

Chancellor Parent Cabinet Meeting Minutes

Tuesday, December 8, 2015
5:30-8:00 PM
DCPS Central Office

Meeting Objectives

Meeting participants will:

1. Learn about DCPS' role in supporting parent organizations and helping schools build relationships between parents and school staff
2. Discuss key challenges parent organizations are experience
3. Identify resources and strategies central office should execute to support parent organizations

Meeting Attendees:

- *DCPS Chancellor's Parent Cabinet Members:* Robin Appleberry, Davena Archie, Nazanin Ash, Ameen Beale, Tara Brown, Charles DeSantis, Kristine Erickson, Laurence Gill, Diane Jackson, Helene Klusmann, Michael Koppenheffer, Corinne McIntosh-Douglas, Beth Osborne, Cristóbal Rodríguez, Shanti Sale, Kevin Sampson, Shameka Stewart, Alejandra Vallejo, and Adria Wright
- *Not in Attendance:* E. Andre Carter, Camille Fair-Bumbray, Dionne Moore, Matthew O'Hara, Sweta Shah, and Chancellor Kaya Henderson
- *Office of Family and Public Engagement:* Josephine Bias Robinson, Shanita Burney, Brandon Best, Sharona Robinson, and Allison D'Aurora

Notes:

Topic	Comments
Welcome	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The Chancellor could not attend this evening's meeting because of another scheduling conflict. Chief Robinson facilitated this meeting. ▪ PARCC results were released last month for grades 3-8. The Chancellor has called the results sobering. The results demonstrate there is need for improvement, but they also present a clearer picture of how DCPS needs to prepare its students for college and career. School specific results will be sent out soon. ▪ DCPS hosted three meetings with Local School Advisory Teams in November to discuss the Fiscal Year 2017 budget. More than 300 people, including principals, parents, teachers, and other school staff attended these meetings to discuss how the upcoming budget could address the following challenges: investing in struggling schools, helping teachers succeed in the lowest-performing schools, increasing instructional time, and reducing the high school dropout rate focusing on alternative schools and career and college readiness. The feedback from all of the meetings was posted on

	<p>www.EngageDCPS.org. DCPS is still collecting feedback on these topics through that website. Cabinet members should log into the website to read through their school’s comments and post their own feedback.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Johns Hopkins University recently published a study that links improvements in the performance of DC public elementary school students with the Family Engagement Partnership managed by the Flamboyan Foundation and the Office of Family and Public Engagement (OFPE). In this program, teachers learn key strategies to engage their families, including home visits where teachers visit the families of their students to learn the family’s hopes, dreams, and expectations for their student. The study covered 12 DCPS elementary schools and more than 4,000 students in the 2013-14 school year. Two main findings included: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Students whose families received a home visit from their teacher had 24% fewer absences than similar students whose families did not receive a visit. ○ These same students also were more likely to read at or above grade level compared to similar students who did not receive a home visit. ▪ DCPS announced the Standing Ovation award winners this month. DCPS recognized 29 teachers, administrators, staff, and schools for their dedication and excellence. Each of the winners will be honored by DCPS and the DC Public Education Fund at the annual Standing Ovation for DC Public Schools ceremony at the Kennedy Center on February 1, 2016. Winners also received cash prizes totaling \$230,000. ▪ Parent Cabinet members are strongly encouraged to engage with DCPS on Twitter. The Community Action Team has a separate Twitter handle, @DCPS_Community.
<p>Focus Topic: Parent Organization Best Practices and The Family Engagement Lab</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Shanita Burney, Deputy Chief of Community Engagement; Sharona Robinson, Community Action Team Coordinator for Ward 7 and Ward 8; and Brandon Best, Family Engagement Specialist will discuss the work OFPE is doing to help schools build positive relationships between school staff and parents and what the office’s role has been in supporting parent organizations. ▪ The goal for tonight’s meeting is to work with the Cabinet to determine what parent organizations should expect from DCPS and what role can the Parent Cabinet play to help support parent organizations. ▪ OFPE receives a lot of requests to support parent organizations. DCPS does not oversee parent organizations because these are formal organizations of parents led, organized, and managed by parents at the school level. Because DCPS does not have oversight over parent organizations, it cannot make requirements or set standards for them. It is up to each school to oversee its parent organization. ▪ OFPE typically receives two types of requests: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Organizational requests when schools need help starting an organization, creating bylaws, electing officers, etc. ○ Behavioral requests when organizations are struggling because

