

SUPERINTENDENT'S EVALUATION

October 23, 2012

As voted by the School Committee on October 23, 2012, the Committee will use last year's discussion format to evaluate the Superintendent of Schools this year. The new Evaluation Tool for Superintendents will be in effect for next year. The evaluation will be centered on three general categories: **Financial Management, Educational Management, and School, Community and Intergovernmental Relations.** Each Committee Member was asked to speak to the superintendent's strengths in each category and also of their expectations. The discussion was facilitated by Chairperson Sovinee. The synopsis below, together with the attached Superintendent's Year End Report, 2012 will serve as the performance evaluation for this past year. The Chair, as aggregator, included comments sent by member Erdem Ural, who was not present, related to the three areas and goals being assessed.

Financial Management

Thomas Colburn: You have always done a remarkable job here, every year you have improved. One strength you have is you look at the budget and translate where the money can go effectively. Every year you don't just rubber stamp the budget, you critically evaluate each area, either through reorganization or reallocation. You make difficult choices. Thoughtfully, we seem to be moving forward despite the real challenges. I think that has a lot to do with your leadership and you are meticulous as far as your detail with the budget. You use the business resources within our school system very well.

You don't blindly rely on them, but you use them to the best of your ability and to the fullest. Financial management in regards to grant opportunities... you do a very good job empowering and inspiring employees to go after those grants. As soon as you hear they have an interest in going after them, you support them and you provide them with the resources. You have identified people outside the system; you don't rely on just one person, you are very careful to provide a number of resources. You are not afraid to change course, one person may be doing a good job, but you will change things if you need to, that is strength, a large strength. The grant opportunities have progressively increased, not just the same entitlement grants, you take good care of those, but we are not completely dependent on them, you just don't look at one grant, you look to see where that will lead us, and how dependent are we on that and how sustainable is it. As far as the collaborations with the business community, we are very fortunate we have a fair amount of businesses here that we can collaborate with. That is an area that you have as a priority. When you first came here you talked about it, and we have made relationships within the community, but I think that is an area that can be built upon. You had 16 goals here, and to have that many is very ambitious. I think that is reflective that you don't look at the school system as just one perspective. I think many superintendents have strengths in just one area. You come to the table with a lot of strengths. I think you had so many areas you wanted to go for, it was hard because you try to so many things at once and we were not seeing the fruition of all of them at once.

I think that over time I have seen you mature in the position and I think that you are comfortable in the position, you have identified the people within the school system who can help us

financially, you get the information you need from the municipal side and you work very hard to have a healthy relationship with the municipal side and you do a good job of communicating with all of the different people at all the different levels. Sometimes it is a very adversarial situation that you are stepping into. You have done a very good job working with the Interim Town Manager getting and providing information from the municipal side. I know that last year one of the real challenges was procurement.

I look at that as an unfortunate situation that was a real challenge and it took a lot of work to make sure that we were doing things the way they needed to be done to be able to protect the interest of the schools while protecting the interest of the community.

You made sure we were compliant in all of our bids. We had the selectmen and the Town Manager at the time, equally passionate, and they felt they were doing things the way they should be done. When we were having that clash I thought you handled the situation with poise and dignity, yet trying the whole time to figure out how can we collaborate, and how can we come to a resolution, and you helped shepherd that in a very good way. I thought that when we did get the resolution there, I thought the whole time you handled things well. I think out of all the things last year, in the financial area, that was the most challenging. You very quietly did a good job with it. It could have really been far more chaotic for the community than it was. It came to a beautiful resolution and that was in a large part due to you. You also were very careful to be sure that your staff also followed the same level of dignity in the face of real adversity.

