

**GOVERNMENT OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA
DC PUBLIC SCHOOLS**



**Public Roundtable
on**

The District of Columbia Public Schools Strategic Plan

Presentation by

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**Before the
Committee on Education
Council of the District of Columbia
David Grosso, Chairman**

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**John A. Wilson Building
1350 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW
Room 412
Washington, D.C. 20004**

OPENING REMARKS

SLIDE 1

Good morning, Chairman Grosso, members of the Committee and staff. I am really pleased to have the opportunity to meet with you today to discuss DC Public Schools' *Capital Commitment* – our strategic plan for 2017 – 2022. I want to thank Mayor Bowser for her strong support of DC Public Schools (DCPS), and I want to thank this Council for its interest in and support for our work. Today, I will share with you the path we have taken over the past six months to shape a bold, ambitious strategic plan for DCPS - and the road map to achieving that vision.

SLIDE 2

We began this planning process from a position of incredible strength. The past five years of DCPS' strategic plan, which we call *A Capital Commitment*, have resulted in great progress, including increased student satisfaction, graduation rate, and enrollment. Among our peers, DCPS remains the fastest improving urban school district in the country. This month, the American Institutes for Research, one of the world's largest social science research organizations, released a new [report](#), looking at the five years of progress of DC Public Schools. Their report, which we have included as an appendix to this presentation, confirmed that DCPS is the fastest-improving urban school district in the country and has made significant gains on students achievement, graduation rates, Advance Placement exams, student satisfaction, and attendance.

Our families and community members in the District of Columbia are rightly proud of the consistent progress that DCPS has realized over the last several years.

SLIDE 3

Last month, we were thrilled to announce the record academic gains DCPS students achieved on the PARCC assessment. DCPS increased by 6.4 percentage points in English language arts and 3.5 percentage points in math in 2017. Thirty-two percent of our students met or exceeded expectations on the grades 3-8 and high school English language arts (ELA) assessments, while 27 percent met or exceeded expectations on the grades 3-8 and high school math assessments. Further, students at every grade level made gains on the 2017 PARCC, including strong gains among middle grades in both ELA and math. Students also saw gains by race, economic status, special education status, and English learning status.

SLIDE 4

While our internal results are promising, other tests are also validating the growth we are making. As the fastest improving urban school district and is one of only four (out of 20) districts with statistically significant improvement in reading on the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), which is given every 2 years to 4th and 8th grade students in reading and in math. In 2015, our district made the largest gain – up eight points from 2013, which is the largest recorded 2-year gain since reporting began in 2002 and the largest-ever recorded gain in 4th grade reading for any participating urban district.

SLIDE 5

In 2011, only about half of our students were graduating. Under the current *Capital Commitment*, DCPS is on track to meet our four-year graduation rate goal of 75%. We owe much of this progress to the application and monitoring of three key strategies: student-specific

planning, credit recovery and the expansion of our 9th Grade Academies. We also strengthened our focus on students in our opportunity academies and on re-engaging those who may have dropped out.

SLIDE 6

For DCPS, welcoming new students and retaining current students are both important goals, and we are proud that more families are choosing DCPS. After declining enrollment, we have had five straight years of growth. In fact, we met the *Capital Commitment* enrollment goal of 47,000 in 2014-15. Last year, DCPS enrolled 48,555 students. Over the past five years, DCPS has also retained an increasing number of students, retaining 82.8 percent in SY16-17.

SLIDE 7

Even as we celebrate our progress, we understand that our families and other stakeholders are right to expect the district to accomplish much more. We have spent the last six months engaging our stakeholders in an iterative process to help shape the future of DCPS – reflecting on the last strategic plan, and refining what we heard to develop a set of strategic priorities and ambitious goals for the next five years.

I have visited every one of our schools and had more than 4,500 conversations in every school, in private homes, and with community leaders across every ward. We have heard from students, teachers and instructional staff, school leaders, Central Office employees, families and community members, and we followed these engagements by sharing multiple drafts of the plan and improving it based on their feedback.

From all of those conversations, we have developed a plan that reflects the hopes and dreams of our students, parents, educators and community members. What struck me most

powerfully through all of the public engagement leading up to the plan was the generosity of our stakeholders' dreams – for all of our students. Almost to a person, our stakeholders shared that they want what is good and right for *all* children in the District of Columbia, not just their own.

For me, what they are asking for boils down to three key values: excellence, equity, and love. That means we will guarantee excellent schools in every neighborhood where leaders will have room to innovate, and students will have a wide range of academic and enrichment experiences that excite and challenge them. It means we will ensure equity that addresses differences across race, gender, income, disability, immigration, and home language. We will demonstrate genuine love and respect for our students as complete people, dealing with their individual academic and personal needs, while also attending to the needs of our teachers, principals, and staff. Finally, it will take all of us working together to achieve all of this, and that means we will value our parents as true partners in building excellent schools.

SLIDE 8

During my time with you today, I will introduce you to these values and the key elements of our next Capital Commitment, as well as the systems and structures we will use to actually meet our big goals. We know that we still have much work to do to ensure that all of our students are prepared to thrive in life, but I am completely confident that, with a talented corps of school leaders, the best teaching force in the country, and a strong, supportive community working with us, we will surely build on our strengths and focus on areas of opportunity to meet our goals over the next five years.

