



2016 Annual Report





2016 DC State Board of Education

Board Members

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Karen Williams
Mary Lord
Laura Wilson Phelan
Ruth Wattenberg
Kamili Anderson
Mark Jones
Joe Weedon
Tierra Jolly
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Brian Contreras

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Vice President, Ward 7 Representative
At-Large Representative
Ward 1 Representative
Ward 3 Representative
Ward 4 Representative
Ward 5 Representative
Ward 6 Representative
Ward 8 Representative
Student Representative
Student Representative



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Sean Chalk
Jamikka Kendrick
Paul Negron

Executive Director
Policy Analyst (through November 2016)
Staff Assistant
Program Support Specialist (started October 2016)

Interns

Eric Duncan
Miranda Houchins
Tiffany Jones
Mackenzie Fusco
Joey Kathan
Elizabeth Pancotti
Anastacia Sendoun
Melissa Ward

Policy Fellow
Policy Fellow





EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

2016 was truly a groundbreaking year for the District of Columbia State Board of Education. The SBOE helped to create a foundation here in the District for excellence and equity in education, continuing its impressive pace of work committed to ensuring that every student receives a top-quality education. This is accomplished by establishing the “architecture of excellence” – the academic standards and other policies that spur innovation, strengthen teaching, and enrich instruction for every child, in every subject, in every classroom across the city.



This year, the SBOE partnered and engaged with local parents, teachers, students, policy leaders and community members in efforts to solicit feedback on how policy decisions affect the daily lives of our public education stakeholders. Community meetings and roundtables related to school quality, student success and health education standards were held in *every* ward in the District. Board members remained committed to narrowing the opportunity gap that exists and helping to push education standards to a higher level.

The DC State Board of Education is the singular elected representative body that is devoted solely to public education in the District. As policy leaders, Board members work diligently to measure what excellence looks like. Based on public feedback and engagement, Board members identify systemic problems like bullying and address these challenges through policy that is more responsive to the needs of today's children.



The SBOE is comprised of nine elected members, two student representatives, and staff in three offices: the Office of the State Board of Education, the Office of the Ombudsman for Public Education, and the Office of the Student Advocate. Each office is charged with specific statutory duties. The Office of the Ombudsman serves as mediators between schools, students, and families. The Office of the Student Advocate provides resources and guidance for students in the education system. The State Board received



briefings from the Ombudsman for Public Education and Chief Student Advocate on trends in the kinds of problems their offices were fielding and resolving. These trends and policy recommendations are detailed in their respective office’s annual reports to the Board, which can be found at sboe.dc.gov.

As an independent, neutral body, the SBOE helps parents and students navigate and understand district-wide education policy. Board members analyze and research trends within public education in order to craft policy that serves the best interests of DC’s young children who attend our public schools. The State Board of Education is responsible for advising the State Superintendent of Education and her office (OSSE) on educational matters, including state standards/objectives, state policies for special, academic, vocational and charter schools, and any state regulations proposed by the Mayor or State Superintendent.

The State Board also approves state-level policies, including specifying what children are expected to know and be able to do:

- STATE ACADEMIC STANDARDS
- HIGH SCHOOL GRADUATION REQUIREMENTS
- PROFICIENCY FOR ALL LOCAL EDUCATION AGENCIES (LEA’S)
- STANDARDS FOR TEACHERS ACCREDITATION AND CERTIFICATION
- STATE ACCOUNTABILITY PLAN UNDER EVERY STUDENT SUCCEEDS ACT (ESSA)
- STATE POLICIES FOR PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT
- RULES FOR RESIDENCY VERIFICATION
- LIST OF CHARTER SCHOOL ACCREDITATION ORGANIZATIONS
- CATEGORIES AND FORMAT OF ANNUAL REPORT CARD
- APPROVE STATE RULES FOR ENFORCING ATTENDANCE REQUIREMENTS
- APPROVE STATE STANDARDS FOR HOME SCHOOLING



