

COMMUNITY LETTERS TO THE COMMITTEE



COUNCIL OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA
1350 PENNSYLVANIA AVENUE, N.W.
WASHINGTON, DC 20004

Mary M. Cheh

Councilmember, Ward 3
Chair, Committee on Transportation & the Environment

Office: (202) 724-8062
Fax: (202) 724-8118
mcheh@dccouncil.us
www.marycheh.com

June 14, 2018

Muriel Bowser
Mayor of the District of Columbia
Executive Office of the Mayor
1350 Pennsylvania Ave. NW
Washington, DC 20004

Dear Mayor Bowser,

This past Monday, I joined a group of parents, teachers, and community members in Ward 3 to discuss the selection of the new DCPS Chancellor. It has been nearly four months since Chancellor Wilson resigned, and many in the District are eager for the search to be underway. It is my understanding that you have said the Chancellor search will not officially commence until after the primary next Tuesday. A number of parents have expressed concerns to me about this delay, worried that the candidates are being vetted behind closed doors, and that a new Chancellor will be announced without any community input. With the start of the 2018-19 school year just two months away, I urge you to begin the search process as soon as possible, so that the permanent Chancellor will be in place for the first day of school.

At the June 11th open forum, those in attendance shared concerns that went beyond the slow pace of the search process. As you know, reports from over the last twelve months have shaken the trust that parents have in our public schools. Many parents shared that they feel that they cannot trust our school data to be accurate, policies to be fair, and leadership to be honest. One way to begin regaining that trust would be to meaningfully involve students, parents, and school staff in the selection of their new Chancellor.

Toward that end, I asked the parents, teachers, and community members in attendance to share the qualities that they'd like to see in the new Chancellor, and what an ideal search process would look like. I also asked them to share what issues they'd like the new Chancellor address in his or her first few

months on the job. I have summarized those recommendations below, which I hope will guide the work you and your team do over the summer to identify candidates and select the new Chancellor.

The Process

Attendees shared that an ideal search process would:

- Engage with students, parents, teachers, and community members in neighborhoods throughout all eight wards through community meetings and open forums; and
- Provide the Council, State Board of Education, and District residents with information on the qualifications for nominees as determined by your search committee, the list of questions asked of candidates and answers provided by the chosen candidate, and any other information about candidates or the selection process that would better allow District residents to assess the qualifications of the chosen nominee;
- Adhere to the statutory requirements under §38-174(b), which requires the Mayor to convene a panel of teachers, parents, and students to aid in the selection of the new Chancellor, and consider the opinions and recommendations of the panel in making her nomination. Although a panel was convened during the search that resulted in the selection of Chancellor Wilson, that panel did not receive information on any candidates, and consequently was unable to provide recommendations.

Qualities of a Nominee

Attendees would like the new Chancellor to possess the following qualities:

- Be a champion for DCPS and public schools generally;
- Have a history of being responsive to parents and schools, including providing timely and substantive information to the community;
- Have the skills and experience to provide multi-cultural outreach to families in the District, so as to ensure that all families are kept informed and feel welcome in our schools; and
- Work closely with the Executive Director of the Education Research Collaborative, and actively use research and recommendations from the Collaborative to inform needed school reforms.

First Steps

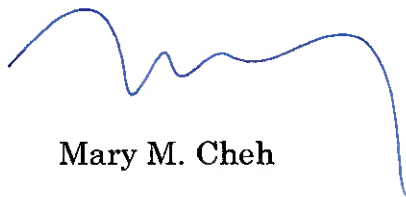
Attendees called on the new Chancellor to do the following in his or her first months on the job:

- Issue a comprehensive plan for his or her time at DCPS, outlining major short and long-term goals;
- Reform the school budget process to increase transparency and consistency in school budgets from year to year;
- Develop a plan to address enrollment and capacity concerns throughout the District, including ensuring the availability of universal pre-K;
- Reduce Central Office bureaucracy, and provide needed flexibility to principals and teachers to set policies and rules that are appropriate for their students and school; and
- Hire a Chief of Special Education, and invest additional funding and staffing resources into ensuring schools can meet the needs of students with special needs and comply with special education mandates under District and federal law.

As noted above, §38-174(b) requires the Mayor to convene a panel of teachers, parents, and students to provide guidance on the selection of the next Chancellor. I believe this panel plays a particularly important role in this search. As such, please provide me with the names of the individuals who you have chosen to sit on this panel, a description of their role in the search process, and when you anticipate the panel will first meet. If you have not yet selected members of the panel, please announce the date by which you anticipate making that decision.

As you know, residents throughout the District are eager to be involved in the Chancellor selection process, and they (and I) are ready to provide you and your team with support and guidance as you work to identify the best candidate. I look forward to learning more about your plans for that process, and how you and your team will be engaging with the Council and District residents in the search for the new Chancellor. Thanks very much.

Best,



Mary M. Cheh

Cc: Councilmember David Grosso

Cc: State Board of Education Member for Ward 3 Ruth Wattenberg

To: Mayor Bowser

June 27, 2018

Re: Meeting Request Regarding Chancellor and DME Selection

We write to you today as a diverse coalition of parents, teachers, community members and advocates from all 8 wards who believe that all students deserve a neighborhood public school of exceptional quality that is a matter of right, not just choice.

We would like to meet with you to discuss the process and goals for your upcoming DCPS Chancellor and Deputy Mayor for Education (“DME”) appointments.

We believe those appointments will be critical for the future of education in our city.

We are convinced that the process of Chancellor and DME selection could only benefit from a candid discussion with a broad range of stakeholders, including our group which represents organizations in all 8 wards, as you embark on these important processes.

Indeed, such a meeting would align with the critical need for the kind of community engagement surrounding these processes that would comport with the legal requirements and can result in the strongest possible platform for the eventual appointees. We hope the processes will include:

- Full transparency around the process that is available to the public and updated often.
- A review panel of teachers, including representatives of the Washington Teachers Union, parents, and students, with great weight given to the panel’s recommendations.
- Stakeholder meetings in every ward with concrete takeaways that are publicly reported and will form key decision criteria.

This is a pivotal moment. We often find ourselves debating the success or failure of the pivotal 2007 reforms. The reality is we’re in a new time. We’ve seen improvements and failures--but if the controversies of the last year have taught us anything, it must be that we remain very far from achieving our goals and must cause us candidly to reassess what is working and what is not.

We hope you will take the opportunity to meet with us to discuss these issues. We will follow up with your scheduler to explore a date and time for such a meeting. In the meantime, in order to maximize the value of any such discussion, we have attached an outline of our views of the current education landscape and key priorities for your appointees.

Sincerely,

The Capitol Hill Public School Parent
Organization (CHPSPO)

Citizens for Effective Schools

EducationDC.net

Education Town Hall- We Act Radio

EmpowerEd DC

NAACP DC

Teaching for Change

Ward One Education Collaborative

Ward Five Council of Education

Ward Seven Education Council

Ward Eight Education Council

Washington Lawyers Committee for Civil
Rights and Urban Affairs

Washington Teachers Union (WTU)

June 27 , 2018

Open Letter to Mayor Muriel Bowser and D.C. Council:

We Need a Chancellor and DME to Support DCPS and Make Mid-Course Corrections

We write to you today as a diverse coalition of parents, teachers, community members and advocates from all 8 wards who believe all students deserve a neighborhood public school of exceptional quality that is a matter of right, not just choice. As you embark on the process of selecting a new DCPS Chancellor and Deputy Mayor for Education, we ask that you consider how both of these appointees as well as this process may serve as a starting point for the positive, constructive agenda we articulate below.

