



Legislative Policy Fellowship Program

The Office of the Student Advocate guides and supports students, parents, families, and community members in navigating the public school system in DC. We provide step-by-step assistance for students, parents, families, and community members to be informed, be connected, and be empowered. We accomplish our goal of assisting students and their families achieve equal access to public education through advocacy, outreach, and information services. More information about our office can be found at <http://studentadvocate.dc.gov>.

Key Responsibilities

Under the supervision of the Chief Student Advocate, the legislative policy fellow participates in all aspects of the office's support of DC students and families with special attention to the legislation and policies that affect those families. This work includes but is not limited to:

- Responding to requests for assistance;
- Researching laws that govern public education locally and nationally and regularly reporting findings to the Chief Student Advocate;
- Monitoring legislative activity and regularly reporting findings to the Chief Student Advocate;
- Drafting documents explaining laws, policies, and rights that impact education to families and stakeholders;
- Attending hearings, briefings, and forums as a representative of the Office of the Student Advocate;
- Participating in and supporting parent engagement, outreach, and advocacy events;
- Drafting portions of the office's annual report, which is published to the DC State Board of Education, DC Council, and the general public; and
- Composing whitepapers and one-pagers on relevant topics in law and education;

Supervision and Compensation

Legislative policy fellows are managed by the Student Advocate and the Chief Student Advocate, who provide fellows with the necessary guidance and assistance to complete their projects. Fellows can receive payment (DC living wage bi-weekly) or course credit. Legislative policy fellows are expected to work 20 hours per week.

To Apply

Submit resume and cover letter to student.advocate@dc.gov. In your cover letter, please indicate (1) what weeks you are available in the fall, spring, or summer semester; (2) which days of the week you would be available for the fellowship; and (3) whether you are interested in the stipend or course credit. Applications accepted on a rolling basis until positions are filled.

More About Our Office

Prior to the Public Education Reform Amendment Act of 2007 (PERAA), the District had gone through several governance changes. Initially, the District incorporated community voice through an elected local school board with budget, decision-making, and personnel power that was directly accountable to the community.ⁱ The implementation of PERAA brought forth mayoral control and the removal of day-to-day oversight from the school board. Mayoral control led to the division of oversight into three bodies — the Executive Office of the Mayor, the District of Columbia Public Schools (DCPS), and the Office of the State Superintendent of Education (OSSE). Operational accountability was diverted to the Mayor, and the local school board became the State Board of Education, an elected body responsible for advising the State Superintendent of Education on policy matters and state-level policy approval. While mayoral control sought to provide additional accountability for a struggling school system, the Mayor’s lack of proximity to schools limited community voice, inadvertently removing the direct mechanism for community members to raise questions regarding public education and to address school-related problems. The Parent and Student Empowerment Act of 2013 addressed community members’ need for a direct advocate within government who focused primarily and exclusively on making the newly complex education system more accessibleⁱⁱ. As a result, the Office of the Student Advocate was established.

For the last three school years, our office has diligently worked to carve out our space in the city’s public education landscape. In our work, we provide guidance and resource supports to families in order to assist them in navigating our complex system of public education in the District of Columbia, both DCPS and public charter schools. Since our office was established in 2015, our goal has been to ensure that families are informed, connected, and empowered not only to be able to understand our complex public education landscape and to be aware of available resources, but also to be equipped to be their own best advocates.

Our focus on improving educational equity through student parent voice is evidenced by our commitment to being engaged in relevant policy discussions and processes in order to remove systemic barriers for families while offering policy recommendations for the improvement of the quality of public education for all students in the District. We know that students and parents are the very foundation of a quality public education system, but we cannot avoid acknowledging that their voices have not been at the forefront of our education policy conversations and decisions in a truly meaningful way. For more information about the history of our office or DC’s public education governance structure, please visit studentadvocate.dc.gov.

ⁱ The Council of the District of Columbia (2007, April 23). DC Act A17-0038: Public Education Reform Amendment Act. Retrieved from: <http://lims.dccouncil.us/Download/8505/B17-0001-ENROLLMENT.pdf>.

ⁱⁱ The Council of the District of Columbia (2013, December 16). DC Act 20-242: Parent and Student Empowerment Amendment Act. Retrieved from: <http://lims.dccouncil.us/Download/29470/B20-0314-SignedAct.pdf>.