

Self-Evaluation Form: Superintendent Self-Appraisal

Name: Steve Zrike
Superintendent, Salem Public Schools

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Standard I: Instructional Leadership

The education leader promotes the learning and growth of all students and the success of all staff by cultivating a shared vision that makes powerful teaching and learning the central focus of schooling.

Comments:

I continue to be incredibly impressed by the tireless dedication of our educators to serve our students and families. I am grateful to work with a team of teachers, support staff and administrators who make our young people a priority each day. During the last year, we worked hard to position the system more squarely on academic excellence through a concerted focus on: establishing a playbook to roll out clear routines that create a platform for learning, strengthening quantity and quality of feedback and observation, using targeted, high-leverage, and evidenced-based instructional practices and sheltered English immersion strategies and consistently implementing a process that results in data informed instruction. As we continue to emerge from a pandemic that diluted our core efforts, we must recenter our work on powerful teaching and learning aligned to our new strategic plan (particularly priority #1- Elevate Learning). To this end, our instructional achievements from the last year include:

- Completed a comprehensive SEI audit and identified priority practices around which school improvement plans were developed.
- Designed and implemented a comprehensive system of common assessments that include end of unit assessments in literacy and math for grades 1-10 with a linguistically amplified version for ML students at a WIDA level of 2 or lower.
- Strengthened services for PreK children by ensuring every site provides after school programming.
- Ran vacation academies in December, February and April and expanded summer programming opportunities at no cost to families (including a pilot full-day model for students with disabilities).
- Built a centralized critical incident data system and supporting protocols and reports.
- Provided differentiated professional development on SEL and supportive discipline.
- Partnered with The Brookline Center and Cartwheel to provide rapid access to tele-therapy for over 150 students.
- Strengthened inclusive practices: doubled the number of teachers with specialized reading training, increased the number of co-taught classrooms at the high school level, and increased the FTEs for teachers of the blind and deaf and hard of hearing positions.
- Adjusted elementary and middle school device models to a 1:1 in-school model.
- Wrote a technology plan for lead technology integrations, upgrades, and innovations across the district over the next 3 years.

- Implemented a play-based social skills curriculum and model in the K-5 ASD program.
- Partnered with Landmark for professional development and consultation for inclusion-based special education service providers in literacy, writing and executive functioning.
- Expanded the Unified Sports Program to Collins Middle School and the middle school sports program to include intramural soccer, basketball, and volleyball for students across both schools.
- Implemented a Pre-AP curriculum in grades 9-10 at Salem High School (math, science, and social studies) and Odell in ELA for grades 9-12.
- Focused our professional development with principals, assistant principals, and coaches to establish a playbook to: roll out clear routines that create a platform for learning, strengthen the quantity and quality of feedback and observation, use targeted, high-leverage, and evidenced-based instructional practices and sheltered English immersion strategies and consistently implement a process that results in data informed instruction in math and ELA.
- Supported schools and departments to design improvement plans aligned to the district's strategic plan and to use stepbacks to monitor progress.
- Continued our partnership with the Equity Imperative to focus on the development of a framework for disrupting inequities across our district departments.
- Regularly examined data with the executive team, district leadership team and principals to adjust practices based on academic and non-academic outcomes- Panorama survey results, chronic absentee data, STAR performance, dropouts, discipline, etc.
- Doubled the number of students in the innovative middle school pilot to include both 7th and 8th grade students while sharing and beginning to inform best practices across the entirety of the middle school grade span.
- Developed an attendance campaign and coalition focused on curbing chronic absenteeism. Schools also built stronger routines and efficacy of school-based attendance teams to develop coordinated intervention plans for students exhibiting a pattern of absences.
- Expanded the student voice project and youth participatory action research efforts to include elementary schools.

These accomplishments are the result of countless educators who I have the privilege of working closely with to positively impact children every day in the Salem Public Schools.

Standard II: Management and Operations

Promotes the learning and growth of all students and the success of all staff by ensuring a safe, efficient, and effective learning environment, using resources to implement appropriate curriculum, staffing, and scheduling.