	<p>of issues related to relationship-building, diversity, trust, etc.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ There are many different types of parent organizations across DCPS schools, including Parent Teacher Associations (PTA), Parent Teacher Organizations (PTO), and Home and School Associations (HSA), among others. The types of organizations differ in their structure and the supports available to them. Some groups, like Parent Teacher Associations, have support from local and national chapters, like the DCPTA or the National PTA. Others are independent organizations and are not part of an affiliated organization. ▪ OFPE has noticed that schools often define how functional their parent organization is by how much money their group can raise. This is not the best indicator to measure the success of a parent organization because there are many other meaningful ways that these groups can support their school. ▪ OFPE has been working with schools to strengthen parent organizations through the support of the Community Action Team. Coordinators consult with parent organizations to help them develop a strategy specific to their school. In some cases, schools do not have parent organizations at all because there are weak or strained relationships between parents and school staff that prohibit the school from meeting its goals. ▪ OFPE’s Family Engagement team has launched a new program to support schools experiencing these relationship deficits. The program is called the Family Engagement Lab and has been implemented in two schools to date. In the Lab, a select number of school staff, parents, and community members collectively identify one challenge area they would like to work together to solve. Throughout an eight-week program, Lab participants: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Collectively identify a challenge area they would like to solve together ○ Map their school’s assets ○ Interview members in their school community to ensure their solution is representative of many different voices ○ Create an action plan that addresses the original challenge area ○ Present the action plan to their peers in their school community who did not participate in the Lab and discuss how to improve or adapt the plan to ensure there can be sustained change ▪ Through the Lab, participants learn how to collaborate with those in their school community to address critical issues. The goal is for school communities to master these skills to sustain this type of collaboration when the school faces challenges in the future. ▪ Schools interested in having the Family Engagement Lab should reach out to their CAT Coordinator.
<p>Group Discussion on Focus Topic</p>	<p>Cabinet members broke out into small groups to discuss guided questions about the challenges their parent organizations face. The responses recorded to each question are below.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ What is one challenge that inhibits your parent organization from succeeding? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Parents want to be involved in parent organizations but do not have the training or experience to fully execute on their assigned

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> roles and responsibilities. ○ Parents do not understand how they personally would benefit from participating in school activities and organizations, and, as a result, do not get involved. ○ In many cases, there is little connection between the non-English and English speaking parent populations. It is hard to have non-English speaking families meaningfully engaged in school business. ○ There are few parents within the school community who are willing or able to devote the time to serve on a parent organization. ○ Parent organizations struggle with making informed decisions that are aligned with school goals and fairly represent the entire school community, not just the voice of a select number of parents on the parent organization. ○ Demographics are changing in many schools, which has created a divide in school communities. ○ When elementary schools have poor parent involvement it sets an expectation for parents that they don't need to be involved with their child's school even if their middle or high school does have a strong parent organization. ○ Members often are expected to pay out-of-pocket costs for parent organization activities. This prohibits parents from participating in their schools' parent organization. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ What support can DCPS provide? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Trainings for parent organization officers to better prepare them and set shared expectations for their roles. ○ Offer incentives for parents to be involved at their schools. ○ Encourage parent organizations to have co-presidents or leadership positions and require that one of the presidents speak Spanish so that person can translate and interpret for other Spanish-speaking families. ○ Allocate funds for schools to use explicitly for their parent organization, so members do not have to pay out-of-pocket costs. These funds could also be used to cover costs, such as food and childcare for meetings. ○ Create reference documents that outline the basic expectations and roles for parent organizations. Include a rubric that parent organizations can use to guide their decision making process. ○ Publish materials that help parent organizations navigate and bridge cultural differences among families at their school. ○ Create sister school pairings, so parent organizations can talk with one another, share ideas, and problem solve together. ○ Host an online forum so parent organizations can connect with each other throughout the school year. ▪ What is the parent organization's role in solving this challenge? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Conduct more targeted outreach to underrepresented groups in their organization. ○ In schools with large Spanish-speaking populations, ask a Spanish-speaking parent to run for an officer position. ○ Be thoughtful when planning meetings to ensure they are at a
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	<p>time and place where most parents can attend. Think through other amenities the parent organization can offer to attract more parents, such as food and childcare.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Set clear expectations for parents to explain why it is important that they participate and what is needed of them throughout the year. ○ Set reasonable goals, so the parent organization has something to collectively work towards throughout the year. ○ Conduct more outreach to parents or underrepresented groups in their organization. ○ Think creatively about opportunities parents at the school can provide that are low cost, such as inviting more parents into classrooms to talk about their careers. ○ Offer more opportunities for parents to engage with the school outside of meetings, such as sending out surveys or creating virtual opportunities to connect with each other. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Is there a role for the Parent Cabinet in addressing these challenges? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Cabinet members could host meetings at the beginning of the school year with the parent organizations in their ward to help them set expectations, clarify roles and responsibilities, and map their school's assets.
<p>Closing</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Cabinet members received copies of the Parent Leader Toolkit. ▪ Next meeting is January 14, 2015.