The SBOE's voice was at the head of the table in helping to craft the implementation of the new federal law, Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA), which was passed in December 2015. President Obama signed this bill into law to replace No Child Left Behind (NCLB). The new law gives states broad new authorities over how to measure performance. The State Board has spent the entirety of 2016 focused on revising the District's statewide accountability plan that will help shape every school. This work is vital to the future of education in the District. SBOE was out front in engaging hundreds of parents, teachers, workforce development and business representatives, and community members, holding meetings and quorums in *every* ward. The goal is to develop strong recommendations for use with OSSE in the development of the plan. Notably, the new federal education law itself reflects the District's voice due to this State Board's involvement with, and leadership of, our national organization during the ESSA legislative advocacy effort. The State Board will be continuing this work into 2017.



Members and staff of the SBOE served as leaders on various national, regional, and citywide boards and committees, including: National Association of State Boards of Education¹, US Department of Education Mid-Atlantic Regional Advisory Committee, the District's inter-agency Truancy Task Force, the Washington Area Boards of Education, and the Deputy Mayor of Education's Cross-Sector Collaboration Task Force. As the only elected body in the District dedicated solely to

education, the SBOE is able to bring the voice of District residents to the education policy debate at the federal and local level through these initiatives.

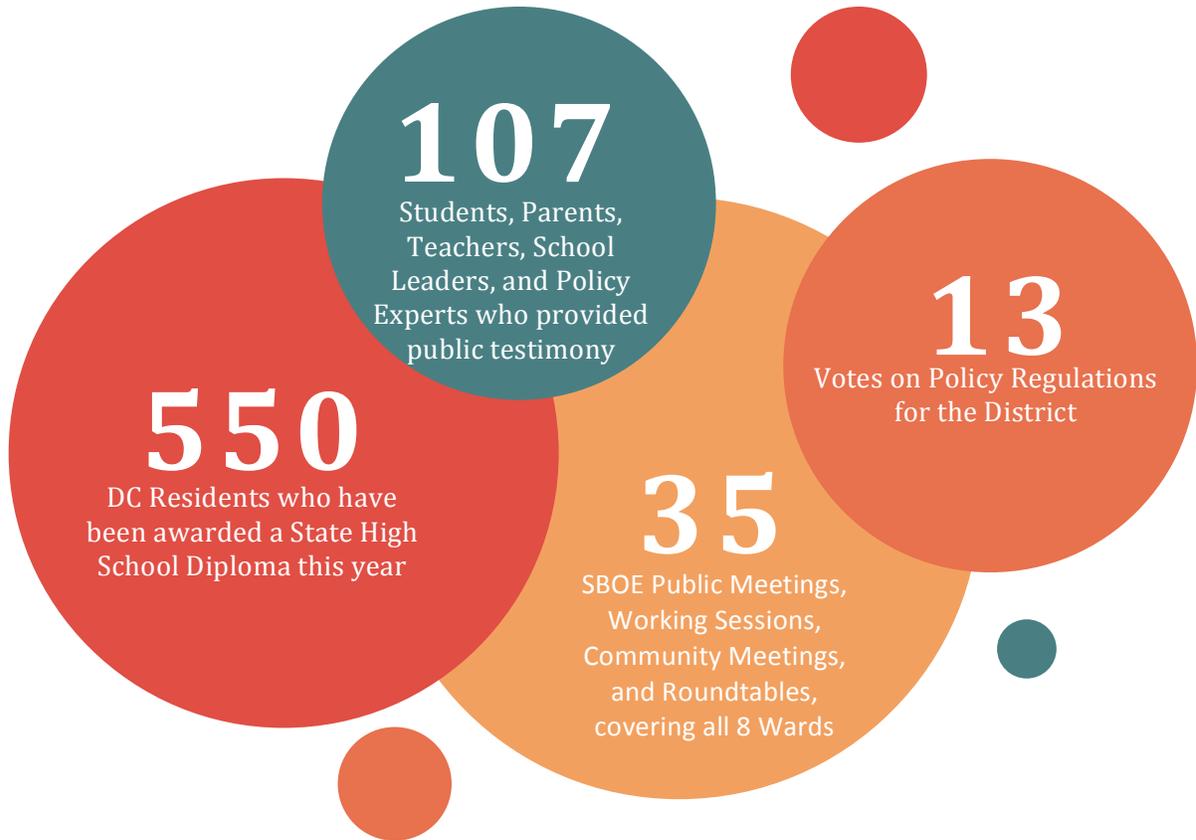
The State Board views its role in the achievement of its mission as one of shared responsibility, whereby it engaged the public to play a vital role in preparing every child for college and/or career success. The State Board of Education regularly meets twice a month. Working sessions are held on the first Wednesday of the month and public meetings are held on the third Wednesday of every month. In addition, Board members meet frequently with constituents in every ward of the city at community meetings and roundtables.



