**The School District of Philadelphia
Superintendent Performance Evaluation**

Dr. Tony B. Watlington, Sr.

School Year 2022-2023

BOARD COMMENTS

On April 7, 2022 the Board of Education appointed Dr. Tony B. Watlington, Sr. as Superintendent of Schools for the School District of Philadelphia. The 2022-2023 school year was Dr. Watlington's first complete school year as Superintendent. During this time, the school district, like many school systems around the world, was navigating the safe return to in-person learning in light of a recent global pandemic. As a result of the change in leadership, this evaluation considers the 2022-23 school year as a transition year for the School District of Philadelphia.

In December 2020, the Board of Education adopted its five year strategic plan, Goals & Guardrails, to clearly outline key priorities to improve student academic outcomes in Philadelphia. Progress on these Goals & Guardrails are the metrics for the annual evaluation of the Superintendent.

Prior to the start of the 2022-23 school year, Dr. Watlington began identifying key District challenges to significantly improve student achievement. These included: safety, staffing challenges, historic underfunding, aging facilities, need for a strategic plan, lack of central office evaluation system; and educator evaluations that are not aligned to Goals & Guardrails. Most immediately, Dr. Watlington engaged in a listening and learning tour to engage the diverse communities in Philadelphia, understand the perceptions and needs, and share data and research on what improves students' outcomes in order to build city-wide consensus around developing a strategic plan for the District. He developed a 100 member transition team, including local and national education experts, which provided short and long term recommendations for improvement. Finally, after extensive community engagement, Dr. Watlington developed a 5-year strategic plan, *Accelerate Philly*, which is grounded in evidence and research. The plan identifies five priority areas and 63 strategic actions that will be used to align the District's limited resources in order to drive faster results towards the Board's Goals & Guardrails. *Accelerate Philly* was unanimously adopted by the Board on June 1, 2023.

While much of the 22-23 school year was spent in the development of *Accelerate Philly*, there were 5 immediate conditions for success that were identified and implemented. Those were:

- Safety: Increased safe path programs from 7 to 13;
- Student Attendance: Regular monitoring and reporting led to an increase from 57% in SY21-22 to 60% in SY22-23;
- Teacher Attendance: Regular monitoring and reporting led to an increase from 77.3% in SY21-22 to 83.6% in SY22-23;
- Student Dropouts decreased from 3,917 in SY21-22 to 3,652 in SY22-23; and
- Cohort Graduation Rates increased from 71% in SY21-22 to 74% in SY22-23.

In addition, the District saw increased student performance on state assessments in 13 out of 17 areas for students in grades 3-12, as well as a reduction in the number of students scoring "Below Basic" in all but one of the testing areas. For more detailed information, please see Figure 1 and Figure 2 below.

The Board commends Dr. Watlington for his leadership in attracting top talent to Philadelphia in key leadership roles to further accelerate progress towards our Goals & Guardrails. Despite the historical underfunding we have faced as a District, we continue to manage a balanced budget and improved our investment credit rating from stable to positive. Through meaningful engagement and intentional planning, he has been able to prioritize resources and reorganize project teams to better serve the more immediate and long-term needs of the District. Dr. Watlington brings to the District a fresh perspective and energy where he has demonstrated his ability to build consensus, collaborate with key partners, improve communications, and remain focused on improving student achievement.

In August 2023, the Board adopted revised indicators for its Goals & Guardrails. To account for the Superintendent transition and the many challenges the District faced during an unprecedented pandemic, the Board will be considering revised annual targets for each Goal & Guardrail and extending targets through 2029-30. The Board commends Dr. Watlington for providing leadership that resulted in achieving progress in 13 of 17 academic areas, increasing student attendance, increasing teacher attendance,increasing the four-year cohort graduation rate, and decreasing our dropout numbers. This will serve as a baseline for newly revised Goals & Guardrail measures that the Superintendent will be evaluated on annually. Along the way, the Board will receive regular updates on the implementation of Accelerate Philly, the 5-year Strategic Plan.

Figure 1: Student Performance

Academic Goals							
PSSA/PASA Proficient				**PSSA/PASA Below Basic**			
Grades 3-8	2021-22	2022-23	Progress	2021-22	2022-23	Progress	
Grade 3 Reading	28.1%	31.0%	+2.9%-pts	38.2%	31.4%	-6.8%-pts	
Grade 3 - 8 Reading	34.4%	34.0%	-0.4%-pts	28.2%	26.4%	-1.8%-pts	
Grade 3 Math	20.8%	26.5%	+5.7%-pts	58.9%	52.0%	-6.9%-pts	
Grade 3 - 8 Math	16.5%	20.7%	+4.2%-pts	61.7%	56.8%	-4.9%-pts	
Grade 4 and 8 Science	37.1%	40.2%	+3.1%-pts	35.6%	33.6%	-2.0%-pts	
Keystone Proficient				**Keystone Below Basic**			
Best by 11th	2018-19	2022-23	Progress	2018-19	2022-23	Progress	
Literature	47.6%	53.9%	+6.1%-pts	25.7%	18.4%	-7.3%-pts	
Algebra 1	36.3%	30.1%	-6.2%-pts	26.0%	34.0%	+8.0%-pts	
Biology	34.9%	31.4%	-3.5%-pts	43.2%	38.0%	-5.2%-pts	
NOCTI Proficient							
NOCTI Tests	2021-22	2022-23	Progress				
NOCTI	43.4%	49.1%	+5.7%-pts	–	–	–	

Figure 2: Conditions for Success

Conditions for Success			
Priority Area	**2021-22**	**2022-23**	**Progress**
Safety (Safe Pathways)	6	13	+7 sites
Student Attendance	57%	60%	+3%-pts
Teacher Attendance	77%	84%	+7%-pts
Dropouts	3,917	3,652	-265
Graduation Rate (4-Year Cohort) (Note: 86% met ACT 158 Requirements)	71%	74% (preliminary)	+3%-pts