

Evaluation of Superintendent Manuel Rivera by the Norwalk Board of Education  
June 17, 2014

The Norwalk Board of Education hereby adopts the following evaluation of Superintendent Manuel Rivera in accordance with sections 6(A) and 6(B) of the employment contract between Dr. Rivera and the Board dated August 20, 2013.

1. Board / Superintendent communications and working relationship

Dr. Rivera has been open to communications from Board members on an individual and group basis since taking office, and has established an excellent working relationship with the Board. He communicates updates to the Board on key developments in the schools quickly, and provides regular, detailed reports at Board meetings on the progress of initiatives ongoing in the school system. When requested to provide additional information to the Board, he has done so consistently (e.g., detailed memos supporting significant budget transfers and running monitoring of legal fees).

2. Community-Superintendent communications and working relationships

Dr. Rivera has made extensive outreach efforts to the community, beginning in his first week (mid-July) with a series of community, staff and parent meetings that he convened and/participated in. These were followed by budget and goal-setting meetings with members of the public at a variety of school and community venues last fall (and with a series of more recent forums on the Common Core State Standards). He has regularly visited schools and community organizations to talk to parents and other community members about the schools and our many reform initiatives (see "Objective 1" in the attached self-evaluation (p. 3)). As noted also in the self-evaluation ("Objective 4", p. 4), he has brought the NPS into the 21<sup>st</sup> century in terms of communications, both from an emergency perspective (text and email systems for emergencies) and in ongoing communications with our enhanced web site, social media presence, and through a pro-active communications strategy.

3. Superintendent / School district personnel relations and working relationships

Improving personnel relations and working relationships has been a priority for Dr. Rivera. He has established good relationships with central office staff and our principals, and has been visible to teachers in our schools. He is rebuilding the HR operation of the system, both to assure that current employees' needs are effectively addressed, and to improve our recruitment processes to bring in a high quality, diverse set of new employees. Dr. Rivera has also worked closely with our teachers union, with, among other things, the Briggs Turnaround and the recently-announced "Literacy 4 Parents 4 Their Children" program.

4. Quality of educational programs initiated and successfully operating during the current year

Establishing quality educational programs has been the chief priority of Dr. Rivera, and he has clearly excelled at this. He has established the first true strategic plan for the NPS in many years (see "Objective 2", attached), and has developed this into both an excellent high-level summary (see

Summary Chart attached, p. 6) and a very detailed work program (see “Key Initiatives”, also attached, pp. 7-10). This has included personally bringing about a resolution of the K-5 literacy issue with a remarkably comprehensive plan, adopted by the Board, that can fundamentally improve efforts to close the stubborn achievement gap (see “Objective 5”, attached, p. 4). With full implementation of the Common Core to be completed this fall, Dr. Rivera’s many other initiatives, from community-based Pre-K programs through the P-Tech Academy at Norwalk High, have the Norwalk schools poised for a leap forward in student achievement.

5. The Superintendent's handling of business matters impacting the Board throughout the current year

Continuing the work begun by Messrs. Longo, Daddona and Rudl, Dr. Rivera has significantly enhanced the business operations side of the school system. Our first true multi-year budget was developed this year by Dr. Rivera and Mr. Rudl. Board finances have improved dramatically despite relatively small budget increases, with surpluses replacing deficits, program improvements replacing cutbacks, and hiring replacing layoffs, all while keeping budget increases to the smallest of any department in the city government. Dr. Rivera is building a first-class ‘cabinet’ of new departmental leaders at City Hall, with excellent appointments to manage IT / Initiatives, Communications, Human Resources, Facilities, and Special Education.

6. Professional leadership exhibited by the superintendent throughout the current year

Whether through curricular initiatives, budgeting, fundraising (see “Objective 6”, pp. 4-5), initiatives ranging from P-K to P-Tech, Dr. Rivera has shown the value of having someone with his deep professional education and experience leading our school system. His relationships with the governor, the education commissioner, and thought leaders in the national educational community have been invaluable to NPS.