Joyce Husseini: First of all I want to apologize for this list of 16 goals which I remember being part of that process and trying to reign this group in. You were so enthusiastic about wanting to set these goals. We broke them down into 3 categories, and it worked out, maybe, but in the area of financial management I commend you on the hiring of Ms. Denision to shepherd the financial health of this school system and move it forward. It has been a pleasure to work with both of you throughout the budgeting process. You play off of each other really well and because of that we are a well oiled machine in all that is produced. It shows, really, with the budget process that was used last year and the instrument you used to present to town meeting, beginning with the Finance Committee and then the town meeting members on the floor. Individuals who come to you who have not always been advocates of the school, but come to ask you questions. I think it is a really positive thing and a joy to see. As it pertains to the goal around the common core, that is something you have been very proactive in, preparing for it and its implementation, and that has put us in a really good light. As I mentioned before with the textbooks and the electronic media, I feel we are ahead of the game compared to a lot districts, knowing we already have the tools in place to meet some of those goals of the common core. That certainly has helped us and will help us financially as we go forward. I am very pleased with the business partnerships, particularly the groups with the town agencies, OASIS and the Public Library. I think that has done a really good job of explaining the offerings we have here, by bringing those groups into the schools to supplement, bringing the traditional school issues out to their sites; and have the schools involved beyond the confines of what happens within the buildings and within the confines within the school day. I am really just happy to see that because sometimes it is hard to tell when it is a school item or an OASIS item or a youth commission or public library. It is all very collaborative.

George Dolinsky One of the things I was a little concerned about in the goals that we discussed, is with the grant writing. I think that if there is any negative in this whole review process, I am a little disappointed that we have not got more from the grant writer. I think either we may have hired the wrong person, or we have not given him enough direction. We had two young ladies here earlier this evening that are in the process of securing a five to ten thousand

dollar grant to purchase books. My feeling is that this person has let me down, or you down. I think we have to take steps to correct and remedy the situation. That's my only point, and I know it is somewhat negative, but everything else has been positive, and Mr. Colburn said it all.

Deborah. Sovinee: One of the things that I have been most impressed with is how thorough the financial coordinator Jessica Denison has been in being able to get information to us, to the penny, about anything we ask for. Most immediately, having worked on some of the recent various union negotiations, we can determine what the financial cost is going to be even ten years down the road, well beyond the contract we are actually bargaining over. It is amazing how well and how quickly she can get that information. The other thing that always pleases me is how you manage to get so much out of, what is relative to the number of students and staff, the little money we have to work with, being well below the state average per pupil expenditure. We do a huge amount and I have seen and appreciate how you manage to stretch every dollar.

Erdem Ural: 1. Look ahead to restoring programs and services cut in previous years.

No Progress: Dr. Rizzi's report takes pride in avoiding the layoff of additional 14 teachers.

2. Planning for curriculum changes mandated by Common Core.

Some Progress: Dr. Rizzi's report takes pride in purchasing a new elementary math program. There is much more to be done.

3. Look for potential collaboration and partnering in business community.

No Progress: Dr. Rizzi's report takes pride in continuing to be a member of the Stoughton Chamber of Commerce Board. This claim may have had some relevance if she attended the Board meetings. The remainder of her claims in this section is also irrelevant to this particular goal.

4. Look for grant opportunities to enhance programs.

No Progress: Dr. Rizzi's report takes pride in engaging a "pro bono" grant writer. No achievement, other than helping Stonehill College and other Town departments is noted.

Educational Management

George Dolinsky: I think, as the sole senior citizen on this Committee, one thing I found that I have not seen enough of is the development of interest of the senior citizens in adult classes. I have not seen enough of that. I am a little disappointed with the results we got from town meeting survey, and from the input we are getting from the senior center. I think we need to do a little bit more for the people of my generation.

