

Evaluation 2020-21 School Year
Dr. Anna Nolin, Superintendent
Natick Public Schools

This evaluation of Dr. Anna Nolin, Superintendent of Natick Public Schools, was conducted on June 30 and July 1, 2021. It includes a review of the work done during the 2020-21 school year.

Consistent with documented state procedures for evaluating school superintendents, this evaluation includes three main components:

1. Evaluation of achievements in the four district goal areas, as outlined in the district strategic plan created in August 2018.
2. Evaluation of professional practice goal.
3. Evaluation of student learning goal.
4. Evaluation of standards established by DESE for superintendent evaluation. Dr. Nolin was evaluated on seven indicators that were chosen by the School Committee in November 2020.

Introduction

To say that the 2020-21 school year was unprecedented is a true understatement. In the middle of a global pandemic, with very little guidance from the state, Dr. Noin was tasked with figuring out how to return students to school after complete closure in March 2020. The complexities were immense with many different stakeholders to consider in the process. Of course, with the very health and safety of students, families, staff, and the Natick community at risk, the stakes were incredibly high.

From the very beginning of the planning process, Dr. Nolin made her priorities clear - 1. The health and safety of students and staff was paramount. 2. In-person learning, if at all possible, was to be attempted in order to assess the well-being of Natick's most vulnerable students. With these priorities at the forefront, Dr. Nolin led the team that developed the Return to School Plan for the 2020-21 school year.

The following evaluation includes reflection and discussion of the impact of COVID-19 on the 2020-21 school year and the near constant complexities it presented for Dr. Nolin and her team. In addition, it includes an evaluation of the progress made on the district's strategic plan, for which action steps were identified for the 2020-21 school year. The work accomplished this year was significant and the School Committee appreciated the careful documentation of evidence. Importantly, the School Committee considered this evidence in the context of the pandemic in which school as we knew was completely re-invented and transformed.

District Goals

District goals are rated on the following scale: *Exceeded, Met, Significant Progress, Some Progress, Did Not Meet*

Goal Area #1 Teaching and Learning & Assessment, Accountability/Assessment and Evaluation (*excel in academic achievement, and Profile of a Natick Graduate (POG) competencies for all groups and sub groups of students*) - EXCEEDED

Overall, the committee rated Dr. Nolin as Exceeding Expectations within the first goal. The pandemic and the associated health and safety concerns necessitated the development of three separate school models - a fully remote model, a hybrid model, and a full in-person model for students receiving special education services. To operate these school models, Dr. Nolin and her team identified the essential standards for each grade level that would need to be covered. The challenge of creating these school models and identifying the essential standards was immense, but Dr. Nolin's management of the process was outstanding. The creation of the re-opening committees, both at the district level and the school level provided a process by which the various stakeholders felt included and heard. These re-opening committees continued to operate at the school level throughout the year as the school models changed and adapted. These processes were essential given the constantly shifting guidance, or lack thereof, from the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education.

Of particular note in the development of these models was the live and interactive Zoom sessions Dr. Nolin held in August as the learning models were developed. This provided the community with direct access to Dr. Nolin and a forum through which their questions could be answered. Dr. Nolin spent hours in these sessions answering questions and providing insight and information into the decision-making process. While inevitably not all families were fully satisfied with the final decisions in learning models, these sessions were invaluable in ensuring the community felt heard and acknowledged.

The committee was also impressed by the professional development opportunities provided to teachers and staff prior to the start of school. When the commissioner made the decision to delay the start of school to provide adequate preparation time, Dr. Nolin did not waste any time in putting together a thoughtful, useful, and strategic series of professional development days. In addition to essential training on all the new health and safety protocols, teachers and staff received training on tools essential to engaging students in remote learning environments and assessing the social-emotional health of students. The committee was impressed with the excellent utilization of these professional development days.

As in a typical school year, Dr. Nolin and her team continued to collect and monitor data in all learning models. Data was reviewed periodically to track student performance in both the hybrid model and the Remote Learning Academy. In addition, the data was broken down into sub-groups. The data was utilized to make and support plans and curriculum adjustments from the 2021-22 school year and was used to develop the outstanding summer learning program for

both general educational students and students receiving special education services. One member of the committee would like to see more clear communication on how and when student data is collected, when it is shared with the committee and the community, and how the data is then utilized both during the school year and in the coming school year. Other members felt that data was already collected and shared regularly with the School Committee, families and the community and that this communication was clear. Members also felt this data was utilized regularly to inform teaching and learning. Another member hoped to see more proactive collection of data rather than reactive to specific situations.

