GOVERNMENT OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA
District of Columbia Public Schools

Open Government Report 2014

To institutionalize a culture of transparent and open government, accountability, and to expand opportunities for resident participation and collaboration, this Report describes how the District of Columbia Public Schools (DCPS) has and will continue to develop and enhance transparency, public participation, and collaboration. In accordance with Mayor's Order 2014-170, this report addresses the following topics:

1) **Transparency**
DCPS has implemented various affirmative measures to improve transparency in response to the Mayor's Order 2014-170. These include the following specific steps:

- DCPS currently shares information with the public through the DCPS website. DCPS also distributes press releases, which are posted on the DCPS website. DCPS works with local print and broadcast media. , DCPS has an active and large following on social media. Facebook and Twitter accounts allow DCPS to communicate announcements of interest to parents and the public, including announcements regarding student achievement, weather related incidents, and other timely information. The social media accounts also allow for parents to communicate with DCPS quickly and easily and for DCPS to respond accordingly. DCPS also shares notices of rulemaking through publication in the DC Register.

- DCPS has a Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) team responsible for meeting DCPS's obligations pursuant to District FOIA requirements. The DCPS FOIA team consists of staff within Office of the General Counsel (OGC) and is responsible for processing all DCPS FOIA requests. The process is overseen by the DCPS FOIA Officer in OGC. Currently, the DCPS FOIA team performs an intake process by reviewing the request, generating an acknowledgment letter, and forwarding the request to the appropriate DCPS office or department for the requested information or data. Upon receipt, the DCPS FOIA team reviews the information or data and generates a response to the requestor pursuant to applicable laws. The DCPS Office of Data and Strategy (ODS) in conjunction with the DCPS Office of General Counsel (OGC) plan to review documents for publication in the DCPS FOIA Xpress reading room. The reading room is a repository for documents and data that are often requested by the public or that DCPS wishes to affirmatively share with the public. DCPS is not a "public body" as that term is defined by the Open Meetings Act.

DCPS has a well-organized and user-friendly website which includes an informative Open Government link. In order for DCPS to increase access to information, DCPS plans to add a link on its Open Government page for the DC Official Code - Title 38 - Educational Institutions and the DC Municipal Regulations - Title 5 - Education. DCPS will also continue to update its Organizational Charts and Strategic Plans as changes are made to each document. DCPS currently has select datasets on its website for the following categories: enrollment, graduation rates, and DC CAS results. DCPS is working closely with the Office of the State Superintendent of Education (OSSE) and the Office of the Chief Technology Officer (OCTO) to identify additional data that OSSE and OCTO expect to publish online later this year. If no new data from DCPS is selected to be included this year, DCPS will continue to work with OSSE and OCTO to identify additional data appropriate to publish in 2015.

2)   **Public Engagement and Participation**
DCPS has taken a number of steps to enhance opportunities for the public to participate in agency decision-making, and is working to further expand its public engagement and participation efforts.

- DCPS publishes Notices of Proposed or Emergency Rulemaking and Notices of Final Rulemaking in the *DC Register* as required by DC law. The *DC Register* is publicly available on the website of the DC Office of Documents and Administrative Issuances (ODAI) at www.dcregs.dc.gov. In some instances, rulemaking notices are also posted on the DCPS website. Currently DCPS has two Final Rulemakings posted on its websites involving new grievance procedures enacted by DCPS in 2014 they may be accessed using the following links:

  http://dcps.dc.gov/DCPS/Files/downloads/ABOUT%20DCPS/DCPS%20Student%20Grievance%20Procedure10314.pdf

  http://dcps.dc.gov/DCPS/Files/downloads/ABOUT%20DCPS/DCPS%20Parent%20Guardian%20and%20Visitor%20Grievance%20Procedures.pdf .

  DCPS endeavors to improve its process for posting proposed rules and regulations on its website and will create a specific section on the website for this purpose. DCPS will also create an online mechanism for securing public comment, if permitted by ODAI. Currently, most comments are received in writing, pursuant to required instructions listed in each rulemaking that allow for comments to be sent to the Chancellor.

