

Chancellor Parent Cabinet Meeting Minutes

Tuesday, February 9, 2016
5:30-8:00 PM
DCPS Central Office

Meeting Objectives

Meeting participants will:

1. Learn about the history of human capital work in DCPS
2. Understand how the Office of Instructional Practice is developing a strategy to better support teachers to ensure students are college and career ready
3. Engage in a discussion about what they think the most valuable qualities are in a teacher

Meeting Attendees:

- *DCPS Chancellor's Parent Cabinet Members:* Robin Appleberry, Davena Archie, Ameen Beale, Tara Brown, Charles DeSantis, Kristine Erickson, Camille Fair-Bumbray, Laurence Gill, Michael Koppenheffer, Corinne McIntosh-Douglas, Dionne Moore, Matthew O'Hara, Beth Osborne, Cristóbal Rodríguez, Shanti Sale, Kevin Sampson, Sweta Shah, and Adria Wright
- *Not in Attendance:* Nazanin Ash, E. Andre Carter, Diane Jackson, Helene Klusmann, and Shameka Stewart
- Chancellor Kaya Henderson
- *Office of Family and Public Engagement:* Josephine Bias Robinson, Shanita Burney, Cassandra Sánchez, and Allison D'Aurora
- *Guest Speakers:* Jason Kamras, Chief of Instructional Practice; Ijeoma Kush, Deputy Chief of Instructional Coaching; Maggie Thomas, Director of the Master Educator Program

Notes:

Topic	Comments
Welcome	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Chancellor Henderson was sick during this meeting and left early. Chief Robinson facilitated the meeting in her place. ▪ The DCPS Study Abroad program application deadline is February 15. The program offers free, organized international trips and is open to all DCPS 8th and 11th grade students who take a World Language. Cabinet members should share this opportunity and encourage 8th and 11th grade students to apply. ▪ DCPS celebrated its sixth Standing Ovation ceremony on February 1, 2016 at the Kennedy Center to acknowledge its teachers, school leaders, and support staff. ▪ January marked the one-year anniversary of the Empowering Males of Color initiative. DCPS has launched a social media campaign to highlight success stories of the students that have been impacted by this work. DCPS is also working to open the Empowering Males High

	<p>School in August as part of the initiative. The school will be located in Ward 7 but is open to all male students.</p>
<p>Focus Topic: Instructional Practice</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Last month, the Cabinet heard about Cornerstones, which is one step DCPS is taking to increase academic rigor and ensure equity across the district. To complement this discussion, Chief Jason Kamras from the Office of Instructional Practice will share how DCPS is addressing equity and rigor by developing its teacher workforce. ▪ Chief Kamras began his career with DCPS in 1996 as a math teacher at Sousa Middle School. Chief Kamras was named National Teacher of the Year in 2005. His teaching experience drives the decisions he makes in his current role about how DCPS can best support teachers. Chief Kamras is also a DCPS parent. ▪ In 2008, Chief Kamras joined central office to improve the support DCPS gave to teachers. In this time, DCPS has significantly changed how it recruits, hires, evaluates, and compensates its teachers. ▪ DCPS began evaluating teachers with a new evaluation system called IMPACT in 2009. At that time, 16% of teachers were rated highly effective. In 2015, this number increased to 35%. ▪ National Assessment of Education Progress (NAEP) also released data in 2015 that show DCPS student growth has outpaced the other school districts that take this assessment. ▪ There are five main areas that DCPS has focused on improving over the past eight years: hiring, evaluation, support, compensation, and retention. <p><i>Hiring</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ In the past, DCPS made a lot of forced placements and there was little capacity to recruit teachers. In most instances, the school district was not hiring teachers until June or July, and they would sometimes open schools for the school year with more than 100 vacancies. ○ DCPS has ended forced placements and negotiated teachers' contracts to support this. Teachers do not go to a school unless they want to be there and the principal wants them there. ○ There is now a recruitment team of 12 people to advertise teaching positions with DCPS. They maintain a recruitment website, http://joindcpublicschools.com, and last spring they launched an ad campaign on WMATA buses and metros that featured DCPS teachers and principals. The week this campaign launched last year, teacher applications tripled. ○ There is also a new selection process for teachers. They complete an online application, upload a video of their teaching, have an introductory phone interview with a current DCPS teacher, and then interview with principals for specific positions. This screening process helps DCPS select the best teachers and create the best fit with schools. ○ DCPS has been hiring earlier in the summer so it has a better chance of hiring good people. In 2012, DCPS hired 252 new teachers by June 30. In 2015, it hired 821 new teachers. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Of the 821 new teaching positions last year, only 20 were from Teach for America. DCPS has been intentionally shifting away from hiring brand new teachers. Last year, 75% of

