

Summative Evaluation

Superintendent Dr. Midge Connolly

June 29, 2020

Overall Comments

- Dr. Connolly is doing exceptional work. Importantly, she has established a cohesive leadership team; implemented needed curriculum improvements at the elementary levels; increased the use of data to improve instruction; modeled strong and compassionate leadership; created increased opportunities to meet students' individual needs; and promoted improved students' social/emotional learning.
- She knows good instruction and is working hard to implement effective and consistent instruction throughout the district. She has established a solid leadership team to help her with that work. Her ability to implement, sustain, and lead such an effective leadership team is a major accomplishment that will set the tone for continued improvement in the classroom.
- Dr. Connolly has been doing a great job and has matured quickly into a respected Superintendent.
- After a hiccup around HS parking communication to start the year, Midge has had the stongest year in her tenure. Prior to the pandemic, Midge improved communication, drove significant improvement across the district and made a great hire from a strong pool of candidates for the HS principal position. Once coronavirus came on the scene, Midge was proactive, first communicating with families on January 29, and continued with a valuable stream of communications and resources to families and the community. The district was among the first to close and was the first to begin remote learning for all grades. Midge and her team drove toward constant improvements in the remote teaching model, emphasizing emotional health as a priority while still providing meaningful learning within the confines of state guidance and an entirely new model for delivering curriculum. Midge and her team, particularly the nursing staff, have been and continue to be a valuable resource to the town. The administration, faculty, staff, students, and families all came together to create meaningful end-of-year events within recommended safety protocols.
- Weston was fortunate to have Midge at the helm this year.

Leadership

- Dr. Connolly has had to make many difficult decisions this year and has done so with thoughtful deliberation and reflection. The process for hiring the new high school principal was well-designed, allowing for input from many stakeholders, and resulted in a strong selection.
- Headed into the 2020-2021 school year, she has built a strong and talented senior team. I've been very impressed with her hiring of Kimo Carter and Dan Green, and I'm

optimistic about Paul Peri. She did a good job pulling this team together while everyone was in temporary and separate offices during the renovation of Case House. Management of the High School has been a challenge, and I hope she has internalized some lessons from this experience and will be able to leverage them for the benefits of students and staff across the district going forward.

- Midge has established a balanced schedule to check in with senior administrators. Time is carved out to work one-one-one with Midge and to work as a team. While this takes a lot of time, it allows for opportunities for Midge to make sure each building is working in line with district initiatives.
- While the reduction in force was not an easy process, I believe Midge handled it gracefully and provided support to all who were affected.
- Midge is decisive and unafraid to tackle difficult issues.
- Midge has dealt sensitively with a number of difficult and tragic circumstances throughout the year. Midge's focus on the whole student and meeting the needs of all students through-out the spectrum of abilities and needs continues to drive and improve the culture and performance of our schools.
- Dr. Connolly models a culture of ongoing learning. Midge is eager to understand new theories and practices and eagerly participates in workshops and professional development.
- The movement in the district to identify and share best practices across disciplines and levels reflects a focus on constant improvement. We saw improvements in the WSfH throughout the spring as a result. Midge needs to continue to drive her dedication and focus on constant improvement down to every last employee in the district.
- An important focus will be on-boarding and supporting the new HS principal and leveraging all the talents of an exceptionally strong administrative team to move the district forward despite the disruption of the pandemic.
- The superintendent would benefit from enrolling in formal leadership training programs.

Academics

- Under Midge's direction, the district has made excellent strides in improving standards-based instruction and data-driven work with the continued implementation of reading and writing curricula and the Data Wise project.
- Working closely with Kimo Carter, Dr. Connolly has helped to improve the elementary curriculum and will hopefully turn focus to the HS. The faculty training in Datawise is helpful to quantify results and streamline decision-making.
- The language program review implementation remains a high priority. There are important lessons from the math program review that can also be addressed, including differentiation, classroom instruction and alignment.

- There is room for continued improvement with horizontal alignment at the high school. It is important that department heads receive the professional development needed to establish effective and consistent instruction at the high school.
- Continued professional development for faculty is encouraged.
- The district has continuing work to do in further improving differentiation and alignment, engaging all students, and improving instructional practices. The district faces a significant challenge ahead in ensuring an excellent learning experience as we continue to navigate the pandemic world.
- I would have liked to see further action on the Student Learning Goal relating to the homework policy because that will have to wait for some time now.
- The pandemic interrupted the evaluation process, but we must move forward in FY'21 with fidelity to identify and implement best practices and improve instruction across the district.
- While Midge and her team have made significant strides in cultural competency training and fostering an environment that embraces equity, diversity, inclusion and access, the pandemic slowed some of those efforts. This spring has shown us how much difficult work we as a district and a community have ahead of us to make anti-racism a priority. This work cannot take a back seat to the pandemic or any other initiative but must instead be embedded in the very fabric of all we do in the district.