We're now over a decade into education reforms. We've invested in state-of-the-art facilities, expanded curricular options, increased pre-K 3 seats, and ensured higher teacher pay. These were the right things to do, but there is still so much more to be done. At the same time, the narrative of success does not match reality. NAEP scores were growing faster in the several years before the reforms than they have in the years since. The achievement gap is now wider than it was in 2007. While the city has many strong matter-of-right elementary schools, it has struggled to retain families in most of our neighborhood middle and high schools. Overall, the share of DCPS students has decreased every year, and with almost half of students in DC attending publicly funded charter schools, commutes across town are often a burden. Teacher and principal turnover is at a crisis level in DCPS and charter schools and despite higher pay, morale among teachers is often low. And recent scandals for attendance, graduation accountability, and residency have further eroded community trust in DCPS.

For all of these reasons, our city must undertake a Chancellor selection process that fully and broadly engages the community, acknowledges what isn't working, and takes concrete steps to chart change. We remain ever hopeful our system can regain its footing and make improvements that genuinely improve our system for all stakeholders--most importantly our students and families.

The next chancellor has the opportunity to set a positive, forward looking, research and experienced-based agenda for DC schools. **Our diverse coalition of experienced stakeholders offers a starting point in this letter. We need leadership committed to shifting the culture to one that is collaborative, teaching- and-learning centered, community-engaged, equitable, honest, transparent, and supportive of school-based educators to win the commitment of teachers, principals, students and families. We need leadership who can improve and strengthen our school reform culture.**

It may be tempting to simply champion a stay-the-course approach, but we believe this is an opportunity to make DCPS even stronger. We need leadership willing to both identify what's gone right as well as open and willing to identify areas for improvement and make mid-course corrections. Recent scandals point to the huge gap between the rhetoric of reform, the day-to-day experience of our schools' students, and elevate the challenges we must address in order to have our education system work for all kids.

Let us begin this conversation from a common set of facts:

Annual progress measured by the Department of Education's NAEP reading and math test scores these past ten years has actually been less than in the years before the so-called reforms were implemented. Budget analyst Mary Levy has shown that while 4th grade math scores, in DCPS and charter schools combined, improved annually by 3.2 scale points from 2000 to 2007, from 2007 and 2017, they improved only 1.8 scale points annually. Before 2007, 8th grade reading scores for black

students increased 2.1 points annually, but only 1.15 points since. If the 2007-09 improvements were credited to the pre-reform policies where they probably belong, then much of the progress since reform would be even worse. We understand the desire to focus on raw point gains--but doing so ignores the racial and economic achievement gaps that we have done little to improve. Recent NAEP scores for 2017 confirm another year of little to no progress on student achievement measurements, with scores for the bottom 25% of students declining and the achievement gaps by race and income widening between 2015 and 2017.

Insisting on staying the course now would mean:

--accepting a huge racial/ethnic achievement gap, endangered matter-of-right schools in high-poverty neighborhoods because of heavy reliance on test scores for school quality ratings, excessive focus on test prep, frustrated and disengaged parents and community members, a culture of fear and stress among the teaching staff, unreliable data, and a lack of honest research on what's working.

--accepting the high turnover among teachers and principals that has not abated since it began in 2007. Twenty percent of teachers and twenty-five percent of principals leave DCPS each year. In our highest poverty, lowest-performing schools, teacher turnover is 33%--and it's even higher in many charter schools. This is not simply a matter of differential turnover. While DCPS points to 94% retention of highly effective educators, those numbers vary widely depending on the school and include many educators who have been consistently rated effective or highly effective except for the one score on the year they left the system. These turnover rates are substantially higher than those of similar urban districts where achievement gains have been at least as fast, if not faster, than DCPS.

The Next Chancellor and Deputy Mayor for Education Must Be Prepared to Change Culture.

The path to improved student learning and better matter-of-right schools in every ward must include the following:

- **A Stable, High-Quality Staff of Teachers and Principals in DCPS** – Teaching and learning centered schools require a stable staff of adults that students, especially the most vulnerable, can relate to. First, principals should receive longer contracts that allow them to establish and implement good faith, sustainable efforts and build trust and community with staff and families. Second, we should encourage teachers to innovate, collaborate, and mentor each other in order to better improve instruction, reach students, and create a vibrant, professional school culture and provide training and other resources teachers say they need to strengthen their knowledge and skills and grow professionally. Third, we must move away from the punitive IMPACT system, designed to rank and rate educators rather than improve teaching. According to teachers, IMPACT contributes to teacher dissatisfaction and churn, particularly in high poverty schools, and incentivizes databending shortcuts like grade inflation and lowered graduation standards. That doesn't mean we shouldn't evaluate teacher performance and seek to retain the most effective educators- but we must build a more collaborative and less oppositional system that encourages teachers, coaches, principals and support staff to work together for the common good of our students. Such systems exist, and we look forward to playing a role in supporting smart reforms to teacher evaluation that achieve this end.

- **A Rich, Broad Curriculum Everywhere** – Educate the whole child instead of focusing primarily on reading and math skills. As shown by research and experience, a broad, challenging curriculum including science, social studies and arts is the best way to improve student learning, including in the early grades.
- **Equitable Funding** – Provide resources adequate, and tailored, to student need in all schools. That means additional resources and staffing allocated according to a weighted student formula to target students significantly behind grade level for intervention. Deploy additional staff to work directly with high-need students and high-need schools. Ensure schools receiving at-risk funds are able to use those funds for specific strategies and supports they need to help at-risk students.
- **Listening to Individual Schools** – More Responsiveness to What School Communities Need and Fewer Top-down Mandates – This means DCPS’s central administrators would shift to collaborating with each school to create a dynamic, trusted, innovative learning culture—not the other way around. The current approach – Central Office rolling out top-down strategies to be implemented with fealty, whether or not they work and make sense at each school– is not viable. Support each school’s staff, parents, community members and secondary students to conduct comprehensive needs assessments and develop and implement individualized school improvement plans addressing that school’s needs. Central Office needs to support greater school autonomy and creativity, rather than impose system-wide uniformity. While one school may need twenty electives, at another school that mandate might unfairly impact staffing and create virtually empty classes and extra teacher preparations instead of using those staff resources where they are needed most.
- **Fixing a Broken Discipline System that Disproportionality Harms Children of Color and Children with Disabilities** - Far too many children of color and children with disabilities are suspended or otherwise disciplined in the District schools, often for ordinary adolescent behaviors, conduct related to a disability or resulting from trauma. A comprehensive change to the approach to student behavior that is trauma informed and eliminates bias is essential.
- **Community Schools** –Greatly expand the community schooling approach of wraparound services to overcome students’ non-academic obstacles to learning, such as health and housing; expand extended day and extended year offerings, including sports and civic engagement activities; reach out to parents and families to involve them in school life and support their children’s learning at home; and empower educators to innovate and apply their professional judgment in how schools operate.
- **Learning from What Works and What Doesn’t** – Honest, Transparent and Independent Data and Research – We know so little about what’s working. Every year there are new initiatives, but which work and how do we know? No research is done to find out. We need to collect a wider range of data about how we’re doing. The data need to be impartially analyzed and publicly reported by independent researchers. Useful data, like parent, teacher and student satisfaction surveys, staff turnover rates, and the results of programs implemented and dollars expended, need to be both collected and made public. A simplified star rating system will only exacerbate these problems. Parents need access to a full view of what’s working and not in our schools, and boiling complex environments down to a star rating may only further erode trust in our public schools and exacerbate racial and class divisions in the city.

