



Chancellor’s Parent Cabinet Meeting Notes

October 20, 2014
5:30-8:00 PM
DCPS Central Office

Meeting Goals

1. Understand the key initiatives the Office of Youth Engagement leads and how they impact student attendance, behavior, and support.
2. Provide input on how to best engage parents and families in DCPS’ attendance work and obtain additional community support.

Materials Provided During the Meeting

- DCPS Parent Handbook, Second Edition

Attendees

- *DCPS Chancellor Parent Cabinet Members:* Sharona Bean Robinson, Susan Boa, Gary Carleton, Olivia Chase, Patrick Clowney, David Galbraith, Vivian Guerra, Laura Levine, Rahul Mereand-Sinha, Andrew Rowe, Idella Simpson, Emily Walton, and Martin Welles
- *Not in attendance:* Craig DeWolfe, Marcio Duffles, Sirraya Grant, Christena Howell, Dan Rosenthal, Leslie Scott, and Thomas Strike
- Chancellor Kaya Henderson
- *Office of Family and Public Engagement:* Josephine Bias Robinson and Shanita Burney
- *Speakers:* John Davis, Chief of Schools (OCOS); Arthur Fields, Deputy Chief of Youth Engagement, OCOS; Dexter McCoy, Assistant to the Chief, OCOS

Notes:

Issue	Comments
Welcome and Review	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Cabinet Members who participated in additional engagement opportunities were recognized for their work, including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Standing Ovation Teachers selection panel ○ Digital Promise League of Innovative Schools panel ▪ The Chancellor recognized the recent passing of Father John Payne, Duke Ellington School of the Arts Principal. ▪ Chief of Communications Ernestine Benedict was introduced to the group. ▪ Tonight’s meeting topic is on the Office of Youth Engagement and their work to ensure attendance is a priority for students and the metrics the office uses to evaluate district-wide progress.

Focus Topic:
Student Attendance

- The Office of Youth Engagement (OYE) is a division within the Office of the Chief of Schools (OCOS) and is focused on improving student attendance. This used to be calculated by using a measure called Average Daily Attendance (ADA). This measure was flawed because it would count excused absences. OYE now uses a measure called In Seat Attendance (ISA), which counts any student who has missed class, even if there is an excused absence.
- City Council has recently introduced measures to change the truancy policies, specifically altering the number of days a student can miss school before being counted as truant. DCPS has been working to educate City Council that students are not always truant because there are not clear guidelines. Rather, there need to be more consistent city-wide support and wraparound services to reduce the number of truanies. DCPS has changed its policy from 60/40 to 80/20 meaning students must attend 80% of their school day to be counted for attendance. DCPS also began considering truancy interventions that addressed all forms of truancy to ensure students were receiving comprehensive support from their school district.
- The goals for increasing ISA are to reduce truancy, reduce excused absences, and reduce suspensions.
- Schools must prioritize these strategies. Ross Elementary School and Simon Elementary School are two schools that have excelled in implementing DCPS initiatives to improve their attendance, including:
 - Incentivizing attendance by offering computer carts in addition to other SWAG
 - Creating a student committee that met with school leadership and advised on what inspired them to attend school
- There will be some flexibility to account for circumstances, such as if students miss class for field trips or other school-related reasons.
- DCPS makes the ultimate decision on the school year calendar and consults with the Washington Teachers' Union (WTU).
- A Cabinet Member explained that one reason students miss school is because there is not a strong partnership with parents at all schools and not all parents feel welcomed in their schools. DCPS staff explained the district is implementing a number of initiatives to address this issue, including working with outside partners to train school leaders on connecting with families of all types in authentic and meaningful ways, such as home visits, the new principal evaluations, etc. The goal with is for local schools to improve their relationships and build trust with the families they serve, so everyone feels welcomed and valued.

<p>Discussion Questions</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Cabinet Members offered suggestions on how DCPS can better encourage a culture of attendance at home, including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Working with schools to educate parents on who they can communicate with at the school level. Parents want to ring the alarm the fastest and go straight to principals. In most cases, parents should be directed to other parents or other staff members who can answer their initial questions. ○ Some children skip school because of issues they're dealing with at home. For example, sometimes students have to take care of their parents. ○ Students should also be key players in creating a culture of attendance. Some schools have student focus groups. Eventually there will be speakers who address the group, and the students themselves will present at various school functions. ○ Schools need their own communication officer because a lot of institutional information leaves schools when parents leave.
<p>Closing</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ OFPE is expanding its team and hiring Community Action Team Coordinators who will be field based representatives. Ms. Burney will send the position description to the group so they can make recommendations for potential candidates. ▪ Ms. Benedict shared some opportunities for Cabinet Members to engage with her office regarding the communications plan around attendance initiatives.

Next Meeting Date – November 11, 2014 from 5:30-8:00 PM