



OFFICE OF THE
STUDENT
ADVOCATE

Fiscal Year 2017 Performance Oversight Responses

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Program Operations and Community Engagement

Q1. What were the major accomplishments of the Office of the Student Advocate in FY17 and to date in FY18?

1. ***Parent Leadership Series*** – We continued the work we started in FY16 by retooling our Ward 7 Parent Empowerment Series keeping the core elements of coalescing around community specific concerns and issues and pairing parent teacher organizational skill building, including but not limited to effective communication, engaging stakeholders, and budget advocacy. In FY17 we rebranded the series as the Parent Leadership Series and continued our work in Ward 7. We continued this work in Ward 7 with parents and other resident stakeholders by hosting various conversations on how the public education system works, connecting our knowledge to advocacy, DC government budgeting 101, understanding how the DC budget impacts schools, and etc. This series concluded in FY17 with a session that allowed parents to put their knowledge into action was a one-on-one conversations with decision makers from the DC Council, City Administrator Office, Deputy Mayor for Education, Deputy Mayor for Health & Human Services, DC Department of Housing and Community Development, the Mayor’s Office on Talent and Appointments, and the Public Charter School Board.

In FY18, to date we have expanded our Parent Leadership Series from Ward 7 to Ward 8. To date, we have conducted three sessions in those communities. Additionally, we have developed our trainings into online resource materials for any parent to access and utilize.

2. ***Special Education Workshops*** – Our office continues to be committed to supporting parents who have children in need of specialized instruction. We worked to fill a clear void in this space as we have seen a reduction in capacity around supports and capacity/knowledge building resources for families, and the growing access gap between LEA’s and parents. In Ward 3, re-launched our Know Your Rights Special Ed Workshops, but moved from panel presentations to small group table discussions in which providers like DCPS, OSSE, DC Special Education Collaborative, and several other special education community based organization have the opportunity to interact directly with families and respond to their questions and concerns on the spot. Over 80 residents and presenters were present at Wilson SHS. We are scaling up the effort to replicate East of the River in Ward 8. More information regarding this workshop can be found at <https://sboe.dc.gov/page/training-events>.
3. ***Parent Organization Engagement*** – OSA met with parent leaders in various capacities and location to gain a better understanding of their questions, concerns, and hopes for not only their school communities but our public education system. OSA recognizes that schools, students, and families should not exist in silos but our current system has forced some silos to form. In our work, we aim to build a cadre of parent leadership that amplifies the voices of families, is aware of how to access the decision makers regarding their children’s’ education, while building a base of parent capacity and power to move forward public education in the District.
 - a. We joined Turning the Page with providing guidance to their parent leaders on how public education in the city is funded and who provides input on that

- process. This focused training allows families to understand our governance structure, budget process, and connect it to their desired areas of advocacy.
- b. OSA connected with OSSE’s State Advisory Panel on Special Education and has been a partner in hosting community meetings with parents and community stakeholders, and school leaders at three DCPS elementary schools (Houston, Plummer, and Thomas).
 - c. Our office continues to conduct targeted trainings for parent organizations focused on requested topics. In FY17, we worked closely with DCPS’s Community Action Team to host parent information sessions at several DCPS elementary schools (Smothers, Langdon, Takoma, and Langley) to share information on how to effectively communicate with their school leaders and how to message their concerns as a collective voice.
4. ***Equity from Concept to Practice*** – OSA is committed to ensuring that all parents are able to navigate public education in the District. Their ability to navigate should include the knowledge to understand the system but access should not be limited or restricted by race, economic status, language, or mobility.
- a. Go-To Guide
 - i. Our *Parent Go-To Guide* is a collection of parent-centered documents that serve as a quick go-to reference for parents as they are working to navigate the various public education topics, agencies, processes, etc. they need to understand. Many of the topics are issue areas in which we have more lengthy trainings also offered in isolation on our website and at various outreach events. By placing these resources in one guide, parents have access to information in one handy document.
 - b. Ask Sheets
 - i. Our *Right to Know Ask Sheets* serve as a guide, providing helpful conversation starters so parents and families feel informed. Knowing what questions to ask during interactions with teachers and administrators helps ensure that communication is more effective and interactions are more meaningful. We have *Ask Sheets* available for the following topics: Absences, Achievement, Attendance, Behavior, Enrollment, Homelessness, Response to Intervention (RTI), and Special Education. This resource can be found at <https://sboe.dc.gov/node/1285466>.
 - c. Special Education (SPED) Resources
 - i. Federal Law Overview- Understanding the difference between Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act and Individuals with Disabilities in Education Act is imperative as parents try to make informed decisions about what additional supports their student may or may not need to get the education they deserve.
 - ii. 504 v IEP- 504 plans and IEPs have different protections under the law, different processes for evaluation, and different periods of review. Understanding the difference between the two plans help parents understand which plan would be best for their student. Knowing the difference also helps parents determine what level of

support their student needs for either academic or behavioral progress.

- iii. Landscape- Roughly 14% of students attending DCPS or DC public charter schools receive special education services. We take time to explain this information to families to minimize the stigma surrounding special education services and to assure them that more often than not, their concerns are valid and may be widely felt.
- iv. SPED Definitions- Special education has its own language, full of frequently used acronyms and abbreviations that you need to decode in order to fully understand the process. We designed a sheet to help give a bit more context as parents navigate special education and related services in the District.
- v. SPED Resources- Special education has laws and language that isn't always the easiest to understand. We compiled a list of agencies, offices, and resources that would be beneficial as parents navigate special education and related services in the District.

5. Online Advocacy Tools –

- a. Fast Five Equity Campaign: Voice, Access, & Power – Families deserve a better understanding of how our system of public education governance should work for them and their child's needs. Our Voice, Access, & Power: Fast Five Campaign is designed to distill what families need to know about key DC government offices and agencies in five specific areas that are most relevant to families.
- b. Resource Toolkits: In reviewing our Requests for Assistance (RFA) data and feedback from our partners, it became evident there were certain issue areas that required specific information for families to have to in order to navigate certain processes and to move past that barrier that impact their child's educational experience. We created and/or revamped six toolkits that address the following needs students and families in the District may have:
 - i. Homelessness
 - ii. Behavioral Mental Health
 - iii. Attendance/Truancy
 - iv. Graduation Requirements and Alternative Pathways
 - v. Special Education
 - vi. Effective Communication Tools (English and Spanish)

6. **Language Access Improvements** – Language Access Improvements- In FY17, we partnered with the Mayor's offices on various affairs (i.e. African Affairs) and community-based organizations/family collaboratives (i.e Collaborative Solutions for Communities) in order to reach immigrant or non-English speaking families in supporting their efforts to navigate our public education system. Additionally, we have done significant outreach to organizations and government offices working with non-native English speaking and immigrant communities in an effort to reach families within those communities to offer support. Moreover, we have implemented additional language access improvement to be in compliance with the Language Access Act by translating portions of our website, materials, and our outreach brochure into all of the required languages (e.g. Spanish, French, Vietnamese,

Amharic, Chinese and Korean). We also use the services of the Language Line service, which we utilize frequently to communicate with callers to our RFA line who do not speak English. In FY 18, our office is continuing to move closer to compliance with the Language Access Act. We are currently in the process of translating our online posted toolkits, Go to Guide, and other outreach materials as well as portions of our webpage into all of the required languages (e.g. Spanish, French, Vietnamese, Amharic, Chinese and Korean).

7. ***Student Discipline*** –

- a. **LEA Student Discipline Policy Analysis**: Our office, in partnership with Howard University School of Law, conducted a comparative analysis of student discipline policies for DCPS and each of the public charter LEAs. This analysis was conducted in order to develop resource tools for families that would support their school selection and transition processes. These tools will allow for parents and students to explore their school options in a more informed way. We also want to help parents be more proactive with school discipline policies instead of reactive or when a problem arises. We are continuing to work in partnership with Howard Law in FY18 to produce additional comparative tools for families that would allow parents to understand how to engage school staff early on in the behavior support process.
 - i. **Creating comparable data points on discipline policies for all charter schools** – Our office collected all of the school discipline policies from public charter LEAs, in addition to DCMR Chapter 25. Howard law students analyzed the policies using mutually-agreed upon criteria for analysis focused on five areas, included below.
 - ii. **Developed Ranking factors** – Each topic area (excluding Zero Tolerance) used a number scale ranking system, 1 being “not present” and 5 being “exemplary”, to examine discipline policies throughout the District:
 1. Parents/Students Rights and Responsibilities
 2. Statements of Infractions and Penalties
 3. Due process, Appeal Process, Impartial Decision Makers
 4. Zero Tolerance/Alternative Discipline Policies
 5. Alternative Education for Students Out of School Due to Discipline or Illness
 - iii. From this analysis, our office worked on providing a snapshot of our current system coupled with recommendations for how to make systemic changes to the DC Council, OSSE, and LEAs.

8. ***Parent and Student Advisory Committee*** – In FY18, we created and launched our Parent and Student Advisory Committee to provide a forum for parents and students to assist the Office of the Student Advocate in better serving families throughout DC and to foster conversations and uncover solutions about the issues all stakeholders face within DC’s public education landscape.