Deborah Sovinee: One of the issues for me is the MMSI grant to increase the number of students in AP courses and to increase their scores. It is disappointing to me, and I know this has nothing to do with you, but the grant is sponsored by the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, we were able to qualify for three years, but due to stipulations in the teachers union contract, we were only allowed to accept one year of the grant. I really hope, because the one year was really successful, that we will be able to think about reapplying for the remaining two years, and that

we still qualify for it. I want to congratulate you on the Pathways Program at the Middle School because I am very close to a middle school student, a neighbor who has been reporting to me on the kinds of things she has been able to learn over the last two years in the Pathways Program. It is interesting that she complained about it at first, and she wanted to use her study periods to get her homework done, yet she was able to take some of her interests that she discovered through the program, and develop those interests in high school. So far it has done what it was designed to do.

A question I have is about the work being done to raise the SAT scores at the high school. My understanding is that mandatory PSAT tests will be one of the tools that will eventually help to raise the scores. This had not been done previously. *(Mr. Ford responded that the PSAT's are now being offered to both freshman and sophomore classes at the high school. It takes the testing anxiety out of the students so they can focus on what the question really is). (Dr. Rizzi responded that if you have experience with the PSAT you have a huge leg up in the process. They are a very important step in the process towards the SAT and a step toward the college application process. By offering them on site, no one gets past that gate that previously, could have stopped them in the process.)*

Joyce Husseini: Quincy College, as an education management tool is a great selling point as we talk about being able to sell Stoughton High School over a private school, as well as a vocational school, to really say that this is an opportunity to afford that education. *(Dr. Rizzi replies students have an opportunity see themselves as college students).* I would also like to comment on the Pathways Program. I would like to congratulate you not only on the implementation of the program, but also on what it took to make that happen within the union contract and why that was kind of an obstacle. The successes of education are not just necessarily about the program but about the process of getting the program. I think that was a huge coup on your part, and to have it happen essentially very inexpensively.

Along the lines of educational management, the continued plans to grow technology, the use of data to inform, those are the words we have been hearing, leading up to the last couple of years. It seems like they are here this year so there is a certain expectation that goes with that but along the lines of what already has been put into place, I am very pleased with the outward facing in the part where the use of data helps the parents, particularly with the use of the Parent Portal. It has been, for me, just tremendously informative as well as useful, and I am pleased to see Dr. Gray distributed the statistics of how many parents accessed the portal this year alone. It was staggering. You don't expect the first or second year of implementation to be so successful. I believe it was 70 or more percent or maybe higher. I know that the midterm progress reports came out and I did not need to see them because I have been following, not only on the Portal, but the app for my phone. Congratulations on that effort. I look forward to where the data driven information is going to take our teachers.

I am also pleased with the ability to create the Curriculum Coordinators and you have likewise solved some of the fuzzy issues around the contract on who can evaluate and how that can happen. From that standpoint alone I think it has been worth putting in place with the two people you have leading that effort. They are just stellar, and we look forward to meeting them soon. Also, along educational management - the writing focus at all grade levels: I am very pleased with what Ms. Dillon brought forward today. I think the writing, reading and literacy across those subjects, which have not typically been STEM topics and a place where people have not been able to express themselves... I am very pleased with the effort along that line particularly with the Buzzards Bay program that is coming into place.

Which leads into the professional development part of this, which is Mr. Ford's duties, but where you oversee him. I think the professional development that I have been able to see through our access to First Class, I can see the excitement of a teacher who teaches biology, and who is able to collaborate on literature. I do love the access we have to First Class, as well as to some of the things you have talked about in terms of the development of the curriculum website, the resource library, Smartboards, and all the resources that are open to us. I assume that not everything is open to us that is open to the teachers, just from the bit I have seen, I am impressed. I can only imagine how that is growing. It is tremendous that everyone has these tools at their fingertips; they are portable, not just opening a book. I am looking again forward, with great expectations, to some of the transitions to the tablet technology, and being able to use that in the classrooms.