- The Office of Communications and the Office of Family and Public Engagement (OFPE) serve as a link between key stakeholders and DCPS. These offices serve the community through providing regular information and

opportunities for engagement with families, partners, and community stakeholders to build and strengthen critical relationships that improve the educational environment for our students, inform the development of resources, and drive student academic success.

Methods of public outreach include: the DCPS website (dcps.dc.gov), social media, and more traditional methods such as print advertising and fliers posted in the community.

- The DCPS website provides access to grade.dc.gov and to email addresses for the Chancellor, DCPS executive and managerial staff, and school principals. Through the use of Connect Ed, robo-calls, robo-texts, and mass mailings, DCPS sends out mass communications involving school issues and emergency communications such as weather-related school closures, which are also, communicated through DCPS social media accounts.

- EngageDCPS.org is a website that allows parents and stakeholders to submit comments and ideas about the annual DCPS budget process.

- Stakeholders can view rebroadcasts of ward-based community meetings about local school matters on DKN District Cablevision/Channel 99.

- The DCPS Parent Handbook is distributed to each DCPS school site for distribution to families. The Handbook is produced in a family-friendly, easy to read format that includes content related to academic and discipline policies; strategies families can use to support their children's learning and to partner with their school; and information about parent services, testing, health services, and graduation requirements, among other useful topics. The Handbook is also available on the DCPS website in 5 translated versions.

- DCPS hosts an annual Chancellor's Address, providing an opportunity for DC families, community members, students, and partners to spend an evening with the Chancellor and her leadership team. The event generally features a speech from the Chancellor outlining DCPS priorities, followed by a reception and "gallery walk" of DCPS programs.

- The Chancellor participates in a Living Room Chats across the city, which are small intimate discussions (typically 10-15 people) hosted in the home of a DCPS parent. These discussions are an opportunity for the Chancellor to connect with a variety of families and community members, while sharing information and answering questions about DCPS programming and initiatives in a setting that encourages discussion and the free flow of ideas.

- The Chancellor's Parent Cabinet allows parent leaders to directly inform the Chancellor about system-wide policies and programs affecting schools. Comprised of 15-20 members, the Parent Cabinet meets monthly.

- The Office of Data and Strategy (ODS) delivers stakeholder surveys on an annual basis to school-based staff, parents, and students. This proactive approach to understanding DCPS families and students helps DCPS gauge the effectiveness of academic and extracurricular programming, communications strategies, facilities, and other resources. Results from DCPS Stakeholder Satisfaction Surveys can be viewed at: http://dcps.dc.gov/DCPS/About+DCPS/Satisfaction+Stakeholder+Surveys

- DCPS periodically hosts and participates in large scale, district-wide engagement meetings, activities, and events to share information about key priorities, solicit feedback and encourage relationship building at the school level. In 2013, DCPS participated in Council hearings, public office hours and office hours for affected ANCs, and ward-based community meetings during the School Consolidation and Reorganization Engagement effort. Also in 2013, DCPS began holding regular meetings with the Ward 5, 7, and 8 Education Councils as a way of proactively engaging the members of the Education Councils. DCPS holds an annual Public Budget Hearing with the Chancellor to provide information on the overall budget process and to gather feedback on priorities from key stakeholders.

3) **Collaboration**
DCPS collaborates extensively with other government agencies.
- DCPS regularly engages in high levels of contact and collaboration with the following District Government partners: DC Public Library (DCPL), the Department of Parks and Recreation (DPR), the Metropolitan Police Department (MPD), the Department of Mental Health (DMH), the Deputy Mayor for Education (DME), the Deputy Mayor for Health and Human Services (DHHS), the DC Housing Authority (DCHA), the Office on Aging, DC Child and Family Services Agency (CFSA), the Department of General Services (DGS), District Department of Transportation (DDOT), the Office of the Attorney General (OAG), and the City Council.