Budget

- Midge's work on the budget this year represented a significant leap forward in her development. Midge worked with her team to create a budget that recognized and implemented necessary efficiencies without negatively impacting student opportunity or service. The budget development and presentation process was vastly improved over the previous year.
- It is never easy to make staffing cuts due to declining enrollment, but Midge made all decisions with a student-centered focus; and she was thoughtful in how messages would be shared with faculty, staff, families, and the public.
- Overall, the budget process was much smoother this year.
- The budget was managed and presented well, despite being a difficult process because of FTE reductions.
- She did a good job finding a balance in the budgeting process for FY2021. Health care costs will be another priority that needs to be addressed in the next few years, in collaboration with the Town and other committees.
- Midge should continue to grow her knowledge and facility with financial statements and the budget. Significant challenges are ahead of us.

Communication

- The Case House Newsletter was a good step toward greater communication with the community.
- She stumbled a bit with the High School parking communications but worked hard to address the issue. Her communications with stakeholders continue to improve, and she seems to grasp the impact and importance of these messages.
- Her written communication is excellent. Dr. Connolly has improved her verbal presentation skills but there is room for continued improvement.
- Her communication during the COVID-19 crisis was timely, clear, and overall, very well done.
- The communication during the Weston School from Home has been excellent. Dr. Connolly and her team have kept parents informed throughout an uncertain time. The surveys of students and parents and attempts to gather and address feedback throughout school from home have also been exemplary.
- It may be helpful if Midge relied on her administrative team to help share cohesive information that focuses on district goals. Responsibility for disseminating information about student learning and performance could (and should be) shared with Dr. Carter, principals, curriculum specialists, and department heads. The collaboration among all these stakeholders for the MCAS report and the self-study portion of program reviews works well. Midge should consider having these administrators help share information with the community, as there are not enough hours in a day for any superintendent.
- I request that our district continues and puts more even more resources on communication. I would like to see more open dialogue with parents and more community engagement. In addition, I would like to see the district make a conscious effort to share good news, district goals and initiatives – for example we should share the data that shows improvement from new curriculums. Our entire communication system needs to be evaluated as a district. We also need to review our web presence to maximize ease of use and breadth of information.
- Weston is a unique community where traditions are long-standing. The urgency for improved and consistent curricula and instruction required that changes be made at a fast clip over the past few years. However, it is important to remember that some traditions and/or characteristics of a Weston education are unique to our community and that it is important for cultural changes to be socialized at a community level.
- Build on the strides made in communication with families and the community to further strengthen the relationship between the district, families and the community, including furthering the understanding of Weston's unique traditions and concerns.

COVID-19 Response

- Her team's response to the pandemic and the rapid implementation of School from home was impressive and made a huge difference for our students and families.

- Dr. Connolly's leadership in handling COVID has been exemplary. She was decisive and thoughtful in her decision-making and prioritized the safety and health of the entire school community. Her leadership allowed Weston to lead the state in closing schools and protecting our community
- Midge demonstrated very strong leadership through the pandemic crisis, through a proactive and flexible approach as the situation changed dramatically on a daily basis. Midge led the creation of a new school model faster than any neighboring district, as well as the revision and improvement of the model over time, all the while keeping the district focused on the physical and emotional health of our students.
- Midge and her team pivoted through repeated challenges, developing and implementing plans rapidly while open to constant improvement to maximize social and emotional wellness and learning opportunities. The district's rapid implementation of technology to deliver curriculum in the pandemic was impressive.
- Midge and the administrative team received a tremendous amount of feedback regarding the school closing, Weston School from Home, and end-of-year celebrations, among other things. Midge and her team were thoughtful and considerate in addressing the often-conflicting requirements and desires of students, families, staff, the board of health, and state guidance.

Wrap-Up

- Overall, the community seems very happy with her performance, but this is a high-performing district with very high expectations, and continuous improvement is expected.
- Midge is a strong, effective superintendent. She doesn't shy away from difficult decisions or conversations, and makes all decisions based on what's best for students. She has assembled a stellar administrative team and outwardly values the role of all district employees – faculty and staff. She understands the complex nature of public schools and works hard to make sure all students can have a positive learning experience. Midge has grown in this role and is on her way to becoming an exceptional superintendent. She is a pleasure to work with.