



SCHOOL COMMITTEE
Public Meeting
July 7, 2022

Call to Order

Present: Chair Kristian Merenda
Vice Chair Kendall O'Halloran
Clerk Maureen Moran
Nichola Gallagher
Laura Arboleda

Chair Merenda called the meeting to order at 6:09 p.m.

Motion: Ms. O'Halloran

Second: Ms. Moran

Voted by roll call 5-0

Also present: Superintendent Folan
Press

D. New Business

1. **Superintendent Evaluation:** Chair Merenda stated that Superintendent Folan's end-of-cycle summative evaluation is both a measurement of progress toward goals and a tool to help with the running of the district. She informed the community that the School Committee had worked in close partnership with the Massachusetts Association of School Committees (MASC) and followed the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE) best practices throughout the year-long superintendent evaluation process. She explained that individual School Committee members evaluate and rate the superintendent using a detailed process developed by DESE. As Chair, she served as the task leader to compile individual member's ratings and comments into a single document. Chair Merenda explained that a numerical score in each rating is determined by the greatest number of scores within a category, not an average of all the scores in that rating. She commended Superintendent Folan on his leadership of the district, noting that he was a seasoned veteran of CPS when he stepped into the role of assistant superintendent in July 2020. He was named interim superintendent in July 2021, following the resignation of the previous superintendent, and was named full superintendent in February 2022.

Chair Merenda informed the community that Superintendent Folan had been given an overall rating of "Proficient" by the School Committee. Each School Committee member read a section of the Evaluator Comments into the public record.

Overall Summative Evaluation – Evaluator Comments:

Derek fully embraced the opportunity to step into the Interim Superintendent role in August 2021, becoming full Superintendent in February 2022.

He successfully helped lead the District as it navigated different learning, behavioral and social/emotional needs, and COVID protocols. He intentionally focused on joy and community, while also establishing relationships, routines, and accountability. In the backdrop of his work toward Goals, he also addressed the two major water main breaks at the Galvin Middle School (GMS), a series of weather-related incidents in the fall and winter, negotiations with five bargaining units, two building-based leadership shifts (JFK and GMS), and two principal searches.

He also helped successfully procure an invitation into the MSBA process for the GMS, played a role in numerous awards and accolades for our students and educators (Teacher of the Year and ESP of the Year), and rightly focused on a re-commitment to school community engagement, recognition and collaboration, and the return of programming, extracurriculars and social events.

We believe that as our Superintendent, Derek is moving the District in a positive direction and has begun to build lasting structures that support Canton as it continues to be a strong District through an increased focus on access, rigor and differentiated learning opportunities for all our students. We support providing Derek the opportunity to continue rolling out the plans he has put in place.

Canton is fortunate to have a true partner and collaborator at the helm. We believe the ratings assigned above reflect both the true progress and promise Derek has shown, as well as areas that are primed for continued growth. As progress is made in setting and achieving SMART Goals; establishing/using DESE-aligned Standards, Indicators and best practices in planning, evaluation, operations, and management; and demonstrating further instructional leadership toward demonstrable high-level achievement for all our students, we believe Derek and the District will be on a path toward truly exemplary results.

We understand and appreciate the quantity of issues that required careful and constant attention in the 2021-2022 school year, many of which could not have been foreseen, as well as the skill and professionalism required to address so many of them adeptly that he demonstrated. What's more, initial progress toward a more-streamlined and efficient strategic management system via the adoption of bold District Goals, regular reporting during public School Committee meetings, incorporation of regular surveys and other data sources, and willingness to drive accountability -- while encouraging individual agency and ownership -- throughout the District will position us to accelerate growth in the short- and long-term future. Overall, we believe that Derek did an outstanding job in his first full year as a Superintendent, and we expect to see even more great things moving ahead.

Standard I, Instructional Leadership - Evaluator Comments

Given Mr. Folan is a new Superintendent who stepped into the position after serving as an Assistant Superintendent for approximately one year, we believe "developing" is an appropriate score using the DESE Rubric for the selected Focus Indicators of Curriculum and Instruction.

