

April 10, 2015

Greetings Mr. Jack Jacobson and Members of the State Board of Education,

In my absence this evening I have prepared a statement urging you to approve the request for the Office of the State Superintendent of Education (OSSE) to issue diploma's to eligible high school seniors.

At the beginning of the 2014 – 2015 school year Washington Hospitality Foundation's Hospitality High School (WHF – HHS) became a state managed school; therefore an OSSE managed school. When we were a charter school the Public Charter School Board (PCSB) issued our diplomas. The former model of PCSB issuing the diploma to eligible seniors set the precedent for the governing authority of a school or system of schools to issue the diploma to eligible seniors. District of Columbia Public Schools (DCPS) is not our governing authority, therefore, it is not logical and does not seem legal for DCPS to issue our diplomas.

OSSE has provided unprecedented support and management to WHF – HHS since we became an OSSE managed school. When DCPS would not serve as our LEA, OSSE stepped in with legal support and LEA support and negotiated a deal in which DCPS was provided with over \$300,000.00 in funding by OSSE to provide the needed staffing and resources including an LEA Representative, School Social Workers and other Special Education services. We floundered for at least three months in terms of special education support and resources (which is an extensive and costly period of time when it comes to special education compliance) until OSSE stepped in on our behalf to do what was best for our students.

Our school has never received the type of hands on and intensive support that is has received from OSSE. Since becoming a state managed school, when our students and staff need something, anything, they get it. This includes but is not limited to, curricular resources, special education support, technical assistance for our teachers and staff, professional development for teachers, staff and leadership, transition/closure support and management, and thought partnership for school leadership. Dr. Johnson our Contract Administrator even participates in parent meetings, most recently meetings related to the status of graduating seniors. Dr. Johnson and OSSE have demonstrated that more than anything our students come first.

OSSE staff members are on location in our school at least twice weekly and in contact by phone and email several times daily to ensure that we have the supports that we need and that all plans and processes are successfully carried out.

OSSE stepped in to take the responsibility of school management when no one else would. The partnership between OSSE and WHF – HHS should serve as a model for what is possible and what is best for students in the future. While this may be the first time that OSSE has stepped in to manage a school, I certainly hope it will not be the last. The only thing that I would change is to give schools and OSSE the choice to be OSSE managed before closure becomes the reality.

In closing, I implore you to authorize OSSE to issue diplomas to the eligible seniors at WHF – HHS. We are an OSSE managed school. OSSE has taken the role of our governing authority and as such should be the agency to issue our diplomas and the diplomas of any other school or group of schools that it manages in the future.

Ms. Jacque Hayden, M. Ed.

Principal

Washington Hospitality Foundation – Hospitality High School