- The DCPS City Council Liaison is responsible for engaging the City Council on matters that impact DCPS and ensuring strong lines of communication between DCPS and the City Council. The City Council Liaison provides assistance to City Council staff with resolving DCPS-related constituent concerns and providing feedback on how proposed bills may affect DCPS.

- DCPS and CFSA collaborate regularly on a variety of matters that impact the District's children. As mandatory reporters of child abuse or neglect under the District's mandatory reporter law, many DCPS employees must take CFSA-provided mandatory reporter training each year as a condition of their employment with DCPS. Furthermore, DCPS school-based employees and legal staff in OGC routinely communicate with CFSA employees and respond

to requests for education records and other information regarding DCPS students who are the subject of CFSA cases and investigations.

- DCPS engages in constant collaboration with MPD, to provide the safest learning environment possible for students, families, and staff. DCPS has a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with MPD that stations MPD school resource officers at schools. The MOU also provides for contract security guards, stationed at each school under the direction of MPD and the DCPS Office of School Security (OSS). The MPD Youth Investigations Division and the Patrol Services and School Security Bureau work collaboratively with OSS to ensure student safety and to address issues of truancy and criminal activity involving students.

- DCPS works collaboratively with DME and OSSE in the areas of policy, rulemaking, and high-level decision making, to ensure that objectives are met that are consistent across the agencies and provide a clear cohesive message to stakeholders and parents about educational objectives and priorities. DCPS Rulemakings must be approved by DME and enforced by OSSE. Further, there are areas where OSSE also provides monitoring and support of DCPS functions.

- The DCPS OGC staff regular collaborates with OAG, Public Safety, Civil Litigation, Equity, and Public Enforcement divisions. OAG represents the legal interests of DCPS in all litigation at the judicial level, including civil tort actions, suits arising out of employee appeals, suits arising out of special education due process claims, juvenile criminal cases, and affirmative litigation in cases of fraud committed against DCPS.

- DCPS has partnered with DCPL on professional development for teachers and schools; a summer reading pilot with 9 schools; focus groups to discuss children and teen patron spaces for the upcoming renovation of the main DPL MLK Library; the DC Reads program; and revising general reading recommendation reading lists for each grade level.

DCPS also plays a key role in the following programs and initiatives in conjunction with other city agencies:

- **Safe Passages Partnership**
  DCPS (OSS and OFPE) collaborates with DDOT, MPD, DPR-Roving Leaders Program, and Metro Transit Police as a part of the Safe Passages Neighborhood Initiative to address safety issues facing students traveling across neighborhoods to attend school. A major safe passages effort was undertaken leading up to the school consolidation plan in 2013.Recommended "safe passage" route were developed through a collaborative process, including:
  - Receiving feedback from school leaders on routes;

- Meetings with each agency to gather feedback on safe routes and to plan respective agency roles;
- Walking each recommended route and making adjustments to routes;
- Development of a communications plan with feedback from stakeholders; and
- Communications with impacted families through posting on the DCPS website, distribution at schools, and through partner agencies (DPR and DCPL).

- **Truancy Taskforce**
  DCPS is a key member of the Truancy Taskforce, co-chaired by the Deputy Mayor for Education and the Deputy Mayor for Health and Human Services. The taskforce is charged with developing and implementing initiatives to reduce truancy and promote school attendance in the District.

- **DCPS School Boundaries and Student Assignment Policies**
  DME led the process to review school boundary policies and practices, identify challenges, analyze data, and recommend solutions. DCPS played a critical role in serving on the Student Assignment and School Boundaries Review Process Committee by providing information and resources to DME to support the committee's work, and by leading community engagement efforts to communicate the proposed Student Assignment plan to District stakeholders.

- **One City Youth Initiative (OCYI)**
  DCPS has participated in the Mayor's initiative designed to align summer programs across the city in response to a needs assessment for youth services in high-crime target areas.