A real high note this year unrelated to COVID-19 was the significant progress made in Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion in the Natick Public Schools. The multi-pronged approach was truly impressive with so many different action steps among a wide variety of stakeholders. The staff training reached all NPS staff and students, particularly at Wilson and NHS, were engaged in the work. The development of a new social justice elective and the first-ever Equity Co-op at the high school were real highlights for high school students. The committee looks forward to expanding this work to all schools so that all students are engaged, as well as finding additional ways in which to extend this work among teachers and staff.

The committee continues to be impressed with Dr. Nolin's vision for the district and the strategic partnerships developed among town departments and with organizations throughout Natick. Those partnerships and relationships are essential to developing support for the school system and for involving key stakeholders in critical decisions.

Dr. Nolin is deeply committed to the notion that the district is a learning organization. A real strength of hers is her willingness to acknowledge the imperfections of the district and to solicit feedback, listen, learn, reflect, and make the necessary adjustments. Dr. Nolin is not afraid to have difficult conversations and to go at a problem directly. The committee feels this demonstrates real personal courage and a deep commitment to excellence. The shift in the elementary RLA model away from Edgenuity part way through the year, as well as the recent listening sessions around dyslexia, are just two examples of this courageous approach to addressing imperfections in the system.

As a whole, the committee is anxious to see progress on the Response to Intervention objective and the various action steps within it, particularly related to the effective implementation of RTI across all schools. The committee would also like to see additional progress on the ELL goals set forth within the strategic plan. One expects that a normal return to school in fall 2021 will facilitate the achievement of these objectives and accompanying action steps.

Finally, as a whole, the committee is interested to see more evidence of the impact of various trainings, programs, curriculum, etc. What was the impact of the training and have staff/families been able to implement key learnings from a particular training? What is the evidence of success? Does the impact match the intent? In addition, how does the district ensure

connection between theory and practice? Is Dr. Nolin's vision and theory at the administrative level implemented in practice at the school and classroom level?

Because of the impact of COVID-19, there were several action steps that were not accomplished within goal #1 in the strategic plan. Dr. Nolin provided the rationale that this was either because the learning models prohibited the action step or there was simply not enough time to take on the project.

One member cited Dr. Nolin's honest reflection that some action steps were unable to be completed this year as a reason to rate this goal as "significant progress." This member felt that "significant progress" was both a realistic evaluation against the goals that were agreed upon by the Committee and Dr. Nolin last fall. Other members disagreed that the rating should be downgraded because of the impact of COVID on the completion of some of the action steps given the unprecedented and unforeseen challenges Dr. Nolin had to react to in real time.

Overall, the committee was very pleased with the progress made within goal #1 for the 2020-21 school year. For reference, please note that the overall rating was "exceeds," while two members selected "met" and one member selected "significant progress."

Goal Area #2 Teaching and Learning While Nurturing Connections (*SEL - develop a systematic, developmentally appropriate SEL and healthy living framework for student learning and parent engagement and partnership*) - **EXCEEDED**

As mentioned in the introduction, Dr. Nolin placed social and emotional learning and health front and center for the 2020-21 school year. Beginning with the firm desire to return to school in person in the fall in order to be able to see and check on the district's most vulnerable students, Dr. Nolin continued her focus on social-emotional learning and health throughout the year.

While SEL could have been placed on the back burner given the physical health and safety issues faced by the district, the district instead kept the focus squarely on building relationships and developing social-emotional skills. Dr. Nolin's priorities were very clear - first we had to make sure students and staff were healthy and safe. Then we had to make sure they were ok from a social and emotional perspective. The committee applauds this approach and believes that it made a real difference for both students and staff this year.

In addition to the work done in the classroom and despite survey fatigue, the committee felt the Panorama surveys done in the winter added real value and provided a clear picture of the social emotional health of families, staff, and students in the district. The surveys provided good insight and real-time data on the health of the Natick community at a time in which the virus was surging and there was a real possibility that people may have been feeling anxious and uncertain. The committee believes this was an outstanding example of the deep commitment to social-emotional health and learning during this school year.

When it came time to return all students to school in person, full-time, Dr. Nolin again emphasized the social and emotional health of students and staff. Teachers and staff were given permission to focus on adjusting to full in person learning and building classroom culture and community rather than a strict focus on academics. She also focused on helping the RLA students who had been out of a school building for more than a year make the adjustment back to in person learning.