As we look to the next five years, we know our strategic planning process will be successful if we dream big and boldly; play as a team; and focus our work. We must act in this way because every student matters.

SLIDE 9

Just as important as the plan we have created together is the opportunity we have to ensure that we are all rowing in the same direction as a team, leveraging our individual roles and talents to create collective momentum. For us, “team” is represented in our school teams and the larger DCPS team. Because we know that our progress has been driven by our educators, we were extremely satisfied when, last week, we announced the ratification of a new collective bargaining agreement with the Washington Teachers Union (WTU) that provides our teachers with the additional professional compensation and benefits they deserve. We will do more for our students if we work across schools and align the Central Office supports to the needs of the students and educators in our schools.

I am incredibly proud to lead this important work. I am grateful for the work that has come before me and even more excited for what lies ahead of us.

DCPS CAPITAL COMMITMENT 2017-2022

SLIDE 10

The strategic plan is comprised of several cascading elements – starting with our highest aspirations for our students and the district, and then narrowing our focus to the most essential areas of work for the next five years.

SLIDE 11

At the highest level of the plan, we developed a vision statement: *Every student feels loved, challenged, and prepared to positively influence society and thrive in life.* Again, this vision represents our highest aspirations for our students. There were many conversations around whether or not to include the word “loved.” Ultimately, we decided to include it as we reflected on what students shared with us about their own experiences in their schools and what they valued.

SLIDE 12

From this vision, we developed a mission statement: *Our mission is to ensure that every school guarantees students reach their full potential through rigorous and joyful learning experiences provided in a nurturing environment.* This mission statement is designed to convey why DCPS exists and the way in which we will do our work. While the vision statement is *student-centered*, the mission statement we have adopted is *school-centered*. Ultimately, all the work we do is designed to ensure the success of our students, but because we, at the school level, are closest to students, we want to position every school to accelerate progress for students.

SLIDE 13

DCPS has also adopted a set of six organizational values to guide how we show up to work on behalf of our students and families every day. We began with over 30 values, and over the course of many conversations refined them to these six fundamental values: *Students First; Equity; Excellence; Teamwork; Courage; and Joy.*

SLIDE 14

Our theory of action expresses our beliefs about what drives results, primarily by explaining the desired relationship between schools and Central Office – emphasizing that schools are the main levers of change in the district and clarifying how schools and Central Office will work together to ensure that all of our students are successful. It also previews a framework for defining what we mean when we discuss the idea of schools receiving some levels of autonomy. Simply put, the school district wants to empower school leadership to make decisions that meet the unique needs of their students. This is important as we think about accelerating progress for all of our students and closing the achievement gap. The role of Central Office will be to ensure that decisions made at the school level are aligned with the strategic plan, well-informed to drive results for our students, and supported with the necessary resources and supports for implementation.

In some cases, all schools will be required to do the same thing. In some cases, schools might be able to choose from a menu of options that the district provides. Still, in other cases, schools may be drawn into collaboration with other schools and Central Office to innovate, merging their combined experience and insight. All of this will be subject to regular support

and monitoring, and all levels of autonomy will come with high levels of accountability to assess things like student growth or improved school climate and culture.

SLIDE 15

At the next level, we have identified strategic priorities and initiatives to drive progress toward our goals. The strategic priorities represent the most essential bodies of work that DCPS will pursue over the next five years. The initiatives, on the other hand, detail more specific work streams through which we will prioritize time and resources. These will also be implemented over the next five years; however, the initiatives may change from year to year as we learn lessons about what works. An initiative might run over the full course of the five-year plan, or it might be completed within a shorter timeframe, creating space for us to add another initiative. And if we find that an initiative is clearly not working, we will refine or replace it.

It is important to note that these priorities and initiatives do not represent everything that the DCPS is or will be doing; there will always be core work, such as procurement or certain human resources functions, that is essential and will continue.

SLIDES 16-20: STRATEGIC PRIORITIES AND INIATIVES

For the next five years, these will be our strategic priorities and initiatives:

SLIDE 16

- *Promote Equity*: DCPS will define, understand, and promote equity so that we eliminate opportunity gaps and systematically interrupt institutional bias. Equity means that all students get what they need to thrive. This is especially important for the most vulnerable children who have been underserved as a result of generations of institutional bias. To address that, DCPS will distribute resources and make decisions that prioritize the areas of

greatest need in our district and city—without taking resources away from schools that are doing well. DCPS will accelerate progress for all students.

SLIDE 17

- *Empower our People:* DCPS will recruit, develop, and retain a talented, caring, and diverse team. This school district will be a place where people from all backgrounds who are passionate about teaching and learning can launch and grow their careers. We want our schools to be places where adults want to work and where children want to be. Young people also need educators who look like them, speak their language, and represent their experiences, so we will strengthen teacher pipelines with a focus on high-need content (eg., bilingual) teachers and male educators of color. Our school leadership development pipelines – with an initial focus on Assistant Principals – will complement this focus.

SLIDE 18

- *Ensure Excellent Schools:* DCPS will increase the number of excellent schools throughout the city. Great schools are not one size fits all, and every community has different needs. To build excellent schools across the city, DCPS will work with school communities to make sure their unique needs are met. One school might need a college preparatory program, while another might need more dual language courses. Critical components of ensuring these excellent schools will be the establishment of strong strategies to increase attendance and to further increase enrollment and re-enrollment. At the end of the day, what will be the same in every school are excellent opportunities for young people.

