

Chancellor Parent Cabinet Meeting Minutes

Wednesday, September 9, 2015
5:30-8:00 PM
DCPS Central Office

Meeting Objectives

Meeting participants will:

1. Learn how DCPS enters into and monitors contracts with food service vendors
2. Understand the state of food contracts and learn how to route questions or concerns about food services
3. Inform how DCPS solicits and collects parent feedback on its food service contracts and their satisfaction with food services at their school

Meeting Attendees:

- *DCPS Chancellor's Parent Cabinet Members: DCPS Chancellor's Parent Cabinet Members:* Connie Brown, Olivia Chase, Laurence Gill, Michael Koppenheffer, Laura Levine, Corinne McIntosh-Douglas, Matthew O'Hara, Shanti Sale, Kevin Sampson, Sweta Shah, Shameka Stewart, and Tom Strike
- *Not in Attendance:* Davena Archie, Nazanin Ash, Jessica Bonness, E. Andre Carter, Camille Fair-Bumbray, Helene Klusmann, Cristóbal Rodríguez
- Chancellor Kaya Henderson
- *Office of Family and Public Engagement:* Josephine Bias Robinson, Shanita Burney, Matthew Guevara, and Allison D'Aurora
- *Guest Speaker:* Dr. Nathaniel Beers, Chief Operating Officer

Notes:

Topic	Comments
Welcome	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Applications are now open to fill the spots for Parent Cabinet members who have six month terms and will be ending their service next month. Applications are open for parents who live in Wards 1, 2, 4, 5, 7, and 8. Cabinet members should share the application widely with their networks and recommend applicants. ▪ A Conversation with the Chancellor on the State of DC Public Schools will be held on September 30, 2015 from 7-9 p.m. at Dunbar High School. NBC4 Anchor Jim Vance will join the Chancellor this year for a live, on-stage discussion about DCPS' progress and its ongoing priorities to make this a vibrant school district that provides a world-class education for all students. ▪ All DCPS schools opened on August 24, 2015. This year was the strongest school opening since the Chancellor has been involved with DCPS over the past 18 years. School buildings and staff were ready and equipped

	<p>for the first day of school with little issues reported across the school district.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Parent Cabinet members reported out about their school opening experience: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Luke C. Moore High School had a good first day. It was a good opportunity for the school to set norms on student behavior and expectations. ○ Shepherd Elementary School’s first day of school was positive because there is a new principal, and parents could feel a difference in the school climate. However, the building is in bad shape, and the parents are upset particularly because of the playground, which is unusable. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Parents are feeling frustrated in part because DCPS hasn’t had the ownership of managing communication about these projects. DCPS will be taking over this communication process in October, which will allow the school district to communicate fairly and frankly with families about facilities projects and appropriately set expectations. ○ Lafayette Elementary School had a great school opening even though all of the students have class in trailers, which are temporarily set-up while the school undergoes a modernization. The principal asked the Parent Teacher School Association (PTSA) to help welcome students on the first day and that created a positive atmosphere. The Back to School Night happened earlier this month and was also successful, but the teachers could have done more to promote their programs and showcase the great work they are doing. ○ Parents at Stoddert Elementary School have had questions about the students from the Russian Embassy. Stoddert’s boundary encompasses the Russian Embassy grounds, so those students tend to fill the Pre-Kindergarten (Pre-K) seats. The students are not technically DC residents, and in-boundary parents feel that it is not fair for so many Pre-K seats to go to students from the Russian Embassy who will likely not stay at Stoddert all the way through fifth grade taking away from the seats available to in-boundary families who are invested in staying in DCPS throughout their child’s education. ▪ The meal served at this Cabinet meeting was provided by Chartwells, one of the DCPS food service vendors. This meeting will address food services in DCPS schools, and the
<p>Focus Topic: Food & Nutrition Services</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Dr. Nathaniel Beers, the Chief Operating Officer, oversees the Office of Food and Nutrition Services (OFNS), which is responsible for ensuring all DCPS schools serve meals that meet local and national nutritional guidelines. Dr. Beers discussed how DCPS enters into and monitors contracts with food vendors who provide these services and what OFNS is doing this fall to ensure these contracts are structured to best meet the needs of students and families. ▪ As part of tonight’s meeting, OFNS arranged to have Chartwells, one of the DCPS food service vendors, provide dinner for Cabinet members. Dinner consisted of menu items that Chartwells prepares for the meals they offer students across the DCPS locations they service. ▪ Since 2008, DCPS has contracted with Chartwells/Thompson School Dining Services to provide food service in the majority of DPCS locations.

