk

In my case, the rating of "progressing toward proficiency" was not intended as a negative, but was appropriate for someone who had been in the Superintendent position for under a year. In particular, I commended Steve on his strong communication skills and community engagement.

Clare Graham

I have chosen to rate all areas as progressing towards proficient as these are the first reviews of a new Superintendent. This rating does not indicate the Mr Bliss is not doing well, rather the rating represents that Mr Bliss has yet to complete a full year as Superintendent. It would not be my expectation that someone new to the role would master all aspects of the position in the first 9 months. As noted in this document a new Superintendent would reach Proficient in three years.

Mr Bliss has taken on 53 new staff, participated in the educator's contract negotiation and started to lead the district through many changes that will be to the benefit of students, staff and our budgets. The district has welcomed the changes and new perspective. As Mr Bliss works through these initiatives he will gain more experience that will expand and define his leadership. It is expected that from time to time things may not go as planned but Mr Bliss has shown an ability to continually work through issues to often come to a better solution.

Michael Lee

Positives:

- o Extremely smooth transition from Asst. Superintendent to Superintendent role.
- o Handled a very high level of turnover in key administrative positions coincident to Steve's transition, as well as several subsequent to assuming superintendency. No major transition snags were experienced that were noticeable to me nor do I perceive to the community of parents and students. This in it's own right is an exceptional achievement.
- o Major progress was made in defining annual objectives and effective reporting about progress against these objectives. This in part was an element of our adoption of the state program for evaluating a superintendent. But Steve delivered on written and oral reports to the SCs that was significantly better than the previous norm.
- o Energy & enthusiasm for the position and for playing a leadership role in our communities.
- o Successfully designed and gained buy-in for a major reorganization for how we manage and deliver special education programs. Built on the ideas of his staff and have created a more empowering structure for the group to work as a team.
- o Smooth proposal and adoption of his first set of operational and capital budgets.

Opportunities:

- o Incorporate insightful "outcomes measures" into district-level and building leader-level goals.
- o Make significant progress on the use of data to help inform all aspects of school operations.
- o Sustainable work level. Leverage the established team you have invested in building this past year.
- o Building an even stronger partnership with SCs to decide what we collectively want to focus on, and what we collectively will de-prioritize, so we can all be more effective in achieving our highest priority initiatives.
- o Along those lines, help/cajole/lead the SCs to "think/act regionally" whenever possible.

Following the comments by individual members, Mr. Bliss offered some summary comments:

- He expressed his thanks for the patience shown with the new administrative cabinet, the 53 staff changes, the Educator Agreement negotiation and the new Professional Growth & Evaluation System.
- He is aware that his current pace is not sustainable.
- He looks forward to focusing more on the larger vision than on details.
- He wants to continue to look at the curriculum and learning model to understand how we are measuring student growth.

These lead to areas of focus for 2014-15, which will include:

- Building the depth of capacity in the administrative team
- Enrolling in the new Superintendent Induction Program to support his personal growth.

There were motions to extend Mr. Bliss a one-year extension of his contract as Superintendent of the Dover-Sherborn Public Schools.

Region: motion by Ms. Graham, second by Mr. Lee

Vote in favor: Ms. White, Ms. Graham, Mr. Lee and Ms. Balk

Union #50: motion by Mr. Caffrey, second by Ms. Doherty

Vote in favor: Mr. Hess, Ms. Fattore, Ms. Hovey, Ms. Doherty and Mr. Caffrey

3. Special Items

- a) Mr. Bliss offered best wishes on behalf of the districts to two families whose mothers are battling cancer – Sue Badeau of Sherborn and Heather Tourtellotte of Dover. Sadly, subsequent to this meeting, Mrs. Badeau lost her battle; Mr. Bliss expressed sympathy to the family on our behalf.
- b) **IT Director Search** - After an extensive search process, Mr. Anthony Ritacco, the Interim IT Director was named to the permanent position. Search committee members Kristen Dennison, Frank Hess and Michael Lee offered comments on the process.
- c) **2014-15 Goal Setting** - Mr. Bliss shared that he and his administrative cabinet have begun the process of setting goals for 2014-15. There will be an offsite on Monday May 19 to focus on academic goals by school that will plug into each School Improvement Plan and the overall plan for Mr. Bliss.

4. Approval of Minutes -

June 17, 2013 - Change spelling of Mr. Caffrey's name and indicate he left early.

There were motions to approve the minutes of June 17, 2013 as amended.

Dover Sherborn Regional Committee - motion by Ms. Graham, second by Mr. Lee.

Vote in favor: Ms. White, Ms. Graham, Ms. Balk and Mr. Lee

Sherborn School Committee - motion by Ms. Hovey, second by Ms. Hanlon

Vote in favor: Mr. Hess, Ms. Hovey and Ms. Hanlon

Dover School Committee - motion by Ms. Dennison, second by Ms. Doherty

Vote in favor: Ms. Fattore, Mr. Caffrey, Ms. Doherty, Mr. Hill and Ms. Dennison.

Union #50: motion by Mr. Caffrey, second by Ms. Doherty

Vote in favor: Mr. Hess, Ms. Fattore, Ms. Hovey, Ms. Doherty and Mr. Caffrey

March 3, 2014 -

There were motions to approve the minutes of March 3, 2014 as amended.

Dover Sherborn Regional Committee - motion by Ms. Graham, second by Mr. Lee.

Vote in favor: Ms. White, Ms. Graham, Ms. Balk and Mr. Lee

Sherborn School Committee - motion by Ms. Hovey, second by Ms. Hanlon

Vote in favor: Mr. Hess, Ms. Hovey and Ms. Hanlon

Dover School Committee - motion by Ms. Dennison, second by Ms. Doherty

Vote in favor: Ms. Fattore, Mr. Caffrey, Ms. Doherty, Mr. Hill and Ms. Dennison.

7. Adjournment to Executive Session at 8:35 pm for matters pertaining to nonunion personnel contract negotiations not to return to open session.

Regional School Committee: Ms. White - yea, Ms. Graham - yea, Ms. Balk - yea, and Mr. Lee - yea.

Sherborn School Committee: Mr. Hess - yea, Ms. Hovey - yea, and Ms. Hanlon - yea

Dover School Committee: Ms. Fattore - yea, Ms. Doherty - yea, Mr. Caffrey - yea, Ms. Dennison - yea, and Mr. Hill - yea

Respectfully submitted,
Amy Davis