Comments:

The most significant development of the last year is the creation and initial implementation of a strategic plan that will carry SPS through the 2025-26 school year.

It is through this dynamic plan that we intend to make decisions about how to best use people, time, and money. It will ensure that we stay tightly focused on what matters the most to deliver on the measures of success that are clearly delineated in the document. We used these priorities to ground our school-based and department improvement. Each of these plans are aligned to the priorities, strategies and initiatives that were developed through a comprehensive nine-month process of community interviews, focus groups and surveys of over 500 constituents.

In the last year, we used our previous strategic plan to guide a robust budget process that included school leaders, advisory groups, families, and members of our staff. We entered this past year's budget process with the sobering reality that the Commonwealth's contribution to our schools remained largely flat, that costs have increased with inflation, and that we were nearing the conclusion of our ESSER resources. These demands resulted in our expenses outpacing new revenue. As a result of these circumstances, we were forced to eliminate a series of school-based and central office-based positions to balance our FY24 budget. Most of these moves were achieved by right sizing the number of classrooms and central office staffing due to a steady decline in enrollment over the last few years. Additionally, to maximize impact, we also reallocated resources from less mission-critical areas to support vital investments to achieve our priorities and goals. In making these decisions, we tried to honor the stakeholder engagement that we received throughout the public portion of our budget process as well as the recommendations of our school leaders and department heads. Ultimately, despite these funding challenges, we presented a balanced budget that, above all, maintained the integrity of the student experience, addressed escalating operational costs, and began to lessen our dependence on expiring grant funds.

We continue to take steps to enhance safety across our schools having completed a safety audit (throughout the 22-23 school year) across our schools. This audit has provided us direction and utilized the deep knowledge of a community expert to provide us with a prioritized list of high-leverage actions. Please see a list of some these actions below:

Efforts to Enhance Safety
<ul style="list-style-type: none">● Trained all school leaders, safety teams and city emergency personnel on incident command and reunification using the I Love You Guys Foundation's approach.● Provided coaching to school counselors and school leadership on threat assessments and developing a school-based threat assessment team.● Utilized the districtwide audit to address the majority of Tier I safety issues.● Practiced reunification at all schools.● Revised bomb threat protocols in accordance with recent FBI guidance.● Collaborated with afterschool partners to enhance safety protocols during out of school time.● Created a new position with school safety as part of the portfolio of responsibilities.

Additionally, we were thrilled to gain eligibility into the Massachusetts School Building Authority (MSBA) construction process last December. This is a critical milestone in our efforts to secure a new facility at the Salem High School site. In the last year, we have

organized a school building committee, completed the Chapter 74 vocational education viability documentation, submitted our educational profile questionnaire, certified our enrollment with the MSBA, submitted our maintenance and capital planning information and, most recently, secured funding for the facility's feasibility study. In order to coordinate the monumental task of the proposed building project, we repurposed a position so that there could be a dedicated project liaison.

Also, it is important to note the extensive facility upgrades we have made to enhance the learning environment across our schools. Specifically, we are almost at the construction phase for a new, accessible Witchcraft Heights playground, we completed extensive summer painting at Collins, Saltonstall and SHS, purchased new middle school student furniture for 7th and 8th graders at Collins and Saltonstall, repaired sidewalks/curbs at Bates and Saltonstall and addressed plumbing and electrical issues across multiple schools. We are currently in the process of developing a comprehensive HVAC plan to systemically address heating/cooling issues, replace boilers and overhaul controls that are no longer operable. Furthermore, we introduced a new work order system to be utilized by custodians to manage and track building projects and established a process to conduct monthly school facility walkthroughs with principals.

Standard III: Family and Community Engagement

Promotes the learning and growth of all students and the success of all staff through effective partnerships with families, community organizations, and other stakeholders that support the mission of the school and district.