- **A Respectful and Trusting Environment of Enthusiastic Engagement** – Collaborate with each school to create a welcoming, respectful, trusting and enthusiastically engaged environment for all school staff, students, parents and community members.
- **Work to Eliminate Racial Segregation in Schools** – The District schools remain largely segregated by race more than 60 years after the decision in *Bolling v. Sharpe*. The overwhelming majority of African American students go to all Black schools. The new superintendent must address the current state of separate and unequal.
- **Reform the Modernization and Stabilization Systems of Our School Buildings.** Too many schools have not been modernized, and schools that have been modernized are not adequately maintained. We cannot build students' knowledge when the buildings are in constant crisis.
- **Matter of Right Pre-K 3 and 4 and clear path from PreK- 12-** Universal access to pre-school is just a starting point. Now it's time to ensure all families have a matter of right pre-K- 3 and 4 program in their neighborhood DCPS school and a clear path of quality DCPS schools so that students can attend quality DCPS schools from Pre-K to 12 in their own neighborhood. Choice does not solve this problem. Instead, we've seen increased school segregation that actually harms students.
- **A Robust Technology Plan for All Schools-** We must ensure equity in the distribution of both technology and access to technology-based learning throughout our city. Leaving this up to chance has resulted in a continued digital divide that mirrors socioeconomic status of students, which exacerbates our opportunity and achievement gaps.
- **The Next DME Must Ensure Quality Matter of Right Schools in all Wards-** The next DME must believe in the power of our neighborhood schools and work in partnership with the chancellor to strengthen the matter-of-right neighborhood schools and their feeder patterns and deliberately work to strategically build enrollment. The current lottery system and continued unfettered expansion of charter schools providing duplicative services with DCPS is inefficient and counter-productive. With 21,000 more seats than students, we cannot keep opening and expanding charter schools without doing irreparable harm to the system of matter-of- right neighborhood schools, which are the guarantors of public education. The Cross-sector Task Force failed to grapple with this most pressing problem. The new DME must prioritize a rational plan for how best to efficiently provide for quality matter-of-right public schools in every neighborhood and in every ward, and this must take precedence over the business interests of charter operators. The Mayor and D.C. Council have authority over all our schools funded by public tax dollars and responsibility to decide the public education landscape. Charter schools represent roughly half of our student population. As such public charter schools must be truly public and operate under the same standards as public schools, including being subject to FOIA and the Open Meetings Act. Additionally, if charter schools receive public funds for facilities, the process by which those funds are used and the schools expanded must be clearly outlined, transparent, and with the full knowledge and approval of the community first, not last or never.

Strong Community Engagement Will Earn Trust and Develop Understanding to Set the Stage for the Success of the Next Chancellor and DME.

We believe the recruitment and hiring process for the next Chancellor needs to follow the law. Under the previous process, there were opportunities for public comment, but not a sufficient opportunity for the public to make a serious impact on the final decision as mandated by the law.

We believe the selection of the next Chancellor will succeed only when it is informed by a community engagement process that includes what the law mandates:

- Full transparency around the process that is available to the public and updated often.
- A review panel of teachers, including representatives of the Washington Teachers Union, parents, and students, with great weight given to the panel's recommendations.
- Stakeholder meetings in every ward with concrete takeaways that are publicly reported and will form key decision criteria.

This is a pivotal moment. We implore you not to make a status quo appointment for our next Chancellor and DME. We find ourselves in DC often debating the success or failure of the pivotal 2007 reforms.

The reality is that we're in a new time. We've seen improvements and failures--but if we have invested so heavily in our city's schools and 11 years later have failed to move the needle on the achievement gap, there is simply no excuse to cling to the status quo. A top-down, test score and graduation rate-driven culture is not working for our students, families, communities and taxpayers. We need as Chancellor and DME seasoned educators who are both committed to a strong, neighborhood system of DCPS schools and have the knowledge, skills and confidence to re-examine our direction to help get us there. Only in that way will all of our young people, no matter where they live, excel.

We would appreciate the opportunity to meet with you to discuss these important matters.

Sincerely,

The Capitol Hill Public School Parent
Organization (CHPSPO)

Citizens for Effective Schools

EducationDC.net

Education Town Hall- We Act Radio

EmpowerEd DC

NAACP DC

Teaching for Change

Ward One Education Collaborative

Ward Five Council of Education

Ward Seven Education Council

Ward Eight Education Council

Washington Lawyers Committee for Civil
Rights and Urban Affairs

Washington Teachers Union (WTU)

Individuals Signatories

Abigail Martin

Amy Rothschild

Beth Sewell

Akosua Ali

An Almquist

Bruce DarConte

Aleah Meyers

Aritsidis Payne-Tsoupros

Carlos Plaza

Alexandra Simbana

Ava

Caroline Brewer

Allison Acosta

Barabar Schwabauer

Carlton Ackerman

Allison Harvey

Becky Reina

Cheryl Millet

Allyson Criner Brown

Begaeta Ahmic

Chioma Oruh

Amita Lathigra

Benjamin Michael Williams

Christine Miller

Cubby Brown	Jonathan Pajibo	Sarah Hudgins
Cynthia Grant	Julian F. MacDonald, Ed.D	Sarah Whitener
Danica Petroschius	Karen M. Wilson- Ama'Echefu	Sasha Gottlieb
Darian McKinney	Kent Withycombe	Scott Goldstein
David Reina	Kristen Degan	Shahna Gooneratne
Deborah Kline	Laura Fuchs	Sharice Lane
Deborah L. Polhemus	Laura Rear McLaughlin	Shayna Tivona
Deborah Menkart	Lindsey Jones-Renaud	Simona Spicciani Gerhardt
Denise Curry	Lisa Curtis	Shelina Warren
Dowan McNair-Lee	Liz Festa	Shemeka Ivy
Elizabeth Bacon	Louise Chapman	Sumner McRae
Elizabeth Bergner	Lucy Rojansky	Susan Ousley
Elizabeth Koenig	Lydia Sampedro	Suzanne Wells
Emily Gasoi	Lynda Tredway	Suzy Glucksman
Emily Y. Washington	Mark Simon	Talia Brock
Erika Landberg	Markus Batchelor	Tara McGuinness
Erin Cooper	Mary Nezek	Theodore Ngatchou
Erin Roth	Maybelline McCoy	Thomas K Byrd
Gary Ratner	Meredith Perry	Tiffany Pyen
George Telzrow	Micah Winograd	Tina L. Fletcher
Guarina Lopez-Davis	Michael Leibman	Travis Brown
Guy Brandenburg	Myrna Mandlawitz	Valerie Jablow
Haninah Levine	Nicholas Fels	Vanessa Nikki Harvey
Iris Jacob	Patricia Balestra	Yaqueline Clauss
Iris Toyer	Rachel Henighan	Yolanda Whitted
Ivy Ken	Rev. Graylan Scott Hagler	Zachary Leibman
Jessica Perlmutter	Roberta Killgore	Zeke Reich
Jessica Simone Pannett	Samantha Caruth	Zia Hassan
John McInerney		