SLIDE 19

- *Educate the Whole Child:* DCPS will provide rigorous, joyful, and inclusive academic and social emotional learning experiences to ensure all students are college and career ready. For DCPS to become a place where every adult and child is expected to succeed, our students need schools where they can struggle and know that they are still smart, and where they can make mistakes and know that they are still loved. We will support teachers in the implementation of the academic and social emotional curriculum. We will focus on early literacy, augment middle school offerings, and expand access to college and career experiences. And we will strengthen special education and English learner delivery models. By focusing on social and emotional development, along with academics, DCPS will give young people the foundation they need to succeed in school and in life.

SLIDE 20

- *Engage Families:* DCPS will ensure communication and deepen partnerships with families and the community. We will build staff capacity to engage families and community in the academic and social emotional learning of our students, treating parents as experts on their children and partners in their learning. From visiting student homes to information sharing in multiple languages, our schools should be places where all families feel welcome from the moment they walk through the doors. All students do better when schools value their families.

SLIDE 21

Our big goals represent the desired measures of progress toward our vision, mission, and priorities. They represent what we want to be true five years from now and what we believe are important indicators of success for our students and DCPS overall. We will continue

to track other measures, but these will be the most well-known measures that we want our students, educators, families, and community to rally around. We approached our goals with boldness and set high ambitions – this is not about playing small for our students.

These goals are about our students being academically on grade level, and with *Goal 1*, we will double college readiness and triple career readiness of at-risk and students of color. The primary measure will be the PARCC assessment – for all students who are assessed; however, we will be also be assessing how we might use other measures such as the Scholastic Aptitude Test (SAT), International Baccalaureate (IB), Advanced Placement (AP) courses and dual enrollment.

This starts with our youngest learners: with *Goal 2*, we will accelerate early literacy to ensure 100 percent of K-2 students achieve grade-level reading proficiency, as measured by internal diagnostic assessments.

It runs up through the high school level: with *Goal 3*, we will increase our high school graduation rate – to 85 percent within four years, and 90 percent by five years. Additionally, we aim to ensure that 100 percent of students feel loved, challenged, and prepared: *Goal 4*.

When all of those things happen, our schools improve dramatically: with *Goal 5*, 100 percent of our schools are highly-rated.

Finally, we aim to attract more families to choose DCPS: with *Goal 6*, we expect 90 percent re-enrollment, with DCPS serving 54,000 students by 2022.

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We will track our progress toward these goals through a very intentional monitoring and improvement process. Based on what we heard throughout the strategic planning process and follow up interviews with individuals across the organization, we have established a strategy management process with three goals: first, to set common expectations for yearly progress and build shared ownership of those goals by clearly identifying areas for collaboration; second, to articulate processes at the Central Office level that make clear connections between the work that needs to happen at this level to support schools in accelerating student success; and finally, to establish a standardized system of planning and documentation.

On the technical side, collaborative, cross-functional Strategy Management teams will support the development and monitoring of work plans and act as a kind of critical friend in providing guidance and feedback throughout the process. The strategy management teams will map strategies for each year's work; regularly evaluate and clarify initiatives to determine if we are on track to meet our desired outcomes; and develop structures for problem-solving, which may, at times, lead us back to revisiting our strategy. These teams will provide progress updates on initiatives and celebrate success.

This work is rooted in our commitment to being a learning organization. It is as much about the "how" we will move DCPS as it is about the "what" we will achieve.

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We will establish plans for multiple initiatives under each Strategic Priority; however, these initiatives may be in different stages of development over the full five years, and different phases of their development may very well coincide with others.

CLOSING

SLIDE 24

Finally, as we monitor our progress through this internal process, I will continue to stay engaged with the community through a number of public engagement structures we have established. These range from our existing Chancellor Cabinets to a continuation of the school-based faculty meetings we established this year to other citywide engagements that we will conduct beginning in the fall. At every step, we will also continue to apprise this Council of our progress.

DCPS is recognized as a school district on the rise, and we recognize that we will only be able to continue that progress through focused teamwork and partnership with our families and our educators, as well as our government and community partners. I know firsthand what is possible through educational opportunity, and I have a deep passion for making sure that schools are places of both excellence and equity – where students, families, and communities feel welcomed and see their values reflected. With continued, strong support from the Mayor and the Council, we will give every student the opportunities and support they need to thrive in college, career, and life.

Again, I am incredibly proud to lead this important work. Thank you for your time. I would be happy to answer any questions you may have.



DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA
PUBLIC SCHOOLS

DC Public Schools: Capital Commitment 2017-2022

September 2017

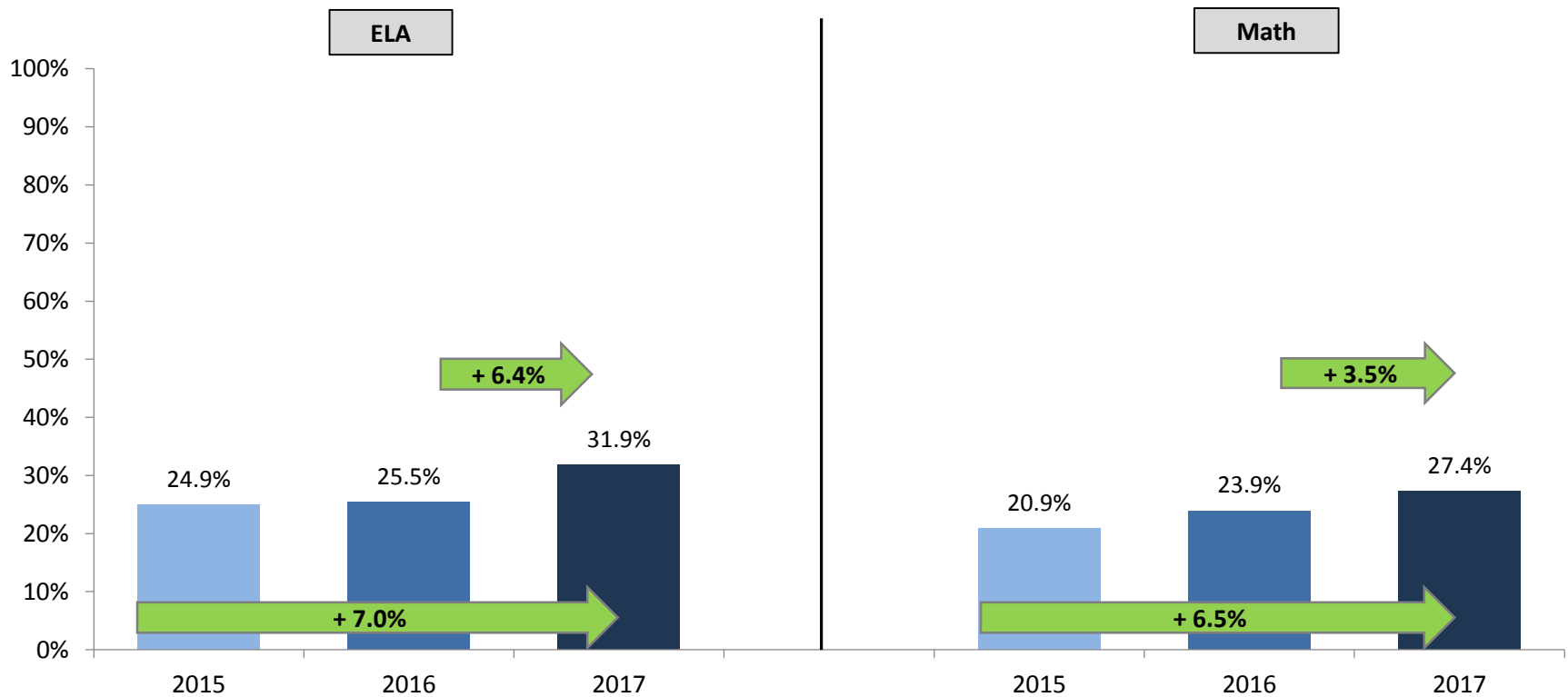


Looking back, we have had many successes!

- Strong gains on 2012-2017 **Capital Commitment** goals
 - Student Achievement
 - Graduation Rate
 - Enrollment
- **Fastest improving** urban school district in the country
- “...DCPS has made considerable progress toward the goals laid out five years ago...” (*Atchison and Stein, American Institutes for Research, 2017*)

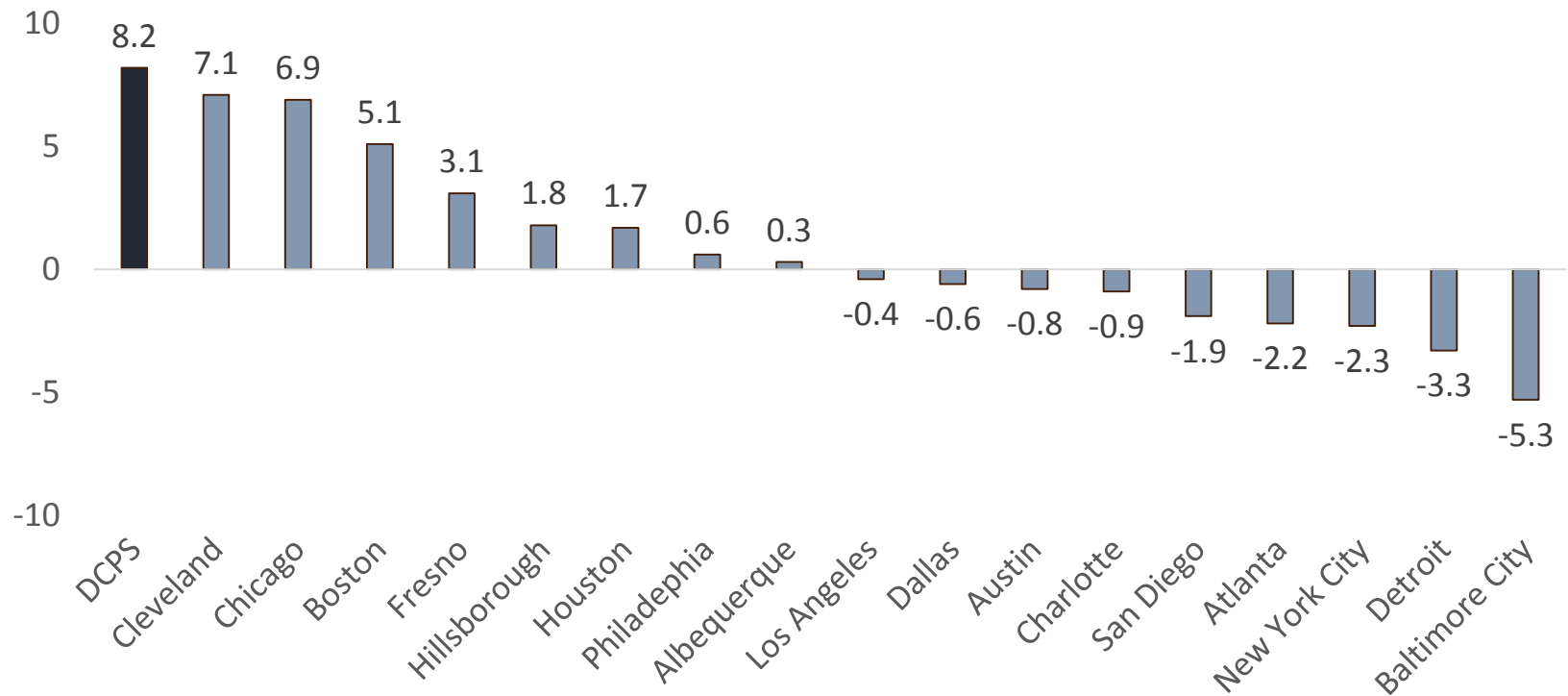
DCPS has made significant gains in both ELA and Math on the PARCC.

