



District of Columbia State Board of Education  
DCSBOE



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State Board of Education Resolution

State Superintendent Presents the Following Resolution for Members of the State Board of Education  
To Approve Amendment and Renewal of the District's Statewide Accountability Plan  
SR15-\_\_\_\_\_

**WHEREAS**, in 2001 Congress enacted No Child Left Behind (NCLB), which amended the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965 (ESEA) and established a system of accountability for schools receiving federal funds with a goal of improving overall student achievement and closing achievement gaps;

**WHEREAS**, District of Columbia law requires State Board of Education approval of the Statewide Accountability Plan required by NCLB as developed by the Chief State School Officer, which in the District of Columbia is the State Superintendent of Education;

**WHEREAS**, on September 23, 2011, the United States Department of Education Secretary Arne Duncan invited Chief State School Officers to apply for a waiver from certain provisions of NCLB in exchange for "rigorous and comprehensive state-developed plans designed to improve educational outcomes for all students, close achievement gaps, increase equity, and improve the quality of instruction;"

**WHEREAS**, on July 19, 2012, the Department of Education approved the District's application for a flexibility waiver through the end of the 2013-2014 school year;

**WHEREAS**, on July 25, 2012, the State Board of Education issued Resolution 12-01, adopting the Department of Education-approved flexibility waiver as the District of Columbia's Statewide Accountability Plan;

**WHEREAS**, on November 14, 2013, the Department of Education informed Chief State School Officers of the opportunity to submit an application to extend states' approved flexibility waiver through the end of the 2014-2015 school year;

**WHEREAS**, the State Superintendent found that, with the proposed amendments, District students are best served by retaining the flexibility granted by the Department of Education in the Statewide Accountability Plan as evidenced by the growth in overall student proficiency and the reduction of achievement gaps since implementing the Statewide Accountability Plan;

**WHEREAS**, the State Superintendent proposed an extension of the Statewide Accountability Plan through the end of the 2014-2015 school year with amendments developed by OSSE in response to input from the Department of Education and stakeholders in multiple public engagement sessions;

**WHEREAS**, on September 3, 2014, the State Board of Education issued Resolution 14-04, approving the adoption of the flexibility waiver extension as the District of Columbia's Statewide Accountability Plan;

**WHEREAS**, on September 5, 2014, the Department of Education approved the District's application for a flexibility waiver through the end of the 2014-2015 school year;

**WHEREAS**, on November 13, 2014, the United States Department of Education Secretary Arne Duncan invited Chief State School Officers to apply for a three-year renewal of continued ESEA flexibility through the end of the 2017-2018 school year;

**WHEREAS**, the State Superintendent proposed a renewal of the Statewide Accountability Plan through the end of the 2017-2018 school year with updates and amendments developed by OSSE in response to input from the Department of Education and stakeholders in multiple public engagement sessions, which began on January 26, 2015, and are as follows:

- Strengthening implementation of the ESEA flexibility waiver;
- A one year pause in school classifications;
- A one year pause in the use of assessment results for educator evaluations (reporting still mandatory);
- Revision of reward school criteria;
- Revision and clarification of priority and focus school exit criteria;
- Improved supports for priority and focus schools;
- Description of support for economically disadvantaged students;
- Aligning DC's flexibility waiver with the use of next generation assessments; and
- Clarification of accountability terminology.

**WHEREAS**, the State Board of Education received presentations from OSSE regarding renewal and amendment of the Statewide Accountability Plan at public meetings held on January 21, 2015; February 18, 2015; and March 18, 2015; as well as at working sessions held on January 7, 2015; February 4, 2015; March 4, 2015; March 26, 2015; and collaborated with OSSE on several community engagement sessions between February and April, 2015;

**WHEREAS**, the State Board of Education has reviewed the amendments proposed by the State Superintendent and finds that the proposed amendments to the Statewide Accountability Plan are based on State Board-approved academic standards, OSSE-adopted statewide assessments, includes a statewide system of support that is designed to effect change in low-performing LEAs, and ensures that all LEAs make sufficient progress towards the District goal of reaching an overall student proficiency rate of 73% in reading and 74% in math by 2017;

**WHEREAS**, on March 18, 2015, the State Board adopted a report on OSSE's ESEA waiver renewal that made many recommendations to OSSE about the need for more transparent data on student achievement, learning conditions, and resource use. Specifically, the report makes a number of recommendations, including but not limited to, calling for:

- A broad range of city-wide and school-by-school achievement data, including the disaggregation of student test data according to the City Council's definition of "at-risk" and according to student achievement percentiles;
- District-wide and per-school data on non-cognitive outcomes, including through the use of a research-based school climate survey;
- Data on learning conditions, including the presence of social workers, psychologists, and librarians, the experience and retention of teachers, engagement with parents and support for struggling students;

- Better information on how funds targeted to at-risk students are used to support effective educational programs;
- A change in the way student outcomes and progress on citywide tests are measured, reported, and used for holding schools accountable for student achievement, such that progress in student achievement is fully captured, separate and apart from students' proficiency; and
- Reports, including on the progress of implementation of programs for students at risk; on new assessments; and on the side effects of the existing accountability system.

**WHEREAS**, the Department of Education is expected to approve the District's application renewal request for a flexibility waiver through the end of the 2017-2018 school year pending State Board of Education's approval;

**WHEREAS**, the DC State Board of Education approves of the ESEA waiver as presented, but does so with the understanding that a subsequent set of amendments to the waiver are forthcoming that will consider the State Board's report of March 18, 2015;

**BE IT RESOLVED THAT on June 17, 2015** the State Board of Education approves the Renewal and Amendment of the Statewide Accountability Plan as proposed by the State Superintendent through the end of the 2017-2018 school year.

Date Adopted: June 17, 2015 Signed: \_\_\_\_\_

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**State Board of Education Resolution**  
**State Superintendent Presents the Following Resolution for Members of the State Board of**  
**Education**  
**To Approve the Definition of Proficiency**  
**SR15-\_\_\_\_\_**

**WHEREAS**, the District of Columbia administers multiple assessments annually in accordance with local and federal law to measure students' proficiency and progress toward college and career readiness;

**WHEREAS**, in July 2010, the District of Columbia adopted the Common Core State Standards (CCSS), which define what students should know and be able to do at each grade level in English Language Arts and Mathematics so that they will graduate high school ready to succeed in college and careers;

**WHEREAS**, adopting and implementing the CCSS meant the District of Columbia needed to adopt a high-quality assessment aligned to the CCSS that would allow students to demonstrate their knowledge in a more accurate and engaging way, and help the District ensure that every student graduates from high school ready for college or a career;

**WHEREAS**, in 2010, the District of Columbia joined the Partnership for Assessment of Readiness for College and Career (PARCC), a consortium of states that is developing a common set of K-12 assessments designed to build a pathway to college and career readiness by the end of high school, mark students' progress toward this goal from 3rd grade on, and provide teachers with timely information that informs instruction;

**WHEREAS**, in the 2014-2015 school year, the PARCC assessments replaced the DC Comprehensive Assessment System as the District of Columbia's state assessment in mathematics, reading, and composition to measure student performance in grades 3-8 and once in high school;

**WHEREAS**, the PARCC assessment includes more rigorous, authentic questions, aligned to what do students need to succeed in entry-level college coursework, without remediation;

**WHEREAS**, all District of Columbia students participate in the state assessment program for mathematics and reading through either the PARCC assessment or the alternate assessment, based on alternate achievement standards;

**WHEREAS**, based on the numerical scale score a student receives on the PARCC assessment, students' scores are categorized as one of five performance levels:

- Level 1 = did not yet meet expectations
- Level 2 = partially met expectations
- Level 3 = approached expectations

Level 4 = met expectations  
Level 5 = exceeded expectations

**WHEREAS**, the PARCC Governing Board has adopted a policy designating Level 4 as the level indicating college- and career-readiness for students.

WHEREAS, the Level 4 designation is intended to indicate the level of performance at which students will have approximately a 75 percent probability of earning college credit by attaining at least a grade of C or its equivalent in college coursework in English or mathematics;

**WHEREAS**, students who score below a Level 4 have not fully met the expectations in the tested grade and subject and need additional assistance;

**WHEREAS**, not more than 1 percent of District of Columbia students in tested grades, who have significant cognitive disabilities that prevent them from participating in the general assessment, even if provided with accommodations and/or modifications, may show academic proficiency through administration of an alternate assessment based on alternate achievement standards;

**WHEREAS**, in the 2014-2015 school year, the National Center and State Collaborative (NCSC) alternate assessment, which is also aligned to the CCSS, replaced the DC CAS Alternate Assessment as the alternate state assessment for students with significant cognitive disabilities in the District of Columbia;

**WHEREAS**, based on the scale score a student receives on the NCSC alternate assessment, students are assigned a performance level ranging from level 1 to level 4, with Levels 3 and 4 designated by NCSC as “Meets Expectations;”

**WHEREAS**, since the PARCC assessment and the NCSC alternate assessment scores are not comparable to the DC CAS and previous alternate assessment, and the PARCC assessment and the NCSC alternate assessment set forth a new baseline for student performance, pursuant to D.C. Code § 38-2652(5)(C), the State Board of Education shall approve a new state definition of “proficiency” that ensures an accurate measure of student achievement” under the PARCC assessment;

**WHEREAS**, The Office of the State Superintendent of Education (OSSE) proposes that the State Board defines “proficiency” as the percentage of students who score at or perform at a Level 4 or above on the PARCC assessments (on a five-level scale) and the percentage of students who perform at a Level 3 or above on NCSC alternate assessment (on a four-level scale);

**WHEREAS**, the State Board of Education received presentations from OSSE regarding PARCC and the definition of proficiency at public meetings held on September 16, 2015 as well as at working sessions held on October 7, 2015 and September 2, 2015, and collaborated with OSSE on an LEA engagement session on October 6, 2015 to hear their recommendations on how the District of Columbia should define proficiency;

**WHEREAS**, the DC State Board of Education approves OSSE’s proposed definition of proficiency as the percentage of students who score at or perform at a Level 4 or above on the PARCC assessment and the percentage of students who score at or perform at a Level 3 or above on the NCSC alternate assessment;

**BE IT RESOLVED that** the State Board of Education approves the definition of proficiency as the percentage of students who score or perform at a Level 4 or above on the PARCC assessment and the percentage of students who score or perform at a Level 3 or above on the NCSC alternate assessment.

Date Adopted: October 21, 2015 Signed: \_\_\_\_\_

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**State Board of Education Resolution**  
**To Approve Promulgation of Regulations for a State Diploma**  
**SR15-4**

**WHEREAS**, District of Columbia law requires State Board of Education approval of high school graduation requirements;

**WHEREAS**, the current regulatory framework does not provide the District's non-traditional and adult students with multiple pathways to obtaining a high school diploma;

**WHEREAS**, approximately 60,000 District adults, 85 percent of whom are 25 or older, lack a high school diploma or its equivalency;

**WHEREAS**, the unemployment rate for residents without a high school diploma is 19 percent, versus 18 percent for those with a high school diploma, 15 percent with some college, and 4 percent with a bachelor's degree or higher;

**WHEREAS**, 36.8 percent of District families headed by an individual without a high school diploma live in poverty as compared to a 2.4 percent poverty rate for District families headed by an individual who has completed a bachelor's degree or higher;

**WHEREAS**, Georgetown University's Center on Education and the Workforce has reported that by 2020, only 24 percent of District jobs will require a high school diploma or less, a lower percentage than any other jurisdiction in the nation;

**WHEREAS**, the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics reports that personal income and employment rates are significantly correlated and that the average wage earner in the U.S. makes about \$815 per week, compared with \$472 per week for an adult without a high school diploma or equivalent;

**WHEREAS**, the GED was recently rewritten to include more rigorous content that is consistent with the Common Core State Standards and the threshold for passing the GED was established based on substantial research, including field testing, and normed so that the achievement level is at least as high as 40 percent of current high school graduates;

**WHEREAS**, research on previous versions of the GED found that among a number of dropouts, the possibility of getting a GED incentivized them to leave school, an unintended consequence the State Board urges OSSE to take steps to minimize;

**WHEREAS**, the State Superintendent therefore proposes offering a State Diploma to a resident who has successfully passed the General Educational Development (GED<sup>®</sup>) test, in compliance with Title 5-E District of Columbia Municipal Regulation (DCMR) Sections 2320 *et. seq.*, (General Educational Development (GED<sup>®</sup>) Testing), or successfully completed the requirements of the National External Diploma Program (NEDP), on or after January 1, 2014;

**WHEREAS**, the State Diploma shall be recognized as an equivalent to a high school diploma granted pursuant to the District's graduation requirements;

**WHEREAS**, the State Superintendent and members of the State Board of Education have engaged in an extensive period of public engagement, including receiving testimony from the public and from the Office of the State Superintendent of Education regarding the proposed State Diploma at public meetings held on November 19, 2014, July 15, 2015, and October 21, 2015, as well as at working sessions held on July 1, October 7, and November 4, 2015;

**WHEREAS**, the State Board included in its independent review current research on high school equivalency policies, practices, and learning outcomes in other states;

**WHEREAS**, members of the public, employers, and research underscored the need for accountability, transparency, and annual reporting by providers of high school equivalency programs to identify and replicate best practices, including such measures as exam passage rates, trends in enrollment and feeder patterns, academic growth, and employment rates 6, 12, and 24 months after successful completion of the GED, NEDP, or other approved high school equivalency exam;

**WHEREAS**, in the District, an applicant for the GED<sup>®</sup> test shall be at least eighteen (18) years old and an applicant for the NEDP shall be at least twenty-five (25) years old, with limited exceptions to the age requirement for both the GED<sup>®</sup> and NEDP as approved by the State Superintendent;

**WHEREAS**, the State Diploma provided for passing the GED<sup>®</sup> test or successfully completing the NEDP shall not be included in the District's state or school-level calculation of the adjusted cohort graduation rate;

**WHEREAS**, the State Board of Education has reviewed the elements of the proposed State Diploma and finds they may eliminate barriers and ensure District residents have additional opportunities to access educational and career pathways to the middle class, regardless of past experiences; and

**WHEREAS**, the State Board of Education requests that the State Superintendent provide a report to the State Board assessing and evaluating the aggregate impact of the State Diploma every five years beginning in January 2019 that includes, but is not limited to, the successful passage of the GED<sup>®</sup> test and successful completion of the NEDP for those residents enrolled in publicly funded adult education programs.

**NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED THAT**, on November 18 2015, the State Board advises that the State Superintendent promulgate proposed rulemaking that includes the elements of the State Diploma as proposed in this Resolution.

Date Adopted: November 18, 2015

Signed:







District of Columbia State Board of Education  
DCSBOE



State Board of Education Resolution  
Emergency State Diploma Rulemaking

SR15-05

**WHEREAS**, pursuant to D.C. Official Code § 38-2652(a)(3) the State Board of Education is required to approve high school graduation requirements;

**WHEREAS**, the Mayor's Order 2014-96, dated August 12 2014, delegated authority to the Office of the State Superintendent of Education (OSSE) to manage Hospitality High School;

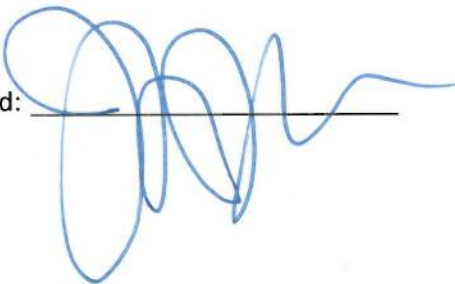
**WHEREAS**, the Mayor's Order 2014-96 did not explicitly provide authority to issue diplomas and the current regulations do not provide the state education agency, OSSE, with explicit authority to grant or confer diplomas;

**WHEREAS**, the State Superintendent of Education proposes emergency rulemaking to ensure that the students graduating from Hospitality High School in June 2015 receive a diploma;

**WHEREAS**, the State Board of Education recognizes that the proposed emergency rulemaking would ensure that the graduating students from Hospitality High School receive diplomas.

**BE IT RESOLVED, THAT** on May 20, 2015 the State Board of Education approves the emergency State Diploma rulemaking to take effect on May 29, 2015 and remain effect for up to one hundred and twenty (120) days, expiring September 26, 2015.

Date Adopted: 5/20/15

Signed: 



**State Board of Education Resolution**  
**To Make Recommendations Regarding High School Credit Flexibility**  
**SR15-6**

**WHEREAS**, District of Columbia law requires State Board of Education approval of high school graduation requirements;

**WHEREAS**, the District is one of the few jurisdictions in the United States where the time-based Carnegie unit (120 hours of class or contact time with an instructor during the year) is the sole means for awarding course credit for a traditional high school diploma;

**WHEREAS**, the opportunity gap remains massive in the District of Columbia, illustrated most recently by the 2015 Partnership for Readiness for College and Career (PARCC) scores, which showed performance for the most and least privileged students differed by 44 to 58 percentage points;

**WHEREAS**, students who enter high school either unprepared to meet the District of Columbia's rigorous academic standards or already having acquired the knowledge and skills to demonstrate mastery must enroll in courses organized into standard Carnegie units without an option to pace their own learning;

**WHEREAS**, the District of Columbia is the only jurisdiction in the country that requires students to enroll in Algebra I by ninth grade, regardless of their readiness;

**WHEREAS**, high schools in the District of Columbia may not tailor their credit-bearing course offerings outside of the Carnegie unit to take advantage of logical synergies between academic material that would enhance student learning;

**WHEREAS**, research indicates that academic outcomes improve when high school students are able to pace their own learning, choose how they acquire skills and knowledge, and determine how they provide evidence of proficiencies;

**WHEREAS**, key features of competency-based education include student self-pacing and choice in skill and knowledge acquisition and demonstration of learning;

**WHEREAS**, successful implementation of competency-based courses requires significant thought, preparation, and teacher support;

**WHEREAS**, most high schools in the District of Columbia currently organize their class schedules around the Carnegie unit, and its elimination all at once could create unproductive disruption to student learning;

**WHEREAS**, the State Board of Education convened a cross-city task force of 25 members representing teachers, principals, traditional and charter public schools, community groups, the business community, the Washington Teacher's Union, the Office of the Deputy Mayor for

Education, the Office of the State Superintendent of Education, and the Council of the District of Columbia from August 2015 to December 2015 to set forth recommendations for high-school credit flexibility;

**WHEREAS**, the majority of task force members agreed that creating alternative pathways to earning credit beyond the Carnegie unit represented an important first step toward recognizing that not all students learn at the same pace nor best demonstrate understanding of content based on 120 hours in a traditional classroom setting;

**WHEREAS**, the task force's report makes the following recommendations for earning high school credit:

1. **Create a waiver process** for schools wishing to pursue competency-based learning;
2. Allow students to receive **credit for demonstrated knowledge** in world languages and mathematics;
3. **Maintain Carnegie units** as the default means for earning credit where neither of the two above conditions apply;
4. Consistent with the benefits of student self-paced learning associated with competency-based models, **remove the requirement that students enroll in Algebra I by 9<sup>th</sup> grade.**

**WHEREAS**, the State Board of Education has reviewed these recommendations and conducted an independent literature review;

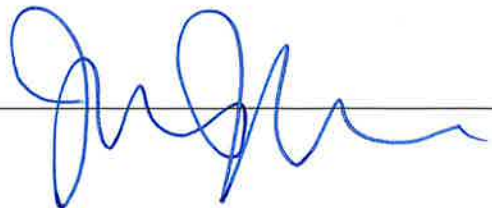
**WHEREAS**, the State Board of Education urges the State Superintendent to provide diligent oversight of the progress and achievement of students involved in waiver-based credit programs, with an eye towards identifying strengths, weaknesses, best practices, and ways to improve outcomes and consider promoting expanding these programs if successfully to other academic and vocational subjects and to schools that serve the most academically challenged students;

**WHEREAS**, the State Board of Education finds that the recommendations may assist students at all levels of academic performance by eliminating barriers to meeting individual educational needs and by promoting competency-based learning that ensures students advance with the requisite knowledge to be successful;

**NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED THAT**, on December 16, 2015, the State Board advises the State Superintendent to consider the High School Credit Flexibility Task Force's recommendations and discussion as outlined in its report, and to initiate rulemaking to implement the recommendations endorsed in this resolution.

Date Adopted: December 16, 2015

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_





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3 **State Board of Education Resolution**  
4 **To Approve the State Diploma Rulemaking**  
5 **SR16-1**  
6

7 **WHEREAS**, District of Columbia law requires State Board of Education approval of high  
8 school graduation requirements;  
9

10 **WHEREAS**, the current regulatory framework does not provide the District’s non-traditional  
11 and adult students with multiple pathways to obtaining a high school diploma;  
12

13 **WHEREAS**, approximately 60,000 District adults, 85 percent of whom are 25 or older, lack a  
14 high school diploma or its equivalency;  
15

16 **WHEREAS**, the State Superintendent has proposed offering a State Diploma to a resident who  
17 has successfully passed the General Educational Development (GED<sup>®</sup>) test, in compliance with  
18 Title 5-E District of Columbia Municipal Regulation (DCMR) Sections 2320 *et. seq.*, (General  
19 Educational Development (GED<sup>®</sup>) Testing), or successfully completed the requirements of the  
20 National External Diploma Program (NEDP), on or after January 1, 2014;  
21

22 **WHEREAS**, the State Diploma shall be recognized as an equivalent to a high school diploma  
23 granted pursuant to the District’s graduation requirements;  
24

25 **WHEREAS**, the State Superintendent and members of the State Board of Education have  
26 engaged in an extensive period of public engagement, including receiving testimony from the  
27 public and from the Office of the State Superintendent of Education regarding the proposed State  
28 Diploma at public meetings held on November 19, 2014, July 15, 2015, and October 21, 2015, as  
29 well as at working sessions held on July 1, October 7, and November 4, 2015;  
30

31 **WHEREAS**, the State Board included in its independent review current research on high school  
32 equivalency policies, practices, and learning outcomes in other states;  
33

34 **WHEREAS**, members of the public, employers, and research underscored the need for  
35 accountability, transparency, and annual reporting by providers of high school equivalency  
36 programs to identify and replicate best practices, including such measures as exam passage rates,  
37 trends in enrollment and feeder patterns, academic growth, and employment rates 6, 12, and 24  
38 months after successful completion of the GED, NEDP, or other approved high school  
39 equivalency exam;  
40

41 **WHEREAS**, the State Diploma provided for passing the GED<sup>®</sup> test or successfully completing  
42 the NEDP shall not be included in the District’s state or school-level calculation of the adjusted  
43 cohort graduation rate;  
44

45 **WHEREAS**, the State Board of Education has reviewed the proposed rulemaking establishing  
46 the State Diploma and finds that the State Diploma may eliminate barriers and ensure District

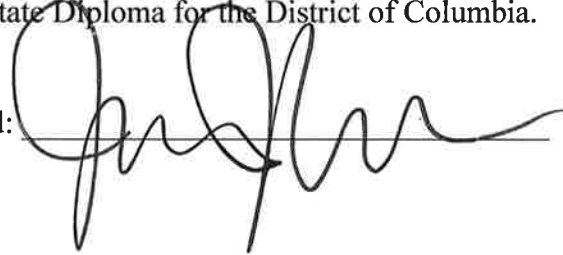
1 residents have additional opportunities to access educational and career pathways to the middle  
2 class, regardless of past experiences; and

3  
4 **WHEREAS**, the State Board of Education unanimously approved a resolution advising the State  
5 Superintendent to publish proposed and final rulemaking that would implement a State Diploma  
6 on November 18, 2015.

