

Process and Timelines for New Superintendents

The evaluation process for superintendents who are new to the district or who have been promoted from within need not be substantially different from the process used for superintendents who have served more than one year in the district. Two modifications to the process are worth considering.

The first difference lies in the rating system as it applies to superintendents new to the role of superintendent. As described earlier, ratings of *Exemplary* performance will not be commonplace. They are reserved for performance on Standards or Indicators that exceed *Proficient* and are worthy of serving as a model for others. *Proficient* performance represents performance that is fully satisfactory. It, too, is meant to represent a high standard. Few new educators—be they superintendents, principals, or teachers—are expected to be *Proficient* on every indicator or even every standard in their first years of practice. For that reason, the *Needs Improvement* level of performance has a particular meaning for educators new to the role of teacher, principal, or superintendent. In these cases, *Needs Improvement* has the meaning of developing. It means that the educator's practice on a standard or indicator is not yet *Proficient*, but the educator appears to be “on track” to achieve proficiency within three years.

The second modification applies to both superintendents new to the role and those who are new to a district. It has to do with the substance of the goals established for the superintendent in the first year.

Most new superintendents in Massachusetts will be participating in the three-year New Superintendent Induction Program launched in 2010 by ESE and MASS in collaboration with MASC. The induction program supports superintendents to be effective instructional leaders, build strong relationships with their school committees and union leaders, and develop high-functioning leadership teams of district administrators and principals. They are supported to spend a considerable portion of the first year working with key stakeholders—including, of course, the school committee—to examine district needs and develop a coherent, widely understood strategy and goals for addressing them. The goals established for the superintendent's first year need to take into account the timetable for that work and, at the same time, ensure forward momentum on important ongoing improvement efforts at the school and district levels.

To that end, the following four goals can serve as starting points for the superintendent and school committee as they collaborate to develop the goals to be included in the Superintendent's Annual Plan for the superintendent's first year.¹ The first two are district improvement goals. The third is a goal related to the superintendent's own professional practice. The fourth can be a good starting point for implementing educator evaluation in the district in a fair, transparent manner.

¹ Joan Connolly, retired superintendent from Winthrop and Malden, contributed to the development of these examples. Dr. Connolly directs the New Superintendent Induction Program.

Goal 1: Effective Entry and Direction Setting. By early spring, the district will have broad agreement from key stakeholder groups about (a) the district's most critical needs, (b) the strategies and goals that will address them most effectively, and (c) the measures that will be used to assess progress.

Key Actions

1. By mid-August,² present to the school committee a written Entry Plan, including (a) types of evidence to be analyzed, (b) stakeholders to be interviewed, (c) methods for assessing instructional practice, and (d) methods for assessing district systems of support including financial management, human resources, and operations.
2. By December, complete and present a report of Entry Findings that (a) synthesizes evidence collected, (b) identifies strengths of the system and the most critical areas for improvement that require further inquiry, and (c) identifies next steps for study.
3. By March, propose key strategies to improve student learning and other district systems of support.
4. By April, collaborate with school committee to identify three to five student learning and district improvement goals.
5. Secure stakeholder feedback about engagement, awareness, and commitment to the strategies and goals.

Benchmarks

1. Presentations completed on schedule (process).
2. Goals adopted (process).
3. Results of spring survey of key stakeholder groups demonstrate engagement (85 percent), awareness (75 percent), and agreement (60 percent) (outcomes).

² This timetable applies to superintendents who begin July 1; it will need to be adapted for those starting at other times.

Goal 2: Maintaining Momentum During the Transition. Keep the district moving forward during this year's transition in leadership by working with principals and other district leaders to ensure that meaningful progress is made on critical district and school goals.

Key Actions

1. Within six weeks, complete with all principals and district administrators Steps 1 and 2 of the new Educator Evaluation Cycle (Self-Assessment; Analysis, Goal Setting, and Educator Plan Development).
2. By end of February, complete Formative Evaluation conferences with each principal and the district administrators the superintendent supervises.
3. By late spring, conduct at least three school and classroom visits to each school.³
4. By June 30, complete Summative Evaluation Reports for supervisees and analyze goal attainment.

Benchmarks

1. Completed Educator Evaluation Plans (process).
2. Log demonstrating at least three visits per school (process).
3. Analysis of Summative Evaluation Reports demonstrates meets or exceeds rating on 75 percent of principal and district administrator goals (outcome).

Goal 3: (Professional Practice) New Superintendent Induction Program. Develop skills in strategy development, data analysis, and instructional leadership by completing the first year of the New Superintendent Induction Program and earning at least *Proficient* ratings on each major assignment.

Key Actions

1. Attend eight daylong sessions.
2. Complete all assignments.
3. Consult with my assigned coach at least monthly.

Benchmarks

1. Calendar documents attendance and contact with coach (process).
2. Rubric rating on each assignment demonstrates proficiency (process and outcome).

The superintendent and school committee may consider a fourth goal. Pursuing this goal will help a district implement the new educator evaluation system at the same time as the district leadership team is strengthened in ways that will lead to improvements in teaching and learning districtwide.

³ In districts with more than 10 schools, responsibility for school visits may need to be shared with one or more assistant superintendents.

Goal 4: Fair, Effective Classroom Teacher Evaluation. By June, principals' and district administrators' ratings of classroom instruction will reflect a shared understanding of what classroom instruction entails when it is being done at the *Proficient* level.

Key Actions

1. Monitor the frequency of principal visits to classrooms and review the quality of their feedback to teachers.
2. Devote time at five leadership team meetings to viewing digital recordings of teaching and sharing conclusions about the level of practice observed.
3. During school visits, observe classrooms with the principal and share conclusions about the level of practice observed.

Benchmark

June administrator ratings of selected digital recordings of classroom instruction are comparable (outcome).