DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA
PUBLIC SCHOOLS

DCPS-BUDGET MATTERS: DEVELOPMENT OF THE FY16 BUDGET

COMMENTS MADE ON ENGAGEDCPS.ORG AND VIA THE "EVERYONE, EVERYWHERE" COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT CAMPAIGN
NOVEMBER 2014 – FEBRUARY 2015

The following comments were taken from the EngageDCPS.org website and the DCPS Everyone, Everywhere Community Engagement Campaign.

EngageDCPS.org is an interactive website DCPS uses to garner stakeholder feedback around a number of topics. From November 2014 and ending late February 2015, this site has supported DCPS' ability to receive feedback from a broader set of stakeholders who were not at the Chancellor-LSAT Budget Engagement Meetings held at Cardozo, Coolidge, and Ballou Senior High School on Tuesday, January 20, Thursday, January 22, and Tuesday, January 27, 2015 respectively.

Comments centered on the Chancellor's 3 budget priorities for SY15-16; Improving High Schools, Equity in Academic Rigor, and Empowering Males of Color. Additionally, there were 2 discussion areas added that allowed participants to share feedback in ways that could not be captured within the 3 budget priority areas – the discussion areas were 1) Best Practices in Our Schools and 2) What else would you prioritize at your school to improve student achievement?

The Everyone, Everywhere Community Engagement Campaign provided further opportunities for DCPS stakeholders to weigh in on the development of school budgets. Armed with a budget toolkit and an overview of the goals of the Campaign, stakeholders were able to host community based conversations around the Chancellor's budget priorities. This feedback is included in this summary as well.

Comments have not been adapted to maintain the integrity of each stakeholder's feedback. This is reflected in the varying formats of the comments in this document. In addition, for privacy purposes, names of individuals have been redacted.

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EQUITY IN ACADEMIC RIGOR

DCPS will institute Cornerstones Assignments which are high-quality, in-depth activities offered across the district. Resources will include:

1. *Online resources and opportunities for easier access and teacher collaboration*
2. *Engaging course materials that includes student texts, and more*
3. *Expanding student learning with access to multiple languages and arts*

Share your thoughts with us on this important topic!

Language immersion and expansion of language choices

- I posted an idea back in 2012 when I learned that my neighborhood school, Davis Elementary, was slated to close. I received zero feedback or commentary. Three years later, my neighborhood school still stands empty and lifeless. Is DCPS really serious about creating a world class educational system? My original post is entitled, *Save Davis Elementary - Make it a pilot Japanese Immersion*. Please read it. I hope someone is listening.
- Every DC child should have access to language immersion. There should be a comprehensive expansion of language options (outside the traditional Spanish, French, and Latin) to include Japanese, Korean, Chinese, ASL, Russian, and Portuguese, for examples.
- Look to the Fairfax County Public Schools as a model. Washington DC has no excuse to lag behind in global education and exposure as our city IS a world capital.

BEST PRACTICES IN OUR SCHOOLS

What programmatic offerings do you think could be improved by further investment in your school?

Career and Technical Education (CTE)
- It is difficult to require students to take a course for graduation purposes but the CTE team does not provide the staff. It turns into one teacher teaching 3 or 4 preps which is not a best practice.

Guaranteed Before and After Care in Title I schools

- Currently my school does not offer before care and has a cap on its aftercare program. While aftercare was guaranteed for those who signed up before the deadline, families on our waitlist did not have that chance and many could not enter because aftercare was capped. If we were not a Title I school, they could have paid extra to get into the program. But it seems now that we are Title I, families don't pay but there is also a cap. With before care, there is no dedicated funding and the only way the school could budget for this would be to rob from other programs. We need before and after care to compete with the charters, who all generally offer this.