7  
8 **WHEREAS**, proposed regulations implementing a State Diploma were published in the District  
9 of Columbia Register on December 11, 2015 for a 30-day public comment period and no public  
10 comments were received; and

11  
12  
13 **NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED THAT**, on January 20, 2016, the State Board  
14 approves the final rulemaking implementing a State Diploma for the District of Columbia.

15  
16  
17 Date Adopted: January 20, 2016 Signed:

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be "John F. ...", written over a horizontal line.



## **2015 Year in Review**

Jack Jacobson, President, Ward 2  
Karen Williams, Vice President, Ward 7  
Mary Lord, At Large  
Laura Wilson Phelan, Ward 1  
Ruth Wattenberg, Ward 3  
Kamili Anderson, Ward 4  
Mark Jones, Ward 5  
Joe Weedon, Ward 6  
Tierra Jolly, Ward 8

January 20, 2016



## Executive Summary

2015 was an eventful year for the DC State Board of Education, and for education in the District of Columbia. While we have accomplished many things over the past 12 months, there is still much to be done to ensure that every student graduates well prepared for the future. The DC State Board of Education (SBOE) is ready to tackle these challenges in the year ahead.

In January, the SBOE welcomed four new members: Laura Wilson Phelan, representing Ward 1; Ruth Wattenberg, representing Ward 3; Joe Weedon, representing Ward 6; and Destinee Whittington, from Richard Wright Public Charter School, representing students. Each of the nine members of the SBOE have participated in numerous working sessions, community meetings, Advisory Neighborhood Commission briefings, and Ward education council and alliances, and worked collaboratively with Mayor Muriel Bowser's administration and the Council of the District of Columbia.

Further, members of the SBOE served on various national, regional, and citywide boards and committees, including as the 2015 President of the National Association of State Boards of Education and as members of the District's inter-agency Truancy Task Force, the Washington Area Boards of Education, and the recently constituted Deputy Mayor of Education's Cross-Sector Collaboration Task Force, bringing the voice of District residents to the education policy debate from at the federal and local level.

The SBOE worked on a number of significant issues over the course of the year. Among those highlighted in this report:

- Developed recommendations that strengthened the District's successful waiver application for flexibility from elements of No Child Left Behind
- Issued a Truancy Committee report on the challenges of implementing the District's current truancy policy, with recommendations for improvement
- Approved a State Diploma for individuals who pass the GED or complete the National External Diploma Program
- Created a High School Credit Flexibility Task Force that investigated opportunities and developed recommendations for allowing high school students to earn credit outside of the time-based Carnegie unit
- Initiated a review of the District's health education standards and proposed revisions
- Launched a Student Advisory Committee, chaired by the SBOE's two student representatives, for District students to provide policy recommendations to the SBOE

2015 also marked the first year of the Partnership for Assessment of College and Career Readiness (PARCC), the District's Common Core-aligned annual assessments. The results of these rigorous new exams provide a sobering picture of how our students are performing, including the alarming disparities in performance that persist among our students. The National Assessment for Educational Progress, also known as "the nation's report card" confirmed these troubling trends. Closing this opportunity gap is a top priority for the SBOE, which formed a committee this year that has begun working to find ways to combat this problem.

All eleven members of the DC State Board of Education are committed to collectively doing their part to ensure that every student in the District of Columbia receives a top-quality public education.



## **DC State Board of Education 2015 Year in Review**

### Introduction

The DC State Board of Education (SBOE) took on a variety of projects in 2015. The SBOE members sat on committees, met with constituents across the District, and tirelessly worked with other policymakers to improve education for the students of this community. The SBOE was able to collaborate with the Office of the State Superintendent (OSSE) at its monthly working sessions to craft policy that reflects the concerns of parents and students. At the SBOE public meetings, Board members heard from community members and voted on resolutions approving policy initiatives. Several landmark achievements are highlighted in this report.

### **Notable Policy Achievements**

#### ESEA Flexibility Waiver

The current version of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA), known as No Child Left Behind (NCLB), has been the primary federal education law since 2001. Beginning in 2011, Secretary of Education Arne Duncan invited chief state school officers to apply for a waiver that would grant schools flexibility in meeting some of the provisions of NCLB.

The District submitted a flexibility waiver application that was approved by the U.S. Department of Education in the summer of 2012 and it remained in effect through the 2013-14 school year. It was also adopted by the SBOE as the District of Columbia's Statewide Accountability Plan in July 2012. Following the passage of the flexibility waiver, DC public schools saw an increase in overall student proficiency levels and an overall decrease in the size of academic achievement gaps, prompting the State Superintendent of Education to submit an application requesting an extension of the flexibility waiver for DC schools through the end of the 2014-15 school year. The extension was approved by the SBOE and U.S. Department of Education in September of 2014.

On November 13, 2014, Secretary Duncan issued an invitation to chief state school officers to apply for a three-year renewal of the flexibility waiver that would remain in effect until the end of the 2017-18 school year. DC's Office of the State Superintendent of Education (OSSE) made several presentations to the SBOE on renewal of the Statewide Accountability Plan and the various amendments they wished to make to that plan, including:

- Strengthening implementation of the ESEA flexibility waiver
- A one year pause in school classifications
- A one year pause in the use of assessment results for educator evaluations (reporting still mandatory)
- Revision of reward school criteria
- Revision and clarification of priority and focus school exit criteria
- Improved supports for priority and focus schools
- Description of support for economically disadvantaged students





- Aligning DC’s flexibility waiver with the use of next generation assessments
- Clarification of accountability terminology

The SBOE reviewed these amendments and drafted a [report](#) for OSSE on their waiver request and issued a series of recommendations. These recommendations centered on the need for more readily available data on student academic achievement, learning conditions, and use of resources. While members of the SBOE did approve of the flexibility waiver as it existed on March 18, 2015, this approval was conditional upon the inclusion of a set of future amendments based on the recommendations included in the SBOE’s report to OSSE. On June 17, 2015, the SBOE [approved](#) the Renewal and Amendment of the Statewide Accountability Plan.

### Truancy Report

On April 1, 2015, the SBOE formally adopted a [report](#) drafted by Kamili Anderson, Ward 4 member and Chair of the Truancy and Student Engagement Committee. This report sheds light on the challenges that have accompanied implementation of the District of Columbia’s new compulsory attendance laws, particularly the “80/20 rule.” Since the adoption of this report, the Board has been an active participant on the Deputy Mayor for Education’s (DME) Truancy Task Force, which is investigating solutions to many of the issues the SBOE identified.

In 2013, the District redefined the meaning of “present” in school attendance, now known as the “80/20” rule. According to this rule, students will only be marked present if they are physically in attendance at school or at a school-approved event for at least 80 percent of the instructional day.

Since then, the SBOE has made numerous inquiries into the efficacy of the 80/20 rule. Principals, administrators, and attendance staff voiced negative opinions of the 80/20 rule. Many of them argued that their truancy rates had drastically increased after implementing the new rule. A number of school officials who were interviewed said that inconsistent schedule structures across DC exacerbate the problem. Some schools do not let tardy students enter first period, which pushes them over the threshold for being absent that day. Others use block scheduling, so missing one class makes a student absent for the entire day as well. School officials also noted that their attendance staff was not equipped to handle the mounds of paperwork that accompany implementation of the 80/20 rule.

The SBOE’s research into compulsory attendance laws that exist in other cities around the country found that the District’s 80/20 proportion is the strictest of all jurisdictions.

Based on the SBOE’s findings, members of the Truancy and Student Engagement Committee developed several recommendations for the SBOE to take in order to address the issues and concerns raised in regard to the “80/20 rule.” These recommendations include:

- 1) Calling for OSSE to investigate the challenges and inconsistent findings reported by school-based administrators, along with practices employed at the school-level, in the recordation of student absences and tardiness based on the 80/20 rule.



- 2) Calling for OSSE to evaluate the impact of the District of Columbia’s attendance regulations, including the 80/20 rule, on students, their families, the criminal justice and human service (e.g., CFSA) systems, and school climate. The report shall be delivered to the State Board no later than December 31, 2016, and shall include a cost-benefit analysis related to full compliance with compulsory attendance regulations.
- 3) Advising the Council of the District of Columbia to appropriate funds for the development and implementation of solutions that will ensure uniform implementation of the District’s school attendance laws, support school-based administrative staff in the accurate reporting of student attendance, and strengthen truancy prevention work in schools.
- 4) Calling for OSSE to conduct research on truancy-prevention practices and strategies in the District of Columbia as well as in other districts and states, including an investigation into the background and rationale for implementing the 80/20 rule
- 5) Advising the DME, in consultation with District of Columbia Public Schools (DCPS) and the District of Columbia Public Charter School Board (PCSB), to investigate the limitations of compulsory attendance regulations on student learning that extends beyond the classroom, with particular focus on potential changes in practice which could include expansion of the definition of “excused” absences to include guided learning opportunities that extend beyond the classroom.
- 6) Advising the Council and the Mayor to consider expansion of the District’s Department of Transportation’s (DDOT) student transit subsidy program to include free Metrorail passes for students to travel to and from school and possibly to provide free transportation for parents/guardians of young students to accompany their children to and from school on the bus and Metrorail.

In December, Councilmember Grosso and Chairman Mendelson introduced a bill to address some of the concerns included in the SBOE report. The School Attendance Clarification Amendment Act of 2015, if passed, will prohibit schools from suspending or expelling students based on unexcused absences or tardiness, redefines the referral process for students who are chronically absent or tardy. Students will only be referred to Child and Family Services, or the court system, if they receive 10 or 15 unexcused full-day absences. Additionally, Mayor Bowser expanded the Kids Ride Free program to provide Metrorail subsidies to the parents and guardians of young students taking public transportation to school.

### State Diploma

The SBOE conducted substantial research and outreach into granting a State Diploma for individuals who pass the General Educational Development (GED) exam, or complete the National External Diploma Program (NEDP). The Board passed a resolution in November advising the Office of the State Superintendent to create regulations for such a credential. Currently, those who pass the GED receive a “District of Columbia High School Equivalency Credential.”

In July, the Board heard from many members of the adult education community about the need for such a policy in the District. Adult learners overwhelmingly believed that a diploma would remove barriers and open doors that have previously been shut to them. They believe that a



stigma persists around the GED that makes it hard to get jobs, and causes difficulty pursuing postsecondary education. Over 60 thousand District residents do not have a high school diploma or its equivalency, and an increasing number of DC jobs require postsecondary education.

Adult education providers attested to these students' hard work and persistence to pass the newly revised GED exam. The new testis aligned to the Common Core State Standards and takes most people two years of preparation to pass.

The Board revisited the topic in October, where they heard testimony from employers about their experiences with GED recipients. They also spoke with the principal of Ballou STAY about their NEDP program at the October working session meeting.

The Closing the Achievement Gap committee decided to investigate this issue and answer many questions that Board members had around these second chance credentials. Ultimately, the SBOE passed a [resolution](#) advising OSSE to promulgate regulations around the State Diploma. The resolution acknowledges the need for alternative pathways to a diploma for adult dropouts and the rigor of these routes. The resolution urges OSSE to take steps to minimize the chance that students will dropout of traditional high school to pursue this option, notably by maintaining that GED be restricted to those 18 or older, and the NEDP to those 25 or older.

The resolution also calls for accountability in a variety of ways. It clarifies that State Diploma recipients not be counted in the District's graduation rates. This will maintain transparency on our school system and help ensure that as many students as possible complete DC's comprehensive graduation requirements. Additionally, the resolution calls for OSSE to report the impact of the policy every five years with data such as GED completion rates for those in publicly funded adult education programs. The SBOE plans to vote on these regulations in January 2016.

### Health Education Standards

In 2015, the SBOE took the lead on facilitating a review of the District's health education standards. The current standards were adopted by the SBOE shortly after their development by the U.S. Department of Education in 2007, and these standards closely mirror the national health education standards. Best practices suggest reviewing standards every seven years, so last year the Board put together a working group to review and update these standards.

The health standards working group of consisted of experts and stakeholders, including staff from DCPS and OSSE, educators, physicians, community based organizations, principals, higher education faculty, researchers, parents, and youth. This group found that the current standards do not meet the needs of an urban school district, and proposed a set of standards that are more skills-based than the current iteration. This focus on skills is in line with the shift to the Common Core State Standards.



Data from the 2012 DC Youth Risk Behavior survey demonstrates a need for health standards that address the needs of our students in areas such as nutrition, mental and emotional health, violence and safety, and sexual health.

- **Nutrition:** Data shows that 32 percent of DC youth are obese or overweight, and only 25 percent of high school students eat breakfast daily. Seventeen percent of high school students reported going hungry at least once in the prior month.
- **Mental and emotional health:** More than one-fourth of middle school females have seriously considered suicide. Thirty percent of middle school students report being bullied on school property in the previous month, with rates much higher for LGBTQ students.
- **Violence and safety:** Twenty percent of high school students reported carrying a weapon in the last 30 days, and 40 percent were involved in a physical fight in the previous calendar year.
- **Sexual health:** Almost 20 percent of middle school students reported being sexually active, and teen pregnancy rates remain high for the District.

At the July SBOE public meeting, the SBOE heard from students, teachers, and other community members about the need for a new set of health education standards. Since then, the SBOE has engaged with OSSE for their input on the health standards. OSSE and the SBOE are currently working together to develop a transparent process for additional review, adoption, and implementation of a new set of standards, ensuring that educators and the community will continue to provide input on this important issue.

OSSE plans to field test an assessment based on a draft of these new standards in the spring of 2016. This will allow educators to provide additional feedback with a plan to fully implement the standards in the 2016-17 school year.

#### High School Credit Flexibility Task Force

In August, the SBOE launched the High School Credit Flexibility Task Force with the intention of investigating opportunities for high school students to earn credit outside of the Carnegie unit. The Carnegie unit is an administrative mechanism that equates to 120 seat hours, and is the length of a typical year-long course. Current graduation requirements consist of 24 Carnegie units in a wide array of subjects.

Laura Wilson Phelan, SBOE Ward 1 member, led the task force. The participants consisted of Board members, leaders, and educators from across the DC education community. Representatives on the task force came from many organizations and agencies, including the Council of the District of Columbia, OSSE, Office of the Deputy Mayor for Education, Washington Teachers' Union, and others.

The group met seven times throughout the fall as they worked to create a set of recommendations for regulations that OSSE could propose to the State Board. The discussions from these meetings



centered on developing systems where students benefit from flexibility from strict seat time requirements.

The group considered a number of proposals that included waivers from current seat time requirements and a variety of other means for receiving credit. The task force voted on a final set of recommendations at its final meeting on December 3<sup>rd</sup>. These recommendations were drafted into a report to be presented to the State Board.

The final recommendations from the task force on credit flexibility were to:

- 1) Create a waiver process for schools that wish to implement competency-based learning
- 2) Allow students to receive credit for demonstrated prior knowledge via an OSSE-approved test in foreign language and mathematics
- 3) Remove the requirement that forces students to enroll in Algebra I in the 9th grade

The SBOE adopted the recommendations at its December 2015 Public Meeting. A resolution was also adopted at that meeting that advised OSSE to promulgate regulations that would institute the recommendations.

### Student Advisory Committee

This year, the State Board launched the Student Advisory Committee (SAC). High school students from both DCPS and charter schools all across the city applied to be on this committee. The State Board's Student Representatives Brian Contreras and Destinee Whittington lead the SAC.

The committee met for the first time this October and discussed numerous issues in public education that they would like to work on resolving. Issues suggested by student members ranged from gender-biased dress codes, inconsistent discipline policies, and inconsistent

After much deliberation the SAC decided to tackle teacher accountability and certification as their topic for the duration of the school year. The group plans to meet quarterly and present a set of recommendations at the end of the school year.

### Closing the Achievement Gap

The DC State Board of Education launched the Closing the Achievement Gap task force in February as a way to examine, and hopefully rectify, the disparities in student achievement across the District. Ward 8 member Tierra Jolly chaired the task force on this endeavor.

While the District is only 68 square miles, there are two very different cities. According to an *Education Week* analysis, only half of school-aged children in DC are in households earning over 200 percent of the federal poverty level. Similarly, only 47 percent of school-aged children in



DC have a parent with a postsecondary degree. A mere 60 percent of children have a parent working full-time during the entire year, ranking DC last among the 50 states.<sup>1</sup>

This divide between the haves and the have-nots is also largely a geographic divide. Many of these low-income families live east of the Anacostia River in Wards 7 and 8. One in four children east of the river lives in extreme poverty (i.e. less than \$10,000 for a family of three). The extreme poverty rate for children in the rest of the city is just five percent. Incomes have decreased by ten percent since 2007 east of the river, while incomes rose 16 percent across the city as a whole (adjusting for inflation).<sup>2</sup> The average family income in 2011 for Wards 7 and 8 were \$57 thousand and \$43 thousand, respectively, while the lowest ward income west of the river was Ward 5 at \$79 thousand. The remaining five wards have annual family incomes ranging from roughly \$100 thousand to \$240 thousand.<sup>3</sup>

2015 provided numerous opportunities for the District to reexamine the large disparities in student achievement that takes place across wards, across race, and across income levels. This year marked the first year of results for the Partnership for Assessment of Readiness for College and Careers (PARCC) exams for DC students, which replaced the DC CAS as the state's accountability tests. These rigorous new exams, aligned to the Common Core State Standards, found that few students are on track to be ready for college or a career.

Additionally, the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) provided an opportunity for the District to compare itself to the 50 states. This assessment, often referred to as the Nation's Report Card, takes place every two years and is the only standardized assessment across the entire nation. The results show rapid improvement for the District overall over the last decade, but large disparities remain among our students.

An evaluation of the District's education sector this summer by the National Research Council of the National Academies highlighted this as well. The report, "An Evaluation of the Public Schools of the District of Columbia: Reform in a Changing Landscape," known colloquially as the "PERRA report," analyzed the District's progress since it passed legislation in 2007 that created the State Board of Education and established mayoral control of the public schools.

These test results, along with the information published by the National Research Council, provide a clear picture of where the District stands, and the work that needs to be done to ensure that all DC students graduate ready for college or a career.

## **PERRA Report**

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<sup>1</sup> "District of Columbia State Highlights 2015" Education Week Research Center.

<http://www.edweek.org/media/ew/qc/2015/shr/16shr.dc.h34.pdf>

<sup>2</sup> Lazere, Ed "Ensuring that Everyone Benefits from the Economic Development East of the Anacostia River" *DC Fiscal Policy Institute*. November 10, 2015. <https://www.cityfirstfoundation.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/11/11.5.2015-CityFirst-Summit.pdf>

<sup>3</sup> National Research Council. (2015). *An Evaluation of the Public Schools of the District of Columbia: Reform in a Changing Landscape*. 29.



The National Research Council released a highly publicized report on the Public Education Reform Act of 2007 (PERRA), and its impact in the subsequent years. This legislation eliminated the Board of Education and established the DC State Board of Education. This landmark law in the District also gave the mayor control over the public schools, established the Deputy Mayor for Education, created the Office of the State Superintendent (OSSE), and the Public Charter School Board (PCSB), among other things.

While focusing on the bureaucracies and models of the education sector, the PERRA report also provided a portrait of the changing education landscape over the last several years. This included an overview of the shifting demographics of the District, and test score trends in the final years of the DC CAS.

### Demographics of DC Schools

Between the 2006-07 school year and the 2013-14 school year, the number of students in District public schools (both DCPS and charters) rose from 72,000 to 83,000. The makeup of this body changed, however. The number of students in charters, for instance, rose from 27 percent of the public school population to 44 percent.<sup>4</sup>

The city has changed racially in recent years as well. While the city was 60 percent Black at the time of the 2000 Census, now less than half of the city identifies as Black. In the public schools, however, 71 percent of DCPS students and 79 percent of charter students are Black. This is a slight decrease from the schools being 82 percent African American in 2007. The public schools are now 20 percent White (up from 16 percent in 2007), with DCPS seeing 23 percent White students. The rate of Hispanic students in District public schools is now 16 percent, up from 12 percent in 2007. There's an equal percentage of Hispanics in both DCPS and the charters.<sup>5</sup>

While the number of special education students in DC has stayed constant since 2007 (13 percent) the number of English-language learners saw a slight uptick from 7 percent to 9 percent over those years. Ten percent of DCPS students are English learners while seven percent of charter students are ELLs.<sup>6</sup>

One major demographic change in recent years is the number of students eligible for free or reduced lunch. Eligibility status is often used as a crude measure of poverty in schools and in accountability reporting. The percentage of students eligible for this service jumped from 45 percent in 2007 to 55 percent in 2014. The numbers are comparable between DCPS and the charters, with 56 percent and 54 percent respectively. However, the data across these years is not entirely comparable. During the 2012-13 school year, the District changed its eligibility requirements. Now if a school has students that are 40 percent or more students "at-risk," then all students are automatically eligible for free or reduced-price lunch, regardless of family income.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> Ibid. Page 25.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid. Page 24.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid. Page 24.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid. Page 24.



