



Town of Swansea, Massachusetts

SWANSEA SCHOOL COMMITTEE
SCHOOL ADMINISTRATION BUILDING
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Member
Policy Sub-Committee
Budget Sub-Committee
Self-Evaluation Sub-Committee

2016-2017 Swansea School Committee Self-Evaluation Summative Report

Submitted at January 23, 2017 School Committee Meeting

Scoring is done as follows:

1 — Strongly agree

2 — Agree

3 — Disagree

4 — Don't know

Governance

The school committee is a governing body, charged with setting the educational goals and objectives for the school system, adopting policies that enable the administration to achieve these goals and objectives, adopting a budget to provide necessary resources, the hiring and evaluation of the superintendent, and the ongoing review and evaluation of the school system's performance in fulfilling its mission.

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| 1. The committee's policies are clear and up-to-date. | 1.0 |
| 2. The committee has adopted a mission statement. | 1.0 |
| 3. The committee regularly evaluates its progress relative to the goals and objectives that have been adopted. | 1.6 |
| 4. The committee refrains from involvement in the administration of the school system. | 1.0 |
| 5. The committee members take part in educational workshops and conferences to help them make informed decisions. | 2.2 |

Comments:

Overall, the committee feels that the Governance aspect of our self-evaluation is in good standing. The one area that the committee feels could be improved is us all taking part in educational workshops and conferences to help us all make informed decisions, including some who express a desire to but work schedule has not allowed for.

Operations

Any group or team functions best when the norms, rules and dynamics are spelled out, easily understood, and agreed upon. Aside from certain Massachusetts General Laws and Robert's Rules of Order, the school committee generally develops its own ways of doing things. City charters and town by-laws may also provide direction for the committee. The more that is discussed up-front, the smoother the process for making decisions can be.

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| 1. Roles of committee officers are defined in committee policy and understood by all members. | 1.0 |
| 2. New members receive introductory training and orientation when they join the committee. | 1.4 |
| 3. Procedures and protocols for committee operations are published and understood. | 2.2 |

Comments:

Overall, the committee feels that the Operations aspect of our self-evaluation is in good shape. However, multiple members note lack of a published procedure and protocol for committee operations.

Member Relations

Group dynamics and teamwork are an extremely important part of school committee success. Members can have strong opinions on issues yet still remain open-minded and willing to work out differences. How committee members treat each other goes a long way in affecting the ultimate success of the committee as a whole and as individuals.

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| 1. Members treat each other with courtesy and respect. | 1.4 |
| 2. All members are encouraged to voice opinions and take positions on issues. | 1.0 |
| 3. Members respect the will of the majority and support decisions once they are made. | 1.0 |
| 4. Members share pertinent information with each other to prevent surprises and promote informed decision making. | 1.4 |
| 5. Members "do their homework" and come prepared to make decisions. | 1.8 |
| 6. Members understand the role of the individual as part of the whole group. | 1.4 |

Comments:

Overall, the committee feels that the Member Relations aspect of our self-evaluation is strong. A perfect 1.0 on questions two and three are something to be proud of.

Committee/Superintendent Relations

The superintendent is a critical member of the management team, implementing school committee policies and leading the school system in the direction set by the school committee. The relationship between the committee and the superintendent is an area that deserves the utmost attention and care.

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| 1. The committee regularly evaluates the superintendent using a mutually agreed-upon process. | 1.0 |
| 2. The types and frequency of communications are agreed to in advance. | 1.0 |
| 3. The superintendent is accessible to committee members. | 1.0 |
| 4. Committee members contact the superintendent when seeking information. | 1.2 |
| 5. The superintendent informs the committee of major personnel decisions. | 1.0 |
| 5. The superintendent and committee treat each other with mutual respect and professionalism. | 1.0 |
| 6. Both the committee and the superintendent operate on a "no-surprises" model. | 1.0 |

Comments:

Overall, the committee feels that the Committee/Superintendent Relations aspect of our self-evaluation is the strongest point of the committee. Aside from a single "Agree" on question four, this section scored a 1 rating across the board from every member. Given that we have a new Superintendent since our last annual self-evaluation, it is wonderful to see that this area remains a strength. This shows that there is a mutual respect, professionalism, and inherent trust between the School Committee and the Superintendent.