Overall DCPS PARCC % L4 + L5

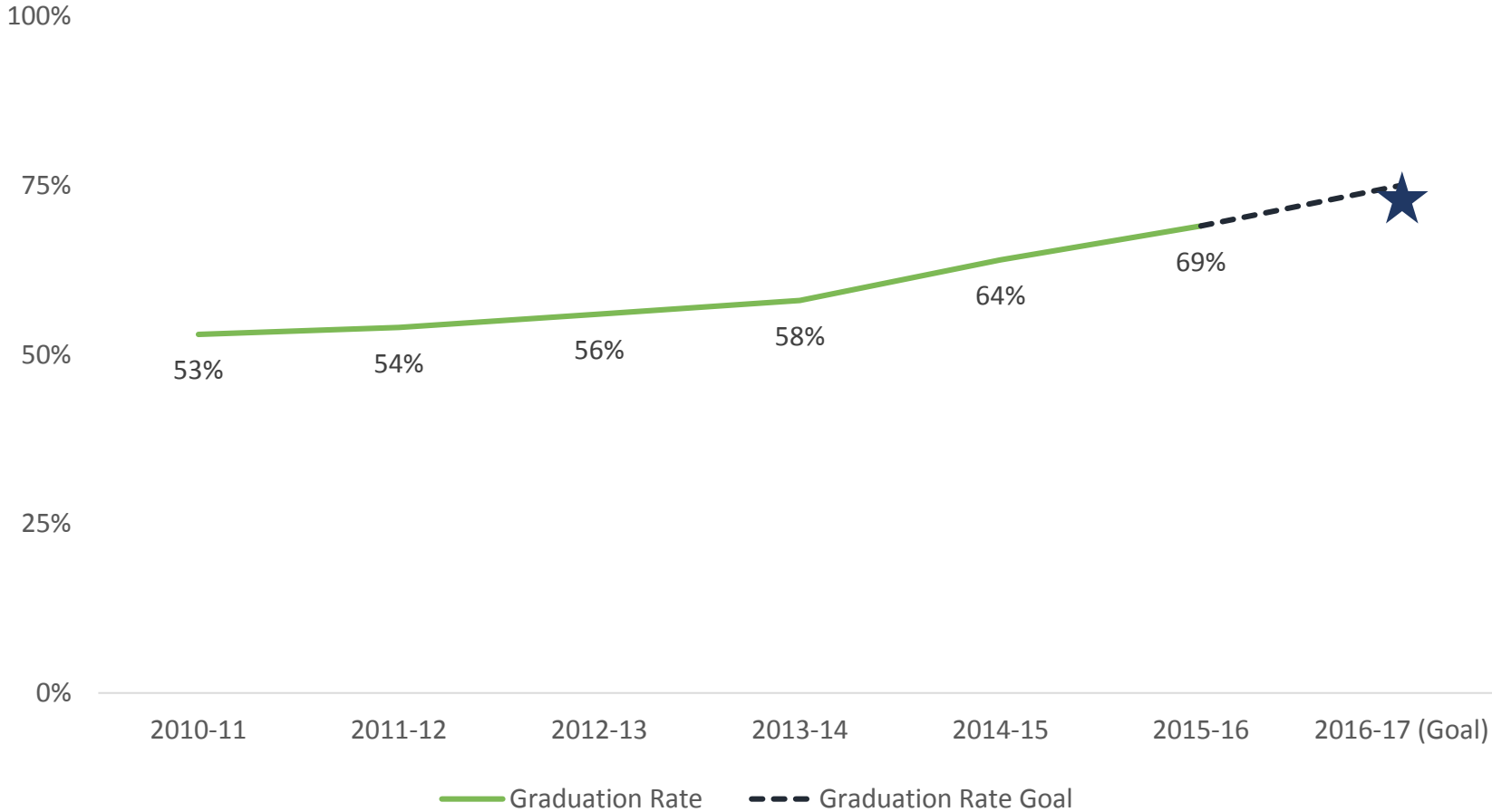


We remain the fastest improving urban school district.