Computer coding as an integral part of DCPS curriculum

- I don't understand why learning how to write computer code beginning in elementary school is not a mandatory course of study in all District public schools. Our children will be left in the dust without this critical curriculum. Soon to be considered a "common language", children without this skill as adults will be seriously disadvantaged economically in the not-so-distant future.
- Why can't our City's leadership particularly our elected officials, mandate partnerships with corporations bringing their business into our Nation's Capitol? Contracts are negotiated, so why not include "good-citizen" requirements at the on-set, in order to receive tax breaks and other incentives? DCPS should be setting national

bench-marks for public education with the financial resources flowing into the city coffers from corporations and other private sector institutions now. Where are the resources going if not to our children? Just a thought.

Software Options for Low Income Kids

- Over and over, DCPS teachers require my child to turn in Powerpoints or Word documents, which she cannot, because we cannot afford Microsoft Office. It is heartbreaking to see her distress. Like many, we use Open Office, which is as good, and costs nothing. But her teachers cannot open those files. Why should lower income students suffer lower grades and shame when the schools could just as easily install Open Office for free and stop requiring kids to use (i.e., purchase) MS Office? Open Office does everything Microsoft does, AND it is open-source software, meaning that it is developed and supported collaboratively and publicly. What a great example to set for our kids! So why not spend LESS on computer software for instructors and switch to Open Office? Or why not at least require teachers/classes using MS Office also to install Open Office so that all students could be served equally? Please, let's take the undue pressure off of kids who have "less" but want to do more.

International Awareness/Subjects

- Extensive range of foreign languages, finance courses that lead to a career in finance/economy.

Teach more history to Black students

- Teach history to Black students that came BEFORE slavery. Blacks were kings and queens, thousands of years before the slave trade and European colonialism. There was a history for people of color, before slavery. How can a black student hold their head high, if all they know is the history of Slavery and the current day history of twerking, rapping, and House Wives television shows? How can anyone walk with their head held high when they are being portrayed like this?

Exposure to things that can help their future

- Education needs to be tailored to the demands of the adult world. Students sometimes don't understand how certain subjects or lessons relate to them.

Athletics Programs

- I believe by increasing athletic programs in schools these programs may aid in a decreasing school violence and help increase student attendance. Athletic Programs teach students about respecting others, social skills, as well as team work.

HIGH SCHOOLS

How do you want to see your school change for the better?

Our high school needs a dedicated full-time principal

- For the last 18 months School Without Walls (SWW) has been sharing its principal with School Without Walls Francis Stevens. This is not beneficial for the students. It is important for the student and parent community to know that the school's best interests are being met. Our principal used to know every student in the school and every student was accustomed to him coming into classes and clubs. This no longer happens and many of the

freshman and sophomores feel the principal doesn't know them at all. The school is the best public high school in the city and if we want it to stay that way we need to have someone full-time at the helm.

SWW needs a full time principal

- SWW is the only HS in the city to share a principal. The school deserves better and needs someone FULL TIME dedicated to advocating and working for the school. The principal cannot effectively run 2 completely different schools with zero commonality except for their name. Only DCPS could think of such an illogical idea. Please give the HS the full time leader it deserves.

Create programing for High School Greenhouses

- Many of the DCPS high schools that have been updated have state-of-the-art greenhouses that are currently being underutilized because of a lack of materials, programing, and/or teacher training. These are already existing resources that could be further tapped to create opportunities to strengthen science, create environmental and STEM-based extracurricular activities and provide vocational and entrepreneurial training. The greenhouses can also be used to help students gain greater understanding of food production and health.

I would like to have an actual principal

- I go to School Without Walls and our principal is the principal of two schools. I would like to have a principal who can devote his time to our school and not have a shared principal. They're beginning to give the students at Francis-Stevens preference over other schools and that could possibly make us lose our status as a selective school.
- *(2nd commenter on this idea)* I think this is an extremely valid point. As a School Without Walls SHS graduate, I would hate to see the students of the school not get the attention they need/deserve from their school administrators.

School without Walls needs a full time principal

- It's crazy that the best performing high school in the city is sharing its principal with another school.

