State Board of Education Resolution
On Improving the School Transparency and Reporting (STAR) Framework
SR20-11

WHEREAS, the State Board of Education is committed to prioritizing issues that disproportionately hurt and hinder the educational experience of our most vulnerable students; and, whereas that commitment includes understanding the quality of our schools, knowing which are most in need and what they are most in need of, and, assuring that these schools get the support they need to provide students with the best possible education;

WHEREAS, the DC State Board of Education (State Board) is responsible for advising the DC State Superintendent of Education (OSSE) on matters related to measuring and improving school quality, which includes providing input on the DC STAR Framework in assessing the quality of DC schools;

WHEREAS, the State Board is committed to ensuring that all schools provide students with a high-quality education and that those that fall short receive the supports and resources needed to promote measurable and sustainable improvement;

WHEREAS, stakeholders rely on the DC STAR Framework to provide accurate data regarding the quality of our schools, including the identification of those schools that have been successful at improving student learning, as well as those schools that are underperforming and that need support in order to provide students with a high quality education; and as OSSE has agreed to add "growth" to the high school rating;

WHEREAS, when the State Board approved the STAR Framework and Statewide Accountability Plan in March 2017, the State Board committed to revisiting the framework and voted in July 2019 to undertake that review now, which would give OSSE time to use our recommendations as the basis for proposing changes to the US Department of Education by March 2021 in order to take effect by December 2021;

WHEREAS, in the course of review of the STAR Framework, the State Board has determined based on expert testimony, research and/or OSSE data that aspects of the current Star Framework design produce ratings that are systematically lower for schools that enroll larger proportions of at-risk, Black, and Brown students — and that these lower ratings do not necessarily reflect lower quality education;

WHEREAS, witnesses and research have suggested that possible remedies could be: to reduce the weight of the proficiency indicator; increase the weight of growth; alter how we measure growth; reduce the weight of the "all-students" group; move away from reducing all measures to a single rating; include a category of long-term students; and/or consider the effect on ratings of student mobility;

WHEREAS, such bias in our school rating system ultimately makes it more difficult to support the schools that serve our city's most vulnerable students in numerous unintended ways, including by:

a. making it more difficult to identify, celebrate and learn from the schools that are genuinely improving student learning;

b. causing "down-rated" schools to be publicly perceived as low-quality, which can lead to enrollment declines, then budget cuts, potentially putting the schools in danger of closure;

c. failing to distinguish between schools that are growing student achievement ~~at healthy rates~~ but need more resources to intensify their work and those schools growing at lower rates that may also require support for broader changes;

WHEREAS, low ratings for schools other than those performing in the bottom 5% do not necessarily lead to identification of a school's areas of need or target assistance to it, leaving many schools without the state support they need to provide the stronger education their students need; and,

WHEREAS, in consideration of the testimony, research, and constituent views presented, we may want to provide a broader view of school quality, by expanding the range of STAR indicators included in our current rating (primarily test score proficiency, test score growth, attendance, reenrollment, and high school graduation rate) or by reporting additional indicators. For example, a broader range of indicators might address teacher retention; diversity; school climate, including a nurturing and challenging school environment; and/or a well-rounded education including a curriculum rich in social studies, science, and the arts.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, that the State Board recommends adjusting and/or enhancing how the District measures and or reports school quality so that the STAR rating minimizes undeserved bias against schools with large numbers of at-risk student groups; and will further discuss how the rating or reporting could reflect a broader view of school quality and indicators that could do so;

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the SBOE and its members solicit public input on these issues; and,

BE IT FINALLY RESOLVED, that the State Board continue research and discussion on these issues and that the Research Committee prepare further recommendations for a future vote.

Date Adopted: _____September 16, 2020_____ Signed: _____

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