4th Grade Reading 2013 to 2015 NAEP TUDA: Scale Score Point Growth

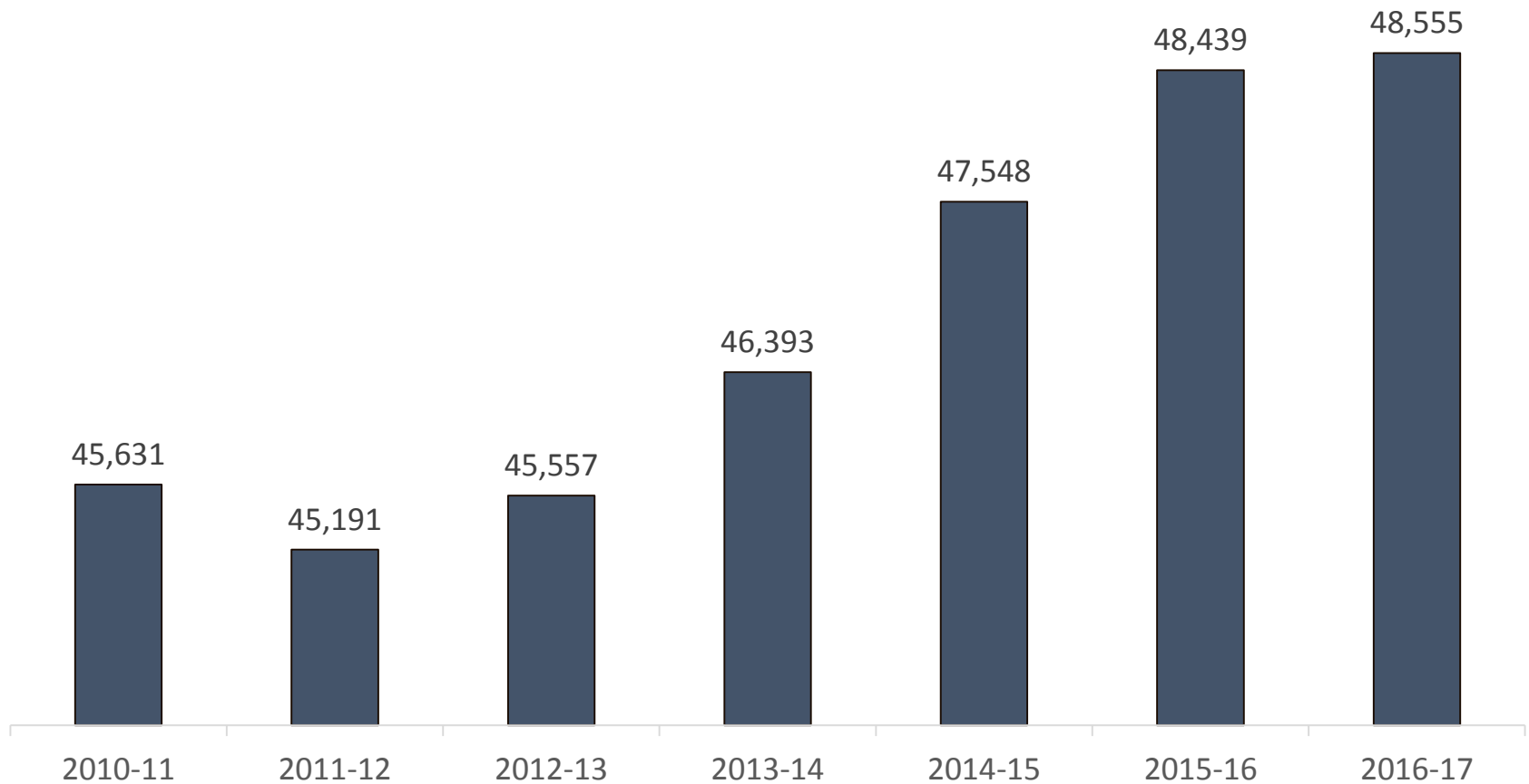


We are on track to meet our graduation rate goal of 75%



More Families are Choosing DCPS!

Audited Enrollment (DCPS)



We engaged with our stakeholders to shape the future of DCPS.

March

April

May

June

July

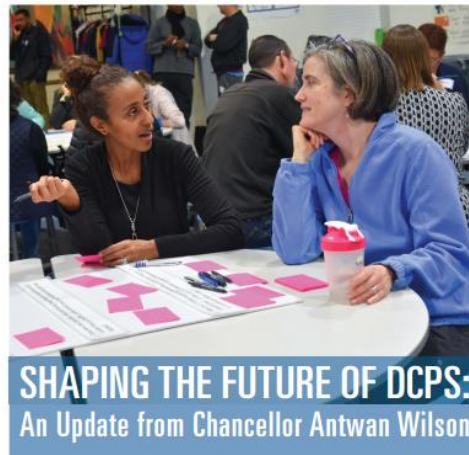
August

September

March - May: Strategic plan engagements including meetings in all eight wards, student sessions, parent sessions, and opportunities for feedback from school leaders, instructional staff, and Central Office employees.

June: DCPS shared the feedback from more than 3,000 people, including the raw data and seven themes that emerged.

May - August: Feedback on the draft from school leaders, teachers, community partners, and parents helped to shape the content and direction of the strategic plan.



Fall 2017: Launch of Strategic Plan outlines the vision and goals for our shared work through 2022.

