

**GOVERNMENT OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA**  
**District of Columbia Public Schools (DCPS)**



Joint Public Hearing on  
**“Teacher and Principal Turnover & Retention”**

Testimony of  
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Chancellor

Before the  
Committee of the Whole  
The Honorable Phil Mendelson, Chairman  
and  
Committee on Education  
The Honorable David Grosso, Chairperson

Council of the District of Columbia  
Room 412  
John A. Wilson Building  
1350 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW  
Washington, DC 20004



## **Introduction**

Good morning Chairman Mendelson, Chairman Grosso, members of the Education Committee, Committee of the Whole and staff. I am honored to testify today and share my appreciation for the attention being paid to the important issue of recruiting, developing, and retaining effective teachers and leaders in the District of Columbia Public Schools. As I have shared before, I come from a family of educators, which has shaped my belief in the power of an excellent education and solidified my commitment to our young people. At DCPS, we work diligently every day to ensure that every student feels loved, challenged, and prepared.

Over the past decade, DCPS students have consistently demonstrated gains on the Partnership for Assessment of Readiness for College and Careers (PARCC) and the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), maintaining the district's status as the fastest improving urban school district. Because of our progress, DCPS now enrolls more than 51,000 students across all eight wards. We also know that great educators do much more than academics. They are mentors, cheerleaders, and tireless champions for our students. I am confident, that with the support of our teachers and leaders, DCPS can continue to accelerate student progress in Washington, DC.

## **Progress and Current Results**

At the heart of this work is our unwavering commitment to providing every student a high-quality teacher in every classroom and a great school in every neighborhood. As a district, DCPS has prioritized research-based initiatives to retain our best teachers and school leaders, and I am pleased to share the results of this work with you today.

Amazing teachers across the district like Alysha Butler, the National History Teacher of the Year, and Lakeisha Brown, the DCPS Teacher of the Year, continue to choose to return to DCPS year after year to support the success of our students. We have seen our retention rate continue to rise, for example:

- For School Year 2019-2020, 93 percent of DCPS effective and highly effective teachers returned to DCPS. Additionally, 84 percent of our effective and highly effective teachers returned to the same school.
- When looking at our overall retention, for School Year 2019-2020, 76 percent of our teachers returned to the same school where they taught the previous school year, a nearly eight percentage point increase in retention from 10 years ago.
- We know that great teachers support our work to eliminate opportunity gaps. At DCPS, the retention rate of highly effective educators holds true across our high-poverty schools with 90 percent retention rate and low-poverty schools with 91 percent retention rate. DCPS' retention of our best teachers for our students furthest from opportunity runs against national trends, which frequently see teachers leaving high-poverty schools.

DCPS also continues to strengthen our school leader retention efforts. We recognize the critical and impactful role our school leaders play when it comes to student success. Entering School Year 2019-2020 from School Year 2018-2019, 93 percent of principals returned to their schools, which is an increase from the prior year and represents over 100 school leaders.

## **Human Capital Strategy: Recruit, Grow, Retain**

Strong leadership is a critical lever for establishing a positive school culture and accelerating student achievement, and we know that high-quality teachers and leaders are the foundation of a strong school community. In fact, research has shown that teacher effectiveness is the most impactful school-based factor influencing student achievement.





DCPS has built systems and structures that intentionally give our educators a voice within our school system. Through the Chancellor's monthly Principal and Teacher Advisory Boards, as well as, content-specific teacher focus groups, educators provide input on the district's priorities and raise issues for consideration. As a result of these engagement and our commitment to high-quality teachers, DCPS has made consistent investments in recruitment, growth, and retention strategies.

### ***Recruitment and Selection***

DCPS knows that recruiting and retaining high-quality teachers and leaders is at the core of our work to provide an excellent and equitable education to all students. DCPS is focused on recruiting racially, culturally, and linguistically diverse educators who:

- Are prepared in their content area and can relate to our students;
- Can provide a well-rounded education that makes every child feel affirmed and included; and
- Offer multiple perspectives to help students gain a better understanding of the world around them.

At DCPS, we look for dynamic teachers who promote excellence and are passionate about honing their craft. Our recruitment and selection team leverages a multifaceted strategy to attract applicants, including marketing and advertising, proactive sourcing, campus and community partnerships, and talent pipelines to recruit teachers in high-need content areas. DCPS teacher candidates complete a rigorous, competency-based assessment process, including interviews and model lessons that are evaluated in alignment with [DCPS' standards for excellent instruction](#).

DCPS works to ensure our teacher demographics reflect the students we serve by improving teacher pipelines, especially for bilingual teachers and male educators of color. DCPS has made a concerted effort to attract candidates of color by recruiting at historically black colleges and universities and Hispanic-serving institutions and through investments such as the Male Educators of Color Collaborative. For the first time, last year, DCPS sent a team of recruiters and school leaders to Puerto Rico to recruit bilingual educators. As a result of these and other efforts, last school year, 14.1 percent of DCPS teachers self-identified as Black or Latino/Hispanic males, far surpassing the national average of four percent.

We set a high bar for candidates, with a commitment to continuous feedback and opportunities to lead without leaving the classroom, and, while the nation is experiencing teacher shortages, we are proud that our district continues to attract world-class teachers as evidenced by the record more than 3,000 teacher applications we received for School Year 2019-2020, which has increased consistently in recent years.