## Teacher Quality

The neediest students also need the best instructors. However, a large body of research suggests that the highest poverty schools tend to be staffed with the least experienced teachers.<sup>8</sup> The District's IMPACT scores, its teacher accountability model, support this finding. Over four years, from 2010-2013, teachers averaged a score of 305.9 on IMPACT. The average scores in wards 7 and 8 were considerably lower at 292 and 289, respectively. Scores for teachers in wards 2 and 3 averaged much higher at 317 and 332.<sup>9</sup> While teacher accountability scores have been suspended as the District moves to new Common Core-aligned assessments, this disparity must be noted as the city works to close the achievement gap in 2016 and beyond.

## Graduation Rates

Over the past several years, DC has made gains in its graduation rates but gaps still persist. Beginning in 2011, all states began calculating their on-time graduation rate using the Adjusted Cohort Graduation Rate (ACGR). Between 2011 and 2013, DC's graduation rate ticked up from 59 percent to 62 percent, but it still the lowest among states reporting data and well below the national average of 81 percent. The gaps are even more pronounced among student groups. Sixty-one percent of African American students in DC graduated on-time in 2013, and 62 percent of Hispanic students did the same. On the other hand, 85 percent of white students and 86 percent of Asian students graduated on time. Results were even worse among students with disabilities (41 percent), the economically disadvantaged (59 percent), and limited-English proficient students (52 percent).<sup>10</sup>

## **Transition from DC CAS**

The DC CAS was the District's accountability assessment from 2006 to 2014. Its reading portion was administered to all students in grades 2-10, and the math portion was given to students in grades 2-8 and during students' sophomore year of high school. Students in grades 5 and 8 took a science exam, along with high school biology students. A composition exam was given in grades 4, 7, and 10.<sup>11</sup>

While DC has transitioned from the DC CAS to the PARCC exam, the most recent DC CAS data is still useful to analyze disparities across the city, and serve as a baseline for what achievement gaps have persisted in the city over the past several years.

While there were some modest gains over the last five years of the DC CAS, the reality shows stark gaps in achievement between various subgroups on both the reading and math exams. In fact, results became worse for English language learners between 2009 and 2014.

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<sup>8</sup> Ibid. Page 110.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid. Page 110.

<sup>10</sup> "District of Columbia State Highlights 2015" Education Week Research Center.  
<http://www.edweek.org/media/ew/dc/2015/sgb/33sgb.dc.h34.pdf>

<sup>11</sup> National Research Council. (2015). *An Evaluation of the Public Schools of the District of Columbia: Reform in a Changing Landscape*. 162.





<b>DC CAS Reading</b> <sup>12</sup>	2009 Proficient or Advanced	2014 Proficient or Advanced	Change
White	91	93	2
African American	43	45	2
Hispanic	50	50	0
Asian	76	78	2
English Language Learners	45	37	-8
Special Education	16	21	5
Economically Disadvantaged	40	42	2

<b>DC CAS Math</b> <sup>13</sup>	2009 Proficient or Advanced	2014 Proficient or Advanced	Change
White	88	93	5
African American	42	48	6
Hispanic	53	58	5
Asian	83	87	4
English Language Learners	51	49	-2
Special Education	14	26	12
Economically Disadvantaged	41	48	7

Examining school-level data shows that these achievement gaps persist geographically as well, and begin in the early grades. For instance, the highest achieving elementary school on the DC CAS for mathematics was Horace Mann Elementary in Ward 3, which saw a 93.7 percent proficient rate in 2014. C.W. Harris Elementary, in Ward 7, saw only 11.5 percent of its children score proficient on the exam. A Ward 3 school, Janney Elementary, also saw the highest proficiency rate for Hispanic students out of any elementary school in the District (88.9 percent).<sup>14</sup>

Similarly on the elementary school reading exams, Janney Elementary had the highest overall proficiency rate at 91.1 percent, and the highest proficiency rate for Hispanic students (85.2 percent). On the other hand, Bancroft Elementary in Ward 1 saw only 25 percent of its Hispanic students score proficient on reading. Reading scores in Ward 3 ranged from 91.1 percent to 67.6

<sup>12</sup> Ibid. Page 172

<sup>13</sup> Ibid. Page 173.

<sup>14</sup> Data compiled from Learn DC at <http://www.learnDC.org>.



percent, while scores in Ward 7 ranged as widely as 89.5 percent to 11.5 percent at its elementary schools.<sup>15</sup>

These gaps persist in the middle school grades as well. Middle school math scores ranged from 88.1 percent proficient to 79.6 percent proficient in Ward 3, while schools in Ward 6 ranged from 71.8 percent all the way to 8.8 percent proficient. In reading, Ward 3 scores range only between 83.9 percent and 79.8 percent, while scores range from only 67.6 percent to as low as 8.8 percent in Ward 6.<sup>16</sup>

### **National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP)**

The National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) is a national assessment that serves as the nation's report card on student achievement. The exam is given to students in all 50 states and the District of Columbia every other year to students in 4<sup>th</sup>, 8<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> grade. This report will focus on 4<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> grade math and reading results for the years 2005, 2013, and 2015. This provides a snapshot of how students performed both the last time the test was administered, and how students performed a decade ago.

These NAEP scores show that there has been progress in the District since 2005, but large disparities remain between major subgroups, specifically race and income.

#### **Race and Reading:**

Overall, the District has seen progress in reading scores over the last ten years. From 2005 to 2015, the percentage of White, Black, and Hispanic 4th grade students who scored at or above proficient in reading increased by approximately ten percentage points. Over the same ten years, more mild gains were made in the percentage of White, Black and Hispanic 8th grade students who scored at or above proficient in reading with the percentage of White 8th grade students increasing by two percentage points, the percentage of Black 8th grade students increasing by three percentage points, and the percentage of Hispanic 8th grade students increasing by one percentage point.<sup>17</sup>

The two years between 2013 and 2015 saw mild to moderate gains in the percentage of White students in both 4th and 8th reading scores. Over the course of these two years, the percentage of White students in 4th and 8th grade who scored at or above proficient increased by four percentage points and three percentage points, respectively. While the percentage of Black students in 4th grade who scored at or above proficient in reading rose by 3 percentage points, the percentage of Black students in 8th grade who scored at or above proficient in reading did not change. However, the proficiency rate for Hispanic students dropped by a percent over that

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<sup>15</sup> Ibid.

<sup>16</sup> Ibid.

<sup>17</sup> Data collected from National Center for Education Statistics NAEP Data Explorer at <https://nces.ed.gov/nationsreportcard/naepdata/>



time. Despite the stagnation and decline in these groups scores, the reading scores are higher than 2005 across all three subgroups.<sup>18</sup>

<b>DC 4th Grade Students at or Above Proficient in Reading by Race/Ethnicity</b>			
	White	Black	Hispanic
2005	70	8	12
2013	77	15	23
2015	81	18	22

<b>DC 8th Grade Students at or Above Proficient in Reading by Race/Ethnicity</b>			
	White	Black	Hispanic
2005	74	9	18
2013	73	12	20
2015	76	12	19

Race and Math:

From 2005 to 2015, the percentage of White students in 4th grade who scored at or above proficient in math saw a moderate increase of 8 percentage points while the percentage of Black and Hispanic students in 4th grade who scored at or above proficient in math rose substantially by 15 and 19 percentage points, respectively. Similar gains were made over the course of the same ten years for White, Black, and Hispanic students in 8th grade. 8th grade proficiency rates for white students rose by 5 points, by nine points for Black students, and 10 points for Hispanic students.<sup>19</sup>

While the last decade saw students’ proficiency rates rise overall, the District saw declines from its results two years ago. From 2013 to 2015, the percentage of White students in 4th grade who scored at or above proficient in math decreased by three percentage points while the percentage of White, Black, and Hispanic students in 8th grade who scored at or above proficient fell by one percentage point. Black and Hispanic students in 4th grade were the only two groups of students who saw an increase in the percent of students proficient in math between 2013 and 2015. It is important to note that while the percentage of white students in 4th grade and white, black, and

<sup>18</sup> Ibid.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid.



Hispanic students in 8th grade did decrease between 2013 and 2015, these groups proficiency rates are still higher than they were in 2005.<sup>20</sup>

DC 4th Grade Students at or Above Proficient in Math by Race/Ethnicity			
	White	Black	Hispanic
2005	78	5	11
2013	88	19	23
2015	85	20	30

DC 8th Grade Students at or Above Proficient in Math by Race/Ethnicity			
	White	Black	Hispanic
2005	69	4	9
2013	75	14	20
2015	74	13	19

### National School Lunch Program Eligibility and Reading

Over the course of the ten years between 2005 to 2015, the percentage of 4th and 8th grade students both eligible and not eligible for free and reduced lunch who scored at or above proficient in reading increased. This increase was mild for 4th and 8th grade students eligible for free and reduced lunch with the percentage rising by five and two percentage points, respectively. This increase was much more significant for 4th and 8th grade students not eligible for free and reduced lunch with the percentage proficient in reading rising by a 16 percentage points in fourth grade and 26 points for 8<sup>th</sup> graders.<sup>21</sup>

The difference between the percentage of students eligible for free and reduced lunch who scored at or above proficient and the percentage of students not eligible for free and reduced lunch who scored at or above proficient has widened drastically during the ten years between 2005 and 2013. The difference in percentage points between the two groups in 2005 was 23 for 4th graders and 12 for 8th graders. In 2015, the difference in percentage points between the two groups had risen to 51 points for 4th graders and 36 for 8th graders.<sup>22</sup>

<sup>20</sup> Ibid.

<sup>21</sup> Ibid.

<sup>22</sup> Ibid.



<b>DC 4th Grade Students at or Above Proficient in Reading by National School Lunch Program</b>		
	Eligible	Not Eligible
2005	6	29
2013	13	61
2015	14	66

<b>DC 8th Grade Students at or Above Proficient in Reading by National School Lunch Program</b>		
	Eligible	Not Eligible
2005	8	20
2013	10	42
2015	10	46

#### National School Lunch Program Eligibility and Math

From 2005 to 2015, significant gains were made in math for non-eligible 4<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> grade students. While only 27 percent of 4<sup>th</sup> grade students not eligible for free and reduced lunch achieved proficiency in math in 2005, 26 percent of fourth grade students not eligible for free and reduced lunch scored at or above proficient in math ten years later in 2015 - an increase of 42 percentage points. Even more dramatic was the change in the percentage of 8<sup>th</sup> grade students not eligible for free and reduced lunch. Whereas only 16 percent of eighth graders not eligible for free and reduced lunch achieved proficiency in math in 2005, 46 percent of eighth graders not eligible for free and reduced lunch scored at or above proficient in math in 2015 – an increase of 30 percentage points.<sup>23</sup>

Fourth and eighth grade students who are eligible to receive free and reduced lunch also saw gains in the percentage of students who scored at or above proficient in math between 2005 and 2015, although those gains were much more modest than those experienced by fourth and eighth from wealthier families. The percentage of fourth grade students eligible for free and reduced lunch who scored at or above proficient in math rose from five percent in 2005 to 18 percent in 2015, an increase of 13 percentage points. For 8<sup>th</sup> grade students, the number rose from four percent to 11 percent over the last decade. However, the gap between those eligible and not eligible has increased as well. The gap between eligible and non-eligible students rose from 22

<sup>23</sup> Ibid.



points to 51 points among 4<sup>th</sup> grade students, and from 12 points to 35 points among 8<sup>th</sup> graders.<sup>24</sup>

<b>DC 4th Grade Students at or Above Proficient in Math by National School Lunch Program</b>		
	Eligible	Not Eligible
2005	5	27
2013	17	68
2015	18	69

<b>DC 8th Grade Students at or Above Proficient in Math by National School Lunch Program</b>		
	Eligible	Not Eligible
2005	4	16
2013	12	46
2015	11	46

### **Partnership for Assessment of Readiness for College and Careers (PARCC)**

The 2014-15 school year marked the first year of the Partnership for Assessment of Readiness for College and Careers (PARCC) exams. PARCC was designed by a consortium of states to provide a comprehensive test of students’ skills that is aligned to the Common Core State Standards. These tests set a new baseline for student achievement as we redefine what students need to know and be able to do to succeed in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

Students were tested in each grade from the 3<sup>rd</sup> grade through the 8<sup>th</sup> grade. High school students taking geometry and English II were also tested.

Scores from PARCC are on a five-point scale. A score of five means a student exceeded expectations, and a four means that a student met expectations. A student scoring at level three is said to be “approaching expectations.” At the high school level, scores of four and five are deemed college-and-career ready.

<sup>24</sup> Ibid.



The results provide a sobering picture of student achievement in the District, and that much work needs to be done in the future.

### High School

Approximately 3,500 students took both the English II and Geometry assessments in the first year of PARCC. Previously, 10<sup>th</sup> grade students were tested on the DC CAS. However, the PARCC exam is subject specific, so DC chose two exams that would serve as the closest proxy for 10<sup>th</sup> grade students. All students taking geometry or English II, regardless of grade, are included in the PARCC results.

In total, roughly 25 percent of high school students met or exceeded expectations on the English II exam. The District's racial disparities in education are starkly apparent, with only 20 percent of Black students and 25 percent of Hispanic students considered college and career ready, compared to 82 percent of the District's White students. In fact only three percent of Black students scored a five on this exam, compared to 53 percent of White students. Additionally, only 17 percent of economically disadvantaged students scored a four or higher in English.

On Geometry, only 10 percent of all DC students scored at the college and career readiness level. The achievement gap is still apparent with only 4 percent of Black students and 8 percent of Hispanic students scoring a four or five, compared to 52 percent of White students. No Black, Hispanic, or economically disadvantaged students scored a five on the geometry exam. Roughly 24 percent of all black students scored a one, compared to only 5 percent of White students scoring at that level. These disparities even exist within schools. At Wilson High School, for example, 83 percent of White students were college and career ready, when only 25.6 percent of Black students scored at that level.

### Grades 3-8

Overall scores remained consistent for students across grades 3-8 on the English Language Arts (ELA) PARCC exam. Each grade saw between 23 percent and 26 percent of its students score a four or a five on the exam. The racial disparities at each grade level are more alarming, however. Of all the students in grades 3 through 8 who took the ELA PARCC assessment, roughly 72 percent were Black, 15 percent were Hispanic, and 10 percent were White. While Black students made up almost three-quarters of the test-taking population, only 17 percent of Black students met or exceeded expectations (i.e. scored a four or five) on the ELA PARCC exam. Of this 17 percent, only one percent scored at a level five. This minimal proficiency rate is in stark contrast to the percent of White students who achieved proficiency on the same exam. While White students made up only one-tenth of the test-taking population, 79 percent of white students met or exceeded expectations on the ELA PARCC exam with 25 percent of them scoring at a level five.

The achievement gap on PARCC also exists when examining scores by income. Of all the students in grades 3 through 8 who took the ELA PARCC assessment, approximately 75 percent



of them are classified as economically disadvantaged. While low-income students represented three-quarters of the test-taking population, only 14 percent of economically disadvantaged students met or exceeded expectations, and only one percent reached level five.

On the math exams, proficiency scores steadily decline from grades 3-7. Thirty percent of third grade students scored at level four or five, followed by 28 percent of fourth graders, 25 percent of 5<sup>th</sup> graders, 21 percent of 6<sup>th</sup> graders, and 14 percent of 7<sup>th</sup> grade students. Seventeen percent of 8<sup>th</sup> graders met or exceeded expectations.

As with the ELA exams, the racial achievement gaps persist on the math exams. While Black students made up almost three-quarters of the test-taking population, only 17 percent met or exceeded expectations on the math PARCC exams. On the other hand, 70 percent of white students met or exceeded expectations, with 14 percent of them scoring at a level five.

Economically disadvantaged students made up three-fourths of the math test taking population as well, and only 15 percent of economically disadvantaged students met or exceeded expectations.

### **Conclusion**

Washington, D.C. has seen many changes in demographics, school governance, and overall achievement rates over the past decade. What have not changed are the gaps in achievement between races, and between students from high and low-income families. The year 2015 gave the District ample data to remind us of this point, and it should inform the work we do in 2016 and beyond.







District of Columbia State Board of Education  
DCSBOE



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**To:** Members, State Board of Education

**From:** Kamili Anderson, Chair, Truancy and Student Engagement Committee

**Subject:** Challenges Associated with Implementation of the District of Columbia's New Compulsory Attendance Laws and Recommendations for Addressing Them

**Date:** April 1, 2015

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### Executive Summary

Truancy and chronic absenteeism have profound impacts on student learning and success.<sup>1</sup> New attendance rules mandated by the Council of the District of Columbia (the Council) and approved by the State Board of Education (State Board) in 2013 established an early-warning system that requires schools to identify and support chronically absent students before they veer off track academically.

Several provisions, notably the so-called "80/20 rule," have been brought to the State Board's attention as problematic in their implementation. After hearing concerns about the attendance rule's negative effect on school staff, students, families, and truancy rates, the State Board conducted research, site visits, and roundtables to learn more about the implementation challenges. It was noteworthy that roundtable participants included high school principals and assistant principals from across the city.

Through the course of the State Board's research, the Board uncovered discrepancies in how the District's school administrative bodies, namely the District of Columbia Public Schools (DCPS), the Office of the State Superintendent (OSSE) and the Public Charter School Board (PCSB), and schools have experienced the impact of the law change. Quite significantly, District school administrative bodies deem the law a success so far in reducing truancy, while school personnel express that they have experienced the opposite effect because of how they have had to implement the policy. School-level implementation challenges fall into the following four buckets.

First, attendance systems at the high school level have not been reconciled with new truancy rules, leading to the unintended consequence of labeling tardy students as absent – which can ultimately lead to their involvement in the family court system. This problem is particularly acute in high schools with block scheduling, where the first class, regardless of length, can represent a quarter of the instructional day. Second, truancy rules are enforced inconsistently across schools; some schools prohibit students who are more than 10 minutes late from entering their first class, leading them to be counted as absent under the 80/20 rule. Third, the new rules have created obstacles for families who choose to engage their students in educationally enriching activities during school time, the most recent examples of which included a student who plays in international music competitions, a grandmother who took her grandchild to the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the march on Selma, Alabama, and the parents who took a sibling to the adoption of his/her sibling. Fourth, school personnel feel "buried in paperwork" demanded by

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<sup>1</sup> Absences Add Up: How School Attendance Influences Student Success. Attendance Works report, August 2014  
[http://www.attendanceworks.org/wordpress/wp-content/uploads/2014/09/Absences-Add-Up\\_090114-1-1.pdf](http://www.attendanceworks.org/wordpress/wp-content/uploads/2014/09/Absences-Add-Up_090114-1-1.pdf)  
441 4<sup>th</sup> Street NW, Suite 723N, Washington, DC 20001 | 202.741.0888  
[www.sboe.dc.gov](http://www.sboe.dc.gov) | [sboe@dc.gov](mailto:sboe@dc.gov) | [facebook.com/dcstateboard](https://www.facebook.com/dcstateboard) | @DCSBOE

the new law, which has required school staff who would ordinarily be involved with addressing the root causes of truancy to address the symptomatic elements instead.

Based on these conclusions of the State Board's research, the Truancy and Student Engagement Committee recommends the State Board take the following actions:

- 1) Call for Office of the State Superintendent for Education (OSSE) to investigate the challenges and inconsistent findings reported by school-based administrators, along with practices employed at the school-level, in the recordation of student absences and tardies based on the 80/20 rule. OSSE shall provide a report of its findings to the Board and the Deputy Mayor of Education (DME) no later than August 30, 2015. The report shall include a proposal to implement solutions that ensure uniform, fair, and accurate reporting of absences and tardies across all District of Columbia schools or to make adjustments to the definition of "present" within the schools.
- 2) Call for OSSE to evaluate the impact of the District of Columbia's attendance regulations, including the 80/20 rule, on students, their families, the criminal justice and human service (e.g., CFSA) systems, and school climate. The report shall be delivered to the State Board no later than December 31, 2016, and shall include a cost-benefit analysis related to full compliance with compulsory attendance regulations.
- 3) Advise the Council of the District of Columbia to appropriate funds for the development and implementation of solutions that will ensure uniform implementation of the District's school attendance laws, support school-based administrative staff in the accurate reporting of student attendance, and strengthen truancy prevention work in schools.
- 4) Call for OSSE to conduct research on truancy-prevention practices and strategies in the District of Columbia as well as in other districts and states, including an investigation into the background and rationale for implementing the 80/20 rule, and report to the State Board no later than December 31, 2015.
- 5) Advise the DME, in consultation with DCPS and the Public Charter School Board, to investigate the limitations of compulsory attendance regulations on student learning that extends beyond the classroom, with particular focus on potential changes in practice which could include expansion of the definition of "excused" absences to include guided learning opportunities that extend beyond the classroom.
- 6) Advise the Council and the Mayor to consider expansion of the District's Department of Transportation's (DDOT) student transit subsidy program to include free Metrorail passes for students to travel to and from school and possibly to provide free transportation for parents/guardians of young students to accompany their children to and from school on the bus and Metrorail.

## Background

In June 2013, the District of Columbia State Board of Education (State Board) approved new compulsory attendance regulations that reduced the threshold of unexcused absences and mandated earlier interventions for truant students and a stricter definition of “present.”

The District’s LEAs have struggled to comply with key provisions of the law, most prominently the requirement that schools convene a student support team (SST) meeting with students and their parent/guardian after the accrual of five unexcused absences. The State Board soon became aware, however, that some District schools were struggling in communicating the changes wrought by the new law to students and parents and were experiencing increases in truancy rates due to the new present/absent ratios mandated in the law, specifically the so-called “80/20 rule” which considers students “absent” if they miss 20 percent of the school day.

This report details the State Board’s efforts to establish facts and achieve solutions to truancy and chronic absenteeism issues that hinder teaching and learning, and prevent too many young people from reaching their full potential. It further discusses some of the many implementation challenges identified by school-level and District personnel since the State Board of Education’s approval of revised compulsory attendance regulations in December 2013.