The committee also noted the innovative ways in which Dr. Nolin incorporated SEL this year. Of note were the “minute” meetings conducted at the elementary schools to check on students. One member noted these may have been less successful for RLA students as they were not done live, but rather by written survey. In addition, Dr. Nolin sought out grant funding to extend the “Hey NHS, KMS, WMS” work this year given the extraordinary challenges faced by students. Another specific example was the way that she worked with students in theater and other extracurricular activities. Dr. Nolin worked hard to make sure the students would have live or virtual opportunities to connect with others. And she made adjustments as the year went on in order for students to have more in-person opportunities as the pandemic allowed.

Dr. Nolin and her team also focused on the social emotional health of teachers and staff, demonstrated by their participation in an MASC presentation on SEL focused on how leaders could support teachers. The professional development at the start of the year also offered several social emotional wellness opportunities.

In general, the committee felt that Dr. Nolin has brought social and emotional learning to the forefront in the district. She is an early adopter of social and emotional well-being and her vision is having an impact on the principals, as evidenced by the goals outlined in their School Improvement Plans. Specific examples of note include the trusted adult work at the high school, the DEI work throughout the district, and the Equity Co-op event at the high school. DESE has even featured the relationship building work in the district at the state level, further demonstrating the success and impact of the approach.

The committee would like to see additional work on the effective implementation of the child study process such that it is applied evenly and equally across all schools. In addition, one member suggested administering baseline culture assessments more frequently for both students and teachers/staff. Perhaps a beginning and end of year survey? This would provide a better understanding of the culture at the schools and how students and teachers are feeling about their school culture.

Overall, the committee believes that Dr. Nolin exceeded expectations within goal area #2. For reference, please note that the overall rating was “exceeds,” while one member selected “met.”

Goal Area #3 Assessment, Accountability & Evaluation (*excel in strategic planning and financial management*) - **EXCEEDED**

The committee evaluated the work on goal #3 by considering its two main components: operations and budget.

With regard to operations, the committee evaluated the numerous and complex district and building-based operations put in place to address COVID-19 health and safety issues. Dr. Nolin was extraordinarily proactive in preparing the buildings for students to return to school in fall 2020. The issues that plagued other districts, including HVAC upgrades, were non-issues in Natick because of Dr. Nolin's proactive planning. Working closely with former facilities director John Gadson, Dr. Nolin ordered plexiglass for classrooms last June. She then spent the summer upgrading the HVAC systems in all buildings to ensure the systems could filter and circulate air per COVID health regulations. As a result, there were no significant concerns with HVAC and it did not serve as a roadblock to returning students to the buildings in the fall.

The return to learn plans at each school were incredibly detailed on school operations and as one member pointed out, this was an area in which school councils played an important role for each school. Dr. Nolin also excelled in the areas of food distribution and technology distribution such that all families had access to the technology they needed as well as breakfast and lunch every day.

The committee did want to point out the incredible work that was done with regard to COVID-19 contact tracing, RUVNA, and the implementation of the pool testing program. The logistics and the work it took to implement these systems was incredible and must be commended. The pool testing program was a huge undertaking as the state-assigned partner had never operated such a program in a school setting before and truly did not have a system that was fully functional or integrated. Nonetheless, Dr. Nolin persisted. Not only did she get the program up and running, but she did it within the state program, meaning that it did not cost Natick anything.

With regard to the budget, the committee acknowledged that the budget process was incredibly smooth this year. Dr. Nolin and her team were incredibly committed to working with town partners to ensure they understood the needs of the school system. The committee is grateful that this year, the town partners were also committed to meeting the needs of the school district and to developing creative solutions to the budget shortfall. Other commendable activities from this year include: a thoughtful and careful MUNIS analysis, follow through and completion of a cumbersome student activities audit, and careful attention and documentation of impact from Medicare changes.

Dr. Nolin also developed a strong relationship with the Finance Committee and the Education Sub-Committee. Information was provided in a timely manner and all questions were answered. The committee wanted to acknowledge Dr. Nolin's clear commitment to transparency in the budget process. This transparency has been noted by current members of FinCom who have indicated Dr. Nolin has brought a "breath of fresh air" to the budgeting process and she deserves credit for this commitment to transparency. The transparency page on the district

website demonstrates a continued commitment to sharing all the details of the budget and information from the Finance Committee meetings. It also provides easy access to all members of the community to this important budget information.