7. Personal and professional qualities and experience exhibited by the Superintendent in the performance of his duties and responsibilities throughout the current year

Dr. Rivera has maintained a highly professional, yet accessible, approach to management of the Norwalk schools. While not afraid to speak his mind on important issues, he has been respectful to members of the Board and the community. Dr. Rivera has often demonstrated real passion for his efforts to improve education for all of Norwalk’s children. The Board endorses Dr. Rivera’s attached self-evaluation as an accurate description of the work to date of an energetic, engaged and concerned leader.

March 14, 2014

Manuel J. Rivera

Self-Evaluation Report (Employment Agreement, page 7, Section C)

A year ago, I responded to the call for a new superintendent for Norwalk Public Schools. The Board of Education was seeking an individual:

- With “a bold academic vision for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century”
- Who would “collaboratively establish and communicate that vision”
- Who would “drive a culture of continuous improvement”
- Who would maintain a “steadfast commitment to high expectations, accountability, communication and transparency”
- Who is “passionate, action driven and advocates for equity.”

During the past 8 months as your superintendent, I have not wavered from the challenge and the expectations set by the BOE last summer. Below is an overview of some of the accomplishments that have been achieved against my primary objectives, and that I believe have put us on the right path towards our goal of closing the Achievement Gap by 2020.

**Objective 1: Establish strong, positive relationships across the entire Norwalk community**

Immediately after coming on board in July 2013, I developed a 90-day plan designed to establish new relationships across the community. Outreach included parents and parent leaders, staff, individual Board of Education members, Union leaders, State officials, foundation partners, PTO leaders, community partners, Pastors, business leaders, legislators, and other political leaders, and other citizens and stakeholders.

Highlights include individual meetings with a wide variety of community organizations, including the Chamber of Commerce, Carver Center, NAACP, South Norwalk Community Center, Stepping Stones, Norwalk Public Library, Norwalk ACTS and many others. I have participated in meetings or presentations with nearly every school PTO group, the PTOC, as well as other parent clubs such as the Spanish Parents group at Brien McMahon and the African-American parent organization at Norwalk High. Importantly, I have also established effective working relationships with Union leadership, resulting in public support for our plans and recommendations.

A listing of the many meetings, activities and events will be forwarded on Monday.

**Objective 2: Create a viable and exciting strategic plan that will take NPS into the future, and better prepare our students to graduate Career and College Ready.**

To assure our strategic planning process was collaborative and that our recommendations were thoughtful and comprehensive, I collected a wide range of data and information that form the basis of our strategic plan. I convened numerous meetings, focus groups, and working sessions with staff, the Board of Education and many stakeholders from July through December, and led a process to generate consensus around our bold plan. That comprehensive plan now serves as the basis for our work going forward.

**Objective 3: Provide sound fiscal management and oversight**

We have provided sound fiscal management with all of our taxpayer funds, and funds received from state and federal sources, and are well within our spending limits, having realized numerous efficiencies during the current year.

Our financial condition has been regularly reported to the Board on a monthly basis, and I am very pleased with both the tight controls that we have in place and the stewardship of our budget.

**Objective 4: Improve Communications**

We have significantly improved communications, an area repeatedly identified as needing improvement. In keeping with the BOE's, we searched for and found a highly competent Communications Director, and all of our communications, including the use of technology, has dramatically improved. We have launched a regular series of messages from my office, and I have received a positive feedback from a large number of parents who say they are grateful for more information, on everything from weather decisions to curriculum choices. Other progress includes our new district Facebook page, an updated and redesigned district website, and the expansion of our presence in the community with forums to communicate directly on topics such as Common Core, for example.

**Objective 5: Resolve Prek-5 Literacy Curriculum choice**

For the past six months, we have engaged many staff members, conducted significantly greater due diligence, and have now advanced a comprehensive set of PreK-5 Literacy recommendations that go well beyond selecting "one reading program." I am pleased that there has been widespread support for these recommendations, from Union leaders to educators to parent groups and beyond. We are ready to begin the hard but necessary work of planning and implementing our 10 Point Literacy Strategy for Norwalk, and to move forward in an area that represents the foundation for knowledge development in all content areas.