## History and Timeline

- **June 19, 2013** – State Board of Education approved revised compulsory attendance regulations that aligned and conformed to changes made by the Council of the District of Columbia to provisions of the “South Capitol Street Memorial Amendment Act of 2012.”
- **Fall 2013** – Community members alerted Board members to implementation challenges associated with the definition of “present” (the so-called “80/20 rule”). That provision states that in order for a student to be considered present, they must be physically in attendance at scheduled periods of instruction at the educational institution in which they are enrolled for at least 80% of the full instructional day, or in attendance at a school-approved activity that constitutes part of the approved school program for the student.
- **December 18, 2013** – The State Board approved several technical changes to the compulsory attendance rules to conform to changes made by the “Attendance Accountability Amendment Act of 2013.” At this meeting, the State Board directed staff to investigate the concerns raised about implementation of the 80/20 rule further and make a recommendation.
- **Winter 2014** – State Board staff visit schools to gather information on implementation of compulsory attendance regulations, with emphasis on 80/20 rule.
- **February 19, 2014** – The State Board establishes the Truancy and Student Engagement Committee.
- **March/April 2014** – Initial findings shared with the Truancy and Student Engagement Committee.
- **June 12, 2014** – The State Board’s Truancy and Student Engagement Committee, chaired by Ward 4 member Kamili Anderson, holds a public roundtable titled, “Moving Past Truancy: Chronic Absenteeism in the District of Columbia” to review the implementation of the compulsory attendance rules and reported implementation problems.
- **November 17, 2014** – State Board holds public roundtable to learn about implementation challenges and get feedback from principals, teachers, students, and community members.

## Analysis of Implementation Challenges

On June 19, 2013, the State Board of Education approved additional revisions to the District's compulsory attendance rules (Title 5, Chapter A-21, in the District of Columbia Municipal Regulations [DCMR]) to address student attendance at public schools and schools receiving District funding. The need for revisions emerged with the implementation of the "South Capitol Memorial Amendment Act of 2012" (the Act).

The Act was intended to reduce truancy and increase in-seat attendance for students in the District and prevent the mass shooting that took the lives of 19-year-old William Jones III, 18-year-old DaVaghn Boyd, 18-year-old Tavon Nelson, and 16-year-old Brishell Jones and inflicted a trauma on the entire city. Along with a reduction in truancy, the law aimed to establish a comprehensive youth behavioral health infrastructure and "transform how the District addresses youth behavioral health issues, strengthen our ability to identify signs of unmet behavioral health needs early, and allow us to effectively intervene in order to prevent future negative outcomes."<sup>2</sup> Through changes to the compulsory attendance law, it was hoped that new activities would decrease high school dropout rates, increase grades and graduation rates, and reduce crime and recidivism. However, the need to strengthen attendance rules was again brought to public attention with the tragic disappearance of eight-year-old District of Columbia Public Schools student Relisha Rudd, who accumulated weeks of "excused" absences before school officials investigated and found she hadn't been in a physician's care, but by then it was too late.

Not long after the State Board's adoption of the revised compulsory attendance rules, education advocates and other members of the public expressed concerns regarding the impact of the new definition of present, tardiness, truancy, and in-seat attendance rates. They maintained that the new definition presented a disincentive for students who arrived late to school to remain in school for the remainder of the day as those students would be marked "absent" even if they were physically present for part of the day. At the State Board's public meeting on December 18, 2013, the State Board tasked its staff to investigate this issue further and develop a set of policy recommendations that might address concerns. Since then, Board staff have been actively engaged in researching attendance rules in other jurisdictions and exploring the impact that the new compulsory attendance laws are having on absenteeism, school truancy, and in-seat attendance rates.

In the past year, additional issues with implementation of the compulsory attendance regulations have come to light. In April 26, 2014, an article by the *Washington Post's* Emma Brown and Keith L. Alexander included comments from Kaya Henderson, Chancellor of the District of Columbia Public Schools. She said that "officials in high-truancy schools are overwhelmed and often struggle to meet the new requirements. As of early January, fewer than 40 percent of the system's chronically truant students had been referred to child welfare as required by law, according to school data." The Chancellor added that the new expectations have "made us [DCPS] more vigilant and have helped us to focus on attendance. But I am worried that I have people whose entire job is the compliance and paperwork...and I think that does not then allow us to do the deeper things that engage students."<sup>3</sup>

In September 2014, the revised compulsory attendance rules were highlighted again when the

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<sup>2</sup> [http://www.huffingtonpost.com/david-catania/south-capitol-memorial-amendment-act\\_b\\_1389638.html](http://www.huffingtonpost.com/david-catania/south-capitol-memorial-amendment-act_b_1389638.html)

<sup>3</sup> [http://www.washingtonpost.com/local/education/truancy-absenteeism-a-chronic-problem-in-dc-schools/2014/04/26/0269291e-cb1f-11e3-a75e-463587891b57\\_story.html](http://www.washingtonpost.com/local/education/truancy-absenteeism-a-chronic-problem-in-dc-schools/2014/04/26/0269291e-cb1f-11e3-a75e-463587891b57_story.html)

*Washington Post* reported on the story of an Alice Deal Middle School student and piano prodigy, Avery Gagliano, who was seemingly labeled as a truant despite her attendance record reflecting that her absences while performing abroad were excused for being “authorized school activity.”<sup>4</sup> However, her family still received form letters threatening Child and Family Services Agency referrals. This error only served to confuse and ultimately frustrate them to the point of removing their daughter from the public school system altogether and educating her at home. This situation highlights the conflict between a broadly applied law and the need for schools to both comply and consider individual circumstances.

As DCPS officials pointed out in response to both the Rudd and Gagliano cases, school personnel typically have relationships with families that allow them to know extenuating circumstances and exercise flexibility in invoking truancy regulations when determining whether an absence is excused or unexcused. In practice, however, it appears that complying with the attendance rules meant, in one case, a school having to accept the false assurance that a child was missing school for medical reasons, and in the other, having no flexibility to consider individual circumstances.

### **The 80/20 Rule**

The revised compulsory attendance rules included a new definition of “present” in the District’s schools. Under the new 80/20 rule, for a student to be considered present, they must be physically in attendance at scheduled periods of instruction at the educational institution in which they are enrolled for at least 80 percent of the full instructional day or in attendance at a school-approved activity that constitutes part of the approved school program for that student. Prior to December 2013, when the State Board was considering its vote on additional revisions to the compulsory attendance rules, which included the 80/20 rule, several education stakeholders and members of the community expressed their concerns about the revised definition of “present” contained in the new regulations. They claimed that the new definition presents a disincentive for students to persist in school on a day when they are tardy or missing for a portion of a day because they would be marked “absent” for the entire day, even if they were physically present for part of it—though less than the 80 percent threshold. They further warned that if such students accrued enough absences during the course of a school year as a result of this rule, especially if those absences went unexcused, they or their parents might face disciplinary referral or other action, warranted or unwarranted.

During winter 2013, at the State Board’s insistence, Board staff conducted interviews with school principals and attendance staff to get a sense of the impact that the new compulsory attendance laws were having on school truancy and in-seat attendance rates.<sup>5</sup> They also held interviews with leaders and staff from several educational and social advocacy organizations and from the DCPS Office of Youth Engagement. Additionally, staff attended several meetings of the citywide Truancy Task Force, and conducted research into attendance laws and perspectives on those laws in other jurisdictions (including both states and cities).

The State Board staff’s findings can be summarized as follows:

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<sup>4</sup> [http://www.washingtonpost.com/local/in-dc-a-12-year-old-piano-prodigy-is-treated-as-a-truant-instead-of-a-star-student/2014/09/08/58962746-3727-11e4-bdfb-de4104544a37\\_story.html](http://www.washingtonpost.com/local/in-dc-a-12-year-old-piano-prodigy-is-treated-as-a-truant-instead-of-a-star-student/2014/09/08/58962746-3727-11e4-bdfb-de4104544a37_story.html)

<sup>5</sup> **Truancy** = Accumulation of more than 10 unexcused absences

**In-Seat Attendance** = Number of days student is present divided by the number# of days student is enrolled

- Principals and personnel at the DCPS comprehensive high schools that State Board staff visited voiced the greatest concerns regarding the implementation of the 80/20 rule. They claimed that their truancy rates had increased and that their staff members were being spread very thin to handle the paperwork associated with documenting attendance under the new rule. In their view, the 80/20 rule was having a largely negative impact on student attendance and truancy rates, and they were very eager for a solution to the problems that they believed had arisen as a result. No measureable impact from the new rule was noted by interviewed personnel at the public charter schools.<sup>6</sup>
- By contrast, staff in the DCPS Office of Youth Engagement maintained that the impact of the 80/20 rule on the public schools had not been as great as they had anticipated. They confirmed DCPS' support for the 80/20 rule and indicated that they would appreciate the opportunity to collaborate with the State Board in addressing the concerns raised by school-based personnel about the rule and its impact.
- Data presented to the city-wide Truancy Task Force further contradicted the anecdotal reports of the high school leaders and staff. Those data confirmed that substantial reductions in chronic truancy had occurred over the 2013-2014 school year and that many of the schools of those interviewed actually experienced sharp reductions in their truancy rates. Truancy rates for public charter schools were also shown to have decreased, from 18.8% to 14.9%.
- Interviewees from the advocacy organizations suggested that the conversation around the 80/20 rule be shifted from a focus on truancy to a focus on student engagement. They further suggested that the State Board take a leadership role in promoting this paradigm shift, which could potentially encompass an emphasis on the benefits of regular, on-time school attendance and welcoming school climates while downplaying the need for disciplinary action.

### **How Other Jurisdictions Define “Present”**

Research into the attendance policies of other jurisdictions revealed that the District of Columbia is an outlier in two respects. First, very few jurisdictions define the term “present” within their compulsory attendance laws. Rather, present is often defined within the procedures used to record student attendance. Second, no other jurisdiction was found to use a proportion of as high as 80/20 to measure student attendance. Indeed, the evidence suggests that the District of Columbia has one of the most stringent definitions of present on record.

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<sup>6</sup> State Board staff conducted interviews with school administrators and attendance staff at five comprehensive DCPS high schools and two public charter schools. Among the public schools were Anacostia, Dunbar, Eastern, Roosevelt, and Wilson; from the charter side: Center City PCS—Congress Heights and E. L. Haynes Public Charter School. Board staff also engaged the principals of McKinley Technology High School and Cesar Chavez School for Public Policy—Capitol Hill Campus via email correspondence. Both of the latter two schools' principals indicated that their schools were not experiencing any problems with student attendance due to the 80/20 rule, nor had any of their students cited the rule as a reason they did not stay at school after missing part of a day.

The closest jurisdiction with a similar law is West Virginia, where students are considered present if they are in attendance for at least 74 percent of the school day. In Illinois, students must be at school for at least five hours to be marked as present, which, for many schools in that state, translates to a 70/30 proportion. In the Baltimore City and Montgomery County public schools, students are counted as present if they are in attendance for at least four hours of the school day, which roughly equates to a proportion of about 60/40. Other jurisdictions, such as the city of Boston and the state of North Carolina, require a student to be in attendance for at least half the instructional day to be counted as present. Students in Florida's Miami-Dade County public schools are considered present if they are in school for at least two hours.

### **School-Level Perspectives on the 80/20 Rule**

The DCPS principals interviewed by Board staff indicated that their in-seat attendance rates had decreased since the 80/20 rule went into effect. Those at Eastern, Roosevelt, and Wilson, for example, claimed to have experienced a 10-point drop and maintained that their truancy rates had become astoundingly high. The principals also noted that after applying the new rule, more than half the students at Dunbar High School met the criteria for chronically truant and one-third of students at Wilson had more than five unexcused absences, which required a meeting with the Student Support Team.

These schools' principals, administrators, and attendance staff concurred that although the 80/20 rule may not be causing their students to skip school altogether, they could understand how such a scenario might arise. They also noted a number of different problems that have arisen with the rollout and implementation of the new compulsory attendance laws, for example:

- All indicated problems with how the 80/20 rule was rolled out. Many said that they were not aware of the changes the new rule would bring until just before the school year began and thus were unable to develop a robust communication strategy for informing parents and students. They also claimed that they were informed about the new rule in different ways, including through an OSSE brochure, through conversations with colleagues, at a PCSB meeting, and at a DCPS professional development session for attendance counselors, which may have led to inconsistent expectations.
- The interviewed principals and other high school personnel also expressed concern about DCPS's lack of a consistent, mandated master-scheduling structure for its high schools. They pointed out that DCPS high schools have the flexibility to determine their own master schedules (e.g., 4x4, 4x4 AB, traditional 1-7 period structure, etc.), which can have a major impact on their attendance rates:
  - Wilson High School, for example, has a "skinny" first period that is only 45 minutes long, but since DCPS measures attendance by period, if a student misses that first class, they have missed 25 percent of the day and they are considered absent for the remainder of the day *even* if they arrive at school in time for second period;
  - Alternately, Roosevelt and Dunbar high schools use block scheduling, so if one of their students misses even one period of the day, they hit the 20 percent threshold and are marked as absent for the whole day.

- By contrast, first period at Eastern High School is a short advisory period, but if students miss that class their attendance level for the day is at 80% and if they miss another class they are below the threshold of present.
- All the interviewed school personnel contended that the technology systems in use at their schools to record student attendance did not align with the principles of 80/20 rule. They noted that DC STARS, DCPS’s student information system, records only the class *periods* at which students are present, not their *time* of arrival. Thus, at Wilson High School, for example, students who arrive after first period, or after 9:20 a.m., are marked as absent for the entire day, even though technically they have until 10:06 a.m. before they hit the 20% threshold.
- The school officials also stated that they do not have enough staff or resources to keep up with all the documentation requirements necessary to comply with the new compulsory attendance laws given the 80/20 rule. They cited the following challenges:
  - Most have one or, at most, two attendance counselors, who are charged with myriad tasks, including monitoring student attendance, issuing the necessary truancy notification correspondence, coordinating and holding SST meetings, conducting home visits, and making court referrals.
  - The tight constraints of the 80/20 rule require them to do a lot of “backpedaling” to track whether students have truly unexcused absences or whether they are attending school-related events, forgot to sign into classes, or arrived late and their teachers forgot to mark them as present. As a result, the school officials maintained that the attendance accounting work “snowballs” very quickly and can cause the misperception that their schools are “not doing their job” of ensuring student attendance. They also noted that their attendance counselors were spending an inordinate amount of time correcting attendance data to comply with the 80/20 rule’s recordation requirements.
  - Many school leaders and staff members also claimed that they worried that they are focusing too many of their schools’ resources on complying with the 80/20 law to the detriment of those students who really are chronically truant.

### **System-Level Perspectives on the 80/20 Rule**

State Board staff also met with Dr. Art Fields, Director of the DCPS Office of Youth Engagement, and Ms. Andrea Allen, Director of Student Attendance for DCPS, on March 6. Mr. Fields indicated that DCPS is very supportive of the 80/20 rule and would not be advocating for a change in the rule for the foreseeable future. Though Ms. Allen stated that the rule has not had as big of an impact on schools as DCPS anticipated, she agreed with the interviewed school officials’ view that its implementation was proving challenging for some schools. The primary challenge both she and Dr. Fields noted, is that the structure of high school schedules does not align well with the new policy. The secondary challenge, in their view, is that schools have different policies for late arrivals, and that can influence whether students are marked as present or absent for first period. They also pointed out that since most teachers take attendance at the beginning of class, changing the attendance status of students who arrive late can be onerous.



Fields and Allen pointed out that DCPS currently allows schools to set their own policies and practices for late arrivals, but they acknowledged that setting clearer parameters and guidance might be beneficial to schools. Ms. Allen agreed to ask school-based DCPS attendance specialists and policy compliance staff for their recommendations on how to address the challenges some schools have faced in implementing the new compulsory attendance requirements. She also indicated that she would request data that could show attendance patterns under the old attendance rule, which defined present as attending at least 60% of the school day (a 60/40 rule) and under the new 80/20 rule. *(Those data, however, were never provided to the State Board.)*

Fields and Allen pointed out that during the first half of the 2013-2014 school year, the Child and Family Services Agency (CFSA) reported a corresponding 20% decrease in the number of referrals for educational neglect. They cautioned that this reduction may have been due to a data “lag” because students are required to have a meeting with their respective School Support Teams (SSTs) before being referred to CFSA. They noted, however, that SST compliance rates at DCPS schools were likewise low, stating that “as of January 5, 2014, 8,105 attendance-related SSTs were needed and schools held 2,902, a compliance rate of approximately 35%.”<sup>7</sup>

Importantly, DCPS’s CFSA referral rates dropped during the first year of implementation of the new compulsory attendance regulations. In the 2013-2014 school year, the compliance rate for CFSA referrals was 46% for both DCPS and PCSB; referrals to Court Social Services Division (CCSD) had compliance rates of 19% for DCPS and 28% for PCSB. In the 2012-2013 school year, DCPS referred 63% of eligible students to CFSA and 57% of eligible students to CCSD. It attributed these declines to the increased focus placed on holding SST meetings, but compliance with CFSA referrals may also have been influenced by school-level officials’ knowledge of students’ particular circumstances and their perceptions that individual student’s situations did not warrant a referral.

The story on the PCSB side was the complete opposite. The PCSB does not require its charter school members to submit data on their compliance with holding SST meetings,<sup>8</sup> yet it reported that charter schools’ referral rates to CFSA increasing from 18% to 46% during 2013-14. It attributed this increase to increased effort in reaching out to schools and prompting them to send their reports into CFSA.

### **Advocacy-Organization Perspectives on the 80/20 Rule**

Board staff also discussed the 80/20 rule, its implementation, and its implications with representatives from several advocacy organizations.<sup>9</sup> These advocates’ narratives on truancy focused extensively on school climate and problems with the implementation of the new attendance laws. They overwhelmingly maintained that school climate plays a major role in student attendance, not just in terms of safety and engagement, but also with regard to whether or not students perceive that they are welcome at school. Eduardo Ferrer of DC Lawyers for Youth, for instance, stated that schools often are very explicit about who they want to educate and who they do not. He added that this can be done formally, through suspensions and expulsions, and informally, by sending the message to certain children and families that they are not welcome.

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<sup>7</sup> DC Public Schools, FY2013 Performance Oversight Responses (p. 88). Retrieved on March 18, 2014 from [http://dccouncil.us/files/performance\\_oversight/DCPS\\_2013\\_Performance\\_Oversight\\_Responses\\_020714\\_FINAL.pdf](http://dccouncil.us/files/performance_oversight/DCPS_2013_Performance_Oversight_Responses_020714_FINAL.pdf).

<sup>8</sup> As stated by Rashida Kennedy, Manager, PCSB Equity and Fidelity at the State Board’s Roundtable on Chronic Absence (June 12, 2014).

<sup>9</sup> DC Alliance for Youth (DC AYA), DC Lawyers for Youth, Children’s Law Center and Critical Exposure.

Several advocates commented that implementation of the new compulsory attendance rules was being affected both by how student attendance data is collected and by the level of knowledge and understanding school faculty and staff have about the new laws. They noted, for example, that student attendance at most schools is taken by teachers, but that in some schools it is recorded through student sign-in. This, he suggested, leads to great variability in results both across and within schools. Others pointed out inconsistencies in how school personnel implement and understand attendance policies, noting that school security guards are often the gatekeepers to the school buildings and are often left to make judgment calls about which students to let in and which students to shut out. Many high schools, advocates contended, simply do not have strong policies and procedures in place for dealing with late arrivals, with some allowing their students to simply go to class late, while others hold students in the cafeteria until the start of the next period. None of the advocates could provide any examples of District schools that have exemplar policies and procedures for late arrivals.

The advocates focused heavily on other issues as presenting more challenges to overcoming the District's truancy and absenteeism problems than the new attendance rules and regulations. DC AYA staff suggested that transportation is another major barrier to student attendance. They indicated that their organization is currently working to get the District Department of Transportation's citywide Kids Ride Free program expanded to students up to age 24 and to include Metrorail, in addition to Metrobus, in the program. Other advocates called for increased funding for student transportation subsidies and for LEAs to become more inventive about providing transportation for their students, (for example, by creating specialized bus systems for students, such as Capitol Hill parents who send their kids to Yu Ying have done by banding together to pay for a private shuttle to transport their children to and from school).

Few of the advocacy group representatives provided much in the way of specific suggestions about "what works" to help reduce truancy and promote student engagement. Mr. Ferrer, however, pointed out that successful schooling models, such as career academies, might go a long way toward achieving these goals by promoting much stronger connections between students and schools, partly because of the greater relevance of such schools' curricula. He also contended that the conversation should be shifted away from truancy and directed toward student engagement, which also encompasses student attendance, discipline, and school climate. He suggested that the State Board might be more effective by providing leadership on student engagement and helping to promote that issue by holding a public hearing and compiling a report on the topic, by offering a series of recommendations based on the outcomes of that hearing, and then enlisting a network of advocacy organizations to push DCPS, PCSB, and the Council to give strong consideration to those recommendations and to implement programs and policies that squarely promote student engagement.

### **Truancy Task Force Perspectives on the 80/20 Rule**

At the meeting of the Truancy Task Force State Board staff attended, summative data for the 2013-14 school year was presented that showed dramatic declines in chronic truancy rates. Additional data presented showed that DCPS schools experienced an 8.8 percent decrease in chronic truancy during the 2012-2013 school year, going from a chronic truancy rate of 26.9% to 18.1%. The charter school sector saw a 4-percentage-point decline, dropping their chronic truancy rate from 19% to 15%. The Task Force's data highlighted trends among DCPS schools showing that these decreases largely occurred in the middle (6-8) and high school grades. In the middle grades, rates of chronic truancy dropped by over 20 percentage points. For example, for grade 6 students, the rate fell from 31.6% in the 2012-2013 school year to 9.5% in 2013-2014 school year. High schools were shown to have experienced major declines as well, specifically in the 11<sup>th</sup> grade, where chronic truancy rates dropped from 72.7% to 49% during the course of one school year. Declines noted in the public charter schools were not as extreme. For example, many charter school grade students mirrored the average decline of 4%, which may be due to the fact that chronic truancy rates in the charter sector were not as high as those in DCPS to begin with.