Dr. Nolin has a real commitment to lessening the burden on the Natick taxpayer and accessing any funding that may be available to the district. She and her team applied for and won many grants this year, which were used to fund previously budgeted programs. This allowed the district to again pre-pay a portion of special education costs, which provides flexibility for the district to adapt to any unforeseen needs in the 2021-22 school year. Dr. Nolin understands what the dollar means for families in Natick, some of whom are just getting by. This commitment to carefully managing resources, while also making sure families have what they need (technology, food, art supplies) is core to her social justice mission. The school committee and the Natick community can be confident that we are getting a lot of bang for our buck.

The committee did want to acknowledge Dr. Nolin's incredible relationship with the EAN. Their support, both in giving up their COLA last summer and working collaboratively throughout negotiations this year, is a real bright spot in Natick. The support of the union allows the district to manage its budget and to have difficult conversations when necessary. Without this collaborative partnership, the district would have been in a much more difficult position, both from an operations and a budget standpoint.

This goal would not be complete without acknowledging the opening of the new Kennedy Middle School in January 2021. The building opened on time, despite the pandemic. The committee recognizes the incredible amount of work it takes to design, build, and manage the opening of a new building. It is work that is above and beyond the normal everyday activities of a superintendent. We applaud Dr. Nolin for the planning and the training it took to move staff into the new building over winter break and to open the building to students in January, exactly according to plan.

The committee would like to see continued work on ensuring the budget presentations are clear, concise, and accurate. All numbers should be presented in a clear way such that the numbers tie out within and across budget presentations and that year over year changes are carefully communicated. There are certain charts that should be brought to the forefront with better explanation. An additional recommended improvement includes a regular presentation of the quarterly budget report.

The committee agreed upon a rating of "exceeds expectations" with one member assigning a rating of "significant progress." The member assigned a rating of "significant progress" citing that the undertaking of the meritorious budget process, which seeks to improve the process and utilize best practices, is an acknowledgement by the district that there is room for improvement within the budget process. This member also felt that there was confusion around the 1% COLA restoration that happened in the fall and differences in how the expense categories were listed in different documents presented to the School Committee. Please note that these concerns

were limited to a single member and did not reflect the opinion of the other members. Other members who objected to these concerns noted that district reporting flexibility is hampered by limited access to MUNIS and dependent upon the degree to which town officials are collaborative.

The committee overall assigns a rating of exceeds expectations given the outstanding work described above.

Goal Area #4 Nurturing Connections (*establish communication procedures and philosophy that build trust, transparency and engagement*) - **EXCEEDED**

This school year was immensely challenging from a communications perspective. With the constantly changing learning models and requirements for community input and feedback, Dr. Nolin and team were reaching out to families, staff, town partners, and community members constantly. The focus on process for regular communications, including emails, standing meetings, and expectations for communications served the district well. Dr. Nolin is to be commended for putting these systems in place to facilitate regular communication with a diverse group of stakeholders.

The NPS Engage email system put in place last year at the start of the pandemic served the district well in communicating with families given the volume of district-wide communications that needed to be shared at all levels. The YouTube presentations in the middle of the year were fantastic as they provided an opportunity for families to hear directly from administrators and to provide real-time, interactive feedback as well as receive answers to questions. This is a practice that should be continued, as should the virtual open houses and parent/teacher conferences. All of these features expanded access to these opportunities to a larger group of parents and guardians.

Dr. Nolin has a real talent for engaging with families in a meaningful way. She responds to every email and provides real opportunities for families to engage in the work of the district. She is extremely accessible, which gives families a real sense that the superintendent is listening and responding to their feedback and concerns. There is some concern that Dr. Nolin is doing too much of the communications herself and the committee wonders if additional communication support is necessary given Ms. Maryland's changing role in the central office.

The survey conducted on communications was favorable for the district. However, it was noted that that 58% of families feel the school values their opinion. Perhaps there is more explanation to be done as to why that number is not higher.

There is always work to be done on communications. The committee would like to explore a focus on school-based communications. While families indicate they appreciate and desire a single email, the committee worries that school-based communications (eblasts, etc.) are lost in

the larger district email given the number of clicks required to access the school eblasts and the volume of districtwide information shared.

