



**SUMMATIVE EVALUATION:  
DR. SARA AHERN, SUPERINTENDENT**

This evaluation was conducted by the Franklin School Committee, in accordance with the guidelines set forth by the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE) and Massachusetts Association of School Committees (MASC). The evaluation model from DESE requires superintendents to follow an evaluation process that is goal-focused (i.e. assessing progress toward one professional practice goal, one student learning goal, and district improvement goals) and also assesses progress toward the defined state-wide standards/ indicators that describe categories of knowledge, skills, and performance relative to the work of superintendents in Massachusetts. The evaluation process consists of five steps:

1. Self-assessment
2. Analysis, goal-setting, and plan development
3. Implementation of the plan
4. Formative assessment/ evaluation
5. Summative evaluation

Dr. Ahern has completed steps 1-4, with the School Committee's support, feedback, and approval along the way. This summative evaluation incorporates the superintendent's self-assessment of and evidence for the agreed upon goals and standards/ indicators. School Committee members have independently reviewed and considered that information, and, integrating their own observations, they completed their individual evaluations of the superintendent. In a public meeting, seven individual evaluations were compiled by the superintendent evaluation subcommittee into this composite evaluation, which is discussed and voted upon (in public meeting) as the final evaluation of the superintendent.

## OVERVIEW

This year continued to be a year of unprecedented challenges for the students and educators of Franklin – and our nation. In some ways, 2021-22 was more demanding than the previous year’s “survival mode,” because the district had to balance between “evolving pandemic mode” and “getting back to [a new] normal.” In her leadership, Dr. Ahern exhibited the utmost professionalism and high standard of excellence in her administration of the district business. Always prepared, relying on data-based decisions, Dr. Ahern demonstrated thoughtful, methodical, compassionate, and ethical decision-making.

A major focus of the last year was the assessment and monitoring of the social-emotional and academic status of students and staff who experienced disconnection, trauma, learning loss, and exhaustion during the pandemic. The district’s commitment to diversity, equity, and inclusion continued to be a priority as the community wrestled with who we want to be as a people. Dr. Ahern accepted that challenge and embraced that goal with sensitivity and purposeful action.

After five years as the Superintendent of the Franklin Public Schools, Dr. Ahern is leaving to lead a district closer to home. Under her leadership, the Franklin Public Schools have flourished. She has consistently exhibited courage and aplomb in the face of challenges, and she has always maintained a focus on doing the right thing for our students and our school community as a whole. The students, faculty & staff, citizens of Franklin, and this Committee thank her for her service and wish her well in her new role.

PERFORMANCE GOALS RATING: **MET**

FOCUS INDICATORS RATING: **PROFICIENT**

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FINAL COMPOSITE RATING: **PROFICIENT**

<b>GOAL RATINGS</b>
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During the spring of 2022, the seven Franklin School Committee members rated Superintendent Ahern's progress on the four District Improvement Goals, two personal goals (one student learning and one professional practice), and the performance indicators as aligned with the Superintendent's Evaluation rubric. Individual ratings were compiled and averaged to obtain one group rating for each, detailed in the tables below:

<b>PERFORMANCE GOALS: average ratings</b>	
Professional Practice Goal	Met
Student Learning Goal	Met
Social-Emotional Well-Being of Students and Staff	Met
Engaging and Rigorous curriculum	Met
High-Quality Instruction to Meet the Academic & SEL Needs of Each Learner	Significant Progress
Effective Two-Way Communication to Support Student Learning	Met

<b>FOCUS INDICATORS: average ratings</b>	
1-A: Curriculum	Proficient
1-B: Instruction	Proficient
2-D: Laws, Ethics, and Policies	Exemplary
2-E: Fiscal Systems	Exemplary
3-A: Engagement	Proficient
4-E: Shared Vision	Proficient

<b>PERFORMANCE GOALS</b>
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**1) PROFESSIONAL PRACTICE GOAL**

For the 2020-2022 school years, Dr. Ahern will increase collaboration and communication skills with stakeholders—in particular the students, families, faculty/staff, administrative team, and the School Committee of Franklin Public Schools—to support the SEL and academic needs of our students as identified in the Franklin Public Schools’ Portrait of a Graduate. This will be evident by developing and implementing effective communication and collaboration methods in virtual and in-person environments that engage students, families, and faculty/staff in a meaningful and consistent manner. The outcome will be a new District Strategy for Improvement document for 2022-2025. **Evaluation Rating: GOAL MET**

**2) STUDENT LEARNING GOAL**

For the 2020-2022 school years, Dr. Ahern will support the students’ development of SEL skills by working with the administrative team and Social-Emotional Learning Committee to identify the District’s current implementation of Tiered Supports and build a recommended budget plan to better support the implementation of a tiered model for SEL. Dr. Ahern will also attend to the SEL well-being of students (indirectly) by attending to the professional well-being of faculty and staff by gathering and acting upon perception data relative to staff professional well-being. **Evaluation Rating: GOAL MET**