### **Truancy Roundtable Summary**

#### **A conundrum**

Chief among the findings from the State Board staff's interviews was that school-level perspectives on the challenges of implementing the revised compulsory attendance regulations directly contradicted the data collected at the school-system level. DCPS, PCSB, and OSSE data show declines in rates of chronic truancy across schools throughout the District since the implementation of the 80/20 rule. Strong assertions by the school-based leaders and personnel spoke to the contrary. During the November 2014 public roundtable on truancy and the 80/20 rule, convened by the State Board, Board member Anderson, chair of the Board's Truancy and Student Engagement Committee, repeatedly pressed the attendees—who represented a broad spectrum of education stakeholders—to explain how and why key parties held such contrasting perspectives on the issue. How could the "official" data on truancy show improvements across the board while officials based in several of the city's schools, particularly its comprehensive high schools, insist that the opposite is true—that implementation of the new rule has led to the over-identification of tardy students as truant, that the reporting workload associated with the new regulations is overwhelming their staffs, and that the and resources to help students who really needed support to arrive on time and stay in school is lacking?

The answers offered to this question by the roundtable participants were inconclusive, mostly based on conjecture, and pointed to the need for a comprehensive study. The following is a summary of their comments:

**OSSE's Jeff Noel, Assistant Superintendent for Assessment, Accountability, and Research**, suggested that heightened interagency collaboration in making attendance a prominent issue in the District, including the Raise DC effort, may have contributed to the attendance improvements highlighted in his agency's data. He shared that the 80/20 rule was developed based on conversations with other urban centers and a review of national research, but recommended that more research be conducted into the 80/20 rule over time. He also suggested that it might be worth exploring the model used in Detroit to fast-track referrals for students who are identified as particularly high risk of chronic truancy.

**Christina Setlow, Director of Policy, Legislative, and Intergovernmental Affairs at OSSE** clarified the history around the laws that affect truancy in the District and what areas fall under OSSE's authority. She responded to some of the participants suggestions that the 80/20 rule be revised by noting that any changes to the attendance regulations could only be made by the DC Council and that OSSE's hands with regard to the Council's actions are tied in many respects. She noted that although OSSE has authority over the 80/20 rule because it is part of the regulations, any changes to those regulations would need to be approved by the State Board.

From the District-level perspective, **DCPS's Andrea Allen, Director of Attendance & Support Services**, explained that while DCPS will continue to issue automated truancy notification letters, her office will work more closely with the District Office of the Attorney General to reconnect students such as runaways and those who have been referred for court social services back to their schools so that they can re-enroll and achieve better attendance results.

**Arthur Fields, DCPS's Deputy Chief of the Office of Youth Engagement**, noted that many of the District's older (high school) students are sometimes placed in the role of a parent and made responsible for taking their siblings to school. He stated that he was aware that such students are often late to school and that if they miss one period as a result, they may feel a disincentive to stay for the rest of the school day since they will be marked absent. He further acknowledged the difficulties school staff face in determining whether to tell these students in that situation that they should come to school, but he encouraged school staff to work more closely with families to help students who must play almost a parent role, even though DCPS does not have sufficient staff to address this issue successfully. Mr. Fields echoed Principal Jackson's comments about providing expanded transportation options for students, but he also shared data from a pilot study that provided free Metro cards to DCPS students to determine how big a difference train subsidies could make on attendance. That study, he noted, suggested that most students do not want to ride on the city's Metro buses, and he concluded that a multifaceted approach is needed to address truancy and absenteeism in the District. .

The **PCSB's Tim Harwood** opined that the 80/20 rule did not appear to have led to higher truancy rates across the District according to reported data. He further stated since the rule was implemented his organization had become increasingly proactive about informing its schools about the changes and expectations associated with it and about holding them accountable for their truancy rates, thus contributing to truancy rate declines.

**Stephen Jackson, principal of DCPS' Dunbar High School**, claimed that comprehensive high schools face serious problems with the 80/20 rule due particularly to the 4x4 scheduling structure at several of those schools. Under this structure, he noted, students who miss even one period have missed 25% of the day and therefore must be marked absent for the whole day. Given his school's significant tardiness levels, which he attributed to his students' and families' significant transportation, poverty, and other challenges, Dunbar faced higher than normal truancy rates, not declining ones. He asserted that this was the case, even though he has 10 to 15 staff people working on truancy-related issues on a daily basis, his school's SSTs meet with 5 to 10 parents each day, and his staff completes numerous home visits and court referrals each week. Mr. Jackson suggested that the District's new attendance rule be revised, noting that most other school jurisdictions nationwide use a 70/30 or 60/40 ratio. The 80/20 rule, in his experience in other school districts, simply does not make sense since some District students must miss a portion of the school day to attend doctor's appointments or other legitimate activities while other students need more support to get to and from school, and they should not be penalized for that. He also advocated for more holistic solutions to this issue such as free transportation for students on both Metro buses and trains. He noted that some Dunbar students must take two to three buses to get to and from school. He further suggested that schools offer students a hot, healthy breakfast each morning, made up of "real" food. If schools provide an environment where students know they will be fed and helped to get to and from school, he claimed, more students would come to school on time.

Principal Jackson's claims were echoed by **Bruce Jackson (no relation), Assistant Principal at Cardozo Education Campus**, who claimed that the 80/20 rule has also caused his school's truancy rate to increase. He asserted that the increase in identification of truant students has overwhelmed his staff, who must now spend their time completing CFSA and CCSD referrals rather than helping students.

Another DCPS school-level representative, **Quinn Flowers, a social worker at Roosevelt Senior High School**, said that the 80/20 rule is causing students who miss only one out of her school's four periods to be marked as absent. She maintained that the resulting higher absentee level is not an accurate representation of attendance at her school.

**Sharona Robinson, parent and president of the Ballou Senior High School PTSA** said that school attendance counselors have been buried in attendance and court social services paperwork since the 80/20 rule went into effect. She commented that school staff are increasingly challenged to complete the rule's new clerical compliance tasks and also find time to meet with families to develop individualized plans that address for student attendance. She indicated that parents have lacked information on the new rules and only find out about the changes after receive the "5-day letter" mandating their appearance at the school for a meeting to discuss attendance problems or a visit from the MPD about their children's truancy or absences. She concurred that students may not have an incentive to attend once they realize that they have missed 20% of the day and will be marked absent anyway. She also suggested that schools across the city were not being held to the same standards around what constitutes an excused absence.

**Arianna Rodriguez, representing the Maya Angelou Charter School**, posited that some charter schools may have broadened their excused-absences policies in response to the new rule. She also surmised the worst-case scenario echoed by many of the public school personnel: that some students may have just left school altogether rather than accumulate additional absences as a result of the new rule's application. She noted that runaway students create a particularly difficult compliance challenge under the 80/20 rule and that parents need reassurances that they will not be receiving a flood of automated notices or paperwork from the school regarding their children's absences after they have reported them as runaways. Rodriguez then posed a question: Should the schools spend time sending out automated letter or should they help families troubleshoot the issue? She responded by stating her belief that the 80/20 rule is an attempt to push the envelope in getting students to school on time and staying for the full day, but at the school level it is making it difficult for schools to identify which students are absent for high-risk reasons and which are not. She also stated that many service agencies are being flooded and made to figure out whether school attendance issues are related to transportation issues or to other substantial issues in the home that are preventing students from attending school.

Representing the education advocacy sector, **Tatisha West, of the Georgia Avenue Family Support Collaborative**, spoke up about her organization's relevant advocacy activities serving poor and English-language learning families faced with their children's truancy and absenteeism challenges. She shared perspectives on what her organization was seeing as trends in school-related absences among the populations it serves, notably big increases in kindergarten and first-grade enrollments especially among Latino parents. **Karen Wilson of the Southeast Family Strengthening Collaborative**, discussed the role her organization plays in providing services offered through the Justice Grants Administration's Show Up, Stand Out program, which provides case management and wraparound services to families with students who have accrued five to nine unexcused absences. She focused on the many issues that can impact student attendance, including homelessness, poverty, unemployment and mental health problems, and stressed the need for schools and school partners to provide creative incentives for students to come to school and stay in school.

**Tim Rivera, a staff attorney with Advocates for Justice in Education**, shared an example of a student he had represented whose attendance issues resulting from the new 10- and 15-day notification regulations (not the 80/20 rule specifically) took a very long time to be resolved. That student, he noted, had been placed out of state by the juvenile justice system and was then not allowed back into her public charter school in the next semester because her absences were not counted as excused. His perspectives were echoed by **AJE's Director of Legal Services and Advocacy, Rochanda Hiligh-Thomas**, who raised two additional concerns. She first questioned the policy some schools have adopted to the effect that three tardy arrivals equal one absence, noting that this fails to take into account how late students arrived to class. She also asked for clarification about the due-process procedures for parents to challenge students' tardiness or absences under the new rules. **(OSSE's Elisabeth Morse** responded to the latter question by explaining that each LEA has its own internal due-process procedures.)

**Katie Dunn, of DC Alliance of Youth Advocates** raised concerns that increasingly labeling children as truants, which she perceived as a by-product of the 80/20 rule, might cause additional problems for them in the juvenile justice system. She spoke about what she saw as the "ripple effect" the new regulations have had on other providers working in schools, such as afterschool programs. She noted, for example, that the PASS program is completely overwhelmed because schools do not have the administrative capacity to go through the list of truants such that the waiting list has reached nearly a thousand students. She maintained that the new truancy regulations have "jammed up" the entire system of education in the District of Columbia She also suggested that the new mayoral administration look into providing expanded Metro transportation incentives for students.

**Alex Peerman of DC Lawyers for Youth** commented that neither the DC school systems nor court system have the capacity to serve the challenges presented by the 80/20 rule and the new attendance regulations. He argued that the Attendance Accountability Act has driven a large increase in the number of petitions for youth to be placed in need of supervision (PINS). He called for two solutions: provide more funding for early interventions and replace the 80/20 rule with a more feasible one.

A written statement, submitted in absentia by **Cathy Reilly, president of DC SHAPPE**, asserted that families, students, and school-level staff perceive the 80/20 rule as unfair because it equally punishes students who attend school for only a portion of the day and students who make no effort to attend at all. It also noted that many families have expressed concern that the list of excused absences specified in the new regulations is not inclusive of a number of legitimate reasons. The statement concluded by asking that the rule be changed to reflect a 60% rather than the 80% acceptable attendance level.

Other public stakeholders included **Sarah Louise Spence, a Ward 6 resident**. Ms. Spence indicated that she attended the roundtable to learn more about the history and origins of the policy and the problems the policy was meant to address.

**Sheila Carson Carr, ANC Commissioner (7F03)**, added that DC's schoolchildren are being "burned" by the 80/20 rule, comparing the situation resulting from the new rule to the workplace setting. If adults were told that they would not get paid a day's wages if they worked only 80% of the day, she posited that no adult would stay on the job for that day. She also claimed that school climate plays a big part in truancy matters and that being identified as a truant is harmful rather than helpful for students because of the stigmas associated with that label. She urged quick action to fix the problems she believed were associated with the 80/20 rule.

**Karen Settles, ANC Commissioner (7F05)**, suggested that students be included in conversations about the 80/20 rule and its impact, and recommended that the State Board use those conversations as opportunities to teach students how to challenge such rules through a collective process. She spoke to the sense of hopelessness she perceived among some DC youth that going to school will be of no use to them and suggested that the new rule may be adding to this perception. She talked about the difficulty some students face in re-enrolling in school after having been incarcerated, and called for the school systems to employ liaison personnel who can help those students. She also suggested that materials explaining the new rule be written in student- and parent-friendly language.

The November roundtable did not solve the puzzle of why truancy rates have decreased. Nor did it reconcile the differing perspectives about whether the challenges many schools seem to be facing with regard to implementing the new regulations are attributable to those regulations. The State Board and others participants did agree, however, that additional and rigorous monitoring of the 80/20 rule's impact will be essential to determining if amendments must be made to the regulations governing truancy and absenteeism in the District. This will require additional consultation with relevant government agencies, including OSSE, the Deputy Mayor for Education, DCPS, PCSB, and other stakeholders to determine the level of support for amending the rule.

Any recommendation to amend the existing 80/20 rule will need to include sound rationale and evidence for why it must be changed, including an analysis of problems to be solved and how a change would ameliorate identified issues. The State Board would also need to consider the message it will be sending to the education sector and the public if it chooses to amend the rule and ultimately change the definition of present in District of Columbia schools.

The following next steps and recommendations emanated from the roundtable discussion on and State Board member assessments of the District of Columbia's current truancy and absenteeism rules and regulations.

- 1) Call for Office of the State Superintendent for Education (OSSE) to investigate the challenges and inconsistent findings reported by school-based administrators, along with practices employed at the school-level, in the recordation of student absences and tardies based on the 80/20 rule. OSSE shall provide a report of its findings to the Board and the Deputy Mayor of Education (DME) no later than August 30, 2015. The report shall include a proposal to implement solutions that ensure uniform, fair, and accurate reporting of absences and tardies across all District of Columbia schools or to make adjustments to the definition of "present" within the schools.
- 2) Call for OSSE to evaluate the impact of the District of Columbia's attendance regulations, including the 80/20 rule, on students, their families, the criminal justice and human service (e.g., CFSA) systems, and school climate. The report shall be delivered to the State Board no later than December 31, 2016, and shall include a cost-benefit analysis related to full compliance with compulsory attendance regulations.
- 3) Advise the Council of the District of Columbia to appropriate funds for the development and implementation of solutions that will ensure uniform implementation of the District's school attendance laws, support school-based administrative staff in the accurate reporting of student attendance, and strengthen truancy prevention work in schools.
- 4) Call for OSSE to conduct research on truancy-prevention practices and strategies in the District of Columbia as well as in other districts and states, including an investigation into the background and rationale for implementing the 80/20 rule, and report to the State Board no later than December 31, 2015.
- 5) Advise the DME, in consultation with DCPS and the Public Charter School Board, to investigate the limitations of compulsory attendance regulations on student learning that extends beyond the classroom, with particular focus on potential changes in practice which could include expansion of the definition of "excused" absences to include guided learning opportunities that extend beyond the classroom.
- 6) Advise the Council and the Mayor to consider expansion of the District's Department of Transportation's (DDOT) student transit subsidy program to include free Metrorail passes for students to travel to and from school and possibly to provide free transportation for parents/guardians of young students to accompany their children to and from school on the bus and Metrorail.

Research<sup>10</sup> suggests that involving families and communities can improve student attendance and foster academic success. Such initiatives could go a long way to curbing the District's truancy problem.

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<sup>10</sup> [Present and Accounted For: Improving Student Attendance Through Family and Community Involvement](http://silverbeach.bellinghamschools.org/sites/default/files/silverbeach/dnew/present%20and%20accounted%20for.pdf). Epstein, J. and Sheldon, S. Johns Hopkins University. The Journal of Educational Research, May/June 2002  
<http://silverbeach.bellinghamschools.org/sites/default/files/silverbeach/dnew/present%20and%20accounted%20for.pdf>





# **Giving Credit Where Credit is Due:**

**Report and recommendations of the High School Credit Flexibility Task Force**

**December 11, 2015**

**Task force convened by:  
State Board of Education of the District of Columbia**

**Task force chair:  
Laura Wilson Phelan  
Member, Ward 1  
State Board of Education of the District of Columbia**



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## Introduction

The primary purpose of public education is to prepare all young people to reach their full potential as scholars, professionals, and engaged citizens in a democratic society. While the District of Columbia has made progress in improving educational outcomes along some measures, the opportunity chasm between poor and minority students and well-resourced white students inexcusably remains massive, illustrated most recently by the 2015 Partnership for Readiness for College and Career (PARCC) scores where the gap between these populations of students ranged between 44 and 58 percent.<sup>1</sup> The District needs improved ways to help each and every student master academic course standards that set her up for success in life. In today's competitive global economy, a high school diploma – and the core knowledge and skills it represents – often is a baseline requirement for success.

Washington DC remains one of the few jurisdictions in the country where students may earn high school credit solely through Carnegie units, which are defined as receiving a passing grade in a course where the student spent a minimum of 120 hours in class (or 150 hours for a lab course). Most DC high school course schedules are organized by Carnegie units. While such an approach ensures that each student is offered a standard minimum number of hours of course content, in some circumstances, the Carnegie unit may present an obstacle to learning, such as when:

- Students need to more time to understand course material and/or catch up and are advanced to new topics before they are ready;
- Students gain knowledge outside of the classroom that leads to mastery of course content standards or master the standards quickly within class time, but are required to sit through class for 120 hours to receive credit;
- Subjects traditionally taught in separate courses could be delivered more effectively as one course in less time because of the interconnectivity of the subjects' content.

The DC State Board of Education approves high school graduation requirements for DC students. As such, it convened a cross-city task force of 25 representatives<sup>2</sup> from the education

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<sup>1</sup>OSSE report on PARCC, grades 3-8

[http://osse.dc.gov/sites/default/files/dc/sites/osse/publication/attachments/OSSE%20PARCC%203-8%20ReleasePresentation\\_finalv14.pdf](http://osse.dc.gov/sites/default/files/dc/sites/osse/publication/attachments/OSSE%20PARCC%203-8%20ReleasePresentation_finalv14.pdf) and OSSE report on PARCC, high school

<http://osse.dc.gov/sites/default/files/dc/sites/osse/publication/attachments/2015%20District%20of%20Columbia%20PARCC%20High%20School%20Results.pdf>.

<sup>2</sup> High School Credit Flexibility Task force Members: Brian Contreras (Student Representative; State Board of Education); Rick Cruz (Board Member; Public Charter School Board); Elizabeth Davis (President; Washington Teacher's Union); Naomi DeVeaux (Deputy Director; Public Charter School Board); Laura Fuchs (Social Studies Teacher; Woodson High School); Cara Fuller (Principal; Ballou STAY High School); Morgan Hall (Deputy Chief of Assessment; DC Public Schools); Jessie Harteis (Deputy Chief of Staff; Office of State Superintendent of Education); Cosby Hunt (Social Studies Manager; Center for Inspired Teaching); Tierra Jolly (Ward 8 Representative; State Board of Education); Nicole Hanrahan (Chief Strategy Officer; Latin American Youth Center); Mary Lord (At Large Representative; State Board of Education); Taneka Miller (Policy Advisor; Office of the Deputy Mayor for Education); Elizabeth Morse (Deputy Assistant Superintendent for Policy, Planning & Charter Support; Office of the State Superintendent for Education); Tiffany Oates (Policy Attorney; Office of State Superintendent of Education); Colleen Paletta (Vice President of Workforce Development; Goodwill of Greater Washington and Goodwill Excel Center Public Charter School); Thomas Penny (General Manager; Courtyard by Marriott Convention Center); Richard Pohlman (Executive Director; Thurgood Marshall Academy); Javaris Powell (Assistant Principal; Columbia Heights Education Campus); Cathy Reilly (Executive Director; Senior High Alliance of Parents, Principals and Educators); John Rice (Director of Blended Learning; DC Public Schools); C. Michael Shaffer (Policy Director; Committee on Education, Council of the District of Columbia); David Tansey (Math Teacher; Dunbar High School); Heather Wathington (Chief Executive Officer; Maya Angelou Schools and See Forever Foundation); Ruth

and workforce sectors from August 2015 to December 2015 to consider whether and how to supplement the Carnegie unit with additional means for DC students to earn high school credit. The following report outlines the recommendations and findings of the task force.

## Overview of recommendations

Various opinions were expressed by task force members over the course of the four months via meeting and online input to documents with regard to how credit flexibility could move the city closer to the vision the group established that “all DC students graduate demonstrating the agency, skills and knowledge to thrive as active citizens in a global economy and democracy.” **The majority of the group agreed that creating alternative pathways to earning credit toward a high school diploma represented an important first step toward recognizing that not all students learn at the same pace nor demonstrate understanding of content best in a traditional classroom setting for the minimum amount of time for a credit-bearing course, as specified by the 120-hour Carnegie Unit.**

A minority of the group expressed doubt that adding pathways beyond the Carnegie unit would improve educational outcomes for the majority of District of Columbia students and worried that the focus on new approaches could potentially divert attention away from the interventions that would make a difference. They expressed concern that credit flexibility might be used to lower expectations for students, inflate graduation rates, and narrow students’ exposure to content. Still, the minority of the group also expressed openness to considering the positive difference alternatives could create.

The task force agreed to three recommendations for earning high school credit and one recommendation associated with course timing.

1. **Create a waiver process** for schools wishing to pursue competency-based learning (CBL)
2. Allow students to receive **credit for demonstrated prior knowledge** in world language and mathematics
3. **Maintain Carnegie units** as the default means for earning credit where neither of the two above conditions apply
4. In consistency with our recommendation for student self-paced learning associated with competency-based learning, **remove the requirement that students enroll in Algebra I by 9<sup>th</sup> grade**

The following summarizes the group’s recommendations and rationale in greater detail, with minority opinion noted where applicable. Supplemental discussions of the task force, together with remaining questions from the group, follow this executive summary in the Discussion section.

## Recommendations

The task force reached consensus on four elements for high school diploma graduation requirements. Following each recommendation, the report includes the rationale for adopting this recommendation and the perspective of the minority opinion, which, in all cases, reflects less than 25 percent of the group.

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Wattenberg (Ward 3 Representative; State Board of Education); Karen Williams (Ward 7 Representative; State Board of Education); Laura Wilson Phelan (Task Force Chair and Ward 1 Representative; State Board of Education)

### **Recommendation 1: Create a waiver process for schools wishing to pursue competency-based learning (CBL)**

The Office of the State Superintendent for Education (OSSE) should establish a rigorous application and evaluation process, including relevant rubrics, for a waiver to Carnegie units to which schools may apply to their authorizing body -- either DC Public Schools (DCPS) or Public Charter School Board (PCSB). In the waiver, educational institutions must describe for which course or series of courses the waiver applies, the method for determining competency within those courses, and the level of performance or achievement that will constitute mastery of state standards for each course or series of courses that will not be using Carnegie units. DCPS and PCSB shall submit evidence of the progress and quality of implementation on each waiver to OSSE annually. This evidence shall be posted publicly and be reported annually to the State Board of Education (SBOE).

#### *Rationale*

When implemented in its true form, CBL offers a promising pathway for student achievement and life outcomes for the following reasons:

- Students pace their own learning, and move on only after mastering the competency; this could enable students to feel more engaged, motivated and accomplished in their learning and allow them to “right-size” the time they spend on content
- Students own their learning – they must direct their pace and demonstrate mastery, leading them to develop important life skills that they will need after high school
- Teachers may offer unique courses that combine topics usually found in separate courses, and tailor the exposure to content according to the standards of those courses vs. a fixed amount of time

Task force members expressed support for appropriate review of the progress and implementation of waivers, and expect that OSSE will analyze, evaluate and transparently share with the public the information it collects from DCPS and PCSB to assess whether CBL is improving outcomes for students.

