

**SUPERINTENDENT EVALUATION TOOL- NATE LEVENSON, 2006-07  
SCHOOL YEAR (JEFF THIELMAN EVALUATION)**

<p><b>Performance Level: 1= Unsatisfactory</b> <b>2= Needs Improvement</b> <b>3= Meets Expectations</b> <b>4= Exceeds Expectations</b> <b>5= Exemplary</b></p>	<p><b>* Any item that is rated below "meets expectations" should be explained in order to determine the course of action needed for improvement</b></p>
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| 1. Completing annual objectives        | 1 2 3 <b>4</b> 5 |
| 2. Committee-superintendent relations  | 1 2 3 4 <b>5</b> |
| 3. Educational-professional leadership | 1 2 3 <b>4</b> 5 |
| 4. Personnel relationship/management   | 1 2 <b>3</b> 4 5 |
| 5. Community relations                 | 1 2 <b>3</b> 4 5 |
| 6. Business and finance operations     | 1 2 3 4 <b>5</b> |

**TOTAL: 24**

7. Comments (add additional sheets if necessary):

- 1) Completing Annual Objectives: **Score 4.** The Superintendent and his staff have achieved approximately 80% of the goals approved by the School Committee in October of 2006. I regard this as a very good percentage. More importantly, many significant changes that several of us on the School Committee have pushed for during the past several years are occurring. They include: a) development and implementation of teacher-created common assessment, which give teachers much better information on student progress than the MCAS; b) an improved K-5 reading intervention program; additional staff in the literacy labs at the high school and middle school; c) increased Math block and interventions at the middle school and high school; d) focused professional development for faculty (the reviews are much better on the program than previous to Nate's arrival); e) increased integration of special education and regular education; f) improved K-5 counseling with assistance from AYCC; g) an attempt to develop an in-house Special Education Program that reduces out-of-district placements; h) contract settlements with the teachers, clerical

assistants and department heads in a non-confrontational manner; i) a completely revamped ELL program; and j) a clear, transparent budget that controls costs and aligns spending with School Committee-approved priorities

- 2) Committee-Superintendent Relations. **Score: 5.** I have no complaints at all in this area. I've found that we receive information on a timely basis. We have never been left in the dark on any important issue or crisis facing the schools. He has gotten information to us in a timely manner. (Supt. Donovan was also very good at getting the Committee information in a timely manner.) Every request for information that I've made has been responded to with 1-2 weeks, which is reasonable given the Superintendent's other responsibilities. I would give the Superintendent low marks if he dropped everything every time I or another SC member asked for information about something. The Superintendent has been open, honest and candid with me this year as he was last year.
- 3) Educational-Professional Leadership. **Score: 4.** Nate has a very solid understanding of state and federal laws and regulations; he has delivered an improved professional development program for faculty; he understands and keeps informed about all aspects of state and national activities that have the potential for affecting the Arlington Public Schools; he has made a concerted effort to reach out to all constituencies, notably making an improved effort to recruit people of color to teach in our schools and a focus on ELL (English Language Learners) not seen in many years in this District; he is always looking for ways to improve the district's performance, both academically and in terms of how we deliver services; he maintains high standards of ethics, honesty and integrity; Nate responds to requests for information in a timely, concise and accurate manner; and he has worked hard to foster an environment and culture where creativity, exchange of ideas, responsible risk taking and experimentation are shared, valued, and practiced. There are two aspects under #3, however, where Nate needs to improve. First, he must improve communication with staff and the public. Nate has a tendency to think out loud (i.e., "we can save \$3,000,000 by placing out of district placements in district), which is wonderful in a private meeting, but dangerous when communicating to the staff and public. He needs a communication strategy. By improving his communication with staff and the public, he will inspire all staff to achieve the highest possible professional standards and positive expectations.