- a. **Recruitment**: Our recruitment efforts involved physically going to schools throughout the District and dropping off materials about both our office and

- the advisory committee. We also visited public libraries and grocery stores to get information to parents where they are outside of the school site. In addition to distributing information in person, we emailed elected ward representatives, principals and school leaders, participants in our outreach events, and those we helped previously with our Request for Assistance line.
- b. Parents and Students: The collaboration of all stakeholders in the DC public education system is necessary in order to create a more effective, responsive, and equitable system for all students and their families. Understanding parent and student voice is essential, it is important to create a space that allows parents and students to express their thoughts and concerns about a system that functions through their participation only.
 - c. Ward Representation: The Parent & Student Advisory Committee is composed of one (1) parent(s)/guardian(s) (of a current DCPS or public charter school student) and one (1) student, from a DC Public School or public charter school, from each ward for a total of 16 members. In addition to the 16 members – one (1) parent/guardian and one (1) student – from each Ward of the city, the committee shall also have one additional parent and student representative from Wards 7 or 8, done to provide proportional representation for the number of students they constitute in the DCPS and PCS system.
 - d. Membership Duties: We asked that members of the committee commit to bimonthly meetings, assist with planning of engagement initiatives, and provide suggestions about voids or areas in DC’s public education system that are either not functioning well or lack a focus on students and families. Requests for Assistance- Our Request for Assistance (RFA) line is a “311 system” for public education through which our office provides relevant resources, information and appropriate agency or organization referrals to meet the specific needs of the caller. In addition to information, resources, and referrals, we are able to provide one-on-one coaching to families on a variety of public education issues.
9. ***Request for Assistance (RFA) Line, Answering Live*** – In FY17, we were able to operate our Request for Assistance line live, Monday through Friday from 9 a.m.- 5 p.m. For SY16-17, we saw a 150% increase in callers served with 336 families served. We nearly doubled the amount of families served from 135 calls in SY15-16.
- a. SY17-18 Requests to Date: To date, in quarters 1 and 2 of SY17-18, we have received 220 requests for assistance. If the trend continues, we will surpass the amount of families served through our RFA process.
 - b. In-depth Data Collection: In SY17-18, we revamped our internal Request for Assistance form to capture more in-depth data. We now include race and school ward to look at trends across the District in a more intentional way.
10. ***Community Outreach*** – Our ability to work within the community to address the needs of students, families, and communities is made possible through our outreach efforts, stakeholder engagement, and the development of partnerships and coalitions. In school year 2016-17, our office had the opportunity to present and meet with numerous community groups, educators, parent groups, community-based organizations, and government stakeholders through our stakeholder listening tours.

Those listening tours were a vital component in establishing our office to directly meet the needs of students and families. We engaged over 2000 residents in face-to-face interactions at 49 events.

Q2. Identify any legislative, statutory, or regulatory requirements that the Office of the Student Advocate lacks sufficient resources to properly implement. Please note any operational or logistical barriers to your office's operations.

Currently, the statutory limitations are around our capacity constraints. We are unable to administer additional Parent Education Resource Centers (PERCs) as currently legislated due to a lack of staffing capacity. The operation of the current PERC has a staff of 3, and two fellows. This would need to be replicated to open additional PERCs. In absence of an additional public space separate from our current one, we answer our line live and also have developed a comprehensive Online Education & Community Resource Guide. In Spring FY18 we plan to unveil one day pop up version of the PERCs, temporarily bringing resources, and support materials for parents to communities across the city.

We have also been unable to hold meetings in every ward in FY17, in lieu of staffing capacity for FY17, we have partnered with multiple entities in their engagement efforts so that we have a representation in every ward, and we have also distributed our materials to every library and all stakeholders in order to raise awareness about our office.

As required by our legislative mandates, our office operates a public education hotline, or the Request for Assistance (RFA) line. The RFA line supports our ability to work directly with students, parents, families, and community members to answer any public education related questions and inquiries. We consider our RFA line to be a "311 system" for public education through which we provide relevant resources, information, and appropriate agency or organization referrals to meet the specific needs of the caller. In addition to resources and referrals, the RFA line allows our office to provide one-on-one coaching to families on a variety of public education issues. Statutorily, we are able to meet this need through the addition of the Student Advocate. However, we understand the great need for our services within the communities we serve, so we need an additional person to help us in the development of ward specific materials, training of community members, and facilitation of resource sharing, coalition building, and resource development specific to the needs of each individual ward. In order to deliver our advocacy services within the communities we serve, we need an additional FTE to help us serve students and families who do need a knowledgeable and reliable partner when communicating with school and other public education officials. There is only one community-based organizations that offer such services, which means those families seeking advocates after these providers reach capacity are forced into pocketbook dilemmas between food/rent and ensuring adequate education for their children through the hiring of an attorney or education consultant. Those families who do not have these resources are left with no other avenues of support.

Our work with students and parents allows us to connect the RFA inquiries to the development of issue focused trainings, resources, and outreach efforts. These resources and initiatives work to tackle systemic issues and remove barriers for students and families.

This work supports the ability of students and families to have equal access to a quality public education through the understanding and knowledge of how the system works on their behalf.

In FY17, we directly served 351 families through our RFA line. Due to capacity constraints, we were unable to broadly promote that we are answer the phone live, so we have an underrepresentation of the potential number of families seeking services. Currently, our increased capacity in FY17 allows us to answer the RFA line live between the hours of 9:00am-5:30pm. In FY18 we began to be more intentional with a broad outreach strategy that include social media, seasonal metro ad buys and radio placements in multiple languages. Since changing this process, we are already on track to surpass the number of calls addressed during the fall of 2017, and we expect to interact with more families via our RFA line. To date, we have already supported more than 230 callers to the RFA line and are on track to exceed the support, referrals, and resources that we provided through the RFA line in last school year.

The OSA Establishment Act of 2013 mandates that our office advocate on behalf of current and prospective public school students and their parents or guardians before the Office of the Ombudsman or public school officials. Our office recently expanded capacity from 2.5 to 3 FTE, and even with that new capacity, the implementation of individual educational advocacy cannot be adequately met for the volume of public demand for service. Issues of equity, access, and clarity about the office's ethical and legal obligations on providing representation is required. The current Ombudsman structure is a voluntary, informal mediation that is solution focused on the best interest of the student. In practice, our office fulfills this role of advocate for families in cases where the Ombudsman or a family requests it. In such cases, the parent or guardian usually has a diminished capacity to actively participate.

The majority of our statutory or regulatory requirements that the Office of the Student Advocate that did not move forward with in 2017 were reflections of the fiscal constraints to the budget. The statue has strong wording on how the PERCs and several core functions of the office should interact with the public. Our current funding levels make the additional implementation of the aforementioned requirements challenging.

Q3. Provide the Committee with the mission, vision, goals, and services for the Office of the Student Advocate.

Our Mission

The mission of the Office of the Student Advocate is to support and empower DC residents to achieve equal access to public education through advocacy, outreach, and information services. Our office aims to play a critical role in amplifying the voices of our students, families, and communities in the DC public education landscape. As connectors, conveners, and collaborators, we ensure that students and families are informed, connected, and empowered to be their own best advocates in public education and in all areas of our city.

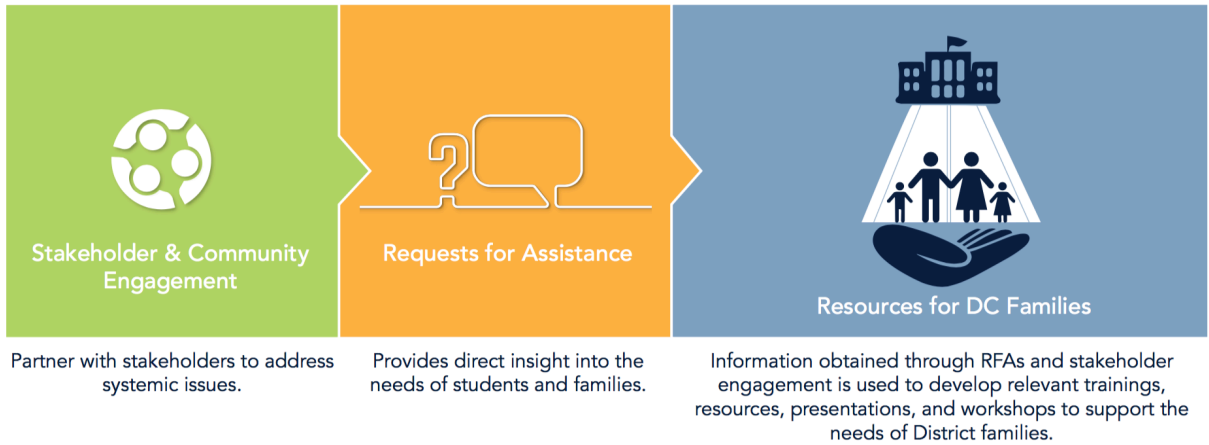
The primary focus of our office is to empower students, parents, and families to be their own best advocates. Our community interactions through educational toolkits and trainings, issue oriented panels, our seat on policy focused taskforces, and the Request for Assistance line, among other forums of dialogue and engagement indicate that students and families find it difficult to navigate their concerns due to the incredibly unique and complex governance structure of DC's education systems. Families often feel discouraged by what they perceive to be the lack of support and clear guidance from agencies and offices. Our engagement with families, coalition building, and outreach provides us the information necessary to develop a variety of targeted trainings, information sessions, and workshops to help empower families and further support such student and parent leadership.