#### *Minority opinion*

The problems with the Carnegie unit are not adequately identified and may not be the reason many of our students are failing. Many students who face difficulty with instructional time-based courses need additional support and would need that even if the course was competency-based. Moving away from a designated minimum time requirement in courses could lead to exposing students to *less* content than they are currently receiving. As well, there is a chance the bar for proving “mastery” of a concept will be set too low, leading to a “race to the bottom” and lead high school staff, who are under great pressure to increase graduation rates, to pass along students who have not mastered academic standards.

Sharing the opposite view from others in the minority opinion, some members expressed the desire for more flexibility and lower barriers to entry than a waiver process would provide. They expressed that educational institutions should be trusted to set up their own systems for awarding credit, so long as credit was robustly defined.

## **Recommendation 2: Allow students to receive credit for demonstrated prior knowledge in world language and mathematics**

Students may receive credit for prior knowledge in world language and mathematics provided that they pass a state-approved exam that “meets or exceeds career and college readiness standards.”

### *Rationale*

Students who have prior knowledge in certain subjects should not have to sit through the course to receive credit for their knowledge, and DC schools should have a state-level standardized way of assessing that knowledge and awarding credit. The courses for which this should apply are those where prior mastery of the course’s academic standards means the student would gain little from sitting through the course and where thoroughly vetted assessments exist for proving mastery. The task force recommends that two subjects fall under this category – math and world language. OSSE would need to establish which exams are approved for credit and establish a process for administering the exams so that all students across the city benefit equally from this provision.

### *Minority opinion*

Reducing course knowledge to a single exam would limit students’ exposure to content and the social benefits of learning in a class. Further, allowing students to test-out of courses risks sending the signal that time spent in class is not valuable if students are allowed to receive credit with only an exam. Given that at-risk, poor and minority students traditionally perform lower than their affluent peers on standardized tests, opportunities should be provided to take standardized assessments beyond only written tests. Given the current lack of standardization across DC schools for what level of mastery of content equals passing in each course, the content of exams used for passing out of courses needs to be highly scrutinized. As well, for new and small schools, allowing students to test out of subjects ordinarily provided by cohort (e.g. where all 9<sup>th</sup> graders take Algebra I) may force the school to provide more advanced courses that it is not resourced to offer.

Some task force members who supported the idea of rewarding prior knowledge wanted to extend this provision to include the opportunity for students to test out of all subjects given that colleges award students credit for passing Advanced Placement exams in many subjects.

## **Recommendation 3: Maintain Carnegie units as the default means for earning high school credit where neither of the two above conditions apply**

Except in cases outlined by recommendations one and two above, educational institutions shall continue to award credit based on a student receiving a passing grade in a course through the Carnegie unit, which is 120 hours of instructional time (150 hours for lab-based courses).

### *Rationale*

Given DC’s high school educational system is structured according to Carnegie units, and given the volume of content and administrative work associated with implementing alternatives to the Carnegie unit, for the time being, the system should continue to default to this means of operating.

### *Minority opinion*

Some members of the task force supported the replacement of the Carnegie unit with the term “credit.” They promoted complete flexibility for schools to set up their own systems for awarding credit, so long as credit was clearly defined.

#### **Recommendation 4: Remove the requirement that students enroll in Algebra I by grade 9**

Remove the language from graduation requirements that all students enroll in Algebra I by 9<sup>th</sup> grade.

##### *Rationale*

The content and standards of Algebra I represent a critical foundation to understanding all math courses that follow. Requiring students to enroll in Algebra I before they have mastered the pre-requisite academic standards is counterproductive. DC is one of only three states that currently requires Algebra I to be taken at a specific grade level in high school.<sup>3</sup> This recommendation allows the timing of the decision to enroll in Algebra I to be based on data indicating student readiness; it does not remove Algebra I as a high school graduation requirement. The recommendation maintains Algebra I as the minimum math course for which students are permitted to earn high school credit.

##### *Minority opinion*

While largely supportive of the idea that enrolling in Algebra I should not be time-based, but rather, in keeping with later recommendations of the task force that learning be sequenced according to a student's readiness as based on mastery of pre-requisite standards, some members expressed concern that the task force had insufficient research to ensure against possible unintended consequences of eliminating the requirement that students enroll in Algebra I by 9<sup>th</sup> grade.

#### **Discussion**

While the above recommendations of the task force represent the areas of consensus with regard to regulation, each of the pathways to earning credit, as well as related topics, garnered significant discussion. The task force shares the content of these discussions with the intent of advising implementation of the competency-based waiver and clarifying and improving the consistency and quality of how credit is awarded across DC schools.

#### **Competency-based waiver**

Several elements of the competency-based waiver recommendation were discussed in depth. The following themes emerged.

#### Schools with high percentages of at-risk, poor and minority students will need additional support to implement CBL in ways that benefit all students

The task force worked ardently to understand the research and evaluation associated with mastery or competency-based pathways to earning credit. They found that specialty and alternative schools that are focused on over-aged and under-credited students are reporting better career outcomes with CBL approaches, although research-based evaluations linking improved student outcomes to CBL is both sparse and inconclusive.<sup>4</sup> The few studies that exist

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<sup>3</sup> Minnesota requires algebra I by 8<sup>th</sup> grade. West Virginia requires algebra I by 10<sup>th</sup> grade, and explicitly explains that because algebra I is a cornerstone course, explaining that students should not be rushed through such a cornerstone course, but rather should master the concepts within. See

<https://wvde.state.wv.us/teach21/documents/RecommendingHighSchoolMathematicsCourseSequences-SchoolCounselors.ppt> Arizona requires a sequence of math concepts be taken "beginning in 9<sup>th</sup> grade," some of which appear to include pre-algebra, but it is difficult to tell based on the way the standards are written. An outline of state requirements may be found at <http://mb2.ecs.org/reports/Report.aspx?id=735>. Accessed December 5, 2015.

<sup>4</sup> Steele, Jennifer, et al. "Competency-Based Education in Three Pilot Programs: Examining Implementation and Outcomes" RAND Corporation. [http://www.rand.org/content/dam/rand/pubs/research\\_reports/RR700/RR732/RAND\\_RR732.pdf](http://www.rand.org/content/dam/rand/pubs/research_reports/RR700/RR732/RAND_RR732.pdf), p. xvi.

on CBL are not longitudinal, and those that describe a CBL approach in places with student demographics similar to those of DC (high levels of at-risk, poor and minority students) did not report out consistently strong success. For example, while the CBL model emphasizes prompt assessment of and attention to mastery gaps, possibly limiting social promotion that allows some students to end up in high school far behind grade-level, in districts similar to DC where elements of CBL were implemented, students who were behind grade-level in some cases fell further behind students in Carnegie unit-based courses.<sup>5</sup> Among other recommendations, these studies point out that for at-risk students to succeed in CBL courses, teachers must be expert in differentiated instruction, as well as provide individualized counseling and support to students.<sup>6</sup>

#### Competency-based learning courses best applied with “whole school” or “whole subject” approach

Research notes that building reliable and valid competency systems requires mapped “learning progressions” that outline how students should progress through a course along levels of comprehension.<sup>7</sup> Because those pathways may cross over traditional course groupings, if only one course in a school is using CBL, students may not be able to move on to the next competency (if it is “housed” in a separate course) at his/her own pace. Because CBL requires that students progress at their own pace, a school would have to have a system in place for students to either stay in or move on from a particular class or subject upon mastery, depending on his/her individual pace. This is an important consideration for OSSE in developing the waiver process and rubric. Likewise, CBL requires an aligned way of assessing mastery, beyond just exams; so schools would need to create competencies and associated assessment tools. It is unlikely that one teacher would have the resources to do this alone. More likely, groups of teachers, supported by a cross-school institution, such as OSSE, the Office of the Deputy Mayor for Education or RaiseDC, might develop one or more collections of courses that could be adapted and used by individual schools, as has been done in other districts that have seriously implemented CBL.<sup>8</sup> One educator on the task force expressed concern that creating such rubrics would “over standardize” the approach to teaching, thereby limiting a teacher’s ability to be creative.

#### For consistent implementation of CBL and standardization of student outcomes across courses in the city “mastery” must be defined

The task force discussed the need to standardize what is considered “mastery” of course standards across the city. A passing grade in one school does not equal a passing grade in another school. Schools lack guidance about how to establish a common base level of “mastery.”

#### A pilot could address equity of access to competency-based learning and the need to define “mastery”

Given the barriers to entry in establishing CBL, such those described above, the task force discussed that it was unlikely that schools serving the most at-risk, poor and minority students would feel they had the resources to implement CBL well, even though the case could be made that the students in those schools would benefit most from CBL. This raised an important equity

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<sup>5</sup> Ibid, xvii, 65.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid, p.49.

<sup>7</sup> Patrick, Susan and Chris Sturgis. (2013). “Necessary for Success: Building Mastery of World-Class Skills”. [http://www.competencyworks.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/02/inacol\\_cw\\_issuebrief\\_building\\_mastery\\_final.pdf](http://www.competencyworks.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/02/inacol_cw_issuebrief_building_mastery_final.pdf), p. 20.

<sup>8</sup> Scheopner Torres, Aubrey, et al. (2015). “Competency-Based Learning: Definitions, Policies, and Implementation” Regional Educational Lab at EDC. <http://www.relnei.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/04/4.1.5.3-NCCRA-CBL.pdf>, p.16.

concern for us, as our common vision was to create pathways that would benefit all learners. We believe that education leadership DC must lower the barriers to entry for under-resourced schools to participate in CBL, such as through a well-planned and resourced pilot that would include a diverse set of high schools across the city.

Such a pilot could create the optimal circumstances for building foundational tools for CBL to scale effectively across many schools, in addition to establishing a common way of defining “mastery” of course content standards. For example, Algebra I could be established as a CBL course for all schools with resources developed to: (1) define Algebra I competencies aligned to state standards; (2) define mastery of the competencies together with the associated rubric for assessing mastery; and (3) support teachers in implementing the course and assessments with relevant materials and coaching. Once the pilot is evaluated and approaches improved, the resources and training created by the pilot could be made more broadly available.

#### Administration of standardized assessments needs reconsideration

CBL and alternative credit pathways require a rethinking of current accountability structures. For example, currently, students must take the algebra and geometry PARCC tests the spring they enroll in those courses. In a competency model, students would wait until they mastered the academic standards assessed by the test before taking it. Administering state tests on varied timelines could create perverse incentives for schools and make it difficult to compare school outcomes. OSSE will need to address this promptly for schools to feel safe trying CBL or other alternative credit pathways.

#### Evaluation of implementation and outcomes of course waivers and pilots should be built into the policy implementation process

As indicated in the recommendations section, the task force expressed support for capturing, sharing, reflecting upon and evolving policy and practice for all of the changes included in its recommendations. While DC would be following other jurisdictions in allowing for multiple pathways toward earning high school credit, the task force learned that few districts or states have captured and/or shared what they have learned from initiating flexible pathways to credit. As in any serious policy implementation, it is imperative to study and transparently share the outcomes for students who took competency-based courses and received credit from passing exams. Annual collection of evidence of implementation quality should be aggregated in a summative report no later than three years after initial implementation of CBL.

#### **Additional pathways to earning credit**

##### Schools award partial and transfer credits inconsistently across the district and could benefit from guidance

The task force uncovered significant confusion related to what is permitted and practiced across the city related to the awarding of partial credit and transfer credit, including for courses taken in middle school, such as algebra and world language. The task force agreed that awarding partial credit for mastery of course standards could represent an opportunity for students, especially mobile and at-risk students, to earn credit in both CBL and Carnegie unit courses for what they have learned. Partial credits could also represent an opportunity to break up year-long courses into smaller elements that students could pass at their own pace (related to competency-based learning). However, the task force did not feel its membership was best-positioned to work out details related to how partial credit for courses could or should be designed. Instead, those with intimate knowledge of credit accumulation, such as registrars and course content experts, should inform the creation of such guidance, including answers to questions such as:



- Would all schools need to adopt a specific sequencing of course material so that transferring students benefit from a logical flow between partial credits?
  - If so, how could this fit in with CBL, which requires that students progress at their own pace?
  - What type of coherence is important to consider across the city?
- What subset of credit makes sense? 0.5? 0.25? In which contexts?
- How would partial credit fit in with administration of PARCC?

Of note, a minority of members felt that it was not necessary to provide guidance on partial credits, as the law is silent on this topic and should remain so.

Schools vary in awarding credit based through credit recovery.

The task force discussed that credit recovery is applied inconsistently in schools across the city. Students would benefit from written guidance that would apply to all educational institutions, with regulatory adjustments where necessary.

### Conclusion

The High School Credit Flexibility Task Force discussed a number of important issues through the course of its meetings as related to its vision: **All District of Columbia students graduate demonstrating the agency, skills, and knowledge to thrive as active citizens in a global economy and democracy.** The diverse and deep education experience brought by the 25 task force members led to energized discussion about the challenges and possible solutions associated with meeting all students’ needs in the District of Columbia so that they may live fulfilling and prosperous lives. While **the majority of the group agreed that creating alternative pathways to earning credit toward a high school diploma represented an important step toward achieving this vision,** all agreed that there is much more to be done. The recommendations and discussion of this task force call for thoughtful immediate action and future consideration of additional pathways for earning high school credit.



District of Columbia State Board of Education  
DCSBOE



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**To:** Members, State Board of Education

**From:** Ruth Wattenberg, Chair, ESEA Waiver Renewal Committee  
Mary Lord, Committee Member

**Subject:** Recommendations on the Elementary and Secondary Education Act Waiver Renewal and Subsequent Amendments

**Date:** March 18, 2014

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### Executive Summary

One of the major responsibilities of state boards of education is to help develop and approve the statewide plan for holding schools accountable for educating all children equitably and excellently.

Since 2002, the federal Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) – better known as No Child Left Behind – has required states to administer standardized annual reading and mathematics tests to all students in grades 3 to 8 and at least once in high school to determine how well they have met state proficiency benchmarks. The law further specified that scores had to be reported for special-education and other subgroups of students, and that every child had to achieve proficiency by the end of the 2013-2014 school year, or schools would face sanctions.<sup>1</sup>

As that statistically impossible benchmark loomed, threatening to brand most of the nation's schools as "failing," the U.S. Department of Education invited states to apply for waivers. In return for flexibility in meeting ESEA/NCLB mandates, states had to develop their own rigorous plans to hold schools accountable and to "improve educational outcomes for all students, close achievement gaps, increase equity, and improve the quality of instruction."

Ultimately, 43 states and the District of Columbia received waivers for the 2012-2013 school year. Those waivers expired at the end of the 2013-2014 school year and the District applied for and received a one-year extension of an amended waiver through the current 2014-2015 school year.

With reauthorization of the ESEA stalled in Congress, the U.S. Department of Education has invited states to apply for three-year waiver renewals. The Office of the State Superintendent of Education (OSSE) intends to file a renewal application with the U.S. Department of Education by March 31, 2015 deadline, and to submit additional amendments to the waiver (especially around accountability) after June 1, 2015. The District of Columbia State Board of Education (State Board) supports seeking this renewal and pursuing the additional amendments. The State Board has discussed the waiver with stakeholders and with OSSE. The recommendations that follow constitute an initial set of recommendations to OSSE for inclusion in either the initial renewal or the follow-on amendments. The

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<sup>1</sup> U.S. Department of Education. ESEA Flexibility. Accessed March 15, 2015.  
<http://www2.ed.gov/policy/elsec/guid/esea-flexibility/index.html>

State Board believes that they reflect the requirements of the federal law while including refinements that the board believes address legitimate public concerns and lessons learned since 2010, when the initial waiver was adopted.

## **Recommendations**

The State Board supports OSSE's plan to continue many elements from the District's original waiver, particularly implementation of the Common Core State Standards for literacy and mathematics and the Next Generation Science Standards, with annual assessments of student performance. The State Board also supports holding teachers and schools harmless this school year to establish new proficiency benchmarks on the PARCC and NGSS-aligned science assessments, as approved in the current waiver. In addition, there are several promising new provisions in OSSE's waiver proposal that should accelerate improvement, notably a state support system and professional learning community for the lowest performing schools, and more robust state monitoring and intervention. The goal of this and other efforts is to ensure that every child is equipped with the knowledge, skills, and mind-set to succeed in college, careers, and civic life.

Beyond these and other revisions proposed by OSSE, the State Board recommends the following:

### **1. State and LEA Report Cards (more details in full report)**

- Augment the State and LEA Report Cards with data that would provide families and District residents with a clearer picture of quality, such as extracurricular offerings, the extent of parent engagement, and the use of one-on-one tutoring for academically struggling students.
- Add the results of a research-based school climate survey that would capture such issues as students' sense of safety and engagement and the extent to which teachers are able to share best ideas and work together on behalf of students. Include data on teacher and student retention.
- Add indicators around student health, including vaccination data and whether there is a full-time school nurse on staff.
- Add a compact, thoughtful list of indicators on college readiness.
- Add additional staffing data, including information on availability of psychologists, social workers, counselors, and librarians.

### **2. Data on student achievement, spending and effective programs**

- Measure and report schools' student achievement growth in a "pure" way (perhaps measured as months/years of achievement) that captures the growth of each student from one grade to the next (not the difference in achievement between different student cohorts); that is unaffected by the proficiency levels students bring to school; and that reflects whether tested students were enrolled at the school during most of the year.
- Provide more meaningful student subgroup data, including disaggregation of student achievement data according to the Council of the District of Columbia's definition of students-at-risk, and according to achievement percentiles (as is done by the NAEP, the National Assessment of Educational Progress). Special education data should be reported and disaggregated based on mid-enrollment data (not from the beginning of the year), which is typically not the same as beginning of the year enrollment data. Consideration should be given to reporting it by special education level.
- Provide better information on how funds targeted to at-risk students are used to support effective educational programs.

### **3. Understand and begin to address the side effects of current accountability system**

- Study and address the side effects of accountability, including conducting a survey or research project to assess how much testing and test preparation is taking place in schools and for what purposes, as well as examine the amount and quality of attention paid to non- and less-tested subjects such as social studies, science, and the arts.
- Establish a task force to identify best practices for providing, sustaining, and expanding a rich, broad curriculum in every school.

### **4. Accountability during the transition to PARCC**

- Schools that have otherwise met the criteria should be allowed to exit from a classification (Priority, Focus, Developing, Rising, Reward) if their MGP scores are sufficiently high.
- Schools in intervention in the 2014-2015 school year that do not exit from Priority or Focus status should not have the “pause” affect the timeline that governs their ability to exit their status.
- Charter schools in a Public Charter School Board (PCSB) closure process should not be required to also participate in an OSSE intervention process. If, however, closure leaves the same staff and leadership largely in place with similar students, OSSE should consider what form of intervention is appropriate and called for.
- OSSE’s intervention process should not commence until the PCSB or District of Columbia Public Schools (DCPS) has been able to work with a low-performing school for three years, unless DCPS or PCSB is unable to provide the needed services in the third year.

### **5. Updates/Reporting**

- There should be regular updates on what assistance is being provided to Focus and Priority schools, how program implementation is moving forward, and how students are progressing.
- There should be a process for reviewing and evaluating the District’s new assessments as valid measures of college- and career-readiness.

### **6. Teacher Certification and Equitable Access**

- The State Board looks forward to working with OSSE on these issues, which are ongoing.

## **Key Elements of the Waiver Application**

The U.S. Department of Education's waiver application requires states to respond in three (3) principle areas: rigorous standards; a system of accountability; and educator effectiveness. The State Board supports the following measures in the proposed waiver application:

### **Principle 1: College- and Career-Ready Expectations for All Students**

- Continued support for implementing the Common Core State Standards in literacy and mathematics and aligned PARCC assessment for all students, and for implementing the Next Generation Science Standards, including aligning assessments this year (2015) to measure student learning in science and engineering.

### **Principle 2: Develop and Implement a State-based System of Differentiated Recognition, Accountability, and Support**

- Continue to administer annual assessments and report scores in reading, mathematics, science, and writing on school and LEA report cards.
- Pause for one year (2014-2015) the use of assessment data to classify schools.
- Maintain current school classifications (Priority, Focus, Developing, Rising, and Reward) for the 2015-2016 school year.
- Develop and detail statewide plans to monitor and support school districts' progress for improving school performance, as required by the U.S. Department of Education.
- Eliminate double testing and allow middle school students who, for example, take Algebra 1 and Geometry to "bank" assessment results.
- Develop state plans and capacity to intervene in schools that persistently do a poor job of educating special education students, English language learners, or other subgroups.

### **Principle 3: Supporting Effective Instruction and Leadership (Educator Evaluation and Support):**

- Hold teachers and schools harmless for the 2014-2015 school year to establish a baseline for growth in reading and math proficiency using the new PARCC assessments, and in science.

## Background

On March 31, 2015, the Office of the State Superintendent of Education (OSSE) must submit a draft renewal application for the District's Elementary and Secondary Education Act Flexibility Waiver (waiver). The waiver, in place since 2012 and extended in fall 2014, provided the District with flexibility from some of the stricter mandates of No Child Left Behind (NCLB) and allowed the District to set new and achievable annual performance targets and eliminated some barriers to school improvement. In exchange for flexibility, the District agreed to several requirements, including that OSSE develop and implement policies and systems for differentiated accountability, recognition, and support. This led to the creation of a system that measured student progress toward proficiency and classified schools in five categories: Priority (chronically low-performing); Focus (lower performing); Developing (average); Rising (above average and improving); and Reward (highest performing).

Critical provisions of the waiver include how student and school progress will be measured; when and how schools will be identified as meeting or failing to make adequate progress toward annual benchmarks; when and how OSSE will intervene to reward, sanction, or assist identified schools—especially those that miss annual targets; how teachers will be evaluated and supported; and how OSSE will seek public engagement and report on progress in these areas.

In November 2014, the U.S. Department of Education announced a process for states with an approved waiver, including the District, to request a three-year renewal, through the 2017-2018 school year. As before, pursuant to the "Public Education Reform Amendment Act of 2007," the State Board must review and approve the waiver renewal application – which is the District's state accountability plan.