COUNCIL OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA
THE JOHN A. WILSON BUILDING
1350 PENNSYLVANIA AVENUE, NW
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20004

David Grosso
Councilmember At-Large
Chairperson, Committee on Education

Committee Member
Health
Human Services
Judiciary and Public Safety

July 27, 2018

The Honorable Muriel Bowser
Mayor of the District of Columbia
1350 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20004

Mayor Bowser:

As you engage in the process to nominate a new Chancellor for D.C. Public Schools (DCPS), I wanted to share with you some thoughts on characteristics I believe are important for the future leader of the school system and request a meeting to discuss how we can work together on this process. Serving on the Committee on Education for the past five and a half years, first as a member and now as chairperson, and working closely with the past two Chancellors on various initiatives has afforded me a unique perspective on the state of public education in D.C. and how that interplays with the role of Chancellor. Given this past school year's challenges, I believe this selection process provides a new opportunity to build trust with the community. It is important that we get this right.

Over the years we have seen DCPS transform from an underperforming school system to one that is nationally known for its growth and innovation and now to one that is mired in controversy. With that said, I have consistently heard across the community concerns about the public process and the composition of the search committee. I'd love to hear more details on your plans to engage the community in this process.

I know you will undoubtedly put forward a nominee whose resume shows depth and experience in public education, hopefully both in the classroom and as an administrator. However, neither titles nor the number of degrees held are as important to me as a candidate's past work demonstrating an abiding commitment to closing the achievement gap. DCPS has certainly made tremendous gains in terms of academic performance over the past few years; however, the achievement gap between minority students and their white peers persists and the overall academic success of DCPS hinges on whether these students are able to go further, faster.

Across the community town halls I have been holding this summer, students have discussed the need for more mental health supports in their schools. As you know, this has been a focus of the work of the Education Committee, and I appreciate your support in this effort. To that end, I would hope that the next Chancellor continues the commitment to social and emotional learning that Chancellor Wilson began. Students will be able to learn when they are in environments conducive to learning. This means environments where they feel loved and supported. A Chancellor committed to building our teaching force's ability to recognize trauma and act accordingly, along with providing resources that support trauma-informed instruction, will allow our students to truly meet their highest potential.

A willingness to engage in cross-sector collaboration is also important, especially as D.C.'s school-aged population continues to grow and students are mobile across LEAs. Students participating in my town halls have had experience in both traditional public and public charter schools and they have made no distinction between the two. While a DCPS Chancellor's first priority must be DCPS schools, there is value in learning and partnering with other LEAs. Through this learning, I believe we can have a strong, thriving, by-right system of schools across the city.

I am certain that you can find someone who embodies all of these characteristics and much more. I hope you will keep these thoughts in mind as you review resumes and speak with candidates. I am committed to a fair confirmation process and look forward to working with you over the next few months.

Sincerely,



David Grosso
Councilmember, At-Large
Chairperson, Committee on Education



Brandon T. Todd
Councilmember, Ward 4
Chairman, Committee on Government Operations

Committee Member
Health
Human Services
Transportation and the Environment



Ward 4 Education Alliance

August 1, 2018

Mayor Muriel Bowser
John A. Wilson Building
1350 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20004

Dear Mayor Bowser,

On July 17, 2018, the Ward 4 Education Alliance and I hosted a strong group of Ward 4 education stakeholders at a joint meeting to hear their thoughts on the selection and appointment of the DC Public Schools (DCPS) Chancellor and the DC Deputy Mayor for Education (DME).

It was a diverse group of parents and community members, as well as current and former teachers and principals from DCPS and DC Public Charter Schools (DCPCS). This group was eager to be involved and to be part of the selection process. We will forward this letter to the members of the Our Schools Leadership Committee and keep our residents informed of the meetings this summer and into the fall.

The purpose of the meeting was to solicit thoughts for what these groups believe would make for good administrators. The following is a thoughtful list generated at our meeting of the qualities our families want to see in our DME and DCPS Chancellor, as well as issues they hope to see addressed by the Chancellor.

Qualities of the Deputy Mayor for Education:

- Good communicator; the ability to connect with varied communities and to make the duties of the office clear and concise.
- Ability to work well with both DCPS and DCPCS officials and advocates.
- Experience and background to effectively receive reports from, evaluate, and support the Chancellor and State Superintendent of Education.
- Facilitate partnerships across agencies serving families so as to increase services offered in schools and better meet their needs.
- Address the needs of families with youngest children age zero to three.
- Effective in working on sensitive matters with elected officials, agency leaders, and various stakeholders across the District.



Brandon T. Todd
Councilmember, Ward 4
Chairman, Committee on Government Operations

Committee Member
Health
Human Services
Transportation and the Environment



Ward 4 Education Alliance

Qualities of the DCPS Chancellor:

- Proven record of honesty and integrity.
- Demonstrated a willingness to be fully transparent in their decision-making.
- The ability to listen and translate what they hear into policy and action.
- Values engagement with parents, students, and the community in both large and small settings.
- Strong advocate for DCPS and all staff at schools and the central office.
- Excellent manager who is laser-focused on the local agenda rather than on promotion of national status.
- Proven track record of teacher and administrator support, as well as strong approval on satisfaction surveys from teachers, parents and principals.
- Educator with experience serving in the classroom and as a principal.
- Comfortable and effective in working on sensitive matters with elected officials, agency leaders, and various stakeholders across the District.
- Willingness to make a long-term commitment to our school system.
- Values institutional knowledge while seriously examining reforms.
- Experience working in an urban setting and has demonstrated the ability to address issues at both the individual school, neighborhood, and city levels.

Once appointed, we would like to see the DCPS Chancellor:

- Focus on school-level performance and foster a system that encourages honest feedback from teachers, administrators, and families.
- Understand and champion a job accountability and student evaluation system that works toward creating a process for open dialogue and feedback.
- Continue a focus on social emotional learning, supportively and constructively address attendance and discipline issues early in a child's education.
- Set achievable and realistic goals that are attainable at every level.
- Focus on expanding language immersion programming in Ward 4 and District-wide.
- Be willing to collaboratively and creatively take risks in our schools to re-build trust that some feel has been degraded.
- Continue to focus on equity across all schools.
- Continue to focus on investments in our buildings and programs.
- Examine and adjust how we relate to children with multiple special needs to ensure our schools fully support them over the entire span of their education.



Brandon T. Todd
 Councilmember, Ward 4
 Chairman, Committee on Government Operations

Committee Member
 Health
 Human Services
 Transportation and the Environment



Ward 4 Education Alliance

Ward 4 has a growing population at our DCPS elementary schools. We are looking forward to working with the DCPS Chancellor to ensure that our families see Ward 4 DCPS secondary schools as quality options. We are excited as we watch the modernization of Coolidge High School and the new middle school come to life. Additionally, with MacFarland taking the first full group of 6th graders this year and Roosevelt’s global opportunities, we are excited to see our schools continue to expand.

The Deputy Mayor for Education and the Chancellor will have a full plate working to coordinate the city’s agencies to serve all children and families of our city, including coordinating the planning between DCPS and the charter schools. This community stands ready and willing to be engaged to support this work.