Thorough-going [SIC] diversity

- Our high school is wonderfully diverse. Wilson is the only general education high school with a diverse population. But within the school and its activities, pockets of segregation or racial isolation remain. Genuine diversity requires work, communication, a thoughtful approach. Can we study why some teams and activities are successfully diverse, and try to take those practices to the teams and classes that aren't? How can Wilson be genuinely welcoming to all, throughout its rich curricular and extracurricular rosters?

Full time principal - Data driven Enrollment numbers

- I am a parent of a SWWHS student. We have been sharing a principal now for 2 years, and [it] is not working out. The high school deserves a dedicated principal whose focus is improving the high school.
- Our enrollment numbers have risen dramatically over the past 5 years based on nothing but the number of seats someone thinks they can cram into the building. This is a selective high school with tons of data available to determine the appropriate enrollment based on the level of interest and ability of applicants. Instead of using data and evaluative analysis to make enrollment decisions, the school is told how many kids can be jammed into the school with no consideration regarding how it impacts the programs or the students. There should be a real

analysis done to determine the appropriate size of the school based on factors that are relevant to selective high school.

My idea would be to make sure the school is safe

- Also to make sure teachers are highly qualified and security are good their jobs to make sure safety comes first as well as staff who are also qualified for their jobs.

Provide tablets or laptops to all students

- Provide laptops or tablets to all students and purchase only digital textbooks and use the DC Network to download the textbooks. Join other Districts in requiring textbook suppliers to use a national standard.

Is it possible to have an audit the second semester?

- If a count is taken in May it will allow schools to get an accurate account of population after the transfer season.

Mindset Shift

- I want students to become self-starters and push the adults to provide a quality education daily. For the adults in the building, I would to eliminate the term "these kids" and raise the level of professionalism.

Integration of specialized programs/mainstream programming
- The integration of specialized programs within mainstreams programs in more schools will offer more diversity and opportunity to all students attending the high school. Whether it be vocational, global studies or basic humanities courses, resources can be consolidated and more efficiently used to expand high schools when programs are housed in the same building. Ward 2 lacks a high school yet has two very successful magnet/application only schools. Why not integrate a mainstream program into one of the existing programs so that students have an option to move through their feeder pattern middle schools and continue building on their strong elementary & middle school programs? Additionally, programs such as Walls, Banneker Duke Ellington should be expanded into other parts of the city and in current high schools to offer equity in quality education, particularly in areas where resources are more limited and equity in education has been lacking.

Less tolerance for riff raff

- Get rid of the kids who don't want to learn. Allow more resources for education and learning.

Teach students how to become independent and self sufficient

- Teach students how to become independent, critical thinking entrepreneurs. Stop testing the students all day long. Teach them skills that they can use in their daily lives. Put the classes back into the schools, such as woodworking or shop, plumbing. Stop the pipeline to prisons. Teach the students to honor and respect themselves and honor and respect one another. The only way that they can honor themselves is to know who they are, as a people.

A LOT

- Unfortunately, I don't even consider my neighborhood high school an option. I want to see it change with more accountability from the administrators/teachers. I want a more rigorous transparent approach such as Latin PCS.

A designated principal is essential at School Without Walls

- I'm not certain why School Without Walls HS is still sharing a principal with the Francis Stevens pre-K-8th grade school and strongly recommend DCPS leaders appropriate the necessary funds to hire a designated principal for SWW in the next budget cycle. I've lived in DC for over 25 years and now have a daughter in her junior year at Walls, so I'm knowledgeable about the challenges DCPS has faced over the past several decades. Educational resources in our city have always been stretched too thin. However, as our city's tax-base expands exponentially due to a seemingly endless influx of new business and corporations into the District, I find it difficult to comprehend why more financial resources are not available to improve public education in our Nation's Capital. Sharing a principal with another school over a mile away seems illogical and physically impossible for any one individual. Who benefits by such an arrangement? It certainly is not the SWW students, or the faculty and staff.