Strategic Planning and Fiscal Management

The school committee is accountable to the community for the responsible management of the school system's finances. It is also responsible for providing the resources necessary to enable the school system to perform its mission. Solid planning is needed to maximize short-term and long-term allocation of resources.

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| 1. A long term, strategic plan exists and is regularly reviewed. | 1.4 |
| 2. All constituencies of the school district are involved in the strategic planning process. | 1.8 |
| 3. The budget process is documented and published. | 1.2 |
| 4. Budgets are developed based on needs, from the "bottom-up." | 1.2 |
| 5. The committee, as a group, presents and advocates the budget to the community. | 1.6 |
| 6. The committee receives regular reports with budget and financial status for the school system. | 1.0 |

Comments:

Overall, the committee feels that the Strategic Planning and Fiscal Management aspect of our self-evaluation is in good but not great shape. Scores for question two ranged from one to three for the second year in a row.

Community Relations

The school committee is the chief advocate for students in the community. As such, it needs to strive for a positive relationship between the community and the school system. The perception of the school system's quality impacts nearly all facets of the system, and is an integral component of school committee success in advocacy.

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| 1. The committee has a public relations plan for the school system. | 1.8 |
| 2. The committee encourages the inclusion of community members in as much decision making as possible. | 2.2 |
| 3. The committee works cooperatively with other branches of municipal government. | 1.0 |
| 4. The school system regularly reports its own progress and accomplishments. | 1.0 |

Comments:

Overall, the committee feels that the Community Relations aspect of our self-evaluation is in decent shape but could be improved. The concerning area in this section is encouragement and inclusion of community members in decision-making.

Conduct of Meetings

The quality of school committee meetings affects not only the quality of committee decisions and committee credibility, but also the level of confidence the community has in the committee. School committee decisions can be made only at these meetings, which often provide the public its only "window" into the school system. The meeting agenda is planned jointly by the committee chairman and the superintendent, and must be adhered to by the committee.

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| 1. Committee members receive sufficient information far enough in advance to prepare for meetings. | 1.0 |
| 2. Public input is welcomed, and is done according to an established policy. | 1.0 |
| 3. Full and sufficient debate is allowed. | 1.2 |
| 4. Discussion is focused on issues, not personalities. | 1.6 |
| 5. The physical setting is conducive to productive discussion and decision making. | 1.0 |
| 6. Meetings are frequent enough to prevent overcrowded agendas. | 1.0 |

Comments:

The committee feels that the Conduct of Meetings aspect of our self-evaluation is a strong point of our committee. Four of the six questions here scored a perfect 1 from all 5 members. .

Summary:

The school committee overall feels that we are in very good shape. There is mutual respect and very good working relationships between members, as well as with the Superintendent. As noted earlier, this leads to an inherent trust from all parties that we all operate on the foundational belief that Students Come First.

To quote Peter Drucker, "Follow effective action with quiet reflection. From the quiet reflection, will come even more effective action." With this philosophy in mind, I would urge that areas where we ranged from a Strongly Agree to a Disagree between members, to close that divide and get on the same page. I would also urge if members feel we are falling short somewhere in our duties, to communicate this to other members and work towards correcting these areas of potential improvement.

We do our annual self-evaluation not only for the above noted reasons, but also because it is important that we show administrators, staff, students and the public that we hold ourselves to high standards and regularly assess how we can do better. Though ultimately we are held accountable by the voters, it would be hypocritical of us to hold administrators and staff, all of whom face high standards and regular evaluations themselves, to not hold ourselves to these same standards. In this spirit, Vice Chairman Carreiro and I will be developing a more clear and focused self-evaluation tool for future evaluations.