- newly hired teachers had at least one year of experience.
- The percentage of newer teachers is higher in our lower performing schools.

Evaluation

- Previously, there were inconsistent evaluations or no evaluations at all for DCPS teachers. The evaluations had little connection with a teacher’s students, which resulted in a misalignment in how teachers were rated and how students were performing. At one point, 95% of teachers earned high evaluation marks, but only 12% of DCPS eighth grade students could read on grade level.
- DCPS created a new evaluation system called IMPACT. Through this process, teachers received feedback through the year on their performance against a Teaching and Learning Framework. Teachers are formally observed five times per year and receive feedback in writing and in a one-on-one conference.
- IMPACT clarified expectations and re-focused expectations on student learning. Half of a teacher’s score is based on objective measures of students’ academic progress, and 35% comes from a “value-added” score that uses standardized tests to measure how much academic progress teachers help their students make each year. The remaining 15% come from other measures of student learning that a teacher and principal jointly determine.
 - Teachers are not just rated by how well their students perform on tests that school year. DCPS uses a statistical model to predict how a student should be performing based on their performance from the previous year. The model can be used to assess if the student meets that trajectory, exceeded it, or slipped below.
 - DCPS looks at a lot of factors when determining a student’s trajectory and understands that sometimes students have a bad year. No teacher is held accountable for students’ academic performance unless DCPS has data for 15 students from the previous school year and the current school year. This is a safeguard from unfairly punishing teachers.
- When teachers earn a highly effective rating, there are opportunities for bonuses and other incentives.
- By an Act of Congress, teacher evaluations are not subjected to collective bargaining, so they are not a negotiated term of a teacher’s contract. However, there is an appeals process that teachers can use if they feel they have been unfairly let go.
- The University of Virginia and Stanford University examined the effect of this evaluation system on students. They found that when the system caused low performing teacher to exit and be replaced with a better teacher, it led to four more months of learning in reading and math for students.

Support

- Previously, DCPS offered one size fits all professional development sessions. Their efforts were focused on giving teachers the minimum number of seat hours they needed to maintain their licenses.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Teachers also did not have a centralized curriculum to guide their work. As a result, they had to set their own expectations about what to teach in their classrooms, which led to inconsistent instruction across the district. ○ Today, teachers receive much more personalized coaching by working with instructional coaches in their school and attending professional development sessions throughout the year that are tailored for a teacher’s subject area and grade level. ○ The Common Core-aligned curriculum means teachers have standardized resources to use in their teaching. Professional development now focuses on building teachers’ expertise in implementing these new, more rigorous standards. <p><i>Compensation</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Previously, compensation was not tied to a teacher’s performance; it was tied to how long a teacher had been working. A teacher had to work for the school district for 21 years and have a PhD to earn the maximum salary of \$87,000. ○ Now, first-year teachers, with a bonus, can make up to \$75,000 if they work in a high poverty school. In five years, teachers can make upwards of \$100,000, and the career maximum is \$126,540. ○ DCPS is providing incentives to teachers in positions where they are most needed. <p><i>Retention</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ DCPS used to not work at all to retain their teachers, and, as a result, they lost a lot of good teachers. ○ Now, we retain 92% of highly effective teachers and 89% of effective teachers. ○ DCPS has created a five-stage career ladder called LIFT for teachers to give teachers an opportunity to grow their careers. As teachers progress through the ladder, they become eligible for leadership positions, new professional learning opportunities, and significant raises. There is also the Teacher Leadership Initiative, a program that allows teachers to take half of their day to coach other teachers. ○ DCPS also recognizes its teachers every year with the Standing Ovation ceremony.
<p>Group Discussion on Instructional Practice</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The Cabinet broke up into small groups to discuss two topics relating to teacher development: 1) instruction and 2) climate and culture. The following captures the small group discussion from both groups. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Culture and Climate Small Group Discussion <p><i>Question: Think back to one of your child’s favorite teachers. What were the characteristics of this teacher?</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Firm, yet nurturing ▪ Loving and shows affection ▪ Connected ▪ Empathetic ▪ Teachers know their students and what’s going on in their lives