Comments:

Family engagement remains a critical lever for districtwide improvement. We have maintained our systems for regular communication: Facebooks Live, weekly newsletter, social media, SATV show and regular office hours. As a school district, we also hosted our second annual back-to-school festival, the See Me project in partnership with the PEM, mental health support sessions with Cartwheel and countless school-based events intended to strengthen the home-to-school connection. We remain committed to spreading positive news stories about SPS while ensuring that we maintain timely, transparent, and regular communication with our stakeholders.

This summer we introduced neighborhood walks and talks (visited 7 different neighborhoods) where members of the leadership team and I attended community events and knocked on doors to engage in a 2-way conversation about what is, and what is not, working for their children in our schools. These were productive conversations with families who we do not consistently hear from. Further, we launched a districtwide home visiting initiative with 45 staff members participating (teachers, paras, family engagement facilitators, school adjustment & CCNX). Each participating individual was required to attend training and then conducted at minimum two visits.

In the last year, the Parent Advisory Council has emerged as a strong body of diverse families from across schools. They have been instrumental in giving us feedback on making report cards easier to understand, improving the conference experience, the school calendar, homework, and communication. Because of their feedback, we are planning to distribute STAR student reports to families, are in the process of rethinking

parent-teacher conferences, designed districtwide homework guidance and we are looking to make the report card more parent-friendly. Their voice has powerfully shaped how we think about strengthening the home/school partnership. At the same time, we continue to solicit input from our multilingual learners' parent advisory council and our special education parent advisory council to explicitly meet the needs of these exceptional learners.

In the last year, our schools and staff have mobilized to serve the over 70 students who have joined SPS, living at Salem State's Bates Complex. Through the efforts of our McKinney-Vento coordinator, family engagement facilitators, student services team, educators, and our transportation department, we have ensured that these students and families experience a smooth transition to our schools. This is a snapshot of the wraparound supports that we provide all families that are new to our community and/or who require additional supports.

We continue to expand our language access services through the continued training of staff through our bilingual incentive program. We now have 32 staff members trained (15 going through training now) who speak seven different languages (Spanish, Portuguese, Afrikaans, Korean, French, Greek and Albanian). We are in the process of ensuring that we have someone in the Parent Information Center and the language access department who will be available to assist the growing number of Portuguese speakers.

Finally, this week (Dec. 5th) we are hosting a community partner meeting so that we can learn how partner organizations might collaborate with us to realize our strategic goals. We also want to support their commitment to serving our city's children. It is essential that their energy, ideas, and resources are surfaced and valued so that our students are the beneficiaries of a citywide approach to their development.

Standard IV: Professional Culture

Promotes success for all students by nurturing and sustaining a school culture of reflective practice, high expectations, and continuous learning for staff.

Comments:

As an organization, we strive to create a culture where all staff receive meaningful feedback and where all community members feel like they belong in our schools. Our students benefit when our staff is consistently growing in their practice and where their expertise and professional perspective is valued, respected, and helps to shape our districtwide practices. To this end, in the last year, please see a list of accomplishments centered on professional culture.

- Firmly resurrected our affinity group to offer an affirming community for staff of color to share their experiences. We are working on creating school-based affinity spaces to expand the reach and impact at each of our respective buildings.
- Redefined Laura Assade's role to explicitly serve as our Director of Diversity, Equity, Inclusion and Engagement so that our racial equity efforts are more intentionally reviewed and coordinated.
- Continued to recruit a more diverse staff such that we have now increased the % of teachers of color from 6% to 14.3% and % of staff of color from 11% to 21.5% of our workforce.