We look forward to continuing this dialogue and working with you to ensure that all voices are heard as we search for the individuals best qualified for these education leadership positions.

Sincerely,

Brandon T. Todd, Councilmember, Ward 4

Cathy Reilly, Chair, Ward 4 Education Alliance

CC: Co-chairs Dr. Sylvia Mathews Burwell, Dr. Charlene Drew Jarvis

- Anita Berger, Principal of Banneker High School
- Rosa Carrillo, DCPS parent and Language Services Program Director of Multicultural Community Services
- Tumeka Coleman, Walker-Jones EC, DCPS 2018 Teacher of the Year
- Elizabeth Davis, President of the Washington Teachers’ Union
- Antwayne Ford, Chair of the Work Force Investment Council
- Nicky Goren, Ward 3 Parent
- Sean Gough, Director of Government Relations at Friendship Public Charter Schools
- Danielle Hamberger, Director of Education Initiatives at A. James & Alice B. Clark Foundation
- Arnebya Herndon, Ward 7 Parent
- Jeanie Lee, President and Executive Director of DC Public Education Fund
- Zion Matthews, Student at Ron Brown College Preparatory High School, 10th Grade
- Victor Reinoso, CEO and Co-Founder of Decision Science, Ward 4 Resident Parent



**COUNCIL OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA
THE JOHN A. WILSON BUILDING
1350 PENNSYLVANIA AVENUE, NW
WASHINGTON, DC 20004**

Charles Allen
Councilmember, Ward 6
Chairperson
Committee on the Judiciary and Public Safety

Committee Member
Business and Economic Development
Education
Transportation and the Environment

August 21, 2018

Muriel Bowser
Mayor of the District of Columbia
Executive Office of the Mayor
1350 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20004

Dr. Charlene Drew Jarvis
Sylvia Mathews Burwell
Our Schools Leadership Committee Co-Chairs
via email

Dear Mayor Bowser, Dr. Jarvis, and President Burwell:

With the search process for a new DC Public Schools Chancellor now underway, we are at a critical moment in the future of public education in the District. The opportunity – and indeed, the challenge – before us is to find the best person to lead DCPS forward, to build on our accomplishments but also to repair the public’s lost trust in our schools and their leadership. This person must be ready to tackle head-on -- with urgency and honesty -- the many challenges facing our schools including the achievement gap, truancy, high teacher and principal turnover, and ensuring every child in DC can attend a great neighborhood school at every age. As a member of the Council’s Committee on Education and a DCPS parent myself, I know how important this work is and the crucial role the Chancellor plays in the success of every aspect of our public education system.

With that in mind, I recently met with a group of Ward 6 parents, educators, and community members regarding their hopes and goals for the selection of the next Chancellor. Co-hosted together with the Capitol Hill Public Schools Parent Organization and Joe Weedon, Ward 6 State Board of Education member, the discussion focused on the search process itself, desired qualifications for Chancellor candidates, and short- and long-term priorities for the incoming Chancellor.

This diverse group of education stakeholders were eager to be involved in the selection process and the evening's discussion featured thoughtful comments and substantive feedback that I wanted to summarize and share with you as representative of the Ward 6 community's priorities:

Chancellor Search Process Priorities

- **Transparency**: Special attention to transparency throughout the search process will be crucial to rebuilding public trust in DCPS. Stakeholders want information about the search timeline to be publicly available and for all meetings to be conducted in accordance with the District's Open Meetings Act. Meaningful opportunities for community input into the process should be created citywide at convenient times and locations. All candidates should be vetted for consideration by the full committee.
- **Composition**: Like myself, attendees were disappointed that no Ward 6 residents were selected for the Our Schools Leadership Committee. With 14 members, the exclusion of any Ward 6 resident participation was jarring, and attendees expressed concern that our unique neighborhood priorities and perspectives will not be considered. Many attendees raised questions about committee members with ties to non-DCPS schools and why they were appointed. Stakeholders noted there are no representatives from neighborhood high schools – special efforts should be made to seek those school communities' input.
- **Equity**: While some neighborhoods and wards are conducting their own meetings to gather input (Wards 3, 4, and 6, in particular), concern was expressed that many parts of the city won't be as fully represented. Residents wanted to ensure the committee will be hearing from Wards 7 and 8 stakeholders, with special efforts made to solicit their input. There was also the suggestion that a city-wide meeting of parents be organized with the Mayor to discuss the Chancellor selection process.
- **Legal Requirements**: Stakeholders asked that this search process comply with the full range of specifications set forth in §38–174. Attendees raised concerns that teacher and student voices are not being heard, and that additional seats on the committee should be created to increase their participation as required by the law. In addition, attendees said the search committee should receive the resumes of candidates under consideration prior to their selection, and that the Washington Teachers Union be afforded great weight in the making of the nomination.

Chancellor Candidate Qualifications

Many comments about candidate qualifications referenced input offered during the 2016 Chancellor search process. Attendees stated there is no need to “reinvent the wheel” – many thoughtful suggestions were made then that still apply now, including the attached August 11, 2016 sign-on letter from the Coalition for DC Public Schools & Communities.

Building on that input, residents also specifically mentioned:

- **Character:** Given the circumstances of Chancellor Wilson's and Deputy Mayor Niles' departures, the next Chancellor will need an unquestioned commitment to ethical behavior in office and a willingness to have difficult, honest conversations in order to rebuild trust with the community.
- **Equity and Community:** Candidates should have experience addressing issues of equity in diverse communities, a strong sense of urgency about the work needed to improve graduation rates and close DC's achievement gaps, and a true commitment to build partnerships with community organizations and residents.
- **Experience:** The next Chancellor should have on-the-ground experience in traditional public schools and as a school administrator. She or he should understand policy implementation, how to collaborate effectively with other agencies, be able to define success for DCPS, and be willing to be held accountable in his or her contract.
- **Continuous Improvement:** Residents want a Chancellor who can articulate a long-term plan for DCPS's future and who will advocate for the continued growth and success of DCPS schools and students. The Chancellor should prioritize real progress over public relations, be willing to conduct actual research to learn what is working and what isn't, and be transparent about both successes and failures. Again, a willingness to have difficult, honest conversations with the community will be essential to rebuilding public trust in DCPS.
- **Focus on Students, Listen to Teachers:** The next Chancellor should continue the focus on social emotional learning and the whole child approach to education, ensuring all students have access to a well-rounded curriculum at all levels and making decisions based on what's best for students. The Chancellor should also be willing to listen to and partner with teachers, including a commitment to providing strong supports for principals and investments in teacher leadership.

Short and Long-Term Priorities

Once the new Chancellor is in place, attendees raised the following items as top priorities needing immediate attention:

- Rebuild trust with parents and the community;
- Create a vision to grow DCPS, from birth through graduation with great schools and predictable pathways in every neighborhood;
- Close the achievement gap, with a particular emphasis on supporting at-risk and homeless students;
- Work to ensure all students receive a high-quality, well-rounded education and are being challenged;
- Improve special education, including the delivery of services, child-find efforts, and communication with families;

- Change the DCPS school-level budgeting model to better support struggling schools and empower local school advisory teams (LSATs);
- Better incentivize high performing teachers to stay in struggling schools;
- Create and fund a District-wide technology plan so that schools are properly resourced;
- Improve collaboration with sister agencies to better leverage resources from outside DCPS to more fully support at-risk students, especially those experiencing homelessness and trauma;
- Build a culture of transparency and accountability within DCPS; and
- Reduce teacher and principal turnover.