*Note: A key indicator of success in this area is measurable improvement in student academic achievement. Nate inherited a district in which one of six children was not reading at grade level by Grade Three, for example. I am looking for data that indicates whether or not there is improvement yet in this area. Generally, I could use some more data to evaluate whether or not teaching and learning, the byproducts of "Educational-Professional Leadership," have improved under Nate's tenure. In the final analysis, improved student achievement is the most important indicator of a Superintendent's impact on a school District.*

- 4) Personnel Relationship-Management. **Score: 3.** It is very difficult for a School Committee member to comment on the Superintendent's relationship with principals and department heads. We don't see how they interact every day, and we don't attend leadership (cabinet) meetings. Clearly, Nate has struggled to establish a productive working relationship with the middle school staff and their principal, but he has been working hard in recent months to improve these relationships. Frankly,

*Nate's inexperience in school management was in evidence during the episode with the middle school principal in March and April of this year. Depending on your point of view, the Superintendent either botched a firing, or he treated the principal unfairly. His letter stating that the principal did not share the educational vision for the District, while apparently accurate, caused uproar in the community and led to the most intense display of faculty and parent anger in recent memory. He underestimated how the letter would be received and clearly did not think through how best to execute the dismissal of a principal. This is something a more experienced administrator would have known how to do. Thankfully, Nate has sought counsel from retired Superintendents and his colleagues in the Massachusetts Association of Superintendents. He has also met several times with Ottoson Middle School faculty and has promised to continue these meetings. This can only lead to a positive change in the relationship with the faculty. No doubt Nate has learned a great deal from the fallout of his attempted dismissal of the principal. .*

*Apart from the middle school, there are many principals and department heads with whom I've spoken who really like Nate and like working for him. The level of dialogue between administrators and the School Committee became much more open, honest and even freewheeling once Nate arrived in July of 2005. This is something I have to take into consideration when evaluating the Superintendent's performance in No. 4. I am also pleased with his visibility in the schools. Many teachers have commented that Nate has attended their class, and they appreciate it. Several have commented that this is the first time a Superintendent has ever visited their classroom. It would be helpful to have data on the number of visits to classrooms he has made; I think this is a significant achievement, one that will help the central office build relationships with staff.*

*I am confident Nate has learned from his experiences in SY '07 and expect him to emerge as a stronger and wiser Superintendent in the years ahead. He is meeting expectations in this area because the good work he's done and the positive relationships he's built with administrators and department heads in general is offset by the tension with the middle school staff.*

- 5) *Community Relations. Score: 3.* *Nate has developed very strong relations with the Chief of Police, the Town's Youth Services Advocates, the Town Manager, and the Finance Committee. He's also developed a strong relationship with the Chair of the Board of Selectmen this year. He was visible at Town Meeting, attended the Town wide Summits, and was a frequent and articulate contributor this year to Budget and Revenue Task Force Meetings. The leadership of AYCC has given Nate high mark, and Patsy Kramer has sung Nate's praises to me a number of times. I was pleased to see Nate at the main fundraisers for the Arlington Schools Foundation (ASF) and the Arlington Education Enrichment Fund (AEEF). Nate spoke well at the ASF event and was a judge at the AEEF event. I am sure he attended many, many other events throughout the year, but those happen to be two events where our paths crossed. His willingness to hold a second budget hearing at the Dallin School in April because of a conflict with the Jewish holidays showed sensitivity and demonstrated desire to reach out to parents and community members. I also saw Nate at a retirement party. Nate has done an excellent job of building rapport with the SPED PAC, a group that felt neglected previously. Barbara Tilson and Trish Orlovksy from the SPED PAC give him high marks for listening to them and responding to the concerns of SPED parents. In general, he took the committee's suggestions made at the end of SY '06*

*(his first in Arlington), and became more visible this year. However, as mentioned above, Nate is still learning the value of careful communication, and he needs a clear strategy for communicating and building a relationship with the community at large. I would like to see something about the development of a plan to raise the public's awareness of the schools in the FY '08 Goals that we approve in October. I don't think he has the support staff he needs to communicate well with the general public. This is an area where he and the District can certainly improve. Here Nate is meeting expectations, meaning he is as good as other Superintendents I've observed in other districts. I would really like to see him exceed expectations in this area in the future.*

- 6) *Business & Finance Operations. Score: 5. Nate is extraordinarily strong in the area of budgeting. What he's done in Arlington in terms of redoing our budget process, making the budget more transparent and aligning the budget with School Committee approved policies and goals is an example to other Superintendents throughout the state. This evaluation piece also includes ensuring the safe and orderly maintenance of buildings. The computer system he put in place this year to monitor the cleanliness of buildings is also a model for other districts. My sense in talking to Nate and Sue Mazzarella is that the District is always looking to improve budgeting and budget communications throughout the district.*

**By: Jeffrey D. Thielman**

**Date: June 18, 2007**