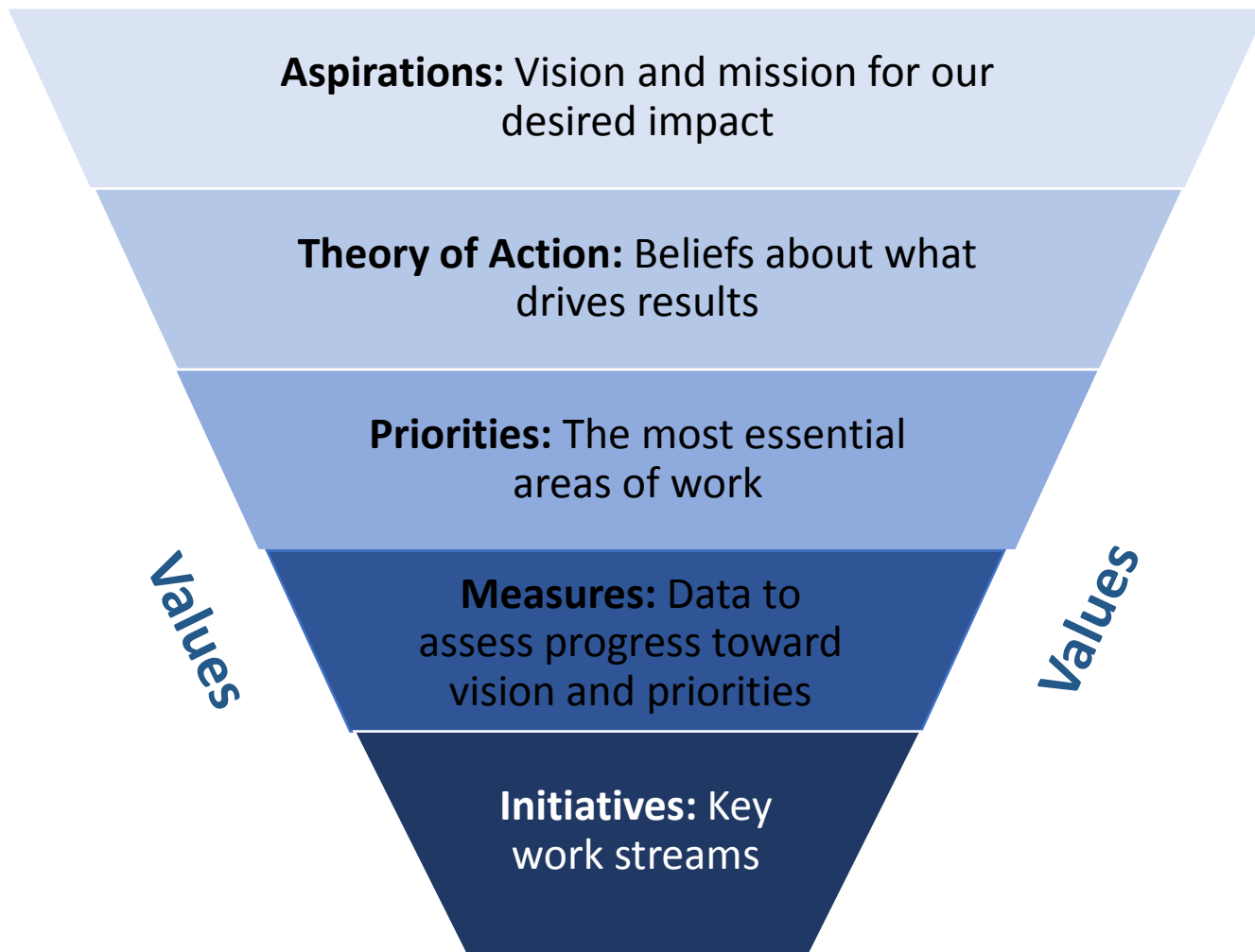
When we began our engagements, we stated our strategic planning process will be successful if we...

- Dream **big and boldly** for our students
- Plan how to **play as a team** to win for students
- **Focus our work** in order to build on our strong foundation and ensure equity and excellence for all

The difference between being great and winning for kids is TEAM.



The strategic plan is comprised of cascading elements.



Vision and Tagline

Vision statement

Every **student** feels loved, challenged, and prepared to positively influence society and thrive in life.

Tagline:

Every Student, Every School, Every Day!



Mission

Mission statement

Our mission is to ensure that every **school** guarantees students reach their full potential through rigorous and joyful learning experiences provided in a nurturing environment.



Values

- Students First** We recognize students as whole children and put their needs first in everything we do.
- Equity** We work proactively to eliminate opportunity gaps by interrupting institutional bias and investing in effective strategies to ensure every student succeeds.
- Excellence** We work with integrity and hold ourselves accountable for exemplary outcomes, service, and interactions.
- Teamwork** We recognize that our greatest asset is our collective vision and ability to work collaboratively and authentically.
- Courage** We have the audacity to learn from our successes and failures, to try new things, and to lead the nation as a proof point of PK-12 success.
- Joy** We enjoy our collective work and will enthusiastically celebrate our success and each other.



Theory of Action

In DCPS we are committed to every student being educated in an excellent school by adults who love them and have high expectations for them to succeed. We will support our school leaders in making **effective decisions in alignment with our strategic plan** to improve their schools in service of every student succeeding. We believe that by **providing excellent service to students and their families, embedding equitable practices, and focusing our efforts** we can accelerate student achievement and close achievement gaps.