**3) DISTRICT IMPROVEMENT GOAL: SOCIAL-EMOTIONAL WELL-BEING OF STUDENTS AND STAFF**

To help students develop connections to school, support positive behaviors and increase academic achievement, the FPS will enhance programs and practices, and promote the well-being of staff, in order to enable each student to acquire the knowledge, attitudes and skills associated with the core competencies for social-emotional learning. **Evaluation Rating: GOAL MET**

**4) DISTRICT IMPROVEMENT GOAL: ENGAGING AND RIGOROUS CURRICULUM**

To ensure that students are provided with rigorous learning opportunities that foster the development of knowledge, skills and dispositions they will need in their future college, career and civic endeavors, the FPS will offer an engaging and rigorous curriculum that focuses on preparing students for a rapidly changing, technologically advanced, globally interdependent future. **Evaluation Rating: GOAL MET**

**5) DISTRICT IMPROVEMENT GOAL: HIGH-QUALITY INSTRUCTION TO MEET THE ACADEMIC AND SEL NEEDS OF EACH LEARNER**

To ensure that each student is supported and challenged to reach their full potential, the FPS will align curriculum, instructional practices, and varied assessment opportunities to personalize learning and meet individual needs. **Evaluation Rating: SIGNIFICANT PROGRESS**

**6) EFFECTIVE TWO-WAY COMMUNICATION TO SUPPORT STUDENT LEARNING**

To ensure that all stakeholders are engaged with the school community in support of student achievement, the FPS will seek to enhance opportunities for two-way communication in between and among all students, families, staff, administrators and the community. **Evaluation Rating: GOAL MET**

<b>FOCUS INDICATORS</b>
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**1-A – CURRICULUM:** Monitors and assesses progress across all schools and content areas to ensure that all instructional staff implement effective and rigorous standards-based units of instruction consisting of well-structured lessons with measurable outcomes. **Evaluation Rating: PROFICIENT**

**1-B – INSTRUCTION:** Monitors and supports principals and instructional staff through observations and feedback to ensure that instructional practice in all settings reflects high expectations regarding content and quality of effort and work, engaging all students and personalized to accommodate diverse learning styles, needs, interests and levels of readiness. **Evaluation Rating: PROFICIENT**

**2-D - LAWS, ETHICS, AND POLICIES:** Understands and complies with state and federal laws and mandates, school committee policies, collective bargaining agreements and ethical guidelines and provides the resources and support to ensure district-wide compliance. **Evaluation Rating: EXEMPLARY**

**2-E: – FISCAL SYSTEMS:** Develops a budget that supports the district’s vision, mission and goals; allocates and manages expenditures consistent with district-level goals and available resources and effectively communicates budget rationale to staff, community members, municipal stakeholders, and the school committee. Provides regular updates on implementation of the budget. **Evaluation Rating: EXEMPLARY**

**3-A - ENGAGEMENT:** Engages in regular, two-way, culturally proficient communication with families and community stakeholders about student learning and performance, that is provided in multiple formats and reflects understanding of and respect for different families’ home languages, culture and values. **Evaluation Rating: PROFICIENT**

**4-E - SHARED VISION:** Continuously engages all stakeholders in the creation of (or commitment to) a shared educational vision focused on student preparation for college and career readiness, civic engagement, community contributions and responsible citizenship. **Evaluation Rating: PROFICIENT**

## COMMENDATIONS

- The Superintendent provided regular, clear communication surrounding the impact of COVID-19 to the district (including protocols, data, and masking), articulated across multiple media channels. Communication was easily digestible, allowing all members to understand the current situation and make their own informed decisions.
- Communications shifted from pre-pandemic building-based to more district-led during the pandemic and Dr. Ahern flexibly adapted to this new way of communicating. This year, Dr. Ahern is leading the communications shift back to more building-based, but has accumulated valuable lessons to use going forward.
- Introduction of the “zoom” webinar style for meetings allowed for both a wider audience and a safer environment that also complied with Open Meeting Law.
- Dr. Ahern represented herself with the utmost professionalism and high standard of excellence: always prepared and working collaboratively in a thoughtful, methodical, and compassionate manner.
- The Superintendent made actionable changes following negative incidents during an October SC meeting and at an FHS spring sporting event. These events became one-off events, in large part due to these changes.
- Under the direction of Dr. Ahern, the district accomplished curricular, cultural, and systematic progress in Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion goals.
- Dr. Ahern represented FPS nobly while serving on the community-based Franklin Freedom Team.
- The district provided excellent programs for parents/students around significant cultural/societal challenges.
- All reports and updates were offered in polished, comprehensive, and informative presentations.
- Dr. Ahern engages frequently and effectively with the Joint PCCs and admin and staff.
- Social Emotional Learning has clearly been a priority under her tenure; the superintendent led commendable work around SEL related data, assessment, budget items, and communications.
- The district implemented the mental health screening tool for grades 8 & 10 to address SEL concerns.
- Under her leadership, the district is working towards implementing a robust and unified advisory program across all middle schools and at the high school.
- The Superintendent always made an effort to acknowledge and appreciate faculty & staff. The “Superintendent’s Report” was often filled with updates about staff members securing new grant funding, completing advanced degrees, or referencing upcoming appreciation weeks.
- The Superintendent often sent out community-wide emails whenever sensitive events occurred in our community or country. Often, these emails would include resources to help community members in need.
- Introduction of the BRYT Bridge for Resilient Youth in Transition model will have a significant impact on SEL support. The effort to secure this program through ESSER funding allows the community to discover the benefits without working it into the operating budget.
- Dr. Ahern effectively identified areas of need and necessary positions and managed the budget to support student needs.