The lack of systematic coordination within the city makes it difficult for parents and other stakeholders to support each other towards the education of our city's children, resulting in duplication, inefficiency, and lack of clarity in meeting the needs of families. In our office, we work to fill this void by staying knowledgeable about the various policies and programs within our school systems, building relationships among individual leaders and groups, and connecting students and families with the resources they need. Through the variety of resources, toolkits, and guides that we have within our office, we see ourselves as a connecting point for information and resources that are otherwise difficult to navigate. Within this system, the Office of the Student Advocate plays a unique role in the DC education landscape as the only governance structure that combines the access and influence of a government agency with the direct, grassroots outreach necessary to serve our families and communities. Our office serves "to make the [public] school system more accessible and to boost parent engagement...and access to resources."

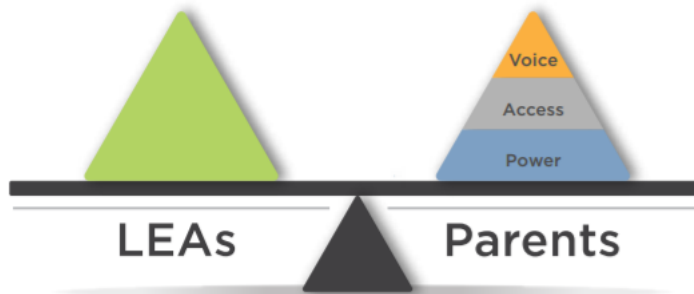
In order to meet our goals of empowering the community, we must be cognizant of the issues that our parents, students, and community members face on a daily basis. Due to the shift of power from a directly accountable local school board, which was in charge of personnel, budget, decision-making, and day-to-day school operations, to the division of oversight into three bodies — the Executive Office of the Mayor, the District of Columbia Public Schools (DCPS), and the Office of the State Superintendent of Education (OSSE) with the support of the DC State Board of Education, the community lost a opportunities for voice in our system to directly address regarding school-related issues. This meant that power was inadvertently shifted from community members to a complex governance system.

Our office was thus created to create a direct avenue for fostering, empowering, and developing the voices of students, parents, families, and the community at large in a way that also allows for direct connections to governmental officials, community based referrals, one-on-one coaching and support, and informational resources.

HOW OUR WORK SUPPORTS FAMILIES

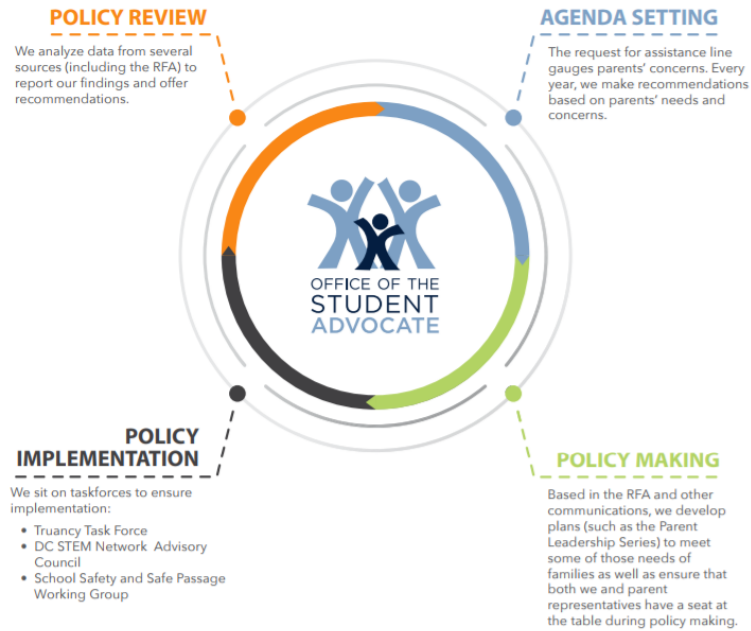


The model below outlines how our office supports the needs of students and families in the District. Our approach aims to shift the balance of power in favor of our community members by convening stakeholders at all levels around topics of community importance; develop and support the knowledge base of students, parents, and community stakeholders; ensure that family and community perspectives are included in all relevant public education conversations; and mobilize community-level leadership in grassroots education advocacy.



We do this through gaining insight into the needs of our families and the greater community in our Request for Assistance line, participation in and hosting of community events and informational panels, coalition building with community organizations and governmental entities, development of tools, resources, and toolkits, and facilitation of workshops, and connecting families to appropriate referrals and resources within the community. We aim to, on a systemic level, elevate the parent voice into the very discussions that are of concern to our community members.

OSA INTERVENTION THROUGHOUT FAMILY PARTNERSHIP



Policy Cycle was adapted from James E. Anderson in his Public Policy Making (1974)

Our office works to achieve our mission through four strategic goals:

1. Shift the balance of power in favor of our community members by convening stakeholders at all levels around topics of community importance.
2. Develop and support the knowledge base of students, parents, and community stakeholders.
3. Ensure that family and community perspectives are included in all relevant public education conversations.
4. Mobilize community-level leadership in grassroots education advocacy.

More of the specifics regarding how we implement these strategic goals are outlined in the questions to follow.

Office of the Student Advocate – Ongoing Work and Initiatives

Initiatives and Collaborative Projects

- Ward-based Parent Leadership Series – focused on parent organization and leadership development in addition to advocacy training.
 - Understanding How the Public Education Governance Structure Works
 - Parent Leadership: Starting a Parent Teacher Organization
 - School Budgeting 101
 - Advocacy Tools, Goal-Setting, and the establishment of Action Plans
- Special Education Workshop Series
- Safe Passage work – in collaboration with community, school level, and governmental entities.

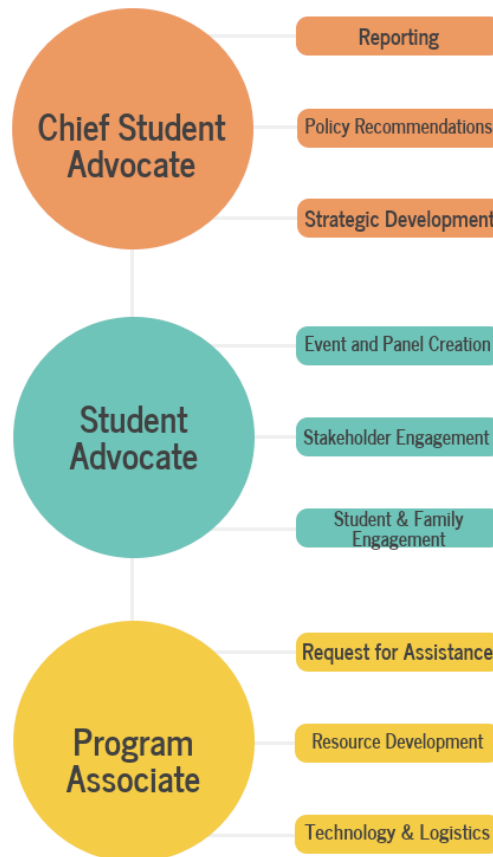
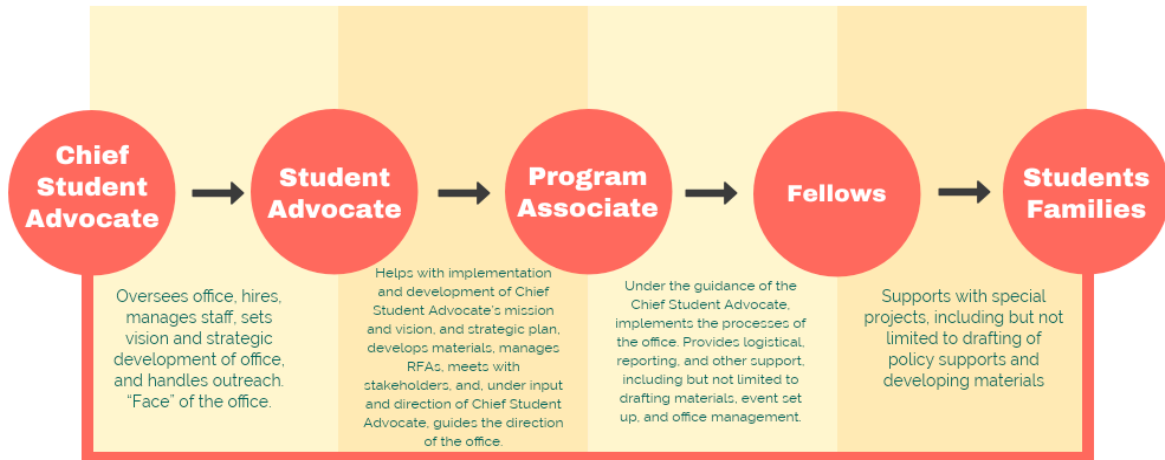
- Student Discipline Policy Analysis and Advocacy Toolkit – partnership with the Center for Court Excellence and Howard University School of Law (resources to be completed in FY17)
- Behavior Supports workshop planning and task force work – a workshop focused on behavior intervention plans and supports for students and educators. This will be in collaboration with a host of organizations (i.e. DC Special Education Cooperative, Advocates for Justice in Education, DC Public Charter School Board, Citywide Bullying Prevention Program)