The expectation of meeting each child where they are especially was made more difficult during this first full school year after COVID began. We believe that Derek excelled at prioritizing resources and focus on such things as the GMS therapeutic program and addition of Educational Support Professionals (ESPs) in elementary schools, demonstrating his commitment to supporting every Canton student.

Other highlights of his work in this area include:

- Launching the first Program Review, with the purpose of taking a deep dive into the preK-12 curriculum, programming, student learning experience and resources for a particular subject area; specifically resulting in the adoption of a new math preK-12 curriculum.
- Developing a Professional Learning Council to help inform professional learning offerings and engage the educator voice in the process.
- Rolling out Instructional Leadership Teams (ILT) and Academic Leadership Teams (ALT) at the elementary level to encourage vertical alignment and ensure intentional collaboration and discussion around instruction and implementation of curriculum, from literacy initiatives to social studies units, to STAR assessments.
- Establishing building-based DEI teams to drive implementation, etc. beyond the work of the District Core Equity Committee. Derek led the District to conduct data reviews to notice enrollment trends and student performance of selected populations. Also, he ensured that staff took the time to engage and listen to members of our community around the matters of diversity, equity, and inclusion.

Within the Curriculum Focus Indicator (as defined by the DESE Rubric), Derek has worked to ensure that most instructional staff implement standards-based units of instruction consisting of well-structured lessons, but the School Committee believes that curricula in some schools or content areas lack appropriate rigor and/or alignment to the State of Massachusetts standards.

Within the Instruction Focus Indicator (as defined by the DESE Rubric), Derek supported instructional practices in some schools or content areas that reflect high expectations, engage all students, and are personalized to accommodate diverse learning styles, needs, interests, and levels of readiness. The School Committee believes instances and areas continue to exist in the District that allow for lower expectations and/or insufficiently engaging instruction for students.

To show a demonstrable commitment to high standards, there is a strong desire within the School Committee for Derek to define SMART Goals for Student Growth, Achievement Gaps and College Readiness within the Student Learning and Instructional Leadership District Improvement Goals for the year ahead. SMART goals are ones that have key actions and progress, or outcome benchmarks attached to them, which make clear how the goals will be accomplished and measured. In the categories of Curriculum and Instruction, we believe that the District would benefit from an added focus on identifying and implementing actions and investments to prioritize in the areas of rigor, higher expectations and accelerated learning in the year ahead, as well as understanding what it will take from a resource perspective to truly engage all learners at all levels as we plan for the future, with lasting deep dual interest in promoting educational equity and educational excellence. We seek to uncover what it will take from a funding and staffing perspective to better ensure that every child is able to maximize their individual learning potential, i.e., the development of educator-led pathways that allow students who are ready to move beyond grade-level standards.

By the end of the 2022-2023 Evaluation Cycle, the School Committee would like Derek to make immediate progress toward, and identify a longer-term plan to show, a demonstrable commitment to high standards for learners at all levels in the District with associated SMART Goals, benchmarks, metrics, action steps and year-over-year growth targets. We hope the outcomes of this work will be a plan that highlights what it will take to ensure that all of our students have the opportunity to actively learn and be taught at their personal highest-achievement level and what steps to better recognize potential can be applied in Canton.

Standard II, Management and Operations - Evaluator Comments

Management and Operations, with a specific focus on the Environment and Fiscal Systems, was an area that Derek spent significant time on last year, with great initial success.