Attendees also noted all of this feedback applies equally to the selection of a new Deputy Mayor for Education. Stakeholders recognize that both positions are critical to improving our public schools and creating a successful educational system in the District.

I plan to hold another meeting on Monday, September 24, at 6:30pm with our Ward 6 State Board of Education representative to solicit additional feedback from the Ward 6 community. I will share the location once confirmed, and would welcome your attendance and that of the Our Schools Leadership Committee. I hope you'll all be able to join me – I think you will hear from residents that the Ward 6 community is eager to participate in this process and stands ready to partner with you and DCPS on the critical work of building great public schools in every neighborhood.

Sincerely,



Councilmember Charles Allen, Ward 6
Chair, Committee on the Judiciary and Public Safety

cc: Councilmember David Grosso, Chair – Council Committee on Education
Anita Berger
Rosa Carrillo
Tumeka Coleman
Elizabeth Davis
Antwayne Ford
Nicky Goren
Sean Gough
Danielle Hamberger
Arnebya Herndon
Jeanie Lee
Zion Matthews
Victor Reinoso

The next DCPS Chancellor must be a champion of multilingual education

August 28, 2018



The DC Language Immersion Project works to engage families, support educators, research best practices and advocate for a systemic approach to close the opportunity gap through multilingual education.

In December of 2016, we testified in front of the Education Committee of the DC Council on the skills the next DC Public Schools Chancellor must have to address the District's most pressing issue—the achievement gap. Read our testimony [Narrowing the Opportunity Gap Through Dual Language Education](#) or watch it [here](#).

The latest PARCC scores show the achievement gap is still unacceptably wide. Therefore, once again, here are our hopes for the next DCPS Chancellor, as they align with the three main priorities areas set out in the Chancellor Search Community Engagement Report issued in October 2016.

Reduce the achievement gap

The focus on reducing the achievement gap must rely on proven initiatives, backed up by solid data and longitudinal research and should be strategically and systemically integrated into the District's education system.

According to longitudinal studies across the country, [students in dual language programs achieve at higher rates than their peers in non dual language programs](#). DC-specific data seems to indicate that this is true also in the District.

Additionally, closing the achievement gap through multilingual education would [directly improve access to college and jobs, as linguistic and cultural competence become a requirement for many jobs, especially in DC](#).

We hope the next Chancellor will integrate language and culture as a critical component in DCPS' access and equity agenda, and will recognize ["language education as a persistent national need similar to education in math or English"](#), and ["ensure that a useful level of proficiency is within every student's reach."](#)

Increase opportunities for all students

Increased opportunity for all students, including equitable access to programmatic options, is crucial in the District's fight towards equity. DC Immersion is pleased that [DCPS' 2017-2022 Strategic Plan includes the expansion of multilingual programs](#). However, more needs to be done to increase [equity of access](#) to specialized programs such as dual language programs.

Currently, [only 20% of DC's English Learners are in dual language programs](#), despite research being unanimous on these programs being [most effective in increasing achievement for DC's growing immigrant population](#).

At the same time, the most [socioeconomically disadvantaged African American children are excluded from the dual language conversation](#), despite researchers saying that [dual language programs benefit disadvantaged, black students too](#).

Additionally, [if school integration is key to opportunity for all students, then dual language programs should be used as a mean to this end](#), by leveraging DC's diversity and by using demand for these programs as a tool to translate the socioeconomic diversity that exists in our neighborhoods to our neighborhood schools.

We hope the next Chancellor will increase opportunity for all students by providing greater access to and equity in dual language education.

Increase parent and community engagement and communication

As an organization that promotes community engagement and that relies heavily on data and research, DC Immersion believes "greater transparency and more effective communication" are paramount. In the area of multilingual education, DCPS should:

- encourage research aimed at better understanding [parental demand for programs such as dual language immersion](#);
- accelerate the collection and reporting of data that can effectively inform the discussion around education, such as the reporting of data by strand in schools that have a dual language and non dual language programs;
- make better use of the data it already has, whether from previous engagement, testing or other, and should shape priorities on the basis of that data, particularly in areas where parents have clearly indicated what they consider valuable.

If DCPS is serious about parental engagement, it should actively support [legislation like that of California](#) where schools must provide a dual language program where families of 20 or more students in any grade (or 30 families across all grades) request it, regardless of language spoken at home. The clear rationale in California is economic opportunity. And that rationale is the same for DC.

We hope the next Chancellor will meet parental demand by supporting legislation that gives real power to families in shaping immediate strategic priorities for their children, and will rapidly move to ensure that the information that District residents have already provided be made transparent and be utilized to help shape strategic priorities.

Many DCPS teachers, staff and officials, including the interim Chancellor Amanda Alexander, understand the value of dual language programs as a competency that students need to be successful in this world. We hope that the next Chancellor will harness the skills and passion of so many to implement a visionary initiative based on empirical evidence – the building of a comprehensive dual language education system in the District of Columbia.



September 18, 2018

The Honorable Muriel Bowser
Mayor of the District of Columbia
John A. Wilson Building
1350 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20004

Dear Mayor Bowser,

On Wednesday, September 5, 2018, the DC State Board of Education held its monthly working session where Interim Deputy Mayor for Education Ahnna Smith briefed the State Board about the ongoing search for the next District of Columbia Public Schools (DCPS) chancellor. Deputy Mayor Smith asked the members for their insight into what was most important for you to consider as you make your selection of the next chancellor. The discussion resulted in a thoughtful conversation about some of the priorities, concerns, and recommendations of the State Board and their constituents.

The State Board is committed to ensuring that the next chancellor is ready to lead from day one. The next chancellor must be transparent and communicative, demonstrate a strong commitment to ethics, and work towards inclusivity and equity alongside a diverse group of stakeholders in our city, with students at the center of their decision-making. These foundational qualities have been echoed in community forums and meetings across the District and we believe they align with the sentiments of the Our Schools Leadership Committee (OSLC).

Below the State Board has summarized a list of additional recommended qualities that you should consider when selecting the next chancellor.

- **Insightful and proactive** – The State Board recognizes the gains and challenges of the District’s current education landscape. As such, the next chancellor must show a willingness to study and learn from the recent past, course correct policies that have proven to be ineffective, and elevate those policies and practices that have advanced our students. This will require a strong leader with the credibility to revisit and possibly change status quo strategies. The next chancellor must be open to encouraging and empowering our schools to share best practices – looking at the programmatic, structural, and budgetary successes of schools – and identifying the best ways to replicate and transmit information between schools and sectors.
- **Committed to analyzing and sharing data with the public** – The State Board recognizes the large amounts of data available to stakeholders – and the importance of making this data accessible to everyone. As such, candidates should bring value using data to provide useful analysis about what will help students succeed and want to share that analysis with the public for their input and ideas. The next chancellor must also know that it is more than



just raw data that the public needs; they need to understand what educational leaders are seeing, how they are thinking about improvements, and enlist the ideas of families and community members to improve outcomes for students. Lastly, candidates should show a commitment to ensuring that DCPS comply to the greatest extent possible with the District of Columbia Data Policy described in *Mayor's Order 2017-115*. Sharing data in an open, transparent, and accountable manner will help to rebuild trust in the education system.

