

## Chancellor's Parent Cabinet: Meeting Notes

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Tuesday, June 10, 2014

5:30 – 8:00 PM

DCPS Central Office

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### Overview:

#### Meeting Goals

1. Dispel myths about special education programs in DCPS
2. Provide a status update on progress DCPS has made
3. Share opportunities for Parent Cabinet members to partner with DCPS
4. Collect feedback on DCPS' Parent Engagement Project

#### Additional Resources

Materials referenced during the meeting as relevant follow-up reading:

- [DCPS Programs and Resources Guide](#)
- Segments from *Including Samuel*
  - [Including Samuel](#) (3 minutes)
  - [Including Samuel](#) (12 minutes)

#### Attendees

- *DCPS Chancellor's Parent Cabinet Members*: Susan Boa, Gary Carleton, Olivia Chase, Craig DeWolfe, David Galbraith, Sirraya Grant, Vivian Guerra, Christena Howell, Laura Levine, Rahul Mereand-Sinha, Gloria Norman-Okojie, Dan Rosenthal, Leslie Scott, Idella Simpson, Thomas Strike, Emily Walton, and Martin Welles
- *Not in attendance*: Sharona Bean Robinson, Angelina Bradley, Patrick Clowney, Kevonya Dickens, Marcio Duffles, Andrew Rowe, Aquila Watson, and Arthur Yarbrough
- Chancellor Kaya Henderson
- *DCPS Office of Family and Public Engagement*: Josephine Bias Robinson, Shanita Burney, Jen Skates
- *Speakers*: Dr. Nathaniel Beers, Chief of the Office of Specialized Instruction (OSI); Dona Watson, Deputy Chief for Compliance, OSI; Tom Flanagan, Deputy Chief for Inclusive Programming, OSI; and Donna Anthony, Chief of Staff, OSI

## Notes:

Issue	Comments
Welcome and Review	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ For many years, the Blackman Jones Consent Decree dictated much of how Special Education programs needed to operate within DCPS.</li> </ul>
Focus Topic: Special Education in DCPS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Dr. Nathaniel Beers is the Chief of the Office of Specialized Instruction (OSI). Prior to joining DCPS, Dr. Beers was the Medical Director of the Children’s Health Center at the Children’s National Medical Center. He also serves on the Mayor’s Advisory Committee on Child Welfare and the Children with Special Health Care Needs Advisory Board.</li> <li>▪ His team is working on expanding high quality special education programs targeting areas such as Autism, Early Stages, Emotional Disabilities, and transitional services for students that graduate from DCPS.</li> <li>▪ Dr. Beers introduced his team members: Dona Watson, Deputy Chief for Compliance; Tom Flanagan, Deputy Chief for Inclusive Programming; and Donna Anthony, Chief of Staff. Dr. Beers and his team provided counter arguments to common myths often associated with special education, including:               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Separate is better</li> <li>○ Special education students cannot be disciplined</li> <li>○ DCPS pulls hundreds of students from nonpublic schools each year</li> <li>○ DCPS does not let families into the classroom</li> </ul> </li> <li>▪ 7,600 DCPS students receive special education services, which is a decrease from last year. Dr. Beers was hired to help the district identify students at an early age and create better measures to identify older students so they are not over-identified.</li> </ul>
Group Discussion	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Parents presented a number of questions to Dr. Beers and his team, including:               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Is Autism on the rise in DCPS?                   <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ The number of students in DCPS with Autism has doubled since Dr. Beers first started, while the number of students with Autism at nonpublic schools has remained consistent over the last six years.</li> </ul> </li> <li>○ About 15% of DCPS students receive special education services. Is that standard for urban areas?                   <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ DCPS is above the 12% average of other urban areas.</li> </ul> </li> <li>○ What would we consider as a best practice with respect to special education practices?                   <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ This depends on the area of special education being examined: students from low-income families tend to need special education services at higher rates. DCPS has a history of over-identifying black male students and under-identifying Latino female students, which is reflective of a trend that typically</li> </ul> </li> </ul> </li> </ul>

	<p>identifies students who are more vocal.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ What is the problem with over-identifying students? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Middle school and high school students are identified as needing special education services even if they do not have a psychiatric diagnosis because of the criteria that defines special education needs is vague. Historically, students have been identified in their grade-level cohorts, and are students who typically act out in the classroom. To ensure the proper students are being identified, OSI has set more clearly defined criteria and is working with the Office of Teaching and Learning to develop reading interventions for young students, so they do not fall behind and develop behavioral issues in the classroom in later grades because they do not understand the material.</li> </ul> </li> <li>○ How is funding allocated for special education students? Does DCPS get more funding for special education students? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Schools do receive additional Uniform Per Student Funding Formula funds based on the number of special education students it serves. This allocation is adjusted based on the level of support needed from DCPS based on disability type and number of students. DCPS is working on restructuring this allocation so it can support schools in placing students in the least restrictive environments. DCPS continues to evaluate its funding model. There is some clustering of programs, so resources can be shared, and every stand-alone middle school has resources in place to support this structure.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
<p><b>Closing and Next Steps</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ The Parent Cabinet Conference Call for June is cancelled.</li> <li>▪ The June DCPS Call hosted by the Enrollment Street Teams is scheduled for Friday June 27, 2014 from 12:00-12:30 PM. The call will include a direct call to action for Cabinet Members.</li> </ul>

Next Meeting Date – July 21, 2014, 5:30-8:00 PM