EMPOWERING MALES OF COLOR

Mentors
- Provide mentors that can relate to their struggle

I believe that DCPS should incorporate a mentors program

- I believe this would be a good idea because many of the males don't have positive male role models in their lives. These successful men of color can teach them the skills needed to become successful. DCPS could have local athletes, entrepreneurs, and teachers just to name a few, who could teach these young men of color the tools needed to succeed in school and life.

Mentor Program

- Create a mentorship program that pairs students with a mentor and meet on a weekly/bi-weekly basis and goes throughout the tenure until graduation.

Raise the Expectations

- Provide young men with models in a plethora of areas of interest. Also, raise the expectations and hold them accountable.

Teach young men of color the truth

- We can improve the outlook of young men of color by teaching them the TRUTH about who they are. They are more than rappers and basketball players. They should know the true history of being Kings!! Teach young men of color how to be MEN of COLOR, not how to be European men.

Include vocational programs and Mentors in our High Schools

- All district High Schools should have a vocational program. There are students who struggle academically. In order to prepare these students for life after High School which may/may not include college, we need to institute a vocational curriculum. Those students who earn certifications can immediately enter the work force after graduation. The vocational curriculum can also be an option for students to complete their volunteer hours that are mandatory for graduation. Students would not only graduate with certifications, but complete student volunteer hours which would also qualify as on the job training.

WHAT ELSE SHOULD WE PRIORITIZE AT YOUR SCHOOL TO IMPROVE STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT? WHAT SHOULD WE STOP DOING?

Equity in per-student funding -- with more for at-risk kids!

- DCPS figures on at-risk funding distribution from last year revealed some pretty stark inequalities between schools: http://tinyurl.com/mfofap7. My own school was near the bottom of the list. This data is pretty confusing (I would love to see the total budget for each school instead of just funds labeled "at-risk"), but it shows there are some real equity problems: some schools seem to get more DCPS funding, more PTA funding, and are also serving kids with more support at home. Part of the problem is that current priorities reward schools with demanding, educated families who know how to develop a grand proposal to attract funding. (My under-funded school's "proving what's possible" grant was rejected last year, and I will admit the application wasn't very visionary). What can DCPS do to fill the gaps and bring great programming to schools where the vision may not be there yet? More equitable distribution of DCPS funds per-student, with more for at-risk kids, seems a good start.

Everyone, Everywhere Community Engagement Campaign
Hosted by the Washington Teacher's Union on February 12, 2015
(Comments from this meeting are shared below)

Inequitable Per Student Funding. General education funding for local schools – i.e., with special education, ELL, and Title I funding filtered out – does not follow the student. Every year since FY 2009 has seen variations of thousands of dollars per student unrelated to academic or other student needs. Figures below are for general education only.

- Smaller schools often receive higher funding per student, but there are many exceptions, and some schools with mostly at-risk students have less per pupil than others with far fewer. In the current year, for example, Wilson High School in Ward 3 has $1,000 more per pupil funding for general education than Anacostia in Ward 8, and $1,200 more than Eastern in Ward 6. Deal Middle School in Ward 3 has more than Hart in Ward 8 and Kelly Miller in Ward 7. Mann Elementary in Ward 3 has more than Houston in Ward 7. The lowest funded elementary school in the city is that with highest percentage of at-risk students -- Hendley in Ward 8.
- After eliminating the extremes, the approximate gaps between the second highest and second lowest funded schools at each level range from 20% to 37% per pupil : elementary -- $3,500; preschool-8 -- $2,300; middle school -- $2,600; high school --$3,800.
- DCPS awards extra funds to schools with small numbers of low income and special education students[1].
- Selective ("application") high schools receive about $1,800 more funding per pupil than neighborhood high schools.
- There is almost no correlation between funding and the percentage of at-risk students, except at the high school level, where DCPS actually disfavors schools with high percentages of at-risk students. This is true even when Title I funding is added to local general education funds.
- 40 lowest performing: elementary and PS-8 schools received only slightly higher per pupil funding than others -- $175-$250, while middle and high schools received lower per pupil funding than higher performing schools.
- By ward: Ward 8 students in grades 1-8 received the lowest average per pupil funding in the city.

