

## **SAU 35 Superintendent Year One Evaluation**

### **Executive Summary – 2025-2026 School Year**

The SAU 35 School Board evaluated Superintendent C.J. Watson's performance through stakeholder surveys, board feedback, and review of his self-assessment. Input was received from 63 school staff members, 13 school board members, 5 school office staff members, 4 principals, and 4 central office staff members, providing a broad and balanced perspective on leadership across the SAU.

After completing his first year as Superintendent, the Board finds that CJ has had a positive and stabilizing impact on SAU 35. Throughout the evaluation process, respondents consistently highlighted his professionalism, accessibility, visibility within schools, responsiveness to concerns, and commitment to building relationships. The Board recognizes that CJ entered the organization during a period marked by significant challenges, including leadership turnover, organizational change, Lisbon's transition out of the SAU, and longstanding concerns regarding trust and communication across the district.

A notable strength of CJ's leadership has been his commitment to engagement and relationship-building. Staff, principals, board members, and central office personnel repeatedly cited his visibility in schools, willingness to listen, and efforts to understand the needs of students, staff, and communities. His communication through school visits, meetings, and district newsletters has improved awareness of district initiatives and fostered a stronger sense of connection across the SAU.

The Board also recognizes several significant accomplishments during the year. Under CJ's leadership, the SAU successfully completed policy alignment work across districts, established a strategic planning process that resulted in clear organizational goals, supported the development of facility and capital planning efforts through the EMC assessment process, and successfully managed Lisbon's transition to SAU 110. These accomplishments required collaboration among boards, administrators, and staff and provide a strong foundation for future district improvement.

The Board appreciates CJ's candid self-reflection regarding areas where goals were only partially achieved or not fully met. In particular, his assessment of SAU office succession planning and operational systems demonstrates self-awareness and a willingness to address organizational vulnerabilities. The Board agrees that developing stronger systems, clarifying roles and responsibilities, and ensuring organizational continuity should remain important priorities moving forward.

Feedback from stakeholders also identified opportunities for continued growth. While significant progress has been made, trust-building remains an ongoing effort throughout the SAU. Respondents noted the importance of continued transparency, consistent

communication, and providing additional context regarding the rationale behind decisions. The Board also recognizes CJ's reflection that some initiatives may have progressed more quickly than the organization was prepared to absorb and agrees that balancing momentum with effective change management will be important as the district continues to evolve.

Overall, the Board finds that CJ has successfully established a strong foundation during his first year as Superintendent. He has demonstrated integrity, professionalism, dedication to students, and a genuine commitment to improving SAU 35. The Board believes the district is moving in a positive direction and appreciates the thoughtful, reflective leadership CJ has brought to the role.

As the Board looks ahead to the 2026-2027 school year, we believe there are several areas that warrant continued focus and attention. Based on stakeholder feedback and CJ's own reflections, the Board sees ongoing opportunities to strengthen trust and organizational culture across the SAU, further develop sustainable operational systems and succession planning within the SAU office, and continue expanding engagement with communities and stakeholders throughout the district.

At the same time, the Board values CJ's perspective and professional judgment regarding the district's needs and priorities. These areas are not intended to represent final goals, but rather serve as a starting point for discussion. The Board looks forward to meeting with CJ to review the evaluation results, discuss his reflections on the year, and collaboratively establish meaningful goals and performance objectives for the 2026-2027 school year. We believe this shared approach will help ensure that priorities are aligned, progress is measurable, and efforts remain focused on supporting students, staff, families, and communities across SAU 35.

The Board thanks CJ for his leadership during a challenging and transformative first year. We appreciate the openness and self-reflection demonstrated throughout this evaluation process and look forward to continuing our partnership as we build upon the progress made this year and work together toward the continued success of SAU 35.

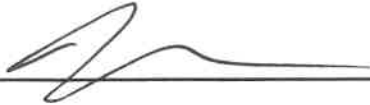
### **Acknowledgement and Signatures**

By signing below, the parties acknowledge that this evaluation has been reviewed and discussed. The signatures do not necessarily indicate agreement with every comment or observation referenced in this evaluation, but rather acknowledge receipt and participation in the evaluation process.



**Robert W. [unclear]**  
Chair, SAU 35 School Board

Date: 7/2/26



**Matthew Copithorne**  
Vice Chair, SAU 35 School Board

Date: 7/2/24



**C.J. Watson**  
Superintendent of Schools, SAU 35

Date: 7/2/26