Highlights of his work in this area include:

- Navigation of different learning, behavioral and social/emotional needs, and constant adaptation to COVID protocols and transitions to masks/testing as the 2021-2022 school year began, to no masks and shifts in testing in February 2022.
- Intentionally focusing on joy and community, while also establishing relationships, routines and accountability.
- Addressing the two major water main breaks at the Galvin Middle School, as well as series of weather-related incidents in the fall and winter.
- Organization of collaborative and improved working groups such as the Policy and Finance subcommittees, Central Office and Cabinet meetings, and CTA meetings. In addition, the initiation of and weekly School Committee Leadership meetings resulted in the development and use of long-term planning agendas, progress monitoring against Goals, and collaboration around high-level school matters.
- Work via the Finance Subcommittee facilitated open conversations about the budgeting process, decision-making, student and school needs, that resulted in successful utilization of ESSER3 grant money, ARPA funds, educational grants, Community Preservation funds and capital funds.
- Development of a comprehensive budget for Fiscal Year 2023 with a 6 percent funding increase from the Town of Canton.
- Provision of quarterly updates that provide a full and transparent view of the District's financial expenditures.

Within the Environment Focus Indicator (as defined by the DESE Rubric), the School Committee believes that Derek developed and executed effective plans, procedures, routines, and operational systems to address a full range of safety, health, and social/emotional needs of students throughout the District. Examples of his leadership in this area include orderly and efficient student entry, dismissal, meals, class transitions, assemblies, and recess; school and District buildings that are clean, attractive, welcoming, and safe; and safe and supportive learning environments for all students.

Within the Fiscal Systems Focus Indicator (as defined by the DESE Rubric), the School Committee believes that Derek has developed a FY23 budget that supports the District's Vision, Mission, and Goals; allocated and managed expenditures consistent with District/school-level Goals and available resources; and effectively communicated his budget rationale to staff, community members, municipal stakeholders, and the School Committee, providing regular updates on budget development and implementation.

Given that as an employer the District is facing the ongoing challenge of filling open positions, Derek took a responsive and proactive approach. He adjusted substitute teacher and bus driver pay and fostered a relationship with Curry College to attract more teachers to the District. In 2021-2022, he successfully built out the administrative infrastructure to drive better impact and effect change, including the addition of new staff supports in Human Resources, Data Analytics and Planning, and Operational Support.

He also navigated two building leadership shifts (JFK and GMS) and co-chaired two principal searches, all while negotiating contracts with five bargaining units.

It is the School Committee's hope that Derek will continue to work in close collaboration with the Committee and all relevant Stakeholders to quickly identify opportunities, issues and solutions - as

transparently and expeditiously as possible as he activates the systems, plans, and positions that he put in place in 2021-2022.

With clear communication, proper information and opportunities for engagement, the Committee will be best positioned to help provide funding, policy, and other assistance, and remove barriers to positive progress, supporting Derek's vision as the leader of our schools.

By the end of the 2022-2023 Evaluation Cycle, the School Committee asks that Derek identify ideal administrative and support staff ratios for the District's size, as measured by state data, and outline an optimal, targeted staffing plan to achieve Goals set forth for 2022-2023, as well as for the Five-Year Strategic Plan.

Standard III, Family and Community Engagement - Evaluator Comments

Family and Community Engagement, with a specific focus on Engagement and Communication, was an area that Derek pursued in 2021-2022 with success.

Highlights of his work in this area include:

- Prioritized communication between staff and the community.
- Reached 90 percent agreement in community survey on "effective Superintendent communication"
- Made a strong effort to keep all stakeholders informed, either through specific scenarios, protocol updates, dashboard, or positive notice letters as the district evolved from full mask wearing in September 2021 to recommending masks be optional after Feb. 28, 2022. Throughout the decision-making process, Derek engaged key community members including CPS District Physician Daniel Muse, MD; Fire Chief Charlie Doody; the CPS nursing staff under the leadership of Lauren Pushard, RN; DESE advisors; and the Canton Board of Health as he sought professional medical information.
- Engaged in various forms of two-way communication with families, faculty, and staff, including surveys, forums, and attendance at town or school events.
- Deepened the District's relationship with a public relations firm to include press releases that highlighted student and staff achievement. His efforts will assist in the overall promotion of the District to internal and external stakeholders.