**Objective 6: Seek Foundation Funding for Key Initiatives**

In order to bring more funds in to support NPS initiatives, I have dedicated significant time to discussions with both state and national foundation representatives. We have developed a deeper understanding

of what key foundation partners are looking for prior to making funding commitments, and are steadily seeking additional opportunities that will benefit our schools. At the recent dedication of the Early Childhood Literacy Demonstration Site at Fox Run, a key foundation partner expressed his satisfaction with his organization's partnership with Norwalk, saying that they are "confident that Norwalk's programs are heading in the right direction." We expect new announcements in the near future, including a significant two-year grant for NPS that I hope to be able to communicate by the end of April.

To date, I have worked to support the infusion of \$1.2 million of foundation funding for Norwalk Public Schools. I am actively pursuing an additional contribution to support greater student access to after school and summer programs.

Most recently, Norwalk received formal approval from the Dalio Foundation for a \$1.1 million grant to enable the district to establish full time Curriculum and Instruction Site Directors in five schools, as well as a key position for research, data analysis and accountability. In addition, I am pursuing a second significant grant from two foundations to support our plan.

**Objective 7: Develop, Recommend and Achieve approval for a multi-year budget, including detailed recommended changes for the 2014-15 budget.**

Following a carefully developed process that included input staff, parents, community stakeholders, and the BOE, I recommended a budget that advances our priorities, but that was hailed as realistic and well-crafted by community leaders. Detailed information was provided promptly to all inquiries made by BOE and Common Council members. Groundwork was also laid for establishing a multi-year budget that will allow us to anticipate future needs and establish better long-range planning.

**In summary**, the details above are an overview of what I believe are some of my most significant accomplishments. But, please know that there are many more. Morale is high across the school system and the community, and the wonderful people that I have the privilege to work with are ready to meet a new set of higher expectations. Although, we are not perfect, we are busy addressing the challenges that we face and working to create a higher performing school system for ALL of our students and the adults that serve them.

I am proud of the work that has been accomplished in what has been a relatively short period of time.

# The World Starts Here



**Mission**  
To create a student-focused culture that motivates, challenges and supports every individual student to his or her highest levels of achievement.

**Vision**  
All students graduate prepared to reach their highest potential for college, career and life-long success in a globally competitive society.

**Overall Goal**  
To close the Achievement GAP by 2020 and assure that all students, regardless of race, ethnicity or economic circumstances, are meeting high standards.

- Goals**
- All children are ready to enter Kindergarten
  - All students are “on track” to meet or exceed learning expectations by the end of Grade 3
  - Students are at or above grade level in 3rd Grade reading
  - Students demonstrate Mastery in CCSS Mathematics
  - Students demonstrate Mastery in CCSS English Language Arts
  - ELL students meet or exceed State Annual Measurable Achievement Objectives
  - Special Ed students achieve Mastery on annual individual goals and objectives
  - Norwalk’s schools reach higher performance
  - Norwalk students graduate “College and Career Ready”

**Focus Areas**

Culture of Accountability	Build Knowledge, Skills and Capacity	A New Learning Environment for All	Systems, Structures, and Support	Partnership and a New Pre-K to 16 Mindset
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Shared Mission, Vision, Goals &amp; Metrics</li> <li>• School and Professional Standards</li> <li>• School Dashboards &amp; Public Reporting</li> <li>• Quality Control &amp; Implementation</li> <li>• Annual report</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Student Engagement</li> <li>• Common Core State Standards: K-12</li> <li>• K-3 Literacy Emphasis</li> <li>• Personalized Learning</li> <li>• ELL &amp; Special Education</li> <li>• Leadership</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Library redesign</li> <li>• NEASC Accreditation for NHS &amp; BMHS</li> <li>• Briggs Turnaround</li> <li>• Expanded Use of Technology</li> <li>• School Safety</li> <li>• New Programs: P-Tech EC; IB program</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• HR: Recruitment and Hiring &amp; Reorg</li> <li>• Finance &amp; Resource Management</li> <li>• Data Systems</li> <li>• Technology Training</li> <li>• School Master Schedule</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Access to Pre-K Quality Early Learning</li> <li>• Parent Engagement</li> <li>• Expand Access to after-school &amp; Summer Programs</li> <li>• Expand Access to Mentors</li> <li>• Health</li> </ul>

## **Key Initiatives for 2014-15**

### **Strategic Planning and Critical Operational Initiatives**

1. Comprehensive and detailed **Professional Development Plan** for 2014-15
  - Clarify key “knowledge and skills” for each group;
  - Organize the “calendar” (dates, times, and topics);
  - Process and Produce by June 25<sup>th</sup>.
  
