

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



**Public Hearing on**

**Teacher and Principal Turnover vs. Retention in the District’s Public School  
and  
Bill 24-355, the “Statewide Data Warehouse Amendment Act of 2021”**

**Testimony of  
Dr. David Pinder  
Chief of Leadership Development**

**Before the  
Committee of the Whole  
Council of the District of Columbia  
The Honorable Phil Mendelson, Chairman**

October 25, 2022  
1:00 PM  
Via Zoom Teleconference

Good afternoon, Chairman Mendelson, members of the Committee of the Whole, and staff. I am Dr. David Pinder, Chief of Leadership Development for the District of Columbia Public Schools (DCPS). I am excited to be here with you today to share the progress we have made and some of the next steps we envision to help build, and sustain, the strongest educator workforce of teachers and school leaders in the country.

Earlier this year, DCPS launched a year-long engagement campaign with our community stakeholders on the design of our upcoming strategic plan. This hearing serves as an ideal opportunity to reflect with Council on our progress to date, to share the new strategies we are developing, and to solicit you and your colleagues' ideas for enhancing our talent blueprint as we respond to the dynamics of a changing workforce in this post-pandemic era.

Since 2007, I have had the pleasure of serving DC students and families as an assistant principal, principal, and instructional superintendent. This experience has provided me with a front seat to the dynamic innovations that demonstrate our district-wide commitment to student success and teacher excellence, thanks to the investments made in our schools by Mayor Bowser and the DC Council.

Throughout this hearing, we will highlight many metrics that we're using to strengthen our workforce, but perhaps the most important metric is that families are choosing DCPS. We are pleased that DCPS enrollment grew significantly in the decade before the pandemic, and now we are seeing enrollment growth as we move into the post-pandemic period. Families are showing us that they trust our principals and teachers with their children and their education.

We owe so much of this success to our school leaders who are working tirelessly to provide the optimal conditions our teachers need to succeed. So, it is fitting that we are meeting during the month of October, which is National Principal Appreciation Month! I would also like to thank the more than 7,000 teachers and staff who show up each day to cultivate welcoming and joyous learning experiences for their students. We are incredibly grateful for your service and commitment.

As we consider the retention landscape, the headline is that DCPS continues to make long-term progress through strategic investments in both teacher and school leader retention. In the decade leading up to the COVID-19 pandemic, DCPS made gains in teacher retention. Between 2009 and 2019, overall district teacher retention increased by 7.2 percentage points from 77.8% in SY 2009-10 to 85% in SY 2018-19. As the pandemic hit in the 2019-2020 School Year, retention was at a high point of 91.6%. While we did initially see some flux in our retention numbers, they have since rebounded. The most recent 2021-2022 school year had an overall teacher retention rate of 86.3%: higher than the pre-pandemic SY 2018-19 retention rate of 85.0%.

As we think about pre-pandemic versus post-pandemic trends, the SY 2021-22 overall teacher retention rate (86.3%) is also higher than the average retention rate of the three years prior to the pandemic. Furthermore, DCPS saw no change in district retention rates from last school year to this school year and retained on average 88% of all teachers over the last three years.

As further evidence of DCPS' overall upward trajectory, DCPS continues to be celebrated for its strategic retention strategy where the district retains greater numbers of teachers designated as "Highly Effective" or "Effective", thereby retaining our top performing teachers who are best poised to advance student achievement across the district. Over the last three years, DCPS has retained, on average, 92% of Highly Effective and Effective teachers. In addition, DCPS is committed to ensuring that our teacher demographics reflect that of the students we serve, and DCPS retained Highly Effective and Effective teachers of color (all subgroups) at a higher rate than white teachers across all three school years spanning the pandemic.

From the national landscape, we know that school districts traditionally experience significantly more turnover at Title I schools than in low-poverty settings. This is not the case at DCPS, where we continue the five-year trend of retaining our Highly Effective teachers at similar rates in Title I and non-Title I settings. While there are many factors that contribute to this, the structural investment in performance compensation through IMPACT bonuses likely plays a key role in our retention of teachers who are best positioned to close opportunity gaps, given that 75% of Highly Effective teachers in DCPS' Title I schools indicate that IMPACT *plus* bonuses contribute to their desire to stay in DCPS, significantly higher than their non-Title I counterparts.