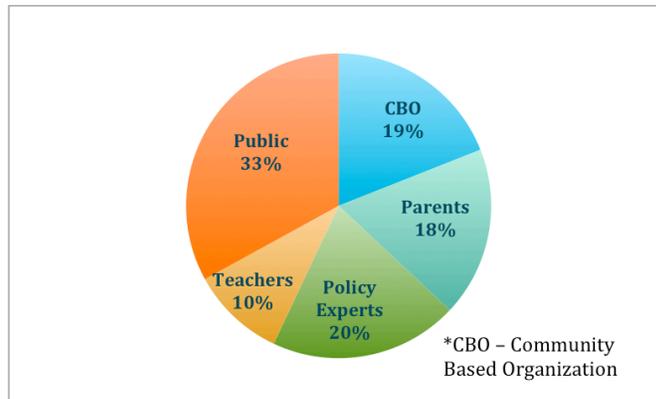
¹ At-Large representative Mary Lord served as President of the National Association of State Boards of Education in 2015 and Immediate Past President in 2016, completing her three-year term on December 31.



2016 BY THE NUMBERS



2016 PUBLIC TESTIMONY





This report will highlight the SBOE’s work on three major policy initiatives:

- Approval of a new state diploma, opening pathways to advancement for adults who pass the GED exam or complete the National External Diploma Program (NEDP);
- Approval of updated health education standards that emphasize nutrition, depression and mental health, self-advocacy skills, bullying prevention, gender identity, and other contemporary issues with which District youths struggle;
- Revising high school credit flexibility by developing and approving graduation rules that permit the awarding of credit based on evidence of competency rather than “seat time” in class.

In each of these initiatives, the SBOE relied heavily on local and national organizations; input from teachers, principals, students, parents and guardians, residents, and other community members. We thank you all for your dedication to making the District’s education system the best in the world.

In addition to the three primary policy successes this year, the SBOE achieved many milestones:

NOTABLE POLICY ACHIEVEMENTS	
PRE-KINDERGARTEN PROGRAMS	Approved enhanced and expanded academic and degree requirements for teachers in CBOs
SCHOOL MODERNIZATION	Held public hearing with Deputy Mayor for Education on lead in the water
STUDENT ADVISORY COMMITTEE	Facilitated creation of committee and adopted its report, which focused on increasing teacher accountability
GRADUATION REQUIREMENTS	Commissioned report from American University students on national research of graduation requirements
REACHING PROPORTIONAL VOICES	Created this ad-hoc group to broaden outreach to middle school families and other underrepresented constituencies
CLOSING THE OPPORTUNITY GAP	Formed committee to review this issue and collected data on teacher turnover
PUBLIC OUTREACH	Developed surveys and documents in Spanish/Amharic to increase public participation
TRUANCY TASKFORCE	Participated and worked with Deputy Mayor for Education on a policy to identify and reduce chronic absences



HIGH SCHOOL CREDIT FLEXIBILITY

This year, the State Board passed regulations to pave the way for competency-based learning in District high schools. Many students learn at their own pace and in unique ways, and the SBOE diligently worked to assess the validity and usage of competency-based



courses. These pioneering courses give teachers the ability to help students own their learning and master material, truly setting them up for success beyond high school.

Previously, students could only receive credit for a “Carnegie unit,” which generally requires spending 120 hours in a classroom and receiving a grade of D- or higher. These new regulations allow schools to create innovative

programs that award credit for student demonstration of mastery of content, without regard to location or time related to the acquisition of the content.