2. **Special Education**
  - Review, revise and strengthen NPS standards, guidelines and protocols for PPT operation;
  - Reorganization: Advance new roles and responsibilities Revamp roles and describe organizational changes;
  - Advance initial phase to consolidate Special Ed Pre-K;
  
3. **School Culture and Student Engagement**
  - Define the scope of this essential initiative;
  - Plan and incorporate into PD;
  - Clarify how we measure our progress.
  
4. **Briggs HS**
  - Continue with implementation of the revised “Plan”;
  - Facility: Pursue a more “program suitable” facility;
  - Transition partnership contract from OPP to Carver Center
  
5. **NEASC Accreditation**
  - BMHS
  - NHS
  
6. **New Program Initiatives**
  - P-Tech Academy at NHS;
  - IB at BMHS;
  
7. **Facility Utilization Plan**
  - Submit RFP, Select and Contract with Service provider
  - Fulfill scope of work and advance recommendations in May 2015
  - Submit New Capital Improvement Plan in December 2015

## **8. Assessment System**

- Implementation and monitoring (no exceptions)
- Provide SBAC training and development..., both staff and students (including the interim assessment)

## **9. Prek-5 Literacy Initiative**

- Management, implementation and monitoring of our 10 Point plan;
- Expansion of “After the Bell” to 3-4 schools, and 2 satellite sites”.
- Deliver Summer school expansion (additional 200 students)
- Complete Purchase of Journeys materials;
- Approval secured for \$1.1 million from Dalio Foundation
- PD and Implementation of Journeys in 2014-15;
- Complete selection for 1 pilot school (CKLA and Ex. Learning).

## **10. Parent Engagement**

- Advance “*Literacy 4 Parents 4 Children*”, *Parent Cafes* and other parent engagement efforts underway at Brookside and Tracey;
- Monitor and Manage
- Complete an end of year evaluation

## **11. Technology**

- P-Tech
- New systems implementation (HR)
- Instructional leadership/ SBAC, etc.

## **12. Internships**

- New Policy
- Focus on Briggs and P-Tech as a start

## **13. Policy Development**

- Diversity Hiring Policy
- Graduation Requirements
- Student Placement (Out-of-District, #99, etc.)
- Grading Policy
- Others TBD

## **14. District Data Team**

- New role and expectations: On track for Fall Implementation



## **15. School Safety**

- Monitor Implementation of Facility Improvements
- Align “Bullying”, “Internet Safety” and School Climate
- PD and assure all district and school emergency management plans are complete

## **16. Evaluation Systems**

- Teacher Evaluation: standards and guidelines;
- Administrator Evaluation: standards and guidelines;
- Complete evaluations

## **17. Scheduling**

- NHS: complete new schedule
- Elementary school schedules: Examine and advance recommendations for 2015-16 budget

## **18. Employee Bargaining Units and Contract management**

- Research and Prep for NFT wage reopener
- Prep for NASA
- Complete NFEP

## **19. Communications**

- Enhanced focus on Internal Communications
- Continue to build on External Communications work to date

## **20. Personalized Learning**

- Advance to next phase with support from Nellie Mae Foundation
- Finalize expectations for 2014-15

## **21. HR Management**

- Advance reorganization plan., and execute
- Update Recruitment and Hiring strategy to improve Diversity
- Staff Transfers
- New hires (what and where)
- Terminations

## **22. Staffing allocations: complete for Marvin, Kendall and other anomalies**

### **23. Quality Reviews**

- Complete design for NPS, approval by DDT
- Conduct one QR in 2014-15

### **24. Business Services and Finance**

- Implement new monitoring system for unauthorized out of district students enrolling in our schools
- New Food Services contract
- New Transportation Contract
- School Based Budgeting in pilot schools
- Establish Budget Development Teams for 2015-16 Budget
- New Budget for 2015-16 and updated multi-year budget
- Capital Improvement Budget
- Legislative priorities