- **Committed to incorporating public input, especially from families, into shaping the direction of schools** – The next chancellor must show an ability to engage and respond in an efficient, equitable, and effective manner with multiple stakeholders. As the leader of DCPS, the next chancellor must also ensure that both individual schools and the central office are consistently engaging and incorporating families' needs, concerns, and questions into their priorities and operations. The next chancellor should *want* to be shaped by the experiences of families – especially those for whom our current way of operating is not working well. This would take the form of training principals across the city to deeply listen to and incorporate the ideas of families into their planning and approach.
- **Willing to innovate** – The DCPS system as it currently operates is not working for a majority of students, as evidenced by the fact that only about one third of students are demonstrating grade-level proficiency. The next chancellor must be willing to try new ideas, thoughtfully and carefully, to explore what might work better for students and their families. Part of this innovation must consider student and school equity and the competency levels of students through differentiated approaches to learning.
- **Capable and committed to championing DCPS** – The next chancellor should have a commitment to a strong system of neighborhood-anchored schools and experience in inspiring schools, school districts, and their leaders to engage successfully in the District's robust education landscape. This requires a demonstrated ability in forward and out-year planning at the school and system-wide level that recognizes the nuances of the strategic planning process and the individual school-level impacts of system-wide decisions. The candidate should be someone who understands the tension between centralized practices and school-level discretion and is committed to finding a better balance, as well as is experienced in navigating this complicated but essential terrain.
- **Focused on building relationships and rebuilding trust** – The next chancellor must be able to engage and establish relationships with the students, families, teachers, administrators, and residents of our city. Given the circumstances of the former chancellor's departure, the next chancellor must have a proven record of effectively rebuilding trust within communities. They should prioritize the democratization of the city's education system when they work to cultivate relationships and build trust.

The State Board recognizes that the above list is not exhaustive and that there are many other qualities that should be considered when selecting the next chancellor. The State Board is fully



committed to working alongside the Interim Deputy Mayor for Education and the OSLC as they work on synthesizing findings and recommendations prior to your selection.

We look forward to continuing to work with you and your education team as we ensure that every student is valued and learns the skills and knowledge necessary to become informed, competent, and contributing global citizens.

Sincerely,

DC State Board of Education

Karen Williams, Ward 7 Representative & President
Jack Jacobson, Ward 2 Representative & Vice President
Ashley MacLeay, At-Large Representative
Laura Wilson Phelan, Ward 1 Representative
Ruth Wattenberg, Ward 3 Representative
Mark Jones, Ward 5 Representative
Joe Weedon, Ward 6 Representative
Markus Batchelor, Ward 8 Representative
Tatiana Robinson, Student Representative
Marjoury Alicea, Student Representative
Members of the SBOE Student Advisory Committee





Council of the District of Columbia

John A. Wilson Building
1350 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20004

Brianne K. Nadeau
Councilmember, Ward 1

Chairperson
Human Services Committee

Committee Member
Housing and Neighborhood Revitalization
Government Operations
Health

September 26, 2018

Paul Kihn
Acting Deputy Mayor for Education
1350 Pennsylvania Avenue NW
Suite 307
Washington, DC 20004

Dear Acting Deputy Mayor Kihn,

On September 17, I hosted a Town Hall meeting focused on the search for the District of Columbia Public Schools Chancellor and the Deputy Mayor for Education. This event was an opportunity for residents of Ward 1 to share their thoughts on this search. Attendees split into three groups where they worked on and answered three questions. One of these questions related to the search of a new Deputy Mayor for Education. The question asked: *What programs or ideas would you like to see the Deputy Mayor for Education prioritize?* Our groups answered this question by providing their three top answers. Responses to these questions were as follows:

Group 1:

1. Prioritizing neighborhood schools
2. Mental health/trauma, wraparound services, Out of School Time funding
3. One cohesive plan for all DCPS Schools

Group 2:

1. Equity: considering the role of Charters and how they lead to segregation
2. More students back to DCPS, funds follow students
3. Building one, cross-sector ecosystem in which agencies work with schools

Group 3:

1. Master education plan with a cross-sector look, a DC-wide approach that is considerate of the entire education ecosystem
2. Community partnerships, culturally responsive approaches
3. Commitment to neighborhood schools-model

I urge you to consider these programs and ideas in your work moving forward. As the Councilmember from Ward 1, I will focus on many of these issues in my oversight of your office. I wish you the best of luck in your new role and look forward to working with you to ensure the District's education system is a shining example for the rest of the country.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Brianne K. Nadeau". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Brianne K. Nadeau
Councilmember, Ward 1

Cc:

David Grosso, Chairperson, Committee on Education

Laura Wilson Phelan, Member for Ward 1, District of Columbia State Board of Education

Steve Walker, Director, Mayor's Office of Talent and Appointments

Tuesday, October 9, 2018

Mayor Muriel E. Bowser
Government of the District of Columbia
1350 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW, Suite 406
Washington, DC 20004

Dear Mayor Bowser:

Please find enclosed a report that is the result of engagement with Ward 8 families, teachers, school staff, administrators, students, youth service providers, civic leaders and concerned neighbors around the selection of the next Chancellor for the District of Columbia Public Schools system. Through an online survey and a town hall meeting on Thursday, October 4, 2018, we asked those who live and work in our community to weigh in on what qualities were important for the next leader of our district to embody in a time of transition for our public schools.

You know, as we do, the next Chancellor will have a tremendous impact on the future of public education in the District of Columbia. Schools are the center of our quickly-changing communities and the anchor of opportunity and prosperity for the children and families within them. Now, more than ever, we need a leader with the experience and perspective to raise the bar so that all of us are ensured a fair shot at a pathway to the middle class.

We encourage you to take these viewpoints into account as you and the selection committee collaboratively review or recruit candidates for this position. Ward 8 is home to nearly one in five of our city's school-aged children and has for too long bore the brunt of deep inequalities in access and opportunity. We believe that children and families across the city have much to gain from a process wholly inclusive of our perspective and responsive to our voices. It is with that belief that we submit the enclosed recommendations.

Sincerely,

Representative Markus E. Batchelor
DC State Board of Education (Ward 8)

The Ward 8 Education Council

Cc: Members of the Our Schools Leadership Committee; Members of the Council of the District of Columbia; Members of the District of Columbia State Board of Education; Deputy Mayor for Education Paul Kihn.

Our Schools. Our Choice.

Ward 8 Town Hall and Survey Report on the Selection of the Next Chancellor of the District of Columbia Public Schools

Submitted October 9, 2018

The State of Ward 8 Schools

Ward 8 is home to over 16, 400 students, nearly one in five of the school-aged population in the District of Columbia, and 20 of DC Public Schools' 115 school communities. They include:

Anacostia High School	Johnson Middle School	Patterson Elementary School
Ballou High School	Ketcham Elementary School	Savoy Elementary School
Ballou STAY High School	King Elementary School	Simon Elementary School
Boone Elementary School	Kramer Middle School	Stanton Elementary School
Excel Academy	Leckie Education Campus	Turner Elementary School
Garfield Elementary School	Malcolm X Elementary School	
Hart Middle School	Moten Elementary School	
Hendley Elementary		

Our children, nearly half of which live below the poverty line, attend public schools in their neighborhood and in communities across every ward in the city. While most student groups are seeing steady increases in performance, growth for our students most in need are still far to slow. According to the most current available data, 62% of students who attend Ward 8 schools graduate high school, 17% are deemed college-ready in English Language Arts and 14.9% are deemed college-ready in math.