Resources Developed

- ***Online Education & Community Resource Guide:*** The online Education & Community Resource Guide is the first publicly available citywide initiative of its kind and is a continuously evolving resource that currently has more than 400 resource listings organized into 20 category areas. The guide provides students, parents, families, and communities across all 8 wards with a roadmap to getting started in navigating the public education landscape in DC. This guide was developed to highlight organizations and government agencies in the sphere of public education that provide critical services to residents across DC. This resource serves to acknowledge the work that is already being done by countless government agencies, offices, and community-based organizations while connecting families to those vital resources in one centralized location.
- ***Parent Empowerment Toolkit:*** Creating and establishing parent organizations are useful and effective ways to organize parent voices and amplify their power in the educational landscape. Effective advocacy involves identifying the purpose and objectives of the work in the communities, understanding the issues and opinions behind the causes, investing in the power of the advocates, and strategically leveraging available tools and skills to maximum utility. Because we know that one size does not fit all, our online Parent Empowerment Toolkit provides an outline of how to create and establish a parent organization with the right structure, leadership, and procedures for your school.
- ***Other Online Tools and Informational Resources:*** Our online tools and resources enable families to (1) Better understand our public education system and how it is structured; (2) Advocate effectively on their child’s behalf through tools; (3) Foster good relationships between families and school officials; and (4) Understand various public education-related topics that families and communities need to know. On our website, we share informational resources with tools in the following topic areas:
 - Effective Communication
 - Enrollment
 - Graduation Requirements
 - Parent Leadership
 - Advocacy & Lobbying Toolkit
 - Special Education & Other School Supports
 - Student Leadership
 - Testing & Assessments

Q4. Provide the Committee with the operational guidelines for the Office of the Student Advocate.

The Office of the Student Advocate is comprised of 3 full time employees (FTEs) and part-time, temporary fellows who support our work. The chart below outlines the roles and responsibilities for each member of the staff:



Chief Student Advocate: As is outlined in the above chart, the Chief Student Advocate is responsible for setting and overseeing the mission, vision, and direction for the office, its work,

and staff. The Chief Student Advocate manages partnerships and coalitions, hires and manages staff, serves on taskforces, and provides policy recommendations.

Student Advocate: The Student Advocate, under the direction of the Chief Student Advocate helps to strategically implement the office's vision and manages the Requests for Assistance, assists in coalition building and community engagement, and assists in strategic development.

Program Associate: The Program Associate, under the guidance and instruction of the Chief Student Advocate, and task management of the Student Advocate, creates and implements the office processes, assists in logistics and administration, and drafts initial external facing materials based on the Chief Student Advocate's needs. The Program Associate is required to understand the Chief Student Advocates broader vision in order to implement appropriate policies and procedures on the operational level.

Fellows: Fellows support special projects and develops resources and toolkits, such as the Safe Passage and Parent Leadership toolkit. Fellows generally have masters' degrees and experience in community engagement, policy, and education.

There are several areas of operation that all staff and fellows regularly provide support in. While our small size means that all staff will provide support in nearly all areas of operations within the office, certain tasks are specifically handled by all staff per policy. For instance, all staff are responsible for addressing Requests for Assistance. This is to ensure that any family who contacts our office will receive a response from a live caller. All staff also track issues of interest to the community and provide feedback to the Chief Student Advocate, who then determines whether these areas fit within her broader vision of the Office.

I would also like to specifically our process for engaging our community members, given this is the most important part of our work. Our process for engaging with the public is informed by the goals and vision of our community and governmental stakeholders as well as the information shared with us by our families. This allows us to create programming that fully aligns with the needs of our families. Our outreach strategy is a citywide approach of targeting communities by ward. We operationalize this by engaging regularly to keep abreast of their concerns such as; school visits with principals, PTA, and/or school based service providers; participating in multi-agency taskforces; community wide surveying; neighborhood wide education coalition meetings, we strive to engage all District stakeholders face to face whenever public education is part of the discourse. We review this information along with our RFA data in order to develop the trainings, workshops, resources, and toolkits relevant to the concerns brought to our attention from the community.

Q5. Does the Chief Student Advocate have the resources necessary to execute her duties? If not, describe the areas in which resources are lacking. How have the additional funding and FTE allocated by the Committee in FY17 and FY18 helped address these challenges?

Currently, the statutory limitations are around our capacity constraints. We are unable to administer additional Parent Education Resource Centers (PERCs) as currently legislated due to

a lack of staffing capacity and programmatic funds to secure and furnish additional brick and mortar community office space.

However, we understand the great need for our services within the communities we serve, so we need an additional person to help us in the development of ward specific materials, training of community members, and facilitation of resource sharing, coalition building, and resource development specific to the needs of each individual ward. In order to deliver our advocacy services within the communities we serve, we need an additional FTE to help us serve students and families who do need a knowledgeable and reliable partner when communicating with school and other public education officials. There is only one community-based organizations that offer such services, which means those families seeking advocates after these providers reach capacity are forced into pocketbook dilemmas between food/rent and ensuring adequate education for their children through the hiring of an attorney or education consultant. Those families who do not have these resources are left with no other avenues of support.

In FY 18 we were funded a .5 FTE was used to fund the current .5 FTE program associate for a whole FTE. Our program associate has been key with the revamping of our communication products to be produce in multiple languages, bringing us closer to compliance with our statute. We have expanded our outreach capacity to meet more students and families during evening and weekends. We have eliminated missed RFA calls and our responsive to emails within 24hrs and have improved our ability to track, collect and analyze data.

Q6. Describe the Office of the Student Advocate's stakeholder engagement and outreach efforts for FY17 and to date in FY18.

In FY17, we leveraged relationships into partnerships and began to produce impacts for students and families that were mindful of challenges and barriers that residents face in all 8 wards. In SY 2016-17, we broadened our outreach to places and spaces where families show up for support. In addition to schools and education-focused organizations, we expanded our outreach to service providers, libraries, hospitals, recreation centers, child care centers, DC's Office of Unified Communications (DC 311), homeless family services, entities focused on community violence, organizations working with non-English speaking communities, and local universities working with school-age children and families. Our efforts have afforded us the opportunity to extend our services deeper into the community. As a direct result of our office's relationship-building and resource-sharing, we consistently receive referrals from DC Council, the State Board of Education, the Office of the Ombudsman for Public Education, DCPS Central Office, DC Public Charter School Board, individual schools, school administrators, service providers and community-based organizations.

We worked with 71 entities and present at 49 events. In FY17, OSA connected with over 2,000 residents via one of our community engagement and outreach efforts. We more than doubled our RFAs from SY 2015-16 to SY 2016-17. This growth is a reflection of an increased awareness of our office and services in addition to the partnerships we have developed.

OSA currently sits on the Cross-Sector Collaboration Task Force, the Every Day Counts! (Truancy) Taskforce, the School Safety and Safe Passage Working Group (co-chaired by the Deputy Mayor for Public Safety and Justice and the Deputy Mayor for Education), the Steering

Committee for Parent Leadership Training in partnership with Multicultural Community Services, the Behavior Intervention Working Group, DCPS Child Find panel, and the individual engagement opportunities with DCPS Community Action Team. These groups largely represent a cross-section of leaders from government agencies and community organizations, and we represent a valuable mix of both because of our unique placement as an agency with direct service to students, parents, and community members. Below is the comprehensive list of government and community-based entities we work in partnership with to support District students and families:

- Member, National Association for Family, School and Community Engagement (NAFSCE)
- Every Day Counts! (Truancy) Task Force, Office of the Deputy Mayor for Education
- Cross-Sector Collaboration Task Force, Office of the Deputy Mayor for Education
- Member, DC STEM Network Advisory Council, Carnegie Institute for Science
- School Safety and Safe Passage Working Group, Office of the Deputy Mayor for Education and
- Office of the Deputy Mayor for Public Safety and Justice
- The Institute for Educational Leadership's National Family & Community Engagement Conference (2016)
- Member, DC Parent Leadership Training Institute (PLTI) Advisory Group, Multicultural Community Service (MCS)
- Panelist for Education Pioneers panel discussion: Why parental involvement matters?
- Panelist for Teach for America's panel discussion: The Power of Parent, Student & Community
- Voice in Education
- Panelist for Institute for Educational Leadership DC Education Policy Fellowship Program:
- Policymaking and the Legislative Process
- Panelist for Engaging Fathers and Families in Education, U.S. Department of Education
- Panelist for Education Forum, Mayor's Office on African Affairs & Commission on African
- Affairs
- ESSA Task Force – State Report Card, State Board of Education
- Presenter for Family and Community Engagement Professional Learning Community, Parents
- Amplifying Voices in Education
- Presenter for Mind the Gap: Getting to Solutions for Students with Challenging Behaviors

SY 2017-2018, we are making strides again to scale up successful partnerships and replicate opportunities for engagement with students and families whose voices are missing from the conversation on making public education work in the District. Changes in our Federal government caused insular communities to second guess our city's commitment that all voices matter, including our non-English speaking communities. We added another level to our community outreach methods to include efforts to cast a wider net to our harder to reach families with media advertisement. At the end of FY17 and into FY18, we placed ads on Metro buses, in

Metro train station, and on social media that either provided information in multiple languages or used imagery to communicate that our office welcomes all.

Q7. Does the Office of the Student Advocate comply with the Language Access Act?

