

## **Evaluation for Dr. David Thomson, Norwood Superintendent of Schools Aug. 8, 2018**

**Background:** Dr. Thomson was hired as the superintendent of the Norwood Public Schools with a contract start date of July 1, 2017. The School Committee, working with the superintendent, determined goals for his first year in the position. The Committee also selected criteria to be used for evaluation. These criteria are a subset of the criteria established by the state Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE). There are criteria from each of the four DESE major standards.

DESE has established ratings categories for their standards: Unsatisfactory, Needs Improvement/Developing, Proficient, and Exemplary. DESE notes that Proficient “is the rigorous expected level of performance.” Also, **for new superintendents, Needs Improvement/Developing indicates that “performance is on track to achieve proficiency within three years.”**

**Process:** The School Committee voted unanimously on goals and criteria for this evaluation at the December 6, 2017 meeting. At the February 28, 2108 meeting, the committee voted unanimously to amend the evidence requested for the evaluation. Dr. Thomson submitted evidence and his own reflections in June 2018. Each committee member then completed independent evaluations of the superintendent. This document reflects a compilation of these independent evaluations. This document was approved unanimously at the School Committee meeting of August 8, 2018.

### **Summary of Evaluation**

**Professional Practice Goals: Met**

**Student Learning Goals: Significant Progress**

**District Improvement Goals: Met**

**Standard I: Instructional Leadership – Developing**

**Standard II: Management and Operations – Developing**

**Standard III: Family and Community Engagement – Developing**

**Standard IV: Professional Culture - Developing**

**Overall Performance: Developing**

**Impact on Student Learning: Moderate**

### **Detailed Goals/Criteria and Responses**

**Professional Practice Goal: Complete new superintendent induction program through MASS. (Met)**

Dr. Thomson participated in the induction program for first year superintendents offered by the Massachusetts Association of School Superintendents (MASS).

This program included working with his personal coach, Jim Marini, for approximately 6 hours/month and attending eight, full-day sessions with other first year superintendents from around the state. As

part of the program, Dr. Thomson has completed an entry plan. He reported his entry plan findings to the School Committee, including suggestions for district improvement.

Committee members appreciated that Dr. Thomson shared with us a letter from his mentor. The letter makes it clear that Dr. Marini believes that Dr. Thomson is well on his way to becoming a very effective Superintendent.

**Student Learning Goal: Work with Building Principals through the evaluation process to improve instructional practices. (*Significant Progress*)**

One way that a superintendent can influence instructional practices is by working with the building principals to ensure that their evaluation of classroom teachers supports the instructional goals of the district.

Over the course of the year, Dr. Thomson spent time with each of the eight building principals observing classroom instruction in each building and discussing feedback that the principals provided to the classroom teachers. He has documented fifty site visits to the schools in the 2017-2018 school year.

Dr. Thomson has used the DESE evaluation tools to evaluate each of the principals. Although evaluations of building principals are not under the purview of the School Committee, Dr. Thomson shared some of his reactions with the committee. He shared strengths that he observed as well as challenges. Several committee members noted his statement, "I will also point out that we seem to be using different vocabulary depending on the building. As we move forward, we need to standardize and expand our instructional approaches and support our teachers in their ongoing development." These members expressed a desire that Dr. Thomson develop a plan to work on these improvements in the coming year.

**District Improvements Goal 1: Complete Entry Plan. (*Met*)**

As a new superintendent, Dr. Thomson created an entry plan which he shared with the school committee on September 27, 2017. This plan focused on getting to know the district and understanding the history and needs.

Although his entry plan was not formalized, until late September, Dr. Thomson began working to learn about Norwood and the Norwood Public Schools even before his contract officially started on July 1, 2017. In May and June of 2017, he attended several school events, including NHS graduation, and a meeting of the Long-Range Building Study Committee.

Since taking over as superintendent, Dr. Thomson has visited each school multiple times. In addition to meeting with school faculty and staff, he has worked to develop relationships with the community. He held "Coffee with the Superintendent," met with the Superintendent's Advisory Committee, participated in two community forums at Norwood High School, and met with the League of Women Voters. He has invited each member of the School Committee to meet with him individually, and he has met with the FinCom Chair and the FinCom liaison to the School Committee.

Dr. Thomson presented his completed Entry Plan Report to the School Committee on May 9, 2018. This report demonstrated a good understanding of the district and noted several areas for improvement in the district.

**District Improvements Goal 2: File Statement of Interest for new middle school with MSBA by March 2018. (*Exceeded*)**

On October 11, 2017, the School Committee voted to submit a Statement of Interest (SOI) with the Massachusetts School Building Authority (MSBA) for a new middle school to replace the building currently housing the Coakley Middle School.

Dr. Thomson's administrative team, particularly Director of Buildings and Grounds Paul Riccardi, completed the application, making good use of the information presented by Scott Dunlop of Ai3 in the Long Range Building Study. The district submitted the MSBA application in March 2018. This application is currently under review by the state.