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[1] "Per pupil minimum funding" is based on total school funding, including special education, ELL, and Title I, thus eliminating schools with large numbers of such students. All but one of the nine recipient schools are located in wealthy neighborhoods.

No allowance for teacher planning periods in secondary schools. In allocating teachers, DCPS does not recognize teacher planning periods in secondary schools, but assumes that every teacher teaches every period of the school day. In elementary schools teacher planning periods are covered by "specials," namely art, music, and PE teachers, who are allocated separately, on top of the regular pupil/teacher allocation ratio. But in secondary schools, these teachers are included in the regular pupil/teacher allocation ratio. The pupil/teacher staffing ratio for high schools is 1/24, which means average class size of 29-32, depending on the school's scheduling model. There are also several elementary and education campuses without special resource teachers which needs to be addressed. For instance, this year alone our findings reflect that 79 of the 105 DCPS schools have an art teacher leaving 26 campuses without an art teacher. In addition, there are 23 schools without PE teachers.

Middle Grades Funding Especially Inequitable. DCPS officials used new at-risk student funding to add millions of dollars to middle school and education campus budgets. Those with enrollment under 300 receive two extra middle school teachers and the rest three.
All, no matter the size of their middle grades enrollment, receive a full-time counselor, extended day funding of $100,000, and special program funding of $133,000.

- Nine of the education campuses have fewer than 100 students in grades 6-8, with one of these having only 10, but all are receiving two extra teachers, a full-time counselor and $233,000 in extra program funding, the same as Johnson Middle School with 283 students. Kelly Miller and Hart Middle Schools with about 575 students receive the same plus a third extra teacher.
- The elimination of many middle schools in favor of PS-8 schools has spread the 6,871 DCPS students of middle school age across 32 schools, (19 of them PK-8), an average of 215 per school.
- This approach seems to be the most expensive and inefficient way possible to improve the depth of middle grades programming.   Although middle schools are not much more costly, the PreSchool-8 schools are extraordinarily costly to operate: $11,387 per middle grades student for general education compared to $8,785 for those in middle schools.

Budget Process. In order to have budget transparency and to ensure that funding is spent efficiently, the public needs to be given a much earlier start and more involvement in the process. Most school systems begin their budget process in the late fall, with the presentation of a superintendent's proposed budget to which parents and community react. These budgets include detailed information about enrollment, trends in revenues and expenditures, detailed break-outs and cross-tabulations within budget categories, and explanations of what each office does and the basis on which resources are allocated to schools. A period of debate follows with changes in the proposed budget, particularly where public reaction is strong. The final budget is then set and reductions are made to balance it if necessary ("budget as adopted").

When DCPS became just another executive agency of the DC government in 2007, parents and community essentially lost this kind of opportunity to influence school spending. DCPS asks what people want ahead of time in a general way, but does not involve anyone from the public in basic budget policy decisions. Rather they are told in late winter what their local school budgets are, this year without even an explanation of the basis for the allocation. There is no opportunity to comment on or protest the basis. LSATs have a few days to work with the principal with very limited options on allocating the schools funding since most positions are required. The rest of the school budget is unavailable until the Mayor's proposed budget comes out, with sorely inadequate information, and too late to respond to public concerns. Council members have proven extremely reluctant to make changes, especially given the lateness of the hour, with local school budgets already set.

The DC Code mandates that the Chancellor's proposed budget be made available three weeks before the release of the Mayor's proposed budget, but DCPS and the CFO have consistently disregarded this law[2]. This year there were only two weeks between the Mayor's budget and the public hearing, and in this period new budget amounts were announced for about one-third of the local schools. Data apart from the budget book were available for only a few days. This schedule prevents more than the most minimal analysis and public information. Effectively parents and community are excluded by late and inadequate information and an extremely foreshortened schedule.

Budget Transparency. The new format in the city's budget books carries out the useful function of combining information that previously appeared in three separate sets of documents—the budget book, the local school budgets, and the DCPS "budget guide." It has possibilities but unfortunately is not yet useful for the public or independent analysts.