In FY17, our office did not have the funds to comply fully with the Language Access Act. We worked to move in the direction of compliance by translating portions of our website and our outreach brochure into all of the required languages (e.g. Spanish, French, Vietnamese, Amharic, Chinese and Korean). In addition to the translation of some materials into Spanish, we also have access to the Language Line service, which we utilize frequently to communicate with callers to our RFA line who do not speak English.

This service has been valuable to our office. In FY17, our community outreach to communities who do not use English as a primary language has been possible through collaborative efforts with the Mayor's offices on various affairs (i.e. African Affairs, etc.) and community-based or religious organizations that are trusted in those communities. Because of the strong relationships that we have nurture with various schools, we have been able to support non-English speaking families by the support of interpretation from bilingual staff members at some of the schools.

In FY 18, our office is continuing to move closer to compliance with the Language Access Act. We are currently in the process of translating our online posted toolkits, Go to Guide, and other outreach materials as well as portions of our webpage into all of the required languages (eg. Spanish, French, Vietnamese, Amharic, Chinese and Korean).

Our office will continue to utilize the Language Line services to support the language needs of any caller to our RFA line.

OSA continues to deepen our partnerships with community-based organizations and governmental entities to reach and engage with non-English speaking students and families. For example in FY 18, our work with organizations that serve families from school communities with high counts of English language learners includes training workshops for LAYC (February/March 2018).

Q8. Are the Office of the Student's Advocate's information technology needs met? If not, what areas are in need of attention (i.e. computer support, internet and phone functionality, etc.)?

No. We are still in need of a database system to track not only our Requests for Assistance, but also our stakeholder engagement. Google Drive, and now Microsoft 365's OneDrive, is not enough to meet our needs. We are in need of a secure database in order to support our work with families.

Q9. Please list all settlements entered into by the agency or by the District on behalf of the agency in FY17 or FY18, to date, and provide the parties' names, the amount of the settlement, and if related to litigation, the case name and a brief description of the case. If unrelated to litigation, please describe the underlying

issue or reason for the settlement (e.g. administrative complaint, etc.).

Not applicable to our office. We do not usually deal with matters of this nature.

Q10. Please describe the agency's procedures for investigating allegations of sexual harassment or misconduct committed by or against its employees. List and describe any allegations received by the agency in FY17 and FY18, to date, whether or not those allegations were resolved.

Not applicable to our office. We do not usually deal with matters of this nature.

Q11. Please list the administrative complaints or grievances that the agency received in FY17 and FY18, to date, broken down by source. Please describe the process utilized to respond to any complaints and grievances received and any changes to agency policies or procedures that have resulted from complaints or grievances received. For any complaints or grievances that were resolved in FY17 or FY18, to date, describe the resolution.

Not applicable to our office. We do not usually deal with matters of this nature.

Performance Plan

Q12. Provide the Chief Student Advocate's performance plan for FY17. Did the Office of the Student Advocate meet the objectives set forth in the FY17 performance plan? Provide a narrative description of what actions the office undertook to meet the key performance indicators, including an explanation as to why any indicators were not met.

#1: Increase Office Awareness and Visibility/Outreach

Goal: Continue to build on current community engagement strategies and expand partnerships/collaborations to establish citywide office awareness.

This engagement includes but is not limited to:

- Continuing to engage and partner with a variety of stakeholders across all eight wards, such as:
 - State Board of Education,
 - DCPS's Office of Family and Public Engagement and the Community Action Teams,
 - Public Charter School Board,
 - Schools and school leaders,
 - Parent organizations
 - Civic groups and organizations (i.e. ward education councils, etc.)
 - Service providers and community-based organizations (i.e. family collaboratives, etc.)
 - Parents, students, and community members, and,
 - Governmental agencies and offices (i.e. any relevant agency or office that services families – traditional and non-traditional)
- Continuing to distribute materials across the District

- Presenting and serving on panels, committees, and action teams
- Communicating the trends that we see in our work through reporting and communications
- Increase communication efforts to non-English speaking communities and translate resource materials to relevant languages
- Via partnerships with community-based organizations and service providers, increase services and communication to District at-risk students and families (e.g. homeless, child welfare, and justice involved populations)

FY17 Strategy Implemented to Meet Performance Goal #1: Increase Office Awareness and Visibility/Outreach:

In FY17, we have increased the visibility of the office through strategic partnerships with government and community based entities as well as extensive outreach to schools, service providers, and community-based organizations.

During school year 2016-17, we partnered with the organizations and offices above to increase the visibility of our office. This work is evidenced through our Parent Leadership Series in Ward 7 and Ward 8, which is in partnership with DCPS, PCSB, Ward 7 and Ward 8 State Board of Education members, the Ward 7 Education Council, and other community-based organizations in Ward 8. Additionally, we increased our outreach by conducting ward level meetings to engage with families regarding education related issues through partnerships with various school-based and community-based partnerships.

In FY17, we also partnered with the Mayor's offices on various affairs (i.e. African Affairs) and community-based organizations/family collaboratives (i.e Collaborative Solutions for Communities) in order to reach immigrant or non-English speaking families in supporting their efforts to navigate our public education system. Additionally, we have done significant outreach to organizations and government offices working with non-native English speaking and immigrant communities in an effort to reach families within those communities to offer support.

Additionally, in FY17, we conducted a number of school visits and reached out to various community organizations and government entities to present on our office and share what services our office provides for families. We shared details on ways that we can work with community-based organizations, family service providers, and schools to support the families and students that they serve.

FY17 Partnerships/Coalitions:

- Office of the Deputy Mayor of Education
- Office of Family and Public Engagement, DC Public Schools
- Division of Specialized Instruction, DC Public Schools
- DC Public Charter School Board
- Office of the Deputy Mayor for Public Safety and Justice
- DC Fiscal Policy Institute
- Office of Student Wellness, DC Public Schools

- DC Department of Parks & Recreation
- Mayor's Office of Community Relations & Services
- Parents Amplifying Voices in Education (PAVE)
- Council for Court Excellence
- Howard University School of Law
- Advocates for Justice and Education (AJE)
- Children's Law Center
- Disability Rights DC @ University Legal Service
- DC Association for Special Education (DCASE)
- DC Re-engagement Center
- East of the River Family Strengthening Collaborative
- Deputy Mayor for Health and Human Services
- Safer Stronger DC
- Far Southeast Family Strengthening Collaborative
- Georgia Avenue Family Collaborative
- Brookland Edgewood Family Collaborative
- Collaborative Solutions for Communities
- Teaching for Change
- Community of Hope
- Senior High Alliance of Parents, Principals, and Educators
- Georgetown University Institute of College Preparedness
- Washington Lawyers' Community for Civil Rights Under Law
- OSSE's Division of Health & Wellness
- OSSE's Division on Specialized Instruction and Family Engagement
- Ward 8 Council on Education
- Ward 7 Education Council
- Ward 4 Education Alliance
- OSSE's District of Columbia Special Education Cooperative Office of Dispute Resolution
- My School DC
- The Bazelon Center for Mental Health Law

#2: Collaborate and Expand Service Capacity

Goal: Build relationships with education stakeholders, community-based and civic organizations, and community professionals to establish a more coordinated approach in serving underserved, underrepresented, and vulnerable populations.

- Expand our outreach to District Government agencies and continue the establishment of ongoing partnerships and collaboration.
- Continue to work closely with the Office of the Ombudsman for Public Education in partnership to provide joint parent and student trainings on systemic trends highlighted through their work and to be responsive to student and parent advocacy needs highlighted through our individual and collective work. Partner with the Office of the Ombudsman in supporting families in case of conflict resolution as their advocate to offer strategies for parent empowerment and to improve educational access and outcomes for all students.

- Engage in conversation with community professionals and organizations regarding opportunities for collaboration and best practices for supporting underserved, underrepresented, and vulnerable student populations, their families, and look for opportunities to spark valuable engagement avenues for all public education stakeholders in DC.
- Expand collaborative relationships with service providers and community-based organizations that work with the District's at-risk students and their families.
- Expand collaborative relationships with service providers and community-based organizations that work with the District's non-native English speaking communities, students, and their families in an effort to provide more supports, resources, and trainings.

FY17 Strategy Implemented to Meet Performance Goal #2: Collaborate and Expand Service Capacity:

In FY17, we met this goal by expanding our outreach efforts as noted above in our work to increase the visibility of our office. Our office expanded and nurtured new partnerships with DC government agencies and offices to meet a host of issues and needs facing students and families. In addition to the aforementioned partnerships and collaborative efforts, our office would like to highlight the following areas:

Expanding our Outreach to DC Agencies:

In FY17, we conducted additional outreach to District Government agencies and offices to ensure they were aware of our office, the resources and supports we offer to families, and to spark opportunities for partnership. Our outreach included interactions with:

- The Council of the District of Columbia
- Office of the Deputy Mayor of Education
- Office of Family and Public Engagement, DC Public Schools
- Division of Specialized Instruction, DC Public Schools
- DC Public Charter School Board
- Office of the Deputy Mayor for Public Safety and Justice
- Individual DCPS and public charter schools
- Office of Unified Communications (DC 311)
- The Office of the State Superintendent of Education (OSSE)
- My School DC
- Department of Health
- Department of Human Services
- Virginia Williams
- Child & Family Services Agency
- Criminal Justice Coordinating Council
- Justice Grants Administration
- DC Public Library
- DC Department of Parks & Recreation
- The Office of Human Rights
- Mayor's Office on Community Relations and Affairs
- Department of Behavioral Health

Collaborative Working Relationship with the Ombudsman:

Firstly, we worked closely with the Ombudsman to further define the role of our offices and to discuss how we can support families in a responsive yet collaborative way. This collaborative action has been realized through our support of families in the informal mediation process and in our referral of families to the Ombudsman office as well as the referrals that the Ombudsman office sends to our office.