**Standard I: Instructional Leadership – Indicator I-D: Evaluation with focus on Element I-D-1: Educator Goals and Element I-D-2: Observation and Feedback (*Developing*)**

Dr. Thomson has observed and evaluated all building principals. Each building principal has updated a School Improvement Plan and presented this plan to the School Committee. These plans determine goals for the school, and therefore, goals for the building principal.

Committee members commended Dr. Thomson for conducting evaluations using the DESE standards and for setting high expectations. More generally, in terms of Instructional Leadership, members noted the Fuse Fellows program and a focus on hands-on, project-based learning.

**Standard II: Management and Operations – Indicator II-A: Environment with focus on Element II-A-3: Student Safety Health and Social Emotional Needs (*Developing*)**

Committee members see this element as an area of strength for Dr. Thomson. The Social Emotional Learning (SEL) Task Force, headed by Dr. Wyeth, is doing great work toward updating and expanding SEL within the district, but this will be an ongoing process that is really in its early stages. Similarly, there are positive changes beginning with cultural awareness at Norwood High School and a Positive Behavior Intervention System at Coakley Middle School.

**Standard II: Management and Operations – Indicator II-E: Fiscal Systems with focus on Element II-E-1: Fiscal Systems (*Proficient*)**

The Superintendent did a very nice job this year with dealing with the budget process. He worked well with both his administrative team and the School Committee to talk about district needs and how to

prioritize those needs considering our budget constraints. Committee members noted Dr. Thomson's budget presentations and advocacy on behalf of the schools. Members express a feeling that the improved budget process has helped all stakeholders have more confidence in the school department.

### **Overall Standard II: Management and Operations (*Developing*)**

Committee members are very satisfied with Dr. Thomson's Management and Operations work.

### **Standard III: Family and Community Engagement – Indicator III-A: Engagement with focus on Element III-A-1: Family Engagement (*Proficient*)**

Dr. Thomson's style is to engage people and he has done a nice job of engaging the stakeholders. Dr. Thomson can be seen around town, at school activities, and various other meetings that prove he is fully engaged in the community. Several members describe him as "approachable."

His work in this area this year has included "Coffee with the Superintendent," meeting with the PTO Advisory Committee, coordinating the Athletic Programming Committee, and many meetings with faculty and staff. His use of Blackboard for district-wide messages has allowed for automatic translation of messages into the home languages of families in this district. Across the district, principals are sending electronic newsletters and using other means to communicate effectively with families.

### **Standard III: Family and Community Engagement – Indicator III-B: Sharing Responsibility with focus on Element III-B-1: Student Support (*Developing*)**

Dr. Thomson has been very engaged with the community. Committee members mention his meetings with FinCom members, the Town Manager, the Police Chief, the Fire Chief, the Town Wide Budget Balancing Committee, Impact Norwood, and others.

### **Overall Standard III: Family and Community Engagement (*Developing*)**

Overall, Dr. Thomson is working hard to engage the community on behalf of the Norwood Public Schools. His numerous formal and informal meetings with parents, teachers and other administrators have helped our community better understand the needs of our students.

### **Standard IV: Professional Culture – Indicator IV-C: Communications with focus on Element IV-C-1: Communication Skills (*Proficient*)**

Dr. Thomson demonstrates strong communication skills in person and in writing. He submits weekly updates to the School Committee via email and is prepared for his reports during the School Committee meetings. Members noted that Dr. Thomson is very responsive to questions.

**Standard IV: Professional Culture – Indicator IV-D: Continuous Learning with focus on Element IV-D-1: Continuous Learning of Staff and Element IV-D-2: Continuous Learning of Administrator (*Developing*)**

Dr Thomson furthered his own Continuous Learning of Administrator with the MASS New Superintendent Induction Program. For the Continuous Learning of Staff, his administrative team has set a Professional Development Plan for the 2018-2019 school year and has engaged in reading and discussing Making Schools Work, A Vision for College and Career Ready Learning by Willard Daggett.

**Standard IV: Professional Culture – Indicator IV-E: Shared Vision with focus on Element IV-E-1: Shared Vision Development (*Proficient*)**

Dr. Thomson has done a great job working with the principals as they studied the book Making Schools Work. The principals' reflections regarding this book demonstrate the fact that his leadership team sees the need for change and wants to do everything they can to make it happen. Rather than the traditional teaching model of what teachers should do, Daggett recommends we look at what the entire system should do. Rather than teachers just delivering instruction, teachers should facilitate learning.

**Overall Standard IV: Professional Culture (*Developing*)**

The Superintendent has done a good job with beginning to set a path for the continued growth and development of the Norwood Public School's culture and vision.

**Overall Performance: (*Developing*)**

Dr. Thomson has done a great job with evaluating and identifying areas and ways that the Norwood Public Schools must continue to grow and evolve. He has worked hard to learn about our district and to develop relationships with faculty, staff, and community. Committee members note that he has made some excellent hires to the administrative team. Overall, the School Committee looks forward to Dr. Thomson's next year as the leader of the Norwood Public Schools.