OSSE has signaled to the State Board that there will be additional opportunities to amend the waiver, pending additional conversations with not only the State Board but also with stakeholders throughout the District of Columbia. As summarized by OSSE, the renewal application will remain smaller in scope, while the conversations around **Accountability 2.0** will include discussions about new academic achievement and growth measures that are aligned to the new assessment, as well as additional technical improvements. It is envisioned that accountability and school improvement will be an ongoing effort, with additional opportunities for the State Board to consider ways to strengthen the system of monitoring, intervention, and support.

### ***Prior Waiver Extension Request***

On September 5, 2014 the District was granted a one-year ESEA waiver extension that gave OSSE continued flexibility in how the agency utilizes federal funding to support the needs of schools. Prior to OSSE's final submission of the waiver extension request, the State Board raised a number of issues in its report, ["ESEA Waiver Extension Request: A Swift, Upward Climb towards Excellence,"](#) adopted on June 18, 2014. Among the concerns: the failure of most schools to meet Annual Measureable Objectives – incremental progress toward the goal of advancing proficiency by 50 percent in six years for each subgroup of students – and the continued large achievement gaps. Both points were raised by the U.S. Department of Education in its monitoring report, along with OSSE's failure to "review and provide feedback on school improvement plans, to monitor and assess each school's implementation of interventions, and to develop publicly available progress reports on Focus and priority schools."

As OSSE was proposing the waiver extension, it was in the midst of launching a number of promising efforts to address these concerns, including the LEA Support Team Model. The State Board asked in the same June 2014 memo that OSSE "include a process for ongoing evaluation of school improvement efforts," disseminate quarterly reports on the performance of subgroups, provide the State Board with

updates on the implementation focused on school-level and student-level outcomes, and reassurances that OSSE has the expertise to ensure the necessary monitoring. The State Board further requested that approval of subsequent amendments and waivers include “public input and review and evaluation by experts.”

The State Board noted that many stakeholders objected to the current nomenclature for classifying schools (as parents and other stakeholders find the words “Priority” and “Focus” ambiguous to the performance of the school) and that the different systems used by OSSE, DCPS, and the PCSB were confusing to parents and sometimes in conflict. The State Board noted the “implementation of No Child Left Behind (NCLB) led to state accountability systems driven by incentives and sanctions. NCLB moved states forward, but was insufficient.” The State Board asked OSSE to “consider adding additional metrics of student and school performance,” including on “school climate and perhaps student and parent satisfaction,” as one way address the narrowness of NCLB’s metrics.

The State Board concluded with their hope that the District could move forward towards “thoughtful reform of accountability systems,” noting that, “We must work together to design an accountability system that has both some of the ‘teeth’ necessary to hold schools accountable for their performance and that provides schools with the necessary support, capacity, autonomy and resources to spur innovation and ensure that all students receive a high quality and equitable education.”

### ***Progress and Change Since the Waiver Extension’s Approval***

Since the State Board adopted its report, [“ESEA Waiver Extension Request: A Swift, Upward Climb towards Excellence,”](#) in June 2014 and the waiver extension in September 2014, OSSE has established the LEA Support Team model as promised and outlined in its proposed waiver renewal many new efforts to support Priority and Focus schools. Further, OSSE has indicated its intent to provide more intensive and customized support to a more targeted group of schools over time. The agency also has proposed the addition of new metrics for measuring school progress, a plan for pausing classifications during this assessment-transition year, and interest in seeking larger changes in how school success is measured. The State Board believes that all of these steps are responsive to what members of the State Board have been hearing from their constituents—the parents, teachers, taxpayers, and voters who support and depend on our schools.

The State Board also notes that there has been a dramatic turnover in the District’s education leadership in the past three months. The state superintendent departed in mid-December, the interim state superintendent will return to overseeing elementary and secondary education, and a new state superintendent will start by the end of March 2015. Likewise, the District has a new mayor, a new Deputy Mayor for Education, and three new members of the nine-member State Board (three members were on the State Board during the original waiver application in 2011).

The State Board is committed to continue working as a constructive partner and to bringing members’ unique understanding of their communities as well as their expertise and experience to improve educational opportunities and outcomes for the District’s students.

All of this makes for a dynamic, hopeful environment in which priorities are being re-examined and fresh ideas raised. Given all of the above, the State Board offers the following advisory guidance. The State Board is open as to whether they should be included in OSSE’s initial waiver renewal application or in a later amendment submission.

## Findings

### *The need for more information*

In approving the waiver, the State Board is being asked to approve a particular set of interventions as well as a system of supports aimed at lifting our most vulnerable students at our most challenged schools. But vital information is missing that could inform that decision and other efforts to improve educational outcomes for the District's most at-risk students.

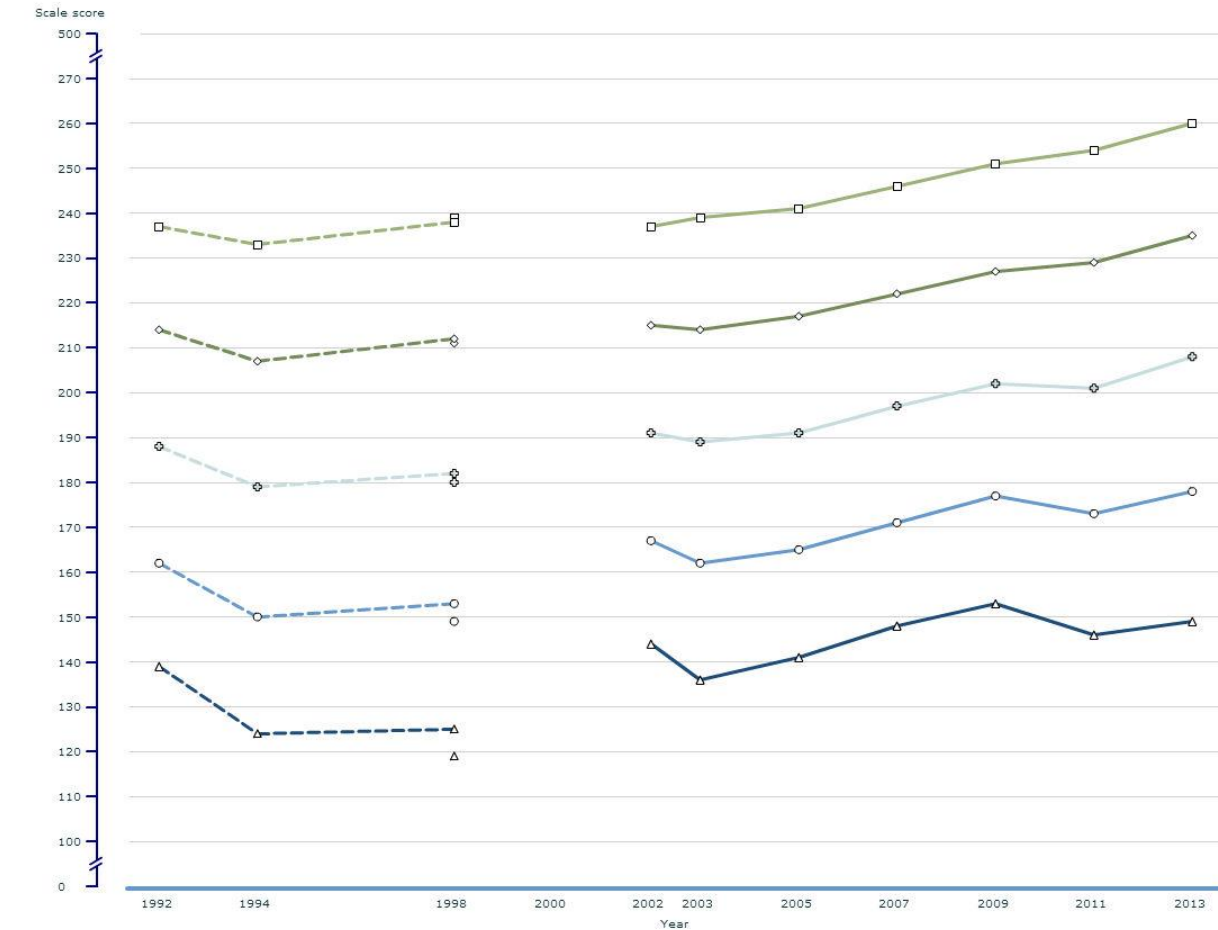
#### Achievement data for our most at-risk students.

The District's schools have received much attention for raising overall student achievement at a more rapid rate than other cities and states. But there have long been concerns that this progress didn't extend to all students or to all schools.

Data from the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), the largest nationally representative and continuing assessment of what America's students know and can do in various subject areas, suggests that in terms of reading (not mathematics) these concerns are warranted. Of greatest concern is that after six years of consistently strong achievement growth in 4<sup>th</sup> grade reading (from 2003-2009), the lowest-achieving quarter of students have made virtually no progress since 2009 (average scale score moved from 177-178); the lowest achieving 10% have actually demonstrated declining proficiency rates since then (from 153-149). In DCPS, the lowest-achieving quarter of 4<sup>th</sup> graders lost ground after 2009 and have barely rebounded to previous levels (average scale score from 2009-2013 has moved from 178-177). Among the lowest achieving 10% of students, the drop was the greatest. Among the lowest-achieving quarter of DCPS 8<sup>th</sup> graders, reading score drops since 2007 have rebounded but have left students at achievement levels in 2013 that are roughly the same as 6 years earlier (218 in 2007 to 218 in 2013). Similarly disaggregated data from city assessments should be easily available.



Percentile scores for reading, grade 4 by all students [TOTAL] for year and jurisdiction:  
 1992, 1994, 1998, 2000, 2002, 2003, 2005, 2007, 2009, 2011, and 2013  
 District of Columbia, All students

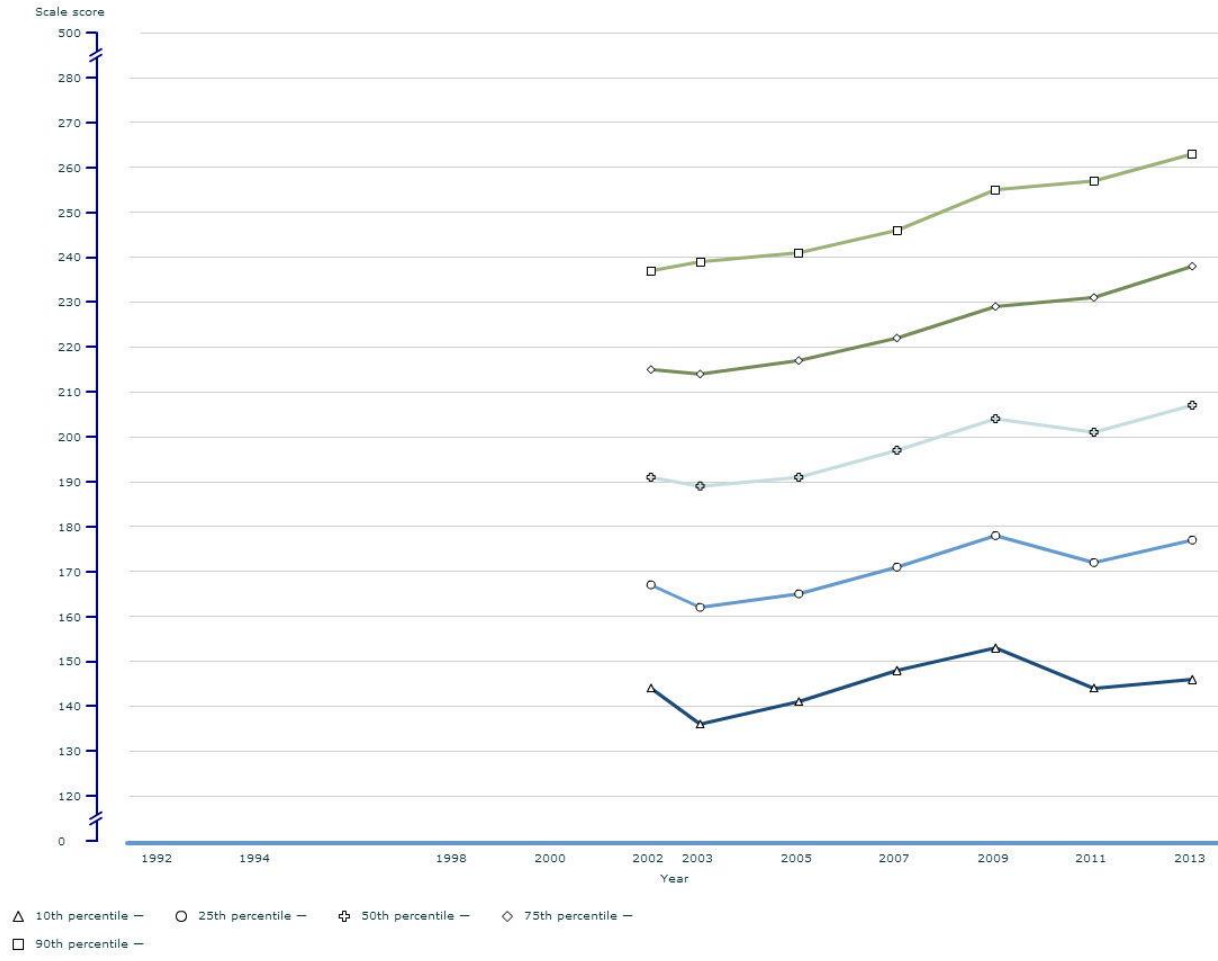


△ 10th percentile — ○ 25th percentile — ⊕ 50th percentile — ◇ 75th percentile —  
 □ 90th percentile —

--- Accommodations not permitted.  
 — Accommodations permitted.

— Not available.  
 \* Accommodations were not permitted for this assessment.  
 NOTE: The NAEP Reading scale ranges from 0 to 500. Some apparent differences between estimates may not be statistically significant.  
 SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, Institute of Education Sciences, National Center for Education Statistics, National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), 1992, 1994, 1998, 2000, 2002, 2003, 2005, 2007, 2009, 2011 and 2013 Reading Assessments.

Percentile scores for reading, grade 4 by all students [TOTAL] for year and jurisdiction:  
 1992, 1994, 1998, 2000, 2002, 2003, 2005, 2007, 2009, 2011, and 2013  
 District of Columbia (DCPS), All students



— Not available.  
 † Accommodations were not permitted for this assessment.  
 NOTE: DCPS = District of Columbia Public Schools. The NAEP Reading scale ranges from 0 to 500. Some apparent differences between estimates may not be statistically significant.  
 SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, Institute of Education Sciences, National Center for Education Statistics, National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), 1992, 1994, 1998, 2000, 2002, 2003, 2005, 2007, 2009, 2011 and 2013 Reading Assessments.

## Use of Resources/Effective programs

The State Board is aware that many efforts have been and are being made to accelerate progress among our lowest achieving students. As noted, OSSE has just put into place a number of new programs to assist Priority and Focus schools. The State Board applauds the new programs and hopes that they will provide needed support and lead to improved learning in these schools. But whether at these schools or elsewhere, the State Board lacks the information to understand what's been tried, what's working, and what's not working. The State Board hopes to work with OSSE to find ways that the State Board and the public can better understand where funds for at-risk students are going, what programs they support, and whether they are effective.

## ***Accountability and its Side Effects***

### **Side Effects**

The preparation of the waiver renewal application is an opportunity to engage the public and think through how the District has been approaching testing, accountability, transparency, and school improvement—the key ingredients of the waiver. It is an opportunity to reconsider how we measure student achievement, the data collected, and how it is used to paint a more complete picture of school quality and characteristics, how we provide school information to the public—and the effect of our accountability system on how schools and teachers do their jobs.

The waiver offers some very important steps in this direction, including adding metrics to the report card on healthy schools and college- and career-ready metrics and convening a task force to consider changing how student achievement is judged.

However, there is growing discontent with the side effects of the District's accountability system. Complaints about these side effects, including excessive testing and test preparation, loss of instructional time, and the narrowing of the curriculum (especially in elementary grades) have emerged at many community meetings.<sup>2</sup> This issue arguably was the biggest concern that came up in community meetings. Consequently, the State Board believes that it is important that the waiver acknowledge these concerns, propose some steps to mitigate them, and resolve to take the issue much more seriously as we move forward.

The State Board has some initial recommendations including an immediate study of the issue. According to OSSE, students spend about 9.5 hours a year to take state assessments, unless they are in grades tested in science or writing, in which case the total is 11.5 hours. Yet in some cases, it is reported that 17 different instructional days have included time devoted to test prep and testing. With the new PARCC assessment rolling out this spring, there's a need for better information and public engagement on this topic.

### **State and LEA Report Cards**

In the proposed waiver renewal application, OSSE proposes to add quality metrics in several areas: college readiness, healthy schools (as related to the District's Healthy Schools Act), and instructional staff data (the additional instructional staff data would bring the District into compliance with federal regulations). The State Board supports the direction of these proposals. However, additional metrics

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<sup>2</sup> The Center for Education Policy's 2008 report revealed the magnitude of the narrowing of the curriculum in elementary schools:

<http://www.cep-dc.org/displayDocument.cfm?DocumentID=309>

that provide information about around parent engagement, curriculum breadth, and extracurricular activities could also provide students and parents with useful information as they plot their academic trajectory. In addition, by asking for certain information and making it public, it would become more apparent to schools, parents, and the public that there are other considerations beyond test scores.

Nonetheless, the State Board is mindful of adding additional data collection tasks to schools and LEA's; where possible, the State Board hopes that OSSE can make use of data that already resides with either DCPS or the PCSB.

### **Accountability Pause**

Given that this is the first year of administering the PARCC assessment, there will be no data from which to measure student progress. The State Board concurs with OSSE that neither teachers nor schools should be judged based on the 2014-2015 school year PARCC scores. As a result, no new schools will be classified as Priority or Focus. OSSE proposes maintaining schools in their current classifications. The State Board urges OSSE to consider allowing schools to exit from Priority or Focus status if their median growth percentile (MGP) scores on the PARCC are significantly high enough. For example, PCSB has set a threshold of 75 percent of students being proficient. The State Board offers this proposal for two reasons. First, preventing schools from exiting simply because OSSE does not have an appropriate measure is unfair, and second, it is possible through the use of MGP to derive an appropriate and reasonable measure for enabling a school's exit. OSSE has expressed an interest in being able to intensely focus on a smaller number of the neediest schools; allowing high-scoring schools to exit advances that goal.

For the same reason, the State Board supports the PCSB's proposal that schools that are already in the process of being shut down by the PCSB and already are involved in the PCSB's close-down process need not undergo OSSE intervention. If, however, closure leaves the same staff and leadership largely in place with similar students, OSSE should consider what form of intervention is appropriate and called for. If DCPS and PCSB are willing and capable of supporting schools in their third year of intervention, the State Board is not supportive of OSSE's takeover of those schools until the fourth year of intervention.

### **Revision of Teacher Licensure**

The waiver proposal includes a report on many changes that are being made in teacher licensure, with more expected. By statute, the State Board must review and approve such changes and suggestions of updates to licensure requirements are needed and welcome. As the District has received a poor score on the National Council on Teacher Quality's annual report, and as Board members frequently hear complaints about the District's lack of reciprocity with other states, the State Board supports licensure revisions. Thus far, however, the State Board has not seen the emerging proposals and can't comment on them.

### **Recommendations**

#### **1. State School Report Cards**

As noted in the waiver renewal application, the State and LEA Report Card provides parents and the public important information on the quality of the entire school program, and especially the quality of the educational experience. The State Board also recognizes that collecting additional data can be burdensome to individual schools and/or stretch the capacity of LEAs and OSSE. As a result, the State Board seeks to strike a balance and requiring the least possible data that can provide the public with the

clearest possible picture. The State Board also notes that as more data is made available, it is increasingly important to think about how to protect and present it. The State Board encourages OSSE to continue to consider how best to display and make this data available, including looking at the new “data dashboards” with which some states are experimenting as well as explore ways for OSSE to provide LEAs with data reports that would let them tailor instruction and intervention – rather than leave it to individual schools try to crunch their own numbers.

State school report cards, published on the LearnDC website, contain a wealth of information. One of the ideas and concerns that emerged from community forums and in conversations with state board members involved the desire to broaden the curriculum, educate the “whole child,” and cut down on the “over-testing” of students. There also was confusion over school classifications (priority seemed to indicate quality, for example) and concern about “unfair” evaluation systems that emphasized a narrow set of scores and applied them to every teacher in a school.

The State Board has heard from many constituents and considered a number of additional data points that could improve the State and LEA Report Cards. Recognizing the need to conduct additional research and benchmarking of other states, the State Board offers the following suggestions:

#### Health-related Data

*Anecdotally, much of this information (e.g. vaccination data) is already available, but it should be aggregated and made easily accessible and comprehensible to the public. Specific points could include:*

- Information related to implementation of the Healthy Schools Act (e.g. school gardens)
- Vaccination rates
- Availability of a full-time school nurse(s)
- Other relevant, already-available health data, from other sources, aggregated in an accessible, comprehensible way

#### School Climate and Student Engagement Data

- Data on bullying; and
- Student/teacher satisfaction and engagement, based on surveys
- Safety
- Suspensions (per grade)
- Extra-curricular activities
- Average number of books per student in school library

#### Staffing Data

- Teacher experience and retention, including, 1, 2 and 5 year turn-over rates
- Proportion of teachers with 3 or fewer years of experience
- Number and certification of school counselors, and counselor-student ratio
- Social worker-student ratio
- Psychologist-student ratio
- Teacher-student ratio
- School librarians

#### Parent/Family Engagement Data

- Parent survey data;
- Attendance at parent-teacher
- Percentage of families that receive a home visit;
- Presence of a PTA and frequency of meeting

- Number of students that withdraw from dissatisfaction with school

#### Support for Struggling Students

- Number of students two or more years behind in reading;
- Number of students two or more years behind in mathematics;
- Number of school staff beyond classroom teachers involved in providing literacy and math instruction to students
- Average hours per week that such students receive one-on-one instruction

College-Ready metrics, such as a thoughtfully selected subset of the metrics proposed in OSSE’s draft waiver will be less burdensome and provide adequate information on this important issue.