We also see evidence in the stabilization of retention rates across DCPS. DCPS participates in a national teacher survey—known as Insight, and, in the most recent administration of the survey, the percentage of DCPS teachers saying they plan to leave DCPS is less than the national average and on par with pre-pandemic levels. Taken together, I believe our investments in curriculum, compensation, and development opportunities are key contributing factors.

We see similar stabilization as we consider our principal retention data. Since 2018, DCPS has consistently retained 90% of our principals across the district. At the end of SY 2021-22, 91% of principals remained with the District, with 89% percent retained in principal roles. Overall, 84% of principals continue to serve at the school they led last year while 6% transferred to take on new opportunities in DCPS, including leading larger schools. These retention figures are on par with the national landscape, which we believe is a result of key investments in compensation, job security, support, professional learning, and agency in school design.

At the same time, we must all acknowledge that the COVID-19 pandemic was unprecedented — and continues to change the world we live in today. One of those ways is the changing nature of work—or what economists have deemed the "Great Reshuffle," which affects not just education but all occupations nationally. As we specifically consider education, we know that our educators were tested in new ways as they led through the pandemic through virtual instruction and health and safety protocols, and we know that our teachers and school leaders have competing career opportunities. As we look ahead, we must commit to re-thinking how we support our teachers and school leaders in a post-pandemic world through strategic investments in retention-related support to ensure we can retain our top talent in the years to come.

As we consider this changing landscape of work, we are committed to several key strategies to bolster our retention efforts. First, we are committed to deepening our investment in teacher and school leader pipelines, which we know are critical to the sustainability of our talent acquisition,

development, and retention work. DCPS is now partnering with four Teacher Residency Programs (Urban Teachers, Relay, Howard, and Georgetown Universities) that prepare program participants who serve as educational aides to become successful teachers in DCPS schools through intensive training alongside high-performing mentor teachers. Each program is designed to cultivate a diverse pool of talent and demonstrates our commitment to building talent pipelines here in DC, as we know that teachers with deeper ties to the communities, they serve are more likely to stay.

We are particularly excited to highlight our new partnership with Georgetown University, where we offer tuition support to DCPS educational aides who are considering becoming Dual Language (DL) or English as a Second Language (ESL) teachers, as part of our strategy to respond to the growing numbers of language learners we are welcoming to DCPS. We also continue to partner with Howard University, which has a program goal that 50% of their cohort will be males of color and reflects our commitment to our Empowering Males of Color initiative, which reflects our commitment to help young men of color excel through academics, social-emotional development and family engagement.

We also believe investing in school leader development is an investment in teacher retention because we know teachers choose to stay when they feel meaningfully supported by their school leaders. As such, we are making similar investments to develop the next generation of school leaders and provide meaningful professional development to our current leaders through partnerships with George Washington and Howard universities to redesign their education leadership graduate programs to support success in DCPS. A cohort of DCPS teacher leaders will have the upcoming opportunity to receive tuition assistance to earn their master's degree at George Washington University to prepare them to become future assistant principals in DCPS. At Howard University, several assistant principals and principals will complete a doctoral program to prepare them to serve as future principals and district leaders.

These pipeline and development efforts align with our role retention efforts. These include executive coaching support for school leaders and the Renewal Fellowship, a new cohort-driven experience for leaders to provide them with a space to build community with peers while focusing on personal well-being and collaboration with other principals across the district.

In addition to pipeline and development opportunities, we are committed to continued innovation in our recruitment and retention strategies. We seek to engage our stakeholders in the co-design of initiatives to ensure the teaching and school leaders' roles are attractive and sustainable, especially in the competitive job market. We are eager to discuss innovative paths to support greater flexibility, shared responsibility and specialization for our teachers and school leaders as we look to the future.

The Council provides a unique and important voice in the next iteration of our work. I look forward to engaging with you today on ideas for how we can continue to strengthen our work. I am happy to answer any questions you may have.