

**Norwalk Board of Education
Superintendent Evaluation
July 2020**

Overall, the Board of Education is very pleased with the Superintendent's ability to make meaningful progress on her 2020-21 Entry Plan, especially in the context of the many disruptions and challenges posted by COVID-19. Coming in with "boots on the ground," Dr. Estrella navigated us through a safe return to school, even as she oversaw deep and rigorous audits of key aspects of the District, including Special Education, HR Policy, a Facilities Study, and the formulation of a comprehensive Strategic Plan. There is already less of a silo culture and more coordination between departments. Our weekly Board updates are thorough and thoughtful, and Board meetings are more accessible, broadcast online with both Spanish and Creole translations. The recent audit of school libraries has already added more diverse and inclusive literature options for students.

She has been focused and aggressive about finding alternate funding sources when necessary. (It might be a good idea to highlight more of this to the public.)

Her rigorous attention to professional development creates high expectations for educators, and we think there are opportunities to enact procedures that encourage personnel to stay and grow with the District. Many have noted her open-door policy, though perhaps there can be more structures for confidential feedback from teachers and other staff.

Dr. Estrella is strong in character, especially when faced with making tough or unpopular decisions related to staffing and COVID safety protocols. Her approach to decision-making is always data-driven and puts children first—such as adding student voices to various aspects of school governance, including an equity-focused vision statement for the strategic plan.

The revamped website is easier to navigate and does a great job of promotion and recruitment for Norwalk Public Schools. It is part of a multi-pronged approach to an effective communication strategy, which is vital to the success of all other priorities. The District has been much more conscientious about using social media and other channels to communicate, but this can be challenging, especially when passionate discussions take off online. The messaging is almost as important as the message. Employing tools such as an FAQ document may help reduce community misinformation. Parents need to feel reassured at the school level, and there needs to be a sense of equal access to information. We should continue to find the right balance between "PR" and earnestness, knowing that it is okay for the District to embrace different levels of vulnerability, and to encourage such practices through the learning community in a systematic way.

As we look ahead to the 2021-22 school year, it is important to continue to center children in articulating goals and expectations, going beyond the cultural expectations of pedagogical jargon. Addressing learning loss and prioritizing clear communication as the educational landscape continues to shift will be key to success, and the Dr. Estrella has already identified key goals and expectations to help make this happen.


Superintendent Signature:

Date: 8/19/21


BOE Chair Signature:

Date: July 28, 2021