- Made a concerted effort to provide more choice and differentiated professional learning to educators and tailored offerings to specific educator roles and responsibilities.
- Designed principal professional development that is tightly aligned to our four key instructional drivers. Additionally, made a commitment to provide regular leadership coaching (at least two visits a month) to all building principals.
- Utilized Panorama survey data to counsel school leaders on how to create increased opportunities for staff to elevate their voices, ideas, and perspectives as it relates to school improvement.
- Continued to communicate internally with the monthly teaching and learning newsletter, the weekly “Zrike’s 3 for the Week” and providing opportunities for staff to meet with me per request.
- The teacher advisory group has been instrumental in influencing decisions and actions. Specifically, because of last year’s feedback we took the following steps (This year, we are focused on creating agreed upon practices that lead to healthy work-life balance):
 - Ensured that educators had sacred time to prepare their classroom the days before school started.
 - Paused the introduction of new curriculum (apart from new high school adoption).
 - Improved and simplified the discipline workflow process.
 - Offered enhanced guidance to educators on standards-based grading (more is needed).
 - Worked with administrators to ensure that observation and feedback more consistently meets the developmental needs of our staff.
- Productively negotiated a new contract with our AFSME unit that offered a competitive salary and enhanced working conditions for our employees.
- Launched quarterly central office meetings (first one scheduled Dec. 11th) focused on ensuring that the staff understands key aspects of our strategic plan, can ask questions, and share concerns. It is important that they are kept in the loop as they are often not made aware of what is happening across the system.

We are fully invested in cultivating a learning environment where outstanding educators want to work, grow, and stay in order to inspire students to dream big, think critically, and be positioned to succeed.

Areas of Growth

Comments:

Please note that this year I thought it was important to ask staff and families about my leadership strengths and opportunities for improvement. Via a survey, I asked the following questions- *What about my leadership is working well? How can I improve as a leader to better serve our students, staff, and families?* The feedback from the second question significantly influenced my reflection on areas for growth in the upcoming year.

- Ensure that I spend considerable time in all schools, not only the schools where I am coaching the school leader.

- Provide clearer rationale and explanations for the budgetary and curricular decisions that are made and how they are informed by stakeholder input.
- Think critically about the effectiveness of systems we utilize to communicate academic progress to families: report cards/progress reports, parent/teacher conferences and regular school-to-home correspondence.
- Work to ensure that our students more consistently have access to challenging, relevant tasks, materials, and texts that are aligned to standards and are at or above grade level.
- More effectively support all students through the college and career preparation and application process and ensure their readiness for success after high school.
- Utilize targeted, high-leverage and evidenced-based instructional practices rooted in research to support multilingual learners and students with disabilities in all classrooms.
- Regularly narrate the impactful and rigorous learning that is happening across our schools. Tell stories about academic excellence in core content areas.
- Continue to support educator understanding and implementation of standards-based grading and how to best communicate student progress to families.
- Take deliberate steps to improve educator retention- providing opportunities for leadership, investing in strong school cultures, offering competitive wages, and creating norms for a healthy work-life balance.
- Leverage the opportunity of the offshore wind industry and other regional workforce pathways to provide quality career options for our students.
- Expand high interest, after-school offerings at the elementary and middle school level beyond traditional childcare options.
- Celebrate and pursue innovation that results in increased student engagement: middle school CTE, design labs, use of AI, etc. Learn from and develop the middle school pilot to identify, document, scale the most successful elements across all middle school grades and/or districtwide.
- Continue to expand and enhance services for students experiencing significant social emotional, behavioral, and mental health needs.
- Finalize guidance for students and staff on how to report bias, microaggressions and incidents of harassment/discrimination.
- Develop a comprehensive plan to address inconsistent HVAC systems and poorly operating heating/cooling controls across our schools.
- Find additional ways to elevate the voices of students to tap into their funds of knowledge to design a more learner-centered school system.
- Examine, and consider interrupting, longstanding structures that result in systemic inequities- intra-district choice, accelerated classes, discipline policies, etc.
- Strengthen our efforts to continue recruiting and improving the retention of a more diverse team of educators in our classrooms, leading schools and running departments. Explore the possibility of designing a “grow your own” pathway for current students to return to SPS as teachers.

Final Reflection

Midway through my 4th year as superintendent, it is a privilege to serve the Salem Public Schools. I continue to learn from the experience and feedback of the students, staff, and families who we serve. Thank you in advance for your assessment and appraisal of my

performance so that I can grow in my ability to lead our schools more effectively. I appreciate the opportunity to be a part of a school district and city that is fiercely committed to the success of every child that we serve.