Thomas Colburn: We talked a lot about advanced placement, and honors, and certainly I appreciate that you have really had that as a focus, to have students reach their levels and higher levels. I think through the whole process we have had more students in the advanced placement program and more students going from the college program to the honors programs. Having said that, you also have a clear eye and a clear focus on the entire student body, and, I think at times we talk [a lot] about the advanced placement students, which are more of a minority of the students, [though] certainly it is a very important part of the school system. But, of equal importance are all the other students, and one of the things I find you do a very good job with is, - when you came into the system, there were a lot of challenges with Special Education - an area I have always been proud of in this town. We retain a higher proportion of our SPED students than most communities do. I know it has been important to the School Committee, and it has been a personal area which has been of great importance to you, to have a quality education for all the students with SPED. I also know it is an area that is a moving target as far as what the kids needs are and the challenges for us to provide those. In different areas you have been creative at times and moving to meet the needs within the different schools, and you have done a very good job with that.

I think that with educational management, part of it is managing your administrators, more than anything it is hiring quality people. You have done a very good job with your hiring. It is identifying, recruiting, keeping a good relationship with other school systems to try to find people for whom might be a good fit for them. In managing people you have to be able to have those uncomfortable conversations, and some superintendents choose not to have those conversations. What can [then] happen is an employee can end up in a situation where they may not be really functioning at the optimal level, and I like the way you try to bring the best out of all the employees. With having those awkward conversations, I like the way you do it off to the side, and most people are completely unaware of it. You do a very good job doing that. It would be inappropriate for the community to know of those conversations. I like the fact that people will come to me and they will say there is a situation going on and nothing is being done about it, yet I know there is a lot being done about it and that tells me you are doing it a professional and respectful way. I will have the side conversation with you, to be sure it is on your radar, and you are handling it. Usually it will be handled and going in the right direction, and when that does not happen you make the difficult decisions. Sometimes people who don't have all the information will vilify you for it, yet that is not to say every time you make the optimal decision, but you learn from that too.

I have seen an evolution of how you have handled managerial things and it has improved over the number of years you have been here. I know when you have had missteps, it is not for lack of trying. You work tirelessly here and you critically look at things and when you are given feedback you are accepting of it. Often times, I give you feedback that is candid and not always gushing. I tend to be very direct when I talk to you and I appreciate that you take the criticism

very well, and that you understand from where it comes. I also see at times when you are attacked by people, you always handle your self with dignity, and I think that is very important. I think you have grown the staff and develop people very well. You have a great relationship with Mr. Ford but you keep on developing other people within the system, which is great to see. You identify those young stars quickly and you try to have them grow and work with them. If you have a pathway with them that is not working well, you steer them to a pathway that is better for them.

As far as the number of students that are retained, and not dropping out, that is on your radar screen. One thing we need to work on is to increase the retention of students across the system. I think athletics is an area you looked at from the beginning, feeling that we could have some improvement. It's less than coincidental that we have had excellence in athletics since you have come on. It is not something we can give you all the credit for, but it is something you have had a positive impact on. The coaches have responded well to this in so far as they all want to succeed.

Erdem Ural: 1. Examine ways to increase number of AP and honors courses.

No Progress: Dr. Rizzi's report, between the lines, blames the teachers union for losing the MMSI grant for AP courses. She asserts she needs additional funding "to really make progress in this area."

2. Reduce already low dropout rate.

No Progress: Dr. Rizzi's report takes pride in continual use of Plato, an online teaching tool. She does not address how she intends to reduce the dropout rate in Stoughton.

3. Look for ways to close gap in MCAS scores in various subgroups and increase learning for all students.

No Progress: According to the accountability data posted in the Department of Education website, Stoughton met the target only for Asian Students. Stoughton's progress toward narrowing the proficiency gaps for high needs students, low income students, ELL and former ELL students, students with disabilities, African-American students, and white students did not meet targets set by the Department of Education.

4. Continue plans to grow technology.

No Progress: reported by the superintendent.

5. Enhance education for community, including possible retraining services for adults that would allow our resources to help upgrade skills.

Some Progress: Dr. Rizzi's report takes pride in conducting a survey to explore the interest of senior citizens only. Much more work is needed.