Perhaps there is a happy medium to be explored so that families feel connected to their school and principal, receive the school-based information in a timely fashion, but also can quickly read the district wide news. For example, the high school sends an email every Sunday night, while the other schools do not. There was also some concern that toward the end of the year, the NPS Engage emails were delivered very late on Friday evenings, likely not an ideal time to ensure families read the information.

One significant accomplishment this year was the commitment to providing translated information to families in the district. This was first done through a group of committed volunteers to ensure families understood the Return to School plans. The utilization of new translation services further demonstrated the commitment to ensuring all families could access information coming from the district and the schools.

The transition to PowerSchool was significant given that families needed to take specific action to ensure they were enrolled in the system. In addition, they were asked to do so in the middle of the pandemic. The communication around PowerSchool was clear and the website with information and instructions was useful. The committee looks forward to continued deployment of the PowerSchool suite of tools.

The committee is also interested to know more about the impact of the communications. Not only gathering data on number of clicks, etc. but also on how families are responding to and acting upon the information provided.

Overall, Dr. Nolin excels at communication and works very hard to communicate clearly with all key stakeholders in the district. The majority of the committee rated Dr. Nolin with “exceeds expectations” for this goal while one member rated her “significant progress.”

Student Learning Goal - EXCEEDED

As described above, Dr. Nolin excelled in creating operational systems in the schools and district wide that allowed students and staff to attend school in person throughout the entire school year. She worked tirelessly with the Natick Board of Health to implement, revise, and update the health and safety standards as the conditions of the pandemic changed. Dr. Nolin was proactive in her actions, which allowed her and the district to avoid the challenges that hampered other districts in the state. The re-opening committees ensured that key stakeholders were involved in the process and felt heard. Dr. Nolin addressed not only the health and safety operational issues, but also developed academic learning plans for the remote, hybrid, and full in-person learning models. Of note, Dr. Nolin consistently has the same learning goals as the principals to ensure consistency across the district. The committee unanimously agreed on the Exceeded rating.

Professional Practice Goal - EXCEEDED

Dr. Nolin completed the New Superintendent's Induction program and successfully renewed her license. While Dr. Nolin initially (September 2020) was not certain the program could advance her professionally, the program did pivot to directly address issues superintendents were facing related to the pandemic. As in past years, Dr. Nolin again presented to the group on innovation and teaming. The majority of the committee felt this warranted a rating of "exceeds" while one member rated this goal as "met."

The committee would be interested to know if Dr. Nolin might pursue the additional professional practice goal she put forward in November 2020 prior to the revamp of the new superintendent's program.

Dr. Nolin is a true teacher and continues to share her expertise through MASS/Teacher's 21 and Boston College's doctoral programs. The committee is also pleased with her service on the committees and boards throughout the state and regionally as it brings knowledge and information back to the district that can be useful.

Standards/Indicators - 7 Indicators Selected for Evaluation in the 2020-21 School Year Exemplary, Proficient, Needs Improvement, and Unsatisfactory

Standard 1: Instructional Leadership

I-A: Curriculum: EXEMPLARY/PROFICIENT

Ensures that all instructional staff design effective and rigorous standards-based units of instruction consisting of well-structured lessons with measurable outcomes.

The complexity of curriculum implementation in the 2020-21 school year was immense. The district deployed three different learning models (RLA, hybrid, full in-person) and identified the key curriculum elements that needed to be addressed within those models. Given the transformed educational model, it was clear that the curriculum had to be adapted and revised.

Dr. Nolin and her team did an incredible job deploying the three models. In addition, she adapted the models as the year unfolded both to respond to the actual experience of students and teachers, as well as the demands of DESE. Changes and tweaks were made consistently throughout the year and implemented quickly. This was particularly evident at the high school level when changes were made mid-year to provide more structure and engagement to the remote week based upon family and student feedback. The committee recognizes that the typical methods for curriculum oversight were not available in the constrained COVID-19 environment in which we were seeking to limit contact across cohorts and classrooms. One committee member wondered if feedback from staff on how the PLCs work could be helpful.

As mentioned earlier, Dr. Nolin does not shy away from challenges and appreciates that there are imperfections in the district that should be addressed and rectified. She should be commended for having those difficult discussions directly with families.

The district has identified a few areas for improvement, including dyslexia/literacy, RTI, and English/writing at the high school. The committee looks forward to learning more about how the district plans to address these challenges given the feedback already received from families, the audit work, and the discussions with staff this year.