	<p>Previously, DCPS had been managing food services in house but found it had been incurring unnecessary costs. DCPS decided to contract out food services, so school staff and central office staff could focus on improving instruction.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ From 2008-2011, DCPS had a contract that allowed the food vendor to charge for every meal it prepared, not every meal students consumed. This model encouraged the food vendor to prepare more food than necessary and charge DCPS for food that students never consumed. DCPS redid the contract in 2012, so it was a fixed-price model meaning DCPS only paid for every meal that was served, not every meal that was prepared.▪ There is some variation in the fixed-pricing model between school types, especially in elementary schools where students are served their meals instead of selecting their meals. This elementary school model does increase some of the costs for DCPS.▪ In 2010, DC adopted the DC Healthy Schools Act, which raised the nutritional standards that DC schools must follow above the national standards set by the Food and Drug Administration. When this legislation was enacted, DCPS saw a large decrease in participation rates among students. Food vendors were not prepared to be creative in the food they offered, so their menu items met the new nutritional standards but still tasted good to students. As a result, students no longer wanted to eat the meals served at school. In the last two years, vendors have started to understand that the way they continue to be a vendor for DCPS is by being creative to get students to participate.▪ To ensure that food vendors are upholding their responsibility in increasing participation in school meals, each school has a Student Ambassador program. These students regularly give feedback to the food vendors on their products throughout the school year. The vendors use this feedback to improve their menu items.▪ DCPS has learned that it could be doing a better job in differentiating the meals it offers at the different grade levels. Food served at an elementary school should be different than what is offered at a high school because students have different tastes at different ages.▪ Only 12 schools within DCPS do not have fully functioning kitchens, meaning the majority of school meals are prepared on site in schools' kitchens. Revolution Foods provides meals to schools without fully functioning kitchens. This vendor delivers food that is packaged but has been prepared that day and meets all local and national nutrition guidelines. This has been a good match for these 12 schools because they do not have to do much preparation before serving the meals to their students.▪ DCPS decided this year is the right time to re-compete its food services contract and is taking the steps necessary to ensure the competition process sets the right expectations for the school district to encourage a range of food vendors to submit a bid. In the last RFP process, Chartwells was the only food vendor to respond to the RFP, which gave DCPS an unfair choice about who the best food vendor is to feed its students.▪ Students who are participating in school meals are rating DCPS as a grade B. DCPS has to take responsibility for this, but food vendors have to take responsibility, too. Food vendors have to be creative in how they serve meals to students, and they must be flexible with DCPS in this process
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	<p>based on its needs.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ DCPS needs help with reaching the students who aren't eating school meals. DCPS has found that families send their children with a packed lunch for two main reasons: 1) it is the preference of some families that their children eat food prepared in their home and 2) some families strongly dislike the school meal options. ▪ This summer, DCPS had a settlement agreement with Chartwells that was widely publicized in the media. The actual dispute was about reimbursement that Chartwells was supposed to give to DCPS. According to the U.S. Department of Agriculture, food vendors are supposed to reimburse schools when their students eat a certain amount of food that meets national nutrition standards as an incentive for schools to encourage their students to eat healthier food. DCPS did not receive the reimbursements it should have, and that was why it entered into a settlement agreement.
<p>Group Discussion on Focus Topic</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ DCPS is collecting feedback from parents on their experience with school meals. The Parent Cabinet provided the following responses: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ High school students do not receive satisfactory portions. Their portions look like those for elementary school students, but high school students need more food. They are often being instructed to not take seconds. How is the cost for each student determined when some students only get a salad and some choose to get hot meals? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ There is an opportunity for DCPS to re-think how portion sizes could differ among grade levels. On the high school side, DCPS pays a single meal price regardless of how much a student eats. Food vendors will typically make more food than is needed, so they do not run out of food. When students takes second servings, then they are typically eating the extra food the food vendor has prepared. Other school districts make money by offering à la carte items and charging on a per item basis. This is the time for DCPS to consider these other options and evaluate if they fit the school district's needs. ○ How does the Student Ambassador program work? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Any student can be a Student Ambassador, who is a student that takes responsibility for talking with their peers about food and participates in food tastings. Each school must have at least two ambassadors, but they can have more than two. All of our current food vendors are developing automated feedback systems on tablets to get real-time feedback from students on what they ate that day. Tablets will be available in some schools starting this year. When DCPS runs student focus groups, it consists only of Student Ambassadors who participate in school meals. DCPS is looking for ways to reach students who do not participate in school meals to collect their feedback. ○ At elementary schools, students take their servings, but a lot of that food is wasted. Does DCPS monitor food waste? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Until last school year, DCPS did not monitor waste. Last year, DCPS piloted a program to do this. The expectation is to expand this program rapidly and use the data to make decisions about what is served and how the school district can differentiate its