6. Include regional Tec Collaborative in previous effort.

No Progress: reported by the superintendent.

7. Grow, innovate and motivate.

Not a goal: This is too nebulous to be considered a goal

School and Community Intergovernmental Relations

Joyce Husseini: I think I have mentioned this before, I know the Parent Liaisons are new this year, but the RTTT effort was new last year, and is in place and is to be commended. One of the

parent liaisons and one of the RTTT committee members were on the Wellness Committee. They talked in depth [about] some of the things they have been trying to do with nutrition, programs that they are pushing forward. They talked about their wanting to get these programs out, and the challenges they face, which are the challenges that you face in getting information out to parents who either work evenings, have activities, who are not available, and the various methods we can use to reach them. I know they have been working with Dr. Gray. There is certainly a lot of room to grow still in that area of getting the information out to people. I am looking forward to continued growth and improvement in that and as our TV equipment has come on line, and our web sources are maturing, that will help to get the information out via You-tube or video clip on demand. Parent liaison process has so many wonderful possibilities, really.

I think the biggest part of School Community and Intergovernmental Relations is the challenges you have had in the last year in the transition. [The] total turnaround has been a truly collaborative relationship that you have had with the Interim Town Manager. We have seen you work through some difficult issues and seen you mature in that process and how one deals with difficult situations, and we hope nothing but positive kind of relationships in the future.

Thomas Colburn: I think you have always one-on-one excelled with your communication and I have seen that you have been more and more comfortable interacting with larger groups and connecting with larger groups. I think that certainly one area we talked about is the transitional years, and the parents of the kids who are moving up into different schools and what they talked about in the past is we have there opportunities every year like kindergarten graduation, and fifth grade graduation and eight graduation. I know that as a parent as my kids have gotten older, and I have seen them grow, and at the time they were coming along, there are opportunities to be closer to the schools. I think there are areas that the parents could have more information, for example, at times you are doing so many wonderful things here, and the administration and the staff are doing a great job, and yet, parents are choosing private school. When I hear the reason why I think at times it's because we have not conveyed all that we are doing here, and I personally think, that when we do have those graduation ceremonies, it would be a real service to all the families to know the opportunities that are available to them. Here are the things that middle school has to offer, and we have almost every parent right there, and these are things we offer, and I think they would be excited about that. Going from eight grade: here are the wonderful things we offer at the high school, and go into more elaboration on the details such as Quincy College, all the different opportunities, and I think we could provide more on that.

What you have done with raising the level of the technology for the students and training the adults to be as savvy with technology as the students are. These are all things we can get more information out there to the parents about the resources we have and the opportunities we offer.

I think that areas to reach out to the community, so we can have better with the collaboration with the Chamber [of Commerce], I know you have worked hard with that and I know that those are areas we can have a lot of improvement with and certainly the ongoing relationships with the municipal side and that is something I want to see us build upon. There are areas [where] we work together well, and we are all leaders of the community, and it is one community, even though there is the school and municipal side. I know that you have worked really hard and have a great relationship with the Interim Town Manager and I look forward to building upon that with the next Town Manager, and with us working closely with the Selectmen. [Also,] having really positive information, where you continue with your transparent explanations, I feel that every year you have been here, you have had far greater detail in

answering questions and dismissing the myths that are out there and are inaccurate. When people raise concerns, you look at them carefully and - is this something we need to address? - not just dismissing them out of hand. I have seen an evolution where, initially at times, it certainly is not just yourself, but we, as a board, would take them as attacks, and we have seen more and more [that] you have embraced it.

I know one of your real strengths is you love a challenge and you excel when challenged, especially, when at the core of your beliefs, you're challenged [and] will turn around and explain very well to the whole community why it is, and why it is a high priority for you. We need you to continue to improve in those areas, like you have, developing those relationships with community.