Ward 8 schools and families face persistent issues with inequity in resourcing; disproportionately high teacher and principal turnover; lack of safe passage; home and community-based trauma; barriers to attendance and chronic absenteeism; and other issues that schools must work collaboratively with government and the community to tackle.

The children and families of Ward 8 have a large stake in the selection of the next DCPS Chancellor, who must begin to aggressively tackle all of these issues on day one. We submit the following recommendations that encapsulate our common vision for the qualities and experience we need in the next leader of DC Public Schools.

Our Next DCPS Chancellor

Through an online survey and a town hall meeting on October 4, 2018 at Garfield Elementary School, we engaged over 100 parents, students, educators, youth service providers and other concerned neighbors around their priorities and hopes for the next Chancellor of DC Public Schools. The recommendations below are a synopsis of the areas with the largest consensus among the diverse group of stakeholders.

Academic and Professional Experience

- 1. Our next Chancellor must have experience in both the classroom and leading an urban system.** We believe that the next leader of DCPS should have experience as a classroom teacher, a school administrator and have a demonstrated body of work leading a school system similar to our own. We believe they must be knowledgeable of and equipped to handle the various challenges of an urban public school system. That includes serving a broad array of communities and constituencies with diverse concerns and needs. They must have a resume that demonstrates a deep and personal understanding of the system from the bottom-up.
- 2. Our next Chancellor must have a proven record of closing gaps and promoting equity.** The most dismaying of the issues facing our school system is the [persistent gap in achievement across our city](#). After over a decade of aggressive school reform efforts, the gaps between low-income students of color and their more affluent peers have remained enormous. The achievement/opportunity gap is the most important issue our next Chancellor will face and they should come to the District of Columbia with a proven record of driving up achievement and closing persistent gaps with a real plan to achieve it here.
- 3. Our next Chancellor must have a record of recruiting, nurturing and retaining high-quality educators.** [A recent report](#) commissioned by the DC State Board of Education shows that DC Public Schools have a teacher and principal turnover rate higher than the national average and higher than comparable urban school districts with available data. The rates are highest in communities with larger numbers of at-risk students, nowhere higher than in wards 5 and 8. We know that high turnover is disruptive to students' learning, building culture and school improvement efforts. The next leader of DCPS should have a record of providing educators with the support, flexibility and voice to develop professionally and shape instruction. This includes working collaboratively with teachers unions and being responsive to employee concerns. This should also include a reevaluation of the IMPACT evaluation system and its adverse impacts on morale and performance.

Priorities on Day One

- 1. Our next Chancellor must define equity with our communities in mind.** We believe that equity must be a District-wide priority in philosophy and practice, benchmarked by the upward mobility of our most challenged students in our most challenged communities. Our next leader of DCPS should help shape instructional programs & offerings, classroom design, professional

development, and other investments that will provide the young people in our community with a fair shot to a pathway to the middle class. Additionally, the next leader of DCPS should understand the equity of professional development, instructional programs, and resources for teachers may vary from ward to ward. They should work collaboratively with our community to find the need and with government and community partners to fill gaps.

- 2. Our next Chancellor must use data as a flashlight, not a hammer.** For far too long, school data has been used as a mechanism to punish, reprimand or fit a narrative; not as a way to honestly and openly measure our progress and work collaboratively to improve as a system -- together. Our next Chancellor should have a record of and a willingness to use data as a tool to help teachers improve, not to fire them; to help schools better serve students, not to frequently and abruptly change leadership or change course; to have an honest dialogue with the community, not to fit a narrative based on political calculation.
- 3. Our next Chancellor must be hyper-focused on students with special needs.** There is no group of students falling further behind or that feel the most underserved than our students with special needs. The next leader of DCPS should ensure that every school community is equipped to provide every student, no matter their ability, with the resources and support they need to be successful. That means proper staffing and space allocation, stringent oversight of IEP service delivery, resources for English language learners and their families and disciplinary policies that take these circumstances into account and utilize restorative practices.

System Management

- 1. Our next Chancellor must end the barrage of mandates and initiatives.** Educators and administrators bemoan the constant churn of new mandates and initiatives coming from DCPS Central Office that constantly upend planning and disrupt progress. For example, one educator who attended our town hall exclaimed “Why are we switching from *Tools of the Mind* [, an early childhood curriculum to improve children's self- regulation and academic skills] when we just got good at *Tools of the Mind*!?” Knee-jerk decisions at Central Office oftentimes ignore the inability for a big system to turn on a dime and ignores the premise that even the best tools take time to retrofit and streamline. We ask our next Chancellor to help alleviate the “burnout” associated with constantly introducing new initiatives, curriculum and mandates without fully measuring the success of those we were using before.
- 2. Our next Chancellor must reevaluate food services.** The transition to outsourcing the delivery of school meals in 2008 was done with the promise that costs would be lower for the system and quality of meals would improve. Nearly a decade later, confirmed in a [2016 report by the DC Auditor's Office](#), DC Public Schools' costs have only increased. The system spends more on meals than other comparable school districts. Ironically, the quality of food -- by most accounts of students, school staff and families -- has not improved at all. The Auditor's report concludes, and DCPS agreed at the time, that there are long-term benefits to bringing food service delivery back in-house, including increased accountability for quality service. Our next Chancellor should take

another hard look at how we provide every student with safe, appetizing and nutritious meal options.

- 3. Our next Chancellor must cut the red tape and leverage partnerships that serve students and families.** Educating a student is the work of an entire community and DC Public Schools should do all it can to empower youth-serving organizations and other community partners to fulfill their part of our collective responsibility to our schools and families. Our next Chancellor must provide the opportunity for community organizations (both long-standing and new / innovative) to find their place as a part of school communities. That means helping to provide more resources like space and partnerships that help raise achievement, break down systemic barriers and enrich students' lives. We should commit fully to the [community school model](#) that provides the infrastructure, staffing, flexibility and resources necessary to fulfill the need of every student and every family.

The Face of DCPS

- 1. Our next Chancellor must have a record of honesty, integrity and transparency.** Our families deserve a Chancellor that has a record of maintaining the integrity of their office, that plays by the rules and that is committed to being open and honest about where our school system is and where we need to go. The next leader of DCPS will have to rebuild trust in our system and its leadership after a series of missteps and scandal. Choosing a person with a proven record of going above and beyond to be open and transparent will be a critical step in the right direction.
- 2. Our next Chancellor must be accessible and community-focused.** The DCPS Chancellor is the public face of our school system. For too long, our community has been frustrated with one-off engagement and the inability to access those with decision-making authority. We believe the next leader of DCPS should be not only present in our community, but responsive to our voices. We also believe the next Chancellor should redouble our commitment to raising the voices of students, teachers and parents, nurturing and welcoming their ability for advocacy and leadership.
- 3. Our next Chancellor must create channels of communication that work.** Many Ward 8 schools and communities are hamstrung by fragmented networks of communication that makes engagement with families more difficult, but even more important. DCPS has a role to play. The next leader of DCPS should expand the Office of Family and Public Engagement and use all the resources at its disposal to analyze barriers to engagement and find innovative solutions to include families in the academic lives of their students.