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Differentiated approach for students ▪ Collaborative ▪ Continues to learning from their students ▪ Teaches real life skills and values ▪ Sets high expectations <p><i>Question: What are the unacceptable behaviors and environments that would cause you to want to relocate your child?</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Poor ethics ▪ Mean or too strict ▪ Ignores students ▪ Allows a chaotic environment in their classroom ▪ Gives unreasonable punishments instead of proper consequences ▪ Insensitive to students ▪ Lack of inclusion or equity, particularly based on ethnicity and special learning needs ▪ Lack of representation in teaching style based on gender, race, etc. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Instruction Small Group Discussion <p><i>Question: Describe the type of instruction you're seeking for your child.</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Interactive ▪ Inclusive ▪ Rigorous ▪ Supportive ▪ Creative ▪ Useful ▪ High impact ▪ Accessible ▪ Fun ▪ College prep <p><i>Question: What instructional practices have you seen in your child's classroom that you appreciated?</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Interactive components in the lessons ▪ Field trips related to learning ▪ Regular communication with parents regarding instruction and progress ▪ Activities for parents to support learning at home ▪ Teachers model positive language for students ▪ Teachers have strong content knowledge <p><i>Question: What practices concerned you?</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Little communication home to parents ▪ Students complete work packets and are teaching themselves ▪ No opportunities to review errors on assessments ▪ Inadequate behavior management that impedes instruction ▪ No alignment of instructional programs ▪ No communication to parents about where their child stands on assessments <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The Cabinet then provided the following direct feedback to the OIP team and asked questions:
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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Question: What is DCPS doing for students who have a long-term substitute teacher and are not getting the same level of instruction they would with their permanent teacher? ○ Response: DCPS is still trying to address the problem of teachers who have to take long leaves of absences from their classrooms. Long term substitute teachers will fill-in for these teachers, and DCPS recognizes it is not the same environment for the student. Each year, DCPS hires a reserve of teachers in case a classroom is over enrolled at the beginning of the school year, but the reserve is not large enough to address all of the classrooms with a long-term substitute. ○ Comment: One of the most important communications parents want to receive is about their child’s report cards. Parents are trying to learn the new grading system and understand what their student’s marks means for their learning and progress. ○ Question: Is there a way for OIP to also collect parent input as part of the IMPACT evaluation? Sometimes parents feel uncomfortable giving constructive feedback to their student’s teacher, and this could be a way to keep the feedback anonymous and provide a qualitative measure as part of a teacher’s IMPACT score. ○ Response: This type of feedback is something DCPS has considered. Next school year, DCPS will collect student surveys as part of the IMPACT evaluations. Students will be asked questions such as “When you make a mistake, how does your teacher respond?” so DCPS can better evaluate what kind of impact teachers have on their students. ○ Comment: Parents often trust that their student’s teachers are capable leaders in the classroom. When tensions arise between parents and teachers it usually is not about a teacher’s skill but because there is not a space to build a relationship with the teacher outside of drop-off and pick-up. Some schools need more settings to foster engagements between parents and teachers. ○ Comment: The Academic Parent Teacher Team (APTT) conferences have been a great setting to bring together teachers and parents to build relationships around student progress. ○ Response: APTT is part of the Family Engagement Partnership (FEP) that the Office of Family and Public Engagement (OFPE) manages in partnership with the Flamboyant Foundation. APTT is a new style of parent-teacher conferences that take place three times throughout the school year in place of traditional parent-teacher conferences. Teachers meet with all parents at once and look at data about how their students are performing compared to other students in the school using anonymous data to help parents, teachers, and students with goal setting. The FEP is in 23 DCPS schools that run the model with the entire school, and there are some individual teachers who are also a part of FEP. APTT has proven to be most effective at the elementary school