In the fall of 2015, the SBOE organized a citywide taskforce chaired by Laura Wilson Phelan, Ward 1 member of the State Board of Education to devise a set of recommendations on how to grant high schools flexibility in awarding credit hours. The High School Credit Flexibility Taskforce was comprised of 25 education leaders from across the District including, OSSE, DCPS, PCSB, the Council, the Deputy Mayor for Education, and other school and community members.

The task force issued three recommendations for earning high school credit and one recommendation associated with course timing, all of which were adopted by the State Board in February, and three of which were included in the final regulations proposed by OSSE and adopted by the SBOE in March. They are outlined below.

- **Recommendation 1: Create a waiver process for schools wishing to pursue competency-based learning (CBL).** To foster responsible innovation in the use of flexible credit, SBOE recommended that the Office of the State Superintendent for Education (OSSE) should establish a rigorous application and evaluation process,



including relevant rubrics, for a waiver to Carnegie units to which schools may apply to their authorizing body -- either DC Public Schools (DCPS) or Public Charter School Board (PCSB). In the waiver, educational institutions must describe for which course or series of courses the waiver applies, the method for determining competency within those courses, and the level of performance or achievement that will constitute mastery of state standards for each course or series of courses that will not be using Carnegie units. DCPS and PCSB shall submit evidence of the progress and quality of implementation on each waiver to OSSE annually. This evidence shall be posted publicly and be reported annually to the State Board of Education (SBOE).

OSSE recently released guidance on the application process for schools. DCPS schools will submit applications to DCPS Central Office for approval. Charter schools and charter districts will submit applications to the Public Charter School Board.

- **Recommendation 2: Allow students to receive credit for demonstrated prior knowledge in foreign language and mathematics**

Students may receive credit for prior knowledge in foreign language and mathematics provided that they pass a state-approved exam at “meets or exceeds career and college readiness standards.” Receiving credit for these courses will



allow students to either move on to more difficult courses, or focus attention on other subjects where they may be struggling. The regulations that the State Board approved also leave the door open for students to possibly test out of other courses sometime down the line. This recommendation was not included in the recommendations from OSSE. Instead, it was decided to

consider this flexibility during a comprehensive review of high school graduation requirements later in the year.

- **Recommendation 3: Maintain Carnegie units as the default means for earning high school credit**

Educational institutions may continue to award credit based on a student receiving a passing grade in a course through the Carnegie Unit, which is 120 hours of instructional time (150 hours for lab-based courses), or may seek a waiver for specific courses. Students also may demonstrate competency by passing a state-



approved assessment in math or foreign language. The task force determined that it was important to maintain the Carnegie Unit as the default means for earning credit to allow for controlled innovation and scaling of the most successful approaches.

- **Recommendation 4: Do not require students to enroll in algebra by grade 9**
Remove the language from graduation requirements that all students enroll in Algebra I by 9th grade. Feedback received by the State Board and the taskforce found that many ninth grade students are not ready for this content. The new regulations delay the requirement to 10th grade so that schools can create 9th grade courses that will better prepare these students for the rigor of Algebra, while still allowing students to graduate in four years.



These changes will allow schools to innovate with competency-based education without forcing schools to overhaul their current credit-giving framework. The State Board is eager to understand the challenges and successes of implementing this enhanced flexibility to deepen student learning and put them on the path to success.

STATE DIPLOMA



Despite their hard work to pass the rigorous GED exam or complete the National External Diploma Program (NEDP), many adult learners in DC face barriers to employment. One of these barriers was the mere fact that they were not awarded a “diploma” for their accomplishments. Approximately 60,000 District adults, 85 percent of whom are 25 or older, lack a high school diploma or its equivalency. Over 35 percent of families headed by an individual without a diploma live in poverty, and Georgetown’s Center on Education and the Workforce predicts that by 2020 over 75 percent of jobs in DC will require a diploma.