The committee was split on the rating with three indicating Exemplary and three indicating Proficient (one member was not present when the committee evaluated this indicator.) The proficient rating was assigned given the mention of “empowering administrators” contained in the “exemplary” rating rubric. The committee very much views Dr. Nolin as an expert in curriculum development. Given the staffing changes of over the past few years, she has often been required to step back into this “lead curriculum” role. The committee believes that given Dr. Nolin’s position as superintendent, we would like to see more “empowering administrators” to take on this difficult curriculum work and to have the difficult conversations. Some of us believe that Dr. Nolin is “doing too much” and we would like to see her start to ease herself out of this leading role in curriculum development, adjustment, and revision and into a role that includes more delegation. The members who rated Dr. Nolin “exemplary” believe that she does/did empower administrators, but for various reasons, was required to be more personally involved than would normally be expected. This may have been because of the unique circumstances of the year, as well as Dr. Nolin’s ongoing efforts to build her own leadership team in the central office as a new superintendent.

I-E: Data-Informed Decision Making: EXEMPLARY

Uses multiple sources of evidence related to student learning—including state, district, and school assessment results and growth data—to inform school and district goals and improve organizational performance, educator effectiveness, and student learning.

It is clear from the presentations and the discussions of revisions to programs and plans for future adjustments that Dr. Nolin takes data very seriously. Data is collected from multiple sources and utilized to make mid-year adjustments and to plan for future year budgets. The commitment to utilization of the Schoolzilla product in the future speaks to Dr. Nolin’s commitment to sharing data and information more transparently with families. It will also create a platform by which teachers and staff will be able to more easily access all the data that exists for a particular student and make adjustments to learning and support structures.

The majority of the committee rated Dr. Nolin as Exemplary while one member rated her Proficient, citing the language in the rubric provided by the state within this indicator: “regularly monitors and shares progress with the community” about the data that is collected. The member suggested that places like the School Councils (similar to the Space Study) and School Committee meetings could be an example of where to improve data sharing. Other members felt that while involving the School Councils as a way to share information may have some

value, the majority believes Dr. Nolin does an outstanding job of sharing information with the public.

Standard 2: Management and Operations

II-A: Environment: EXEMPLARY

Develops and executes effective plans, procedures, routines, and operational systems to address a full range of safety, health, emotional, and social needs.

As discussed earlier in this evaluation, Dr. Nolin excelled in developing effective plans, operations, procedures, and routines to address the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on school operations. Key stakeholders were involved in the development of plans, information was shared with families so they would understand the systems that would be in place in school buildings and in remote learning, and adjustments were made as the year unfolded.

Beyond the pandemic operations, the development of the HR Workflow document was cited as excellent and effective.

The committee unanimously agreed on the Exemplary rating.

II-E: Fiscal Systems: EXEMPLARY

Develops a budget that supports the district's vision, mission, and goals; allocates and manages expenditures consistent with district- and school-level goals and available resources.

The majority of the committee rated Dr. Nolin Exemplary in the area of fiscal systems. This rating was applied for several reasons. The committee felt Dr. Nolin's commitment to transparency is exceptional, as evidenced by the transparency webpage, the discussions with the Finance Committee, the budget presentations and hearings, and the communication with town partners, town meeting members, and the Natick community.

In addition, Dr. Nolin was committed to a prudent use of town funds, seeking outside funding sources and support when possible. Numerous grants were applied for and obtained, which allowed the town allocation to go toward funding some expenses in FY22, thereby easing the budget shortfall. In addition, Dr. Nolin stood up the state pool testing program, which while incredibly difficult operationally, meant that the program was entirely funded by the state, rather than town funds, NPS families, or private fundraising.

The FY22 budget process was incredibly smooth and Dr. Nolin worked successfully with town partners to secure a budget that will support the students and staff of the Natick Public Schools as we emerge from the pandemic. Together, the team identified creative ways in which to close the budget shortfall and ensure the needs of the district were met.

One member did assign a "needs improvement" in this indicator. This rating was assigned for a few different reasons. One was the discussion of the ASAP salary scale adjustment that

occurred outside of the budget cycle. While Dr. Nolin provided a rationale for the timing, this member felt strongly this conversation should have occurred during the FY22 budget discussion. Other members disagreed with this assessment, noting Dr. Nolin's rationale made sense given the uncertainty of the budget situation in February.