Parent Leadership Series:

We continued the work we started in FY16 by retooling our Ward 7 Parent Empowerment Series keeping the core elements of coalescing around community specific concerns and issues and pairing parent teacher organizational skill building, including but not limited to effective communication, engaging stakeholders, and budget advocacy. In FY17 we rebranded the series as the Parent Leadership Series and continued our work in Ward 7. We continued this work in Ward 7 with parents and other resident stakeholders by hosting various conversations on how the public education system works, connecting our knowledge to advocacy, DC government budgeting 101, understanding how the DC budget impacts schools, and etc. This series concluded in FY17 with a session that allowed parents to put their knowledge into action was a one-on-one conversations with decision makers from the DC Council, City Administrator Office, Deputy Mayor for Education, Deputy Mayor for Health & Human Services, DC Department of Housing and Community Development, the Mayor's Office on Talent and Appointments, and the Public Charter School Board.

In FY18, to date we have expanded our Parent Leadership Series from Ward 7 to Ward 8. To date, we have conducted three sessions in those communities.

Development of Additional Resource Supports for Families:

In FY17, we expanded the resource support we have for families. All of our resources can be found on our website at studentadvocate.dc.gov. Those resources include:

- Advocacy & Lobbying Toolkit
- Attendance & Truancy Resources
- Behavioral & Mental Health Resources
- Effective Communication
- Enrollment
- High School Graduation Requirements & Information
- Homeless Children and Youth Resources
- Parent Leadership Toolkit: Parent Organization Resources
- Right to Know Ask Sheets
- Safe Passage
- Special Education & Other School Supports
- Student Leadership
- Testing & Assessments
- DC Public Education Governance Structure

Additionally, in FY17, we started answering our Request for Assistance (RFA) Line live, Monday through Friday from 9am until 5:30pm. Answering our RFA line live has allowed us to support the needs of more families in real time without delay. This change in service delivery has allowed our office to increase our support of families by more than 150%.

Student Discipline:

DC is still a relatively small jurisdiction yet we have more than 60 local education agencies (LEAs), or school districts, which operate within the District of Columbia with 60 plus student discipline policies that families must understand when they select a particular LEA for their child. Through our communication with families, either in-person or through Request for Assistance line, we discovered that students and parents lack clarity regarding the student discipline policies that govern the diverse LEAs in the District and the schools they operate. While Chapter 25 governs our DCPS schools, many families have no idea about the different student discipline policies that govern each of the charter LEAs. In a city like ours, families exercise their right to choice on an almost yearly basis, yet most families tend to think about student discipline only when an issue arises.

Questions regarding issues of student discipline were raised regularly in school year 2015-16 and 2016-17. There is a very high correlation between issues of student discipline and other issue areas such as special education, student safety, or even issues of truancy. In our work, many parents communicated a lack of understanding regarding student discipline policies. Over the last two school years, our office in partnership with the Council for Court Excellence and the Howard University School of Law has worked to collect and conduct a comparative analysis of all of the LEA student discipline policies in the city in order to have a better understanding of the policies and to offer policy recommendations toward the streamlining of these policies in order to better serve the needs of students and their families. This analysis was conducted in order to develop resource tools for families in an effort to support their school selection and transition processes. These tools will allow parents and students to explore their school options in a more informed way. More information can be found on our website at studentadvocate.dc.gov.

Community Outreach/ Collaborative Relationships with services providers and community based organizations to reach more at-risk families:

In FY17, we also did a significant amount of presentations to parent and civic organizations regarding our office and the services that our office provides. A snapshot of our FY17 stakeholder and community outreach is listed above.

Language Access:

Additionally, we also partnered with the Mayor's offices on various affairs (i.e. African Affairs) and community-based organizations/family collaboratives (i.e Collaborative Solutions for Communities) in order to reach immigrant or non-English speaking families in supporting their efforts to navigate our public education system. Additionally, we have done significant outreach to organizations and government offices working with non-native English speaking and immigrant communities in an effort to reach families within those communities to offer support. Moreover, we have implemented additional language access improvement to be in compliance with the Language Access Act by translating portions of our website, materials, and our outreach brochure into all of the required languages (e.g. Spanish, French, Vietnamese, Amharic, Chinese

and Korean). We also use the services of the Language Line service, which we utilize frequently to communicate with callers to our RFA line who do not speak English. In FY 18, our office is continuing to move closer to compliance with the Language Access Act. We are currently in the process of translating our online posted toolkits, Go to Guide, and other outreach materials as well as portions of our webpage into all of the required languages (e.g. Spanish, French, Vietnamese, Amharic, Chinese and Korean).

Deepening Community Partnerships:

Furthermore, in FY17, we worked to foster and deepen our partnerships with various community-based organization, family collaboratives, and service providers to reach the harder to reach family populations, which are considered to be more vulnerable or at-risk. This work manifested itself in our partnerships with the organizations listed below through presentations and regular working relationships with their staff thus yielding opportunities to interact with their clients, or families, they work with regarding matters of public education. Our working relationship with these organizations not only manifested itself in referrals to our office for support, but also in our ability to conduct presentations and trainings for families.

The organizations included:

- East of the River Family Strengthening Collaborative
- Far Southeast Family Strengthening Collaborative
- Georgia Avenue Family Collaborative
- Brookland Edgewood Family Collaborative
- Collaborative Solutions for Communities
- Safer Stronger DC
- Community of Hope
- Georgetown University Institute of College Preparedness
- Family Matters DC
- Hillcrest Children & Family Center DC
- Teaching for Change

#3: Parent Empowerment and Advocacy

Goal: Improve the capacity of parents, families, and prospective parents to navigate the education landscape and educational processes so that they become better informed about options that allow them to become better self-advocates.

- Further develop the knowledge base of parents regarding issues of public education in the District and how those issues connect to the way our public education governance structure and overall government structure works.
- Create access for public school parents to have voice in the thought development stages of policy making.
- Create brochures and informational materials for parents on areas of special education, student discipline, student enrollment/school selection, and effective communication tools; provide additional resources and links to community resources.
- Continue to improve and make appropriate adjustments to ensure that the website presence of the Office of the Student Advocate is user-friendly and interactive for students and families.

- Improve access to families of non-English speaking populations; offer materials online, and in printed form, in translated languages outlining the services of our office.
- Provide resources in the areas of parent and student rights and responsibilities and services for on-going support.

FY17 Strategy Implemented to Meet Performance Goal #3: Parent Empowerment and Advocacy

In FY17, we met this goal through the following initiatives:

Online Education & Community Resource Guide:

The online Education & Community Resource Guide is the first publicly available citywide initiative of its kind and is a continuously evolving resource that currently has more than 400 resource listings organized into 33 category areas. The guide provides students, parents, families, and communities across all 8 wards with a roadmap to getting started in navigating the public education landscape in DC. This guide was developed to highlight organizations and government agencies in the sphere of public education that provide critical services to residents across DC. This resource serves to acknowledge the work that is already being done by countless government agencies, offices, and community-based organizations while connecting families to those vital resources in one centralized location.

The guide can be found online at: <http://sboe.dc.gov/page/resource>.

Online Informational Resources and Advocacy Tools:

Our office aims to serve as a hub for information for both current and prospective families regarding information on public education and issue that impact education. Our efforts to meet the needs of students and families has led us to develop several resources, toolkits, and tip sheets that are available on our website. In addition to our online Education & Community Resource Guide, our website also has resources on topics that provide support to students and their families in all aspects of education and achievement. In FY17, we expanded the resource support we have for families. All of our resources can be found on our website at studentadvocate.dc.gov. Those resources include:

- Advocacy & Lobbying Toolkit
- Attendance & Truancy Resources
- Behavioral & Mental Health Resources
- Effective Communication
- Enrollment
- High School Graduation Requirements & Information
- Homeless Children and Youth Resources
- Parent Leadership Toolkit: Parent Organization Resources
- Right to Know Ask Sheets
- Safe Passage
- Special Education & Other School Supports
- Student Leadership
- Testing & Assessments

- DC Public Education Governance Structure

The resources can be found online at: <https://sboe.dc.gov/page/advocacy>.

Ward 7 Parent Empowerment Summit Series:

Information regarding this programming has been noted previous in this document. Please reference the previous goal.

Language Access:

In FY17, we partnered with the Mayor's offices on various affairs (i.e. African Affairs) and community-based organizations/family collaboratives (i.e Collaborative Solutions for Communities) in order to reach immigrant or non-English speaking families in supporting their efforts to navigate our public education system. Additionally, we have done significant outreach to organizations and government offices working with non-native English speaking and immigrant communities in an effort to reach families within those communities to offer support. Moreover, we have implemented additional language access improvement to be in compliance with the Language Access Act by translating portions of our website, materials, and our outreach brochure into all of the required languages (e.g. Spanish, French, Vietnamese, Amharic, Chinese and Korean). We also use the services of the Language Line service, which we utilize frequently to communicate with callers to our RFA line who do not speak English. In FY 18, our office is continuing to move closer to compliance with the Language Access Act. We are currently in the process of translating our online posted toolkits, Go to Guide, and other outreach materials as well as portions of our webpage into all of the required languages (e.g. Spanish, French, Vietnamese, Amharic, Chinese and Korean).

