

Final Report: June 2019

Background

The DC State Board of Education's Student Advisory Committee was created to expand the influence that the District's student community has on voicing their opinion on what happens with the education policies that impact their lives daily. Co--chaired by the current Student Representatives of the State Board, the Student Advisory Committee (SAC) is composed of students from various DC Public Schools and DC Public Charter Schools. The committee members meet once a month. The Student Representatives share the progress of their work at DC State Board of Education Working Sessions.

Overview

In April 2018, the DC State Board of Education (SBOE) began to prepare for its third Student Advisory Committee (SAC), a committee for DC Public Schools (DCPS) and public charter school (PCS) students to provide input on education in the city. SBOE chooses two Student Representatives to serve as unofficial Board members each year, and in addition to attending Board meetings, these Student Representatives sit on and chair the SAC. Previous committees were small, and the SBOE sought to increase the representation and size. For the last two years, the SAC has grown tremendously.

The two chairs of the SAC were chosen after the review of over 20 applications. Ballou High School senior, Tatiana Robinson, is serving her second term as a Student Representative. Capital City Public Charter School senior, Marjoury Alicea is currently serving her first term. The other applicants were all invited to join the SAC, and majority of them joined and are active members. These members also invited other peers to participate, and as a result there is representation from several DCPS and DCPCS high schools.

At the SAC's first few meetings, led by Tatiana and Marjoury, the committee members decided to focus on two main issues. The topics chosen were Teacher Retention and Equity Across All Schools. Each SAC member chose a committee to serve on, and each committee spent the remainder of the group's meetings focusing on research and testimonials that advanced their goals. Ms. Robinson served as the chair of the Teacher Retention Committee, and Ms. Alicea served as the chair of the Equity Across All Schools Committee.

To be attentive to other issues that SAC members cared about, the SBOE staff worked to provide students with additional supports to contribute. The staff arranged for

representation from the OSSE Health and Wellness Division, the Department of Behavioral Health, United Way, and Data Ethics.

Teacher Retention

The goals of the Teacher Retention Committee were to:

- create solutions to keep more teachers in schools.
- find the main reasons that teachers leave schools after a short period of time.
- advocate and voice the ways in which erroneous retention rates affect students.

Group members were motivated by differences in substitute offerings, lack of conversation on this issue, negative effects on schools, the lack of teacher variety in the selection pool and horrible effects (grades, graduation rates, student satisfaction, etc.) on students where their schools have lower retention. After several meetings, group members realized that there needed to be research on the main reasons teachers leave. They begin to interview current and new teachers and do different types of research. Quotes from their interviews can be found in the final PowerPoint.

Equity Across Schools

The Equity Across Schools Committee focused on finding the real reasons behind the inequities in DC schools. The inequities researched included, but were not limited to, differences in schools' course offerings, such as languages, extracurricular activities, college tours, the quality of substitutes at different schools, and the quality of school opportunities. After several meetings, and a conversation had at a SAC meeting, the committee realized that there were wide differences in the knowledge and supports put in place for students at their varying schools. For example, students in some high schools had been on numerous college tours, whereas those at other schools said they had not been exposed to many college experiences. Also, it was stated that the opportunities given were often automatically assured to select students rather than everyone. Another example discussed was substitutes. In some high schools, students are given quality substitutes that may even help with work, while some other schools struggle to get consistent substitutes to show.

The committee conducted interviews with both teachers and students, did research on the root causes of inequity, and conducted a small survey on thoughts from students on inequity. Some of the reasons that inequity occurs in schools now were:

- Lack of funding
- Location

- Donations (PTA, PTSO)
- Testing (PARCC and SATs)
- Parental Involvement

Further Recommendations

The SAC has recommendations for the SBOE that go beyond the work they conducted over the course of the 2018-19 school year. These recommendations will call attention to these two issues of *Teacher Retention* and *Equity Across Schools* that could not be addressed by the SAC in their limited time together. The SAC calls on the Board to act on moving forward with solutions to improve inequity and low retention rates by doing things such as:

- **Listing the resources that each school needs and creating a plan to allocate them across all schools, giving each school not what they want, but what they need.**
- **Conducting a series of surveys and conversations for students to give input on these issues, and how to fix them.**
- **Ensuring effective communication tactics are put in place for teachers to advocate for themselves and changes they want to see at their schools.**
- **Recommending the creation of a mentoring program for highly effective workers to help those rated ineffective to improve instead of just removing them from schools.**
- **Recommending that before teachers and staff members come to work at schools, especially first-year teachers, give them an opportunity to get a glimpse of the school's climate by teaching a sample lesson or spending the day with students.**
- **Ensuring that opportunities, such as dual enrollment, are available to all students who have fulfilled their necessary requirements and need exposure into life beyond high school.**
- **Recommend that schools with lower test scores, get them a PARCC Test Prep and SAT and ACT Prep classes.**

In addition to this report being shared with the members of the District of Columbia State Board of Education, the Student Advisory Committee also recommends that this report be shared with other leaders responsible for education policy in DC. This report should be shared with the Mayor of the District of Columbia, the Deputy Mayor for Education, the Chancellor of District of Columbia Public Schools, the Office of the State Superintendent of Education, the District of Columbia Public Charter School Board, the Principals of all DCPS and DCPCS schools, and other educational organizations in the city, not only to highlight the work that the Student Advisory Committee has done, but to also call to action the appropriate people to implement their suggested recommendations.

Member List

Leadership:

Tatiana Robinson, Ballou High School, Class of 2019, SAC Co-Chair

Marjoury Alicea, Capital City Public Charter School, Class of 2019, SAC Co-Chair

The schools represented on the 2018-19 Student Advisory Committee included:

BASIS DC

Benjamin Banneker High School

Columbia Heights Educational Campus (CHEC)

DC International School

Duke Ellington School of the Arts

Eastern Senior High School

Frank W. Ballou HS

Friendship Collegiate Academy High School

Friendship Technology Preparatory High School

McKinley Technology High School

School Without Walls High School

SEED Public Charter School

Thurgood Marshall Academy

Washington Latin Public Charter School

Washington Leadership Academy

Woodrow Wilson High School