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	<p>level. Some middle schools have started to student-led parent-teacher conferences, and DCPS is working with high schools on also using student-led conferences focusing on the steps they're taking to get ready for college.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Comment: There is a need to better prepare teachers in high poverty, struggling schools. Teachers need support in balancing discipline with actual instruction. Response: DCPS is thinking about how to address this with its new training curriculum. DCPS has to help teachers understand the science on how students can transition from the executive function of their brain to an emotional state. There are techniques teacher can use to get their students back to executive function, and DCPS needs to do a better job of training teachers on these techniques. Right now, there are instructional coaches in schools, but they are responsible for all teachers regardless of grades or subjects. DCPS is trying to figure out how to specialize this sort of position and training. ○ Comment: Physical activity is equally important in this equation of finding ways for students to absorb quality instruction. There is evidence that shows that students cannot learn if they do not have enough physical activity. The parent community will support DCPS to push back on any pressure it gets to limit the amount of physical activity students receive each day. Response: DCPS, by and large, treats instruction as discreet blocks, but there is limited time to fit in all of the blocks. One way to solve this issue of time is to have more integrated experiences to free up more time to allow for more physical activity and other specials. ○ Question: How do you change how the public thinks about education in DCPS? Parent engagement seems to be partly shaped by parents who attended DCPS and had a bad experience. Some schools seem to acknowledge this bias and proactively reach out to parents, but some schools don't seem to provide the same opportunities for parent involvement. Response: It is our responsibility to help our teachers make every parent feel welcome into DCPS schools. These mindsets and expectations are critical to the success of students and schools. We need to help our teachers create opportunities for parent involvement. ○ Comment: The instructional needs of a high needs school may be different than others. There is an inequity across DCPS in how schools are funded. Some schools can fundraise through their parent organization to fund multiple full-time positions. DCPS should look at these capabilities when determining the funding for teachers across schools. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ OIP will use this feedback as the team creates a training curriculum for the next school year. The big pieces the team will think about leaving this discussion are:
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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Impact of mid-year vacancies ○ Classroom culture ○ Communication with parents to inform them about what their students are learning and helping them know what questions they should be asking teachers about their student’s progress.
<p>Open Forum <i>This portion of the meeting is reserved for the Cabinet to pose questions of any topic to the Chancellor. The questions and the Chancellor’s responses are recorded in this section.</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Comment: Some Cabinet members have reported that their schools do not communicate with them regularly, but there are some schools that do this well. For example, at one school, teachers send weekly e-mails to parents informing parents what their students learned in class that week along with related activities parents can do at home with their children. The principal also sends a weekly e-mail to the entire school with updates. This regular communication also encourages parents to seek out teachers and school leaders when they have concerns in the classroom. It opens the door for strong relationships with parents. Response: Cabinet members should send good school-parent communications to OFPE staff, so the OIP team can build their training and support materials around these examples. ▪ Question: What should parents do if they have concerns at their school that they have tried raising with the principal but feel like need further discussion? Response: Parents should work with their school’s instructional superintendent in these cases. It is best when representatives from the entire parent community, including the leads from the parent organization and LSAT, can come together, so the instructional superintendent can best understand what the concerns are and lead productive conversations to help parents work through these issues. ▪ Question: Parents do not understand the criteria that is used to make decisions about selecting schools for modernization. Is there something that DCPS can share to help parents understand this process? Response: DCPS has taken on a larger role in renovations this school year, but this work is done in coordination with the Department of General Services and City Council. DCPS does have some guidance materials that can be shared to help clarify this process.
<p>Closing</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Next meeting has been rescheduled to Tuesday, March 15, 2016. ▪ The April meeting has also been rescheduled to Wednesday, April 13, 2016.