I think we need to do better informing and reassuring the community that our school system is there providing the level of services that their student deserves through the whole spectrum. We do a good job of explaining the higher level of AP but I think we could do a better job of relaying the same about Special Education. Very quietly, we do a very good job, but we need to communicate that to the community. I think we could do a better job early on helping the students identify better career pathways that are open to them. I think that sometimes when the students become seniors, they think: what do I want to do when I grow up? I think in this economic environment, that the earlier we can, [we should] help them identify the possible pathways, with increased internships. I think we need to work with the students on that.

A big priority could be to have the students apply electronically to the various colleges as opposed to doing it through snail mail. We are one of the few communities that still do that.

George Dolinsky: I have seen Dr. Rizzi in action with the community and I am very impressed. I have seen the way she has handled herself, and I think she does very well.

Especially during the period when there was confrontation, during the period of purchasing and everything else. One thing I feel is lacking, some where along the line, and it is not directly her fault, but we are not getting enough publicity for the activities of the school. I think the accomplishments of our students, the advanced education they are going into, should be emphasized a little bit more, the accomplishments a little bit more, and I think it falls under the department heads that are under you that are making you have a short coming in this area. It was mentioned earlier by the student council representatives how well the band did, and I did not read much about that in the paper, and I think I should have. It may have been on the Patch, or somewhere else, but we have to do more to publicize what the Stoughton School System is doing. It was mentioned earlier, that we want to get the kids going to our schools rather than private schools, but at the same time I think this is one area I think needs improvement on.

Deborah Sovinee: I am going to reiterate what George said, that looking at a possible addition or someone on staff, someone that could serve in a public relations position, someone who has experience and could be tapped should there be any crisis. [If] you or I are not able to be reached, it would be great to have someone like that available for those times, but to just get the stories out there about all the wonderful things the schools do. I would like to give you kudos for the parents/students fairs you have had, at key transitional times, they were enormously popular, and got huge turnouts and a lot of great publicity. I myself heard personally that the students found them extremely useful, especially the 8th graders, and they could see all the activities available [at the High School], and start to think about what activities they were interested in and they could pursue. Those were an enormous success, and I know Tom and I talked about getting those going, so kudos to you for doing that.

The one area I really wish we could do more is the increased use of our cable channel. I think it is not up to snuff, and in an ideal world, I would like to see more athletic events. I would have loved to see the volleyball, the Dig for the Cure game, where they qualified for the tournament, I would love to see the Science Fair, see the students interviewed and I see how it has expanded, and now includes the social sciences and so many more students are participating. The music events are shown, and that is great, and I want that to continue. With the money the town has received from the cable companies and will be sharing with the schools, I would like to see an improvement with our sound system. Because that is the one complaint with the musical programs [shown], is the sound quality is not good. I would like the School Committee and the town to think more creatively about how to get more use of the cable channel because that is a major way to get our message out.

Erdem Ural: 1. Increase in use of website as a tool to reach parents and community.

Significant progress: Dr. Rizzi's report takes pride in making the website more interactive, current and growing. She also takes credit for the Parent Portal, which I have not used.

2. Increase in use of cable channel to inform community of programs such as Science Fair and Walk to Read.

No progress: reported by the superintendent.

3. Organize an effort to reach out to parents at key transitional years.

Some progress: Dr. Rizzi's report takes pride in enhancing parent nights.

Much more work is needed.

4. Parental liaisons to create additional web and cable TV content.

No progress: Dr. Rizzi's report makes the trivial statement that parent liaisons and coordinators may be used for this goal.

5. Continue outreach efforts with community and town committees.

Significant progress: Dr. Rizzi demonstrated formidable political skills by keeping the School Committee, Finance Committee and the Town Meeting under her thumb. In her report, she also takes pride in developing a strong working relationship with "significant members of the Stoughton Community." Unfortunately, her confrontational and sometimes disrespectful style has alienated some of the Stoughton governmental bodies, administrators, and the people Dr. Rizzi presumably considers insignificant members of the Stoughton Community. She and the School Committee has a large amount of work to do to repair these serious damages.