### COMMENDATIONS, continued

- Dr. Ahern's efforts to support the social emotional well-being of students and staff during the pandemic has been commendable.
- Under her leadership, professional development has moved towards more “voice and choice” (teacher-designed and -led) that honors educators’ professionalism, differing needs, and their skills while providing opportunities for them to be teacher leaders.
- Dr. Ahern supported community-based committees in their work towards student and staff well-being (i.e. School Wellness Advisory Committee, Substance Abuse Task Force).
- The district implemented a thoughtful process for considering curriculum adoption at the elementary level.
- The district administration initiated deep and meaningful work on vertical alignment of curriculum.
- The community partnerships built (i.e. SAFE Coalition, Franklin Freedom Team, Hockomock YMCA, Wellesley Centers for Women, Franklin Cultural District, William James College) provided invaluable resources and opportunities for the district.
- The “Budget Flyer” was a terrific resource in the ongoing budgetary process. The visual provided a clear understanding of the funding process, the district’s priorities, and the fiscal concerns. Furthermore, the QR code allowed for a more detailed and nuanced look at the FY 23 budget for interested parties.
- The Superintendent is consistently working towards better and more productive policies while ensuring that all policy revisions are meeting state legal and ethical requirements.
- Dr. Ahern’s presentation at the Joint Budget Subcommittee was an effective start to the budgetary process and led to a smooth budget hearing.
- The Superintendent maintained a consistent focus on the long-term spending of the CARES and ESSER funding. Developing a roadmap of covid relief funding and priorities was an effective method for ensuring all funds are spent thoughtfully and in a timely manner.
- The adoption of the Portrait of a Graduate drove nearly every policy, curricular, and budgetary decision, ensuring a clear focus on the future of our students and a shared vision for staff and faculty and admin.
- The superintendent is dedicated to working closely with school committee subcommittees.

### AREAS FOR CONTINUED DISTRICT FOCUS

*As this is Dr. Ahern’s last year as Superintendent of Franklin Public Schools, the recommendations below are based on her past performance but centered upon the district’s future growth under new leadership.*

- Consider deploying applications that integrate with phone calendars to serve as reminders to citizens and students and parents to encourage participation in events.
- Continue to provide opportunities for staff to express views in a safe and open manner with regard to actions that affect them directly or indirectly.
- District families and citizens are very supportive of the DEI work. CONTINUE so that Franklin can become a model for districts facing issues and dealing with them, then moving towards authentic culture change.

- Start the process of updating the district's Strategy for Improvement.
- Continue to prioritize counselors, social workers, and support staff who interact directly with students, especially as they weather the trauma of the pandemic and the general uncertainty of our country and modern life.
- Continue to work to reduce class sizes so that teachers and students can form more secure and authentic relationships.
- Whenever possible, ensure that topics and details of professional development are secured well in advance of the planned date. Please continue to share PD content/areas of focus with the School Committee and community.
- Initiating thoughtful and regular communication within and between departments at the high school will provide more consistency about guaranteed curriculum *and* academic expectations. Note: **more** doesn't mean better, and collaboration can help teachers avoid burnout.
- Be mindful about the number of administrative positions vs forward facing positions to avoid a top-heavy management structure.
- Consider how to utilize the experience and expertise of the high school department heads for driving/leading curriculum, while also making sure every decision is not top-down.
- Continue the district work of formalizing and rolling out of MTSS (multi-tiered system of supports), including restorative practices.
- When soliciting community feedback, make all efforts to avoid optics of preordained decisions. Whenever community input is requested but not acted upon, it is wise to provide transparent explanations for the decisions, thereby ensuring community members trust their voices were heard.