#4: Improve Educational Outcomes by Effecting Systemic Change

Goal: The Office of the Student Advocate is committed to identifying and recommending strategies to improve educational outcomes for all students and increase students' and families' ability to achieve equal access to public education.

- Build relationships and work collaboratively with students, parents, families, government agencies, community-based organizations, and all education stakeholders to identify systemic barriers that impact educational outcomes for students and limit access to quality public education.
- Participate in relevant education policy focused conversations, such as testifying before DC Council on policies and legislation and membership on task forces and committees (i.e. Cross-Sector Collaboration Task Force and Truancy Task Force).
- Provide quarterly data reports and any identified trends to education stakeholders in order to continue conversations about areas that require systemic change and to discuss how our office is working to impact those challenges.
- Work to develop access points for public school students to have voice in the thought development stages of policy making.

FY17 Strategy Implemented to Meet Performance Goal #4: Improve Educational Outcomes by Effecting Systemic Change

In FY17, we met this goal through the following initiatives:

Participation in Relevant Education Policy Conversations/Engagement in Systemic Conversation:

The Chief Student Advocate, on behalf of the office, participated in a host of education policy focused conversations through testifying before the Committee on Education on issues of student attendance. The Chief Student Advocate engages in other education policy discussions through membership on the following task forces, advisory committees, working groups, panels, and conferences:

- Member, National Association for Family, School and Community Engagement (NAFSCE)
- Every Day Counts! (Truancy) Task Force, Office of the Deputy Mayor for Education
- Cross-Sector Collaboration Task Force, Office of the Deputy Mayor for Education
- Member, DC STEM Network Advisory Council, Carnegie Institute for Science
- School Safety and Safe Passage Working Group, Office of the Deputy Mayor for Education and the Office of the Deputy Mayor for Public Safety and Justice
- The Institute for Educational Leadership’s National Family & Community Engagement Conference (2016)
- Member, DC Parent Leadership Training Institute (PLTI) Advisory Group, Multicultural Community Service (MCS)
- Panelist for the Smithsonian’s Anacostia Community Museum panel discussion: Neighborhood Change & Public Schools
- Panelist for Education Pioneers panel discussion: Why parental involvement matters
- Panelist for Teach for America’s panel discussion: The Power of Parent, Student & Community Voice in Education
- Panelist for Education Pioneers panel discussion: Why parental involvement matters?
- Panelist for Teach for America’s panel discussion: The Power of Parent, Student & Community Voice in Education
- Panelist for Institute for Educational Leadership DC Education Policy Fellowship Program: Policymaking and the Legislative Process
- Panelist for Engaging Fathers and Families in Education, U.S. Department of Education
- Panelist for Education Forum, Mayor’s Office on African Affairs & Commission on African Affairs
- ESSA Task Force – State Report Card, State Board of Education
- Presenter for Family and Community Engagement Professional Learning Community, Parents Amplifying Voices in Education
- Presenter for Mind the Gap: Getting to Solutions for Students with Challenging Behaviors

Quarterly Reports:

Every 90 days, the Chief Student Advocate submits a quarterly report to the members of the DC State Board of Education summarizing the work of the Office of the Student Advocate during each quarter of the current fiscal year. The quarterly reports are also made publicly available on our website at <https://sboe.dc.gov/page/reports-and-official-testimony>. In addition to using the quarterly reports to discuss the services and activities of the office, the reports are used as a way

of engaging with relevant agencies, elected officials, local education agencies, schools, and other education stakeholders to highlight the issues that the office is seeing.

Testifying before the Council of the District of Columbia and engagement with other relevant policy making bodies:

As an office, we believe that lending our voice to the conversations of education policy throughout the city is vital. In an effort to share not only the trends that we are seeing in our work and the services that our office provides, our Chief Student Advocate has testified on various occasions at hearings at the Council of the District of Columbia for the Committee on Education, former Committee on Health and Human Services, and Committee on the Judiciary. We also continue to meet individually with councilmembers to share the trends that we are seeing in our office and to engage in conversation regarding possible solutions to systemic issues in education. In addition to our engagement with the Council of the District of Columbia, we also work to engage with other relevant policy making bodies and agencies. More on our testimony in various education areas can be found at <https://sboe.dc.gov/page/reports-and-official-testimony>.

Development of Access Points for Students & Parents Voice in Decision-Making:

Collaborative Relationships:

This has been previously addressed in this document in various areas of our FY17 strategic plan.

Online Resources and Trainings:

Previously in this document we have noted our online resources, printed resources, and workshops/trainings, which work to support parents and students in navigating the complexities of our system but also serve to provide parents and students with access points for their voice in decision-making processes. Our resources and trainings focused on assisting families in understanding how the DC public education governance structure works is designed to ensure families understand how government works, how it should work for them, and areas in which they can and should interject their voice and power. Those resources can be found at <https://sboe.dc.gov/page/advocacy>.

Parent and Student Advisory Committee: In FY18, we created and launched our Parent and Student Advisory Committee to provide an outlet for parents and students to assist the Office of the Student Advocate in better serving families throughout DC and to foster conversations and uncover solutions about the issues all stakeholders face within DC's public education landscape.

- Recruitment: Our recruitment efforts involved physically going to schools throughout the District and dropping off materials about both our office and the advisory committee. We also visited public libraries and grocery stores to get information to parents where they are outside of the school site. In addition to distributing information in person, we emailed elected ward representatives, principals and school leaders, participants in our outreach events, and those we helped previously with our Request for Assistance line.
- Parents and Students: The collaboration of all stakeholders in the DC public education system is necessary in order to create a more effective, responsive, and equitable system for all students and their families. Understanding parent and student voice is essential, it is important to create a space that allows parents and students to express their thoughts and concerns about a system that functions through their participation only.

- **Ward Representation:** The Parent & Student Advisory Committee is composed of one (1) parent(s)/guardian(s) (of a current DCPS or public charter school student) and one (1) student, from a DC Public School or public charter school, from each ward for a total of 16 members. In addition to the 16 members – one (1) parent/guardian and one (1) student – from each Ward of the city, the committee shall also have one additional parent and student representative from Wards 7 or 8, done to provide proportional representation for the number of students they constitute in the DCPS and PCS system.
- **Membership Duties-** We asked that members of the committee commit to bimonthly meetings, assist with planning of engagement initiatives, and provide suggestions about voids or areas in DC’s public education system that are either not functioning well or lack a focus on students and families. **Requests for Assistance-** Our Request for Assistance (RFA) line is a “311” system for public education in the District.

#5: Increase Student Engagement and Advocacy

Goal: Work collaboratively with relevant stakeholders to improve the capacity of students to navigate the education landscape and educational processes so that they become better informed about options that allow them to become better self-advocates.

- Work collaborative with relevant stakeholders to develop access points for public school students to have voice in the thought development stages of policy making (ie: Student Advisory Committee)
- Create more access for students to use the RFA process by becoming more youth friendly.
- Work with relevant stakeholder groups and organizations to support on-going student engagement or leadership organizations or opportunities.

FY17 Strategy Implemented to Meet Performance Goal #5: Increase Student Engagement and Advocacy:

While this goal was a stretch goal for us in FY17, we were able to work to lay the foundation for the execution of this goal in FY18 through the creation and establishment of our Parent & Student Advisory Committee (previously discussed in this document).

Additionally, we increased our outreach to high schools in an effort to engage and support the needs of students. We have also started our work in this area but partnering with DCPS and PCSB and their efforts in this area.

Q11. Provide the Chief Student Advocate’s performance plan for FY18. What steps has the office taken in FY17 and to date in FY18 to meet the objectives set forth in the performance plan?

FY 2018 PERFORMANCE PLAN

For FY18, the Office of the Student Advocate had the following performance plan:

#1: Increase Office Awareness and Visibility/Outreach

Goal: Continue to build on current community engagement strategies and expand partnerships/collaborations to establish citywide office awareness.

This engagement includes but is not limited to:

- Continuing to engage and partner with a variety of stakeholders across all eight wards, such as:
 - State Board of Education,
 - DCPS's Office of Family and Public Engagement and the Community Action Teams,
 - Public Charter School Board,
 - Schools and school leaders,
 - Parent organizations
 - Civic groups and organizations (i.e. ward education councils, etc.)
 - Service providers and community-based organizations (i.e. family collaboratives, etc.)
 - Parents, students, and community members, and,
 - Governmental agencies and offices (i.e. any relevant agency or office that services families – traditional and non-traditional)
- Continuing to distribute materials across the District
- Presenting and serving on panels, committees, and action teams
- Communicating the trends that we see in our work through reporting and communications
- Increase communication efforts to non-English speaking communities and translate resource materials to relevant languages
- Via partnerships with community-based organizations and service providers, increase services and communication to District at-risk students and families (e.g. homeless, child welfare, and justice involved populations)

#2: Collaborate and Expand Service Capacity

Goal: Build relationships with education stakeholders, community-based and civic organizations, and community professionals to establish a more coordinated approach in serving underserved, underrepresented, and vulnerable populations.