The member also felt that the rationale for budget items ultimately not funded should be more clearly communicated to community members. This would avoid any miscommunication from principals and staff to the community about why certain items are not funded. Various members disagreed with this assertion, noting that the budget is discussed at several School Committee meetings and the items funded and not funded are shared, discussed, and analyzed. The member also felt that clearer communication around the ESSER III proposal was warranted given the significant funding proposal. Other members felt that Dr. Nolin handled ESSER II communication exceptionally well.

Finally, the member would like to see more reporting at School Committee meeting on the expenditure of the budget in the form of regular quarterly reports. According to the member, more time is spent on the formation of the budget, but less time is spent on how the budget is expended throughout the year. In addition, there is continued desire for more clarity on the budget presentations with continuity and tie-outs of numbers across budget presentations.

Standard 3: Family and Community Engagement

III-C: Communication: EXEMPLARY

Engages in regular, two-way, culturally proficient communication with families and community stakeholders about student learning and performance.

The committee rated Dr. Nolin exemplary in communication. The commitment to translating information to reach all families, as well as utilization of a variety of forms of communication, ensured families had access to the information they needed, especially during a school year when families needed to make many different choices. There were many examples of meaningful two way communication in which the district provided information and families could ask questions and provide feedback.

The one question the committee has is that while the email communications have been streamlined, there has been a loss of communication with the school and principal directly and there is worry that the school eblasts are lost within the district wide communication.

The committee unanimously agreed on the Exemplary rating.

Standard 4: Professional Culture

IV-B. Cultural Proficiency: EXEMPLARY

Ensures that policies and practices enable staff members and students to interact effectively in a culturally diverse environment in which students' backgrounds, identities, strengths, and challenges are respected.

As shared earlier in this evaluation document, Dr. Nolin and her team excelled in the area of cultural proficiency this year. It was clear that Dr. Nolin's vision of engaging students and staff in training and learning was implemented at the school level. In addition, there were opportunities for administrators to engage in training and practice to elevate their cultural proficiency. The trainings with Kalise Wornum and the collaboration with Melissa Patrick are of particular note. Dr. Nolin truly models the practice of cultural proficiency with her engagement in community groups in Natick and her relationship building with town partners.

The committee recognizes Dr. Nolin for her work on the Town of Natick's Equity Task Force, her participation in Influence 100, and her participation on the DESE board for diversity, equity, and inclusion. Dr. Nolin should also be commended for her commitment to a more inclusive district calendar that recognizes the diversity of the school community. Finally, the work with students, particularly at the high school through the work of trusted adult and the Equity Co-op forum demonstrates a commitment to engaging students in this important work.

The committee unanimously agreed on the Exemplary rating.

IV-D: Continuous Learning: EXEMPLARY

Develops and nurtures a culture in which staff members are reflective about their practice and use student data, current research, best practices, and theory to continuously adapt practice and achieve improved results. Models these behaviors in his or her own practice.

The 2020-21 school year has been one of continuous learning and Dr. Nolin has embraced the challenges that come with this type of year. Throughout the year, Dr. Nolin adapted the curriculum and the learning models based upon the experience of students and the feedback from families. This was especially true for the move away from elementary use of Edgenuity early in the school year.

These adjustments required close collaboration and partnership with the EAN and we feel fortunate that Dr. Nolin had built such a strong relationship with the unions so as to facilitate these adjustments. Student data played a strong role in the adjustments to learning models made during the spring, the development of the summer learning program, and the proposal for the ESSER III spending to support learning in the 2021-22 school year.

Not only did Dr. Nolin use data and reflection to make adjustments during the year, but she held a series of end of year meetings to capture the positives of this pandemic year that we wish to carry forward,, as well as those practices we would like to leave behind with the pandemic. To capture this learning at the end of this year is critical as we begin planning for school post-pandemic.

The committee unanimously agreed on the Exemplary rating.

Conclusion

The School Committee is extraordinarily pleased with Dr. Nolin's performance as superintendent this school year. She was charged with a seemingly impossible task - reinventing school in the face of a global pandemic. With foresight, quick action, proactive strategies, and a deep commitment to both the physical and social-emotional health of students and staff, she kept Natick Public School students in school all year. She did this by bringing Natick Public School families and the entire Natick community along with her. With her leadership, we avoided the strife and anxiety that enveloped other towns and created distress and animosity. With solid partnerships and careful planning, Dr. Nolin has positioned the Natick Public Schools with the resources needed to assist our students, staff, and families in recovering from the impact of this global pandemic on learning. We look forward to a positive and productive 2021-22 school year.