This standard of excellence holds true for our school leaders as well, and DCPS has cultivated pathways to school leadership. DCPS partners with Georgetown University to offer robust professional development opportunities to DCPS leaders. Through that program, Assistant Principals have the opportunity to complete the DCPS Leadership and Innovation Aspiring Principal Program, which is a rigorous certificate program designed to prepare them with adaptive leadership and change management skills.


### **Growth and Development**

As an essential part of our retention strategy, DCPS has taken steps to support our educators in continuing to improve their practice with an emphasis on professional growth at every stage of their career.

Beginning in 2012-13, DCPS reaffirmed our commitment to professional growth through LIFT, a five-stage career ladder that provides high-performing teachers with opportunities for advancement inside the



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classroom, as well as additional responsibility and increased recognition and compensation. At its core, LIFT is about honoring teachers as professionals, and making DCPS a place where teachers at any point in their careers can continue to learn and grow in an environment where they are respected and appreciated.

Furthering our commitment, in 2016-17, DCPS introduced LEAP, our system of professional growth and improvement for teachers. LEAP has served as the DCPS vehicle to support all teachers in becoming true experts at teaching the DCPS Common Core-aligned curriculum and other course-specific content. Rooted in professional development best practices, LEAP is job-embedded and recurrent. Specifically, teachers engage in a cycle of development in small, content-specific professional learning communities (LEAP Teams) led by school-based content experts. In recent years, DCPS has also enhanced LEAP to provide training that builds teachers' cultural and social awareness.

DCPS is also committed to growth through IMPACT, our school-based staff evaluation system. All teachers have access to online trainings that provide support around DCPS' instructional expectations. Additionally, DCPS provides a video library, which has a growing collection of over 50 videos that offer snapshots of exemplary DCPS classroom instruction across grade levels and content areas with play-by-plays of key teacher actions.

We know that the key to our district's progress is supporting our dedicated school leaders. Through the Cluster Support Model, principals are connected to a team that provides aligned support across content areas and connects them with central office resources – whether they are focused on literacy, community engagement, or attendance. This approach allows schools to receive cohesive and targeted supports that meet the needs of their students.


DCPS' sustained investment in human capital and our commitment to empowering our leaders have delivered results for our schools. As an example, DCPS convenes regular Leadership Academies for DCPS school leaders. In a recent session, DCPS leaders engaged in workshops with the Management Center on personal leadership; 100 percent of school leaders reported that the session supported their practice and was valuable.

### **Retention**

Finally, DCPS is committed to recognizing and celebrating the contributions of educators and their work. We have set a high bar of excellence for our teachers and have established pathways that ensure that teachers remain successful and advance on their career paths. While we know the importance of continuity, we also want to recognize that retention efforts should be targeted towards our best educators. We can only achieve our goals of equity and excellence if all schools have access to and retain their highest quality educators.

Over the past decade, we have seen our teacher retention rate rise by nearly eight percentage points due to DCPS' emphasis on:

- Compensating our teachers for their outstanding contributions to our community with an average teacher salary of \$86,815, which has consistently increased in recent years and is more than \$25,000 higher than the national average;
- Implementing the Leadership Initiative for Teacher (LIFT), which provides high-performing teachers opportunities for advancement inside the classroom, along with additional responsibility, recognition, and compensation;
- Partnering with educators in the instructional design and development process for our ongoing areas of focus including technology integration and social-emotional learning; and

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- Celebrating high-quality teacher and school leaders through annual recognition events, such as Standing Ovation and Rising Talent.

More recently, I joined Mayor Bowser to announce the launch of [Landed](#), a new option to help our district's educators become homeowners here in the community where they work and live. We want our teachers to be proud to not only work in the District, but also to call our great city home. Our educators are at the center of our progress as a district, and I am excited to continue celebrating their contributions to our community.

### **Strengthening IMPACT with Educator Voice**

Since becoming Chancellor, I have engaged with teachers across the district in focus groups, classrooms, and public events and have heard the stories of teachers that have shared that they want to be fairly evaluated, supported, and celebrated for their contributions to our district. I am committed to continuing to celebrate and reward DCPS educators. This year marks the 10-year anniversary of the implementation of IMPACT, our multiple-measures evaluation program for school-based staff, and as we take a look back on its progress and evolution, I would like to share my vision moving forward. In recognition of this milestone, I am committed to taking a fresh look at how we can update our performance evaluation system to ensure we are supporting all educators in all eight wards through a comprehensive review of IMPACT.

The review will involve multiple mechanisms for incorporating teacher and school leader feedback and will be done in partnership with local and national experts. While the initial focus on continuous improvement will be focused on teacher IMPACT, I am ultimately committed to implementing a fair and equitable evaluation program for our educators that ensures the best and brightest are supporting our students across the district every day.

### **Conclusion**

Thank you for the opportunity to speak to you today on this important issue of keeping effective teachers and leaders in our public schools. Your attention to this topic highlights our mutual commitment to working together to create citywide solutions to citywide challenges. As DCPS continues to invest in and prioritize our schools, our teachers and staff, and above all, our students. We appreciate the support of our agency partners, family, and community.

I would also like to take a moment to thank our educators and staff for the work they do to provide our more than 51,000 students with a high-quality education each day. I am happy to answer any questions you may have at this time.