- Expand our outreach to District Government agencies and continue the establishment of ongoing partnerships and collaboration.
- Continue to work closely with the Office of the Ombudsman for Public Education in partnership to provide joint parent and student trainings on systemic trends highlighted through their work and to be responsive to student and parent advocacy needs highlighted through our individual and collective work. Partner with the Office of the Ombudsman in supporting families in case of conflict resolution as their advocate to offer strategies for parent empowerment and to improve educational access and outcomes for all students.
- Engage in conversation with community professionals and organizations regarding opportunities for collaboration and best practices for supporting underserved, underrepresented, and vulnerable student populations, their families, and look for opportunities to spark valuable engagement avenues for all public education stakeholders in DC.
- Expand collaborative relationships with service providers and community-based organizations that work with the District's at-risk students and their families.

- Expand collaborative relationships with service providers and community-based organizations that work with the District's non-native English speaking communities, students, and their families in an effort to provide more supports, resources, and trainings.

#3: Parent Leadership and Advocacy

Goal: Improve the capacity of parents, families, and prospective parents to navigate the education landscape and educational processes so that they become better informed about options that allow them to become better self-advocates.

- Further develop the knowledge base of parents regarding issues of public education in the District and how those issues connect to the way our public education governance structure and overall government structure works.
- Create access for public school parents to have voice in the thought development stages of policy making.
- Create brochures and informational materials for parents on areas of special education, student discipline, student enrollment/school selection, and effective communication tools; provide additional resources and links to community resources.
- Continue to improve and make appropriate adjustments to ensure that the website presence of the Office of the Student Advocate is user-friendly and interactive for students and families.
- Improve access to families of non-English speaking populations; offer materials online, and in printed form, in translated languages outlining the services of our office.
- Provide resources in the areas of parent and student rights and responsibilities and services for on-going support.

#4: Improve Educational Outcomes by Effecting Systemic Change

Goal: The Office of the Student Advocate is committed to identifying and recommending strategies to improve educational outcomes for all students and increase students' and families' ability to achieve equal access to public education.

- Build relationships and work collaboratively with students, parents, families, government agencies, community-based organizations, and all education stakeholders to identify systemic barriers that impact educational outcomes for students and limit access to quality public education.
- Participate in relevant education policy focused conversations, such as testifying before DC Council on policies and legislation and membership on task forces and committees (i.e. Cross-Sector Collaboration Task Force and Truancy Task Force).
- Provide quarterly data reports and any identified trends to education stakeholders in order to continue conversations about areas that require systemic change and to discuss how our office is working to impact those challenges.
- Work to develop access points for public school students to have voice in the thought development stages of policy making.

FY17

#5: Increase Student Engagement and Advocacy

Goal: Work collaboratively with relevant stakeholders to improve the capacity of students to navigate the education landscape and educational processes so that they become better informed about options that allow them to become better self-advocates.

- Work collaborative with relevant stakeholders to develop access points for public school students to have voice in the thought development stages of policy making (ie: Student Advisory Committee)
- Create more access for students to use the RFA process by becoming more youth friendly.
- Work with relevant stakeholder groups and organizations to support on-going student engagement or leadership organizations or opportunities.

Interagency Collaboration

Q12. What efforts have been made to improve Office of the Student Advocate functions in FY16 and FY17 to date? Describe efforts to collaborate with boards and agencies to engage in District education initiatives and include in your response specifically any partnerships or collaborations with the following:

- a. **Office of the State Superintendent for Education;**
- b. **Office of the Deputy Mayor for Education;**
- c. **DC Public Schools;**
- d. **DC Public Charter School Board;**
- e. **Office of Human Rights' Citywide Youth Bullying Prevention Program; and**
- f. **DC Public Libraries.**

FY 17 Collaborative Efforts with Boards and Agencies

Office of the State Superintendent for Education

We have worked with OSSE in a variety of ways. In FY16 and 17, we asked for OSSE's participation in our "Know Your Rights" special education panels and our special education resources and trainings. We worked closely with individuals from their Division of Specialized Instruction in the development of the materials and the marketing of the panels and resources. We also had the participation of OSSE's Office of Dispute Resolution and Office of State Complaints. In addition to OSSE's participation on our panel, we have also teamed up with OSSE and their STEM work in partnership with the Carnegie Institute for Science. I am a member of the advisory committee for the DC STEM Network. Furthermore, I meet on almost a quarterly basis with OSSE to talk about the work of our office and ways that we can continue to work collaboratively to support students and families. Our office has participated in OSSE's parent summit and in the planning of other community engagement activities that OSSE has undertaken. In addition, a large portion of the referrals that our office receives comes from OSSE. We believe this is as a result of our collaborative working relationship. Lastly, we are regular participants in the Parent Engagement Summit hosted by OSSE in addition to their work with the State Advisory Panel for Special Education.

Office of the Deputy Mayor for Education

As mentioned above, our office has greatly appreciated a close working relationship with the DME. Our office worked closely with the DME on their safe passage work in addition to the

complementary work that our office has done to support their citywide safe passage efforts. In addition to our collaborative efforts on safe passage, the Chief Student Advocate has been asked to participate on several task forces and working groups: School Safety and Safe Passage Working Group, Cross-Sector Collaboration Task Force, Every Day Counts! (Truancy) Task Force, and the Transportation Task Force.

DC Public Schools

The working relationship that our office has with DCPS is mutual and continuous. We work regularly with the Community Action Team, which is a part of the Office of Family and Public Engagement, to support the needs of students and families in their respective wards. We have also worked closely with the Division of Specialized Instruction on our special education work and in support of families who are having special education challenges. We regularly work with their school support liaisons. Furthermore, we have a cooperative relationship with the instructional superintendents as well. In addition, many of the referrals to our office come from schools or from the DCPS central office. We believe this is as a result of our collaborative working relationship. DCPS' Community Action Team, particularly Sharona Robinson, has been a very valuable partner in the Ward 7 parent leadership work that our office is doing.

DC Public Charter School Board

During our office's first year of operation, one of the first meetings we had as we established the office was with the leadership and community outreach staff of PCSB. Since that initial meeting until today, we have enjoyed a collaborative working relationship with PCSB. Nicole Newman, the community outreach manager for PCSB, is a part of the safe passage working group that our office is hosting. Nicole has also been a valuable part in the parent engagement work that we are doing in Ward 7 and a thought-partner in the work that we are planning in Ward 8. PCSB has also been supportive in the sharing of information with their schools regarding the special education trainings and resources that our office has developed. They have regularly posted our resources and upcoming engagement opportunities in the Wednesday Bulletin and with school leaders. As we have increased our outreach efforts, we have been able to reach many more charter school leaders and families because of information sharing from PCSB. Our office has also been invited to present to the parent and student groups that PCSB convenes to have conversations about concerns that students and families are experiencing and to share the resources from our office.

Office of Human Rights' Citywide Youth Bullying Prevention Program

Our office regularly works collaboratively with Suzanne Greenfield and the Citywide Youth Bullying Prevention Program. We regularly refer families who reach out to our office and in return Suzanne has referred families to our office. In addition to referrals, Suzanne is a real thought-partner in the work and initiatives that our office undertakes. Suzanne is a part of the safe passage working group that our office is hosting and is also working with us on some of the ways that we can support schools. We are also working collaboratively with Suzanne and her office on the school climate work in partnership with OSSE and the public schools in the pilot program.

DC Public Libraries

Our working relationship with DC Public Library is continuing to grow. We have worked with DCPL to ensure that our office materials are located in each of their library locations. We have also worked to offer information on our office regarding the services we provide and how we serve families. Additionally, the front line staff at DCPL locations can direct students or families in need to our office for support. We have also hosted many of our community meetings and trainings at DCPL library locations.

Q13. Describe the Office of the Student Advocate’s relationship with the State Board of Education and any improvements that can be made.

We have worked with SBOE staff and ward representatives in order to ensure that the questions and concerns of parents and families who reach out to our office are heard and understood. Ward-based outreach events have a great impact with the partnership of ward representatives interested in expanding some of our current trainings and events to their wards.

Office of the Student Advocate is always looking for opportunities to collaborate with board members to ensure that parents, families, and community members are getting public education knowledge they need to know in all eight wards. We aim to continue to foster the development of collaborative partnerships with board members to recommend effective policies and develop appropriate trainings for the residents they serve directly. In FY17, we partnered with several board members to host trainings, workshops, and parent meetings in their wards. We look forward to continuing our collaborative relationship in FY18 and beyond.

Q14. Describe the Office of the Student Advocate’s relationship with the Office of the Ombudsman for Public Education and any improvements that can be made.

We have worked with Office of the Ombudsman on some resource development, namely our homelessness resource toolkit and our special education work. Moving forward, we will be collaborating more around student discipline in the District. Both of our offices have made recommendations around equity and student discipline. Our collaboration can and will be incredibly valuable as lawmakers consider what steps need to be taken in order to ensure that discipline’s harsh and disproportionate impact on students of color is reduced.

As Office of the Student Advocate and Office of the Ombudsman continue to grow, it has become increasingly difficult to ignore the physical constraints that come with our shared office space.