Within the Engagement Focus Indicator (as defined by the DESE Rubric), the School Committee believes that Derek has invited families to participate in the classroom and school community. To date, however, those efforts have been limited or insufficient, resulting in limited family involvement throughout the District.

Within the Communications Focus Indicator (as defined by the DESE Rubric), the School Committee believes that Derek has engaged in regular, two-way, culturally proficient communication with families and community stakeholders about student learning and performance. Communication is provided in multiple formats and reflects an understanding of, and respect for, different families' home languages, culture, and values.

Derek is a talented communicator, who believes in two-way conversations and collaboration as core elements of his leadership style. The School Committee believes Derek is the right leader, with the right skills, at the right time in Canton. His ability to bring the community together to develop authentic relationships is highly regarded among all stakeholders.

It is the School Committee's hope that Derek will continue to implement the "Communications Plan" he began to undertake in 2021-2022, which will include a District newsletter, enhanced website, outreach to

the Canton Association of Business and Industry (CABI), Canton High alumni/ae, etc. We recommend that he codify and build into the school year calendar regular interactions with stakeholder groups via family, faculty and staff fall and spring surveys; family and staff entry and exit surveys; in-person family forums (e.g., “critical conversations” or “curriculum and instructional nights”); and community event attendance (e.g., the weekly summer Canton Farmer’s Market).

Whether through the 2022 Equity Audit, MSBA GMS process, Five-Year Strategic Plan, Long-term Capital Plan or a year-over-year focus on the District Action Goals named in 2021-2022, the School Committee hopes that Derek uses these meaningful opportunities within Family and Community Engagement in a way that strengthens an overall sense of pride and ownership in the District.

In addition, the School Committee would like to see a year-over-year Student Retention SMART Goals, benchmarks, metrics, action steps and year-over-year growth targets be added to the priorities for the year ahead, and beyond. Understanding what drives interest in the District, as well as reasons for departure, will reveal trends that will inform ways to better engage families and the community.

By the end of the 2022-2023 Evaluation Cycle, the School Committee would like Derek to make immediate progress toward, and identify a longer-term plan, to improve Student Retention in the District.

Standard IV, Professional Culture - Evaluator Comments

Professional Culture, with a specific focus on Commitment to High Standards, Cultural Proficiency, Communication and Continuous Learning, was an area of deep focus for Derek last year.

Highlights of his work in this area include:

- Acknowledged that the greatest lever for student achievement is the high-level professional practice of educators.
- Created plan for a Coordinated Program Review that will continue each year as new subject area(s) will come under review. This plan will ensure a formal review of standards alignment, budget and resource preparation, and innovative thinking around curriculum mapping and instructional approaches.
- Aligned a Professional Development (PD) plan to support improvements made as part of the Coordinated Program Review.
- Continued prioritization of equity work.
- Commenced a 2022-2023 Equity Audit.
- Re-established PreK-12 Collaboration, holding three preK-12 Leadership sessions that brought Department Coordinators together to engage in a shared vision of District teaching and learning, and best practices for curriculum and instruction.
- Conducted walkthroughs in classrooms of subject areas across the grade levels, allowing elementary leaders to see the work in middle and high school, and vice versa. This exercise of walkthroughs, debriefs, and “look-fors” allowed for rich and important conversations that have not happened before. The end result will be a sharing of best practices, a better understanding of student learning through grade levels, and an identification of improvement areas.
- Ensured the Professional Learning Council has representation from all stakeholders. Its work includes forums with staff; a survey; data review; scheduling for next year; and discussions about the PD model to advance professional practice.
- Published a professional learning catalog for offerings throughout next year.
- Developed a partnership with Curry College to offer licensure and degree programs for educators at a discounted rate, which is providing a pathway for Educational Support Personnel to further their education and possibly be certified as teachers.

- Leveraged the work of the District Calendar Task Force to help with the examination of the best PD model options.

