

**GOVERNMENT OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA
DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA PUBLIC SCHOOLS (DCPS)**



Public Hearing on

Teacher and Principal Retention in the District

Testimony of

Dr. Drewana Bey

Deputy Chancellor, Social Emotional Academic Development

Before the

Committee of the Whole

Council of the District of Columbia

The Honorable Phil Mendelson, Chairman

November 29th, 2023

10:00 AM

Good morning, Chairman Mendelson, Councilmembers, staff, and members of the public. I am Dr. Drewana Bey. I have served the District of Columbia Public Schools (DCPS) since 2016 and over my 24 years in education I have been a science teacher, a principal, a DCPS Instructional Superintendent, the Chief of Secondary Schools, and now the Deputy Chancellor for Social Emotional and Academic Development.

My own interest in education was sparked when I was a young child. My great Aunt Alda, who taught for an unbelievable 53 years, is also the person I consider my first teacher. Suffice to say, I would not stand in the shoes I currently stand in if not for this remarkable woman. She is the beginning but by no means the end of my immense and profound gratitude for educators.

While I do not expect that every teacher will have the same career that my Aunt Alda had, I am incredibly proud of the work that DCPS has done to recruit, support and sustain a strong educator workforce that can bring their best to the students of Washington, DC. Thank you to all the educators working at DCPS for the incredible work you do each day.

It is my great honor to share that more students are choosing DCPS, with 51,376 students enrolled in DCPS according to the Office of the State Superintendent of Education's (OSSE's) preliminary report. As Mayor Bowser said, "When families enroll and re-enroll in our public schools, that is a reflection of their confidence in our teachers, principals, and school communities." It fills me with incredible pride when I see DCPS educators choosing DCPS for their own children. Take for example the Cobb family – Zamir and Ashley Cobb are DCPS graduates, parents of DCPS students, and Ms. Cobb is a teacher at DCPS. It fills me with such joy to see DCPS alumni return as teachers, school-based staff, and leadership – and in turn bring their own children into the DCPS community.

Earlier this fall, we were thrilled to announce that Beth Barkley, a dedicated English teacher in the International Academy at Cardozo Education Campus, was the 2024 DC Teacher of the Year. Beth has taught at Cardozo for eight years and is known for cultivating a welcoming environment for students and their families, promoting opportunities for student voice, and facilitating meaningful and rigorous learning experiences. We are thrilled that Beth and so many other educators continue to choose DCPS.

Thanks to Mayor Bowser's leadership, DCPS has robust resources to compensate and support educators. To better understand how we support our workforce, today I want to leave you with two points to remember – (1) DCPS is retaining a high proportion of teachers and an even higher proportion of our most effective teachers and (2) at DCPS, educators can earn a competitive salary and progress professionally.

First, let us ground this conversation in system-wide data. **DCPS is retaining a high proportion of teachers and an even higher proportion of our most effective teachers.** DCPS recently conducted an initial review of teacher retention data for this fall. We looked at DCPS teachers who were employed by the school system during the 2022 – 2023 school year and where they are now. We are pleased to share that nine out of ten teachers returned to DCPS this school year. Let me repeat – 90% of DCPS teachers returned to work at DCPS this year. Over the past decade we have seen our rates of teacher retention rise and we are incredibly proud that nine out of ten DCPS teachers chose to return to work at DCPS this school year. I would also note that whether we are considering system level retention, retention within the role, or retention at the same school, all metrics are on an upward trajectory. We are incredibly proud that we continue to strategically retain our effective and highly effective educators at greater numbers. 95% of teachers scoring at the highest levels choose to remain with DCPS.

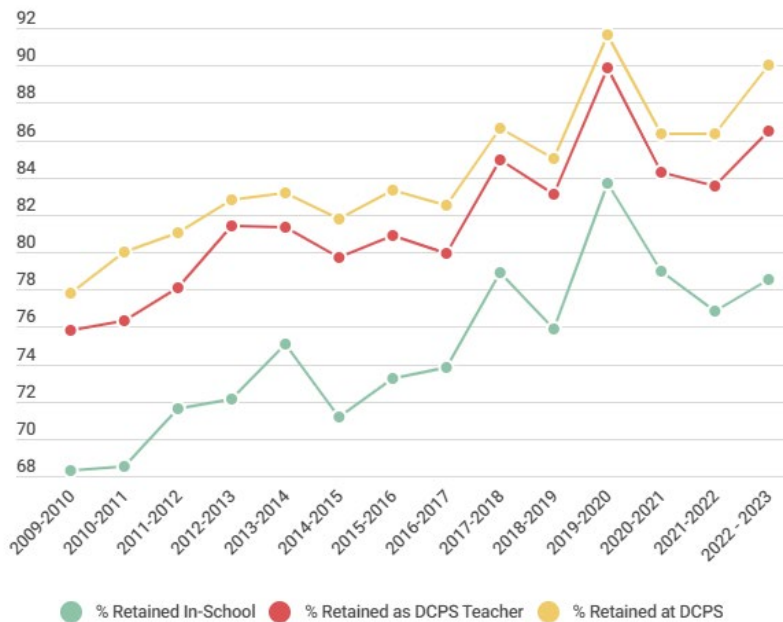
We understand and appreciate the Council's interest in within-school teacher retention. At DCPS, our within-school teacher retention is above the average for other large districts. Education Resource Strategies released

a report analyzing data from the 22-23 school year, the most recent year with data across school districts in multiple states. During that year, DCPS retained 77% of its teachers within the school, outpacing the average for other large districts by 5 percentage points.¹ This fall, our numbers improved, and eight out of ten (79%) teachers were retained within their school. For more information on teacher retention levels over the past five years, please see the tables and chart included in this testimony.