Strategic Priorities & Initiatives

- These are the most essential bodies of work DCPS will pursue **over the next five years** to drive progress toward our goals.

Core

- Established and essential work of the district

Priority

- New body of work
- Expansion or acceleration of an existing body of work



Strategic Priorities & Initiatives

Promote Equity

Define, understand, and promote **equity** so that we **eliminate opportunity gaps** and **systematically interrupt institutional bias**.

- Develop and implement a strategy that infuses a **consistent focus on equity** across all DCPS.
- Offer **programming that supports students of color**, with an initial focus on maximizing the impact of EMOC and Reign.
- Develop and implement a **school budgeting model** that prioritizes resources for students who need them the most.



Strategic Priorities & Initiatives

Empower our People

Recruit, develop, and retain a **talented, caring, and diverse team.**

- Develop and implement a strategy that strengthens and infuses our defined **values** into all that we do.
- Strengthen **teacher pipelines** with a focus on high-need content (e.g. bilingual) teachers and male educators of color.
- Strengthen **school leadership development and pipeline programs**, with an initial focus on Assistant Principals.



Strategic Priorities & Initiatives

Ensure Excellent Schools

Increase the number of **excellent schools** throughout the city.

- Develop and implement an aligned system of **differentiated supports and resources** that moves schools toward a **consistent standard of school excellence**.
- Develop and implement a **school improvement and growth strategy** based on school and regional need, that includes the systems needed to authorize new schools and programs (e.g. multilingual, magnet, etc.); promote greater student diversity; and increase opportunities for innovation.
- Develop and implement a strategy to increase **attendance**.
- Develop and implement a strategy to increase **re-enrollment** and further increase **enrollment**.



Strategic Priorities & Initiatives

Educate the Whole Child

Provide **rigorous, joyful, and inclusive academic and social emotional learning experiences** to ensure all students are college and career ready.

- Support teachers with implementation of the **DCPS curriculum** and resources through **Learning together to Advance our Practice (LEAP)**.
- Build a shared understanding of **social emotional learning (SEL)** competencies and embed SEL into our curricular resources and culture.
- Ensure students are reading on grade level by 3rd grade through a **coherent and aligned preK-12 literacy strategy** with an initial focus on **early literacy**.
- Strengthen **middle school offerings**, including increasing coursework options and access to extra-curricular opportunities.
- Expand access to **college and career** experiences and preparation.
- Strengthen **special education and English Learner** delivery models, curricular resources, and professional development for all educators.

Vision and
Tagline

Mission

Values

Theory of
Action

Strategic
Priorities &
Initiatives

Big Goals

Strategic Priorities & Initiatives

Engage Families

Ensure communication and deepen **partnerships with families and the community.**

- **Build staff capacity** to engage families and community in the academic and social emotional learning of our children, with an initial focus on expanding **home visits.**
- Improve and increase mechanisms to **communicate with and listen to families.**



Big Goals: By 2022

- 1. Double College and Career Readiness**
Double the percent of students who are college and career ready, and **triple the percent** of at-risk and students of color who are college and career ready.
- 2. Accelerate Early Literacy**
100 percent of K-2 students are reading on or above grade level.
- 3. Increase High School Graduation Rate**
85 percent of students graduate within four years; and 90 percent graduate within four or five years.
- 4. Improve Student Experience**
100 percent of students feel loved, challenged, and prepared.
- 5. Increase Excellent Schools**
100 percent of schools are highly rated or are improving.
- 6. Increase Enrollment**
90 percent of students re-enroll, and DCPS serves 54,000 students.



Strategy Management Purpose

Strategy management is a set of strategic processes intended to support **collaboration**, **alignment**, and **coherence** across DCPS. By supporting detailed planning, project management of milestones, and collaborative problem-solving, strategy management processes ensure that the DCPS team stays focused, coordinated and responsive to providing streamlined supports and services to schools.

Strategy Management teams will each own one Strategic Priority, which will be comprised of multiple initiatives – each with its own plan.

Strategic Priority	Initiative	17-18	18-19	19-20	20-21	21-22
Empower Our People: Recruit, develop, and retain a talented, caring, and diverse team.	1.1 – Develop and implement a strategy that strengthens and infuses our defined values into all that we do.	R&D/ Pilot	Scale	CI		
	1.2 – Strengthen teacher pipelines with a focus on teachers of color, bilingual teachers, and high-need content teachers; and a particular emphasis on black male educators.	Accelerate	Accelerate			
	1.3 – Strengthen school leadership development and pipeline programs, with an initial focus on Assistant Principals.	R&D	Pilot	Scale	CI	

The Chancellor will also engage regularly with stakeholders to gather their feedback and to inform the work.

Engagement	Stakeholder Group	Frequency
Chancellor Cabinets	One each for parents, principals, teachers, students	Monthly
Faculty Meetings	Teachers and school-based staff	Weekly: Open to all staff from 3-4 schools each week
Chancellor Forums	Parents and community members	Monthly: Two sessions hosted each time, morning and evening at schools
Living Room Chats	Parents and community members	Monthly: Small group setting in homes or communities
Citywide Engagements	Parents, community members, and staff	3-4 large events hosted throughout the year on important topics

Thank you for your support!