### **2. Data on Student Achievement, Spending and Effective Programs**

- Measure and report schools’ student achievement growth in a “pure” way (perhaps measured as months/years of achievement) that captures the growth of each student from one grade to the next (not the difference in achievement between different student cohorts); that is unaffected by the proficiency levels students bring to school; and that reflects; and that reflects whether tested students were enrolled at the school during most of the year.
- Provide more meaningful student subgroup data, including disaggregation of student achievement data according to the Council of the District of Columbia’s definition of students-at-risk; and according to achievement percentiles (as is done by the NAEP, the National Assessment of Educational Progress), as well as proportions of students in these subgroups.
- Provide better information on how funds targeted to at-risk students are used to support effective educational programs .

### **3. Understanding and beginning to address the side effects of current accountability system**

- The waiver sets forth the District’s plans for the near future regarding accountability. That plan should include a deliberate effort to understand and, if appropriate, address the side effects of accountability. The State Board asks that the waiver include a commitment to:
  - Conduct a survey/research project that assesses how much testing and test preparation is taking place in our schools and for what purposes; the effect of logistical challenges on teaching and learning; and the amount and quality of attention paid to the non- and less-tested subjects, including science, social studies, and the arts. Among the issues that should be looked at are the differential effects depending on school grade level and school demographics. Possibly these should be two separate studies, one that looks at testing and test prep and another that investigates the availability of a rich, broad curriculum.
  - Using the results from the survey(s), establish a task force to identify best practices for providing a rich, broad curriculum and determine how best to support and extend such practices

### **4. Accountability During the Transition to New Assessments**

- Schools that have otherwise met the criteria for exiting a given classification should not be prevented from exiting that status if their MGP scores are sufficiently high. The PCSB’s recommended a threshold of 75 percent appears sensible.
- Schools that are in intervention this year and do not exit this year should not have this (frozen) year count against the clock that leads to further sanctions.

- Schools that are in a PCSB-closure process should not be required to also participate in an OSSE intervention process. If, however, closure leaves the same staff and leadership largely in place with similar students, OSSE should consider what form of intervention is appropriate and called for.
- Schools should not enter OSSE's intervention process until DCPS or PCSB has been able to work with them for three years, unless DCPS or PCSB is unable to provide the needed services in the third year.

## **5. Updates/Reports**

- There should be regular updates on what assistance is being provided to Focus and Priority schools, how program implementation is moving forward, and how students are progressing.
- There should be a process for reviewing the District's new assessments as valid measures of college- career-readiness. How have they lived up to expectations and what improvements can be made to their administration.

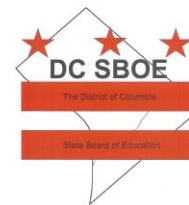
## **6. Teacher Certification and Equitable Access**

- The State Board looks forward to working with OSSE on these issues.

Ultimately, the hard work of educating children rests with teachers in the classroom. The State Board believes that a waiver will support educators, encourage innovation, and, most importantly, support students, families, and taxpayers in their pursuit of the common goal of college- and career-readiness – and a way to measure every child's progress toward that goal. We look forward to continuing to work with OSSE on further amendments to the waiver, on teacher certification, and on a state plan to assure equitable access to excellent educators as the U.S. Department of Education has tasked all states to develop



**District of Columbia State Board of Education  
DCSBOE**



**CEREMONIAL RESOLUTION**

**CR\_\_-\_\_**

**THE MEMBERS OF THE D.C. STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION PRESENT  
THE FOLLOWING RESOLUTION**

**HONORING MARION S. BARRY, JR., FORMER PRESIDENT OF THE BOARD  
OF EDUCATION**

**WHEREAS**, the District of Columbia State Board of Education (State Board) mourns the passing of Marion S. Barry Jr., a scholar-activist who served as president and at-large member of the Board of Education from 1971 to 1974.

**WHEREAS**, during Mr. Barry’s tenure on the Board of Education, he worked tirelessly to make schools “work for all children,” reorganizing the District of Columbia Public Schools’ finances, creating committees on health and nutrition, and hiring Barbara Sizemore as superintendent, the first African-American woman to head a major school system in the nation;

**WHEREAS**, even before serving on the Board of Education, Mr. Barry, a self-described “man of science” with a master’s degree in chemistry, was passionate about promoting educational opportunities and justice for students, exemplified by his participation in establishing the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC) and later moving to the District to open a local SNCC chapter;

**WHEREAS**, upon Mr. Barry’s arrival in the District, he quickly became a driving force for home rule, job training programs, and civil rights;

**WHEREAS**, Mr. Barry’s legacy continues on through the Mayor’s Youth Leadership Institute and the Summer Youth Employment Program, which has provided thousands of District residents with their first work experiences, helping them learn and develop essential skills

**WHEREAS**, while serving as the Ward 8 representative on the Council of the District of Columbia, Mr. Barry never stopped working for children and youth, remaining a ceaseless advocate for educational equity and excellence on the D.C. Council’s education committee;

**WHEREAS**, Mr. Barry was a stalwart supporter of the State Board and a friend to many of its members;

**BE IT RESOLVED**, that the District of Columbia State Board of Education honors and celebrates former Board Member Marion S. Barry, Jr. and his legacy of outstanding service and leadership.

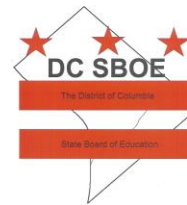
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Attest pronunciation





**District of Columbia State Board of Education  
DCSBOE**



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**CEREMONIAL RESOLUTION**

**CR\_\_ - \_\_**

**THE MEMBERS OF THE D.C. STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION PRESENT  
THE FOLLOWING RESOLUTION**

**HONORING STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION MEMBER  
PATRICK MARA**

**WHEREAS**, the District of Columbia State Board of Education (State Board) recognizes the stewardship of Board Member Patrick Mara for his dedicated service in improving educational outcomes for the students in the District of Columbia since January 2, 2010;

**WHEREAS**, the State Board acknowledges the outstanding service that Mr. Mara provided to the Ward One community in engaging government leaders and education stakeholders in furtherance of the vision that all District residents receive an excellent education;

**WHEREAS**, over the last decade, Mr. Mara served on the boards of numerous local non-profits devoted to supporting the educational needs of District children in addition to being a long-term tutor and mentor for a number of public school students;

**WHEREAS**, Mr. Mara served as a leader in the District of Columbia on education reform initiatives by increasing public awareness of the Common Core State Standards, advocating for the adoption of the Next Generation Science Standards, and serving as the State Board's appointee to the National Association of State Boards of Education's Government Affairs Committee where he has been the District's voice in shaping national education policy;

**WHEREAS**, Mr. Mara has led the charge in the State Board's consideration of a system of competency-based learning in the District that would provide multiple pathways for students to earn credit towards graduation;

**WHEREAS**, Mr. Mara will end his duties with the District of Columbia State Board of Education on January 2, 2015;

**BE IT RESOLVED**, that the District of Columbia State Board of Education honors Board Member Patrick Mara for outstanding service and leadership to the District of Columbia.

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Date Adopted

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Attest pronunciation



District of Columbia State Board of Education  
DCSBOE



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**CEREMONIAL RESOLUTION**

**CR\_\_ - \_\_**

**THE MEMBERS OF THE D.C. STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION PRESENT  
THE FOLLOWING RESOLUTION**

**HONORING STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION MEMBER  
LAURA MCGIFFERT SLOVER**

**WHEREAS**, the District of Columbia State Board of Education (State Board) recognizes the stewardship of Board Member Laura McGiffert Slover for her dedicated service in improving educational outcomes for the students in the District of Columbia;

**WHEREAS**, Ms. Slover is a native Washingtonian with over 16 years of experience in the field of education and education policy;

**WHEREAS**, Ms. Slover has served on the State Board since 2007, first serving as an appointed member on the former Board of Education and later elected as the Ward Three representative to the current District of Columbia State Board of Education;

**WHEREAS**, Ms. Slover served the State Board as Vice President in 2011 and President in 2012 and 2013;

**WHEREAS**, the State Board acknowledges the outstanding service Ms. Slover has provided to the Ward Three community in engaging government leaders and education stakeholders in furtherance of the vision that all District residents receive an excellent education;

**WHEREAS**, Ms. Slover commitment to designing and implementing a strong system of assessment and accountability has been an asset to the State Board and the education community;

**WHEREAS**, Ms. Slover showed extensive leadership during the consideration of revised high school graduation requirements and was early advocate for competency-based learning;

**WHEREAS**, Ms. Slover shall end her duties with the State Board on January 2, 2015;

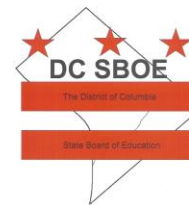
**BE IT RESOLVED**, that the District of Columbia State Board of Education honors Board Member Laura McGiffert Slover for her outstanding service and leadership to the District of Columbia.

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Date Adopted

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Attest pronunciation



**District of Columbia State Board of Education  
DCSBOE**



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**CEREMONIAL RESOLUTION**

**CR\_\_ - \_\_**

**THE MEMBERS OF THE D.C. STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION PRESENT  
THE FOLLOWING RESOLUTION**

**HONORING STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION MEMBER  
MONICA WARREN-JONES**

**WHEREAS**, the District of Columbia State Board of Education (State Board) recognizes the stewardship of Board Member Monica Warren-Jones for her dedicated service in improving educational outcomes for the students in the District of Columbia since January 2, 2010;

**WHEREAS**, the State Board acknowledges the outstanding service Ms. Warren-Jones provided to the Ward Six community in engaging government leaders and education stakeholders in furtherance of the vision that all District residents receive an excellent education;

**WHEREAS**, Ms. Warren-Jones enhanced her colleague’s understanding of the issues facing low and moderate income residents by sharing her experiences in affordable housing and community development and how insecure housing quality affects our students;

**WHEREAS**, Ms. Warren-Jones is actively involved with community activities and has mentored at risk, elementary school children through the Everybody Wins Reading Program, is an active parent with the Capital Hill Cluster PTA Board, where she previously served as Co-Treasurer to support professional development and special initiative in three District of Columbia Public Schools;

**WHEREAS**, Ms. Warren-Jones served as the Chairman of the Committee on Parent Engagement and led the charge for a bill of rights for parents to become a framework for future development of parent involvement standards;

**WHEREAS**, Ms. Warren-Jones will end her duties with the State Board on January 2, 2015;

**BE IT RESOLVED**, that the District of Columbia State Board of Education honors Board Member Monica Warren-Jones for her outstanding service and leadership to the District of Columbia.

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Date Adopted

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Attest pronunciation



**District of Columbia State Board of Education  
DCSBOE**



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**CEREMONIAL RESOLUTION**

**CR\_\_ - \_\_**

**THE MEMBERS OF THE D.C. STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION PRESENT  
THE FOLLOWING RESOLUTION**

**HONORING STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION MEMBER  
TRAYON WHITE**

**WHEREAS**, the District of Columbia State Board of Education (State Board) recognizes the stewardship of Board Member Trayon White for his dedicated service in improving educational outcomes for the students in the District of Columbia since May 10, 2011;

**WHEREAS**, Mr. White has always been actively involved with community activities, starting with his work with the East of the River Clergy Police Community Partnership, where he served as an Outreach Coordinator, and continuing through his establishment of a nonprofit where he used his life experience to show young adults pathways to successful living;

**WHEREAS**, the State Board acknowledges the outstanding service Mr. White has provided to the Ward Eight community in engaging government leaders and education stakeholders in furtherance of the vision that all District residents receive an excellent education;

**WHEREAS**, Mr. White was a champion for finding productive, practical ways of reducing truancy among the District's youth;

**WHEREAS**, Mr. White was a constant advocate for parent and home engagement in every policy brought before the State Board;

**WHEREAS**, Mr. White ended his duties with the State Board on March 6, 2014;

**BE IT RESOLVED**, that the District of Columbia State Board of Education honors Board Member Trayon White for his outstanding service and leadership to the District of Columbia.

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Date Adopted

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Attest pronunciation



District of Columbia State Board of Education  
DCSBOE



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**THE MEMBERS OF THE D.C. STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION  
PRESENT THE FOLLOWING CEREMONIAL RESOLUTION**

**CR15-\_\_\_\_\_**

**HONORING JACOB MARTIN  
DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA DELEGATE TO THE 2015 NATIONAL YOUTH SCIENCE  
CAMP**

**Whereas**, the District of Columbia State Board of Education coordinates the selection of two graduating high school seniors each year to represent the District of Columbia at the prestigious National Youth Science Camp in West Virginia;

**Whereas**, this opportunity to exchange ideas, study science, and participate in outdoor learning experiences with peers from around the country and world is granted to students who have exhibited leadership and outstanding scholastic achievement in science and mathematics;

**Whereas**, the District of Columbia State Board of Education recognizes Jacob Martin for excellence in science and mathematics throughout his high school career at Friendship Collegiate Academy;

**Whereas**, Jacob Martin is a leader in the engineering and information technology program, spearheading the team working with the 3-D printer to make phone cases, among other things;

**Whereas**, Jacob Martin made the honor roll all four years of high school;

**Whereas**, Jacob Martin will attend Montgomery College and study engineering;

**Whereas**, Jacob Martin was selected to attend the 2015 National Youth Science Camp in West Virginia;

**BE IT RESOLVED** that the District of Columbia State Board of Education recognizes Jacob Martin for academic excellence, and honors him as one of the District of Columbia's most promising and creative young engineers in the high school graduating class of 2015.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
President, Jack Jacobson

\_\_\_\_\_  
Ms. Mary Lord (Representative At-Large)

(Representative WARD 2)



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**THE MEMBERS OF THE D.C. STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION  
PRESENT THE FOLLOWING CEREMONIAL RESOLUTION**

**CR15-\_\_\_\_**

**HONORING TAYLOR LOFTON  
DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA DELEGATE TO THE 2015 NATIONAL YOUTH SCIENCE  
CAMP**

**Whereas**, the District of Columbia State Board of Education coordinates the selection of two graduating high school seniors each year to represent the District of Columbia at the prestigious National Youth Science Camp in West Virginia;

**Whereas**, this opportunity to exchange ideas, study science, and participate in outdoor learning experiences with peers from around the country and world is granted to students who have exhibited leadership and outstanding scholastic achievement in science and mathematics;

**Whereas**, the District of Columbia State Board of Education recognizes Taylor Lofton for excellence in science and mathematics throughout her high school career at Benjamin Banneker Academic High School;

**Whereas**, Taylor Lofton is a leader in student government, serving as senior class president and a college-bound student ambassador;

**Whereas**, Taylor Lofton made the honor roll all four years and was inducted into the National Honors Society, the National French Honors Society, and Mu Alpha Theta, the national math honors society;

**Whereas**, Taylor Lofton is a cheerleader whose team won the 2014 District of Columbia state and city championship and holds a 3<sup>rd</sup> degree black belt in Tae Kwon Do;

**Whereas**, Taylor Lofton tutors at Turkey Thicket Recreation Center;

**Whereas**, Taylor Lofton will attend the University of Rochester as a Posse Scholar and study bioengineering;

**Whereas**, Taylor Lofton was selected to attend the 2015 National Youth Science Camp in West Virginia;

**BE IT RESOLVED** that the District of Columbia State Board of Education recognizes Taylor Lofton for academic excellence, and honors her as one of the District of Columbia’s most promising and creative young scientists in the high school graduating class of 2015.

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Date

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President, Jack Jacobson  
(Representative WARD 2)

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Ms. Mary Lord (Representative At-Large)





District of Columbia State Board of Education  
DCSBOE



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**THE MEMBERS OF THE D.C. STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION  
PRESENT THE FOLLOWING CEREMONIAL RESOLUTION**

**CR15-\_\_\_\_\_**

**HONORING JACOB MARTIN  
DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA DELEGATE TO THE 2015 NATIONAL YOUTH SCIENCE  
CAMP**

**Whereas**, the District of Columbia State Board of Education coordinates the selection of two graduating high school seniors each year to represent the District of Columbia at the prestigious National Youth Science Camp in West Virginia;

**Whereas**, this opportunity to exchange ideas, study science, and participate in outdoor learning experiences with peers from around the country and world is granted to students who have exhibited leadership and outstanding scholastic achievement in science and mathematics;

**Whereas**, the District of Columbia State Board of Education recognizes Jacob Martin for excellence in science and mathematics throughout his high school career at Friendship Collegiate Academy;

**Whereas**, Jacob Martin is a leader in the engineering and information technology program, spearheading the team working with the 3-D printer to make phone cases, among other things;

**Whereas**, Jacob Martin made the honor roll all four years of high school;

**Whereas**, Jacob Martin will attend Montgomery College and study engineering;

**Whereas**, Jacob Martin was selected to attend the 2015 National Youth Science Camp in West Virginia;

**BE IT RESOLVED** that the District of Columbia State Board of Education recognizes Jacob Martin for academic excellence, and honors him as one of the District of Columbia's most promising and creative young engineers in the high school graduating class of 2015.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
President, Jack Jacobson

\_\_\_\_\_  
Ms. Mary Lord (Representative At-Large)

(Representative WARD 2)



**DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION  
DCSBOE**



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**DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION**

**CR15-04**

**CEREMONIAL RESOLUTION HONORING ARLENE WATKINS ON HER RETIREMENT FROM  
DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA PUBLIC SCHOOLS**

**WHEREAS**, Mrs. Arlene Watkins, has served as the Administrative Assistant at Janney Elementary School for 15 years;

**WHEREAS**, Mrs. Watkins has worked for DC Public Schools for 31 years;

**WHEREAS**, Mrs. Watkins has helped Janney Elementary School run smoothly during all of this time, thus endearing herself to a generation of parents, students, teachers, and principals;

**WHEREAS**, Mrs. Watkins is the person parents turned to for unfailing and always cheerful help in navigating all of the policies, procedures, and paperwork required of them;

**WHEREAS**, Mrs. Watkins has helped generations of Janney students learn to be good community members by collecting Janney paw prints and celebrating these awards with students; and

**WHEREAS**, through her outstanding service, Mrs. Watkins has significantly contributed to our community and has served as an example for others to follow.

**BE IT RESOLVED**, That the District of Columbia State Board of Education honors and celebrates Mrs. Arlene Watkins on her retirement.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date Adopted

\_\_\_\_\_  
Ruth Wattenberg  
Ward 3 Representative

\_\_\_\_\_  
Jack Jacobson, President  
Ward 2 Representative



District of Columbia State Board of Education  
DCSBOE



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DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION

CR15-05

**CEREMONIAL RESOLUTION HONORING WENDY MORGAN-WILLIAMS ON HER RETIREMENT  
FROM DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA PUBLIC SCHOOLS**

**WHEREAS**, Ms. Wendy Morgan-Williams has taught pre-kindergarten and kindergarten at Janney Elementary School for 36 years;

**WHEREAS**, Ms. Morgan-Williams, with her colleague, Ms. Marquita Pressley, has welcomed generations of students to Janney, helping them to transition successfully to their new community;

**WHEREAS**, Ms. Morgan-Williams has taught hundreds of students how to read, launching them on a lifelong journey of discovery and learning;

**WHEREAS**, Ms. Morgan-Williams engaged even the youngest students with lessons on the history of our country and the world;

**WHEREAS**, Ms. Morgan-Williams has prepared generations of students for successful elementary school careers;

**WHEREAS**, Ms. Morgan-Williams, through her outstanding service has significantly contributed to our community and has served as an example for others to follow; and

**WHEREAS**, Ms. Morgan-Williams is now retiring.

**BE IT RESOLVED**, That the District of Columbia State Board of Education honors and celebrates Ms. Wendy Morgan-Williams on her retirement.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date Adopted

\_\_\_\_\_  
Ruth Wattenberg  
Ward 3 Representative

\_\_\_\_\_  
Jack Jacobson, President  
Ward 2 Representative



District of Columbia State Board of Education  
DCSBOE



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DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION

CR15-06

**CEREMONIAL RESOLUTION HONORING NANCY MARTELL-STEVENSON  
ON HER RETIREMENT FROM DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA PUBLIC SCHOOLS**

**WHEREAS**, Ms. Nancy Martell-Stevenson has taught 3rd and 4th grade at Janney Elementary School for 5 years; and before that taught at Murch Elementary School;

**WHEREAS**, Ms. Martell-Stevenson has been a teacher with the District of Columbia Public Schools for 16 years;

**WHEREAS**, Ms. Martell-Stevenson brought history alive for her students by engaging them in the stories of our past, helping them to imagine and understand the ways in which people lived;

**WHEREAS**, Ms. Martell-Stevenson, with tireless advocacy for the special education community and high expectations for all her students, has inspired hundreds of children to have high expectations for themselves and to think critically and write with confidence and enthusiasm; and

**WHEREAS**, Ms. Martell-Stevenson, is now retiring.

**BE IT RESOLVED**, That the District of Columbia State Board of Education honors and celebrates Ms. Nancy Martell-Stevenson on her retirement.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date Adopted

\_\_\_\_\_  
Ruth Wattenberg  
Ward 3 Representative

\_\_\_\_\_  
Jack Jacobson, President  
Ward 2 Representative



**DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION  
DCSBOE**



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**DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION**

**CR15-07**

**CEREMONIAL RESOLUTION HONORING MARY OSTERMAN ON HER RETIREMENT FROM  
DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA PUBLIC SCHOOLS**

**WHEREAS**, Ms. Mary Osterman has taught 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> grade reading and writing at Janney Elementary School for 20 years;

**WHEREAS**, Ms. Osterman has been a teacher with the DC Public Schools for 25 years;

**WHEREAS**, Ms. Osterman has taught generations of Janney students to read critically, write clearly and powerfully, and to love learning;

**WHEREAS**, Ms. Osterman is well-known for her stunning annual unit on Early America, ending in classroom simulations for which students dressed up, cooked, and ate like early Americans while studying and learning;

**WHEREAS**, Ms. Osterman, through her outstanding service has significantly contributed to our community and has served as an example for others to follow; and

**WHEREAS**, Ms. Mary Osterman, is now retiring.

**BE IT RESOLVED**, That the District of Columbia State Board of Education honors and celebrates Ms. Mary Osterman on her retirement.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date Adopted

\_\_\_\_\_  
Ruth Wattenberg  
Ward 3 Representative

\_\_\_\_\_  
Jack Jacobson, President  
Ward 2 Representative