The State Board spent much of 2015 hearing from adult learners about the hardships they face and learning about the difficulty of the GED and NEDP. Based on these conversations, and the Board’s research into the issues, it decided to award a “State Diploma” to



individuals who pass the GED or pass the NEDP. The State Board recognizes the hard work and accomplishments of these individuals, and wants to remove barriers they will face for future employment.

The final regulations, approved in January 2016, award diplomas to anyone who passed the GED or completed the NEDP since January 2014. This decision reflects the date that the



new GED, aligned to the Common Core State Standards, was introduced. This new exam takes most adult learners two years of studying to pass. The Office of the State Superintendent (OSSE) will issue the State Diploma. Since passage of these regulations, DC's State Diploma has been issued to approximately 550 DC residents.

In December 2016, District of Columbia Deputy Mayor for Education Jennifer Niles, State Superintendent of Education Hanseul Kang, and SBOE members attended the first-ever commencement for GED and NEDP recipients who earned the DC state diploma. This momentous occasion was celebrated as a jumping off point for those recipients, who can now take the next step in their career pathway. Many can now successfully enter an apprenticeship or industry-certification program or enroll in a college or university to further their education goals.

The final regulations state that the State Diploma will be recognized as an equivalent to a regular high school diploma, but will not count toward the District's graduation rate. The State Board also called on the OSSE to release a report on the policy's effect after five years.



HEALTH EDUCATION STANDARDS



In April, the State Board voted unanimously to update the District's health education standards. Health education standards are vital to ensuring that students learn to be healthy, safe citizens. Health education standards are so important, in fact, that adopting newly revised health standards was one of the first official actions of the SBOE after its inception in 2007. These standards can make a real difference in the lives of our students. From bullying to addiction, sexual health to depression, the new

standards will provide students with the skills they need to be healthy for the rest of their lives.

Over two years ago, the SBOE and its community partners recognized a need to revise these standards to become more skills-based, and better meet the needs of our students. The old standards were based on the National Health Education Standards. However, data from the DC Youth Risk Behavior Survey demonstrated a need for revisions to meet the needs of an urban community, especially in areas such as nutrition, mental and emotional health, violence and safety, and sexual health.

These newly developed standards seek to give teachers tools they can easily use, and supply information that our students desperately need. Previously, the standards the standards were spread across 15 categories. They have been consolidated into six easier to manage categories, logically organized in a way that will make it easier for teachers to communicate this information to students. These new categories are: mental and emotional health; safety skills; human body and personal health; disease prevention; nutrition; alcohol tobacco and other drugs.





Each health education category is also broken into several important strands for student learning, such as: health promotion, analyzing influences, accessing information, communication, decision-making, goal setting, healthy behaviors, and advocacy.

Additionally, the standards focus more on skills students can use to make healthy choices—rather than mere memorization. The focus is developing skills for students to advocate for themselves, their families, and their community. Students can now take charge in maintaining their health and wellness, prevent disease, and reduce health-jeopardizing behaviors.

The revised standards are the product of two years of diligent work by the SBOE, Office of the State Superintendent for Education, and numerous members of the District community. OSSE and SBOE solicited input and feedback from teachers, students, practitioners, and others to develop comprehensive standards that meets the needs of our students.





2017 AND BEYOND

The DC State Board of Education looks forward to an exciting year ahead as it continues its role as the citizen's voice for District public education. Since its independence from the Office of the State Superintendent of Education (OSSE) three years ago, the SBOE has faced significant barriers to its efficient operation from a lack of adequate office space to establishing adequate policies and procedures.

OPERATIONS THIS YEAR:

- Opened additional State Board office to house new personnel and provide additional space for Ombudsman and Student Advocate
- First official SBOE vote on its budget as a measure to increase transparency
- Revised SBOE bylaws and policies to reflect new structure and procedures
- Secured additional funding and FTEs to support SBOE, Ombudsman and Student Advocate
- Drafted and anticipated passage of SBOE Omnibus legislation

As a relatively new and growing agency, large strides have been made to provide the strong foundation the agency needs to continue its work in statewide policy and engagement.



The foundation of every state is the education of its youth. –Diogenes