Retention of Teachers Overall			
School Year	% Retained In-School	% Retained as DCPS Teacher	% Retained at DCPS
2018 – 2019 to 2019 – 2020	76%	83%	85%
2019 – 2020 to 2020 – 2021	84%	90%	92%
2020 – 2021 to 2021 – 2022	79%	84%	86%
2021 – 2022 to 2022 – 2023	77%	84%	86%
2022 – 2023 to 2023 – 2024	79%	87%	90%

Retention of Teachers Rated Highly Effective / Effective			
School Year	% Retained In-School	% Retained as DCPS Teacher	% Retained at DCPS
2018 – 2019 to 2019 – 2020	84%	90%	92%
2019 – 2020 to 2020 – 2021	88%	93%	95%
2020 – 2021 to 2021 – 2022	83%	88%	90%
2021 – 2022 to 2022 – 2023	84%	89%	92%
2022 – 2023 to 2023 – 2024	85%	91%	95%

Teacher Retention at DCPS



In addition to strong teacher retention data, we are excited to share that 88% of DCPS principals returned to lead their schools this fall and that 96% of DCPS principals returned to a role within DCPS. Please see the table below for data on principal retention over the last five years.

¹ Education Resource Strategies examined teacher retention data at large urban and suburban school districts and found a within-school retention rate of 72%. See https://www.erstrategies.org/tap/teacher_turnover_trends_analysis.

Retention of DCPS Principals		
<i>School Year</i>	<i>% Retained at Same School Site</i>	<i>% Retained in DCPS (any role)</i>
2018 – 2019 to 2019 – 2020	85%	95%
2019 – 2020 to 2020 – 2021	85%	92%
2020 – 2021 to 2021 – 2022	87%	90%
2021 – 2022 to 2022 – 2023	84%	90%
2022 – 2023 to 2023 – 2024	88%	96%

Second, at DCPS, educators have competitive salaries and robust opportunities to develop professionally.

Teaching is a demanding profession and thanks to Mayor Bowser’s leadership, we have robust resources with which to compensate educators. DCPS provides a higher starting salary than any surrounding county. DCPS’ starting salary is also \$1,000 above the median starting salary for Local Education Agencies within the District.

Starting Teacher Salaries in the DC Metro Region	
<i>Location</i>	<i>Starting Teacher Salary (BA / 10 Month)</i>
District of Columbia Public Schools	\$63,373
DC Local Education Agency Median ²	\$62,330
Montgomery County Public Schools	\$59,640
Loudon County Public Schools	\$55,889
Alexandria City Public Schools	\$55,255
Prince George’s County Public Schools	\$55,079
Fairfax County Public Schools	\$54,913
Arlington Public Schools	\$54,878

DCPS is committed to providing educators with robust development opportunities such that they can make their careers at DCPS. Take for example the career of Gwen Payton. Gwen began her DCPS career as an elementary teacher. Following 14 years of teaching for DCPS, Gwen led Beers Elementary School for 17 years, where she expanded early childhood education opportunities and supported students with special needs. After this distinguished career, Gwen was eligible for retirement but decided instead to become an Instructional Superintendent at DCPS. She now supervises 12 principals, including Principal Jon Rolle. Principal Rolle is in his first year leading Garfield elementary, having previously served DCPS as a Dean and Assistant Principal, and recently completed DCPS’ internal principal preparation program. Gwen and Jon’s careers speak to DCPS’ investment and commitment to “growing our own,” through meaningful support and development. While both Garfield Elementary and Beers Elementary have new principals this year, they are also examples of two schools where we have intentionally developed principals to take on new leadership roles.

I also want to speak to a specific area of development and focus for DCPS: intentionally cultivating opportunities for Latino and Latina educators to expand their influence and gain access to more opportunities. As a part of our Equity-Centered Pipeline Initiatives, DCPS held its second annual Adelante LatinX Leadership Summit, a day developed and led by LatinX district educators and leaders. Among other highlights, the day featured Shajena Cartagena, an assistant principal at Powell Elementary who is currently participating in a DCPS partnership with Howard University to obtain a doctoral degree in Educational Leadership, and Veronica Torres, a DCPS graduate who went on to become a DCPS teacher and assistant principal, who now serves as the proud principal at Seaton Elementary. Shajena and Veronica’s stories reflect the best of DCPS – educators who have made their careers at DCPS, who have participated in intentional development opportunities, and who are now giving back to support and cultivate future leaders.

² Based on the publicly available salary schedules provided by DCPS and public charter LEAs.

We are incredibly excited about the foundational work in place. We have made great strides as a school system and continue with a laser focus on further improvement. Whether we look at teacher retention or principal retention, we are seeing more educators choose to stay at DCPS and choose to stay at their school. That is good for our schools, good for our students, and a trend we should celebrate and support. And while we are excited about our progress, we are just as excited about the work ahead to continue to improve the retention, development, and growth of our dedicated educators and school leaders, so that they continue to choose to serve the students and families of DCPS. Thank you for the opportunity to testify today and I look forward to continued collaboration with the Council on this critical issue of teacher and principal retention.