Problems:

- The three-way categorization of central/schools/ school support is meaningless because "school support" is a mix of central office bureaucracy, non-instructional services, central office instructional support, and direct services to students. The format does not provide an accurate depiction of the resources in schools or in central offices. We would be much better informed with the kinds of categories used in standard educational cost accounting elsewhere, for example, central administration, central instructional support, non-instructional support, and local school budget.
- The "program/activity" categories seem to be a mix of organizational units and functions. The lack of organizational units in the published budget materials is a long-standing flaw in the city budget, but it is not helped by labeling some of them as "activities." We need both organizational units and program/activities, separately and cross-tabulated.
- Most definitions of the "program/activity" categories are too vague to be informative. What are the definitions used by DCPS CFO and human resources officials when categorizing expenditures and positions for reporting purposes? If they do not exist, they should be created; if they do, they should be part of the budget.
- There are no comparative figures for last year's actual expenditures and this year's current budget. Trend analysis is impossible.
- The basis for allocating resources to schools is not provided. The criteria of the "Comprehensive Staffing Model" – or hopefully a better model -- should be part of the budget. DCPS never published the table for FY 2015.

RECOMMENDATIONS AND GENERAL CONCERNS FOR EACH BUDGET PRIORITY

Discussion Points on Budget Priority: Improving High Schools

- Schedules not in effect when advisories start during every advisory change; spend funds on training principals and school administrators how to develop and implement master schedules.
- Student-teacher ratio at the high schools should be fixed and improved to create smaller learning communities
- Free up dollars spent on administrator salaries; there are way too many administrators at some schools, i.e. four administrators at a school with only 400 students is a waste of money that could be used to truly improve schools.

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[2] § 38-2831 (c) No later than 21 days before the Mayor's submission of the District's budget and financial plan to the Council, the Chancellor shall, annually, make available on the DCPS website and post at each school a detailed estimate, in accordance with this section, of the amount of money required to operate the public schools for the ensuing year, including preliminary school-by-school budgets.

- In-house suspension program.ms are underfunded and will never be successful without the appropriate funding for quality staff and training.
- Funding is needed for supplies and to add and maintain technology infrastructure and warranties.
- Swimming instructors are needed; new pools have been installed but there are no instructors to teach students how to swim and because of this students have no access to the pools; wasted investment if pools are not accessible to students.
- Funding needed to recruit and hire quality instructional leaders for all schools; principals and school administration with an instructional background.

Discussion Points On Budget Priority: Equity In Academic Rigor

- Funding needed to create and implement a uniform curriculum, uniform scope and sequence, uniform Cornerstone assessments with associated supplies and supportive quality curricula resources accessible to all students in DCPS every classroom
- Funding needed to procure updated, relevant, anti-bias textbooks and sufficient manipulatives available at every school for every student and teach
- Funding needed for supplies and to add and maintain technology infrastructure and warranties
- Funding needed to create and sustain effective and efficient technology integration and application beyond "Google" searches
- Reduce the number of instructional superintendents to recover much needed dollars for adequately supporting this priority (There are currently 9 Instructional Superintendents for 105 schools (ration of 1:12) plus two Deputy Chiefs of School and one Chief of School plus their staff. By comparison, Montgomery County has 6 for 160 schools (ration of 1:26))
- General agreement and cause for concern: There is no evidence that teacher bonuses have any correlation to improved student performance

Discussion Points on Budget Priority: Empowering Males of Color

- Urban Prep school should NOT be an application school
- Some of the greatest challenges in addressing males of color, include: Family support
- Parent Engagement Truancy
- Early Intervention (PK Elementary); Some students being sent home in PK/K; need for restorative practice
- To support this work with $100,000, we should hire and train parents as partner
- General agreement and cause for concern: There has been no evidence that this project and school concept is supported by documentation of measurable success based on the marginal outcomes gained in Chicago. Nor has there been collaboration with the WTU to address the challenges facing male students of color