	<p>decisions between individual schools. Different schools will have different usage patterns, and DCPS needs to think about what students at different schools want to eat.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ How does DCPS determine which food vendors will serve which schools? Specifically, which schools does DC Central Kitchen serve? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ DC Central Kitchen serves eight schools all East of the River, and Revolution Foods serves the schools that do not have fully functioning kitchens. Both of these food vendors are interested in expanding their services to DCPS. Chartwells serves about 90 schools. For the new contract, DCPS will likely group schools by geographic area. OFNS is considering the best and most logical ways to group the schools. ○ In terms of the type of contract DCPS competes, another method is to set up a contract with incentives for the food vendor when they meet certain metrics. It would be helpful for the solicitation to do some market research about what food services within DCPS looks like to help food vendors forecast their services. ○ DCPS should donate the extra food that schools would otherwise throw away. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The DC Department of Health places many constraints on what can be donated to a shelter, which makes it difficult for DCPS to donate its leftover food. ○ A few years ago at Deal Middle School, Whole Foods operated international cooking classes, which were a great way for students to try new foods. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ DCPS still has international food days throughout the school year, when food vendors serve food from a specific country on that day. These events have been a great opportunity to get students to try new food and learn more about that country and its culture. ○ One reason there is low participation is because parents don't have enough information about the food. They only see the menu. After trying the food tonight, Cabinet members are more inclined to encourage their students to eat the school meals. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ DCPS can arrange for food vendors to cater some Back to School Night events, parent organization meetings, or parent-teacher conference days, so parents have more opportunity to try this food. ○ One way DCPS could encourage more students and families to participate in school meals is by hosting a cooking competition for students and feature the winning group's recipes on the school menu. ▪ Dr. Beers will be testifying in front of City Council later this month to discuss DCPS' food service contracts. In preparation for this meeting, DCPS has been re-evaluating how the school district can change the narrative about the food it serves in its schools. ▪ The Parent Cabinet can help OFNS in its work to collect parent feedback on their experience with school meals by: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Sharing a survey with parents that asks them for their opinions on their experiences with school meals
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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Suggesting questions they think are missing from the survey ○ Recommending students to serve as Student Ambassadors
<p>Open Forum</p> <p><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"> ▪ Question: At my school last year, 14 teachers left the school, and all of the teachers that were hired were white. The concern is that there are few teachers of color to be role models for the students of color. ▪ Response: Our teacher recruitment team has many systems in place to provide principals with diverse teacher candidates. Principals can peruse a vetted pool through an online database. There are no quotas for our principals to have a diverse staff, but central office does talk to our principals about how this is important. This might be a conversation for when the principal and his or her supervisor sit down to look at the teachers and teacher retention rate at her school. ▪ Question: How will all schools implement Cornerstones like teaching every second grader how to ride a bike? ▪ Response: All teachers should have been trained in one Cornerstone by this point. In October, they will learn two additional Cornerstones. Central office has created an online professional learning community for teachers to access the tools and resources they need to implement the lessons. DCPS has raised funds to cover the costs of materials needed for Cornerstones. DCPS purchased bikes for half of the second graders in its schools, so half of the schools could ride bikes first semester and second half of schools could ride second semester. The District Department of Transportation also offered to buy bikes as part of this program. Other partners have emerged in a response to Cornerstones. The National Park Service wants to engage with DCPS in a third grade Cornerstone about navigating DC. ▪ Question: How does the recent uptick in violence relate to the schools? What is happening as far as professional development and advising teachers to identify violent behaviors or drug addictions? ▪ Response: We have a student health and wellness team that runs drug prevention and other related programs. DCPS has not done anything differently since the uptick in crime. There is limited time to train teachers, so the focus has been on instruction. We have partner agencies like the Metropolitan Police Department and the Department of Parks and Recreation that are trained in these content areas and are present in our schools. The vast majority of the spike in crime in the city is happening with 25- to 29-year-olds. DCPS' approach to this problem is that if students are in school longer, engaged with sports or other activities, then they are in a safe place away from the crime. ▪ Question: Are there any opportunities to promote opportunities for DCPS parents to consider fostering a child? There is a need in the foster family community for reliable and loving foster parents. ▪ Response: This is something that could be shared through the DCPS newsletter or other similar communication channels.
<p>Closing</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The next meeting is October 20, 2015. This will be the last meeting for Cabinet members with six month terms.