DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA PUBLIC SCHOOLS

Graduation Excellence: An Overview

Background

Graduation Excellence is a division in the DCPS Office of Secondary Schools that was established during School Year 2018-2019 to ensure the value of a DCPS diploma and prepare students for success after high school. DCPS took a hard look in the mirror when the problems at Ballou came to light in November 2017. Since then, we have engaged in a **top to bottom review of our policies, training, and practices** regarding graduation requirements and student supports. We have **invested in technology** to facilitate accurate record keeping, and we endeavor to **train our teachers and administrators** – throughout the system and not just at Ballou – in our policies and practices. **We are all committed to helping our students gain the skills they need for college and career.**

Progress on Our Commitments

Goals	School Year 2017-2018	School Year 2018-2019
Maintain **high expectations** for all students and ensure all graduates feel confident they have earned their diploma. Focus Areas: ▪ Graduation Verification ▪ Systems Improvement	✓ Monitored the graduation status of every student. ✓ Conducted manual review of individual student transcripts for all students in the 2018 cohort. ✓ Enhanced graduation verification process to include school-level and central office transcript review and data certification.	✓ Modified master scheduling process to include additional checks and balances. ✓ Revised the Adjusted Cohort Graduation Rate (ACGR) tracker to provide more actionable data for schools to support students who are off-track or at risk of failing; Added a graduation specialist who works directly with high schools on graduation.

Goals	School Year 2017-2018	School Year 2018-2019
Empower our students and families on their path to graduation with the supports they need to be successful. Focus Areas: ▪ Student Supports ▪ Communication and Engagement	✓ Created new Office of Integrity (Feb. 2018) to ensure that policies and procedures are implemented with fidelity and to follow up on complaints regarding laws and DCPS expectations. ✓ Held fairs at all comprehensive high schools to connect students and families with resources. ✓ Published and shared a school-based resource guide from each high school. ✓ Offered high-quality original credit and credit recovery courses during summer school for high school students resulting in an additional 186 students from the 4-year cohort graduating in August.	✓ Created protocol to ensure all students have access to participate in individual scheduling meetings. ✓ Produced personalized Graduation, College, and Career Guide that synthesized the graduation progress, college planning, and career development in one place for students in grades 9-11 and their families. ✓ Developed a clear new Credit Recovery policy and program that provides all students with rigorous, competency-based opportunities to master content and progress on the path to graduation; Supporting schools through ongoing training, site visits, and additional curricular resources. ✓ Provided cluster-based support to help high schools locate and re-engage students who have disconnected from DCPS. ✓ Put supports in place to expand access to high-quality service learning opportunities for students; Establishing systems to ensure the fidelity of community service programming and the provision of hours.
Provide clear and transparent **policies with rigorous monitoring systems**. Focus Areas: ▪ Policies ▪ Training ▪ Monitoring Systems	✓ Implemented system improvements to support compliance with grading and attendance policies. ✓ Provided ongoing training, resources, and technical assistance to key staff on graduation-related policies.	✓ Released updated policies and implementation guidance for attendance, secondary grading, promotion, credit recovery, and graduation, based on intensive stakeholder feedback. ✓ Trained all high school staff members on updated polies and implementation guidance in-person at school-based sessions. ✓ Released Family Guide that helps families navigate updated policies. ✓ Developed a Continuous Improvement Framework to regularly review and share data on policy alignment in the areas of course marks, absences, credit recovery, and scheduling; Building the capacity of schools to course-correct policy variances and ensure alignment.

Graduation Data

DCPS is committed to monitoring student progress and using data to support students. All schools have implemented a data-informed approach to identify students who are off track, and plan interventions to ensure that every student receives the targeted support and resources they need to be successful. While our graduation rate decreased between 2017 and 2018, the rate with which we reduced policy violations has dramatically outpaced this decrease, and we're confident that our graduates are crossing the stage because they have met all requirements.

DCPS remains focused on regaining the public's trust. We have worked diligently to build transparent and strong systems, so that students, families, and the community are confident in DCPS. More information about polices and student data can be found at **dcps.dc.gov/graduation**.