Within the Commitment to High Standards Focus Indicator (as defined by the DESE Rubric), the School Committee believes that Derek did foster a shared commitment to high standards of teaching and learning with high expectations for achievement for all, including: (1) Mission and core values: develops, promotes, and secures staff commitment to core values that guide the development of a succinct, results-oriented mission statement and ongoing decision-making and (2) Meetings: plans and leads well-run and engaging meetings that have clear purpose, focus on matters of consequence, and engages participants in a thoughtful and productive series of conversations and deliberations about important school matters.

Within the Cultural Proficiency Focus Indicator (as defined by the DESE Rubric), we believe that Derek took pride in having a diverse student body, but we are aware that there is work to be done within diversity among administration and faculty; examining some policies and practices are not culturally responsive; and addressing limited resources for administrators to support the development of culturally responsive learning environments and a school culture that affirm individual differences.

Within the Communications Focus Indicator (as defined by the DESE Rubric), we believe that Derek has demonstrated strong interpersonal, written, and verbal communication skills, as evidenced by regular and informative outreach to staff, families and community members, and the School Committee in a manner that advances the work of the District. We affirm that he regularly seeks and considers feedback in decision-making.

Within the Continuous Learning Indicator (as defined by the DESE Rubric), we believe that Derek has nurtured a culture in which staff members are reflective about their practice and use student data, current research, best practices, and theory to continuously adapt instruction and achieve improved results. He supports regular opportunities for administrators and teams to reflect on and collaborate around the effectiveness of a wide range of practices related to instruction and student learning and engaging in their own continuous learning to improve leadership practice. We affirm that he models these behaviors in his own practice.

Understanding that a core focus for our District will continue to be on equity for high-needs students, it is also important to acknowledge the School Committee's deep commitment to accelerating excellent academic achievement for all our students. The School Committee seeks to understand what it will take from a funding and staffing perspective to better ensure that every child is able to maximize their learning, potentially including the development of educator-led pathways that allow students to move beyond grade-level standards when they are ready to. While strategies may vary, we wish to see outcomes that show increasing levels of students in the highest quartiles of performance when compared to others in the state/country.

The School Committee also would like to see the Derek prioritize further developing optimal conditions for teaching that result in educational equity and educational excellence for all with SMART Goals, benchmarks, metrics, action steps and year-over-year growth targets added to support this critical lever for student achievement. Part of this work may also be defining a plan to achieve those conditions. By the end of the 2022-2023 Evaluation Cycle, the School Committee would like Derek to make immediate progress, and identify a longer-term plan, to articulate what optimal conditions for teaching in the District should look like.

2. **Special Education Reserve Fund Transfer Vote:** Superintendent Folan asked the committee for a vote to transfer \$300,000 from the Special Education Reserve fund. This transfer requires a vote from both the School Committee and the Select Board.

Motion: Ms. Gallagher
Second: Ms. Moran
Voted by roll call 5-0

E. **Public Comment:** None

F. **Consent Agenda:** Ms. Moran asked the regular session meeting minutes of June 9, 2022 be removed from the Consent Agenda. The remainder of the consent agenda was approved.

Moved: Ms. Arboleda
Second: Ms. O'Halloran
Voted by roll call 5-0

The following items were included in the consent agenda:

Executive Session minutes, June 9, 2022
Warrant, July 8, 2022

G. **Subcommittee Updates, Task Forces and Liaison Posts Updates:** Chair Merenda informed the committee that the Master Planning Implementation Committee was meeting on July 14.

Superintendent Folan informed the committee that his monthly meeting with CAPT leadership in June offered the opportunity to meet several incoming board members. In addition, Kevin Sullivan, PreK-12 Instructional Technology Coordinator, was a resource for CAPTs dealing with software questions.

H. **Other Business:** None

Future Business: The School Committee has a workshop tentatively scheduled for July 28, 2022

J. Adjournment: 7:26 p.m.
Motion: Ms. Gallagher
Second: Ms. O'Halloran
Voted by roll call 5-0

Documents used during the meeting:

1. Superintendent Folan's Summative Evaluation
2. Special Education Funding Transfer memo